

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

# **Braich Ddu Wind Farm, near Maerdy, Gwynedd**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



**CPAT Report No 847**

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## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**R. Hankinson**  
February 2007

**Report for CLP Wind Projects**

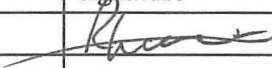
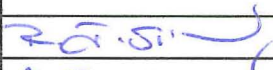

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## CPAT Report Record

### Report and status

<b>CPAT Report Title</b> Braich Ddu Wind Farm, near Maerdy, Gwynedd Archaeological Watching Brief	
CPAT Project Name Braich Ddu Wind Farm watching brief	
CPAT Project No 1348	CPAT Report No 841
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FIGURE: Archaeological sites and areas pertaining to the watching brief



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2006, CLP Wind Projects, of Charlestown, St Austell, (henceforward CLP) asked the contracting section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward CPAT Contracting) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a wind farm on land at Braich Ddu, near Maerdy in Gwynedd. The proposal had been subject to an earlier archaeological assessment (Silvester 2003).
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out two parts, the initial stage of which involved the examination of some test pits that were excavated in January 2006. Construction of the wind farm commenced in November 2006 and the archaeological watching brief involved intermittent visits in the period up to the end of January 2007. This report is a formal statement of the results of the watching brief and was prepared in early February 2007.

## 2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The watching brief encompassed the access route from the main A494 trunk road and part of the plateau of Mynydd Mynyllod, to the north of Craig y Llyn, centred at SJ 012408. With the exception of the access roads that led up to the wind farm, most of which followed existing trackways, the watching brief area could be characterised as improved upland pasture, rising to an elevation of almost 360m OD.
- 2.2 Two main soil types have been identified in the locality. On the upper slopes the soils are loamy upland soils with a peaty surface and bleached subsurface horizon, belonging to the Hafren Association, while the lower slopes are occupied by fine loamy or silty soils of the Manod Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend).
- 2.3 The underlying rocks of the area comprise greywackes belonging to the Sheinwoodian portion of the rocks of Silurian age (British Geological Survey map of Wales).

## 3 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1 No evidence of archaeological sites or features were recognised during the recording of the test pits on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2006, the results of which are presented below. Each pit measured approximately 2m by 1m. The subsoil was generally iron-rich clayey loam.

*Table of results from test pits*

Pit No	NGR	Results
1	SJ 01074091	Topsoil 160mm; subsoil 230mm
2	SJ 01144073	Topsoil 230mm; subsoil 190mm
3	SJ 01294074	Topsoil 130mm; subsoil 190mm
4	SJ 01314099	Topsoil 230mm; subsoil 190mm
5	SJ 01234107	Topsoil 100mm; subsoil 340mm
6	SJ 01084103	Topsoil 190mm; subsoil 530mm
7	SJ 01224132	Topsoil 320mm; subsoil variegated and merges with underlying degraded material

- 3.2 During the test pit excavations, the opportunity was taken to perform some preliminary investigation of the two mounds (PRN 16971) to determine whether they were of archaeological significance. Accordingly, the turf was removed by machine from the top of one of the mounds, under close archaeological supervision. This revealed that the upper surface of the mound was composed of fragmented stone, which was considerably different in nature to the topsoil and subsoil that had been revealed in a test pit in the immediate vicinity. The difference in composition from that expected suggested that the mounds were probably of archaeological significance and discussions were therefore held with the developers, during which it was decided that the mounds would be preserved in-situ. The proposed course of the nearby site road was consequently diverted around the location of the mounds.
- 3.3 On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006, the archaeological sites in close proximity to items of wind farm infrastructure were marked out under archaeological supervision, to ensure that they could be recognised and avoided by construction staff. The sites, PRNs 3281, 16969 and 16971 (see Fig 1), were marked with canes and coloured tags which were checked during the watching brief to ensure they remained in place. There was no requirement to maintain the markers once the topsoil stripping phase of groundworks had been completed, as vehicle movements were then limited to the stripped areas. The site marking was successful in protecting the known archaeological sites of the development area from disturbance.
- 3.4 The initial examination of the topsoil stripping for the site compound, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, revealed no features or finds of archaeological interest. The main part of the watching brief commenced on 11<sup>th</sup> December and comprised the observation of topsoil stripping from the road lines leading to and between the turbines on Mynydd Mynyllod. Over these routes, topsoil was removed by machine down to the top of the subsoil, and the resulting areas were assessed to determine whether any features of archaeological significance could be seen. No features were observed.



Plate 2 Topsoil stripping in the vicinity of the mounds (PRN 16971), (CPAT photo 2288-002)



