

# River Ellen, Maryport, Cumbria



## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Oxford Archaeology North**

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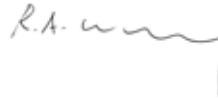
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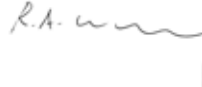
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## SUMMARY

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Oxford Archaeology North was commissioned by Stobarts Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground works associated with the construction of a cycle path (NGR: NY 0330 3622). The development site is located within an area of archaeological potential and accordingly the watching brief followed recommendations issued by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES).

Along the course of the cycle path only comparatively shallow stripping of the topsoil was undertaken and no features or artefacts of archaeological interest were identified.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank James McGonigle, Stobarts Limited for commissioning the project. Thanks are also expressed to Jeremy Parsons of the Cumbria County Archaeology Service, for his advice. The watching brief was undertaken by Dave Maron who, along with Nate Jepson and Richard Gregory, compiled the report. The report was edited by Richard Gregory, who was also responsible for project management.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 In April 2010, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Stobbarts Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground works associated with the construction of a cycle path on land adjacent to the River Ellen, Maryport, Cumbria (NGR: NY 0330 3622). The development site is located within an area of archaeological potential and accordingly the watching brief followed recommendations issued by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES), which were set out in a brief dated 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009. The project design which responded to this brief is attached (Appendix 1).

### 1.2 THE LOCATION AND SETTING

1.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken within an area located on the southern fringe of Maryport's town centre (Fig 1). This area is low-lying and is dominated by a meander of the River Ellen. The watching brief site lies within an area designated by English Heritage as being of High Archaeological Importance and also falls an area designated as a Heritage Park by the local authority.

1.2.2 The area of observation was along the route of a proposed cycle path which ran in a north-east/south-west direction from an existing cycle path, to the site of a proposed footbridge over the River Ellen (Fig 1). This route skirts the southern edge of the River Ellen and is positioned within land that is contained within the river's meander (Plate 1).

### 1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 Within the immediate environs of the watching brief area are a series of known archaeological sites, which have relevance to the evolving history of Maryport. These sites, and the general history of this area, form the subject of an earlier OA North report (2007) and the intention here is to merely present a background summary. The sites do indicate, however, that the area, found within the meander loop, contains important evidence for Roman, medieval, and industrial-period activity.

1.3.2 **Roman:** although the focus of Roman activity lay to the north of the modern town, Roman artefacts have been recovered from the environs of the watching brief site. These include three coins of Hadrian (one Denarius of Hadrian AD 117-38, and two Aes issues of Hadrian AD 117-38) and one unworn Antoninianus coin of Trajan Decius, which were discovered in 1978 to the north-east of the watching brief site, on Castle Hill. In addition, a hoard of Aes-issues of the first and second centuries (including coins of Hadrian) was found in c 1920 (Shotter 1995). Whilst the precise context of these coins is not known, it has been suggested that Castle Hill was possibly the site of a Roman

tower, forming part of the Roman western coastal defences running down the coastline (Bellhouse 1989).

