

CPAT Report No. 1519

# Cefn-caer Roman Fort, Pennal



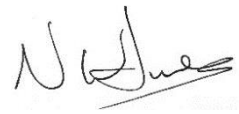
Archaeological Mitigation



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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 CPAT Project No: 2216  
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## Summary

A programme of archaeological mitigation was conducted by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust within the scheduled area of the Cefn-caer Roman site (SAM Me009), Pennal, Gwynedd, during the replacement of two electricity poles. The work was undertaken as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent.

A small area was excavated by hand adjacent to one pole which was located along the line of the north-western rampart of the fort. This identified material likely to be part of the earthen rampart, although this had been disturbed previously by excavations associated with the erection of the existing pole in the 1950s. A watching brief was maintained during the removal by machine of this pole, and another located outside the fort, with the holes being widened slightly by hand to accommodate the new poles. No artefacts were recovered at either pole location.

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) were commissioned by Overlec Ltd in June 2017 to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation, comprising hand excavation and a watching brief, during the replacement of two electricity poles within the scheduled area of the Cefn-caer Roman Site SAM Me009 (NGR SH 7049 0008).

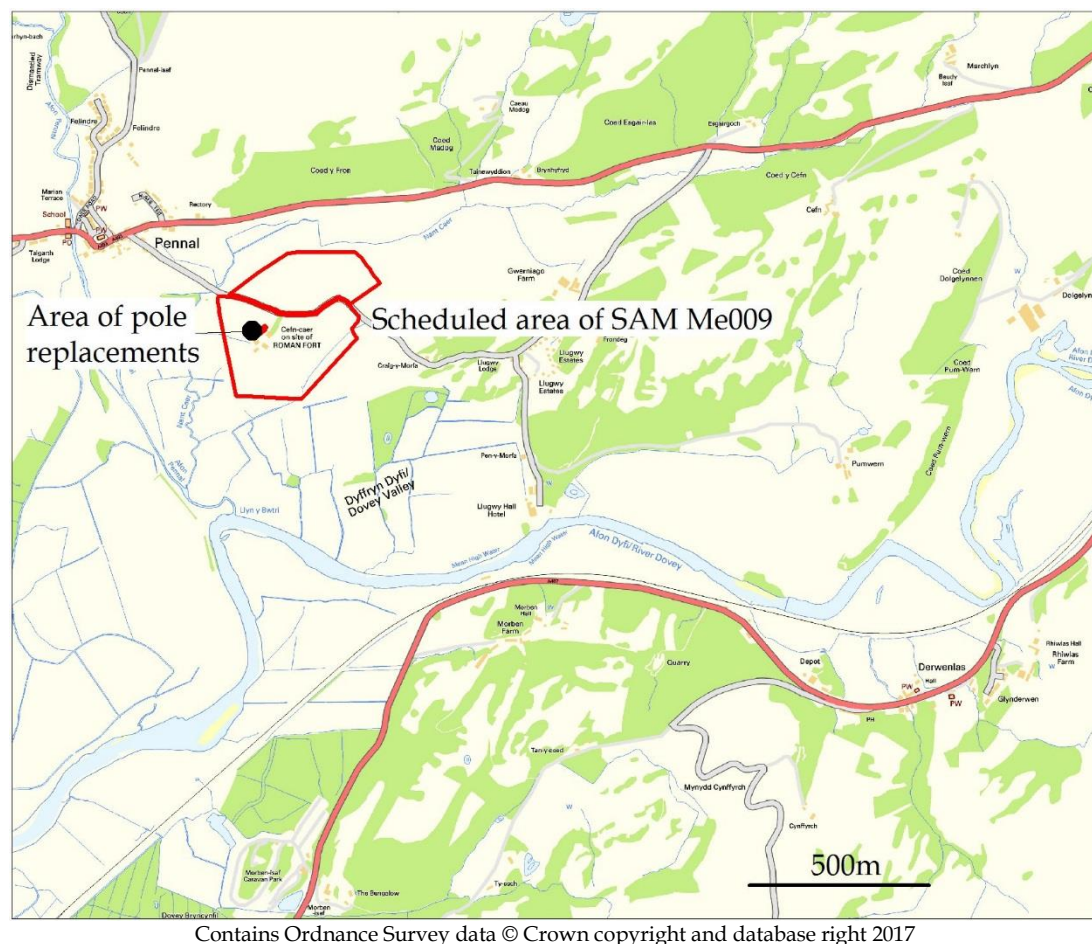


Fig. 1: Location of the Electricity Pole Refurbishments at Pennal

