

**Netherton Hub 400 kV OHL Connection to
New Deer and Peterhead: Tie-In
Environmental Appraisal Report
Volume 3 Appendix 6.1: Cultural Heritage
Background and Gazetteer**

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1. APPENDIX 6.1 – CULTURAL HERITAGE BACKGROUND AND GAZETTEER

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This technical appendix contains the Cultural Heritage Background related to the Site, and provides details of previous archaeological investigations, a historic background, the archaeological potential of the Site, and a gazetteer of all heritage assets within the Site and study areas. Each entry in the gazetteer has a heritage asset (HA) reference number which is used to identify it within this appraisal and on **Figure 6.1 Cultural Heritage Assets (Volume 2)**. The heritage assets also have a unique identifying number provided by the Aberdeenshire Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and/or the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE).
- 1.1.2 Further information on the Proposed Development and study areas can be found in **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage (Volume 1)** of the Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR).

1.2 Cultural Heritage Background

Geology

- 1.2.1 The study areas are underlain by a complex geological sequence that reflects an extended geological evolution spanning from the Tonian to the Silurian periods. The dominant bedrock formations belong to the Dalradian Supergroup, which comprise metamorphosed sedimentary rocks such as semipelite, pelite, and psammite. Intruding this older metamorphic sequence are two notable igneous formations: the Forest of Deer Pluton and the Peterhead Pluton. The Forest of Deer Pluton, composed of granite, has historically been quarried for high-quality building stone. To the east, the Peterhead Pluton represents another granite intrusion and reflects the widespread magmatic activity that characterised northeast Scotland during the early Palaeozoic.
- 1.2.2 Overlying the solid geology is a sequence of Quaternary superficial deposits, primarily the Banchory Till Formation. This consists of diamicton—a compact, poorly sorted glacial deposit laid down during the last glaciation. In lower-lying parts of the study areas, this till is interspersed with glaciofluvial sheet deposits composed of sand, gravel, and silt, formed from meltwater outwash and offering more favourable conditions for drainage and early human activity. Smaller areas of gravel and flint are also recorded toward the southern parts of the study areas. Together, these geological conditions have shaped the physical landscape, influencing both historic land use and the archaeological potential of the area.¹

Walkover Survey

- 1.2.3 The Site and study areas were visited on 26th and 27th August 2025, by heritage professionals from WSP. This walkover survey (visual inspection only) was executed in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation. Given the relatively large extent of the Site, the survey was targeted to areas of known archaeological potential, previously recorded Historic Environment Record (HER) assets, and locations where potential impacts from the Project were anticipated. Access was not available to all land parcels: some areas were inaccessible due to ongoing Eastern Green Link 3 works (an interfacing SSEN project) or due to livestock, cultivation, or lack of landowner permission. In such cases, the land was inspected from nearby public roads or footpaths and photographs were taken where possible.

¹ British Geological Survey (BGS) 2025, accessed at: BGS Geology Viewer - British Geological Survey on 3-10-2025

- 1.2.4 No new heritage assets were identified during this survey. The findings of the survey have been used to inform this assessment.

Previous Archaeological Work

- 1.2.5 The Site includes an area where archaeological monitoring (NK04NE0137; HA6) was undertaken by GUARD Archaeology between June 2023 and November 2024 during ground investigation works for the Netherton Hub. Although most of the 46 boreholes and 133 trial pits revealed no features of archaeological significance, two possible features were recorded: a linear cut in TP222 and a large sub-oval pit in TP231. Neither contained datable material, and their function remains uncertain.

Baseline Discussion

- 1.2.6 There are 14 heritage assets within the baseline study areas supporting this appraisal. 11 non-designated heritage assets (HA2, HA3, HA4, HA6, HA7, HA8, HA9, HA10, HA11, HA12, and HA14) are located within the Site, consisting of post-medieval farmsteads, other buildings, and probable agricultural remains. There are a further two non-designated heritage assets located within the Inner Study Area, consisting of post-medieval buildings.
- 1.2.7 One designated heritage asset Easterton of Lenabo Airship Station (SM13679; HA1), is located within the Outer Study Area, approximately 670 m south of the Site.
- 1.2.8 Heritage assets within the study areas are discussed by archaeological period, from prehistoric through to modern. Their locations are depicted in **Figure 6.1: Cultural Heritage Assets (Volume 2)**.

