

**Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV  
OHL Connection  
Environmental Impact Assessment  
Volume 5 | Technical Appendix**

**Appendix 12.2 | Archaeological  
Historical Background**

**July 2025**



## **VOLUME 2: APPENDIX 12.2: ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

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# 1. ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

## 1.1 Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic (c. 12,700 – c. 4,100 BCE)

- 1.1.1 The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods represent the earliest phases of human activity, prior to the introduction of farming. The Highlands experienced a dramatic climatic shift during these periods, from pre-boreal to boreal around 18,000 BCE. After the shift to a boreal climate and glacial recession, repopulation in Britain (c.12,700 cal BCE) conformed to a tripartite process of rapid expansionism, consolidation and a late Mesolithic expansion following complete deglaciation. This phased approach saw developments in hunter-gatherer-fisher resource exploitation in the region and variably across Scotland.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.1.2 The archaeological evidence for the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods in the Scottish Highlands primarily comes from caves, rock shelters, middens, and surface scatters. These sites were used temporarily and often seasonally. On the east coast of the Highlands, evidence of Mesolithic shell middens has emerged, suggesting consistent and sustainable marine exploitation patterns. Flint working at cave sites and lithic outcrops indicate the manufacturing of tools and that the development of a lithic toolkit was taking place, utilising both advantageous sources, as well as potentially distant higher quality source material. Theories concerning communicable landscapes may have seen the highly mobile populace traverse significant distances and cyclically revisit areas to harvest resources and establish a temporary or semi-sedentary presence without exhausting their resource base(s).

## 1.2 Neolithic (c. 4,100 – c. 2,500 BCE)

- 1.2.1 Practices including cereal cultivation, animal domestication, pottery production and use, and monumentality demonstrate the adaptation and move towards sedentism. These are indicative of the process of 'neolithisation', and they define the beginnings of the Neolithic period.
- 1.2.2 In addition to developments in farming and agriculture, the monumentalisation of ritual/ceremonial and/or processual activity becomes visible through megalithic constructions that served to separate the living spaces from those of the dead, while also imbuing the landscape with both a power-scape and a navigational dynamic.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the specialised carvings on megalithic constructions as well as natural outcrops may have served as navigation aids for purposes of transportation and communications, but were often re-purposed into later prehistoric structures, indicating their significance, multi-faceted use and dynamic meanings.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.2.3 Cultural diversity in patterns and production can be observed between settled peoples, with an increasingly complex lithic and composite toolset that included polished stone axes and adzes. These advancements saw the highly mobile precursor Mesolithic populations creating timber-framed buildings and engaging in environmental management practices. The hunter-gatherer-fisher practices continued in small part but were eventually fully superseded by a sedentary agrarian lifestyle and associated world view.
- 1.2.4 Few known archaeological sites in the Highlands are confirmed as being of Neolithic date. The closest substantive example to the Proposed Development is Tarradale on the east coast. This site contained a chambered cairn, arrow heads, and stone axes, identified as a result of the Tarradale Archaeological Project.

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<sup>1</sup> ScARF, 3.1 Climate Changes in Scotland from the last Glacial Maximum c.16000 yrs BP to c. 6000 BP. < <https://scarf.scot/national/palaeolithic-mesolithic-panel-report/3-environment/3-1-climate-changes-in-scotland-from-the-last-glacial-maximum-c-16000-yrs-bp-to-c-6000-bp/> > [Accessed 15/09/2023].

<sup>2</sup> ScARF, Neolithic Introduction <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/neolithic/5-1-introduction/>> [Accessed 15/09/2023].

<sup>3</sup> ScRAP, Rock Art of Scotland - Scotland's Rock Art Project.

- 1.2.5 Neolithic to early Bronze Age rock art can be found in high concentrations along the major waterways of the Dornoch, Cromarty, and Moray Firths, throughout much of the Proposed Development area. Other sites in the vicinity include possible houses and pits at Kinbeachie, and pits and pottery at Lewiston.
- 1.2.6 The majority of reliably dated Neolithic sites in the Highlands are located near Inverness, which is to the south of the Proposed Development area, as well as in proximity to waterbodies.<sup>4</sup> There remains some modest potential for unknown sites to survive within the region of the Proposed Development, especially to the south as it approaches Inverness.