- 1.2. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for the work was granted by Cadw on 15 July 2016, with the inclusion of a number of conditions designed to protect the Scheduled Monument and to record any archaeological features that might be revealed during the consented works. These included a provision that a suitably qualified archaeologist was appointed to carry out a watching brief during the removal and replacement of the poles, also a hand excavation at the location of the easternmost pole. The archaeological works were detailed in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI 1795-1: Appendix 1) which was approved by Cadw in July 2017, and contains full details of the SMC conditions.
- 1.3. The two poles in question were located at NGRs SH 70380 00118 and SH 70410 00129, the latter placed in the fence/hedge enclosing the garden at Cefn-caer. Both poles lay within the area of the fort defences, that nearest Cefn-caer Farm lying on or near the

crest of the fort rampart, while the other lay in the approximate position of one of the fort ditches. The work was carried out on 11 August 2017 and this report written immediately thereafter.

## 2 Background

- 2.1. The Roman site is focussed on the fort, within which the Cefn-caer farmstead lies, and situated on a low spur overlooking the floodplain of the River Dyfi. The position of the fort, near to the upper tidal limit of the Dyfi, is thought to have allowed for the transport of goods by sea (Hopewell 2010, 272), and this would have provided access to the next forts via the Roman road network.
- 2.2. There were apparently two forts on the same site, the earlier covering an area of 2.6ha and probably built of earth and timber with two or three ditches, while the later sat in an off-centre location within the defences of the earlier fort, had a single defensive ditch, and covered an area of 1.8ha.

