

**Tote - Skeabost Link Path,
Isle of Skye**

Planning Ref.: (SL-07-453)

NG 42042 48903 (centred)

An Archaeological Watching Brief during Path Construction Works

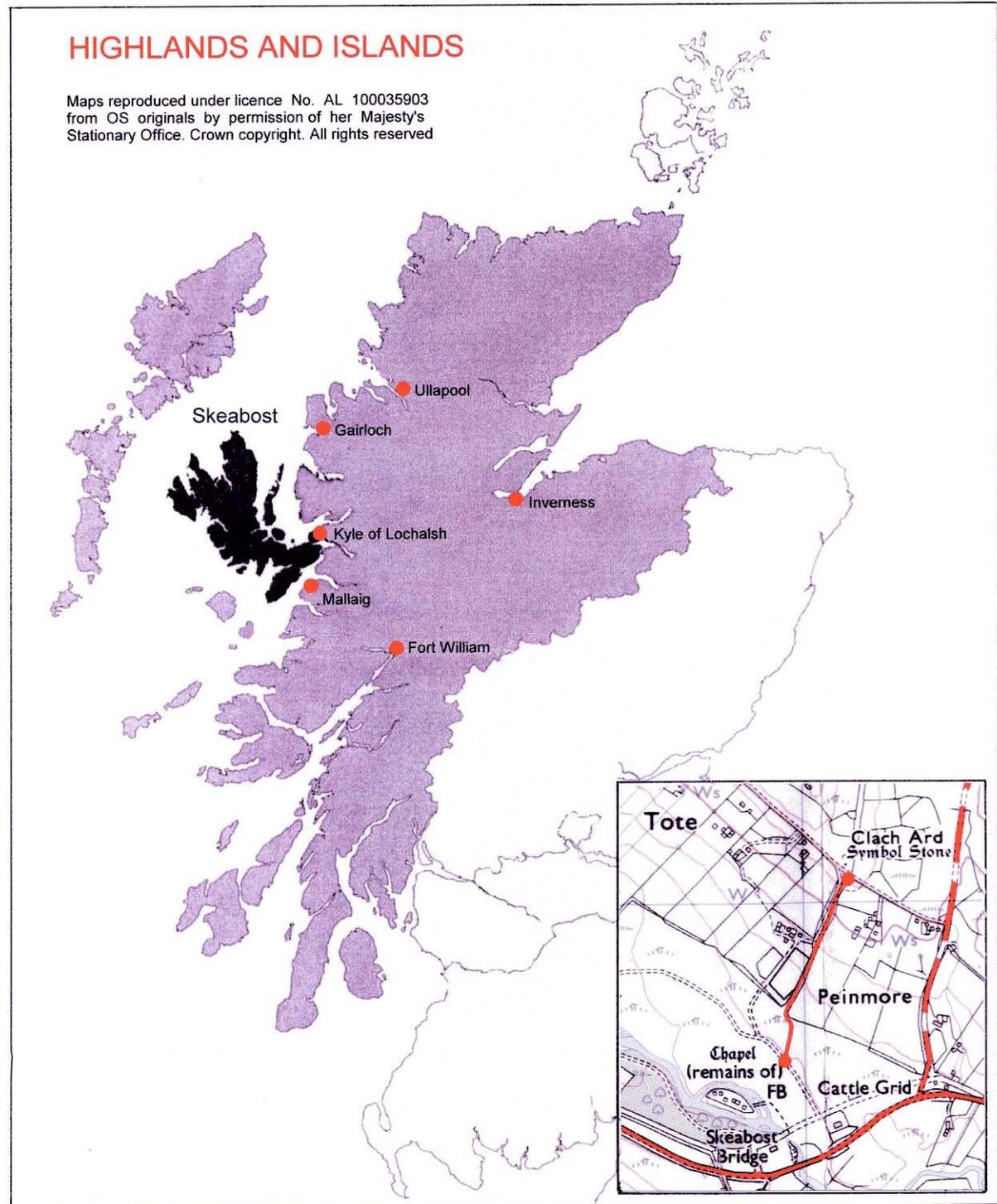
3rd – 7th April 2008



Illus. 1 : The new path viewed from the southern end of the drove-road. Scale = 1 meter

Client: Skeabost and District Community Council

Martin Wildgoose AIFA
and
Steven Birch PIFA



Illus. 2 Location: Skeabost and Tote, and line of the new path (red line between red dots)

Archaeological Watching Brief: Tote – Skeabost Link Path, Isle of Skye. April 2008

NG 42042 48903

Planning Ref. (SL-07-453)

1. Introduction (See Illus. 1 & 2)

The route of the proposed path runs between the Tote Stone (See 2 below) and the county road lying immediately to the northeast of Skeabost Bridge – a total distance of circa 478 meters. For the greater part of its length the path runs between well preserved turf dykes which enclose the route of a drove road which allows the communities of Peinmore, Tote and Prabost access to the Snizort River. The area around the development is rich in standing archaeological monuments, it was therefor imperative that a watching brief be carried out during site works.

