

# SPACEPORT 1, SCOLPAIG FARM, NORTH UIST

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION – MITIGATION- EXCAVATION, CONSTRUCTION
INTEGRATED RECORDING AND PROTECTIVE FENCING

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## HERITAGE CONSULTANCY ARCHAEOLOGY CONTRACTING SITE INVESTIGATIONS

SPECIALIST SERVICES

Stornoway,



CLIENT HEADLAND ARCHAEOLOGY

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**PROJECT NAME** Spaceport 1, Scolpaig Farm, Uist

PLANNING REF 21 00646 HEADLAND REF P24-341

**NGR** NF 72959 75413

**HEADLAND PROJECT CODE** SSFU24

WORK STAGE Mitigation- Excavation and Construction Integrated Recording (CIR) and

fencing

PURPOSE OF WORK To undertake an archaeological excavation, and CIR to include: the

archaeological removal of overburden using plant machinery; archaeological investigation and recording of the archaeological remains uncovered; presentation of the results of the work in a report. To ensure that protective

fencing is erected around known Cultural Heritage Assets.

AUTHOR Stephen Cox PROJECT MANAGER Kate Bain



#### NAME **REFERENCE**

Client	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Consultant	Atlantic 58
Planning authority	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Archaeological advisor	Kevin Murphy - Western Isles Archaeology Service

#### **RELEVANT STANDARDS:**

NAME **REFERENCE** 

Applicable CIfA standards	1.	Code of Conduct (CIfA 2022)
	2.	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIfA 2020)
	3.	Standard for archaeological excavation (CIfA 2023a)
	4.	Universal guidance for archaeological excavation (CIfA 2023b)
Regional research framework	5.	Scotland's Islands Research Framework for Archaeology (SIRFA)
	6.	Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF)

#### PROJECT SCHEDULE:

MILESTONE	DATE	DURATION
Proposed start on site	05/11/2024	TBC
Machine excavation	06/11/2024	TBC
Hand excavation	29/10/2024	c.15 days over whole programme
Machine backfilling	TBC	TBC
Report production window	TBC	12 weeks from the end of fieldwork

#### PROJECT SPECIFICATION:

**DESCRIPTION REFERENCE** 

Site area	2714m <sup>2</sup>
Oasis ID	TBC

# HERITAGE CONSULTANCY **ARCHAEOLOGY CONTRACTING** SITE INVESTIGATIONS SPECIALIST SERVICES



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#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has commissioned Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd to agree an investigative programme of archaeological work to fulfil the planning conditions of planning application 21\_00646. The overarching project comprises the construction of a sub-orbital vertical rocket launch site with associated infrastructure.
- 1.2 Headland Archaeology have been commissioned to encapsulate the required archaeological works within a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI this document) to be submitted for agreement with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. This document details the requirement for a programme of archaeological mitigation on four sites within the proposed development area and to ensure that protective fencing is erected around known Cultural Heritage Assets.
- 1.3 This document takes into account relevant CIfA and Western Isles Standards and Guidance and is issued as the second WSI associated with groundworks; following the recommendations from previous evaluation works.

#### 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 2.1 The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is situated at NGR NF 72959 75413, located at the former Scolpaig Farm, Scolpaig in the north-west of North Uist. The current land use is an access track and machair as well as former agricultural land which includes Scolpaig Farmhouse and four associated farm buildings, as well as a yard and stone dyke. The site is situated at 19m aOD where the access track meets the A865 road descending to 6m aOD at Scolpaig Loch and rising to 10m at the location of the former farm buildings. It covers an area of 0.27ha.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology of the site consists of gneiss of the Lewisian complex, a metamorphic bedrock formed between 4000 and 541 million years ago between the Aechean Eon and Edicarian period (NERC 2024). Superficial deposits comprise blown sand, a sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present, during the Quaternary period.

#### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The project has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment which included a Cultural Heritage chapter (GUARD 2010) and an addendum (Headland Archaeology 2023). The results of the cultural heritage assessments will not be repeated here, and the following is a summary.
- 3.2 The site is located in a machair environment in proximity to the sea. A feature of settlements from the Neolithic to the Iron Age in this environment is their abandonment due to wind-blown sand (Ballinn Smith 2018), and extensive prehistoric evidence has been uncovered during excavations at Udal (MWE 10330), 10km north-east of the site. While no known heritage assets of prehistoric date are known within the development area, those located within 200m of the site include a fort or dun Dun Scolpaig (MWE 10072), a cup marked stone (MWE 10060) a possible Iron Age souterrain (MWE10073) and a beaker sherd (MWE10062).
- 3.3 Robert Reid's plan of the Island of North Uist (Reid 1799) depicts twelve buildings at Scolpaig indicative of a post-medieval township. A 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse (Scolpaig Farmhouse, MWE150004) is located within the site and incorporates the farmhouse with a garden wall and



barn attached. Five roofed buildings are depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map arranged around a central courtyard to the north of the farmhouse, as well as a walled garden, a cattlefold and two trackways. Three of the roofed buildings are currently standing.

- 3.4 A comprehensive level Historic Building Record (HBR)survey was undertaken in October 2022 (Wilson 2022) of the Scolpaig farmhouse and associated structures. It identified several phases in the development of the farm buildings and indicated that the farm was continually evolving over its 200-year history.
- 3.5 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in August 2024 (Milne 2024) which comprised the excavation of eleven trenches laid out across the site. The evaluation uncovered evidence of structures in four trenches, three of which relate to the farmstead at Scolpaig and one (an upstanding structure in Trench 11) likely relates to the Ardanroin township (MWE147257) south of Loch Scolpaig. As the proposed construction design would result in the direct removal of three of these structures (or parts thereof), it was recommended that they be excavated under archaeological conditions.
- 3.6 Further to the removal of the three structures outlined above, a small, ruined structure, recorded as part of the earlier HBR survey, to the north-west of Trench 5 will be removed due to poor structural integrity. Monitoring of the removal of any below ground elements of this structure will be carried out under archaeological conditions.

#### 4 OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The aims of the archaeological mitigation include:
  - To preserve by record the archaeological remains on site by establishing and recording the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features and deposits.
  - To ensure that protective fencing is erected around known Cultural Heritage Assets.
  - To produce and deposit a satisfactory archive and disseminate the results of the work via grey-literature reporting and publication as appropriate.
- 4.2 More specific aims include:
  - To identify and record any archaeological remains that indicate a post-medieval origin for the farmstead at Scolpaig.
- 4.3 The resulting archive (finds and records) will be organised and deposited in the National Record of the Historical Environment (NRHE) to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit.

#### **RESEARCH AGENDA**

4.4 The relevant regional framework for the region, Scotland's Island's Archaeological Research Framework has not been published. Based on the neighbouring Highland Archaeological Research Framework (HighARF), the following research questions have been highlighted as of potential relevance to the works summarised above, and as such will inform strategy both on site and during the assessment phase:



- What were the style and construction techniques of vernacular buildings
- What were the innovations and developments in farm buildings over the postmedieval to modern period.

#### 5 PROJECT TEAM

- 5.1 Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd is a Registered Organisation and abides by the Codes of Conduct (CIfA 2020) and Approved Practice and Standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. The company has all the necessary technical and personnel resources for the satisfactory completion of the work.
- 5.2 The project will be managed by Kate Bain. The field team will consist of suitably qualified archaeologists. Curricula vitae of key personnel can be supplied on request. The project team will familiarise themselves with the background to the site and will be aware of the project's aims and methodologies.
- 5.3 Specialist artefact analyses will be managed by Julie Franklin who is Headland's Finds Manager. Julie will undertake finds assessment within her areas of competence (medieval and post-medieval ceramics, metalwork, glassware, clay pipes, ceramic building material and other small finds). Further consultation will be sub-contracted to recognised period specialists where appropriate.
- 5.4 Environmental analysis will be managed by Kate Turner who is Headland's Environmental Manager. Headland has in-house specialists who can undertake analysis of plant macrofossils, charcoal, animal bone and molluscs.