Prehistoric Period (13,000 BCE to CE 400)

- 1.2.9 In northeast Scotland, the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods spanned from the end of the last glaciation around 13,000 BCE to the beginning of agriculture around 4,000 BCE. During this time, human activity was characterised by nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyles, with small communities moving seasonally to exploit resources in coastal, riverine, and woodland environments. Archaeological evidence from this period elsewhere in Scotland includes lithic scatters, shell middens, and occupation layers in caves and rock shelters. However, such archaeological remains are rare or absent in inland Buchan.
- 1.2.10 During the Palaeolithic and Early Mesolithic, the now-submerged landmass known as Doggerland connected northeast Scotland to continental Europe, enabling human migration and the diffusion of technologies and subsistence strategies. This connection was severed by around 6,500 BCE due to post-glacial sea-level rise.
- 1.2.11 There is no direct evidence for Palaeolithic or Mesolithic activity within the Site or study areas. However, the area's elevated setting and proximity to watercourses would have made it suitable for temporary or seasonal use. The absence of heritage assets may reflect the limited archaeological visibility of early prehistoric remains, rather than a lack of past activity.
- 1.2.12 The Neolithic and Bronze Age periods are currently not well represented in the heritage asset record for the Site and study areas. Although other heritage assets from this period are present in the wider area, such as find spots of polished stone tools and burial cairns like Cairn Catto long cairn (SM3276), 1.7km south west of the Site, no equivalent heritage assets have yet been identified within the study areas.
- 1.2.13 The Iron Age (c. 800 BCE to CE 400) in northeast Scotland saw increasing evidence for nucleated and often defended settlement forms, such as hillforts, enclosed farmsteads, and roundhouses. The introduction of iron tools and weapons coincided with more intensive land use and agricultural practices, including the construction of storage pits and field systems. However, no confirmed Iron Age features have been recorded within the study areas. The absence of settlement features or

artefactual material from this period may reflect the limited scope of past archaeological investigation, as well as the re-use of an earlier settlement by later inhabitants.

- 1.2.14 The walkover survey noted scattered flint fragments in ploughed fields to the east and south of the area where archaeological monitoring (NK04NE0137; HA6) was undertaken. While likely natural due to proximity to the Boddam prehistoric flint mining area, their presence suggests potential for prehistoric flint working in the study area. This supports speculative prehistoric activity, even though no formal heritage assets were identified.

Pictish Period (CE 297- CE 800)

- 1.2.15 The Pictish period, which overlaps with the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval period, is typically represented in the archaeological record by settlement activity, fortified enclosures, and symbol stones. Pictish society was hierarchical, structured into a network of kingdoms and sub-kingdoms ruled by kings and local chiefs, often operating from prominent or defensible locations.
- 1.2.16 Heritage assets belonging to this period tend to be concentrated along river corridors and coastal lowlands, reflecting patterns of movement, trade, and agricultural productivity. No heritage assets of Pictish origin have been recorded within the Site or study areas. The landscape may have functioned as a rural hinterland exploited for grazing or seasonal resources, rather than as a focus of settlement or ceremonial activity.

Medieval Period (CE 800 – CE 1614)

- 1.2.17 The medieval period in northeast Scotland witnessed the gradual emergence and consolidation of rural settlement, often structured around estates or farmsteads. In inland areas, including the Site and study areas, the pattern of settlement was typically dispersed, with small-scale crofts or cottages supporting agricultural subsistence.
- 1.2.18 Little Dens farmstead (NK04SE0091; HA13) represents a now-destroyed farmstead shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1867), 50 m north of the Site. The steading appears to have consisted of three linked buildings arranged in an L-plan, including an attached horse mill and a garden enclosure. Although labelled as “medieval,” the first documentary appearance of the site is post-medieval; nonetheless, the architectural arrangement may reflect an earlier origin or persistence of medieval farming traditions.
- 1.2.19 No other firmly dated medieval heritage assets have been identified within the Site, and it is likely that the area was being used for rural, agricultural activity related to the farmstead.

