Land adjacent to Cefn Road Wrexham

Archaeological Watching Brief



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wessexarchaeology



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Crynodeb

Comisiynwyd Wessex Archaeology gan Cefn Park Solar Ltd i gynnal briff gwylio archaeolegol yn ystod gwaith tir cysylltiedig â chodi fferm solar ar dir i'r gogledd o Cefn Road, Abenbury, Wrecsam, LL13 0PA.

Cynhaliwyd y briff gwylio yn ysbeidiol rhwng Hydref 2025 a Mehefin 2026 mewn perthynas â'r Ardal Archaeolegol Sensitif (ASA) a'i chylchfa glustogi gysylltiedig o 10 m. Roedd y gwaith a fonitrwyd yn cynnwys cloddio ffosydd ceblau ar gyfer teledu cylch cyfyng a cheblau paneli solar, ynghyd ag archwiliadau safle i adolygu gosodiad paneli solar o fewn yr ASA ac i gadarnhau eu bod wedi'u gosod ar yr wyneb yn hytrach na'u pentyrru, yn wahanol i'r gwaith pentyrru treiddiol i'r ddaear a ddefnyddiwyd ar draws rhannau eraill o'r Safle.

Roedd y gwaith cloddio a fonitrwyd yn cynnwys pedair ffos geblau. Lleolwyd Ffos 1 ar ymyl gogledd-orllewinol yr ASA ac fe'i cloddiwyd ar gyfer ceblau teledu cylch cyfyng. Lleolwyd Ffosydd 2–4 ar ymyl de-ddwyreiniol yr ASA a'r gylchfa glustogi 10 m, ac fe'u cloddiwyd ar gyfer ceblau paneli solar. Datgelodd y ffosydd a fonitrwyd ddilyniant stratigraffig cyson o uwchbridd tyweirch dros isbridd, gyda dyddodion arwynebol naturiol wedi'u hamlygu yn Ffosydd 2–4. Ni nodwyd unrhyw nodweddion na darganfyddiadau archaeolegol yn ystod y gwaith a fonitrwyd.

Yn ystod y prosiect, nodwyd anghysondebau rhwng ffin gytunedig yr ASA a lleoliad yr ASA fel y'i dangoswyd ar wybodaeth ddiweddarach am y cynllun adeiladu. O ganlyniad, canfuwyd yn ddiweddarach fod gwaith treiddiol cyfyngedig i'r ddaear, gan gynnwys pentyrru paneli solar a chloddio ffosydd ceblau, wedi ymestyn i mewn i'r ASA gytunedig.

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Cefn Park Solar Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the erection of a solar farm on land to the north of Cefn Road, Abenbury, Wrexham, LL13 0PA.

The watching brief was undertaken intermittently between October 2025 and June 2026 covering the established Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA) and its associated 10 m buffer zone. The works monitored included cable trenching for CCTV and solar panel cabling, together with site inspections to review the installation of solar panels within the ASA and confirm that these were surface mounted with no alteration to the ground surface, in contrast to the ground intrusive piling used across the rest of the Site.

The monitored excavation comprised four cable trenches. Cable Trench 1 was located at the northwest extent of the ASA and was excavated for CCTV cabling. Cable Trenches 2–4 were located at the southeast extent of the ASA and 10 m buffer zone and were excavated for solar panel cabling. The monitored cable trenches revealed a consistent stratigraphic sequence of turfed topsoil overlying subsoil, with natural superficial deposits exposed in Cable Trenches 2–4. No archaeological features or finds were identified during the monitored works.

During the project, discrepancies were identified between the agreed ASA boundary and the ASA position shown on later construction layout information. As a result, limited ground intrusive works, including solar panel piling and cable trenching, were found to have extended into the agreed ASA.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Cefn Park Solar Ltd for commissioning the archaeological watching brief. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of CPAT, who provided guidance throughout the duration of the project, and monitored the project on behalf of the LPA, and to the site contractors for their cooperation and assistance during the monitored works.

Land adjacent Cefn Road, Wrexham

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Cefn Park Solar Ltd to undertake an intermittent archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the erection of a solar farm on land to the north of Cefn Road, Abenbury, Wrexham, LL13 0PA (hereafter the 'Site'). The monitored works covered an L-shaped area of 1.84 ha at the northern end of the Site, identified as the Archaeologically Sensitive Area (hereafter the 'ASA'), together with an associated 10 m buffer zone, centred on NGR 336792 348702 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 The watching brief was carried out in response to Condition 12 of planning permission (P/2022/0541), which was conditionally granted on 06/03/2023 by Wrexham County Brough Council (WCBC).

> *Condition 12*.
>
> *No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*
>
> *The archaeological programme of work will be undertaken and completed in accordance with the relevant Standards and Guidance laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. A copy of the resulting report should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control Archaeologist, (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust…). Thereafter, the development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved programme of archaeological work.*

1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed (Wessex Archaeology 2023). Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to the fieldwork.

1.1.4 This watching brief is part of a programme of archaeological works, which has included a desk-based assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2022b), a gradiometer survey (Wessex Archaeology 2021a), and an archaeological evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2022a).

1.1.5 The watching brief was undertaken intermittently over the duration of the project, with archaeological monitoring carried out by Wessex Archaeology on 20th October, the 5th, 26th-27th November 2025, 1st April, and 11th June 2026.

1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The site is located north of Cefn Road and adjacent to the Wrexham Industrial Estate, approximately 3.5 km south-east of the centre of Wrexham and 1.2 km north-west of the village of Marchwiel in the county of Wrexham, Wales. The overall development area lies across two fields currently used for arable farming; the eastern field measures 6.8 ha and the western field is 6 ha. The two fields cover a roughly triangular area, divided by a central field boundary comprised of a ditch, bounded by hedgerows and trees. The monitored area is an L-shaped zone of 1.84 ha, bisected by this central field boundary, thus including parts of each field (**Figure 1**). Agricultural farmland lies to the north and south of the site.

1.3.2 The topography of the site slopes gradually from the northwest to south-east towards the River Clywedog in the south, ranging from 38 m OD to 32 m OD.

1.3.3 The underlying geology of the site comprises Salop Formation, a red-brown mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate overlain by superficial deposits of River Terrace sands and gravels from the river Clywedog (British Geological Survey 2026).