- 3.5 Stripping of topsoil was also examined on, or in the vicinity of, the three turbine bases, but, again, no sites or features were revealed. The heaps of topsoil from road lines and turbine bases were examined for finds, but no relevant artefacts were recovered.
- 3.6 Topsoil was removed from the road line passing the mounds (PRN 16971) on 13<sup>th</sup> December. Despite close examination of the area during the machining, no finds or features which might have elucidated the period or function of the mounds were observed. Careful control of the route was maintained during the machining to ensure that there was no encroachment into the zone which had been marked out prior to the commencement of construction work. Both mounds were avoided without damage.
- 3.7 The final visit to the development was undertaken on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007, when topsoil was stripped from the remaining portion of site road. Again, no finds or features were identified in the stripped areas. The opportunity was also taken to examine the other elements of the development to ensure that no disturbance had occurred to the archaeological sites in their vicinity; this was confirmed.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The known archaeological sites within the development area have been protected during the course of the development and it is believed that none have been subject to direct disturbance during the construction of the wind farm. A brief investigation of one of the mounds (PRN 16971) was carried out under close archaeological supervision during the excavation of test pits, and confirmed that they were artificial features. The route of the nearby site road was accordingly diverted to avoid causing any disturbance to the features.
- 4.2 The new access roads and turbine bases have been examined during the removal of topsoil prior to road construction. No archaeological features were revealed by during the progress of the work and no finds were recovered from the resulting spoil.
- 4.3 As far as it can be determined, the development has had no direct effect on the archaeological resource of the locality.

#### **5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank Mr and Mrs Jones of Braich Ddu and the site staff of Carillion, for their help and assistance during the watching brief.

## **6 SOURCES**

### **6.1 References**

Silvester, R J, 2003, *Proposed Windfarm at Braich Ddu, nr Maerdy, Gwynedd*, CPAT Report No 519

### **6.2 Cartographic sources**

1983 Soils of England and Wales (Sheet 2 - Wales) Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend.

1994 *The Rocks of Wales* (Solid), Nottingham: British Geological Survey map.



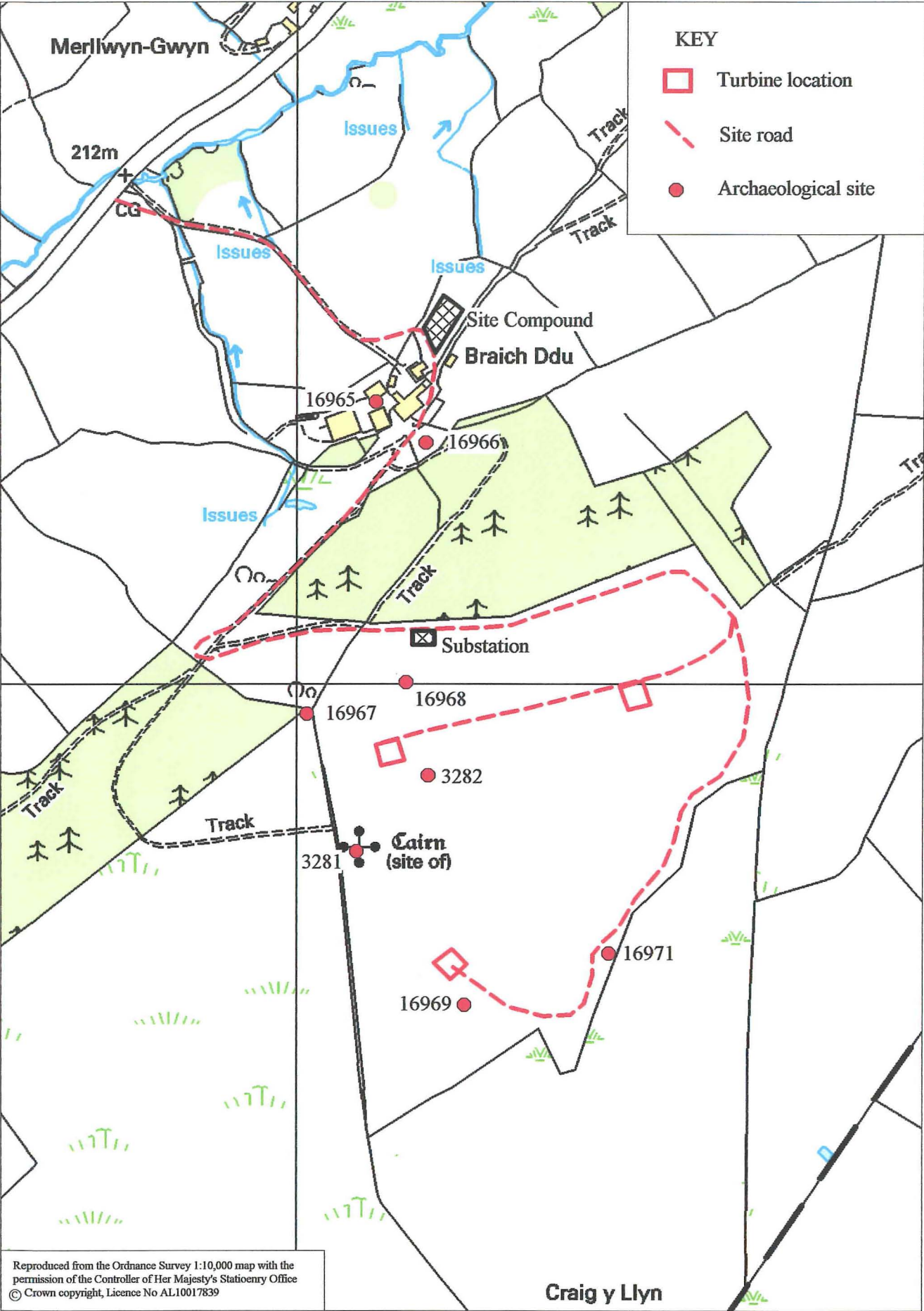


Fig 1 Indicative plan of the windfarm infrastructure in relation to archaeological sites Scale 1:5,000