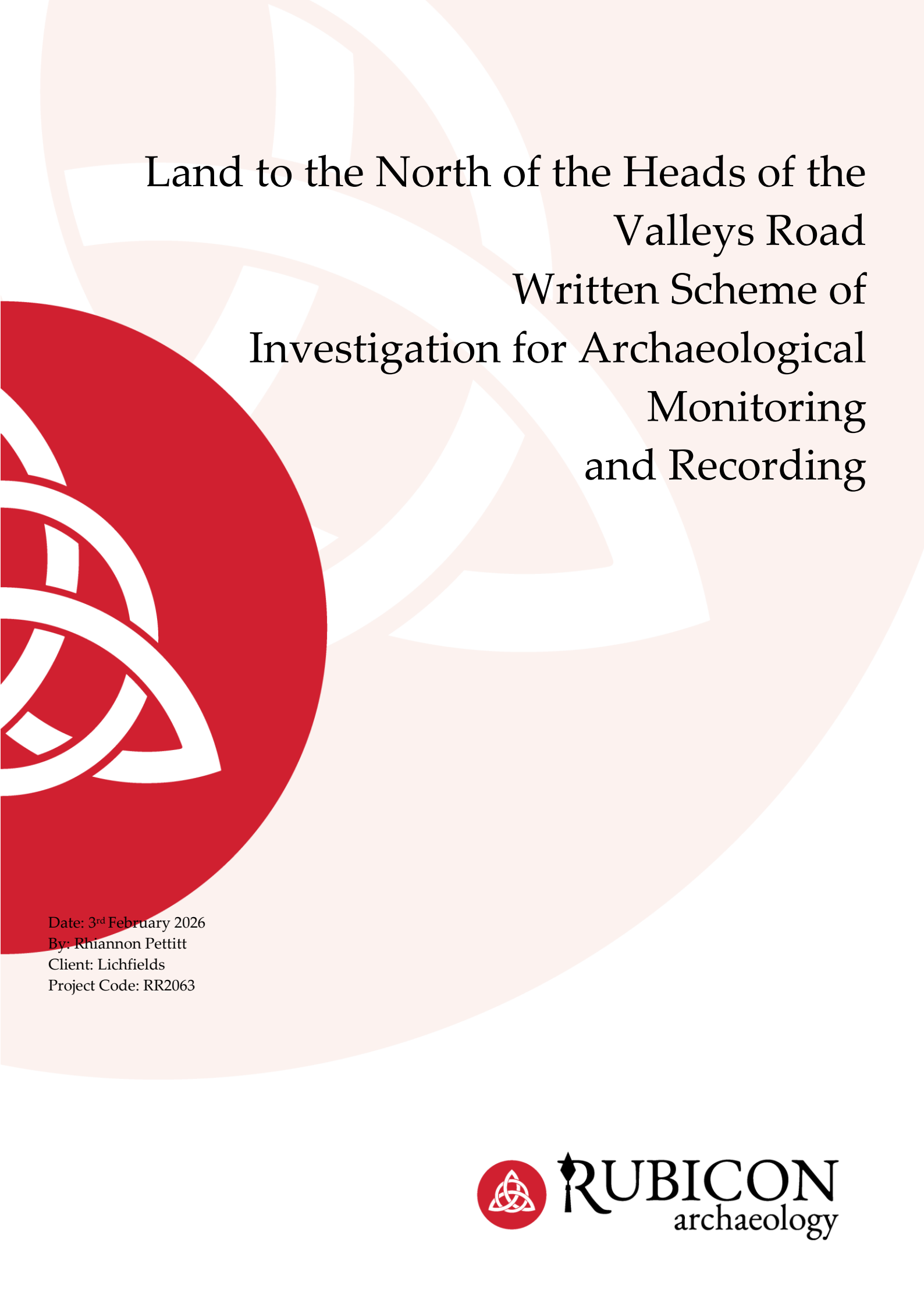




Land to the North of the Heads of the Valleys Road Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

Date: 3rd February 2026
By: Rhiannon Pettitt
Client: Lichfields
Project Code: RR2063

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Client	Lichfields
RRA Project Code	RR2063
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Rev Number	Description	Undertaken	Approved	Date
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FIGURES