1.3.4 It should be noted that GeoIndex data provides a broad general guide to the site's geological composition and informs a general understanding of the area.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed in a prior desk-based assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2022b), which considered the recorded historic environment resource within a 1 km study area of the proposed development. A summary of the results is presented below, with relevant entry numbers from the Clwyd Powys Historic Environment Record (CPATHER) and the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) included. Additional sources of information are referenced, as appropriate.

2.2 Previous investigations related to the development

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2022b)

2.2.1 This assessment identified that there was potential for the site to contain features and finds of archaeological interest, relating to a potential prehistoric landscape. A rectangular enclosure was identified in the south-western corner of the development area on aerial photography, as well as other linear features showing as cropmarks. In addition, it was determined that evidence of agricultural activity dating to the medieval period onwards had the potential to be present on the site.

Gradiometer Survey (Wessex Archaeology 2021a)

2.2.2 Wessex Archaeology conducted a gradiometer survey across the area of proposed development. The results can be seen in **Figure 2**. There were a number of features identified of high archaeological interest, indicating the potential for a prehistoric funerary landscape. A broad ditch was identified to the north-east of the development area which delimited two round barrows, of which the larger one to the east had a centrally located

anomaly potentially indicating a central burial. The smaller barrow to the west was better defined and located at the edge of the presumed burial area. Semi-circular trends were identified to the north and south of the larger round barrow, although their weaker magnetic response did not allow for a confident interpretation. Several anomalies within the area were considered probable graves by their elongated form and regular north-east to south-west orientation. The features were suggested to be Bronze Age in date. A former field boundary was identified in the north-east corner of the watching brief area. Ridge and furrow were also evident across the site, on various alignments.

Archaeological Evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2022a)

2.2.3 Trenches were placed to target geophysical anomalies and to test blank areas identified in the gradiometer survey. The archaeological evaluation confirmed the presence of archaeological features indicative of a prehistoric landscape, including pits, ditches, gullies, a possible burnt mound and two round barrows. Ring ditches, likely to be the remains of further round barrows, were located in Trenches 1 and 5. Pits were identified in Trench 22. A curvilinear bank and ditch bounding the barrows was identified during the geophysical survey and revealed during the evaluation in the eastern end of Trench 1. The geophysical survey indicated that the bank should curve to the west and continue to pass through trench 22, but this was not identified during the evaluation. It was suggested that banding of the natural substrate in this area may have masked its presence (**Figure 2**).

2.2.4 A pit in the south-east corner of the proposed watching brief area (in Trench 21) contained pottery dating to the Bronze Age period.

2.2.5 A burnt mound was located 100m to the south of the watching brief area, close to the River Clywedog. The burnt mound was devoid of artefacts and contained a large quantity of charcoal and burnt stone. Burnt mounds in the British Isles are generally prehistoric in date (Barfield and Hodder 1987; Ó Drisceoil 1988).

2.3 Archaeological and historical context

Prehistoric

2.3.1 The site has geoarchaeological potential for preserving early prehistoric remains. The river Clywedog runs south of the site, which indicates that this landscape would have been an attractive settlement location to later prehistoric populations for its accessibility to natural resources. The river terrace deposits adjacent to this have the broad potential to contain reworked Lower and early Middle Palaeolithic artefacts, as well as contemporary late Middle and Upper Palaeolithic archaeology. Moreover, where layers of peat are preserved in alluvium, organic material may be present, preserving a wide range of paleoenvironmental evidence. Such deposits are commonly located within palaeochannels, and historic aerial photography has indicated that there is potential for palaeochannels to exist within the northern part of the site.

Bronze Age

2.3.2 The archaeological evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2022a) revealed a prehistoric landscape with features comprising pits, ditches, gullies, a possible burnt mound and two round barrows on the location of the proposed watching brief area. One pit was positively dated to the Bronze Age whilst several other features were phased to the Bronze Age based upon their form or relationship with other features.

Romano-British

2.3.3 Aside from a singular Romano-British coin findspot approximately 405 m to the north-west of the site, there are no records dating to the Romano-British period.

Medieval

2.3.4 There is no evidence for early medieval activity within this landscape, although Eyton, Sutton Green, and Farnham were all identified as settlements within the Domesday Book. Wrexham and Marchwiel were part of the Kingdom of Powys, on the western side of Offa's Dyke and therefore always within Wales. There have been deer parks and enclosures identified within the Domesday Book for these settlements, and placename evidence for other local settlements (e.g., Holt, which means 'copse') indicate that the landscape was likely heavily wooded during this period.

2.3.5 Extensive areas of medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow have been identified on historic aerial photography; however, they have not been identified through LiDAR analysis and historic Google Earth imagery. Their preservation and impact, while visible on the gradiometer survey, was found to be limited during the archaeological evaluation.

Post-Medieval-Modern

2.3.6 Several of the ditches identified during the archaeological evaluation were dated through pottery and ceramic building material to the post-medieval/modern period.

The Townships of Abenbury Fawr and Abenbury Fechan, within the Parish of Wrexham in the Counties of Denbigh and Flint 1838

2.3.7 The 1838 tithe map for the Townships of Abenbury Fawr and Abenbury Fechan, in the Parish of Wrexham and Counties of Denbigh and Flint (not reproduced), records the Site within an enclosed agricultural landscape. The field pattern differed from the present arrangement, with the Site extending across parts of five tithe plots, while the L-shaped ASA watching brief area occupied land within the central part of this arrangement with the 10 m buffer zone marginally extended into a further field to the north.

2.3.8 The main part of the watching brief area was located across two adjoining fields. Its western part lay within Plot 110, recorded as 'Big Bradley', while its eastern part lay within Plot 111, recorded as 'Little Bradley'. Both fields were owned by Thomas Parry Jones Parry Esquire and occupied by Moses Lewis. The boundary between these two plots followed a broadly northwest to southeast alignment and appears to correspond with the later division between the eastern and western fields of the Site.

2.3.9 At the very northern extent of the L-shaped ASA watching brief area, the monitored area lies on the boundary separating the adjacent field to the north, recorded as Plot 112, 'Bradley'. This plot was also owned by Thomas Parry Jones Parry Esquire and occupied by Moses Lewis. The relationship between Plots 110, 111 and 112, together with the shared Bradley field name, indicates that the northern and central part of the Site formed part of a related group of agricultural enclosures, although each was separately defined on tithe map.