### 1.3 Bronze Age (c. 2500 – c. 800 BCE)

- 1.3.1 The Bronze Age in the East Coast of Scotland region was marked by the arrival of 'Beaker' culture, which introduced metalworking techniques alongside highly characteristic forms of beaker pottery. The region's metalwork industry, known as the 'Migdale-Marnoch', produced a variety of artefacts, including axe heads, halberds, daggers, awls, razors, and jewellery. Bronze artefacts have been found in various locations, including Caithness, and were used to highlight the affluence and social standing of their owners.<sup>5</sup> More elaborate trade networks than had existed previously were also established, helping to spread bronze material and objects across the Highlands.
- 1.3.2 The region experienced a significant intensification of agriculture (barley being a preferred crop) during this period.<sup>6</sup> Evidence for domesticated animals, such as sheep, cattle, and pigs, is also present in great quantity. Evidence of hunting and gathering is limited due to the acidic soils, but there are numerous finds of barbed and tanged arrowheads suggesting that hunting was also part of Bronze Age subsistence strategies, as well as evidencing episodes of internecine conflict/warfare.
- 1.3.3 Bronze Age communities used their better developed and more robust food exploitation strategies to expand further into the uplands than had previous populations. These communities also created enigmatic middens of heated and fire-cracked stone known as 'burnt mounds' near their settlements; possibly related to food preparation and/or production, burnt mounds are a significant archaeological find, often indicative of nearby settlement.<sup>7</sup> Hillforts also started to come into use during this period, though the majority of the known examples in the Highlands date to the subsequent Iron Age.

### 1.4 Iron Age & Roman (c. 800 BCE – c. 300 CE)

- 1.4.1 During this period, iron working metallurgical techniques were introduced to society in the Highlands and thus defined the age.<sup>8</sup> The Iron Age population saw a material level of expansion and society became more hierarchical, with clans based on kinship and loyalty thought to have competed for land and resources. These peoples developed their own distinctive language, art, religion, and culture which is well reflected in the archaeological record.
- 1.4.2 One key cultural development during this period was the introduction of various distinctive monumentality forms associated with settlement activity, such as brochs, hillforts, crannogs, and souterrains, built strategically on

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<sup>4</sup> ScARF, Neolithic Settlement. <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/neolithic/5-3-settlement-evidence/>> [Accessed 04/12/2023].

<sup>5</sup> ScARF, 6.4.3.2 Metalwork in the Highlands <https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/bronze-age/6-4-daily-life/6-4-3-material-culture/6-4-3-2-metalwork/> [Accessed 15/09/2023].

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> The function of burnt mounds is highly contested, and a full discussion is outside the scope of this assessment.

<sup>8</sup> ScARF, Iron Age <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/iron-age/>> Accessed 15/09/2023.; Hatherley, Candy 2015c 'Atlantic Roundhouses and the Prehistoric Settlement Archaeology of the Moray Firthlands', Unpublished PhD, University of Aberdeen

hills or islands. Despite the diversity of settlement, regional trends are evident; on the east coast, for example, Atlantic round houses, brochs and/or galleried duns are most numerous.<sup>9</sup>