Post-medieval Period (CE 1614 - CE 1900)

- 1.2.20 The post-medieval period in northeast Scotland was shaped by gradual but significant changes in rural settlement, landholding, and agricultural practice. Following the Reformation and the Union of the Crowns, landownership structures began to formalise, with many estates consolidated under lairdly control. Agricultural improvement intensified from the 18th century onward, driven by Enlightenment ideals, landlord investment, and later by legislative changes such as the 1845 Poor Law Act and 1886 Crofters Act. These processes led to both continuity and disruption—while many smallholdings persisted, others were absorbed or abandoned, contributing to the pattern of dispersed crofts, steadings, and estate holdings evident on 19th-century maps. Several heritage assets observed during the walkover survey reflect post-medieval rural settlement and agricultural activity.
- 1.2.21 Netherton Cottage (NK04NE0061; HA9) was mapped on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey, 80 m east of the Site, but is no longer extant and it suggests either a tenant holding or a cottar's dwelling. During the walkover survey, it was found as rubble along the field boundaries, consistent with the remains of small-scale crofting structures.

- 1.2.22 The area of Little Dens contains three heritage assets belonging to the post-medieval period. These include two crofts (NK04SE0090; HA12) located within the Site; a cluster of three crofts (NK04SE0089; HA11) located 10 m to the west of the Site, and a large farmstead (NK04SE0091; HA13) located 50 m north of the Site. All aforementioned farmsteads and crofts are clearly depicted on both the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps. As crofting communities often combined subsistence farming with seasonal labour, these structures may have supported a semi-self-sufficient household economy. The Little Dens Cottages (NK04SE0089; HA11) showed no surviving remains during the walkover survey and are likely to have been removed through long-term cultivation. The cluster of settlement in the Little Dens area was sufficient in this period to warrant the presence of a school (NK04SE0088; HA10) for the children of the families living there. The school is shown roofed on the 1st edition OS map but depicted as roofless by the 1888 edition. This change may reflect a short-lived institution or an early relocation of local schooling provision, possibly due to the introduction of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act which restructured national education.
- 1.2.23 Three additional heritage assets, located within the Site, including a croft (NK04SW0026; HA2) and two farmsteads (HA3, HA7) further illustrate the post-medieval rural character. These are depicted on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps, reinforcing the continuity of rural occupation and land management practices during the 18th and 19th centuries. Access to Auchtydore Croft (NK04SW0026; HA2) was not possible, and there were no clear vantage points from nearby roads for photography. The walkover survey revealed that Braeside Farmstead (NK04SW0027; HA3) was reduced to a heap of stones at the edge of an arable field, indicating a now-destroyed farmstead. Two heritage assets, a cottage (NK04SW0043; HA4) located within the Site and a house (NRHE77097; HA5), located 100 m east of the Site, both depicted in the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps, are sites of now destroyed post-medieval structures. However, the walkover survey suggests that the house (HA5) may have some remains associated to the original building still extant. At Ludquharn cottage (NK04SW0043; HA4), a short section of drystone wall and upright stones was observed, suggesting a former gateway, possibly part of a post-medieval farmstead.
- 1.2.24 Within the Site, archaeological investigations at Netherton (NK04NE0137; HA6) provide further evidence for the long-term use of the area. Monitoring of boreholes and trial pits in 2023 and 2024 recorded a possible linear feature and a large pit, both undated but potentially indicative of earlier land boundaries, drainage, or agricultural activity. While no artefacts were recovered, these features hint at phases of land use that may pre-date or overlap with the mapped post-medieval settlement.
- 1.2.25 Taken together, these heritage assets provide a representative sample of post-medieval settlement and land use in the study areas. They reflect broader regional trends, such as dispersed rural occupation, incremental improvement, and socio-economic adaptation, while also offering locally specific insights into life in the study area during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Modern Period (CE 1901 – present)

- 1.2.26 The modern period in this part of Aberdeenshire saw the continued evolution of rural land use, settlement contraction, and infrastructural development shaped by agricultural mechanisation, depopulation, and national shifts in energy and transport policy. Many small-scale crofts and farm buildings became redundant or were amalgamated into larger holdings, while services such as schools and rural roads were rationalised or rerouted in the 20th century.
- 1.2.27 One Scheduled Monument, Easterton of Lenabo Airship Station (SM13679; HA1), is found within the Outer Study Area, which comprises a World War I airship complex called Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Longside, established in 1915 and abandoned in 1920. The monument is visible as a group of extensive, ground level concrete pads and upstanding concrete structures. The Lenabo Airship Station was visited and photographed, with surviving concrete remains of runways and buildings observed.