2.3.10 The wider Site also extended into fields to the southwest, northwest and northeast. To the southwest, Plot 136, recorded as 'Garden Meadow', was owned and occupied by Roger Hughes, farmer. This field lay adjacent to Plot 110 and was separated from it by a boundary aligned broadly northwest to southeast, broadly parallel with the boundary between Plots 110 and 111. To the northwest, Plot 135 was also owned and occupied by Roger Hughes, farmer, and lay adjacent to Plots 136 and 110.

2.3.11 The northeastern part of the Site extended into Plot 158, recorded as 'Hat Field', which was owned by Love Parry Jones Esquire and occupied by Robert Ellis. The tithe mapping therefore records the Site as lying across several enclosed agricultural fields, divided between different landowners and occupiers. The ASA watching brief area and 10 m buffer

zone, was principally located within the Bradley group of fields held by Thomas Parry Jones Parry Esquire and occupied by Moses Lewis, while the southwest and northwest parts of the Site formed part of the holding of Roger Hughes, and the northeastern part lay within a separate field owned by Love Parry Jones Esquire.

2.3.12 The 1838 map indicates that elements of the mid-19th century field pattern continued to influence the later arrangement of the landscape. In particular, the boundary between Plots 110 and 111 broadly corresponds with the later division between the eastern and western fields of the Site. Other boundaries shown around Plots 135, 136 and 158 appear to have been altered or removed as the field pattern was later consolidated.

Late 19th and 20th century Ordnance Survey mapping

2.3.13 The 1879 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1872, scale 1:10,560) records the Site within a field arrangement broadly comparable to that shown on the 1838 tithe map. The principal field boundaries remained in place, including the boundary between the former Plots 110 and 111, and the boundary separating the former Plots 110 and 136. The mapping also records tree cover and vegetation along a number of these boundaries, indicating that they formed established field divisions within the agricultural landscape.

2.3.14 By the time of the 1899 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1897-1898, scale 1:10,560), the boundary formerly separating Plots 135 and 136 had been removed. These two former tithe plots were therefore recorded as a single, larger field by the late 19th century. This represents the first clear cartographic evidence for consolidation within the field pattern at the Site.

2.3.15 Subsequent Ordnance Survey mapping indicates that the field arrangement then remained largely unchanged through the first half of the 20th century. The same broad layout was recorded on the 1914 map (revised 1909, scale 1:10,560), the 1948 map (revised 1938, scale 1:10,560), and the 1954 map (revised 1949, scale 1:10,560). The 1961 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1960, scale 1:2,500) similarly records no substantial alteration to the field boundaries within the Site.

2.3.16 The 1964 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed/revised 1958-1963, scale 1:10,560) continued to show the northeast field boundary associated with former Plot 158, as recorded on the tithe map. This boundary is no longer present within the current field arrangement, indicating that its removal occurred after the 1964 mapping. The boundary between former Plots 110 and 136 was also still shown on the 1964 map but is no longer present, suggesting that this boundary was likewise removed after the mid-20th century.

2.3.17 The historic mapping therefore indicates a gradual simplification of the 19th century field pattern. The earliest clear alteration comprised the removal of the boundary between former Plots 135 and 136 by the late 19th century, while further consolidation, including the removal of the former Plot 158 boundary and the boundary between former Plots 110 and 136, appears to have taken place after 1964 (**Figure 3**).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023), were to:

- allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;

- provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and

- guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

3.2 Objectives

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023), were to:

- record all archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts that are exposed within the specified works area;

- record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);

- place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and

- make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023) and in general compliance with CIfA standards and guidance (CIfA 2023a–b). The methods employed are summarised below.

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

4.2.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored ground intrusive works undertaken within the Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA) and its associated 10 m buffer zone. The ASA comprised an L-shaped area at the northern end of the Site, extending across parts of two fields divided by a northwest to southeast aligned boundary ditch with dense vegetation and mature trees.

4.2.2 Monitoring was undertaken intermittently during the course of the project works. Site visits were carried out to monitor ground intrusive works, assess the condition of the ASA and buffer zone (**Figure 2**), and confirm that construction activity within this area was being undertaken in accordance with the agreed archaeological mitigation requirements (Wessex Archaeology 2022a).

4.2.3 The monitored works included cable trenching associated with the installation of CCTV and solar panel infrastructure, together with site visits to assess the layout of the solar array installation in relation to the agreed ASA and buffer zone. Where ground intrusive works were undertaken within, or close to, the ASA and buffer zone, the attending archaeologist monitored excavation and inspected exposed deposits for potential archaeological features and deposits.

4.2.4 During the works, discrepancies were identified between different iterations of the construction plans and the agreed location of the ASA and associated 10 m buffer zone. As a result, some construction activity, including solar array piling and cable trenching, was found to have extended into, or close to, the agreed ASA. Works in the affected area were halted while the discrepancy was reviewed, and the correct ASA boundary was subsequently re-established and checked on site. The circumstances of the discrepancy, including the sequence of plan revisions are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

4.2.5 The first relevant site visit was undertaken on 20th October 2025 to assess the early stage of the development works and the condition of the ASA and buffer zone. This visit identified a discrepancy between the agreed ASA and the area marked out on site. No GPS survey was undertaken during this visit, as the visit had not been arranged to resolve a survey discrepancy. The visit included a photographic record, and the issue was raised so that the correct ASA boundary could be reviewed.

4.2.6 A further visit was undertaken on 5th November 2025 to monitor the excavation of a trench for CCTV cabling at the northwest extent of the ASA 10 m buffer zone. The trench was excavated using a 6-ton excavator fitted with a 0.50 m wide bucket. It was opened on a southwest to northeast alignment, beginning approximately 15 m from the western field boundary and extending across the northwest to southeast aligned boundary ditch which formed the boundary between the two fields. On reaching the eastern field, the trench turned 90 degrees to the northwest and continued for approximately 6 m along the field boundary. It then turned a further 90 degrees and continued for approximately 30 m to the northeast.

4.2.7 The trench monitored on 5th November 2025, recorded as Cable Trench 1, terminated just within the 10 m buffer zone, on the edge of the ASA, where it met with a trench that had been excavated prior to the site visit undertaken on 20th October 2025. The trench measured approximately 0.50 m in width and 0.70 m in depth and was excavated to facilitate the installation of cabling for the site's CCTV system.