- 1.4.3 To support the rising populations and settlements in the Highlands, Iron Age people continued to rely more heavily on agricultural practices for food production. Woodlands were increasingly cleared in order to create additional farmland. Grinding stones or 'querns', of both saddle quern and rotary quern type, are common on Highland Iron Age sites, though the date and circumstances of the change from saddle querns to rotary querns are still poorly understood.<sup>10</sup>
- 1.4.4 The arrival of the Romans in the Highlands was less socially impactful than in other parts of Scotland.<sup>11</sup> Tacitus's discussion of the Agricola campaign is the primary source of information regarding Roman incursion into the Highlands that occurred from 77 to 84 CE, as well as of any information regarding the naval or fleet support that would have arrived from the east coast.<sup>12</sup>
- 1.4.5 Less evidence of large Roman permanent settlements exists from this period in the Highlands compared to other parts of Scotland. What archaeological evidence exists is isolated in nature, such as the Belladrum coin hoard (MHG56866) near Beaully, circa 5 km from the southern end of the Proposed Development, and a substantive Roman house in Culduthel.
- 1.4.6 Further north, Roman finds tend to consist of status items that have been identified along the coast, such as the silver crossbow brooch (MHG10872) recovered to the south of Brora and the horde of copper bowls at Helmsdale (MHG10138).<sup>13</sup> This suggests that any Roman finds that may survive buried in proximity to the Proposed Development would likely be towards the east coast and would more likely comprise findspots of ex situ artefacts. It is improbable that any substantive Roman settlement remains survive within the Proposed Development and none would be anticipated.

## 1.5 Early Medieval (c. 300 - c. 1000 CE)

- 1.5.1 The Picts dominated eastern Scotland and the Highlands until the 9th century CE.<sup>14</sup> Comparatively fewer Pictish settlement sites have been identified in Northern Pictland than in Atlantic Pictland, as illustrated in **Plate 1**.<sup>15</sup> The nearest major settlement in Northern Pictland is East Lomond, which was a settlement containing wooden structures and livestock enclosures. However, in Caithness (Atlantic Pictland), Pictish settlement is better represented in the archaeological record.

<sup>9</sup> ScARF, Iron Age <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/iron-age/>> [Accessed 15/09/2023]; Candy Hatherley (2015) 'Atlantic Roundhouses and the Prehistoric Settlement Archaeology of the Moray Firthlands', Unpublished PhD, University of Aberdeen.

<sup>10</sup> Dawn McLaren (2021) 'The stone artefacts' in forthcoming Culduthel: An Iron Age craftworking settlement, Inverness, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

<sup>11</sup> ScARF, Roman Activity in the Highlands <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/iron-age/7-4-daily-life/7-4-3-roman-activity-in-the-highlands/>> [Accessed on 15/10/2023].

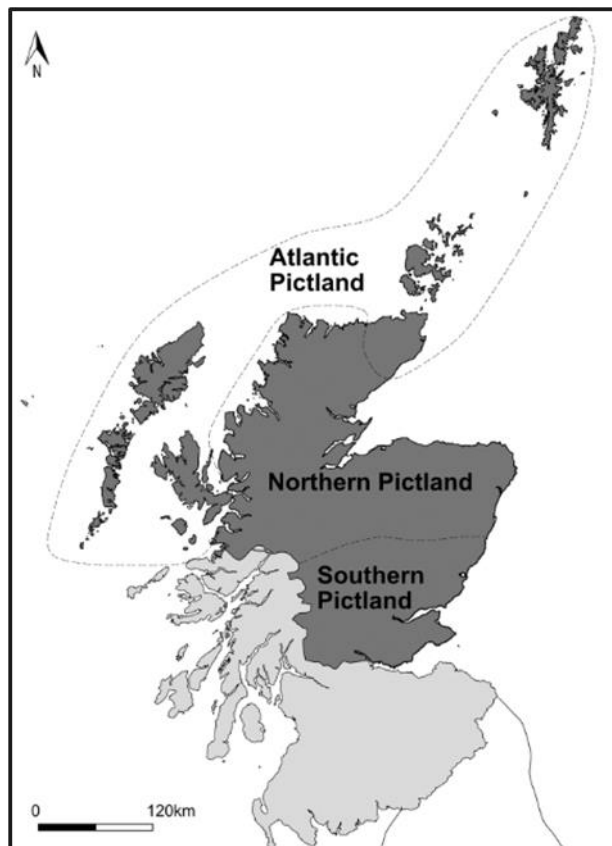
<sup>12</sup> The Centre for Scottish Culture, Scottish History at a Glance: Agricola's Caledonian Campaign (2021) <<https://dundeescottishculture.org/history/scottish-history-at-a-glance-agricolas-caledonian-campaign/>> [Accessed 21/12/2023].

