

INTRODUCTION

In 2007 Perth & Kinross Council granted planning consent to Shawater Limited, on behalf of South Chesthill Hydro Limited, to construct a new hydro-electric scheme at Inverinain, Glen Lyon, near Aberfeldy, Perthshire (Planning Application number 07/000002/HYDRO). Before permission was granted, the Scottish Urban Archaeology Trust (SUAT) had undertaken a desk study of documentary and cartographic sources and a walk-over survey of the route of the proposed pipeline, the latter being undertaken in August 2006.

SURVEY RESULTS

The intention was to tap the water for the hydro scheme at two points: at approximately NN 6527 4680 on the Allt Coire Thaochaidh; and NN 6577 4670 on the Inverinain Burn. The two sections of pipe would then run northwards, meeting at approximately NN 6547 4711. From that point the pipeline would continue northwards to a new power station near Inverinain which consists of a former farmhouse and associated structures including a complex of sheep enclosures to the south-west of the house. Inverinain is located on the south side of the River Lyon and approached by a metalled track from the village of Invervar, some 2km away.

SUAT identified several sites of possible archaeological importance along the proposed route of the pipeline although most were discounted because they were of recent origin. The remaining sites are described below according to the numbers allocated by SUAT.

Site 1 A group of shielings, five of which are centred around NN 6530 4688, a short distance to the west of the Allt Coire Thaochaidh and close to the source of the west branch of the pipeline. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) designate these structures as NN64NE 6 and refers to them as a group of at least ten rectangular huts, centred on NN 6537 4690.

Site 3 A sheep fank, now disused but well preserved, on the south side of the track at Inverinain. It comprises several stone-built pens to the west of which is a large gathering enclosure, centred on NN 6530 4748.

Site 8 A shieling hut located on a narrow shelf above a gorge along the course of the Inverinain Burn, at NN 6537 4724. This structure measures 6.9m east/west by 3.8m wide, its masonry standing to a maximum height of approximately 1m.

Site 9 A shieling hut located a short distance south-east of Site 8, at NN 6539 4722.

Following the results of the survey and on the advice of its archaeological advisers, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), the council attached a condition that a programme of archaeological investigation should be undertaken in conjunction with the hydro scheme. This was to safeguard any sites of archaeological significance that might be adversely affected during the installation of the pipeline and the construction of the power station.

This work was carried out by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology, in the context of Scottish Planning Policy 23 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) whose contents were based on the requirements laid out by PKHT. The scheme was agreed by PKHT and approved by the planning authority before development work commenced on site. This WSI described a programme of works

whose implementation was intended to mitigate any actions that might damage the surviving archaeological record during the proposed development.

THE PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

To install the new pipeline, vegetation and topsoil were removed from a wide strip within which a trench, 500mm wide, was excavated to accommodate a pipe with a diameter of 300mm, to be set at a minimum depth of 300mm. The area of potential disturbance was much wider than the trench itself because of the movement of mechanical excavators and the deposition of spoil. In addition, a swathe of trees had to be felled where the pipeline passed through a forestry plantation in the north half of the route.

Excavations and pipe installation was carried out by A & C Construction (Scotland) Limited of Stanley, near Perth.

Discussions between relevant parties ensured that most of the sites of archaeological significance previously identified were avoided during the installation of the pipeline. At the time of a recent site visit (11th November 2009), the pipeline was still under construction although it had already passed the locations of the putative shielings at Sites 1, 8 and 9. Originally, the pipeline followed a pronounced arc just north of Site 8 but the route was straightened, thus allowing the power house to be located well to the west of the sheep fank at Site 3. The new route is shown on the accompanying plan although it should be pointed out that the north section has been sketched rather than surveyed accurately.

Site 1

A visit to Site 1 on 10th March 2009 confirmed that all the structures previously noted in this area lie to the west of the Allt Coire Thaochaidh, as shown in SUAT's report. It should be noted that the grid reference given by RCAHMS implies that at least some structures lie on the opposite bank of the stream although there was no evidence to substantiate this during the visit. No element of this group of structures was compromised by the installation of the pipeline.

Site 3

The decision to locate the power house some distance west of Site 3 ensured that the sheep fank would not be damaged during any part of the operation.

Site 8

The remains of the shieling hut at Site 8 lay some distance to the north-east of the pipe route although, as a precaution, the structure was marked off with high visibility tape to ensure it was clearly visible to tree-fellers and excavators. It was untouched during this work.

Site 9

A deer fence defining the limit of the forestry plantation and which passed close to Site 8 ran directly through the shieling previously identified by SUAT as Site 9. During site visits on 9th and 10th March 2009 the remains of another small building (Structure 9B) were noted

within the forestry plantation, a short distance to the north-west of this shieling (Structure 9A). At that time it was thought likely that one or perhaps both of these structures might be damaged during tree-felling and excavations for the pipeline.

Both structures were marked off with high-visibility tape to protect them during tree-felling. It was assumed initially that the pipe route would pass directly through Site 9A and that Site 9B might also suffer from the movement of machinery in this area. At that stage it was anticipated that excavation in this area would have to be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief in order to mitigate the results of this operation. However, it proved possible to run the pipe trench past the two structures without damaging either, rendering the watching brief unnecessary although the standing remains of these structures were recorded prior to the commencement of excavation. The record comprised measured sketch plans drawn at a scale of 1:50, a photographic survey and a written account.

Structure 9A

Structure 9A was located a short distance from the edge of the steep ravine leading down to the Inverinain Burn. The building measured 5.8m north/south by 3m wide over walls 0.65m thick, its drystone rubble walls surviving to a maximum height of 0.6m. It was divided into two unequal chambers, the larger being entered through a doorway, 0.6m wide, at the west end of its north gable. There was no evidence of an entrance into the smaller chamber although the south wall had been almost completely destroyed.

Structure 9B

The scant remains of this building were located a short distance south of Structure 9A and were completely enclosed by forestry during the initial site visits. This single-celled building of drystone construction measured 5.5m by 4.4m overall but had been almost completely destroyed, presumably during forestry operations. Some very large boulders had been used in its construction which appeared to have been somewhat superior to that of Structure 9A despite its parlous state.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relatively small amounts of demolition debris within and around Structures 9A and 9B may be an indication that much of their superstructure had been of timber and perhaps turf. Their size and location suggest that they (and presumably the similar nearby structure at Site 8) were probably shieling huts dating to the 18th or 19th century.

None of these sites is now threatened by developments associated with the Inverinain Hydro scheme and no further protection should be necessary for them. However, it should be noted that the buildings at Sites 8 and 9 are clearly vulnerable from future forestry operations and some measure of protection should be afforded them during future timber extraction.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below form part of the project archive and are stored digitally at the National Monuments Record of Scotland. They are not included in this report.

March 2009

- 1 Site 8, viewed from the north-west
- 2 Site 8, viewed from the east
- 3-4 Site 9A, viewed from the north-west
- 5 Site 9A, viewed from the east
- 6 Site 9B, viewed from the north

November 2009

- 7-8 Structure 9A, viewed from the south-east
- 9 Structures 9A and 9B, viewed from the south-east
- 10-11 Structure 9A, viewed from the south-west
- 12 Structure 9B, viewed from the south-west