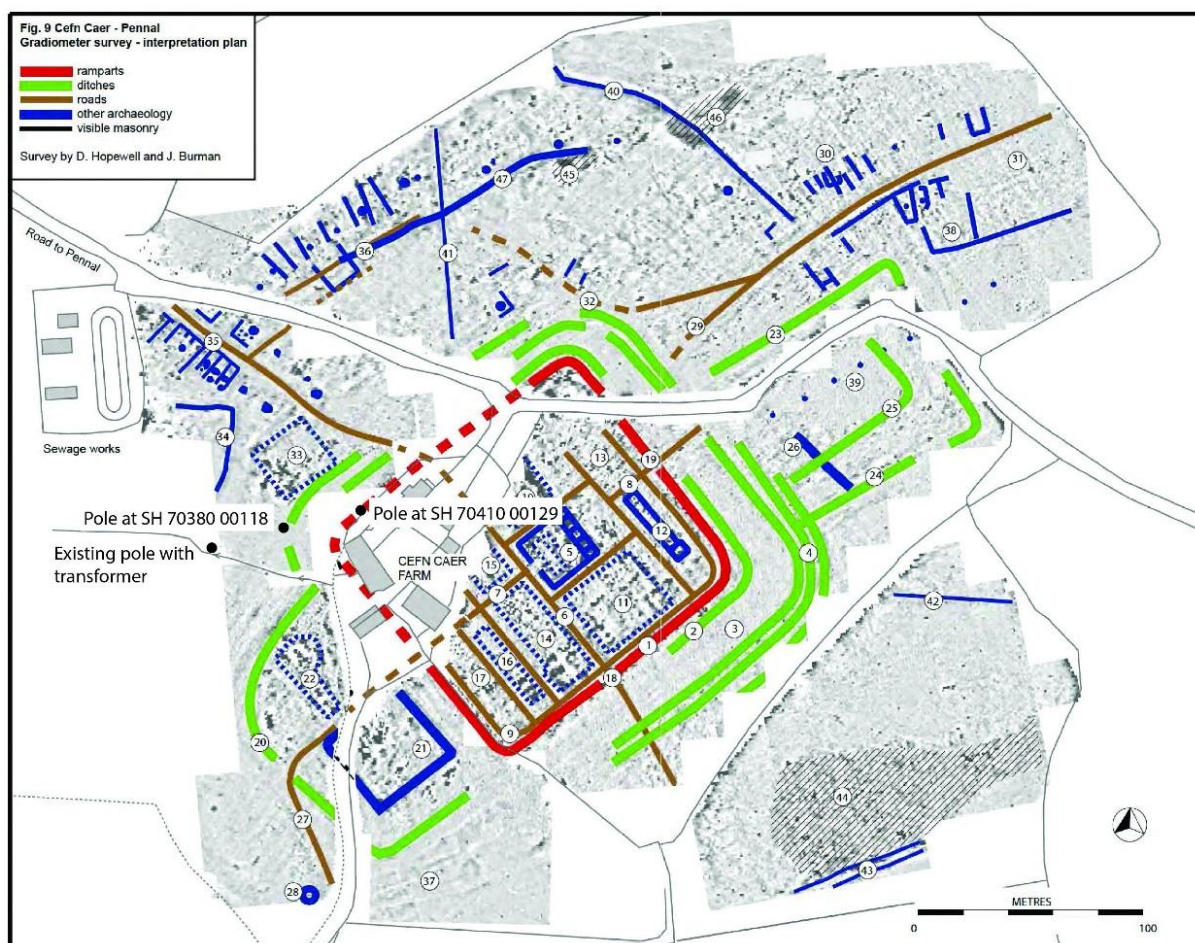


Fig. 2: Pole locations in relation to the plan of the fort, based on the results of geophysical survey in 2005/6 (after Hopewell 2006)

- 2.3. Geophysical survey carried out by D Hopewell of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in 2005 and 2006 revealed a wide range of extra-mural features, including a series of rectangular enclosures to the north-east of the fort and an annexe to its south-west

containing what was thought to be a bath-house and a *mansio*. On the north-west side of the fort, the survey revealed evidence for a civilian settlement, or *vicus*, extending at least 130m away from the fort. This area was subject to investigative excavation by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, revealing two phases of wooden buildings with domestic, trade and light industrial functions; the dating evidence suggested occupation between AD 130-160, with secondary evidence implying that the fort was built around AD 80 and abandoned by AD 160, though low-level activity continuing into the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century was indicated by the finds.

### 3 Excavation

- 3.1. A small rectangular trench was excavated by hand immediately adjacent to the easternmost pole (NGR SH 70410 00129), this area being used as a joint bay to allow the cable leading from the pole to be joined to the Caef-caer farm power supply. The trench measured approximately 1.0m square and was 0.6m deep; numbers in brackets in the following description refer to individual contexts in the site archive and these are depicted on Fig. 4, below.
- 3.2. The trench was located on the north-west side of the pole, which was set into the garden fence/hedge and was excavated in the adjoining pasture field. The upper layer of grey-brown stony silt (1) was up to 0.2m deep and clearly of relatively modern date from the artefacts it contained. This sealed a deposit of mixed stony clay silt (2), that was found to be the fill of a trench (5) which was cut when the pole was originally erected in the 1950s. This may have been a sloping ramp cut from the north-west, but the excavations were not sufficiently deep to confirm this suggestion.



Fig. 3: The completed excavation trench, showing the existing easternmost pole before its removal, from the north-west. Photo CPAT 4386-0008.

