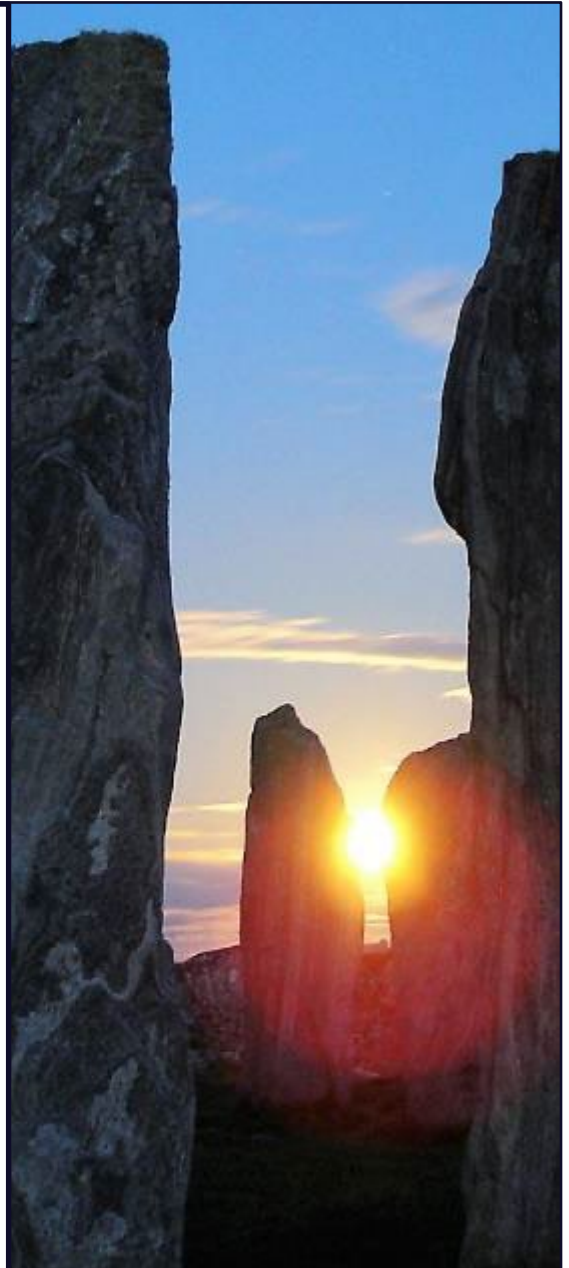


**A program of archaeological works in advance of a project to widen the road between the Stornoway Deep Water Port and Stornoway town, Isle of Lewis**

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**JANUARY 2024**

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**Authored by**

**Mr Ian McHardy, MLitt, BSc(Hons), AIFA**

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## 1.0 Non- technical Summary

The Stornoway Port Authority wish to “upgrade and realign” the current single track road running from the junction of the main A859 Stornoway to Tarbert trunk road to the Arnish yard and new deep water port facility, and have submitted a screening request in advance of a planning application - reference number 23/00284/SCR\_L.

This request has elicited a response from the CNES Archaeologist that consent will likely require a program of archaeological work comprising a desk based assessment and walk over survey. The following document represents the completion of this work and the final report of findings. No sites of archaeological interest were found within the planning boundary corridor (or “buffer zone”), although one site is very close and it is advised that care is taken when the road works pass nearby.

## 2.0 Introduction and context of project

Stornoway port authority embarked upon a multi-million pound project to create a new deep water port facility in June 2022. The new facility is nearing completion and the Port Authority now wishes to upgrade and re-align the road between the new facility and the main road. In screening with the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the following response was received:

***“There are several recorded archaeological sites close to the proposed site boundary, three of these are significant archaeological sites and one is potentially within the buffer zone. Two of the archaeological sites date to the Neolithic period, while the additional site is undated. Peatland areas adjacent to the existing road have a potential to mask unknown archaeological deposits, particularly from prehistory”***

***-Kevin Murphy, CNES Archaeologist***

Archaeologist Mr Ian Mchardy (MLitt, BSc.Hons, AIFA) was contracted by Brenda Jones, project manager with the Stornoway Port Authority, in order to carry out the archaeological work requested by the Comhairle na Eilean Siar in advance of the creation of the new path.

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### 3.0 Site location

The deep water port facility is centred around NB 42556 30884, just south of the “Poll a Choire”, and the existing single track road can be seen running from the main A859 near the Creed bridge to the Arnish industrial estate, depicted in dashed lines, in figure 1, below.



**Figure 1:** The road to be upgraded, depicted in dashed lines between the two red arrows, from the A859 at Creed Bridge to the Arnish facility. Courtesy of OS.

The proposed upgrade has been designed by MacIver’s consultancy, Stornoway, civil engineers, and their detailed drawings and sections are provided in appendix 1, below.

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## 4.0 Methods

There are two distinct pieces of archaeological work suggested by the Comhairle – a desk based assessment and a walkover survey. In the following section the methods used in order to carry out each of these tasks will be described in detail.

All work will conform with current best practice, and with the guidance outlined in Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (Historic Environment Scotland 2019). It will also satisfy the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) Standards - namely the Standard and guidance for Desk Based Assessment (2014) and the Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (2014).

For the purposes of this study, a corridor of c.100m either side of the line of the current road was assumed as the area to be concerned about. This is large enough to include all of the “planning boundary” - shown as a thick red line on the engineers drawings in appendix 1. Assurances have been made that this line is well outside of the extent of works (Malcolm MacIver, 23/01/24 pers.comm.), so we can be confident that our study area is also bigger than the area of land to be affected.

### 4.1 Desk Based Assessment

The CIFA have an established definition for desk based assessment which will be used to guide the work:

*“Desk-based assessment is a programme of study of the historic environment within a specified area or site on land, in the inter-tidal zone or underwater that addresses agreed research and/or conservation objectives. It consists of an analysis of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely heritage assets, their interests and significance; the character of the study area, including appropriate consideration of the settings of heritage assets; and, in England, the nature, extent and quality of the known or potential archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interest. Significance is to be judged in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.”*

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In order to achieve these objectives, the Desk Based Assessment will interrogate the following sources:

- Old maps, OS 1st and 2nd edition maps and name books;
- Historic Environment Records – the national ‘Canmore’ database and the CNES SMR database
- Historic Land use Assessment database
- British Geological Society geology maps
- ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Statistical Accounts;
- The Napier Commission transcriptions;
- Museum nan Eilean archive/ Tasglann;
- Commun Eachdraidh Societies – Stornoway and North Lochs
- The Stornoway Trust archive
- Hebridean Connections website
- Satellite images
- Any relevant Histories to be found

All relevant information from these sources will be presented and used to identify the likely heritage assets in the area. We will then assess their significance in regional, national or international scales and hence decide upon the level of preservation.

#### **4.2 Walkover survey**

The CIFA does not provide specific guidance on walk over survey, although it does specify how to record sites and features. The walk over itself will be conducted by the author, who is adequately trained and experienced in the outdoors and has the correct equipment, including PPE for the terrain. Each side of the 100m buffer zone will be walked twice – once at the outer limit of any potential physical impact, and once close by the existing road. This will hopefully ensure that nothing is missed due to the terrain, angle of perspective or other complicating factors.

All archaeological sites or features considered important will be professionally recorded for the final report. This will include locational information, detailed written descriptions, a photographic record and possibly also a drawn record. The photographic

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record will be made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. This will record both the detail and the general context of the principal features and the site as a whole. The drawn record will include plans and sections if necessary, drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans, 1:10 for sections) and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

## **5.0 Results**

### **5.1 Desk based assessment**

There are a number of known archaeological sites in the vicinity, although only one will be within the study zone (100m either side of the current road), and may or may not be physically affected. A further site of national importance is very close to the study zone and an advisory notice is given for extra care when works are taking place in this area. There are also sites for whose setting, or visual amenity, could be impacted.

### **Maps**

The earliest map of the area is John Woods 1821 plan of Stornoway – see Figure 2 below. It clearly shows a track hugging the coast line all the way from Stornoway to Arnish, however it never comes within the 100m buffer zone for the proposed road upgrade.



Figure 2: Detail of shore path on John Woods plan of 1821. Courtesy of NLS.



The next map of interest is the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition of 1849 – see Figure 3 & 4 below. There is an “Old Fence” marked running through the area where the Arnish road splits from the main road, just south of the Creed bridge. In this instance the “fence” will be a turf and stone dyke. The fact that the fence is old in 1848/9 indicates a potentially late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century date, or even earlier. This dyke was also picked up by the walkover survey and photographs can be seen at figure 14 & 15 below.