- 1.2.28 Historic maps hint at the subtle but cumulative transformation of the landscape during the 20th century. Though less visually prominent than earlier crofts or farmsteads, modern development represents a continuation of land-use adaptation that bridges the historical and contemporary rural environment.

Archaeological Potential

- 1.2.29 This section discusses the archaeological potential of the Site to contain currently unknown archaeological remains. The archaeological potential is assessed for each chronological period, based on the archaeological and historical background of the area, its geology and topography, the likelihood for evidence of past activity, and considering past disturbance which may have affected survival. For example, the Site may have high potential for the presence of an activity of a particular period, but with low survival. This section also includes professional opinion on the likely value of such remains, where there is low to high potential for such to be present. For each chronological period where the potential is assessed as negligible, this implies that remains from the period are not anticipated to be present in the Site, and an assessment of value is not made.

Factors affecting archaeological survival

- 1.2.30 The Site lies within an area predominantly underlain by the Banchory Till Formation, interspersed in places with glaciofluvial sands and gravels that provide more favourable drainage. These free-draining deposits, combined with the gently undulating topography, would have offered suitable conditions for prehistoric and later settlement, particularly in proximity to local watercourses. The underlying Dalradian metamorphic bedrock and nearby granite plutons have had little direct impact on soil fertility but have influenced building material availability in the wider area. Historic land use has been dominated by agriculture, with evidence of post-medieval crofts, farmsteads, and associated field systems in the vicinity. The walkover survey confirmed that only a limited number of heritage assets within the study area retain upstanding remains. The Lenabo Airship Station (SM13679; HA1) retains visible concrete elements of former runways and supporting structures, albeit within dense woodland. At Ludquharn (NK04SW0043; HA4), a short section of drystone wall survives within the roadside hedgerow, including two upright stones that may represent the remains of a former gateway. Elsewhere, survival is generally restricted to fragmentary boundary features such as walls or hedgerows, with most other heritage assets, such as former cottages and farmsteads, reduced to rubble or entirely removed by long-term agricultural use and modern development.
- 1.2.31 Ploughing, clearance, and minor building works may have truncated shallow archaeological deposits, but features cut into the subsoil, such as pits, postholes, or ditches, are likely to survive where ground disturbance has been limited. This is supported by archaeological monitoring at Netherton (NK04NE0137; HA6), where undated but well-defined cut features in the form of a possible linear ditch and a sub-oval pit, were recorded despite a history of agricultural use.

Prehistoric Period

- 1.2.32 The Site has low potential to contain prehistoric remains. There are no recorded heritage assets of prehistoric date within the Site, and the Inner and Outer Study Areas do not contain any confirmed sites from this period. The region of Aberdeenshire contains an abundance of prehistoric heritage assets elsewhere, so the lack of evidence in the study areas is likely to reflect limited archaeological investigation and visibility rather than an absence of past activity. The elevated setting and proximity to watercourses would have been suitable for temporary use during the earlier prehistoric periods, and any such remains would be of low to medium value.

Pictish Period

- 1.2.33 The Site has negligible potential to contain remains dating to the Pictish period. No symbol stones, fortified sites, or reused enclosures that are characteristic of the period, have been identified within the Site or study areas. Pictish activity is well attested in the wider Aberdeenshire region, particularly along major river valleys. However, there is no archaeological or historical evidence to suggest that this landscape functioned as a settlement or ceremonial centre.

Medieval Period

- 1.2.34 The Site has low potential to contain medieval remains. There is no definitive archaeological evidence of medieval activity within the Site, and the majority of mapped heritage assets date to the post-medieval period. However, one heritage asset within the Inner Study Area comprises a steading (NK04SE0091; HA13) first documented on 19th-century mapping that may incorporate elements of earlier origin. Given the rural and agricultural character of the area during the medieval period, any surviving remains are likely to be associated with agricultural land use of negligible to low value and may be difficult to distinguish from post-medieval features without further investigation.

Post-medieval Period

- 1.2.35 The Site has low potential to contain post-medieval archaeological remains. Historic mapping and HER data confirm that the area supported dispersed rural occupation during the post-medieval period. The current range of known archaeological evidence and historic mapping suggests that it is unlikely that there will be unknown post-medieval archaeological remains surviving below-ground as the majority of field boundaries and areas of agriculture have remained as such since this period. If present, remains would likely be related to cultivation remains and drainage, and would be of negligible value.