- 3.3. At the base of the trench, a small area of yellowish-grey silt (3) was observed in the southern corner, which probably represented part of the undisturbed rampart of the fort. A deposit of grey clay silt with some iron panning (4), identified in the northern corner of the trench, is also likely to be part of the rampart makeup. Both deposits had been cut by the original pole trench but the relationship between them could not be determined. No Roman artefacts were found.

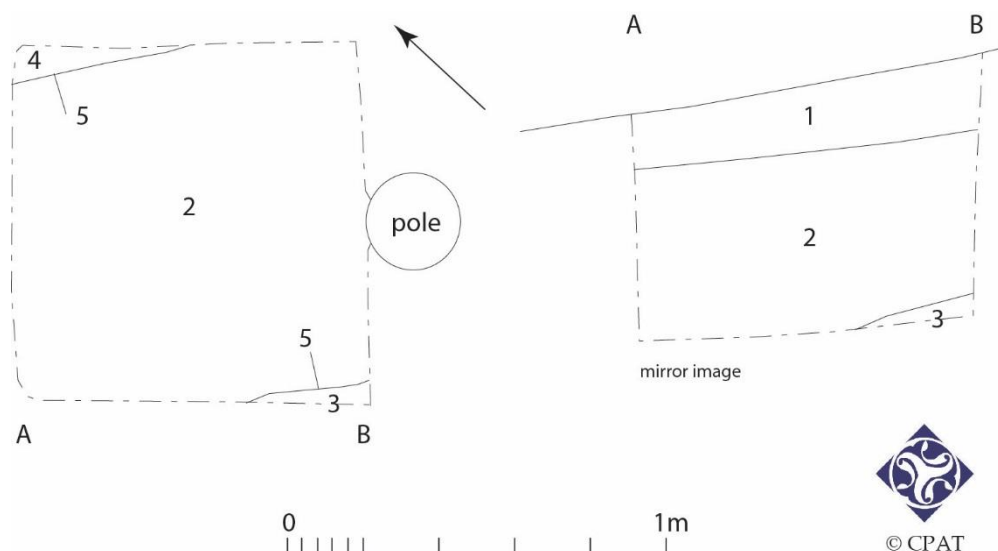


Fig. 4: Plan and section of the excavation at SH 70410 00129

## 4 Watching Brief

- 4.1. The two poles that were replaced were pulled out vertically by machine and replaced in the opposite manner; some minor widening of the existing holes was required to ensure that the new poles could be replaced and this was done by hand.
- 4.2. Any material that was removed during the hole widening process was examined in case datable artefacts or other significant material was revealed, but no Roman material was observed at either of the hole locations. It was evident from the wider excavation at the easternmost pole that all of the material surrounding the existing pole there represented fill dating from the time the pole was erected in the 1950s.
- 4.3. The widening of the hole at the westernmost pole location appeared to show an identical situation, although it was difficult to identify any layers or deposits owing to the small area that the pole had occupied. Again, no material of archaeological interest was revealed. One significant observation at this location was that water infiltrated the base of the hole and this may confirm the belief that this location falls within the route of one of the ditches that served the fort.





Fig. 5: Widening of the hole to allow the new pole to be inserted at the westernmost location (NGR SH 70380 00118), from the west-south-west. Photo CPAT 4386-0007.

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The excavation at the easternmost pole of the two that were replaced appeared to have revealed a small amount of possible in-situ fort rampart, though the vast majority of the excavation was in the backfill of the hole within which this pole was placed when it was erected in the 1950s.
- 5.2. The watching brief on the pole removal and replacement work showed that as far as could be determined in the small areas that were available, the slight widening that was necessary to accommodate the new poles was entirely within ground that had already been disturbed when the poles were first erected. No Roman material was observed at either location.

## 6 Sources

Hopewell, D., 2006. *Roman Fort Environs: Additional Geophysical Survey at Caer Gai and Cefn Caer*, Unpublished Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Report No 635.