4.2.8 Further monitoring was undertaken on 26th and 27th November 2025 at the southeast extent of the ASA and buffer zone. Three cable trenches, recorded as Cable Trenches 2-4, were excavated on broadly north to south alignments for solar panel cabling. These trenches were intended to be located within the 10 m buffer zone, although subsequent survey confirmed that Cable Trenches 2 and 3 partly extended into the ASA as a result of the plan discrepancy. Cable Trench 4 was located outside the ASA but within the 10 m buffer zone.

4.2.9 Cable Trench 2, the westernmost of these three trenches, measured approximately 60 m in length, 0.60 m in width and 1.30 m in depth. It traversed the eastern edge of the ASA for approximately 38 m. Cable Trench 3 was located approximately 3 m east of Cable Trench 2 and measured approximately 65 m in length, 0.60 m in width and 1.30 m in depth. It extended into the ASA for approximately 11 m, with the remainder of the trench located outside the ASA and within the 10 m buffer zone. Cable Trench 4 was located approximately 4 m east of Cable Trench 3 and measured approximately 65 m in length, 0.60 m in width and 1.20 m in depth. It was located outside the ASA but within the 10 m buffer zone.

4.2.10 Cable Trenches 2-4 crossed the location of evaluation Trench 21, excavated during the earlier archaeological evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2022a). The Bronze Age pit recorded in evaluation Trench 21 was located approximately 9 m west of the cable trenches and was not encountered during the monitored works.

4.2.11 The Cable Trenches 2-4 monitored on 26th and 27th November 2025 were excavated using a 6-ton excavator fitted with a 0.50 m wide bucket. Excavation was monitored throughout by the attending archaeologist, and the trenches were surveyed using a Leica GS07 Network 73 model. A photographic record was also made of the excavation works.

4.2.12 A further site visit was undertaken on 1st April 2026 to assess the position of the ASA and confirm that no further ground intrusive works had been undertaken within this area. The visit confirmed that the solar panels within the relevant area had been installed on above-ground metal supports, set onto surface plates and weighted with aerated blocks, rather than being inserted into the ground. A Leica Viva GS6 was used to record and check the extent of the L-shaped ASA, and a photographic record was made.

4.2.13 A final site visit was undertaken on 11th June 2026 following the completion of the solar panel installation works. The visit was undertaken to assess the completed works in relation to the ASA and to confirm that no further ground intrusive works had been undertaken within this area. The inspection confirmed that the panels within the relevant area had been supported above ground and weighted rather than inserted into the ground.

4.2.14 Spoil generated during machine excavation was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. No archaeological finds or remains were uncovered during the monitored trenching works.

Recording

4.2.15 All exposed stratigraphic deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. No archaeological features were identified during the monitored works. A record of the observed stratigraphic sequence was made, including written descriptions, measured records and drawn sections where appropriate.

4.2.16 A representative section of Cable Trench 1 was drawn at a scale of 1:10. The location and extent of Cable Trench 1 were recorded through measured site observations and referenced against visible field boundaries, site photographs and the construction information available during the watching brief. The extent of the ASA was subsequently re-checked during the 1 April 2026 site visit using a Leica Viva GS6.

4.2.17 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels, including a Canon EOS 6D Mark II with built-in GPS location recording. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, with appropriate metadata embedded to ensure the long-term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Finds and environmental strategies

4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of finds and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014), *Environmental Archaeology. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (Historic England 2025) and CIfA's (n.d. a) *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting* (Type 1: Description).

4.3.2 No soil or environmental samples were taken, as no suitable deposits were encountered during the watching brief.

4.4 Monitoring

4.4.1 CPAT monitored the watching brief on behalf of the LPA. Any variations to the approved Written Scheme of Investigation that were required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with the client and CPAT.

5 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored ground intrusive works associated with the installation of CCTV and solar panel cabling within, or close to, the ASA and associated 10 m buffer zone. The monitored works comprised one cable trench at the northwest extent of the ASA and buffer zone, recorded as Cable Trench 1, and three cable trenches at the southeast extent of the ASA and buffer zone, recorded as Cable Trenches 2-4.

5.1.2 The monitored trenches revealed a broadly consistent stratigraphic sequence comprising turfed topsoil overlying subsoil and, where excavation extended to a sufficient depth, natural superficial deposits. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the monitored works.

5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

Cable Trench 1

5.2.1 Cable Trench 1 was located at the northwest extent of the ASA and 10 m buffer zone. The trench measured approximately 0.50 m in width and 0.70 m in depth and was excavated for the installation of CCTV cabling. It extended across the northwest to southeast aligned boundary ditch separating the two fields, before continuing along and then northeast of the field boundary.

5.2.2 Excavation with Cable Trench 1 revealed a turfed topsoil layer (1000), measuring approximately 0.28 m in depth. This comprised mid-greyish brown sandy clay with occasional angular stone inclusions. The topsoil overlay subsoil (1001) physically and stratigraphically, which comprised mid-greyish brown friable clayey silt with occasional angular stone inclusions. The subsoil was exposed to a depth of approximately 0.42 m before excavation ceased at approximately 0.70 m below ground level, where the required cable depth had been reached. The horizon between the topsoil and underlying subsoil was moderately clear (**Figure 4**). No archaeological remains were observed (**Figure 5-8**). The cabling was inserted within a flexible plastic conduit, and the excavated material was reinstated following installation.

Cable Trench 2

5.2.3 Cable Trench 2 was the westernmost of three cable trenches excavated at the southeast extent of the ASA and buffer zone. It measured approximately 60 m in length, 0.60 m in width and 1.30 m in depth. The trench traversed the eastern edge of the ASA for approximately 38 m.

5.2.4 The trench contained a turfed topsoil layer (2000), measuring approximately 0.31 m in depth. This comprised mid-greyish brown sandy clay with rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel and moderate compaction. The topsoil (2000) overlay subsoil (2001) physically and stratigraphically. The subsoil (2001) measured approximately 0.64 m in depth and comprised mid-reddish brown sandy silt with rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel and moderate compaction. The subsoil (2001) overlay natural deposits (2002) physically and stratigraphically. The natural deposits (2002) were encountered at a depth of approximately

0.66 m below ground level and comprised mid-greyish brown sandy silt with a yellow hue and moderately sorted sub-rounded gravel. Localised concentrations of gravel were present and were generally more reddish brown in colour. The natural deposits continued beyond the limit of excavation. The horizon between the topsoil (2000), subsoil (2001) and natural deposits (2002) was moderately clear. No archaeological remains were observed (**Figure 9**).