2. The Archaeological Landscape (See Illus. 3 and Table 1)

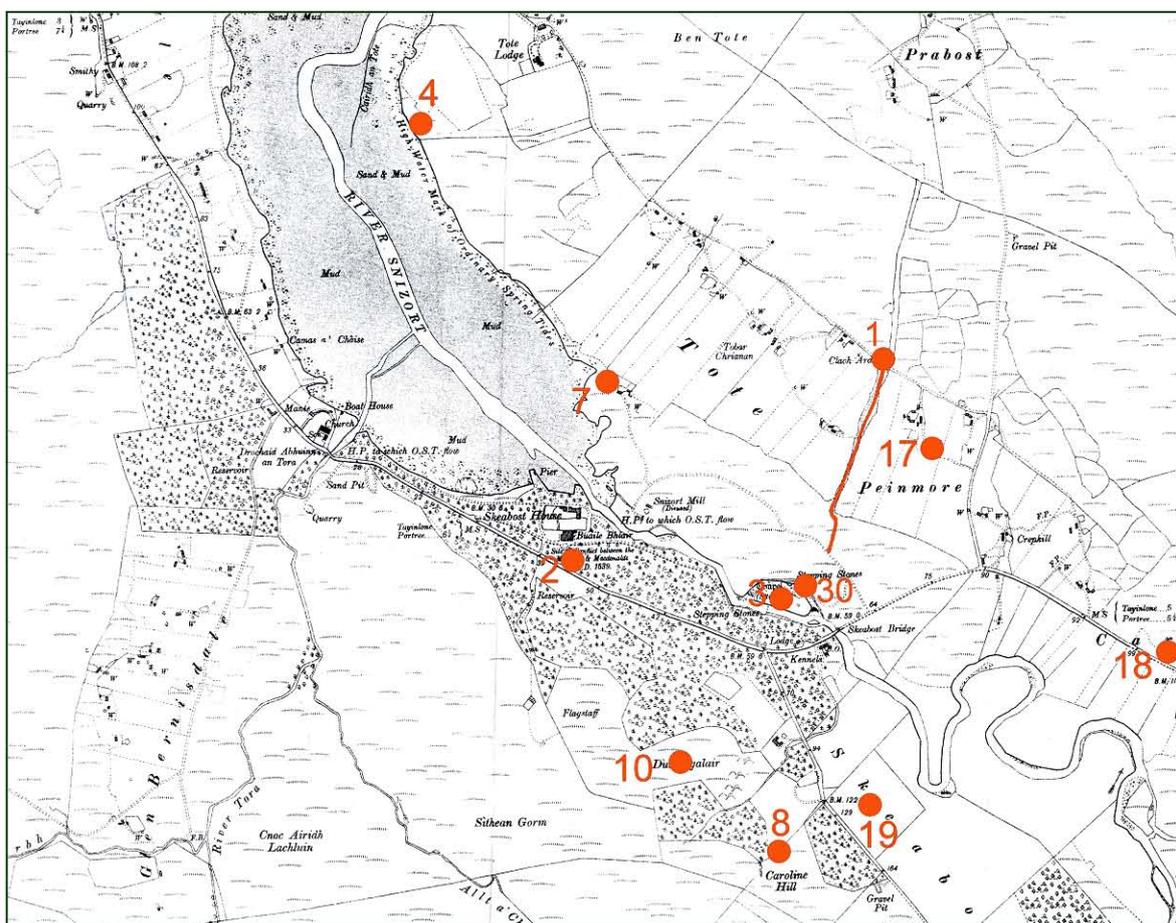
The Development site lies in an area where significant numbers of extant prehistoric and historic sites have been recorded. The most obvious of these visible monuments being the Burial Cairn at Tote, (which also contained Viking remains and post-dated a Mesolithic site), the Pictish Symbol Stone at Tote and the Early Christian Cathedral site on Skeabost Island. There was therefor the potential for buried features to survive within the development area and therefor to be impacted on by the site works.