Figure 1 Site location

Figure 2 Site plan

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 This document is a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological monitoring and recording on Land to the North of the Heads of the Valleys Road (NGR SO 07982 08447), Fig. 1), prepared for Lichfield's on behalf of McDonald's Restaurants Ltd.
- 1.1.2 The works are in support of an application for the demolition of existing buildings and development of a restaurant with drive-thru facility (Use Class A3), including access and cycle path, servicing, car parking, hard and soft landscaping, advertisements and other associated works (Planning Application Number: P/25/0265).
- 1.1.3 This WSI has been guided in its composition by current ClfA standards and guidance (ClfA 2023a; 2023b), and the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide (Historic England 2015).
- 1.1.4 All Rubicon Archaeology Project Managers and Senior Project Officers have completed the certificated *Working in projects using MoRPHE* training course provided by Historic England (<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/online-training/morphe/>).
- 1.1.5 Two mitigation conditions were identified by Heneb (ref: MTY0290/JBHD). The first, a level 2 Building survey of the late-19th century Station House and the second a detailed written scheme of investigation for a programme of archaeological work to protect the archaeological resource. This was envisaged as an archaeological monitoring and recording (watching brief) during the groundworks. It is the latter of the two which is addressed within this WSI.

1.2 Site Location and Description

- 1.2.1 The Site is located within the administrative district of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, approximately 4km north-east of the centre of Myrthir Tydfil. The Site is situated on the eastern periphery of Dowalis Top Retail Park, within the Pengarddu Industrial Estate, situated north-east of the village of Dowlais. It is situated off Rumney Common Road (a.k.a. Old Rumney Road) which runs along its northern boundary and The Heads of the Valley Road (A465) which runs along its southern boundary. The site is centred at National Grid Reference (NGR SO 07982 08447) at an elevation of c.385.21m.
- 1.2.2 The proposed development area comprises a c.0.4ha irregular shaped block. It has seen recent use for commercial and light industry (Figure 1). There are two extant residential buildings at its eastern most extent which includes the late 19th century Station House.

1.2.3 The Site is situated within the Merthyr Tydfil 'Registered Historic Landscape of Outstanding Importance' (Cadw reference HLW (MGL) 2) and within that, the 'Historic Character Area of Dowlais Top', HLCA047.

1.2.4 The bedrock geology comprises South Wales Lower Coal Measures Formation - Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 319 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. With superficial deposits of Till, Devensian - Diamicton. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period (British Geology Viewer accessed 03/02/26).

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

1.3.1 The Heneb Archaeological planning letter (ref: MTY0290/JBHD) identified that:

1.3.2 *'Information in the Historic Environment Record shows the site to be within the Merthyr Tydfil Registered Historic Landscape of Outstanding Importance (Cadw reference HLW (MGL) 2) and within that, the Historic Character Area of Dowlais Top, HLCA047. This is characterised as: Reclaimed industrial area, recent commercial, retail and light industrial area, site of industrial extractive landscape: quarries and spoil tips, rail corridor: Brecon and Merthyr Railway (including Dowlais Top Station) and sidings associated with Dowlais Iron Company Railway.*

1.3.3 *Set in the wider landscape of minerals extraction, and land and water management recorded from the early 19th century, and currently largely reclaimed, aqueducts, drains and leats nearby associated with the Dowlais free drainage system that utilised and managed water from the uplands to supply the Dowlais Ironworks are recorded in the HER.*

1.3.4 *Specifically, the area formed part of the Dowlais Top railway station, where the L&NWR Dowlais Extension, the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway, and the Brecon and Merthyr Railway converged with tramroads supplying the ironworks with raw materials. Historic mapping sequences show varied railway features as well as trackways and sidings, such as buildings, signal posts, and other unidentified features. Whilst the greater part of the area has been reclaimed and reutilised, the south eastern part around the existing station house is likely to retain evidence of the former uses, which may become apparent during the development.'*

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The investigation will involve archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks required for the development.
- 2.1.2 The results of the archaeological monitoring and recording could have the potential to contribute to research priorities. Specifically:
- 2.1.3 Later Post Medieval & Industrial 1750 to 1900; Existing priorities: *'The significance, form and archaeological survival of transport corridors – turnpikes, government-sponsored roads, canals, railways – their engineering, the industries they served and the settlements they sustained.'* (Gerrard, 2025).