#### 6 STRATEGY

- 6.1 The farm at Scolpaig was identified as the only example of a 'Tack Farm' originating in the Victorian agricultural improvement movement to have survived and be actively farmed into the 20th century without significant 20th century alterations. As such, parts of structures that are due to be impacted by the development have been considered for excavation and removal under archaeological conditions.
- 6.2 Following the trial trench evaluation, three areas of archaeological excavation are required as features within them are directly impacted on by construction. These areas are based on the location of Trenches 3, 5 and 11. Once these structures have been excavated and understood, and sign-off received from the archaeological advisor they can then be removed either as part of the excavation phase or under Construction Integrated Recording (CIR) conditions.
- 6.3 A small, extant structure to the north-west of the former location of Trench 5 will also be removed as part of the works and any below ground impact associated with its removal will be monitored under CIR conditions.
- 6.4 This strategy will allow for a better understanding of their construction and would provide confirmation that they did, or did not, have earlier origins. A single report will be produced that includes the results of both the excavation and the CIR.



6.5 For the duration of the groundworks, Cultural Heritage Assets identified as being in the immediate vicinity of the groundworks will be fenced off from construction activity using temporary heras type fencing maintained until the end of the construction programme. Standing assets, which require protection for the duration of construction have been identified as the standing structures, Byres 1, 2 and 3 associated with the 'Tack Farm', and the parts of the boundary wall where it intersects with the new access track. A minimum of a 0.5m standoff will be required between standing assets and temporary fencing. Heras type temporary fencing will also be erected at excavation Areas 2 & 3 and around the structure adjacent to Area 2, until all archaeological works have been completed. The excavation area at Area 1 may not be suitable for Heras fencing, this being the case, during the programme of archaeological works, a temporary visual barrier will be erected, comprising a combination of plastic fence pins and traffic cones and rope- removed once the archaeological works have been completed. •

#### **PROGRAMME**

6.6 The mitigation programme is due to commence in November 2024. The programme for both targeted excavation and Construction Integrated Recording depends on the client's construction programme which is to be confirmed.

#### 7 METHODOLOGY

#### **FIELDWORK**

7.1 The fieldwork comprises two elements which are expected to run simultaneously— otherwise, the first phase will comprise the focussed excavation of three areas, and the second, the Construction Integrated Recording phase.

#### **TARGETED EXCAVATION**

- 7.2 Area 1 targets a structure identified in Trench 11, which measures approximately 5m by 13m, consisting of upstanding stone walls approximately 0.5m high. Topsoil and deposits of modern make-up across the interior of the structure and around the structure will be excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision in controlled spits to expose the extent of the structure and any features within it or within its immediate vicinity.
- 7.3 Area 2 targets an area between two extant structures which was targeted by Trench 05. An area 5m by 6m adjacent to the northwestern end of the larger structure( byre) will be stripped of topsoil and deposits of modern make-up to expose any surviving wall remnants and the full extent of the stone floor identified in Trench 03.
- 7.4 Area 3 targets a wall identified in Trench 03. This area extends 2.5m either side of the wall and for 5m along its length where the Spaceport road is due to run (total area 5m x 5m). Topsoil and any modern make-up will be removed by machine to foundation depth (or 0.75m below ground level, whichever is encountered soonest). The wall will be cleaned and recorded along the length it is exposed.
- 7.5 Once the walls and any archaeological features have been exposed by mechanical stripping, they will be cleaned, excavated and recorded.



7.6 Where appropriate, excavations will be mechanically backfilled using the arisings from the excavation.

CONSTRUCTION INTEGRATED RECORDING (CIR)

- 7.7 The Construction Integrated Recording phase will be undertaken during the construction process at the three locations detailed above and in locations where existing structures, along with the removal of the extant structure to the north-west of Trench 5,- are removed below ground level. An archaeologist will monitor the machine excavation/removal of the structures recorded in the targeted excavation and any below ground removal of currently extant structures, If any archaeological features are identified as a result of these activities, machine excavation will stop and sufficient time will be allowed for the monitoring archaeologist to undertake excavation and recording of those features. In the case that remains are significant, discussion with key stakeholders will be held in order to establish scope and timescales required. Once the archaeological excavation and recording is complete machine excavation will be allowed to continue.
- 7.8 All machine excavation at the targeted areas during the excavation and CIR phases will be undertaken by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed ditching bucket for removal of all soft deposits. Machine excavation will terminate at the top of the natural geology or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever is encountered first. Wall foundations may be removed in courses/ layers using a mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision.
- 7.9 All negative features will be hand-excavated as follows:
  - 100% of all structures, hearths and burials,
  - 50% of all pits/post holes as a minimum
  - initially 10% of linear features more may be sampled in discussion with the curator)
  - all archaeologically significant deposits will be sampled.
- 7.10 Any human remains identified on site will not be excavated; they will be protected and left in situ until an appropriate mitigation strategy is agreed (see Section 9 Human Remains). A burial licence secured if necessary in order to implement the strategy.

