

WHEELHOUSE ECO HUT CAMPSITE AND SELF  
CATERING, AIRIGH MHIC RUAIRIDH, GRIMINISH  
NORTH UIST

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*For Fraser Architecture*

*12/00330*

*February 2013*

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Approved by: >project manager< – Project Manager

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>AIMS &amp; OBJECTIVES</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>
4.1	Site Works
4.2	Recording
4.3	Reporting and Archive
<b>5</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>
6.1	Bibliographic sources
6.2	Cartographic sources
6.3	Other sources
<b>7</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
7.1	Appendix A – Site Registers
7.2	Appendix 2 - Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

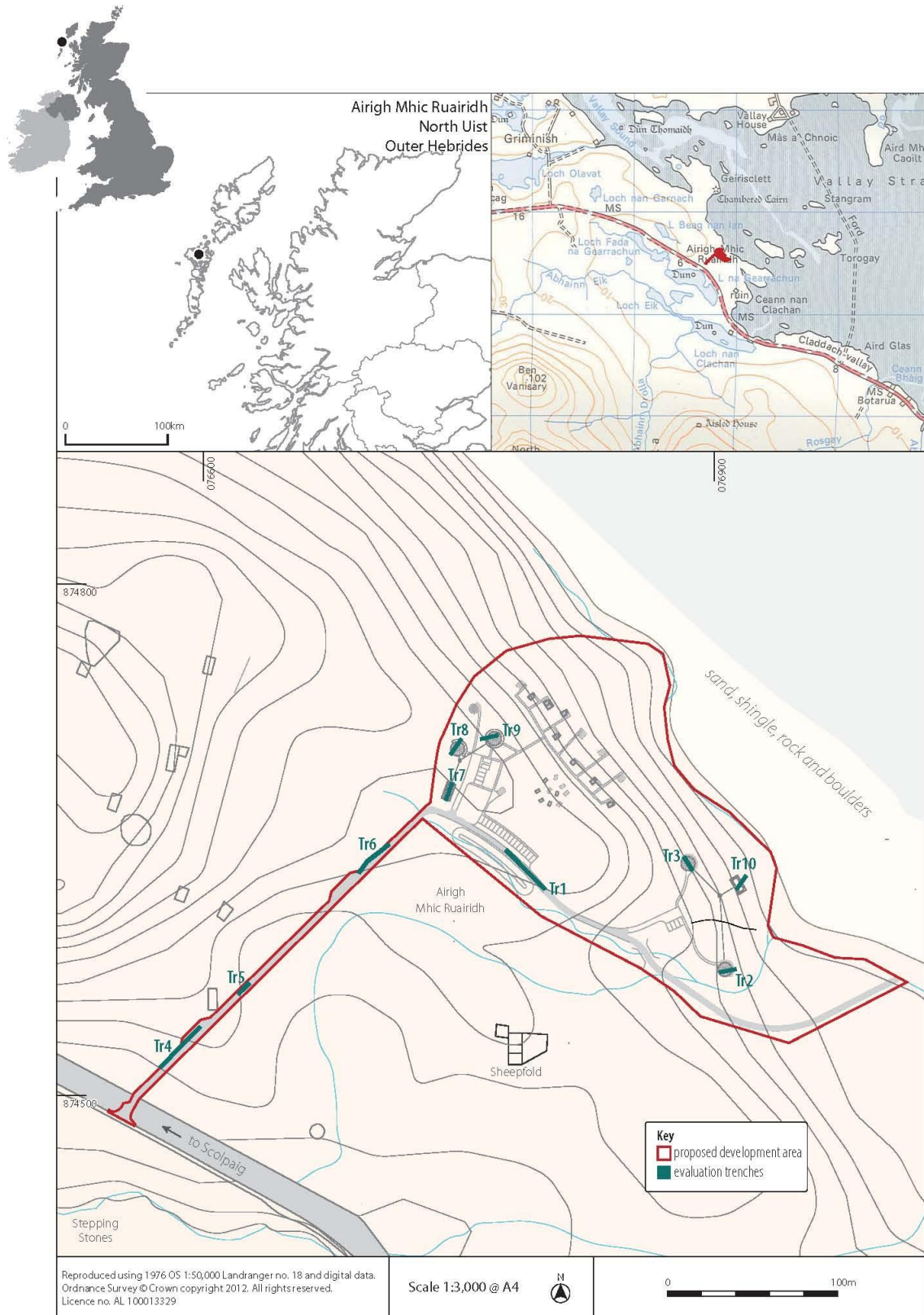
- 1 - Site location plan
- 2 - View of the site from the west
- 3 - Extract from the 1901 Ordnance Survey
- 4 – View of Trench 1 facing NW
- 5 – View of the band of stone within Trench 4
- 6 – View of bedrock bands in Trench 2
- 7 – View of Trench 7 from the south
- 8 - View of the excavation of the water pipe trench from the west