2.2 Objectives

- 2.2.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring and recording proposed in this WSI will be achieved through the following objectives:
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered within the proposed works
 - Establish the nature of the activity on the site.
 - Identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site.
 - Provide further information on the archaeology of the site from any archaeological remains encountered.
 - Determine the geological and soil formation at the site and establish the depths of topsoil.
 - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

3. METHODOLOGY OF WORKS

3.1 Scope

- 3.1.1 The proposed archaeological works will comprise archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks associated with the development on site.
- 3.1.2 These works will be undertaken by Rubicon Archaeology who will ensure that Health & Safety requirements are adhered to; the location of buried services data provided by the client; and compliance of any on-site constraints.

3.2 Methodology

- 3.2.1 All fieldwork will be undertaken in accordance with current best practice and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Universal Guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording (CIfA 2023a and 2023b).
- 3.2.2 The archaeological monitoring and recording will comprise the observation by a competent archaeologist of all intrusive groundworks, including the excavation of connective pits and service trenches. Non-archaeologically significant deposits will be removed by the contractors under archaeological supervision. Where mechanical excavators are used, these will be equipped with a toothless grading bucket whenever possible.
- 3.2.3 All arisings will be separated into subsoil and topsoil and stored on geotextile prior to reinstatement. No backfilling will occur until the Stewardship Officer has signed off the works either through a site visit or remotely.
- 3.2.4 If unexpected archaeological deposits are found which are of sufficient significance to merit an alternative approach such as contingency excavation or physical preservation, the client and Stewardship Officer will be contacted immediately. Destructive work in that area will cease until agreement has been reached on an appropriate archaeological response.
- 3.2.5 All archaeological deposits encountered will be planned and recorded. The work will include, as a minimum: the recording of individual contexts on appropriate pro-formas; section drawings of appropriate single contexts and features (at 1:20 and 1:10 scales, as deemed commensurate with the subject); photographs and other appropriate drawn and written records.
- 3.2.6 Vertical survey control will be tied to the Ordnance Survey datum. Plans will be located using GPS with sub-centimetre accuracy. A geo-referenced digital boundary file will be created as an ESRI shapefile.
- 3.2.7 The photographic record shall consist of digital photographs taken at high resolution (12 megapixels and above). The photographic record shall include photographs of archaeological

features and structures. Photographs shall include an appropriate scale. Digital images will be taken and stored in accordance with the RCAHMW *Guidelines for Digital Archaeological Archives* (RCAHMW, 2015).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Artefact collection policy will be concerned with the provision of adequate samples for meeting the objectives of the work. If archaeological objects are recovered an appropriate retention/discard strategy will be agreed with Amgueddfa Cymru. Discarded artefactual materials will be described and quantified through assignment to broad categories in the field.

3.3.2 Finds work will be undertaken in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA, 2020a).

3.3.3 All retained finds and archaeoenvironmental samples will be treated and conserved in accordance with the English Heritage guidance document *A Strategy for the Care and Investigation of Finds* (English Heritage, 1995), the *United Kingdom Institute for Conservation's document Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC, 1990) and *First Aid for Finds* (Leigh et al, 2001). Assessment and analysis of finds and archaeoenvironmental samples will be undertaken, as necessary. Finds and sample storage will be at Rubicon Archaeology's Cardiff office.

3.3.4 Any artefacts, materials and each category of data recovered during the archaeological monitoring and recording will be treated in accordance with the requirements and standards set by the following:

- *Guidelines and Minimum Requirements for Archaeological Excavation* (Rubicon Archaeology 2019)
- *Guidelines for on-site Retrieval of Archaeological Material and Data* (Rubicon Archaeology 2019)
- *Guidelines for on-site Treatment of Finds* (Rubicon Archaeology 2019)
- *Guidelines for Environmental Sampling* (Rubicon Archaeology 2019)
- *Standards and Universal Guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording* (CIfA 2023a and 2023b)

3.3.5 In general finds will be treated in the following way:

- All finds, where appropriate, will be retained from each archaeological context excavated.
- All finds, where appropriate, will be washed.

- All pottery and other finds, where appropriate, will be marked with the site code and context number.
- Finds work will be undertaken in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidelines for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CifA 2020a).