<sup>13</sup> ScARF, Roman Activity in the Highlands <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/iron-age/7-4-daily-life/7-4-3-roman-activity-in-the-highlands/>> [Accessed on 15/10/2023].

<sup>14</sup> ScARF, *Early Medieval Introduction* <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/early-Medieval/8-1-introduction/>> [Accessed 15/09/2023].

<sup>15</sup> Gordon Noble, Nicholas Evans (2022) *Picts: Scourge of the Rome, Rulers of the North*.

**Plate 1: after Gordon Noble (2023), showing division of Pictish cultural areas<sup>16</sup>**



- 1.5.2 In Atlantic Pictland there is evidence of a move away from roundhouses and towards cellular structures (also known as wags) and figure of eight structures. Cattle husbandry was a major economic activity in the region, and the intricate stone carvings for which the Pictish culture is best known are present in higher concentration than in Northern Pictland.
- 1.5.3 The Pictish trails along the eastern coast of the Highlands are modern tourism areas that showcase Pictish stones found in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development lies within what was once the Cait Pictish kingdom in the north and the Fidach kingdom to the south.<sup>17</sup> The end of Pictish occupation has long been debated by scholars,<sup>18</sup> but is likely to have been the result of incursions from the Gaelic kingdom of Alba as well as Norse populations.
- 1.5.4 Viking raids and settlement were taking place by the end of the First Millennium CE. Early medieval settlements, such as the vitrified Iron Age hillfort of Craig Phadrig (MHG3809) in Inverness, is considered evidence of the need for such fortified settlements to protect inhabitants from foreign incursion. Vikings established trade and agricultural settlements and major settlements in the Orkney Islands and Caithness. Viking graves have also been identified in Caithness. Overall, however, there is a low likelihood of buried archaeological remains of Viking origin surviving in the northern part of the Proposed Development.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Clan Strachan Society, History of Clan Strachan: Picts in Strachan (2005) <[http://www.clanstrachan.org/history/history\\_pictland.html](http://www.clanstrachan.org/history/history_pictland.html)> [Accessed 27/11/2023]

<sup>18</sup> Gordon Noble, Nicholas Evans (2022) Picts: Scourge of the Rome, Rulers of the North.

## 1.6 Medieval (c. 1000 – c. 1500 CE)

- 1.6.1 The medieval period was influenced by a blend of political and cultural influences, with the Highlands being a contested frontier region.<sup>19</sup> Caithness and Sutherland were heavily influenced by Norse culture, supposedly answering to the Kingdom of Norway for both ecclesiastical and secular matters.<sup>20</sup> However, from the eleventh century the Kingdom of Scotland, based in the Lowlands, extended its territory into the eastern Highlands.<sup>21</sup>
- 1.6.2 The eastern highlands was only a nominal zone of authority of the Kingdom of Scotland as many Highlanders saw the earlship of Orkney and Caithness as the true power in the region.<sup>22</sup> Despite the eventual absorption of the northern Highlands into the realm of the Kingdom of Scotland by the thirteenth century through complex inter-dynastic relationships and intermarriages, there remained cultural and political tensions between the Highlands and the Lowlands.<sup>23</sup> The region was divided further into sub-regions, with richer agriculturally productive regions in the east.
- 1.6.3 Cultivation expanded during this period, with barley, oats, rye, wheat, and flax being the most common crops. Evidence of charred oat and other cereals can be found at sites like Glassknapper's Cave, Freswick, and Portmahomack. Evidence of grain drying kilns in Inverness and evidence of commercial fish processing and freshwater fishing are also found. Taken together, it can be inferred that the Highlands primarily supported dispersed agro-pastoral settlements. The practice of sheiling use became popular during the medieval period along with wide-spread rig and furrow cultivation practices. However, very few rural settlements have been identified in the region, and it is not possible to draw larger conclusions about rural life during the period.
- 1.6.4 High status structures, such as castles, became a common means of extending the power of the Kingdom of Scotland from the twelfth century, both symbolically and militarily. Castles in the style of those built by the Kingdom of Scotland were adopted by Highland rulers as a symbol of authority.<sup>24</sup> However, there was already a tradition of stone built defensive and residential structures in the Highlands dating as early as the Iron Age. An important castle near the Proposed Development is Dunrobin Castle (LB7044), which is the largest castle in the northern Highlands, occupied by the Earl of Sutherland since the early 1300s. The use of coastal promontories for siting late medieval castles, and possibly earlier, is a particular characteristic of Caithness.