Cable Trench 3

5.2.5 Cable Trench 3 was located approximately 3 m east of Cable Trench 2. It measured approximately 65 m in length, 0.60 m in width and 1.30 m in depth, and extended into the ASA for approximately 11 m, with the remainder located outside the ASA and within the 10 m buffer zone.

5.2.6 The trench contained a turfed topsoil layer (3000), measuring approximately 0.28 m in depth. This comprised mid-greyish brown sandy clay with rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel and moderate compaction. The topsoil (3000) overlay subsoil (3001) physically and stratigraphically. The subsoil (3001) measured approximately 0.67 m in depth and comprised mid-reddish brown sandy silt with rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel and moderate compaction. The subsoil (3001) overlay natural deposits (3002) physically and stratigraphically. The natural deposits (3002) were encountered at a depth of approximately 0.67 m below ground level and comprised mid-greyish brown sandy silt with a yellow hue and moderately sorted sub-rounded gravel. Localised concentrations of gravel were present and were generally more reddish brown in colour. The natural deposits continued beyond the limit of excavation. The horizon between the topsoil (3000), subsoil (3001) and natural deposits (3002) was moderately clear. No archaeological remains were observed (**Figure 10**).

Cable Trench 4

5.2.7 Cable Trench 4 was located approximately 4 m east of Cable Trench 3, outside the ASA but within the 10 m buffer zone. It measured approximately 65 m in length, 0.60 m in width and 1.20 m in depth.

5.2.8 The trench contained a turfed topsoil layer (4000), measuring approximately 0.30 m in depth. This comprised mid-greyish brown sandy clay with rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel and moderate compaction. The topsoil (4000) overlay subsoil (4001) physically and stratigraphically. The subsoil (4001) measured approximately 0.65 m in depth and comprised mid-reddish brown sandy silt with rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel and moderate compaction. The subsoil (4001) overlay natural deposits (4002) physically and stratigraphically. The natural deposits (4002) were encountered below the subsoil and comprised mid-greyish brown sandy silt with a yellow hue and moderately sorted sub-rounded gravel. Localised concentrations of gravel were present and were generally more reddish brown in colour. The natural deposits continued beyond the limit of excavation. The horizon between the topsoil (4000), subsoil (4001) and natural deposits (4002) was moderately clear. No archaeological remains were observed (**Figure 11**).

5.3 Archaeological remains

5.3.1 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the monitored works. Cable Trenches 2-4 crossed the recorded location of evaluation Trench 21, excavated as part of the previous archaeological evaluation of the Site (Wessex Archaeology 2022a). A Bronze Age pit had previously been recorded within evaluation Trench 21, although this feature was located approximately 9 m west of the monitored cable trenches and was not encountered during the watching brief.

6 FINDS EVIDENCE

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief element. Spoil accumulated during machine excavation was visually scanned for finds, but no material suitable for recovery was identified.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Provision for environmental sampling was made in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023), in accordance with guidance set out in *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011). However, no bulk or targeted environmental samples were collected during the watching brief, as no archaeological features, deposits or other suitable sample deposits were encountered.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary

8.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken intermittently between October 2025 and June 2026 to monitor the ASA and its associated 10 m buffer zone. The purpose of the watching brief was to confirm that no ground intrusive works were undertaken within the ASA, and that any ground intrusive works within the associated 10 m buffer zone were subject to archaeological monitoring. Site visits were also undertaken during the course of the project to review the installation of solar panels within the ASA, and to confirm that these were surface mounted rather than piled, in contrast to the ground intrusive piling used across other parts of the Site.

8.1.2 During the project, differences were identified between the agreed ASA boundary and the position of the ASA shown on subsequent construction layout information. This appears to have resulted from the use of several iterations of site plan data, which differed in the position and extent of the ASA location. As a result, elements of the construction layout were set out in relation to an incorrect representation of the ASA, with some ground intrusive works later identified as extending into the agreed ASA.

8.1.3 Following identification of these works the County Archaeologist (Mark Walters) confirmed that an archaeologist should be made available to monitor any ground disturbances associated with the decommissioning of Cefn Solar Farm at the end of its anticipated 37.5 year operational lifespan (c.2064).

8.1.4 The ground intrusive works identified within the ASA included solar panel piling and cable trenching. Each solar table had a footprint of approximately 26.372 m in length and 2.9 m in width, with 18 piles per table, comprising nine front piles and nine rear piles. The area of the agreed ASA affected by piling measured approximately 1,277.6 m², representing approximately nine tables and 8.1% of the ASA.

8.1.5 A total of 71 rear piles and 81 front piles were recorded within the affected area of the ASA, including an area on the southern spur. The rear piles measure approximately 60 mm by 130 mm, while the front piles measure approximately 50 mm by 90 mm. The combined footprint of piling within the ASA is approximately 0.918 m².

8.1.6 Ground intrusive works had also been undertaken at the northern extent of the ASA prior to the monitoring visit on 20th October 2025. These comprised a cable trench aligned broadly northeast to southwest along the northern part of the Site, which crossed the northeastern corner of the ASA for approximately 23 m (**Figure 2**).

8.1.7 Further ground intrusive works were monitored on 26th and 27th November 2025 at the southeast extent of the ASA and its associated 10 m buffer zone. These comprised Cable Trenches 2-4, excavated for solar panel cabling. During the subsequent review of the ASA boundary, Cable Trenches 2 and 3 were identified as extending partly into the agreed ASA. This was associated with the wider discrepancies between the agreed ASA boundary and the construction layout information, whereby the trenches had been understood to lie within the 10 m buffer zone rather than within the ASA itself. Cable Trench 2 extended into the ASA for approximately 38 m, while Cable Trench 3 extended into the ASA for approximately 11 m. Cable Trench 4 remained outside the ASA but within the 10 m buffer zone.

8.1.8 The monitored excavation comprised four cable trenches. Cable Trench 1 was located at the northwest extent of the ASA 10 m buffer zone and was excavated for CCTV cabling. Cable Trenches 2–4 were located at the southeast extent of the ASA and 10 m buffer zone and were excavated for solar panel cabling.

8.1.9 Cable Trench 1 was understood to lie within the associated 10 m buffer zone and terminated on the edge of the ASA, where it connected with the previously excavated cable trench recorded at the northern extent of the Site. Cable Trench 2 extended into the ASA for approximately 38 m, while Cable Trench 3 extended into the ASA for approximately 11 m. Cable Trench 4 was located outside the ASA and within the 10 m buffer zone.