3.4 Environmental Sampling

- 3.4.1 Where appropriate, contexts will be sampled in accordance with the guidelines provided by English Heritage (2011). Samples will be collected for technological, pedological and chronological analysis as appropriate. Specialist technical advice will be sought if significant deposits are encountered.
- 3.4.2 Should archaeological remains be identified, soil samples will be taken as appropriate to contribute to the evaluation of the nature, date and extent of those remains. The exact sampling methodology can only be determined once the nature of archaeological remains becomes apparent. These charred plant remains would contribute to the assessment of features or the historic landscape if there was material suitable for dating or could contribute to the interpretation of the function of features. Wherever possible samples will be taken in response to specific research questions.
- 3.4.3 Any bone recovered from stratified deposits will also be subject to assessment. Analysis will be limited to material that can provide metrical, ageing or sex information.

3.5 Reporting & Archiving

- 3.5.1 The results of the archaeological monitoring and recording will be disseminated in the form of written and illustrated report, to be compiled following completion of all fieldwork.
- 3.5.2 The preparation of the report will follow the guidelines published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA 2023a and 2023b). Details of style and format will be determined by Rubicon Archaeology Ltd but will include:
- A non-technical summary.
 - The site location.
 - Aims and purpose of the archaeological work.
 - The methodology of works.
 - A description of the project results.
 - An objective interpretation of the results, placing them in an appropriate local and regional context.

- Site layout plans on an OS base, with the location of the archaeological monitoring and recording areas.
 - Plans of each area in which archaeological features were recorded.
 - Sections and feature sections (with OD heights).
 - Site matrices where appropriate.
 - A consideration of evidence within its wider context.
 - Site photographs, including key features, and an index to the full photographic archive.
 - A summary table and descriptive text showing the features, classes and numbers of artefacts located, and soil profiles, with interpretation.
 - An archive statement, which will summarise the contents, location, and projected deposition date of the archive, if required.
 - Supporting illustrations & plans, suitably captioned, at appropriate scales. These will include a location map and site plan; copies of historic map & historic photographs where relevant.
- 3.5.3 The results of the archaeological work will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with *The Standards and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA 2020b) and current Historic England guidelines (English Heritage, 2008; Historic England, 2015).
- 3.5.4 The Archaeological Archives Forum standards (Brown 2011) will also be adhered to in relation to the compilation and treatment of the archive.
- 3.5.5 The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the CIfA in that organisation's code of conduct (CIfA 2022) and this will be adhered to in relation to the current project.
- 3.5.6 The project archive, which will include photographs, plans, elevations and site notes, will be deposited with the Amgueddfa Cymru or other agreed body in line with the *National Standards for Wales for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives* (Welsh Museum Federation 2019). All retained finds and palaeoenvironmental samples will be treated and conserved in accordance with the UKIC's document *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990).
- 3.5.7 A copy of the final report will be submitted to the regional HER in line with Welsh Archaeological Trust guidance (Welsh Archaeological Trusts 2024). The report will become a public document after a period not exceeding six months. Copyright of the report will remain

with Rubicon Archaeology Limited, but will be licenced for use by the client, and the local Historic Environment Team for planning purposes and bona fide research purposes.

- 3.5.8 Either a short publication note or a journal article will be produced, depending on the significance of the results. This will be published within an appropriate journal such as Archaeology in Wales or Archaeologia Cambrensis. The publication text should be provided to the client prior to publication.

4. UNFORESEEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

4.1 Unforeseen Archaeological Remains of Significance

4.1.1 In the event of archaeological remains of unexpected or exceptional (i.e. of regional or national) importance that requires further investigation being encountered, during either archaeological or non-archaeological works on site, the following will be undertaken:

- The stripping of soil, ground reduction or ground disturbance will cease in that area.
- The project archaeologist will inform the Historic Environment Officer and the client of the finds and arrange a site meeting at the earliest possible convenience to all parties.
- The project archaeologist will, if necessary, erect temporary fencing around the area of possible archaeological remains until such a meeting.
- The impact on archaeological remains will be mitigated in a manner appropriate to their importance. The Historic Environment Officer will be the final judge of significance in any case and may require full excavation of features to be destroyed by the proposals.

4.2 Human Remains

4.2.1 Any discovered human remains will be left in situ, covered and protected.

4.2.2 If removal is necessary the project archaeologist will inform the Historic Environment Officer, the client, and the local coroner as appropriate. Advice will be sought from the Ministry of Justice by the project archaeologist as to whether a licence may be required to exhume any or all remains.