# WHEELHOUSE ECO HUT CAMPSITE AND SELF CATERING, AIRIGH MHIC RUAIRIDH, GRIMINISH NORTH UIST

## Archaeological Evaluation

### *Summary*

A programme of archaeological trial trenching was carried out in order to satisfy a condition of the planning consent for a development at the location of the proposed Wheelhouse Eco Hut Campsite and Self Catering, Airigh Mhic Ruairidh, Griminish, North Uist. The trial trenching comprised 10 trenches totalling 160 linear m located to target the main areas that will be impacted upon by the proposed development. These trenches revealed stone rich geological subsoil underlying a shallow layer of humic loam topsoil. No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were revealed during this work.



Illus 1  
Site location

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Fraser Architecture LLP to undertake a programme of trial trenching at the site of the proposed Wheelhouse Eco Hut Campsite and Self Catering development at Airigh Mhic Ruairidh, Griminish, North Uist. The proposal includes the creation of a trackway, much of which will be a low impact ground reinforcement mat laid over the existing soil, four timber constructed eco huts (including grass/turf covered roofs) a small number of low impact huts and a camping area for a maximum of 10 tents along with a septic tank and soakaway.

Planning permission for the development was granted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (App.no. 12/00330) subject to a number of conditions, including one relating to archaeological works. In order to fulfil this condition a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Headland Archaeology (2013) on behalf of the client; setting out the proposed strategy for archaeological mitigation. This included for an archaeological evaluation in outline. The WSI was submitted to and agreed with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar archaeologist who advises the Local Planning Authority on archaeological matters. This report details the results of the work.

## 2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed development area measures approximately 2800 <sup>2</sup>m and is located along the coastal area of Airigh Mhic Ruairidh, Griminish, North Uist (centred on NGR: NF 76827 74637) (Illus 1). The land comprises undulating ground rising to a maximum height of 9 m OD. The landscape is covered in short scrub grassland with frequent heather cover and rocky outcrops. The undulating land continues down to an area of flat coastline leading to the rocky shoreline. A number of shallow streams ran through the landscape towards the coast in this area, particularly to the eastern end of this site.

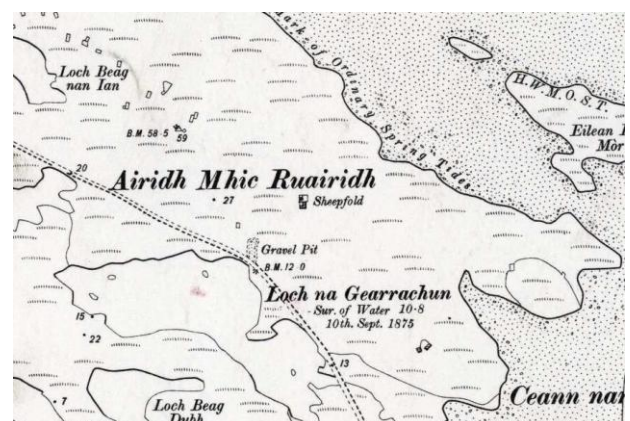


Illus 2: View of the site from the west

No cultivation or peat cutting was evident in this area, although a number of agricultural features are prominent including a sheepfold to the south of the proposed development site.

A walkover undertaken by Headland Archaeology (Wilson 2012) as part of the programme of archaeological works required as part of the planning application identified a small number of possible features of archaeological interest. The low impact of the proposed development has been able to avoid these areas and these possible features will be left *in-situ*.

The walkover report also indicated that the limited cartographic evidence suggested that the wider area was probably being utilised as grazing, as evidenced by the sheepfold depicted on the 1901 Ordnance Survey (Illus 2) along with the lack of visible ploughing mentioned above.