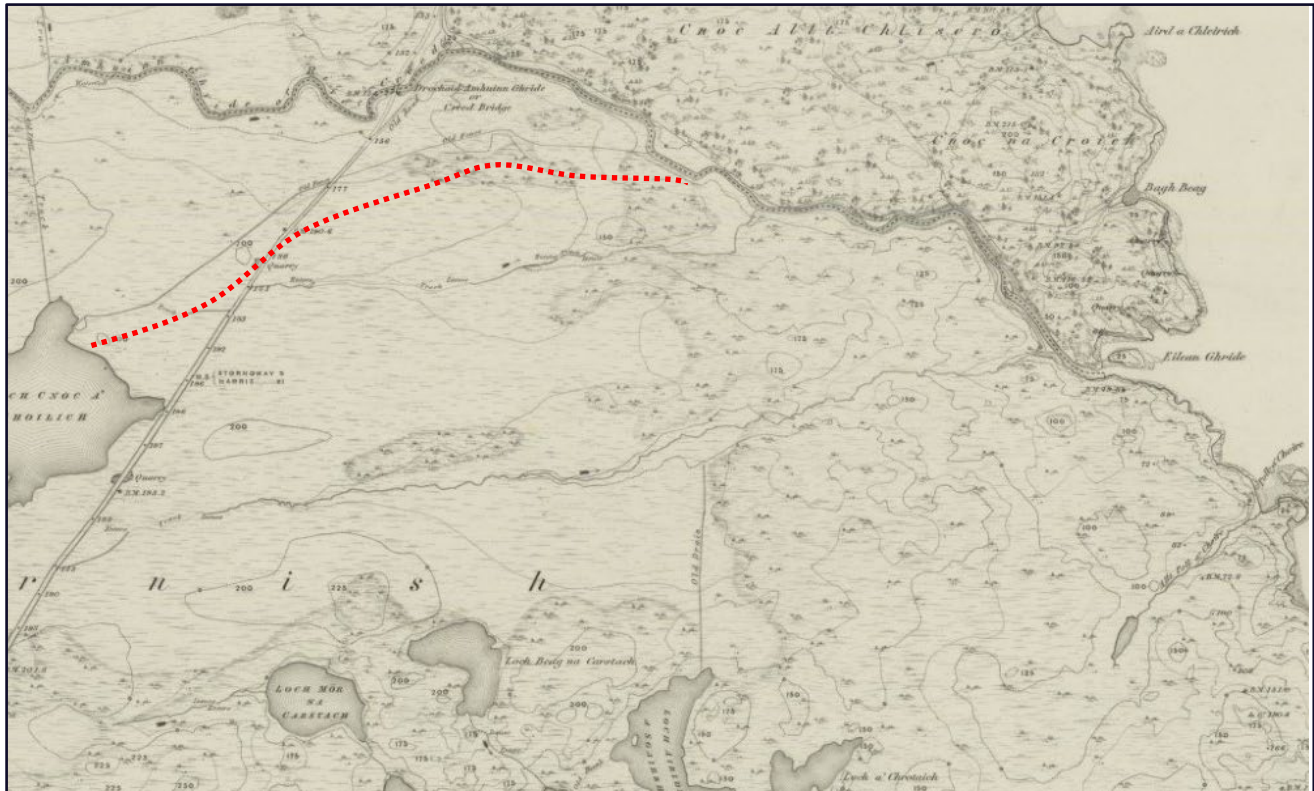


Figure 3: OS 1st edition of area showing "Old Fence" just above red dotted line. Courtesy of NLS.

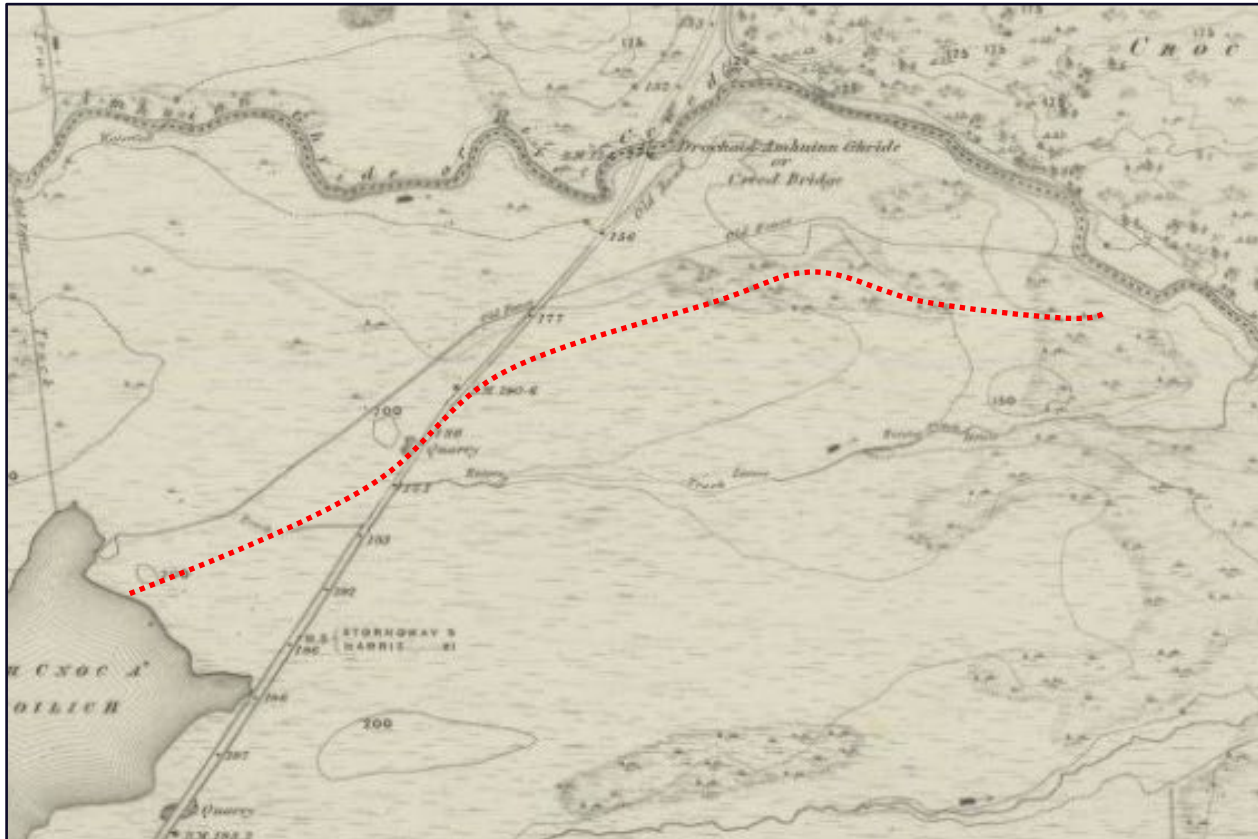


Figure 4: Detail of "Old Fence" on OS 1st edition 1849. Courtesy of NLS.

The Ordnance survey second edition, surveyed around 1895, shows a fence line very close to this which may be the same fence, or a newer version - see figure 5 below.