#### **RECORDING**

- 7.11 All recording will follow CIfA Standard and Guidance for conducting archaeological excavation (CIfA 2023). All contexts, small finds and environmental samples will be given unique numbers. This recording will be undertaken on Headland's pro forma digital recording system 'HARK!'. In the event that stratified deposits are encountered, a 'Harris' matrix will be compiled. Digital photography will be used to record any archaeological features; a graduated metric scale will be clearly visible. Paper registers will be created for all Digital Photography and Drawings, which will then be digitised to fit into our HARK! Systems.
- 7.12 A site plan including all identified features, areas of excavation and other pertinent information will be recorded 3-dimensionally using Headland's digital spatial recording system with a dGPS, accurately linked to the National Grid and heights to OD. Complex plans and sections will be hand-



- drawn on permatrace at an appropriate scale (normally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections), where appropriate, photogrammetry will be used for planning purposes.
- 7.13 Headland maintains a digitally based library of guidance documents that includes information on field evaluation and recording. Relevant parts can be forwarded on request.

#### SAMPLES AND ARTEFACTS

- 7.14 Finds will be routinely recorded by context and recorded 3-dimensionally where appropriate (i.e. where their position within a context can provide further significant information or the find is of particular significance). Any artefacts retrieved during the evaluation will be cleaned using appropriate techniques and packaged and stored in accordance with First Aid for Finds (Watkinson & Neal 1998). All artefacts recovered during the evaluation will be cleaned, marked and catalogued. Headland's in-house finds specialists will be available to provide advice remotely or on site if necessary. Conservation will be undertaken by Drakon Heritage.
- 7.15 Deposits identified as archaeologically significant will be sampled for environmental material and other finds (e.g. bone, pottery etc.). Bulk samples will be taken from selected deposits for wet sieving and floatation in order to recover any environmental material. A bulk sample will typically be 40 litres. However, where large deposits are encountered more than one bulk sample may be taken. Similarly, small deposits such as the fill of postholes may contain less than 10 litres of sediment and will be fully sampled. A representative proportion of samples taken on site will be processed and assessed with the results and recommendations for any further work included in the evaluation report.
- 7.16 Where waterlogged deposits are encountered (such as peat) appropriate sampling techniques will be employed so as to maximise the environmental information gained from such deposits. This may include the taking of monolith or core samples for pollen and non-pollen palynomorphs (e.g. testates and fungal spores) and large specialist samples for plant macrofossil, wood (including waterlogged wood) and insect analyses.
- 7.17 Headland's Environmental Manager, Kate Turner, will liaise with site staff to ensure an appropriate strategy for the recovery and sampling of environmental remains develops in tandem with fieldwork results.

#### MONITORING

7.18 Access to the site will be afforded to the archaeological advisor for monitoring purposes. The archaeological advisor to the LPA shall be given at least 5 working days' notice of the commencement of the project.

#### 8 REPORTING AND ARCHIVE

#### **GENERAL**

8.1 The reporting will take a staged approach. The first stage comprises the 'Assessment Report', assessing what has been found, and if necessary a 'Post-Excavation Research Design' (PERD) outlining what the potential of the archaeological work is, where further analysis and reporting work is required, and providing costs and timescales for this. This is followed by the 'Analysis' stage, which may include a full 'Analysis (or Archive) Report', and Publication(s), as set out in the PERD.



- 8.2 Should the results of the project be of insufficient scale to merit post-excavation assessment and a PERD, the written agreement of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will be sought to proceed straight to post-excavation analysis and unpublished report preparation.
- 8.3 Further or alternative reporting requirements will be discussed and agreed with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar following the fieldwork stages once a fuller understanding of the archaeological remains is appreciated.
- 8.4 Copies of all reports will be sent to the client Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for approval. Approved versions (electronic and, if required, paper) will also be submitted to ADS.
- 8.5 All reports will be written in accordance with the appropriate CIfA standards and guidance, particularly CIfA's 'Standard for archaeological excavation' (2023), 'Universal Guidance for archaeological excavation' (2023) and 'Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation, and research of archaeological materials' (2020). All reporting will be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced members of staff, familiar with the project.
- 8.6 All reports should consider the results of the investigations in the context of local, regional, and national research agendas and frameworks (see Section 4 Objectives).