OS Ref. No.	Name of site	Type of site	OS Grid Ref.
NG44NW 1	Clach Ard	Pictish Symbol Stone	NG 4210 4908
NG44NW 2	Buaile Bhlair	Battle site (16 th C.)	NG 4130 4870
NG44NW 3	St. Columba's Isle	Early Christian site	NG 4182 4850
NG44NW 4	Tote House	Chambered Cairn	NG 4097 4975
NG44NW 7	Tote	Chambered Cairn	NG 4140 4905
NG44NW 8	Dun A'Cheitechin	Broch	NG 4175 4785
NG44NW 10	Dun Sgalair	Fortified Enclosure	NG 4135 4826
NG44NW 17	Peinmore	Township	NG 4210 4880
NG44NW 18	Carbost	Township	NG 4270 4820
NG44NW 19	Skeabost	Township	NG 4200 4790
NG44NW 30	Skeabost Island	Shell Midden	NG 4188 4869
New Site	Tote	Drove road	NG 4210 4910

Table 1: Recorded Archaeological Sites in the area of the Path Development

3. The Watching Brief – Methodology

As there was the possibility that archaeological sites or remains might be found during the initial site works, the Highland Council Archaeological Unit imposed a planning clause requiring a watching brief to be carried out during the initial stripping of the path pan. This watching brief consisted of 3 elements:



Illus. 3: Location of recorded archaeological sites listed in Table 1, (Red line = new path)

- A desk-based search of relevant archives, records and documentary sources in order to establish the archaeological baseline for the area.
- A walkover survey of the planned route and its immediate surrounds.
- A watching brief during the site works.

The results of these 3 elements are detailed below.

3.1 Desk-based research

The desk-based research was carried out prior to the start of site. The following sources and archives were consulted:

- The Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- The National Monuments record for Scotland (NMRS)
- The Dualchas Sites and Monuments Record in Portree
- The Dualchas Aerial Photo Archive
- The Dualchas Map Archive

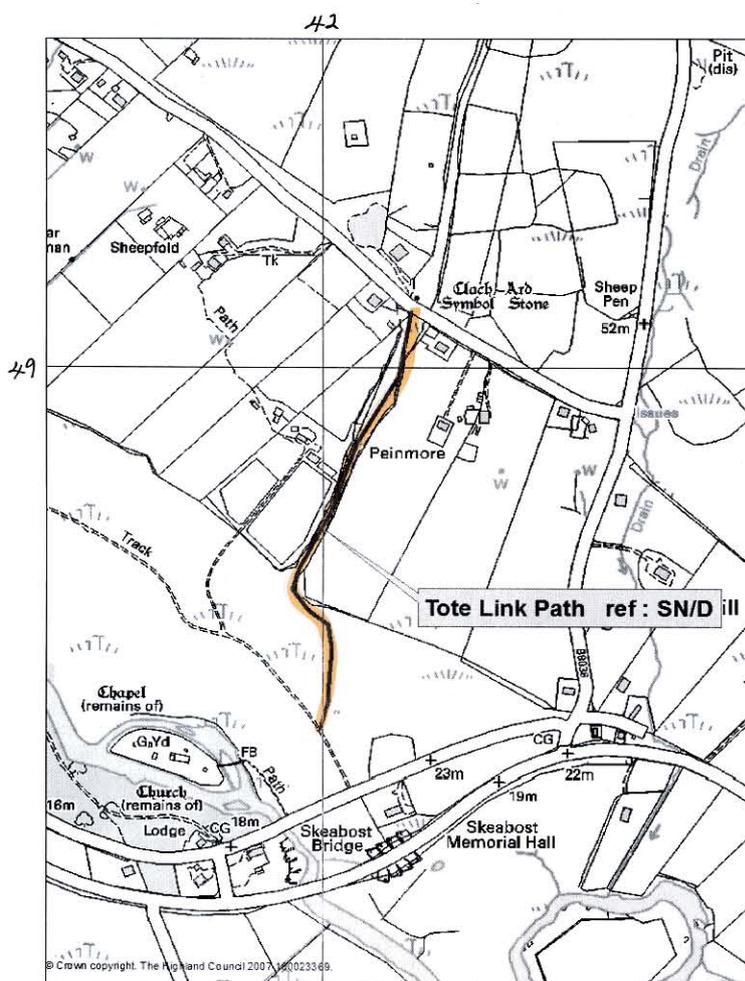
- The Archaeological and Ancient Landscape Survey Archive
- The West Coast Archaeological Services Archive
- Web Site 192.com for current colour air photo's of Skye.

3.1.1 Results (See Table1 and Illus. 3 above)

A search of the above archives and sources revealed that 11 archaeological sites had been recorded in the immediate area of the development. The site works threatened none of these sites.

3.2 The walkover survey (See Illus. 4)

The walkover survey was also carried out prior to the start of site works. The entire length of the proposed path was walked in both directions. It was noted that a short length of the dyke on the east side of the northern end of the drove road (Tote end of the path) had been removed within the last year (the scar was still fresh). No additional archaeological sites were recorded. The contractor later placed the path over this scar.



Illus. 4: The path route-map as supplied by Highland Council



Illus. 5: The northern end of the path.