8.1.10 The monitored trenches revealed a consistent stratigraphic sequence of turfed topsoil overlying subsoil, with natural superficial deposits exposed in Cable Trenches 2-4. No archaeological features or finds were identified during the monitored works.

8.1.11 Cable Trenches 2-4 crossed the recorded position of evaluation Trench 21, excavated during the previous archaeological evaluation of the Site (Wessex Archaeology 2022a). A Bronze Age pit had been recorded within evaluation Trench 21, approximately 9 m west of the monitored cable trenches. This feature was not encountered during the watching brief, and no archaeological features or finds were identified within Cable Trenches 2-4.

8.2 Discussion

8.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken to monitor ground intrusive works within the 10 m buffer zone associated with the ASA, and to confirm that no ground intrusive works were undertaken within the ASA. The monitoring also included review of the solar panel installation within the ASA, where panels were to be surface mounted rather than piled.

8.2.2 The agreed purpose of the ASA was to protect the known archaeological potential identified by previous phases of work, particularly the prehistoric remains recorded during the geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation. The watching brief therefore focused on those parts of the project where ground intrusive works were proposed within the buffer zone, or where the relationship between construction activity and the ASA required confirmation.

8.2.3 The discrepancies between the agreed ASA boundary and later construction layout information resulted in some ground intrusive works extending into the agreed ASA. These comprised solar panel piling and cable trenching at the northern extent of the ASA, together with the partial extension of Cable Trenches 2 and 3 into the southeast extent of the ASA.

The available information indicates that these works were set out in relation to an incorrect representation of the ASA boundary, rather than as a planned departure from the agreed mitigation area.

8.2.4 The direct footprint of the piling within the ASA was limited in comparison with the wider area covered by the solar table layout. Although the affected table layout covered approximately 1,277.6 m², representing approximately 8.1% of the ASA, the combined area of direct ground penetration from the recorded piles was approximately 0.918 m². Subsequent site visits confirmed that later solar panel supports within the ASA were surface mounted rather than inserted into the ground, and no further ground penetration associated with these supports was identified within the ASA.

8.2.5 The monitored cable trenches revealed a simple and consistent stratigraphic sequence of turfed topsoil overlying subsoil, with natural superficial deposits exposed in Cable Trenches 2-4. No archaeological features or finds were identified during the monitored excavations.

8.2.6 Although Cable Trenches 2–4 crossed the recorded position of evaluation Trench 21, where a Bronze Age pit had previously been identified, this feature was located approximately 9 m west of the monitored cable trenches and was not encountered during the watching brief. The monitored works therefore did not identify any archaeological features or finds within the excavated trench areas.

8.2.7 The results of the watching brief indicate that the monitored trenching did not disturb archaeological remains within the observed areas. The circumstances of the ASA boundary discrepancy, including the sequence of plan revisions are set out in **Appendix 1**. The main body of this report records the archaeological monitoring undertaken and the results of the observed ground intrusive works.

9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Preparation of Archive

Physical Archive

9.1.1 The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Shefield. No Museum deposition is anticipated, as no finds were retained and the project did not generate materials suitable for long-term curation.

Digital Archive

9.1.2 The project archive, comprising the digital photographic record, report, and associated documentation, will be prepared in accordance with RCAHMW guidelines. Following completion of the project, the digital archive will be deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) and Heneb: The Trust for Welsh Archaeology, for inclusion within the Clwyd-Powys Historic Environment Record.

9.2 Selection strategy

9.2.1 It is widely accepted that not all the records and materials (artefacts and ecofacts) collected or created during an archaeological project require preservation in perpetuity. These records and materials will be subject to selection to establish what will be retained for long-term curation, with the aim of ensuring that all elements selected for retention are appropriate to establish the significance of the project and support future research, outreach, engagement, display and learning activities (i.e., the retained archive should fulfil the requirements of both future researchers and the receiving museum).

9.2.2 The selection strategy, which details the project-specific selection process, is underpinned by national guidelines on selection and retention (Brown 2011, section 4) and generic selection policies (SMA 1993; Wessex Archaeology's internal selection policy) and follows CIfA's (n.d. b) *Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives*. It should be agreed by all stakeholders (e.g., Wessex Archaeology's specialists, external specialists, local authority, museum) and fully documented in the project archive.

9.3 Security Copy

9.3.1 In line with current best practice (e.g., Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

Documentary records

9.3.2 Paper records comprise site registers (other pro-forma site records are digital), drawings and reports (written scheme of investigation, client report). All will be retained and deposited with the project archive.

Digital data

9.3.3 The digital data comprise site records (tablet-recorded on site) in spreadsheet format; finds records in spreadsheet format; survey data; photographs; reports. All will be deposited, although site photographs will be subject to selection to eliminate poor quality and duplicated images, and any others that are not directly relevant to the archaeology of the site.

9.4 Copyright

9.4.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The Client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. RCAHMW and the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER) will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.

9.4.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) in accordance with the *Guidance for the Submission of Data to the Welsh Historic Environment Records* (Welsh Archaeological Trusts 2022), where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research, or development control within the planning process.

9.4.3 This document, the report and the project archive may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of such material.

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Cartographic sources

The Townships of Abenbury Fawr and Abenbury Fechan, within the Parish of Wrexham in the Counties of Denbigh and Flint 1838

Denbighshire Sheet XXIX. 1879 Ordnance Survey (Surveyed 1872) 1:10,560

Denbighshire Sheet XXIX.SW. 1899 Ordnance Survey (Revised 1897 to 1898) 1:10,560

Denbighshire Sheet XXIX.SW. 1914 Ordnance Survey (Revised 1909) 1:10,560

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SJ3648-SJ3748 - AA. 1961 Ordnance Survey (Revised 1960) 1:2,500

SJ34NE – A. 1964 Ordnance Survey (Surveyed/Revised 1958 to 1963) 1:10,560

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Site
ASA extent
ASA buffer (10 m)
Previous ASA extent (supplied 12/12/25)
Green flags (surveyed 27/11/25)
Solar array