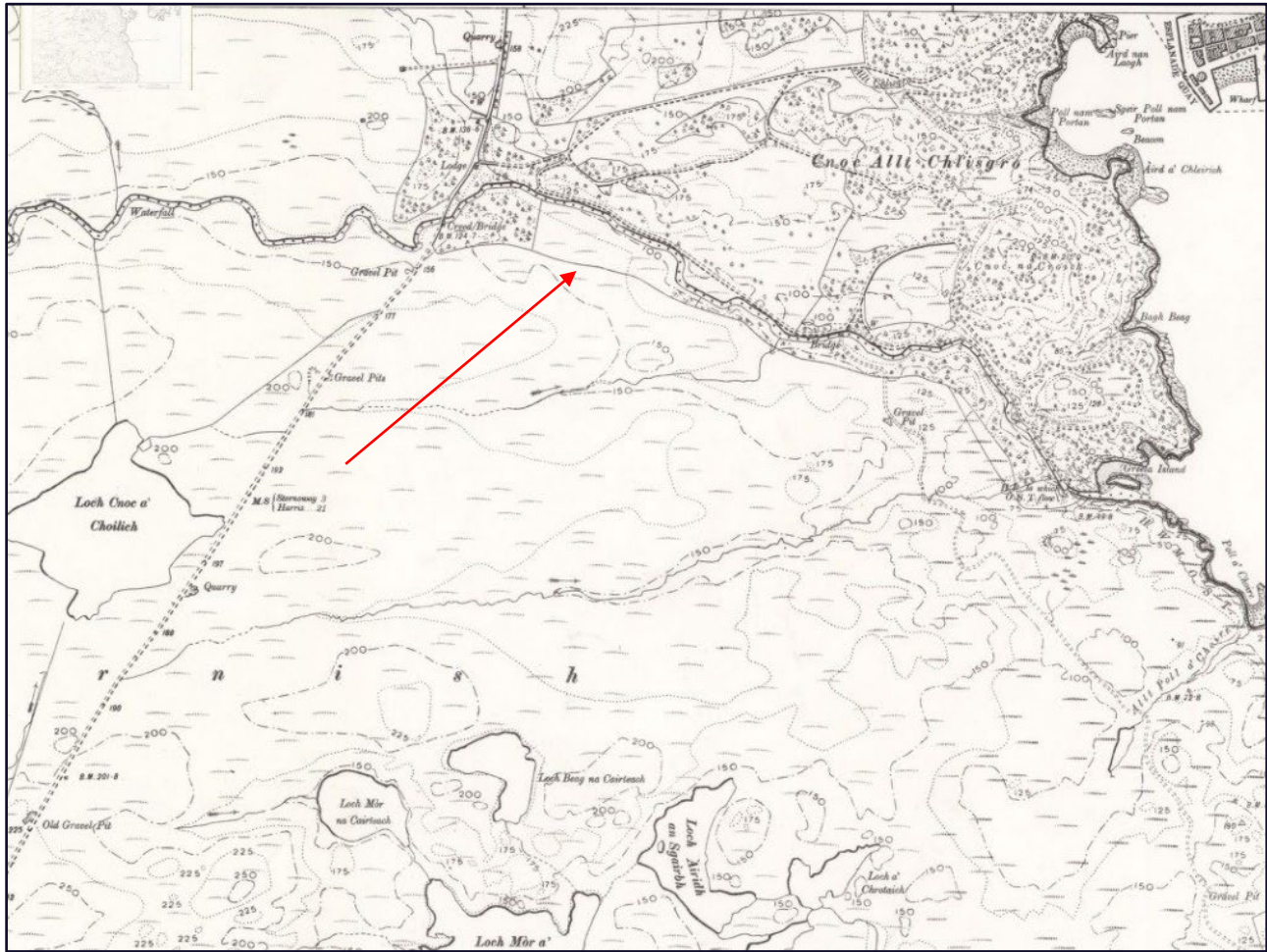


Figure 5: OS 2nd edition 1895, showing fence lines. Courtesy of NLS.

Immediately west of the Creed mouth we can see two almost parallel lines demarking “fences”, marked by the red arrows in figure 6 below. They are not present on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition meaning they date from between 1849 and 1895. A track is also now shown, in roughly the same position as the modern road to Arnish, although not connecting with the main trunk road south and crossing the Creed near where the footbridge does today.

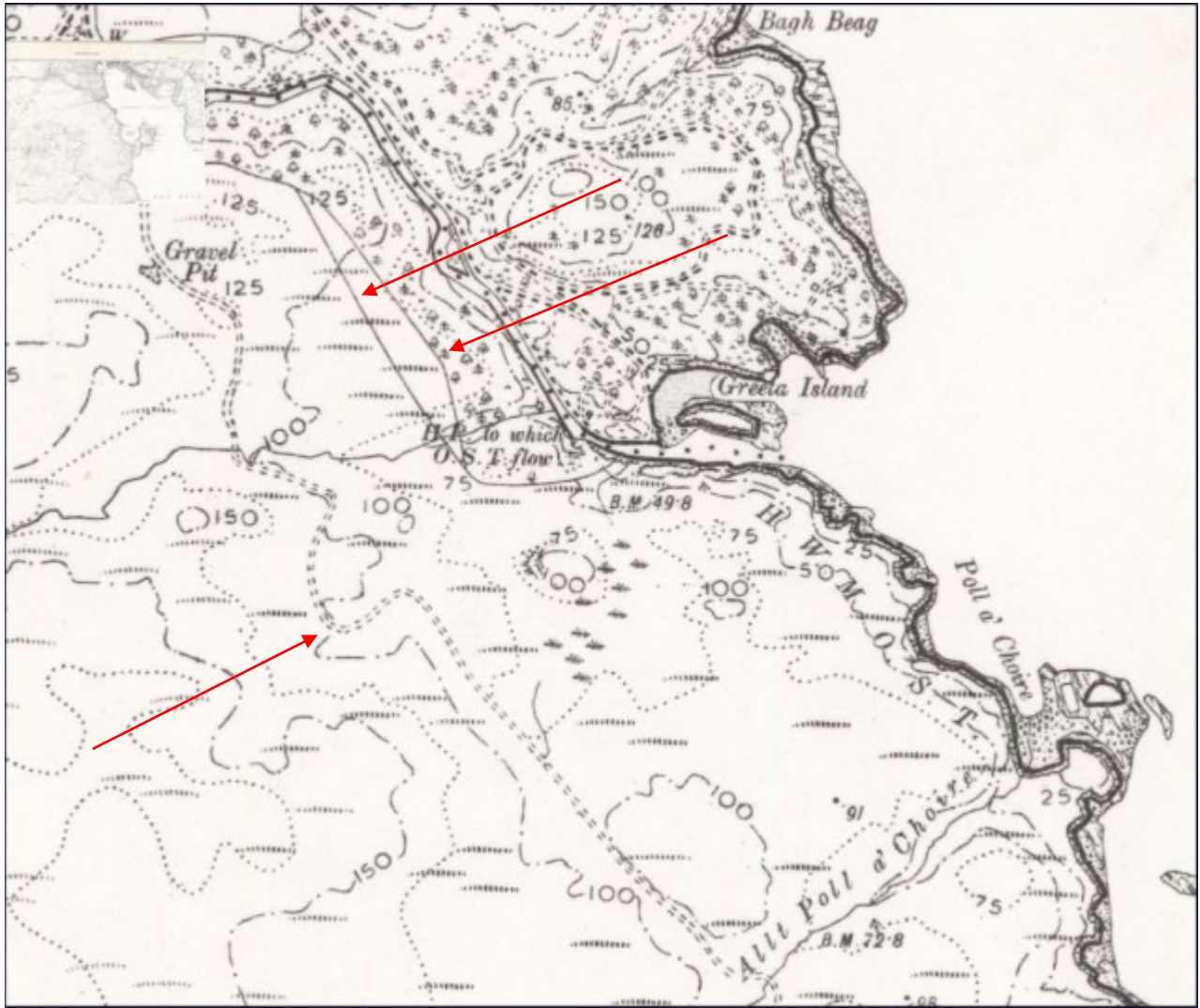
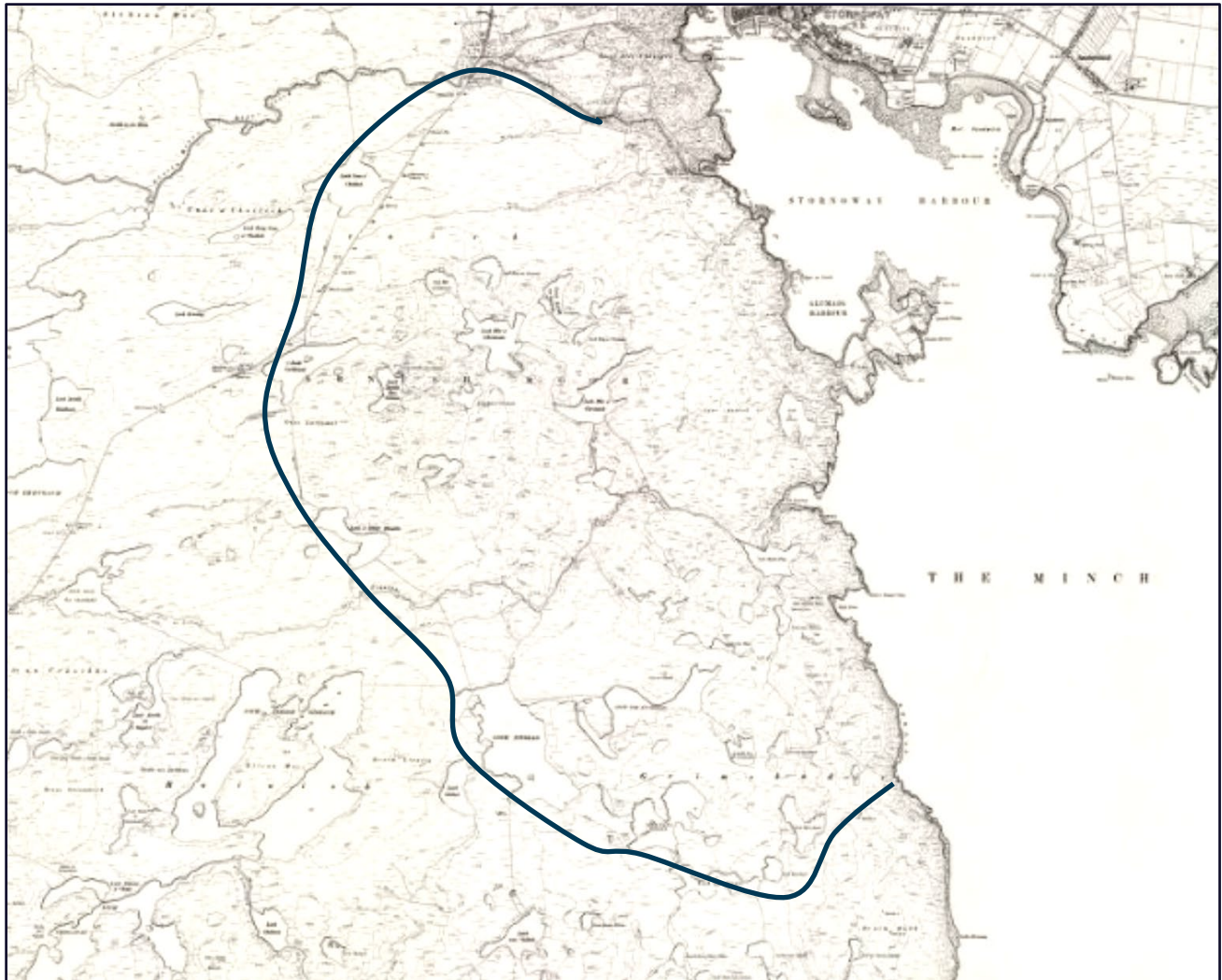


Figure 6: OS 2nd edition 1895 showing near parallel "fences"(top two arrows) and track (bottom arrow). Courtesy of NLS.