Hopewell, D., 2010. 'Pennal (Cefn Caer)' in Burnham, B. C., and Davies, J. L., *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches*, Aberystwyth: RCAHMW, 272-275.

## 7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1. The writer would like to thank Mr Ian Halfpenny, Cadw's Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments for his advice and the site staff of Overlec Ltd for their cooperation with the archaeological elements of the scheme.

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## 8 Archive deposition Statement

- 8.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The digital archive only will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and the paper/drawn/digital archive with the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW) in Aberystwyth. No artefacts were recovered. A summary of the archive is provided below.

## 9 Archive Summary

5 context record forms

1 A4 site drawing

1 watching brief record form

12 digital photographs, CPAT film 4386

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## Appendix 1: CPAT WSI 1795-1

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) have been invited by Overlec to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation, comprising hand excavation and a watching brief, during the replacement of two electricity poles within the scheduled area of Cefn Caer Roman Site Sam Me009.
- 1.2. Scheduled Monument Consent for the work was granted by Cadw on 15 July 2016, with the inclusion of the following conditions:

**Prior to the replacement pole upgrade work being undertaken:**

1. The applicant shall appoint a suitably qualified archaeologist (at their own expense) to undertake a hand excavation, down to the underlying natural substrate, at the proposed location for Pole C (as denoted on the map accompanying the scheduled monument consent application);
2. The applicant shall provide the appointed archaeologist with details of the precise location for Pole C which shall be used for siting the pole;
3. The appointed archaeologist shall submit a specification of works, for approval by the Welsh Minister's prior to the excavation being undertaken;
4. In the event that significant archaeological remains are exposed, the Welsh Ministers shall be contacted and work shall immediately cease until the Welsh Ministers have had the opportunity to arrange for an official to visit the site, assess the significance of the archaeological remains and advise on the next steps;
5. If significant archaeological remains are exposed, the applicant shall review their current proposals and agree a suitable alternative pole location with the Welsh Ministers;
6. Within one month of project completion, the appointed archaeologist shall produce a completion report and the draft of this document shall first be approved by the Welsh Ministers. The completion report shall provide an overview of the works that have been undertaken and appended all relevant documentation, including the original application, plans, a photographic archive, an archaeological report, the works specification and any amendments etc. The report shall also include sufficient historical research on the monument to enable its significance to be appreciated and understood within a local and national context;
7. Within one month of the draft report having been approved, the applicant shall deposit a final version of the report, incorporating any comments/editorial amendments to:
  - The Welsh Ministers
  - The Regional Historic Environment Record held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust - her@heneb.co.uk
  - The National Monument Record held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) - Gareth.Edwards@rcahmw.gov.uk

**During the replacement pole operations:**

8. The Welsh Ministers are given at least two week's advance notice, in writing (written notice via email is acceptable), of the date of the commencement of the work or of any subsequent adjustment to this date;
  9. The Welsh Ministers shall be afforded access onto the site to monitor the progress of the works and carry out site inspections as necessary;
  10. The applicant shall ensure that all on-site contractors and staff are made fully aware that the works are taking place within a legally protected scheduled monument and that care should be taken not to damage the ground surface other than as authorised by this consent. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring that no works are undertaken that could affect or disturb the protected scheduled monument, other than those works agreed to as part of this consent. A plan denoting the extent of the legally protected scheduled monument is attached to this decision;
  11. No ancillary operations shall be undertaken on the scheduled monument, for example, road widening, access track creation, equipment storage, creation of work compounds etc.
  12. The applicant shall immediately notify the Welsh Ministers in the event of any archaeological features, deposits or artefacts being exposed. Work on that part of the site shall cease until the Welsh Ministers have visited the site, assessed the archaeology and advised on the next steps;
  13. Vehicle access onto, or across, the scheduled monument shall be strictly controlled, with access routes agreed by the Welsh Ministers and vehicles shall only access the scheduled monument when ground conditions are suitable in order to avoid damage, for example, when the ground is not waterlogged;
  14. The scheduled monument shall be left in a stable and tidy condition upon completion of the work and that all redundant elements of the work shall be removed from the scheduled monument;
  15. The Welsh Ministers shall be informed in writing (written notice via email is acceptable) immediately upon the completion of the works; and
  16. The Welsh Ministers shall be contacted immediately should there be a necessity to amend or alter the working methodology. Any such amendments/alterations shall be agreed by the Welsh Ministers prior to work commencing.
- 1.3. This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been produced in response to Condition 3 and to provide details of how other relevant conditions will be met.