3.3 The Watching Brief (illus. 5 & 6)

The site works and watching brief were carried out between the 3rd and 7th of April 2008, a dry period with occasional heavy showers. The stripping of the topsoil down to the subsoil, or in most cases the solid rock was carried out by a tracked excavator with a straight edged bucket. The work was monitored over the entire length of the path. The cutting of drains and cross-path culverts was also monitored. No new archaeological sites, remains or finds were encountered. The Drove road enclosure dykes were not encroached upon.



Illus. 6: The path between the drove road dykes viewed from the south. (Scale = 1 meter)

4. Recommendations

The archaeological requirements regarding this development have been fulfilled. There are no further recommendations regarding this site.

5. Location of Records

All field records and research results regarding this watching brief are currently in the archive of :

Archaeological and Ancient Landscape Survey

C/o Martin Wildgoose

Tigh and Dun

Dunan

Broadford

Isle of Skye IV49 9AJ

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Retained records.

Hard copies of the search results

Copy of part of the 2nd Ed. OS 1:10000 map

Copy of the Archaeological Brief

Digital images used in the report

Tote link path: Specifications and maps

End

Martin Wildgoose AIFA

4th May 2008

Appendix A: The Highland Council Archaeological Brief (over)



HIGHLAND COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Construction of Footpath Opposite the Clach Aird Stone, Tote, Skeabost Bridge, Isle of Skye (SL-07-453)

1) Summary

Highland Council has granted planning permission for a footpath centred NGR 142042 848903. This project may impact on valuable features of historic and archaeological importance. In view of the archaeological potential/sensitivity of the site, HCAU advised that archaeological mitigation is required. The implementation of this brief will meet the concerns raised.

This brief is for a Watching Brief which will enable any discoveries to be recorded quickly and efficiently as they appear with minimum delay or disruption to the development. If significant deposits are encountered, recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development must be made.

This brief has been produced for Skeabost and District Community Council who will be responsible for the work, including any tendering and contractual arrangements. This brief must be read with reference to the HCAU Development Guidance that sets out in detail who is responsible for what, as well as the terms of reference, objectives, method, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The Development Guidance is available on our webpage at www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/conservation/archaeology or a printed copy is available from this office on request.

2) Archaeological Background

The site lies in an area where significant numbers of prehistoric ritual, burial and settlement remains have been recorded including a putative standing stone and a midden. Historic sites include an early Christian site on Skeabost Island. There is a potential for buried features to survive within the application site and to be impacted by the proposed development.

3) Objectives

To identify and record any features or objects of archaeological importance that could be damaged or destroyed by this development, while minimising any delays or disruption to the development project.

4) Fieldwork

Archaeological monitoring (a Watching Brief) is required during all site groundworks for this application. An archaeologist will monitor the construction of the path, drainage ditches, culverts and any other works associated with the path construction so that any buried archaeological features can be identified, recorded and/or appropriate mitigation put in place to ensure their preservation.

It is also noted from the plans supplied that path construction works may impact on two lengths of turf dyke. All efforts should be made to ensure that these

features are not damaged during construction works but if impact is unavoidable the dyke should be sectioned, recorded and photographed prior to impact.

5) Methodology

The Archaeological Contractor must refer to the minimum standard requirements as laid out in HCAU Development Guidance. This brief itself is not comprehensive or definitive - tendering Archaeological Contractors will need to determine for themselves the methodology that will deliver the required product. This should be laid down in a Project Design (or Written Scheme of Investigation) and agreed with HCAU in advance of the start of site works. The start of archaeological work will be subject to the submission and approval of this document.

6) Schedule & Monitoring

The Archaeological Contractor is responsible for agreeing arrangements for monitoring with HCAU staff. We will monitor projects as necessary to ensure that minimum standards are met. Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact names, telephone numbers and arrangements for access must be given to HCAU by the Archaeological Contractor.

The Archaeological Contractor must make a short progress report (by telephone) to HCAU for every week of fieldwork undertaken. Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and/or the development must be notified by the Archaeological Contractor immediately to the applicant and HCAU. The finds or features must be left *in situ* until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them. In the meantime work may continue on other areas of the site.

7) Products

Following completion of the fieldwork, an archive and report will be produced and disseminated according to the standards set out in the HCAU Development Guidance. The report should describe the nature of the field work undertaken; the conditions and limitations within which the work was carried-out; the results that were obtained and recommendations for mitigation and/or further work, as appropriate.

All work will be undertaken according to the Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

The brief has been produced specifically for this scheme based on documents supplied at the time it was issued. It is valid for one year from the date of issue. Where work is not carried out in full within that time, a revised specification may be issued.

This brief has been produced by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit, to whom any enquiries should be addressed. No one else has authority to vary its terms.

Highland Council Archaeology Unit

Thursday, 6 December 2007

www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/conservation/archaeology