#### ASSESSMENT REPORT AND POST EXCAVATION RESEARCH DESIGN

- 8.7 The purpose of the Assessment and PERD is to assess the results of the investigations and identify areas of potential. This will include a statement on the quantity and quality of the data, the potential of the data to answer research aims, and recommendations on the analysis and publication requirements. It will also include recommendations for inclusions within the Archaeological Archive, following CIFA archive toolkit guidance (https://www.archaeologists.net/selection-toolkit/toolkit-overview). Specialist reporting should adhere to the standards set out in the CIFA toolkit for specialist reporting (https://www.archaeologists.net/reporting-toolkit).
- 8.8 The Assessment Report and PERD (if appropriate) will include:
  - QA sheet detailing title, author, version, date, checked by, approved by
  - Non-technical summary, summarising the scope and results of the investigation
  - Introduction including:
    - Centred site location with 12-digit national grid reference
    - Area of investigation (ha)
    - Background to the scheme
    - Description of development proposals and planning history
    - Scope and date of fieldwork, archaeological contractors' personnel, commissioning body
    - Organisation of the report.
  - Archaeological and historical background (including geological and topographical background and results of previous phases of fieldwork)
  - Methodology employed (including use of a metal detector)
  - Aims and objectives of the investigation, including research framework questions
  - Results of the investigation including:
    - Feature / group descriptions (where appropriate), arranged by period
    - Finds assessment by artefact type, including quantification, preservation, concordance table, and methods of processing and assessment



- Environmental assessment, including quantification, preservation, details of sampling, processing, assessment, and tables
- Results of scientific analysis.
- A statement of the significance of the results in their local, regional, and national context, cross-referenced to appropriate research frameworks
- A statement of potential with recommendations for further work and analysis, including:
  - Method statement detailing how further analysis will be carried out
  - Task-list
  - o Programme
  - Costings
  - Publication scope and format.
  - o Recommendations for Archaeological Archive
- Appendices containing specialist reports
- Digital appendices of registers and any substantial data resource
- Illustrations including:
  - Site location
  - o Initial phased plan(s) of site
  - Plans and sections of selected archaeological features
  - o Colour images illustrating site setting, work in progress, and selected findings.
- 8.9 The draft assessment report and PERD (if appropriate) will be submitted within 6 months of the completion of fieldwork.

#### ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION(S)

- 8.10 Any analysis reports and publication(s) required will be set out in the PERD. They may take a variety of forms, but could include:
  - Short publication note in relevant journal
  - Stand-alone article, covering either the whole project or individual elements within it, in regional or period journal or online [ref any expected journals here, based on project]
  - Monograph, either print or online
  - Full 'Archive / Analysis Report' including all elements of the analysis work published on ADS.

The timescales for analysis and publication(s) will be set out in the PERD. It is anticipated to take a minimum of 12 months from approval of the PERD.

#### **ARCHIVING**

8.11 The project archive will be compiled in accordance with the guidelines published by the CIfA on behalf of the Archaeological Archives Forum (2011). The documentary and digital archive will be submitted to HES within twelve months of completion of all work on this project. Any PERD will be submitted within 6 months of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's agreement to the DSR and any final publication will be complete within a year of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's agreement to the PERD. It is anticipated that any final publication will report the results of the project as a whole. All finds will be reported to the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel, which will determine the ultimate destination of the material archive. Once this is determined, and within three months, arrangements will be made with the specified archive repository for transfer of material and title.



#### 9 HUMAN REMAINS

9.1 If encountered human remains will not be excavated until reported to the client, curator and local police and a strategy for excavation agreed with all parties. As standard when encountered, the excavation of human remains is anticipated to be undertaken during the course of mitigation works. All excavation and treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains will be undertaken in cognisance of ClfA Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains (Brickley and McKinley 2004); ClfA Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains (Mitchell & Brickley 2017); APABE (2017) Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England; all relevant BABAO Guidance including the BABAO Code of Ethics (2019) and BABAO Code of Practice (2019); and relevant Historic Scotland policy on the treatment of human remains.