## 1.7 Post-Medieval to Modern (c. 1500 CE – PRESENT)

- 1.7.1 By the beginning of the post-medieval period, the Highlands were part of the Kingdom of Scotland, but the political relationship between the Highlands and Lowlands was not amicable and conflict was frequent.<sup>25</sup> The clan system continued to underpin the social structure of the Highlands despite the nominal authority of the Kingdom of Scotland.<sup>26</sup> Religious change in the wake of the Protestant Reformation was a major feature of life for those at the outset to this period, as religion was often integral to kin, language, and identity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> ScARF, Medieval Introduction <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/Medieval/9-1-introduction/>> [Accessed 15/09/2023].

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> ScARF, Castles and High Status Sites <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/Medieval/9-3-settlement-evidence/9-3-4-castles-and-high-status-sites/>> [Accessed 04/15/2023].

<sup>25</sup> ScARF, Post-Medieval Introduction <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/post-medieval/10-1-introduction/>> [Accessed 21st December 2023].

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



- 1.7.2 Although the kingdoms of Scotland and England became dynastically unified in 1603 with the accession of James VI/I, it was not until 1707 that the kingdoms became politically unified.<sup>28</sup> It was during this period that social change in the Highlands appears to have accelerated, with chiefs becoming landowners and the aristocracy developing a more economic mindset.<sup>29</sup> The socio-economic change at the highest levels of Highland society inevitably impacted the lives of Highlanders under them.
- 1.7.3 One of the most impactful events of this period was the Highland Clearances, which began in 1747 when the English government passed the Heritable Jurisdiction Act. The Heritable Jurisdiction Act stated that anyone in the Highlands who did not submit to the English monarchy would forfeit their land. This resulted in the displacement of thousands of people living in the Highland inland area who were often relocated to coastal towns, where land was more conducive to arable, or who emigrated abroad. Many sheilings in the region were abandoned and more housing was constructed near to coastal towns. The land vacated was used for sheep husbandry. The shape of Highland society was changed, Gaelic culture and language was disrupted, and Highlanders struggled for land rights into the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> To some extent, the cultural and psychological impact of the events of this period persist to present.<sup>31</sup>

## **1.8 Northern Lowland (Section A)**

- 1.8.1 These sections of the Proposed Development are the northernmost, and they occupy primarily inland flatlands, traversing north between the peatlands of East Halladale and Munsary-Shielton. Known receptor types within these sections range from Neolithic stone circles to Iron Age brochs, of which Caithness has the highest concentration compared to elsewhere in Scotland,<sup>32</sup> and settlement activity of both (pre)historic and modern date.
- 1.8.2 Mesolithic sites in these sections of the Proposed Development include two lithic scatters at Knockdee (240606), which comprise 900 lithic pieces combined. A Mesolithic survey conducted in 1990 recorded Mesolithic findspots in the area, and eight narrow blade microliths dating to the Mesolithic were recovered from beneath Camster Long Cairn.<sup>33</sup> Camster Long Cairn itself dates to the Neolithic, but the presence of artefacts pre-dating its construction suggests a potential continuation of occupation, attachment to place and ritual practice across the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition.<sup>34</sup> There is considered to be a higher potential for the survival of Mesolithic sites, primarily flint scatters, along this section than elsewhere.
- 1.8.3 During the Neolithic, Caithness was characterised by birch forests and mires. There is a paucity of direct evidence for settlement in the area, though there is a pattern of funerary monumentality. These monuments include clusters of chambered cairns, three of which are located on the North bank of Loch Calder. Tulloch of Assery A, Tulloch of Assery B, and Tulach an t'Sionnaich are all chambered cairns of varying size and shape, and a good example of similar Neolithic funerary monument groupings located throughout this area and nationally.<sup>35</sup>

