

# Scotia Archaeology

REPORT  
TO  
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY

EARTH CABLE  
AT  
CLACHAN,  
ISLE OF LISMORE,  
ARGYLL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF

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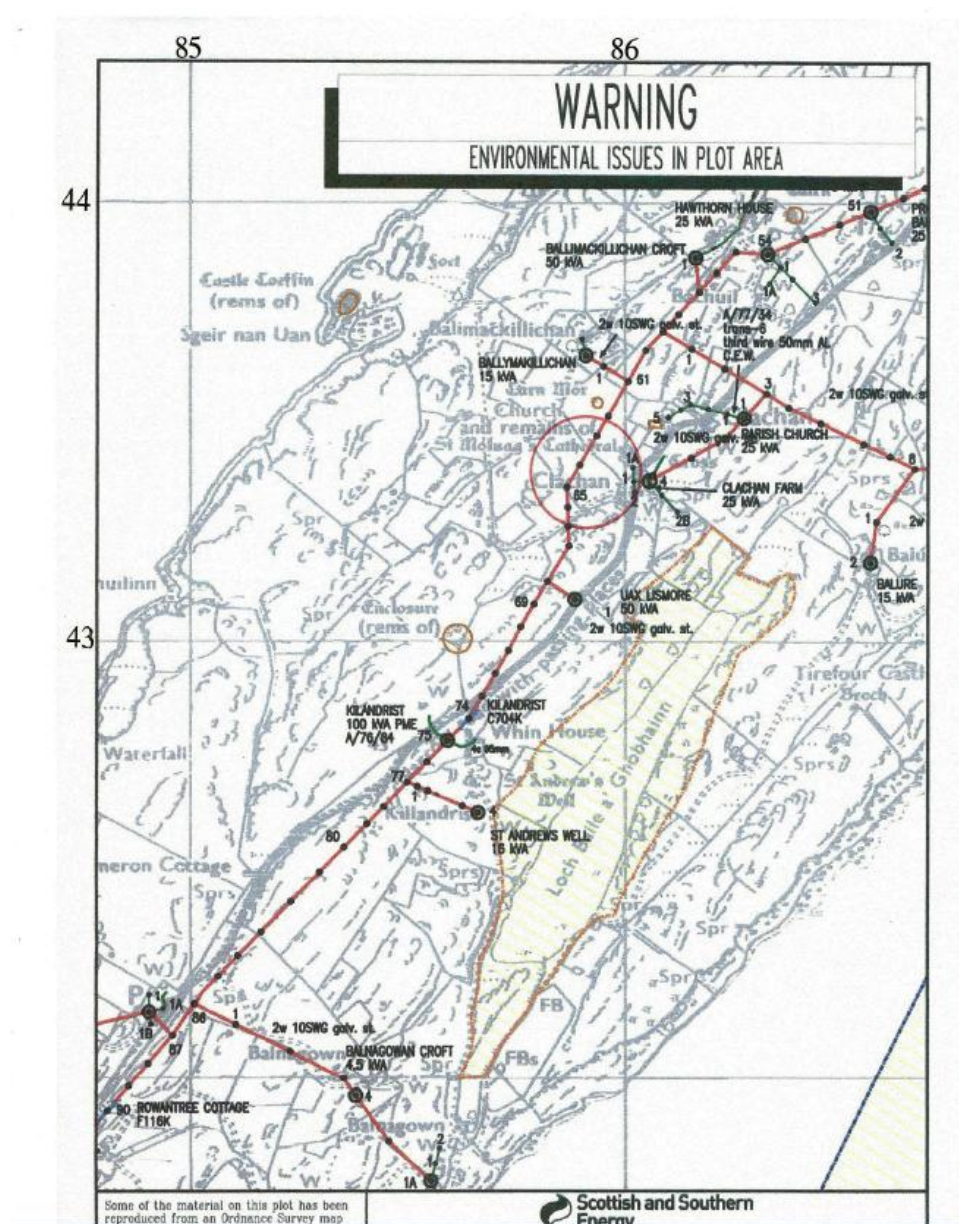
## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken in March 2015 for Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) during the excavation of a trench to accommodate an earth cable near Clachan, Isle of Lismore, Argyll.

The trench was close to the site of St Moluag's Cathedral and the prehistoric cairn of Carn Mor, both Scheduled Ancient Monuments. As a consequence, Argyll & Bute Council, on the advice of the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), imposed a condition whereby an archaeological watching brief be implemented during trenching.