Illus 3: Extract from the 1901 Ordnance Survey

Although the evidence for agricultural use other than grazing was low within the proposed development the potential for the survival of



unknown buried archaeological remains could not be fully ruled out.

### 3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In general, the purpose of the evaluation was to provide sufficient evidence for confident prediction of the archaeological significance and potential of the proposed development site.

More specific aims of the evaluation included:

- Establishing the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the accessible areas targeted for trenching.
- Establishing the integrity and state of preservation of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the accessible areas.

The results of the evaluation are to be used to inform a strategy for further archaeological mitigation if appropriate.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Site Works

A total of 10 Evaluation trenches totalling 160 linear m and equating to approximately 10% of the proposed development site where ground works were to disturb the overlying scrub grass were opened with a 8t tracked mini-digger, suitably equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. All trenches were excavated under direct archaeological supervision to remove topsoil and subsoil deposits and were excavated in controlled spits. Machine excavation was terminated at the top of the natural geology or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first. Spoil was stored beside the trench. A full descriptive list of the trenches can be found in Appendix A.

Excavation of archaeological deposits and features required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation were then continued by hand. On completion of

machine excavation, all faces of the trench that require examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools where required. The stratigraphic sequence was recorded in full in each of the trenches, even where no archaeological deposits had been identified.

### 4.2 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the codes of practice and guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists (*IfA* 2008). All contexts were given unique numbers and all recording undertaken on pro-forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological norms. A comprehensive list of the contexts can be found in Appendix 2.

Colour transparency and digital photographs were taken to record archaeological contexts and to illustrate the general nature of the work. A graduated metric scale is clearly visible in record photographs of contexts. All photographs have been recorded by individual number and include information on the context and direction taken. A full list of the photographic record can be found in Appendix A

A plan of the development area in relation to the National Grid has been supplied by the client. All trenches were recorded on this plan by use of digital survey using a total station and related to the National Grid.

### 4.3 Archive

All aspects of archiving will be undertaken in accordance with guidelines published by the IfA on behalf of the Archaeological Archives Forum (July 2007). On completion of the work Headland will produce a site archive. An online OASIS report will be completed and will be accompanied by a pdf report – Headland1-145266; a summary report will be published in *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* a copy of which can be found in Appendix B

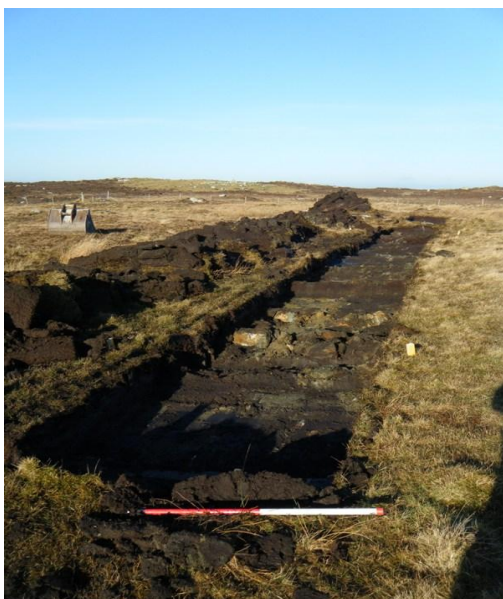
Digital archives will be transferred with the rest of the archive following the NMRS guidelines and packaged appropriately. Metadata forms will accompany all digital archives.

#### 4. RESULTS

A total of targeted 10 evaluation trenches were excavated across the proposed development site totalling 160 linear m equating to approximately 10% of the development site that would be disturbed by ground-works. The trenches were marked out prior to excavation in order to evaluate the precise areas of land that were to be disturbed by the proposed development. The targeted areas included the sites of the 4 proposed roundhouses, a series of timber huts, the location of a septic tank and soak-away pit and areas of access track that would require a gravel surface.

All the trenches were 1.8 m wide and excavated through the overlying topsoil revealing geological subsoil comprising mainly of dark greyish brown loam with frequent loose angular stone. A number of the trenches also revealed the underlying bedrock close to the surface. The topsoil across the site was a very dark brown peaty loam between 0.25m and 0.45m deep.

A number of the trenches became waterlogged once they were opened making the identification of possible archaeological features difficult. The amount of loose stone encountered in the majority of the trenches also made it difficult to excavate down to a clean surface which also limited the identification of any possible archaeological features (Illus 4).