- 1.3.3 Other potential evidence for Roman activity in this area includes a possible Roman road. The position of this road, which is plotted on Ordnance Survey mapping, is postulated as running to the south-east of the watching brief site. Its alignment is based on the discovery of cobbled surfaces, interpreted as elements of a Roman road, which were observed in 1880 and 1920 on the southern side of the river (Bailey 1926).
- 1.3.4 **Medieval:** evidence for medieval activity in the area is confined to Castle Hill, a large prominent earthwork located to the north-east of the watching brief site. Although the origins of this earthwork are not clear, it acted as a fortified site during the later medieval period, and might, on morphological grounds, have formed a twelfth-century motte (Perriam and Robinson 1998).
- 1.3.5 **Industrial:** two significant industrial-period sites are located within the immediate vicinity of the watching brief site. These include a paper mill and a shipyard building.
- 1.3.6 The paper mill was purpose built on behalf of Humphrey Senhouse in 1756 as part of the planned town of Maryport (Jackson and Jackson 1969), and was located immediately to the east of the watching brief area. Eighteenth-century mapping indicates that the site comprised a double fronted building, which was associated with a north/south-aligned millrace. This millrace presumably drove a waterwheel positioned on the paper mill. During the early nineteenth-century, paper milling ceased at the site and the building became the Ship Launch Inn (OA North 2007). Further modifications were made to the building over the course of the nineteenth century. These included the addition of a semi-detached house by 1834, and the construction of a rope walk and ropery by 1868. However, it seems likely that the mill, adjoining house and ropery were given over to the Ritson shipyard in the latter years of the nineteenth century (*ibid*). This site now survives as a series of earthworks, which define the mill buildings and the headrace element of the millrace, and also a boundary wall surrounding the paper mill (*ibid*).
- 1.3.7 The shipyard building, which formed part of Middleton's Shipyard, was located immediately west and was constructed between 1815 and 1834 (*ibid*). It appears, however, that ships were not directly launched from this building, as there are berths and slipways located to the north of the paper mill. By 1858 the shipyard building had been amalgamated into the expanding Ritson's shipyard, located on the opposite bank of the River Ellen (*ibid*). The shipyard building survived throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though it is probable that after the demise of shipbuilding in Maryport, just before 1914, the building would have been used for general boat repairs and berthing. The ruinous remains of this building are still visible, along with several adjacent discrete areas of disturbed ground, which probably represent shipbuilding debris and demolition rubble (*ibid*).
- 1.3.8 In addition, to the paper mill and shipyard building, recent topographic survey by OA North (2007) has also identified two areas of potential ridge and furrow

cultivation to the south-west of the watching brief site and also a small embanked earthwork feature. All of these features are likely to be post-medieval in date.



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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 Prior to the initiation of the work, a project design for the watching brief was submitted to Jeremy Parsons of the CCCHES for approval (*Appendix 1*). Following approval, the project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

2.2.1 The ground works were conducted under constant archaeological supervision. In total, the area observed measured 180m in length and was *c* 2.5m wide for the majority of its length, though it widened to 5.0m adjacent to the River Ellen. Within this area the topsoil was partially removed in advance of the construction of a cycle path (Plate 1).

2.2.2 The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the ground works and also to determine the quality, extent and importance of these remains. The work comprised the systematic examination of all subsoil horizons exposed, and the recording of all archaeological features, and any artefacts, identified during the watching brief.

2.1.1 A daily record of the nature, extent, and depths of ground works was maintained throughout the duration of the project. All archaeological contexts were recorded on OA North's *pro-forma* sheets, using a system based on that of the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A colour slide photographic record was maintained throughout, with digital photographs taken for illustrative purposes.

### 2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full archive of the watching brief has been produced in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited in the County Record Office and a copy of this report submitted to the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record.

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## 3. RESULTS

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### 4.1 RESULTS

- 4.1.1 The ground works associated with the construction of the cycle path commenced at the terminal of an existing cycle path and proceeded south-east to a concrete support for a former gas pipe located at the bank of the River Ellen (Fig 1).
- 4.1.2 Within this area only comparatively shallow stripping of the topsoil was undertaken and no features or artefacts of archaeological interest were present (Plates 1 and 2).
- 4.1.3 The topsoil was generally composed of silty sand, though higher proportions of silt were observed towards the riverbank (Plate 3). Inclusions within the topsoil included water-rounded pebbles and boulders; regular and irregular angular fragments of red sandstone; fragments of roof slate, one of which contained two nail holes; and brick fragments. Adjacent to the riverbank, within the immediate vicinity of the concrete support for the former gas pipe, alluvial deposits of mid-orange-brown silty sand were exposed beneath the topsoil.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

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### 5.1 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 The ground works associated with the construction of the cycle path had the potential to unearth remains of archaeological significance, in particular those associated with the former paper mill and shipyard. However, no features, artefacts or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the shallow topsoil strip. Indeed, it is likely that any archaeological remains are situated beneath those topsoil deposits exposed during the ground works. It is also probable that the route of the footpath has been heavily disturbed during the construction of the gas pipe that formerly spanned the River Ellen, the concrete supports of which are to be incorporated in the construction of the footbridge.