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These “fence” lines are likely to be the extents of the Arnish farm, possibly built up here to prevent stock falling from the cliffs present on this side of the Creed. Why there should be two so close to each other is unknown although it would seem sensible to suggest that one was added after the other, as a re-modelling or repair. This same fence line can be traced in a huge arc with Arnish at its centre – see figure 7 below.



*Figure 7: Tentative line of fences demarcating the 18th & 19th century Arnish Farm. Courtesy of NLS.*

Secondly, a close examination of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in comparison to the modern map shows that the track has been straightened out in at least three locations since 1895 – see figures 8, 9 & 10, below.



Figure 8: OS 2nd edition, surveyed c. 1895, showing track from Creed bridge towards Arnish. Courtesy of NLS.



Figure 9: Modern OS map showing three locations where the track has been straightened out. Courtesy of canmore.



*Figure 10: Aerial view of the three straightened bends. Courtesy of Canmore.*

It is likely then that the old track was straightened out in more than just these three areas, and therefore the old track will meander underneath the modern single track road and might turn up on either side of it. However this is not considered important enough to record in any more detail than the above description.

## **5.2 OS Name books**

There are no names recorded in our study area other than “Arnish”. Arnish has the following records:



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A farm on the north side of the parish of lochs. It is bounded by the Abhainn Ghrida in the north, on the east it is bounded by the Minch and in the south by the (*something of Rarguish? Ranish? and Pr?????*), There is very little arable land on it except a small portion near the farm house the rest of it is Moorish pasturage.. Mr MacRae *something* from *somewhere* is at present renting the farm”

*Ross and Cromarty (insular), volume 71 p32*

Another entry for Arnish on states that “the southern limit is Loch Grimshader”.

*Ross and Cromarty (insular), volume 71 p69*

The fences and dykes described above no doubt belong to this farm.

### **5.3 Historic Environment Records (HER's) – Canmore and CNES**

The national record of the historic environment is collated on the Canmore website. However, occasionally there are other extra sites recorded on the local Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CNES) HER records held by the CNES archaeologist. Both of these sources are used in the following section.

The most important sites in the country are protected by national designation as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Significantly, we have a scheduled monument very close to the line of the old road and the new road - the “Dun” on the island in Loch Arnish (NGR NB 42309 30242, HER number 356 - MWE4316; Canmore ID 4316; Site Number NB43SW 13). This is a multi-period site with at least Neolithic and Medieval activity.

A recent project aimed to find out more about this and other similar sites:

This project aims to investigate a number of recent spectacular underwater discoveries from lochs in Lewis, Outer Hebrides. A programme of non-invasive geophysical (side scan sonar, dual frequency single beam echo sounder), drone and diver based survey was carried out between the 11th and 21st July 2016. Three lochs were chosen for study: Arnish, Bhorgastail (also known as Carloway) and Langabhat. The results from work at all three sites indicate that artificial islets were a feature of the landscape during the Neolithic.

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NB 42301 30238 Geophysical, aerial and ground survey at Loch Arnish worked well, with excellent results from both the sidescan and echosounder systems allowing for the loch to be mapped. The extent of the rubble foundations can be seen and plotted, as too can the variable depth of the loch and associated sediments. The crannog is clearly multi-period, with Neolithic and later pottery recovered by Chris Murray (in previous years), and later modifications (iron rings set into the crannog walls) also visible. Diver based survey was challenging but possible, with poor visibility slowing work and reducing the area that could be examined. A single piece of prehistoric pottery was found on the loch bed.

*Field Visit (11 July 2016 - 21 July 2016) Fraser Sturt and Duncan Garrow – University of Reading.  
(Source: DES, Volume 18)*

The Dun and the island which it sits upon (which is the extent of the scheduled area) will not be physically impacted. It is also very unlikely, given the current industrial setting, that the visual amenity will be negatively impacted either. However, the northern shore of the loch is within the “planning boundary” – see figure 20 & 21 in Appendix 1. It is possible that this length of shore is the area which was used for access to the island and there is therefore a possibility of archaeology remaining on the loch bed. This is of primary concern and will be discussed further below.

Slightly further away we have another Scheduled Ancient Monument, the Neolithic chambered cairn on Cnoc na Croich (NGR 4170 322; HER Number 1563 - MWE71507; Canmore ID 71507 Site Number NB43SW 26). This will not be physically affected, and once complete, the new road will be visible from it but is very unlikely to make any detrimental change to its setting or visual amenity.

The only known site which will be definitely be physically affected are the lengths of “Head Dyke” (HER Number 11289 - MWE14573; Canmore ID 206868 Site Number NB43SW 127) – see figure 8, below. Head dykes are to be found around farmsteads, and usually denote a change from rough, summer grazing on the outside to cultivated

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ground within. These are presumably related to the “fences” mentioned above, perhaps as part of an inner and outer Head Dyke system.

The record states:

“Three lengths of head-dyke which may be associated with the farmstead of Arnish to the E are depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Island of Lewis, Ross-shire 1854, sheet 27), but they are not shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10000 map (1985). Information from RCAHMS (SAH) 28 January 2002”

It is possible that the new road will cut through traces of this dyke. However, a section of it has already been recorded by written description, scale drawing and photography in a recent report carried out by the author for the Stornoway Port Authority, entitled “An Archaeological Watching Brief carried out in advance of the creation of the Stornoway Deep Water Port” by McHardy, I., February 2023 – see figure 13,14 & 15 below. Therefore this turf construction has already been recorded to an adequate standard.



**Figure 11: "Head Dyke" around the centre of Arnish farm. Courtesy of NLS.**



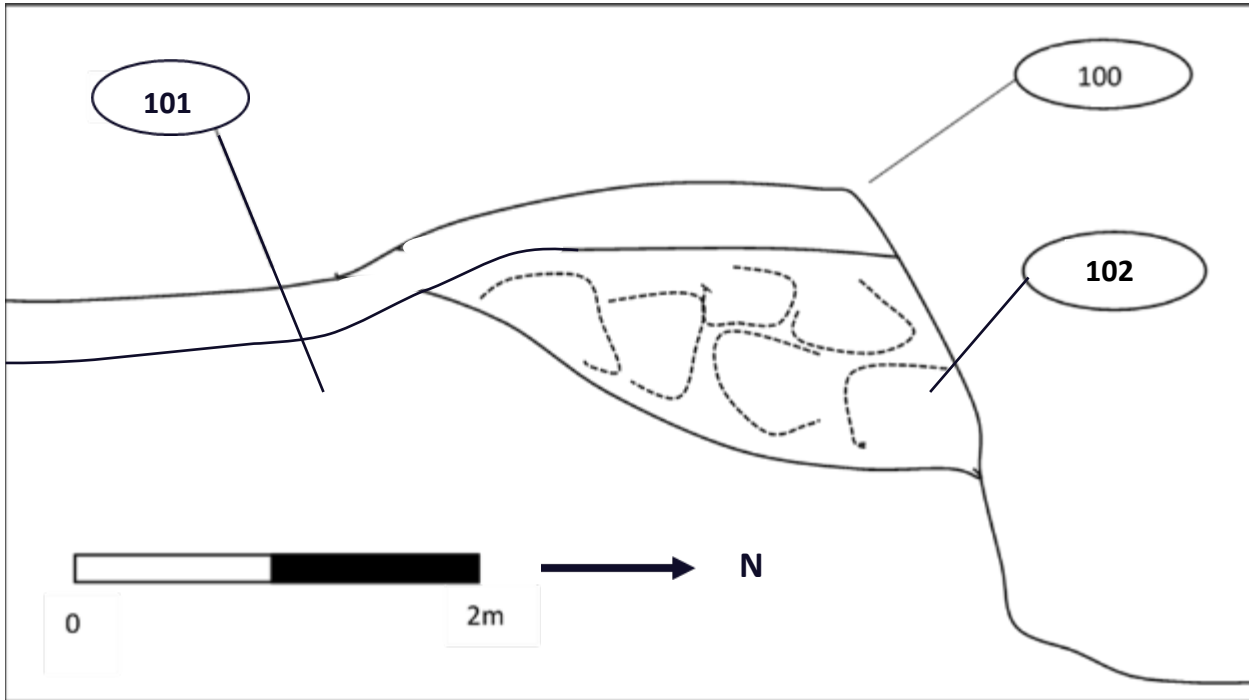
Figure 12: What is left of the Head Dyke shown in figure 11. Courtesy of Canmore.