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28 ScARF, National Framework: Colonialism and Empire <<https://scarf.scot/national/scarf-modern-panel-report/3-global-localities/3-2-colonialism-and-empire/>> [Accessed 21st December 2023].

29 ScARF, Post-Medieval Introduction <<https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/post-medieval/10-1-introduction/>> [Accessed 21st December 2023].

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Caithness Broch Project: The Big Broch Build - Caithness Broch Project [Accessed 26th November 2024].

33 C.R. Wickham-Jones & C. Firth (1990a) 'Mesolithic survey', *Discovery Excav Scot*, 1990. Page(s): 22

34 Ashmore, P.J. (2000) *Neolithic and Bronze Age Scotland*, Historic Environment Scotland. Page(s): 29-31.

35 Ibid.



- 1.8.4 The Bronze Age saw the establishment of bronze manufacturing and trade in the region alongside the expansion of settlements using agricultural and domesticated animal resources first introduced during the Neolithic. The tradition of funerary monumentality persists, whereas the direct evidence for settlement sites remains scarce. Bronze Age sites along this section of the Proposed Development are characterised by cairns, burials, and stone settings; settings, such as those found at Sithean, Achanarras (8304); Tormsdale (8242), Achavanich (317871), and Achkinloch (8271).
- 1.8.5 The landscape of Iron Age Caithness is characterised by brochs. While not much is known regarding their construction and use, they are imposing monuments that can extend to over 16m in height and would have undoubtedly stood out as focal points within the later prehistoric landscape. There is a concentration of brochs surrounding the Northern lowland section of the Proposed Development, raising the potential for associated Iron Age activity in this area. Being located within the Atlantic Pictland region, there is also the potential for Pictish sites to survive along this section.
- 1.8.6 Due primarily to landscape change reflective of political and socio-economic upheaval, the most numerous known archaeological receptors in this section relate to agriculture and enclosure from the medieval to post-medieval periods, particularly that associated with the Highland Clearances. The potential for unrecorded archaeological remains to survive along this section is comparatively high, given the widescale use of the area for grazing following clearance and the comparative lack of any substantive later development.

## **1.9 Central Upland Coastal (Sections A and B)**

- 1.9.1 The central upland sections of the Proposed Development occupy the northern mountainous coastal area along the Moray Firth before it moves further inland at Craigton. The east coast of the Scottish mainland along the Moray Firth retains a concentration of prehistoric landscape elements, including funerary and ritual monuments as well as domestic and defensive settlements.
- 1.9.2 In particular, the area contains Neolithic chambered cairn receptors (14795) and Iron Age brochs (6493), raising the potential for additional unrecorded prehistoric assets to survive buried. Information received following public engagement has identified 39 receptors near to the A1.5 section near Caen Burn that are not yet recorded within the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) data, many of which date to the prehistoric periods, others to the medieval and post-medieval periods. This may be indicative of a waterside settlement pattern, which varied throughout prehistory and formed the basis for further occupation.
- 1.9.3 As the area is coastal, any unrecorded Roman remains that might survive would likely be limited to small finds, rather than settlement features. A potential early medieval Danish battlefield (6499) is suggested to lie near Gordonbush, at the River Brora estuary. This site is where the Danes are thought possibly to have been repelled, potentially further underscoring the influence that the region's maritime associations had in shaping the history of the area.
- 1.9.4 The majority of the known archaeological receptors along this section relate to medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity, such as farmsteads (91504), corn drying kilns (132978), and dykes and dams (6515). This suggests that coastal communities relied upon both agricultural and marine resources for their livelihoods in the region after the population increase that followed the Highland Clearances. The nearby town of Helmsdale provides a focus for present-day pilgrimages by the ancestors of those affected by the Highland Clearances<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Timespan (2023) Personal Communication. Timespan's response to the proposed new overhead 400KV pylon connection: Spittal to Brora

The nearby town of Gartymore was also integral to the formation of the Highland Land League, and there is the potential for intangible as well as tangible heritage receptors within the area of both Gartymore and Helmsdale.

