

INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during excavations by Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) to replace two wooden poles on an 11kv overhead power line near Longforan, Perth & Kinross. The watching brief was commissioned by Allan Coburn of SSE and undertaken on 19th April by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology and was intended to mitigate any action that might damage the surviving archaeological record during the replacement of the two poles.

Terms of Reference (TOR) relating to this investigation had been supplied by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), archaeological advisors to Perth & Kinross Council. Prior to the commencement of fieldwork a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced, describing a programme of work based on the requirements of the TOR and which was to be carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Historical Environment Policy.

THE SITE

The two poles (4 and 5) form elements of a line running east/west through the farms of East Pilmore and West Pilmore, approximately 700m south-east of the village of Longforan, in agricultural land given over mostly to arable cultivation. The power line runs alongside a farm track on the north edge of a field, recently ploughed, that slopes down very gently towards the Tay to the south. See the attached plan (a modified SSE drawing) for details of the poles' locations.

Pole 4 is located at NO 32001 29759 and Pole 5 at NO 32088 29762, 400m and 300m respectively west of West Pilmore Farm. They stand in the proximity of a series of presumed prehistoric monuments, identified from aerial photographs. West Pilmore ring ditch (NO32NW 13; MPK5098) is a cropmark site centred at approximately NO 320 297. A short distance to the north-east of Pole 5 is another monument, or more accurately a group of monuments, comprising a round house, ring ditch and an enclosed settlement (NO32NW 18; MPK5103). It is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 6524) and is protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

A mechanical excavator dug small trenches to the immediate west of the poles, each of which showed signs of decay. Thereafter, new poles were placed in the trenches which were then backfilled. The power line is to be transferred to the new poles at a later date when the old poles will be cut off a short distance above ground and the stumps lifted out vertically without disrupting the materials surrounding them. As a consequence, this second element of the project will not need to be monitored archaeologically.

Pole 4

The trench for the new pole measured 1.3m east/west by 0.5m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.6m. It cut through 0.35m of red-brown, humic topsoil with a few small stones and contained a few sherds of white-glazed pottery of 19th-/20th-century date which were not retained. Below the topsoil were numerous lenses of topsoil intermixed with redeposited fluvio-glacial materials, apparently backfill from a previous ground disturbance. These

materials, which were not bottomed, extended too far from the original pole to be the backfill for its trench and appeared to date from an earlier event. Unfortunately, no artefacts were retrieved from these materials and their date (or dates) of deposition remain unknown.

Pole 5

This trench measured 1.5m east/west by 0.6m wide and 1.7m deep. It cut through 0.3m of red-brown topsoil which sat directly on undisturbed fluvio-glacial red sand, gravel and small stones. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered within this trench and no artefacts of any date retrieved from it.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Excavation revealed evidence of substantial disturbance near Pole 4. The absence of any artefactual evidence makes it impossible to say when this occurred although sense dictates that it predated the construction of the power line. The dimensions of this feature are also unknown although it did extend at least 1.25m into the subsoil.

It seems quite possible that this feature was dug in antiquity and may be contemporary with one or more of the nearby prehistoric monuments identified by aerial photography. As a consequence, it is strongly recommended that any further disturbance to ground in the vicinity of these monuments should also be subject to at least an archaeological watching brief.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below form part of the project archive and are not reproduced in this report.

- 1 Trench for Pole 4, viewed from the west
- 2 Trench for Pole 4 during backfilling, viewed from the west
- 3-4 Trench for Pole 5, viewed from the west
- 5 View to the west from near Pole 5.