*Figure 13: "Head Dyke" mentioned in records Canmore ID 206868.*



*Figure 14: Cross section of dyke*



**Figure 15: Drawing of section of dyke showing construction technique - 100 = topsoil, 101 = undisturbed peat, 102 = re-deposited peat.**

As mentioned, some sites may be visually affected by the development. We have already discussed two of these above. A further site, c170m to the south of the centre of the new road and therefore out with the physically affected zone, is a Shieling settlement at NGR NB 41404 31573 (HER Number MWE149909; not on canmore). The description of it in the record states:

“Large grassy mound surrounded by sloping heather moorland. Situated on the eastern end of a rocky knoll above a stream, with impressive views of Stornoway bay to the east. This site is heavily obscured by grass, however it comprises of at least 4 circular stone structures with an additional outlying structure further down slope to the east. The site is approximately 10m x 15m. Some internal structural remains are upstanding to approx 0.5m. This site is not apparent on any maps. It is not clear what this site represents. Its appears more robust than a sheiling site and may represent some form of (possibly) medieval settlement type.”

***K.Murphy (CnES Archaeologist) December 2018.***



*Figure 16: Shieling site, HER Number MWE149909. AP courtesy of Canmore.*

The new road passes around 170m north of this site, meaning it will not be physically impacted but might be visually impacted. However, it is also over 10m higher, and once the new road is established and the grass and heather grown back, it seems unlikely that there will be any negative impact on the setting or the visual amenity.

Other than this, there are many other sites in the general area but none that will be affected, either physically or in visual amenity and setting, by this development. There may of course be new sites uncovered by the walkover. This concludes the presentation of existing HER records.

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## 5.4 HLA map

Historic Environment Scotland's historic land use assessment map details known historic land uses. The area of the proposed path is listed as "Plantation":

"Most plantations are of coniferous species and tend to be densely packed within clearly defined boundaries. Recently, natural tree regeneration and native tree planting have also been encouraged."

Aerial views clearly show many areas of plantation and some areas which were planted but have not grown.

### **Stornoway Historical Society**

A few pieces of relevant information can be gleaned from the records of the Stornoway Historical Society. The following is an extract from one of their publications entitled "Stornoway Vignettes". It tells us about the farmhouses of Arnish, the locations of which can then be plotted on a map.

#### ***KILDUN HOUSE - ARNISH***

***THERE is a house in Stornoway bearing the name 'Kildun', so called because the original owner had a very keen interest in Lewis history and wanted to perpetrate a name which had long disappeared from the Stornoway scene. The Kildun House of this article was once situated at Arnish Point. Not even its foundations now remain. They were about 50 yards inside the main gate of the present Arnish Yard.***

***In 1746, Kildun House was the dwelling of George MacKenzie, a close relation of Lord Seaforth, the owner of the Island of Lewis. The latter's family had been Jacobite supporters, but by 1745 they had decided to be more careful about who they were to support during the Forty-five. The MacKenzie family of Kildun House, however, were ardent Catholics and had no qualms about their allegiance when, on 5 May 1746, they found a rather dejected and bedraggled Prince Charlie at their front door, seeking shelter from the elements. The reason for the Prince's presence at***

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*Arnish was to make enquiries as to whether a ship could be chartered so that he could sail to France and freedom. He and a few companions had walked from the head of Loch Seaforth in very bad weather and arrived at Kildun House completely exhausted. While the Prince recovered at Arnish, his faithful Pilot, a Donald MacLeod from Skye, ventured into Stornoway to seek a captain willing to charter a ship. But rumours that the Prince was in the vicinity of the town had caused the officers and men of the local Volunteers to assemble in a hostelry to prepare themselves for an assault on Kildun House. Only when Donald MacLeod explained that the Prince had no army poised for invasion, did the Volunteers stand down.*

*But they did tell MacLeod to return to Arnish and get the Prince to leave Kildun House. In doing this they denied themselves of the sum of £30,000 which was the Government's reward for the capture of the fugitive Prince. Thus, the Prince and his companions slept for one night at Kildun House and got ready for a journey south in a small boat. They were supplied with provisions. On their way down the Minch they saw a number of Government ships and, to escape attention, slipped into Loch Shell and spent four miserable days on Eilean Iubhard. Thereafter the Prince and his men managed to reach South Uist where Flora MacDonald appeared on the scene. The rest, as they say, is history.*

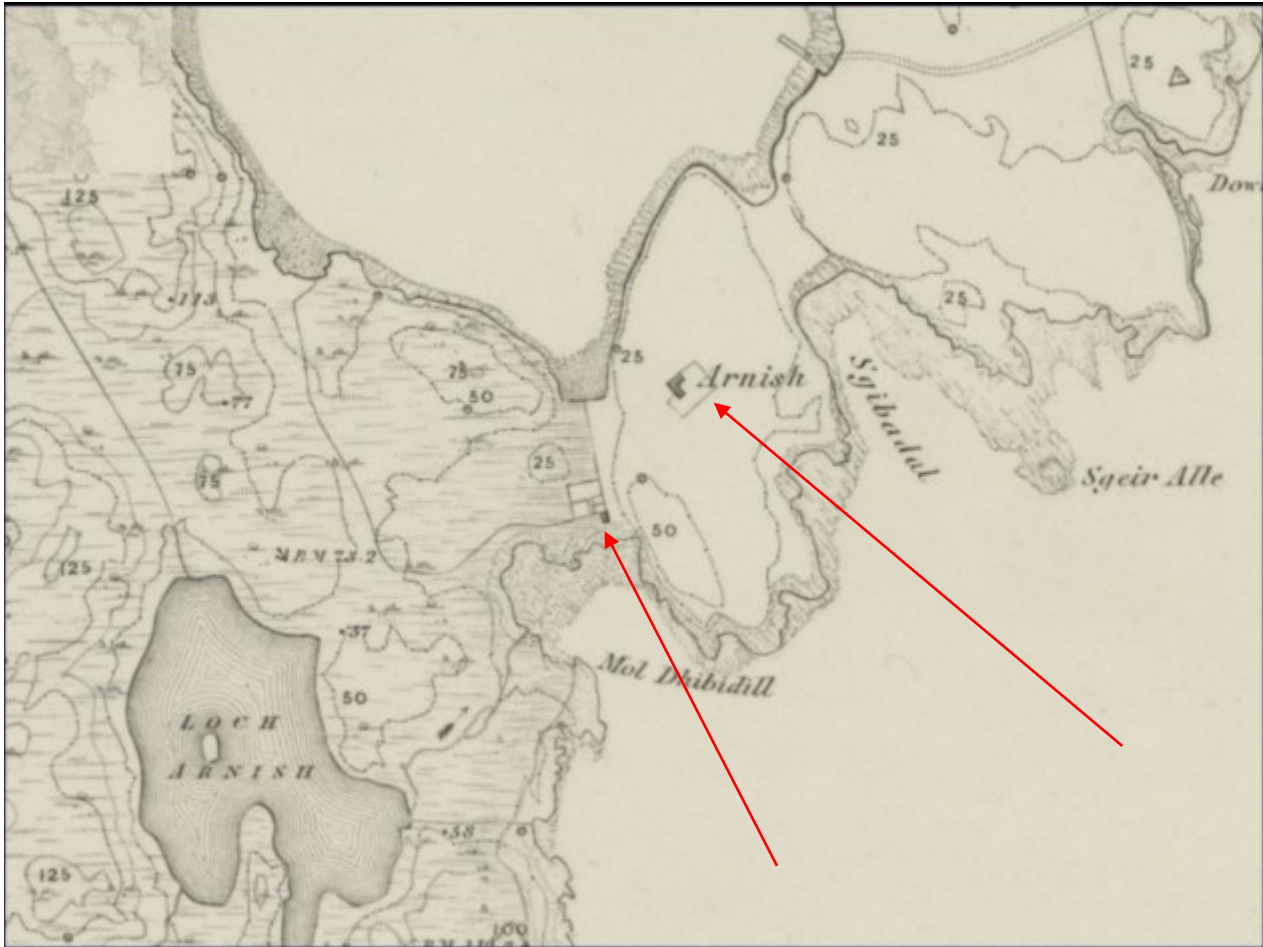
*At Kildun House, the Prince enjoyed the comfort of a bed. The sheets in which he slept were carefully preserved by the Kildun family, along with a quaich from which he drank some wine, and a ring, given to Lady Kildun as a keepsake. When Lady Kildun died she was reputedly buried in one of the bedsheets. The other, with the quaich and ring, was preserved by the family and kept intact by the last descendent of the family, a lady who lived in Inverness not so many years ago. If these relics still exist, it would be more than appropriate for them to be located and perhaps returned to Stornoway as a direct link between today and 5 May 1746.*

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***Figure 15: "A photograph taken in 1959 with an arrow showing the position of Kildun House. The other building in the picture is that of Arnish Farm, now demolished to make way for Arnish yard" Stornoway Historical Society, "Stornoway Vignettes" 2004.***

If we transpose it onto a map we can see their relative locations – see figure 16 below. Both of these farmhouses were demolished to make way for the fabrication yard and so will not be affected by the development - they are included here to contextualise the general area.