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## 6. ILLUSTRATIONS

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### 6.1 LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

### 6.2 LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: Topsoil stripping in progress

Plate 2: The central section of the proposed cycle path following topsoil stripping

Plate 3: Topsoil stripping adjacent to the River Ellen

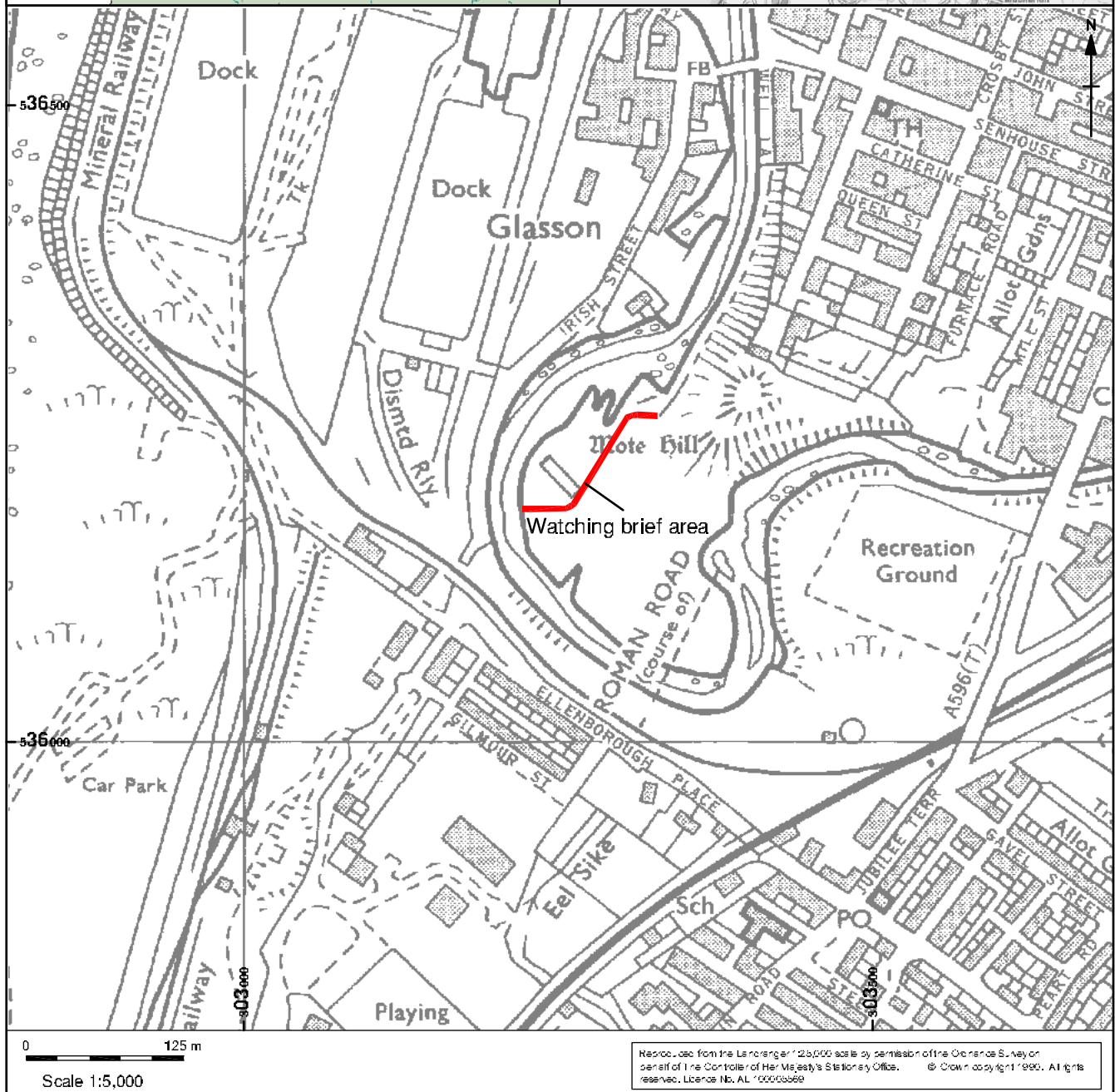
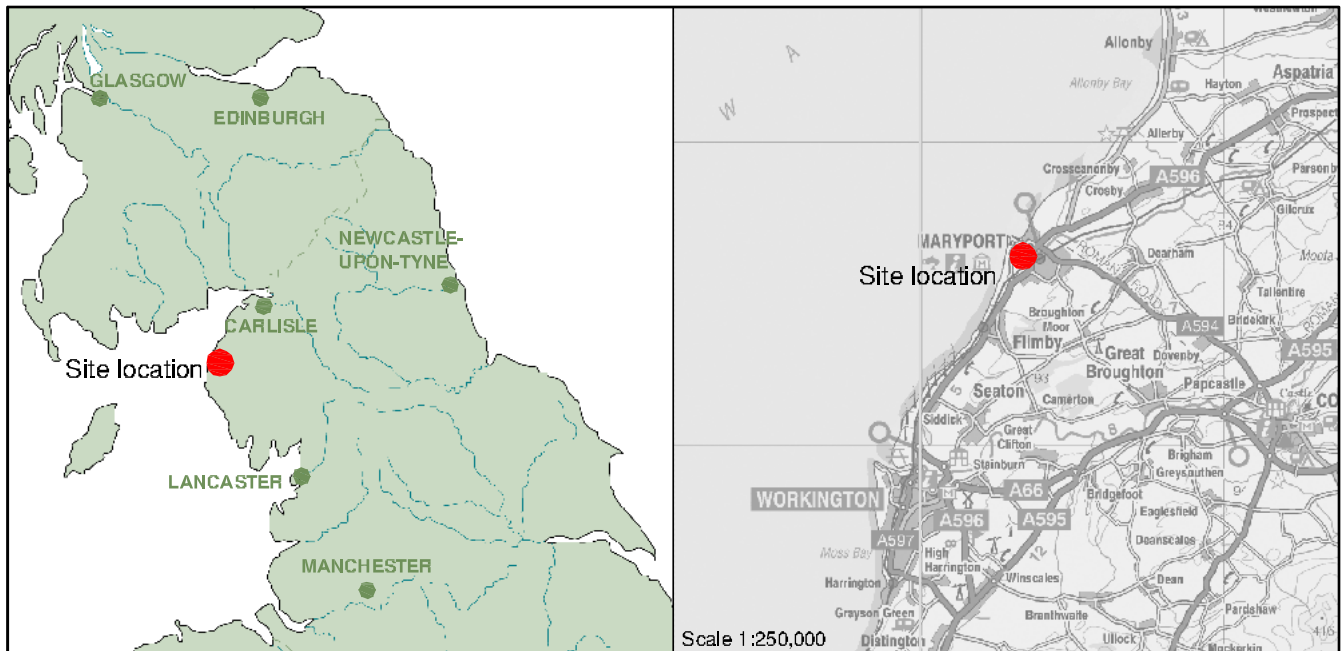