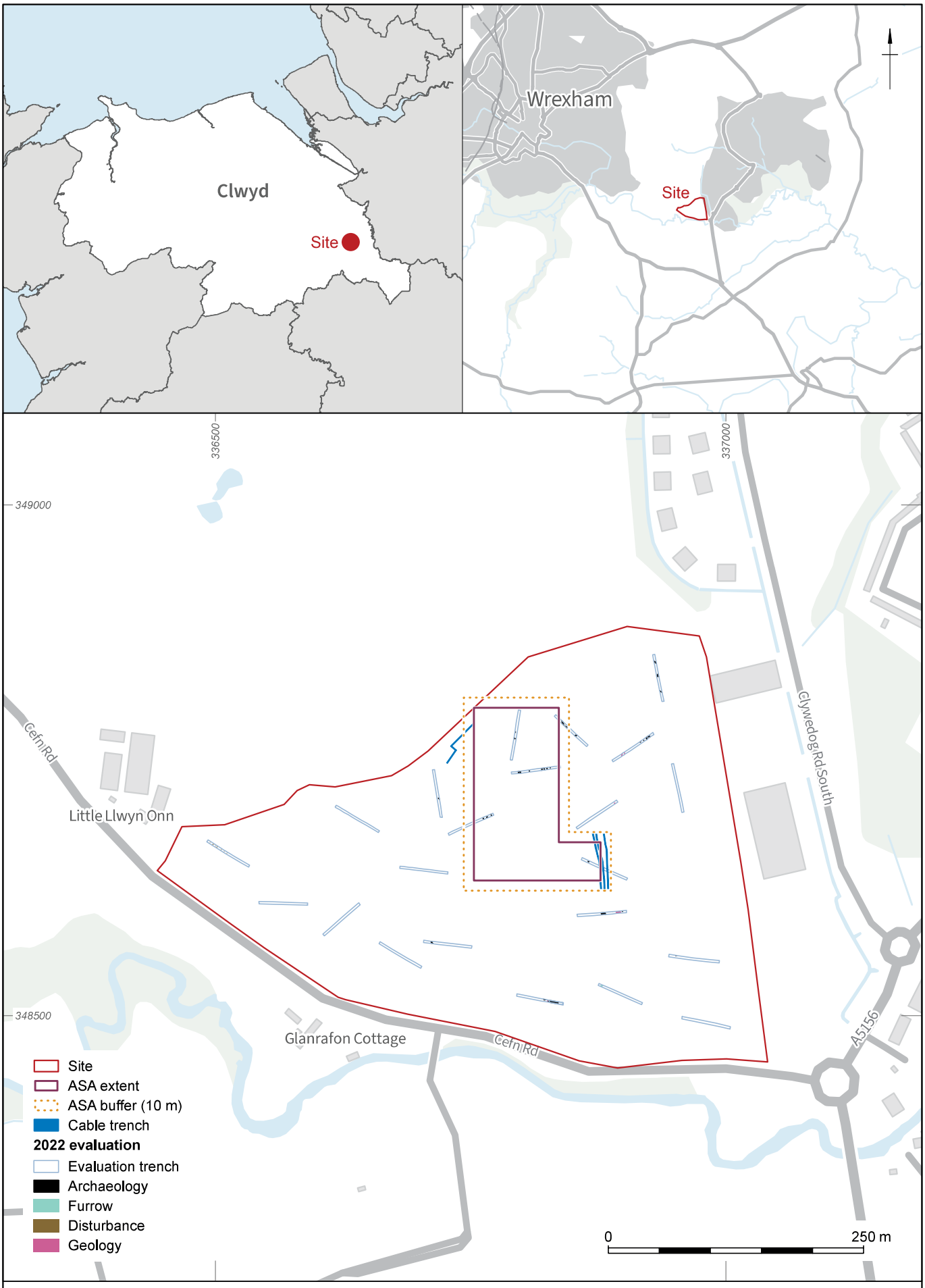
0 50 m

Coordinate system: OSGB 1936 British National Grid
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Date: 07/07/2026 | Created by: CM

Scale: 1:1,250 at A3 | Revision: 0

Appendix 1. ASA timeline



Coordinate system: OSGB 1936 British National Grid

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Date: 09/07/2026	Created by: CM	Revision: 0	Scale: 1:5,000 at A4