## THE SITE

The location of the site is shown on the map below, supplied by SSE.



*Location map of site*

The hamlet of Clachan, located towards the north-east end of Lismore, comprises a farm, the former Lismore Manse which dates from circa 1765, a few other houses and the parish kirk which incorporates the chancel of St Moluag's Cathedral. The medieval cathedral, located at NM 86079 43497, dates from around 1250 and was converted into the parish kirk in 1749 when its roof was lowered. Its monument number, ascribed by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), is NM84SE 5.

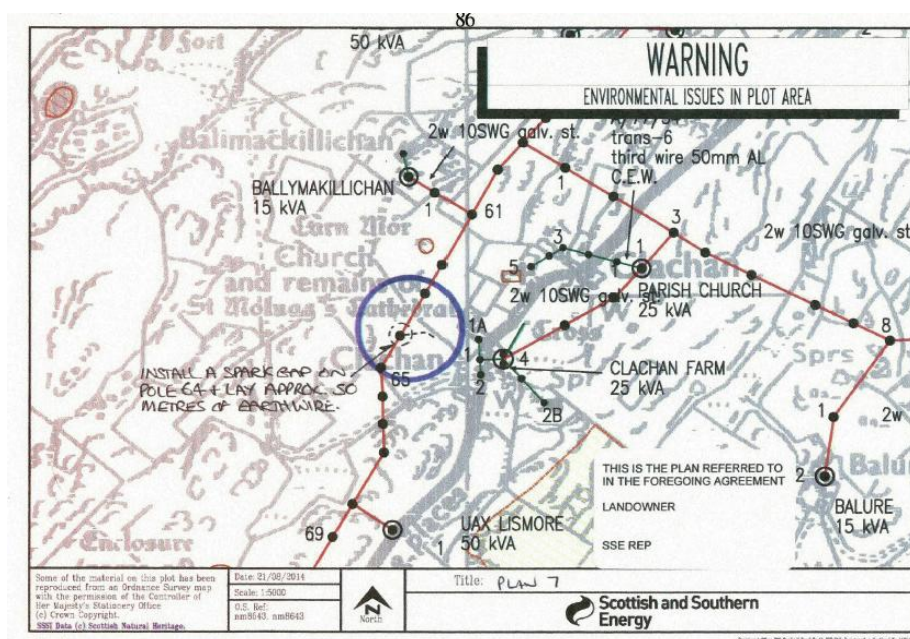
Records indicate that St Moluag arrived in Lismore in the mid-6th century when he is believed to have set up a religious house within the limits of what became the 13th-century cathedral. Visible remnants of the early foundation are scant although the line of the vallum which would have surrounded the early foundation may be reflected in some of the modern field boundaries at Clachan. The footprint of the extant church, its associated cemetery and an irregular area around them constitute a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM286).

The trench for the earth cable ran from Pole 64 on an overhead line that runs north-east to south-west across this part of the island. The pole is located some 200m south-west of St Moluag's Cathedral. At a similar distance to the north of the pole, at NM 85930 43540, is another Scheduled Ancient Monument, the prehistoric cairn of Carn Mor. Its Scheduled Monument and RCAHMS numbers are SAM4192 and NM84SE 12 respectively.

Carn Mor measures 11m by 8m and now comprises a spread of small stones, 1.7m high, which has been used in recent times as a dump for field clearance boulders.

## THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 25 March 2015, a bright sunny day. Trenching was undertaken by SSE using a small mechanical excavator. The trench ran north-eastwards from Pole 64 which is located at NM 85842 43410, its socket set into a small outcrop of bedrock. Otherwise, the field in which the pole stands is relatively flat and well-drained and supports good grazing for sheep.



*Plan showing the trench location*



The trench terminated at NM 85855 43427 and measured some 27m long. It had a nominal width of 0.4m although it had to be widened occasionally to allow the removal of some large boulders which lay just below the surface of the ground, particularly near the pole. Most of the trench cut through dark grey to near black, silty loam to a depth of 0.4-0.5m although towards the north-east end of the trench the soil was pale brown at its base.



*Trench viewed from the south-west*



*Trench viewed from the north-east*

No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered within the trench and the only artefact retrieved from it was a small sherd of late 19th- or early 20th-century pottery which was not retained.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Medieval religious houses often attracted satellite settlements and, although the earth cable trench was located some 200m from St Moluag's Cathedral, there is a possibility that the remains of such a settlement could survive in that area. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered on this occasion but it is suggested that any further developments in this area should also be monitored archaeologically.