*Figure 16: Transposing the information from figure 15 onto the map, Kildun house is the left hand red arrow and Arnish Farm is the right hand red arrow. Map courtesy of NLS*

## 5.11 Walk over Survey

The walk over survey took place on the 22 January 2024 in poor weather. As planned a c100m wide corridor each side of the existing road was walked. There were no sites of sufficient archaeological interest or proximity to affect the development.

The only archaeological features picked up by the walkover were the dykes, or “old fences”, and the straightened out bends in the road, both already detailed in the map interrogation. Although the new development will probably excavate through these features at various points, the dykes have already been recorded and the old track bends not considered of sufficient importance to necessitate any further recording.



*Figure 17: The "old fence" looking west as it crosses the main A859 trunk road to Harris, near the junction of the Arnish road.*



*Figure 18: The "old fence" as it heads east toward the Creed. Note how the powerlines use it as a base.*

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## 6.0 Conclusions

The desk based assessment and walk-over survey have established that no archaeological sites or features lie on the route of the proposed road upgrade. Some sites will be intervisible with the new road but their settings and visual amenity will not be negatively affected by the road upgrade.

The only area of concern is the north shore of Loch Arnish, out with the Scheduled Ancient Monument but nevertheless considered of high archaeological potential. This is because access to the island could have commenced in this area, and we know that there are numerous ceramic sherds and even whole pots distributed over the loch bed. The red “planning boundary” of the development extends into the edge of this loch at this northern shore (see figure 20 below), meaning that it is within the area that planning permission is sought for.

However, the civil engineers in charge of the works<sup>1</sup> have stressed that “The red line ... is well outside the extent of works. There should be no work within limits of Loch Arnish”. A section drawing provided (Figure 21, below) shows the cross section at chainage 30+20, where the development is closest to the loch shore, and shows the shore being unaffected by the development.

Nevertheless the two are in close proximity, and there is potential for the archaeological site to be damaged. This report therefore concludes by recommending that care be taken when carrying out the works in this area so that no rubble or foreign material is deposited in the loch.

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<sup>1</sup> Macivers consultancy 2A STEINISHSTORNOWAY HS2 0AA TEL (01851) 704703 EMAIL malcolm@maciverconsultancy.com

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**Appendix 1: Engineers drawings of proposed development**

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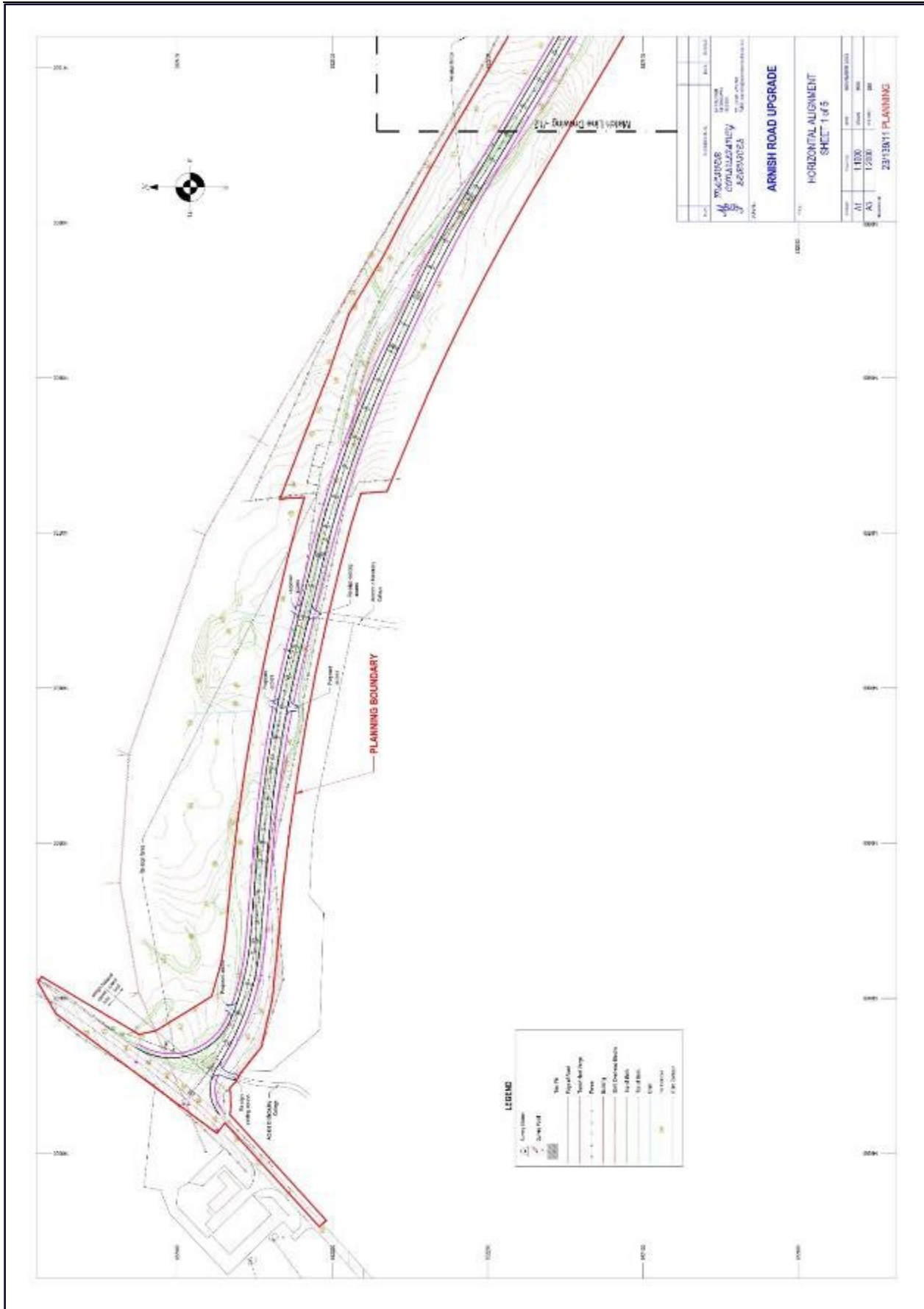