Annex A: Cultural Heritage Gazetteer

Heritage Asset No.	Reference No.	National Grid Reference		Designation	Site Name	Description	Period
		Easting	Northing				
HA1	SM13679 NRHE ID 81604 HER ID NK04SW0025, NK04SW0075	403051	842593	Scheduled Monument	Easterton of Lenabo, airship station	The asset is the core of a First World War airship complex called Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Longside established in 1915 and abandoned in 1920. It comprises the bases of three airship hangars and the adjacent remains of hardstanding, windbreaks and associated structures and deposits. The monument is visible as a group of extensive, ground level concrete pads and upstanding concrete structures.	Modern
HA2	NRHE ID 143715 HER ID NK04SW0026	403330	843472	Non-Designated	Auchtydore croft	Site of a building, possibly a croft, depicted on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps with an attached enclosure.	Post-medieval
HA3	NRHE ID 143716 HER ID NK04SW0027	403706	844075	Non-Designated	Braeside farmstead	The asset consists of the site of a farmstead. The OS 1st edition map shows an L-plan range, a long rectangular building and three to four other buildings and two enclosures. The layout is similar on the OS 2nd edition 1888 map, although another wing has been added to the east end.	Post-medieval
HA4	HER ID NK04SW0043	403674	844233	Non-Designated	Ludquharn cottage	Site of a now destroyed building, probably a cottage, shown on both the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps. It is depicted as a small rectangular building within an enclosure.	Post-medieval
HA5	NRHE ID 77097	404300	844800	Non-Designated	Nether Kinmundy	Described as a house, and depicted on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps. Appears to be altered, however some remains of the house may still be extant.	Post-medieval
HA6	NRHE ID 383046 NK04NE0137	405383	845957	Non-Designated	Netherton ditches and pits	Two archaeological features were found during a watching brief related to the Netherton Hub: a possible linear feature at least 2.9 m long and 0.27 m wide in TP222, and a large sub-oval pit measuring at least 1.7 m by 0.9 m in TP231, but neither contained dated material.	Post-medieval

Heritage Asset No.	Reference No.	National Grid Reference		Designation	Site Name	Description	Period
		Easting	Northing				
						They are interpreted as agricultural remains.	
HA7	NRHE ID 20998 HER ID NK04NE0108	405343	845340	Non-Designated	Inverveddie farmstead	Farmstead, still in use, depicted on historic OS maps. The 1st and 2nd edition maps show a quadrangular steading with attached horse-mill, four buildings to the east and a garden to the west. There have since been alterations and additions.	Post-medieval
HA8	HER ID NK04NE0085	405538	845489	Non-Designated	Netherton farmstead	Farmstead depicted on historic OS maps.	Post-medieval
HA9	HER ID NK04NE0061	406008	845308	Non-Designated	Netherton cottage	Site of a now destroyed building, probably a cottage, shown on the 2nd edition OS map.	Post-medieval
HA10	HER ID NK04SE0088	406559	843961	Non-Designated	Little Dens school	Site of a now destroyed school which is depicted on the 1867 1st edition OS map. On the 2nd edition map, the school building is shown as roofless.	Post-medieval
HA11	HER ID NK04SE0089	406643	844014	Non-Designated	Little Dens cottages	Site of three now crofts or cottages, each with an enclosure, which are depicted on the 1867 1st edition OS map. By the 2nd edition map, only 2 crofts are shown.	Post-medieval
HA12	HER ID NK04SE0090	406744	844082	Non-Designated	Little Dens crofts	Site of two crofts which are depicted on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps.	Post-medieval
HA13	HER ID NK04SE0091	406861	844176	Non-Designated	Little Dens farmstead	Site of a now destroyed farmstead which is depicted on the 1867 1st edition OS map. It shows three linked buildings arranged on an L-plan, the westernmost with an attached horse mill, the eastern one with an attached garden enclosure at its north end. The horse mill had been removed by the time of the OS 2nd edition 1888 map, as had part of the eastern building leaving the southern end as a detached building.	Medieval
HA14	NRHE ID 77131 HER ID NK04SE0035	407000	844000	Non-Designated	Dens house, The Lady of Craig's Place	The location in this record may not be accurate. There are no buildings or features reflected on the historic OS maps. It is possible that the heritage asset lay outside of the study area.	Post-medieval