Illus 4: View of Trench 1 facing NW

A small number of features that were thought to be possible archaeological in origin were hand cleaned and investigated but on closer inspection were found to be bedrock forming linear bands across the trenches. This was particularly evident in Trenches 2 and 4.



Illus 5: View of stone band within Trench 4



Illus 6: View of bedrock bands in Trench 2

Trenches 7, 8 and 9 were located closer to the coastline on slightly lower ground but still encountered the same stone rich clayey sand recorded elsewhere across the site, although the



stones were slightly less frequent enabling a cleaner surface to be recorded.



Illus 7: View of Trench 7 from the S

No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were identified during the excavation of the evaluation trenches. A full list of the trench record can be found in Appendix B below.

In addition to the evaluation trenches a narrow water pipe trench was excavated close to the east end of the proposed development site. The east/west aligned trench was approximately 40m long, 0.3m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. Similar results to those recorded in the evaluation trenches were identified with stone-rich clayey sand geological subsoil overlain by 0.45m of peaty topsoil.



Illus 8: View of the excavation of the water pipe trench from the W.

Close to the south side of the water pipe trench was a small sub-oval area of small slightly raised

stones than may represent the remains of an archaeological feature, although this was far from clear. The feature was left *in-situ*.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Although the remains of a number of shielings or byres were visible to the west of the proposed development site it was noted that these were all located on slightly higher ground than the excavated trenches. This could suggest that the proposed development area has for a long time been an area of wetter ground not suitable for occupation. In conjunction with this there were no visible traces of agricultural activity on this lower ground. This corroborates the results of the evaluation that indicates that the majority of the area was covered in stone rich loam with little or no evidence of clearance or other features that would usually indicate evidence of occupation or arable farming activity.

As part of the evaluation all the spoil was scanned for artefacts such as flint tools or bone but no finds were recovered.

Although the stone rich surface of the trenches made the identification of archaeological features difficult the amount of uneven ground and loose angular stone clearly suggested that no archaeological features could have existed within the areas investigated.

## Bibliography

Archaeological Archives Forum Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (published by the IfA 2007).

IfA Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (revised October 2008).

SPP: Scottish Planning Policy (February 2010;  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/0>)

Wilson, D 2012 *Wheelhouse Eco Hut Campsite and Self Catering, Airigh Mhic Ruairidh, Griminish, North Uist: An Archaeological walkover survey and Desk-Based assessment*. Unpublished report by Headland Archaeology (CVNU12-001).

## Cartographic sources

The following Ordnance Survey maps held by the National Library of Scotland were examined:

1881 (surveyed in 1876) Hebrides Inverness Sheet XXX 1: 2500

1904 (surveyed in 1901) Hebrides Inverness Sheet XXX 1: 2500

## APPENDIX A: GAZETTEERS

### Trench Records

Trench no.	Alignment.	Description
Tr-1	NW-SE	Trench 1 was 35m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.4m. The trench quickly became waterlogged but revealed a stone rich dark grey brown sand natural plus occasional large boulders
Tr-2	NE-SW	Trench 2 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.45m. Excavated onto t a course brown clayey sand with a band of outcropping bedrock
Tr-3	E-W	Trench 3 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.35m. Excavated down to the light grey brown clayey sand and stone rich natural
Tr-4	NE-SW	Trench 4 was 30m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.4m. A slot was excavated through the subsoil to reveal the outcropping bedrock within the grey brown clayey sand natural.
Tr-5	NE-SW	Trench 5 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.45m. The excavation exposed the stone rich natural clayey sand
Tr-6	NE-SW	Trench 6 was 25m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.35m. The excavation exposed the bands of bedrock aligned E-W through the trench.
Tr-7	N-S	Trench 7 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.4m. Revealed lenses of course orange snad within the geological subsoil
Tr-8	NE-SW	Trench 8 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.3m. Excavation revealed linear bands of bedrock and outcropping bedrock.
Tr-9	E-W	Trench 9 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.3m. Revealed a course grey brown clayey sand with frequent ang. stone inclusion
Tr-10	NE-SW	Trench 10 was 10m long and 1.8m wide excavated to a max depth of 0.4m. This

Trench no.	Alignment.	Description
		revealed a layer of coarse orange brown clayey sand and large angular stone inclusions