Figure 1: Site Location

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## 8. PLATES



*Plate 1: Topsoil stripping in progress*



*Plate 2: The central section of the proposed cycle path following topsoil stripping*



*Plate 3: Topsoil stripping adjacent to the River Ellen*



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## APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Stobbarts Limited (hereafter 'the Client'), has requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during ground works associated with the construction of a footbridge and the construction of footpaths on land adjacent to the River Ellen, Maryport, Cumbria (Grid reference NY 0330 3622). The development site is located within an area of archaeological potential and, consequently, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) issued a brief (dated 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009) requesting an archaeological watching brief to be conducted during the course of ground works associated with the construction of the footbridge and footpaths. The following document represents a project design to carry out the above programme of work and has been prepared in accordance with the brief issued by CCCHES.

#### 1.2 Archaeological Background

1.2.1 The site has previously been the subject of an archaeological investigation by OA North (2007). This investigation comprised a topographic and geophysical survey. These surveys suggested that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century earthworks and below-ground remains survive in this area, forming part of a former paper mill, a shipyard, a mill race and a series of field systems.

#### 1.3 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.3.1 OA North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 25 years. Evaluations, desk-based assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables. OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

### 2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 *Archaeological Watching Brief:* the objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the ground works and also to determine the quality, extent and importance of these remains.

- 2.2 **Report and Archive:** a report will be produced for the Client within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990) and also follow recommendations in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to the best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2007).

### 3. METHOD STATEMENT

- 3.1 **Methodology:** a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the area which will be affected by the ground works.
- 3.2 The watching brief will comprise observation during all ground reduction and excavations for the proposed footbridge and footpaths, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.
- 3.3 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified during the observation of groundworks, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions and, where appropriate, sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (ie. selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).
- 3.4 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the Client. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.
- 3.5 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.
- 3.6 **Treatment of finds:** all finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and the recipient museum's guidelines.
- 3.7 **Treasure:** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996.

Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.