Figure 19: Engineers drawing #11 – from the main A859 trunk road turn off



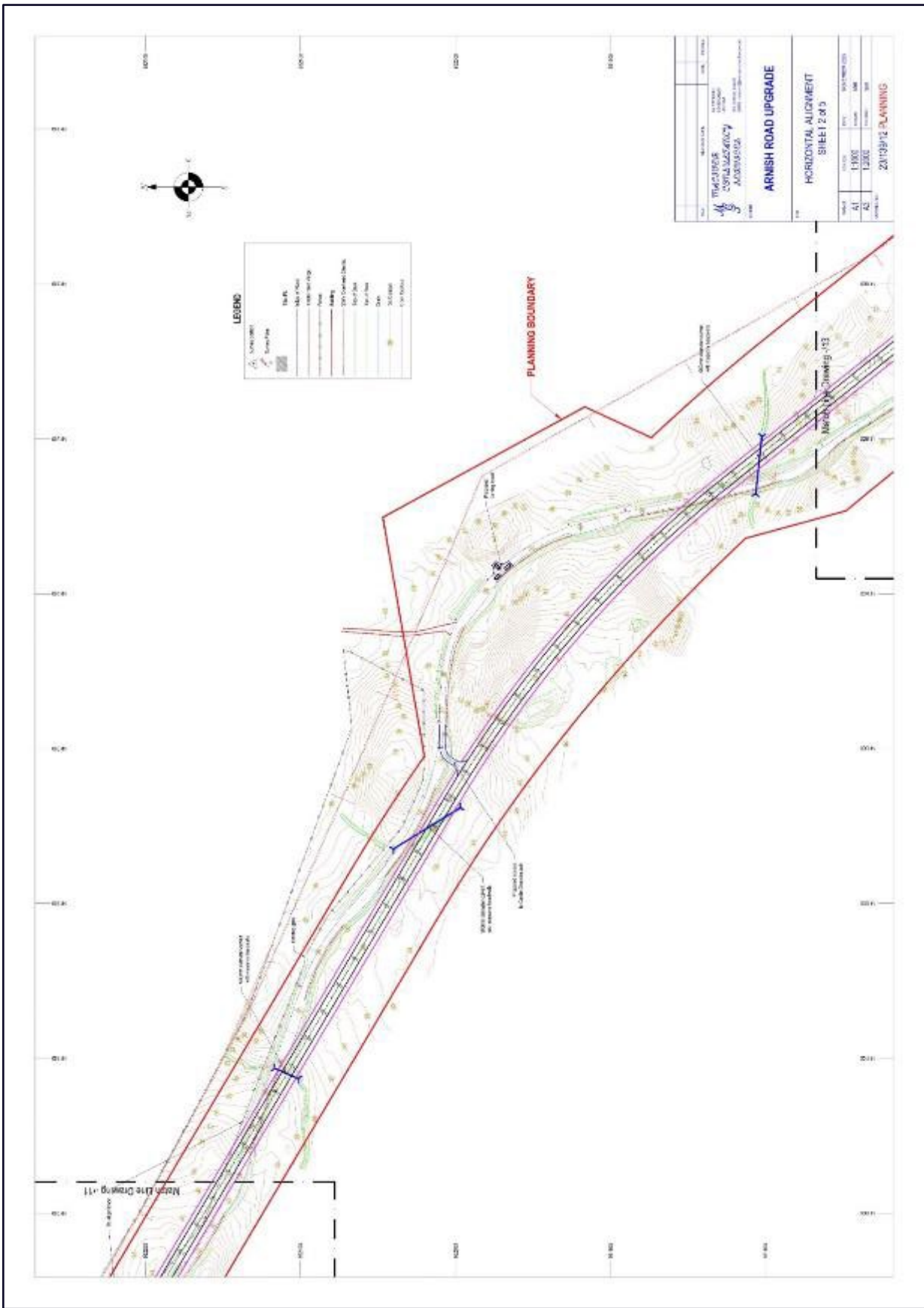


Figure 20: Engineers drawing #12

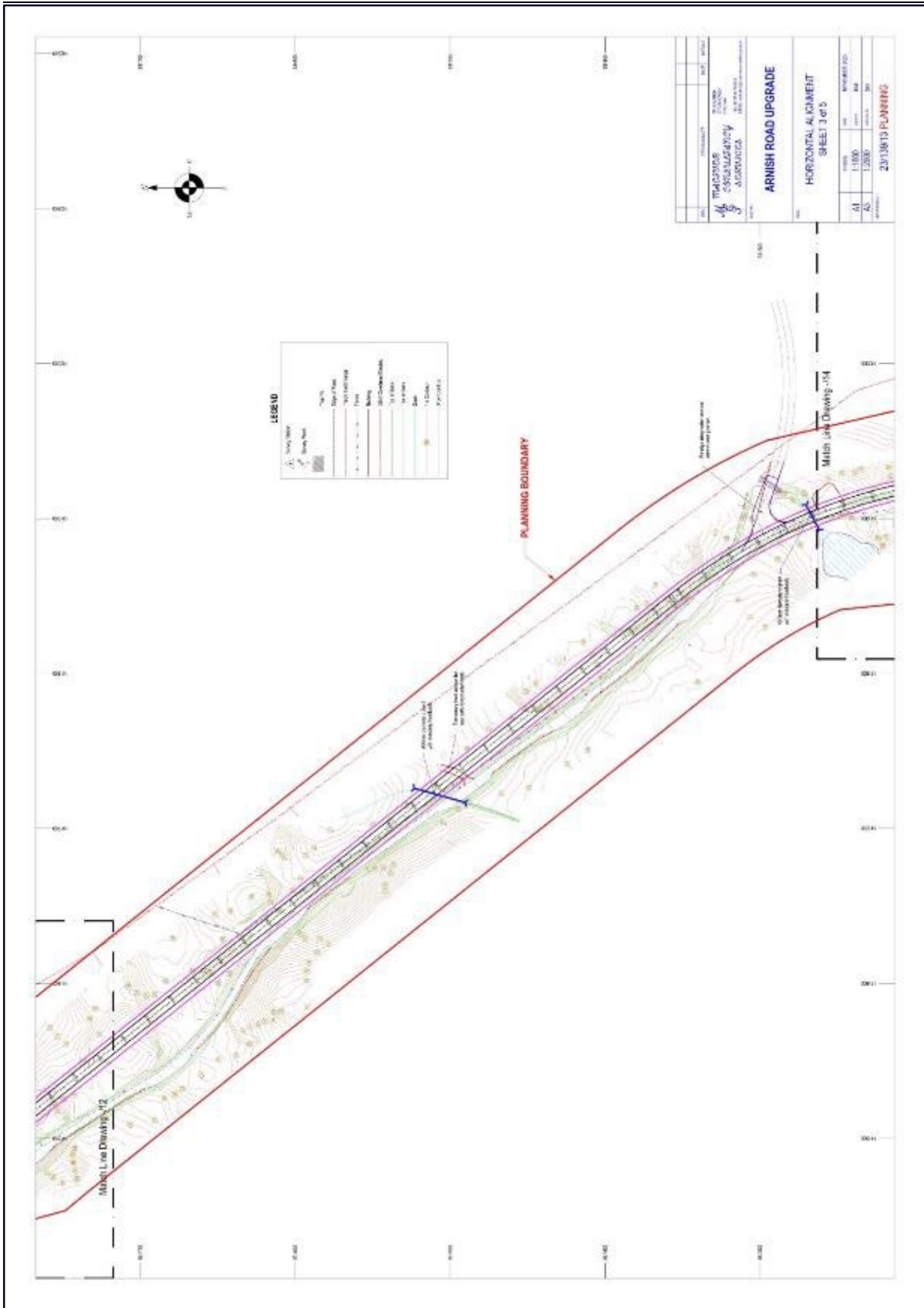


Figure 21: Engineers drawing #13