4.2.3 A strategy for the excavation, analysis, retention and/or reburial of a) disarticulated and b) articulated human remains will be developed and specified in a discussion with the Historic Environment Officer covering the identified human remains. The cataloguing and analysis of all human remains will be undertaken, as necessary, by Siobhán Sinnott, osteoarchaeologist. All treatment of remains will follow industry-standard procedures (McKinley and Roberts 1993; CIfA and BABOA 2017).

4.3 Treasure

4.3.1 All works will be carried out in full compliance with the *Treasure Act 1996* and *The Treasure (Designation) Order 2002, 2023*. Any finds made that are identified under this Act shall immediately be reported to the local coroner as appropriate.

4.3.2 To protect the finds from theft, Rubicon Archaeology will record the finds and remove them to a safe place. Where recording and removal is not feasible or appropriate on the day of discovery

we shall ensure, on liaison with the project archaeologist, the client and the Historic Environment Officer, that adequate site security is provided.

- 4.3.3 Subject to the Provisions of the Treasure Act 1996, all material that is defined as Treasure is vested in the franchisee or, if none, the Crown.
- 4.3.4 With respect to Treasure finds, a reward may be payable to the finder, the landowner and/or the occupier. The Crown usually offers finds to a museum.

5. PROGRAMME AND MONITORING

5.1 Provisional Programme

- 5.1.1 The Historic Environment Officer will monitor progress and standards throughout the project. Notification of the start of site works will be made by the client at least five days prior to commencement of work.
- 5.1.2 The report on the results will be completed within eight weeks of the completion of fieldwork, subject to any specialist assessment or analysis which may be required.

5.2 Monitoring Responsibilities

- 5.2.1 Rubicon Archaeology will keep the Historic Environment Officer informed on the progress of works, including post-excavation works, as necessary.
- 5.2.2 Reasonable access to the site is to be arranged at all times for the Historic Environment Officer, should they request to make a site inspection to ensure that the archaeological monitoring and recording is progressing satisfactorily.
- 5.2.3 Any variations to the WSI shall be agreed with the Historic Environment Officer, in writing, prior to them being carried out.

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6.1 Personnel

6.1.1 The field team deployed by Rubicon Archaeology will include only full time professional archaeological staff. All staff in supervisory positions will be members, at an appropriate level, of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) or equivalent.

6.1.2 The overall management of the various stages of the project will be done by Gemma Stevenson MCIfA as Project Manager, who will oversee all phases of the archaeological programme of works, through to its completion.

6.1.3 The analysis of the finds and environmental data will be undertaken by appropriate specialists and Rubicon Archaeology under the overall direction of the Project Archaeologist.

6.1.4 The analysis of the finds and environmental data will be undertaken by appropriate specialists and Rubicon Archaeology under the overall direction of the Project Manager. These will include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| • Paul Blinkhorn | Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery |
| • Derek Hurst | Medieval and post-medieval pottery |
| • Rob Young/Sarah Percival | Prehistoric Pottery |
| • Dr David Griffiths | Roman/Iron Age pottery |
| • Adam Daudney | Small finds |
| • Rob Young | Lithics |
| • Siobhan Sinnott | Osteoarchaeologist |
| • Hannah Russ | Zooarchaeology |
| • Val Fryer | Archaeobotanist and charcoal specialist |

Further specialists may be required depending on the artefacts/ materials identified.

6.1.9 All the above are published specialists in their field, and full members of the CIfA or equivalent professional bodies.

6.2 Variations

6.2.1 Any variations to this Written Scheme of Investigation that may be needed as a result of the emerging results of works will be approved in advance with the Stewardship Officer.

- 6.2.2 Any dispute or difference arising out of a contract in relation to the work shall be referred for a decision in accordance with the Rules of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, Arbitration Scheme for the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists applying at the date of agreement.

7. REFERENCES

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LandIS Soilscales Viewer
<https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/> (accessed 3/02/2026)



Legend

Site Extent

Project Code: RR2063

Project Name: Land North of the
Heads of the Valleys Road

Revision: 1.0

Prepared by: M.Smithson

Approved by: D.Gilbert

Date: 03/02/2026

Scale: 1:1500 @ A4

10 20 30 40 50 m



Figure 1 - Location plan