### **1.10 Central Riverine (Section C)**

1.10.1 This section is located near the confluence of the Rivers Oyke, Shin and Carron, with the Kyle of Sutherland, which flows into Bamburgh Bay. This strategic location has heavily influenced the history of the region.

1.10.2 Prehistoric receptors and chambered cairns (e.g., SM1817, SM1772) suggest prehistoric peoples occupied and exploited the riverine environs, developing a complex landscape of settlement, mortuary monumentality and communicable navigation and bounding. Its defensive location and potential are demonstrated by the presence of the medieval Invershin Castle remains (Canmore ID 13001). The Kyle of Sutherland and the River Carron also came to pose key obstacles and avenues of approach and retreat during the Battle of Carbisdale in 1650 (BTL19). The riverine sediments, known to have accumulated, within the region may overlie additional unknown archaeological receptors in certain locations locally.

### **1.11 Southern Lowland (Section D)**

1.11.1 These sections are located primarily in the foothill inland and lowland regions from Soyal in the north to Contin in the south. The area is interspersed with both rivers and lochs. Prehistoric hut circle settlements such as (SM4728), and high concentrations of cup-marked stones near Cnoc A'Bhreacaich and Strath Sgitheach indicate the presence of a complex prehistoric landscape, with peoples exploiting regional resources, raising the potential for additional buried prehistoric archaeological receptors to survive.

1.11.2 The North of Scotland Archaeological Society (NOSAS) has visited the area extensively as part of the Scotland Rock Art Project (ScRAP). NOSAS have suggested that the landscape be considered as a whole for its coherence and potential as a known ritual and funerary complex, and that rock art is difficult to identify due to the markings being obscured by moss<sup>37</sup>.

1.11.3 Local interest near the River Sgitheach and the surrounding areas has identified various linear crop mark features and ditches<sup>38</sup>. As such, remote sensing may be warranted in this area to further identify, analyse and interpret any such features<sup>39</sup>. There is also a large number of agricultural and residential receptors dating from the medieval to post-medieval periods including some identified by the Timespan team near Ardross<sup>40</sup>, raising the potential for further such receptors to survive unrecorded, preserved following the Highland Clearances.

### **1.12 Southern Uplands (Sections D and E)**

1.12.1 These sections extend along the uplands from Contin in the north, to Aigas in the south. These uplands are dissected by burns and rivers, with lochs interspersed throughout the region. There are numerous cairns and cairnfields (such as 12363), along with prehistoric forts (12375 and 12376), indicative of prehistoric settlement, mortuary monumentality, and communication in the region.

1.12.2 There are comparatively more known and established Roman sites in this region than elsewhere along the route, possibly resulting from the inland incursions associated with Agricola's campaign. It is possible that more substantive Roman settlement remains may survive locally.

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<sup>37</sup> Thompson, Alan (2023). Personal Communication. Member of NOSAS and ScRAP team.

<sup>38</sup> Womble, John (2023) Personal Communication Prehistoric Field Systems in the Dingwall Area of Easter Ross.

<sup>39</sup> Best Practice also dictates that aerial imagery and historical mapping be used along the entirety of the route during the EIA phase.

<sup>40</sup> Timespan (2023). Personal Communication. Remembering Ardross Area 27/02/2022.

- 1.12.3 Medieval and post-medieval settlements are also well represented within the area. One key receptor that lies along this section, is the Fairburn Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00174). There are also numerous farmsteads associated with regional agricultural activity. Further buried archaeological remains, not ploughed out in modern times, and further abandoned shielings may also survive locally.