#### **10** HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 10.1 All of Headland's work is undertaken in accordance with current Health & Safety legislation. A risk assessment will be prepared prior to the commencement of fieldwork. All staff will wear appropriate PPE, which is to include high-visibility clothing, hard hats and safety footwear. Suitable site welfare facilities will be provided.
- 10.2 This WSI is submitted on the understanding that there will be unlimited access to all relevant areas of the development area.

#### 11 Insurance and Copyright

- 11.1 Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd carries adequate insurance for the works described in this document. Certificates can be presented on request.
- 11.2 Copyright will be retained by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd as far as it applies to any and all items produced by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd or its subcontractors in the course of the works. Headland will licence the client, Local Planning Authority and relevant archives as necessary for use in matters relating to the project. This licence will also extend to non-commercial use.

#### 12 REFERENCES

Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) 2011 *Archaeological Archives A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (2nd edn) (CIfA: Reading) <a href="http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/aaf">http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/aaf</a> archaeological archives 2011.pdf accessed 16/10/2024

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Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/ accessed 16/10/2024

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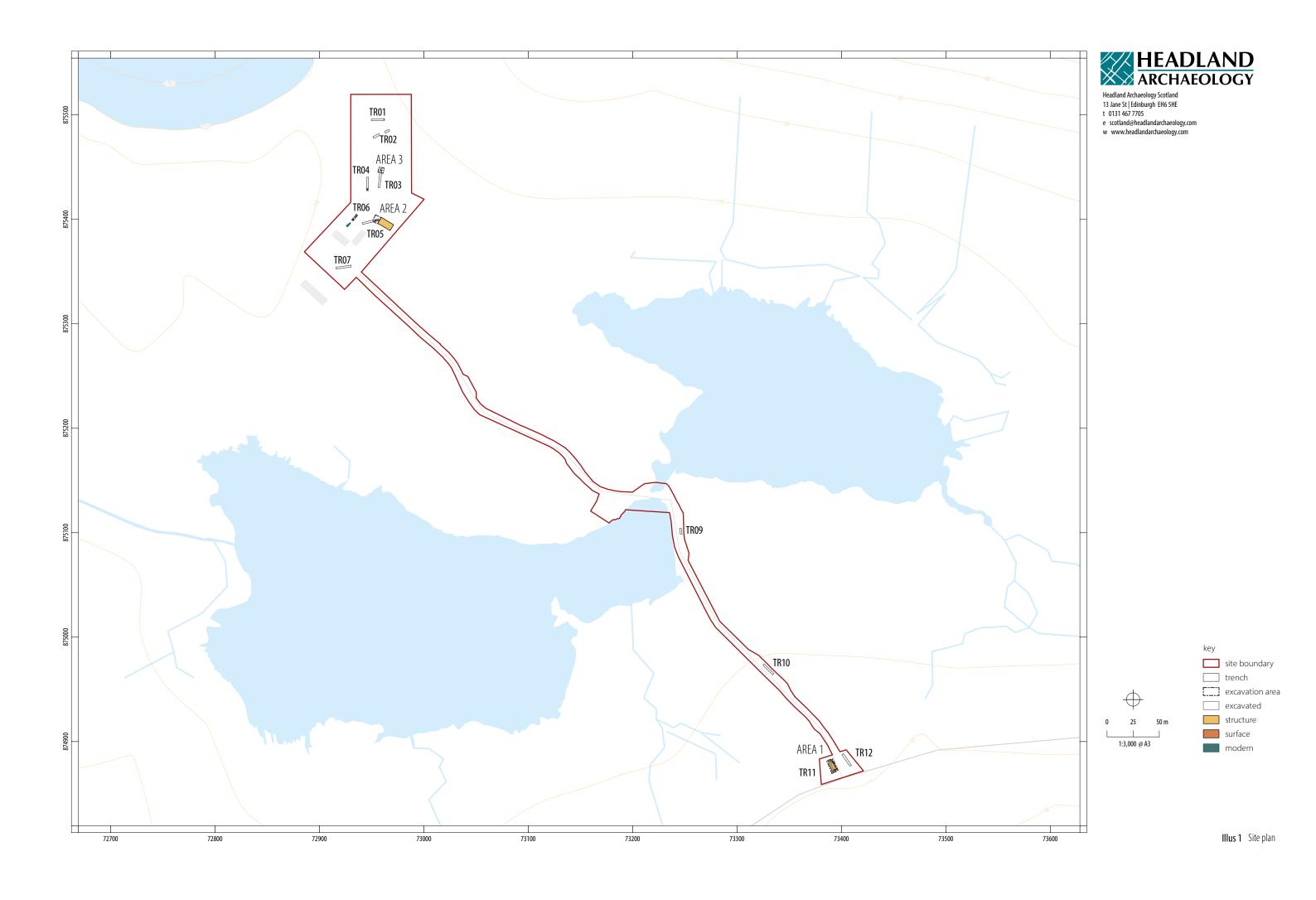
## HERITAGE CONSULTANCY ARCHAEOLOGY CONTRACTING SITE INVESTIGATIONS SPECIALIST SERVICES