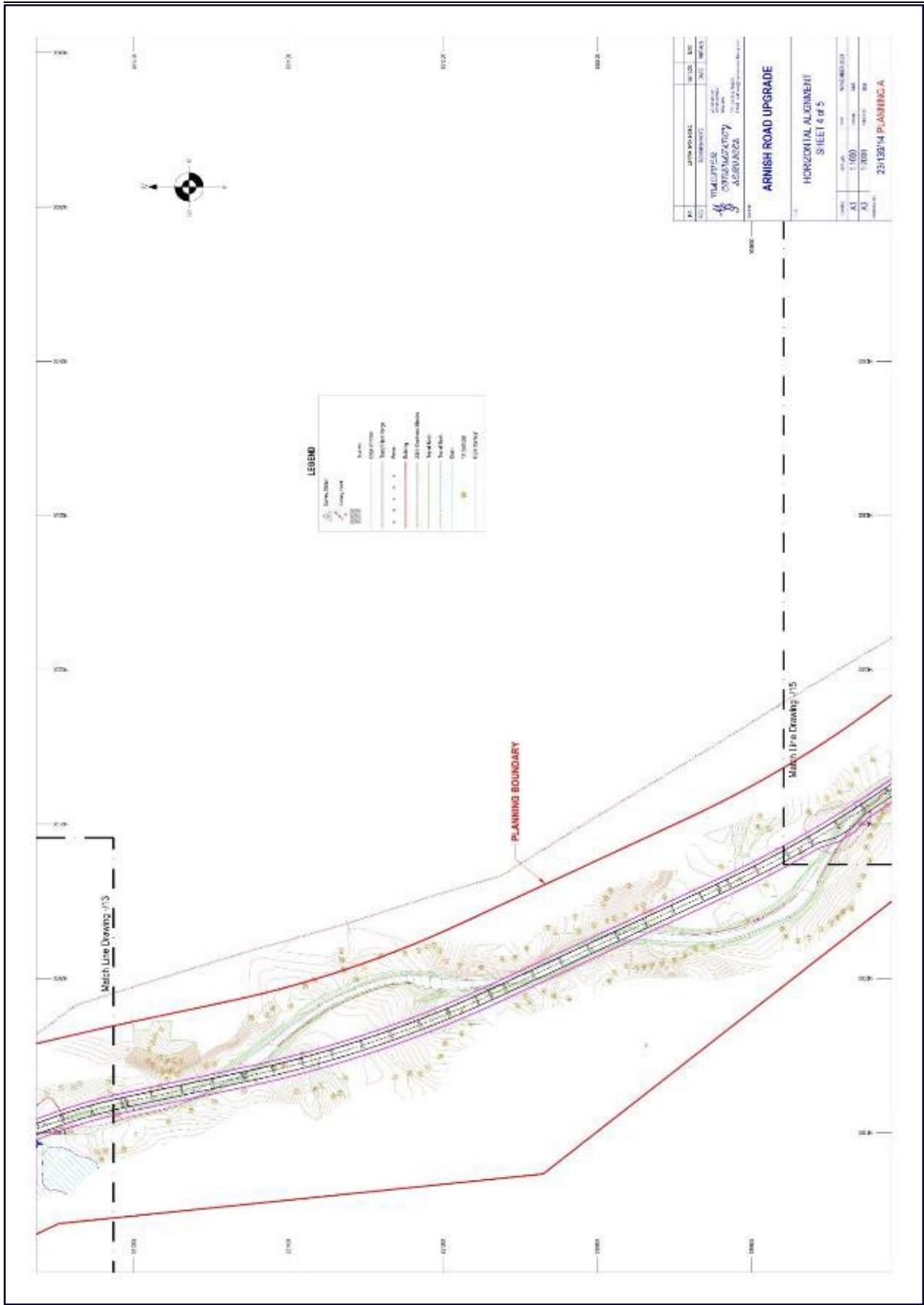


Figure 22: Engineers drawing #14

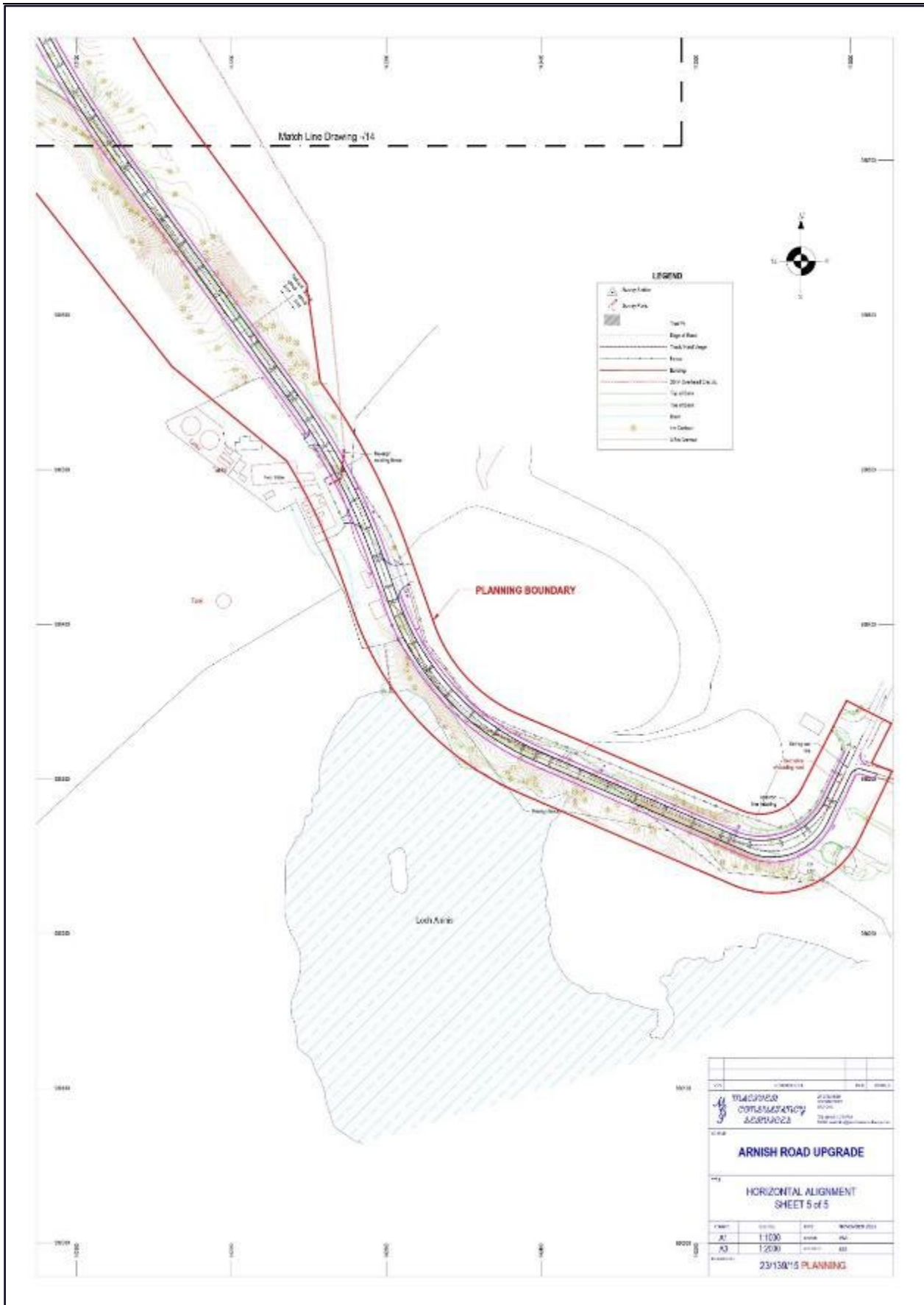


Figure 23:Engineers drawing #15

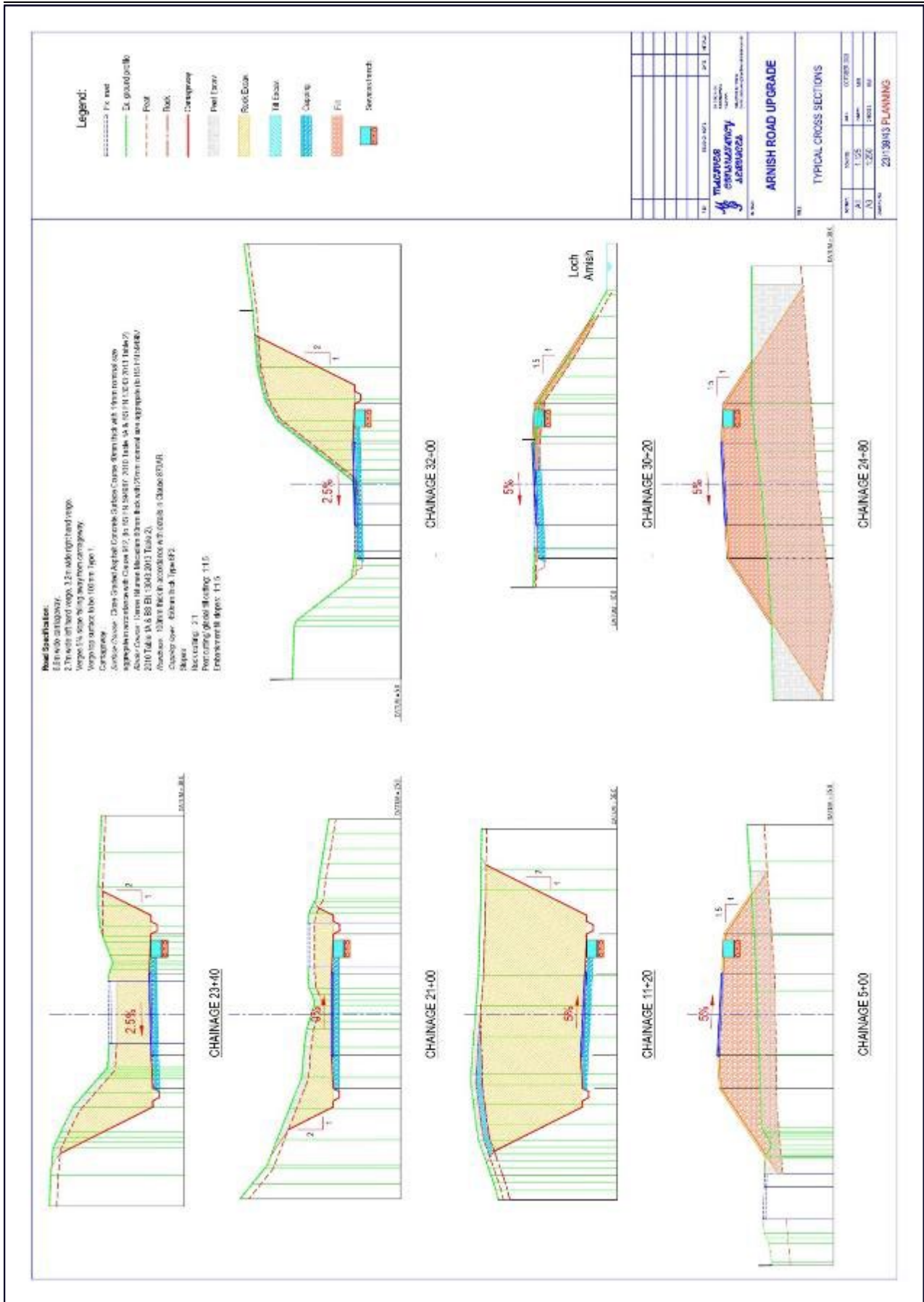


Figure 24: Engineers section drawing #43

