

# *Scotia Archaeology*

**REPORT  
TO  
GREEN HIGHLAND RENEWABLES LIMITED**

**HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME  
BALAGOWAN,  
COWAL, ARGYLL**

**Desk study  
and  
walk-over survey  
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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a desk study of archaeological sites and monuments and a walk-over survey along the route of a proposed hydro-electric scheme near Balagowan, some 9km north of Dunoon on the Cowal peninsula, Argyll. The survey was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology at the request of Green Highland Renewables Limited who supplied a map showing an indicative route for the scheme.

## THE SITE

There will be two intakes for the scheme, one on the Balagowan Burn at NS 12503 82928, the other a short distance away on an unnamed tributary to the burn at NS 12488 82793. The two branches will meet at approximately NS 12595 82835 from where the penstock will run south-eastwards, along the right side of the Balagowan Burn to a power house at NS 13663 81963. The overall length of the pipeline will be approximately 1.5km.

Its route will run through woodland of small birch trees and felled forestry plantation, the undergrowth being of heather, reeds, bracken, long grass and other coarse vegetation.

## THE DESK STUDY

The desk study identified one site of archaeological significance very close to the proposed route of the penstock although no others are shown in the close vicinity. It is listed according to the number allocated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). Their record is taken from an entry in *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland* (DES 2008, 36) and is reproduced verbatim below.

### NS18SW 19 Gleann Ban: houses

NS 12645 82808 On the N bank of the Balagowan Burn, in a flat wooded area, are two rectangular stone foundations of substantial houses A and B. They are much eroded and are obscured by a covering of turf and moss.

**A** On a low mound near the river, and parallel to it (long axis 100° E of N), this structure measures 5.8m by 2.8m externally, internal wall height 0.4m to the vegetation fill, wall width indeterminate due to the heavy turf and moss cover. There is a probable doorway in the centre of the N wall, 0.9m wide.

**B** The second rectangular stone foundation is farther from the river, 9.6m to the NE of A, also on a low mound c0.6m high. It is in poorer condition than A. It measures 6.1m x 3.3m externally with central gaps in each of the long walls, either doorways or broken down by animals. Its long axis is oriented 150° E of N.

## THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The walk-over survey was undertaken on 22 July 2013 on a dry, cloudy day with good visibility.

The survey covered a corridor either side of the notional route of the penstock, extending from the right bank of the Balagowan Burn into the area of felled forestry. The only site of

archaeological significance encountered during the survey consisted of the two structures identified by the desk study and located near the intake points. Their location is marked as 'SITE' on the accompanying map which is based on one supplied by Green Highland Renewables Limited.

Both structures are demolished almost to ground level and their remains were barely visible during the survey, being covered with long grass and bracken. One, probably Structure A, is centred on approximately NS 12659 82817 while the other is at NS 12656 82798. These grid references are difficult to reconcile with the locations given by DES and RCAHMS although there is no doubt these are the two structures described in those records. The vegetation cover gave no opportunity to augment the existing records.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The only features of archaeological or historical significance identified along or close to the route of the proposed hydro-electric scheme are the two structures described above. Without more detailed investigation, it is difficult to determine their original functions although it would not be unreasonable to suggest that they were shieling huts.

These structures lie close to the proposed course of the penstock and should be protected during the construction of the hydro scheme. It is recommended that fences be erected around these remains, the fences extending at least 5m from their walls. The fences should be inspected and maintained throughout the development process to ensure that the excavation of the pipeline, the movement of plant and the deposition of spoil and materials will not affect the surviving remains of these buildings.

## REFERENCE

DES *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*. Annual journal of Archaeology Scotland.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

- 1-2 Structure A, viewed from the north-west
- 3 Structure B, viewed from the north-east
- 4 Structure B, viewed from the south-east