Figure 1. Site location, ASA extent and 10 m buffer zone

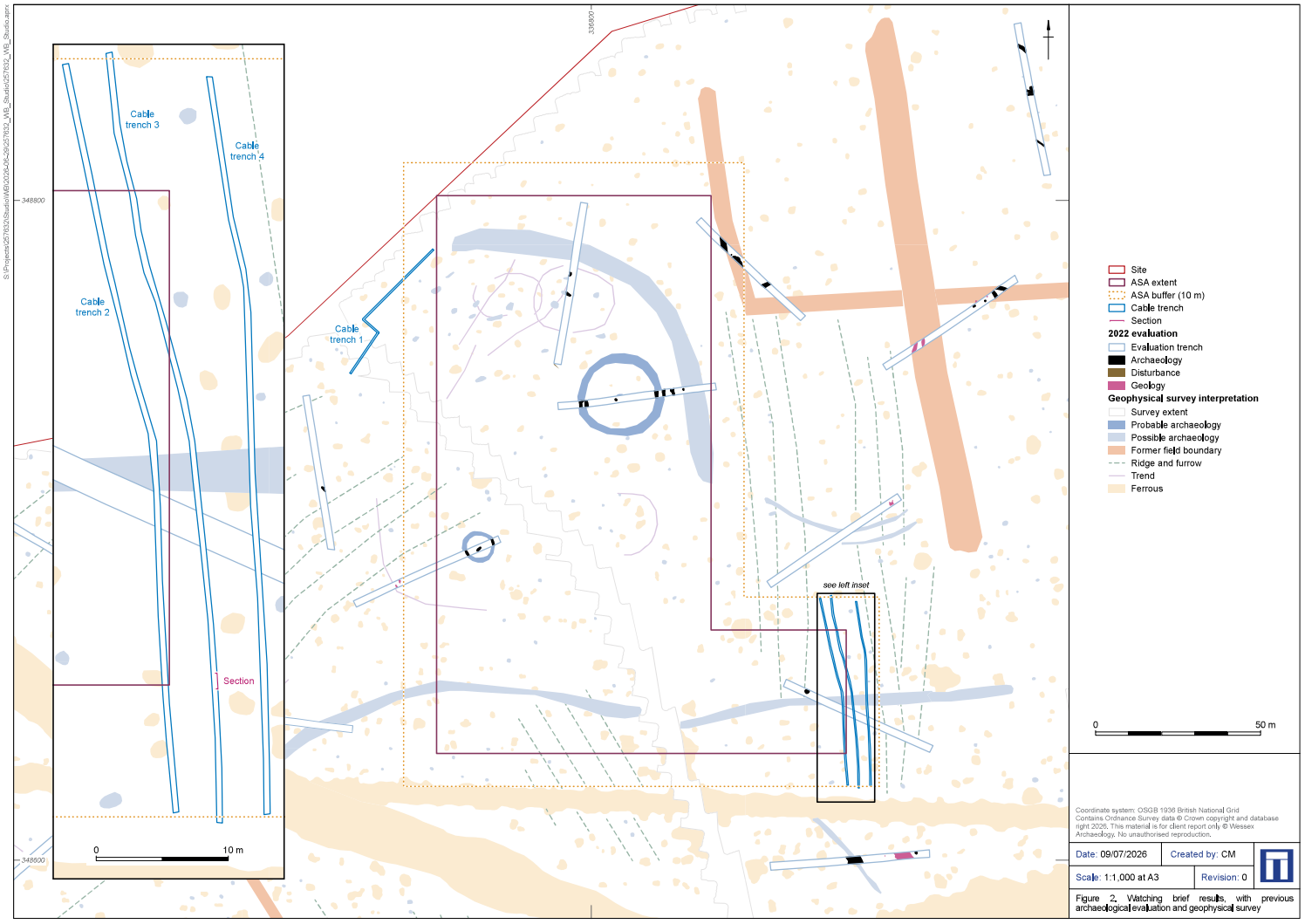
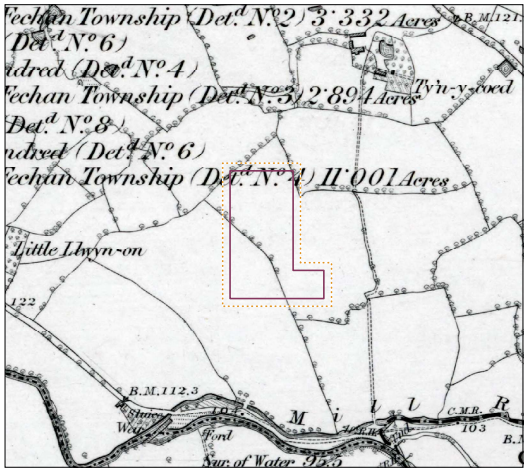
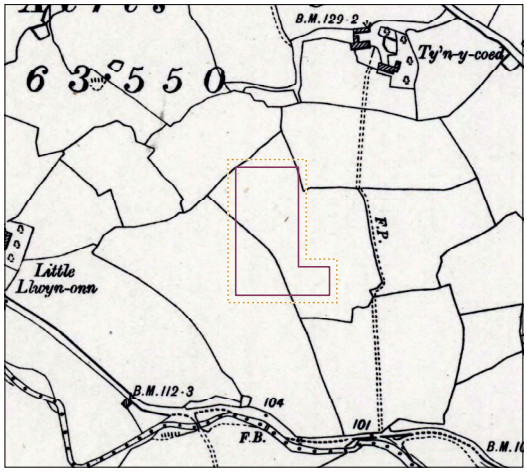


Figure 2. Watching brief results with previous archaeological evaluation and geophysical survey

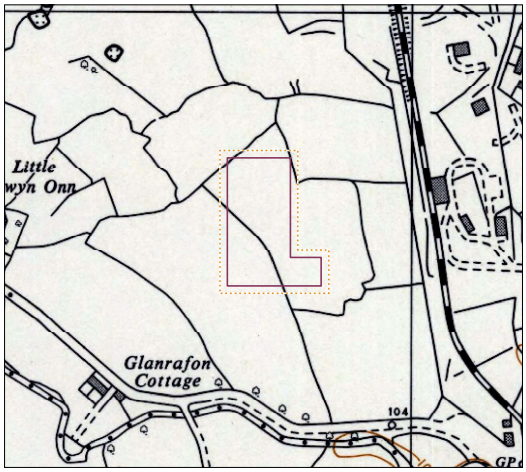
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a) 1879 OS Map (Surveyed 1872)



b) 1899 OS Map (Revised 1897 to 1898)



c) 1964 OS Map (Surveyed/revised 1958 to 1963)

ASA extent
ASA buffer (10 m)

0 250 m

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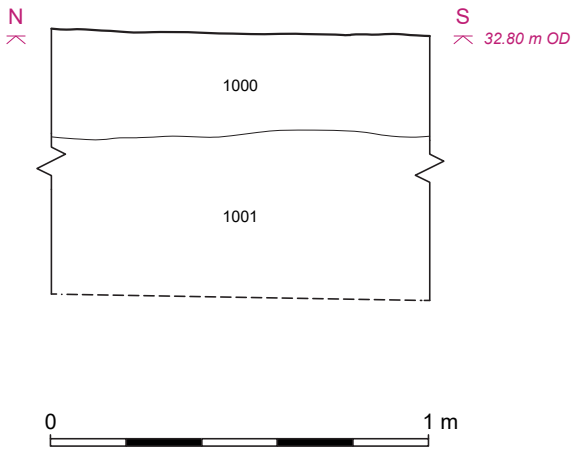
Date: 09/07/2026 | Created by: EE/CM

Scale: 1:5,000 at A3 | Revision: 0

Figure 3, Map regression 1879 – 1964

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North-west facing section
of cable trench 1



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Date: 29/06/2026	Created by: CM	Revision: 0	Scale: 1:20 at A4

Figure 4. Cable Trench 1 representative section

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Figure 5. Cable Trench 1 cable route. West field. Viewed from south-west. 1 m scale



Figure 6. Cable Trench 1 cable route. East field. Viewed from west. 1 m scale

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Figure 7. Cable Trench 1 cable route. East field. Representative section. Viewed from north-east. 1 m scale



Figure 8. Cable Trench 1 cable route. East field. Viewed from north-west. 1 m scale

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Figure 9. Cable Trench 2 cable route. East field. Viewed from south. 2 x 1 m scale



Figure 10. Cable Trench 3 cable route. East field. Viewed from south. 2 x 1 m scale

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Figure 11. Cable Trench 4 cable route. East field. Viewed from south. 2 x 1 m scale

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