#### Photographic Record

Frame no.	C/S no.	Digital	Direction	Description
1	35	CVNU12-002		Film 1 ID shot
2		CVNU12-003		Working shot
3		CVNU12-004		Working shot
4		CVNU12-005	W	Trench 1 excavation
5	34	CVNU12-006	N	Trench 1 showing excavated slot
6		CVNU12-007	E	Trench 1 excavation
7	33	CVNU12-008	N	Trench 1 showing slot to W
8	32	CVNU12-009	SW	Trench 2 excavation
9	31	CVNU12-010	NE	Trench 2 excavation
10	30	CVNU12-011	W	Trench 3 excavation
11		CVNU12-012	E	Trench 3 excavation
12		CVNU12-013	N	General site shot
13	29	CVNU12-014	N	Trench 4 excavation
14	28	CVNU12-015	S	Trench 4 excavation
15		CVNU12-016	E	Trench 4 view of slot
16	27	CVNU12-017	N	Trench 5 excavation
17		CVNU12-018	S	Trench 5 excavation
18		CVNU12-019	NW	House feature to the W of Tr 4 and Tr 5
19		CVNU12-020	W	House feature to the W of Tr 4 and Tr 5
20	26	CVNU12-021	N	Trench 6 excavation
21	25	CVNU12-022	S	Trench 6 excavation
22	24	CVNU12-023	N	Trench 7 excavation
23		CVNU12-024	S	Trench 7 excavation

Frame no.	C/S no.	Digital	Direction	Description
24	23	CVNU12-025		Trench 8 excavation
25		CVNU12-026		Trench 8 excavation
26	22	CVNU12-027	N	Trench 9 excavation
27		CVNU12-028	S	Trench 9 excavation
28	21	CVNU12-029	N	Trench 10 excavation
29		CVNU12-030	S	Trench 10 excavation
30		CVNU12-031	N	General view of Tr 10 setting
31		CVNU12-032	N	General view of Tr 3 setting
32	20	CVNU12-033	SW	General view of Tr 1 setting
33	19	CVNU12-034	NE	Excavation of the water pipe trench
34		CVNU12-035	NE	Excavation of the water pipe trench
35	18	CVNU12-036	N	View of stone feature close to pipe trench
36	17	CVNU12-037	N	Excavation of the water pipe trench
37		CVNU12-038	NE	Excavation of the water pipe trench
38	16	CVNU12-039	SW	Trench 1 setting
39	15	CVNU12-040	E	View of Trench 3
40	14	CVNU12-041	W	View of Trench 8 and 9
41		CVNU12-042		Working shots
42	13	CVNU12-043		Working shots
43	12	CVNU12-044	N	View of slot through Trench 2
44	11	CVNU12-045	S	View of slot through Trench 2
45	10	CVNU12-046	NW	View of slot through Trench 3
46	9	CVNU12-047	W	View of slot through Trench 4
47	8	CVNU12-048	E	View of slot through Trench 4
48	7	CVNU12-049	NE	General site shot
49	6	CVNU12-050	NE	General site shot
50	5	CVNU12-051	NW	Stone house feature to west of site
51	4	CVNU12-052	E	Stone house feature to west of site
52	3	CVNU12-053	N	Stone house feature to west of site
53	2	CVNU12-054	W	Stone house feature to west of site



APPENDIX B: DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND ENTRY

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Wheelhouse eco hut campsite and self catering, Airigh mhic ruairidh, Griminish North Uist
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	CVNU12-002
<b>PARISH:</b>	North Uist
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Donald Wilson
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Headland Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Evaluation
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	None
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	None
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NF 79083 19211
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	February 2013
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	February 2013
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	DBA and walkover survey (CVNU12-001)
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)</b>	A programme of archaeological trial trenching was carried out in order to satisfy a condition of the planning consent for a development at the location of the proposed Wheelhouse Eco Hut Campsite and Self Catering, Airigh Mhic Ruairidh, Griminish, North Uist. The trial trenching comprised 10 trenches totalling 160 linear m located to target the main areas that will be impacted upon by the proposed development. These trenches revealed stone rich geological subsoil underlying a shallow layer of humic loam topsoil. No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were revealed during this work.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Nial Donaldson
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	13 Jane Street, Edinburgh EH6 5HE
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	Don.wilson@headlandarchaeology.com
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	RCAHMS