- 3.8 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained on advice from the recipient museum's archive curator.
- 3.9 **Human Remains:** any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial. CCCHES and the local Coroner will be informed immediately. If removal is essential, the exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. The removal of human remains will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations.
- 3.10 **Contingency plan:** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the Historic Environment Officer or his representative, as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design. In the event of environmental/organic deposits being present on site, it would be necessary to discuss and agree a programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling and or dating with the Historic Environment Officer.

#### 4 REPORT AND ARCHIVE

- 4.1 **Report:** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the Client, and a further three copies submitted to the Cumbria HER within eight weeks of completion. The report will include:
- a front cover to include the planning application number and the NGR
  - a site location plan, related to the national grid
  - the dates on which the fieldwork was undertaken
  - a concise, non-technical summary of the results
  - a description of the methodology employed, work undertaken and results obtained
  - plans and sections at an appropriate scale, showing the location of features

- other illustrations and photographic plates showing, as appropriate, features of interest or to demonstrate the absence of archaeological features.
  - a description of any environmental, finds, or other specialist work undertaken, and the results obtained
  - the report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.
  - a copy of this project design in the appendices, and indications of any agreed departure from that design
- 4.2 This report will be in the same basic format as this project design; a copy of the report can be provided on CD, if required.
- 4.3 **Archive:** the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991). The production of this archive will also follow recommendations in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to the best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2007). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. It will include summary processing and analysis of all features, finds, or palaeoenvironmental data recovered during fieldwork, which will be catalogued by context. All artefacts will be processed to MAP2 standards and will be assessed by our in-house finds specialists.
- 4.4 The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct. OA North conforms to best practice in the preparation of project archives for long-term storage. This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the Cumbria HER (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects with the County Record Office, Kendal. The material archive (artefacts and ecofacts) will be deposited with an appropriate museum following agreement with the client.
- 4.5 **Collation of data:** the data generated will be collated and analysed in order to provide an assessment of the nature and significance of the known surface and subsurface remains within the designated area. It will also serve as a guide to the archaeological potential of the area to be investigated, and the basis for the formulation of any detailed field programme and associated sampling strategy, should these be required in the future.

- 4.6 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database project Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.
- 4.7 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision. Any requirement to revise or reorder the material for submission or presentation to third parties beyond the project brief and project design, or for any other explicit purpose, can be fulfilled, but will require separate discussion and funding.

## 5 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 5.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works and copies will be made available on request to all interested parties.

## 6 WORK TIMETABLE

- 6.1 **Archaeological Watching Brief:** the duration of this element is dependant upon the duration of any ground disturbing activities on the site, though it is anticipated that this will comprise three days fieldwork running from the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> April 2010.
- 6.2 **Report and Archive:** a report will be submitted within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork. However, should an interim statement be required this can be issued within two weeks but instruction must be received from the client prior to completion of the fieldwork.
- 6.3 **Written Instruction:** OA North can execute projects at very short notice once written confirmation of commission has been received from the Client. One weeks notice would be sufficient to allow the necessary arrangements to be made to commence the task and inform CCCHEs.

## 7. PROJECT MONITORING

- 7.1 **Access:** liaison for site access during the evaluation will be arranged with the client unless otherwise instructed prior to commencement of the archaeological investigation.
- 7.2 Whilst the work is undertaken for the client, the Historic Environment Officer will be kept fully informed of the work and its results, and will be notified a week in advance of the commencement of the fieldwork.

- 7.3 Any proposed changes to the project design will be agreed with CCCHEs in consultation with the Client.

## 8. STAFFING PROPOSALS

- 8.1 The project will be under the direct management of Richard Gregory (OA North project manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.
- 8.2 The watching brief will be undertaken by a suitably experienced OA North Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor.
- 8.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist Christine Howard-Davis BA MIFA (OA North project officer). Christine has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England. However, she has specialist knowledge regarding glass, metalwork, and leather, the recording and management of waterlogged wood, and most aspects of wetland and environmental archaeology.
- 8.4 Assessment of any palaeoenvironmental samples which may be taken will be undertaken by Elizabeth Huckerby MSc (OA North project officer). Elizabeth has extensive knowledge of the palaeoecology of the North West through her work on the English Heritage-funded North West Wetlands Survey. Assessment of any faunal material will be undertaken by Andrew Bates MSc (OA North project officer).

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