## **2 Methodology**

### **Excavation**

- 2.1. The new location of Pole C, which is to be positioned in undisturbed ground, will be excavated archaeologically, by hand, down to the underlying natural substrate. The excavations will be undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014).

### **Watching brief**

- 2.2. The watching brief will be undertaken to monitor the removal of existing poles and their replacement. The excavation of any archaeological features or deposits will be

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undertaken by hand using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation. The watching brief will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).

### **Methodology**

- 2.3. All archaeological excavation will be undertaken according to the following methodology:
- The presence or absence of archaeological features encountered during the ground works will be noted.
  - Where features of archaeological interest are identified during the ground works they will be systematically investigated by hand with sufficient work being undertaken to determine their date, character and function, using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation and in accordance with CIfA Standard and Guidance.
  - All features will be located as accurately as possible on an overall plan of the development at an appropriate scale, showing boundaries depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping.
  - Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms, using a continuous numbering system, and be drawn and photographed as appropriate.
  - Plans will be drawn on permatrace to a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, as appropriate.
  - All photography will be taken using a digital SLR camera with a minimum resolution of 12 mega pixels, including a metric scale in each view, with views logged in a photographic register.
  - In the event of human burials being discovered the Ministry of Justice will be informed. The remains will initially be left *in situ*, and if removal is required, a MoJ licences will be applied for under the Burial Act 1857.
  - In the event of finding any artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasures Act 1996, the appropriate procedures under this legislation will be followed.
- 2.4. All artefacts and environmental samples will be treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and a sampling strategy will be developed as appropriate:
- All stratified finds will be collected by context, or where appropriate, individually recorded in three dimensions. Unstratified finds will only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest.
  - All finds and samples will be collected, processed, sorted, quantified, recorded, labelled, packed, stored, marked, assessed, analysed and conserved in a manner appropriate to their composition and in line with appropriate guidance.
  - arrangements to assess and study any artefacts, assemblages and environment samples.
  - Any artefacts recovered during the watching brief will be deposited with an appropriate museum, subject to the permission of the owner.

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- 2.5. In the event that significant archaeological remains are exposed, the Welsh Ministers will be contacted and work shall immediately cease until the Welsh Ministers have had the opportunity to arrange for an official to visit the site, assess the significance of the archaeological remains and advise on the next steps.
- 2.6. Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared, a draft of which will be submitted for the approval of Welsh Ministers within one month. The report will contain conventional sections to include:
- Non-technical summary
  - Introduction
  - Site location
  - Archaeological Background
  - Watching brief
  - Conclusions
  - References
  - Appropriate appendices on archives and finds
- 2.7. Within one month of the draft report being approved a final version will be submitted to the Welsh Ministers, the regional HER held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and the National Monuments Record held by RCAHMW.
- 2.8. The site archive will be prepared to specifications in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) system and the Cifa *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2014). The digital archive only will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and the paper/drawn/digital archive with the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW).

### 3 Resources and programming

- 3.1. The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist under the overall supervision of Nigel Jones, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa). CPAT is also a Cifa Registered Organisation (RAO No 6) and as such agrees to abide by their *Code of Conduct* (2014) and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (2014).
- 3.2. All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the site work. If appropriate, a short report will be published in *Archaeology in Wales*.
- 3.3. Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 3.4. CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

N W Jones

3 July 2017