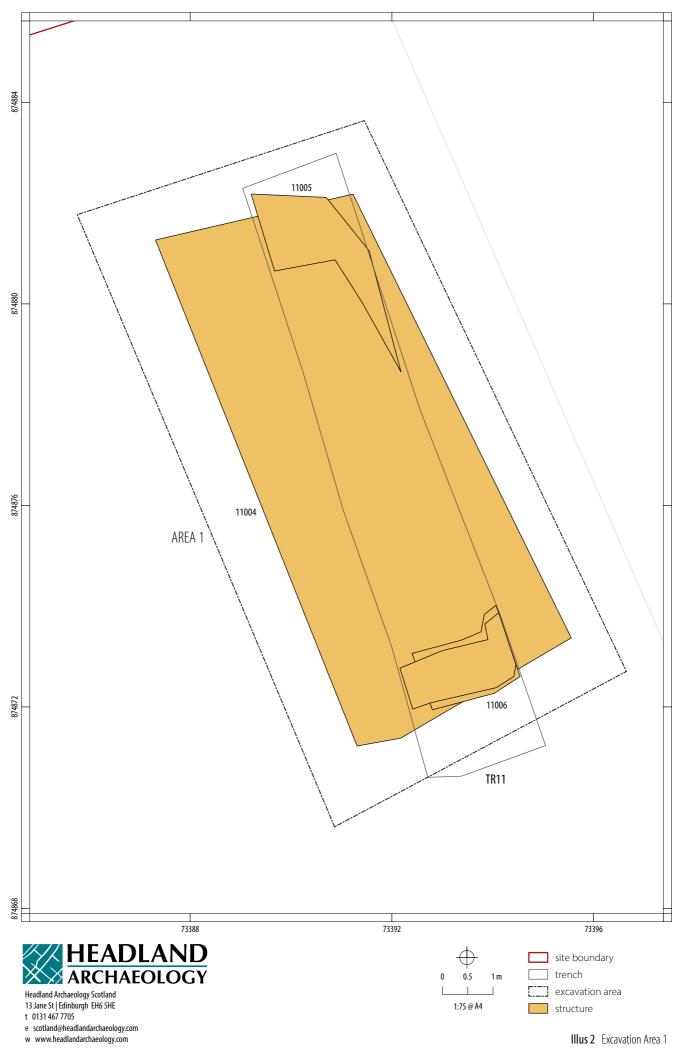


Ordnance Survey (OS) 1881 'Hebrides XXIX.12 (North Uist)' Inverness-shire [map] 1:2500 Southampton surveyed 1878 engraved and published 1881

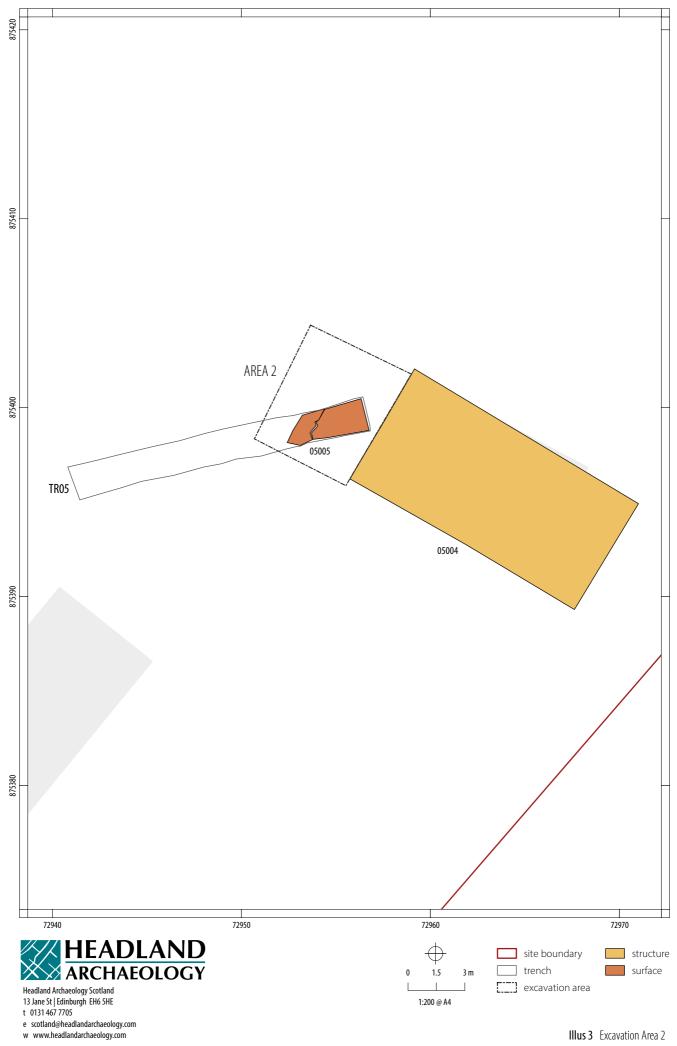
Reid, 1799 Plan of the Island of North Uist belonging to Alexander, Lord MacDonald [map] 1:13400

Wilson, D 2022 Scolpaig Farmstead, North Uist, Western Isles Comprehensive Level Historic Building Record Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd [unpublished client document]

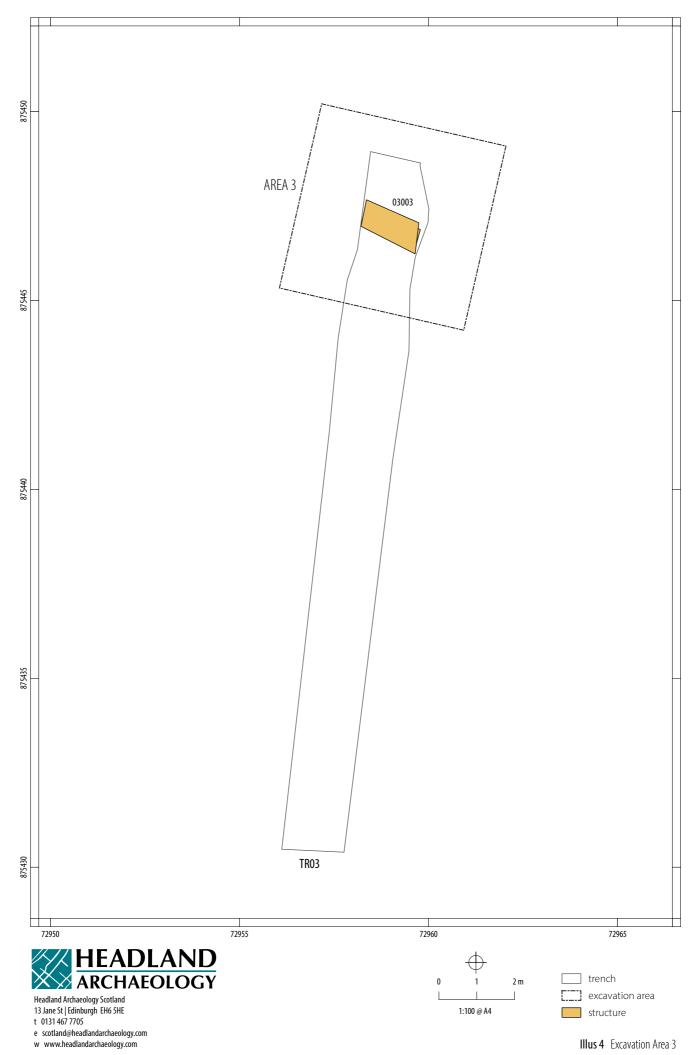




Illus 2 Excavation Area 1



Illus 3 Excavation Area 2



**Illus 4** Excavation Area 3

