

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

## Cultural Resources Team Assessment

### PIC224 Holyrood Park, Zig Zag Path Improvement Heritage Impact Assessment

#### 1 Background

Holyrood Park is a large-scale, dramatic and rugged open space within the heart of the city of Edinburgh. It is some 8 km in circumference and covers 259 ha. Its highest summit is Arthur's Seat at 251m above sea level. The Park is covered by a number of national designations for both natural and cultural heritage and is also a key feature within the informal buffer zone/visual envelope of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

A series of surveys (c.f. Alexander 1997, RCAHMS 1998, HES 2017, Rathmell 2023) have recorded over 110 archaeological sites within Holyrood Park. The Park is covered with well documented evidence of human activity from the Mesolithic to the present day. Most major archaeological periods are accounted for and reflect the Park's changing usage from an area for prehistoric habitation and agriculture, a medieval Royal hunting park, a post-medieval source of quarrying, an area for Victorian and First World War military activity and finally as a recreational park. The Park was enclosed with a stone wall by King James V in 1541, as an adjunct to the Palace of Holyroodhouse and its history has close associations with the Palace. This effectively preserved the present Holyrood, or Queen's, Park as an area of open ground, with no significant settlement from that time onwards.

Following resumption of management by the Crown, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Park became a public park primarily managed for recreation, though it retained military functions as rifle range and parade ground. The road system was laid out, scrub removed, the marshes drained and St Margaret's Loch and Dunsapie Loch created, the lodges and gates constructed, and St Ann's Yards cleared.

In 1997 CFA undertook an assessment of archaeological sensitivity across Holyrood Park, this was updated in 2018 by CFA Archaeology (Alexander 1997, Carruthers 2018).

Path repair and improvements are proposed by HES Operations Directorate to the Zig Zag Path within Holyrood Park (Figure 1). The path runs from Piper's Walk up to Nether Hill and forms one of the major routes for visitors climbing Arthur's Seat. The proposals include repairing and improving existing stone pitch path and steps, extending stone pitch to areas currently unsurfaced, repairing and extending stone & turf revetments and constructing new water bars at intervals; full details of the proposed works, set down areas and access routes for materials are detailed in accompanying drawings for the SMC application.

#### 2 Assessment of Impact

Holyrood Park is a nationally significant archaeological resource. In 1997 an archaeological survey identified 111 features, and the interpretation of an ALS survey in 2017 enhanced the previous survey and identified additional important features in the landscape. In 2023 Rathmell Archaeology undertook an exercise which reviewed the mapping for the known archaeological features within the park and undertook condition monitoring of them. The park is unusual (and possibly unique) in effectively presenting a fairly extensive and open cultural landscape within the bounds of a city. The extensive nature of the park, its time-depth in terms of human presence and the numerous finds to date, indicate that significant ground disturbance anywhere in the park could unearth important prehistoric artefacts.

The visible archaeological remains within Holyrood Park are well understood in terms of location and sensitivities, and for areas where there are no known archaeological remains, the assessments by CFA (Alexander 1997, Carruthers 2018) provide a good basis for understanding the archaeological sensitivities that may be present.

The majority of the Zig Zag Path follows a route at a gradient which is unsuitable for most past human activity, and there are no known archaeological remains on similar angled terrain elsewhere in the park. The 2018 LiDAR survey of Holyrood Park, which was able to penetrate through vegetation, does not show any archaeological features in this area, although this does not preclude the possibility that artefacts and other features may be encountered along the route. There have been two significant find spots in the wider vicinity of the proposed pathworks: a late Neolithic flint arrowhead was found on the south-west slopes of Arthur's Seat in 2002 (<https://canmore.org.uk/site/240181/edinburgh-holyrood-park-arthurs-seat>) and a Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged flint arrowhead was found in 2003 on the summit area (<https://canmore.org.uk/site/273412/holyrood-park-arthurs-seat>). However, the overall potential for the discovery of significant artefacts during the proposed works is deemed to be low. Archaeological monitoring on other recent repair works along this route and other paths nearby noted the absence of any significant archaeological deposits and no significant finds were recorded (Kirkdale Archaeology 2001, 2003, 2007, 2015; Rayner 2018, 2019).

Erosion has exposed a section of cast iron pipeline on the upper part of the path near the summit. The age, purpose and significance of the pipeline is not known, and current resources do not allow for further investigation. The proposed works have been designed to avoid impact or removal of the pipe.

There is potential for the transport of materials along the route of the proposed works to result in additional erosion, especially along the proposed 4X4 route up to the summit from Dunsapie car park as this crosses the archaeologically sensitive remains of the cultivation terraces and prehistoric and later boundaries on Crow Hill – see below for recommendations for mitigation.

#### 3 Recommendations

CRT have been involved in discussions during the development of the proposed scheme of works and have advised on potential impacts during the course of the design phase. Much of the work is restricted to current areas of stone pitch and steps; where it is currently unsurfaced, the path is suffering from considerable erosion meaning that its entire route has been disturbed in recent times. The lower sections of the path were extensively repaired in 2001, 2003, 2007 and 2015. For much of the route the topsoil has been eroded away and sections of bedrock are exposed.

In general, CRT have no concerns about proposed set down points (identified on drawing PIC224-OER-DWG-20230505-016-V1), however the survival of rectilinear enclosure at The Hawse (Figure 2) should be noted. While the set down point is beyond this area, the contractors should be alerted to this site and the works should not stray into this area.

It is advised that use of the 4X4 route up to the summit area from Dunsapie car park is used with caution and only if essential. It is recommended that prior to use of this route there is discussion with HES Operations staff and CRT to assess ground conditions and suitability and that this is continually reviewed during the course of the works. This is to reduce this risk of increased erosion or vehicle rutting along this route, given the archaeological sensitivities.

The proposed work will improve the surface for visitors, reducing erosion and by providing a good surface will reduce the widthways erosion and thus the impact on a scheduled monument, CRT are supportive of the works. There will be little to no archaeological impact as a result of the proposed pathworks, no archaeological deposits are likely to be encountered and as such no archaeological monitoring is required. There will however be mitigation in the form of a dynamic review of access routes during the course of the works, depending on weather and ground conditions in discussion with HES Operations staff and CRT. CRT staff will also brief all contractors on the archaeological sensitivities and potential for stray finds prior to start of works. Should anything of potential

archaeological significance be discovered during the course of the works, the GPS location of the find should be recorded, the area and find photographed and the discovery reported to HES CRT as soon as possible. Should any features or deposits of possible archaeological significance be encountered all works should cease and HES CRT and HES Heritage Directorate be contacted immediately to discuss next steps.

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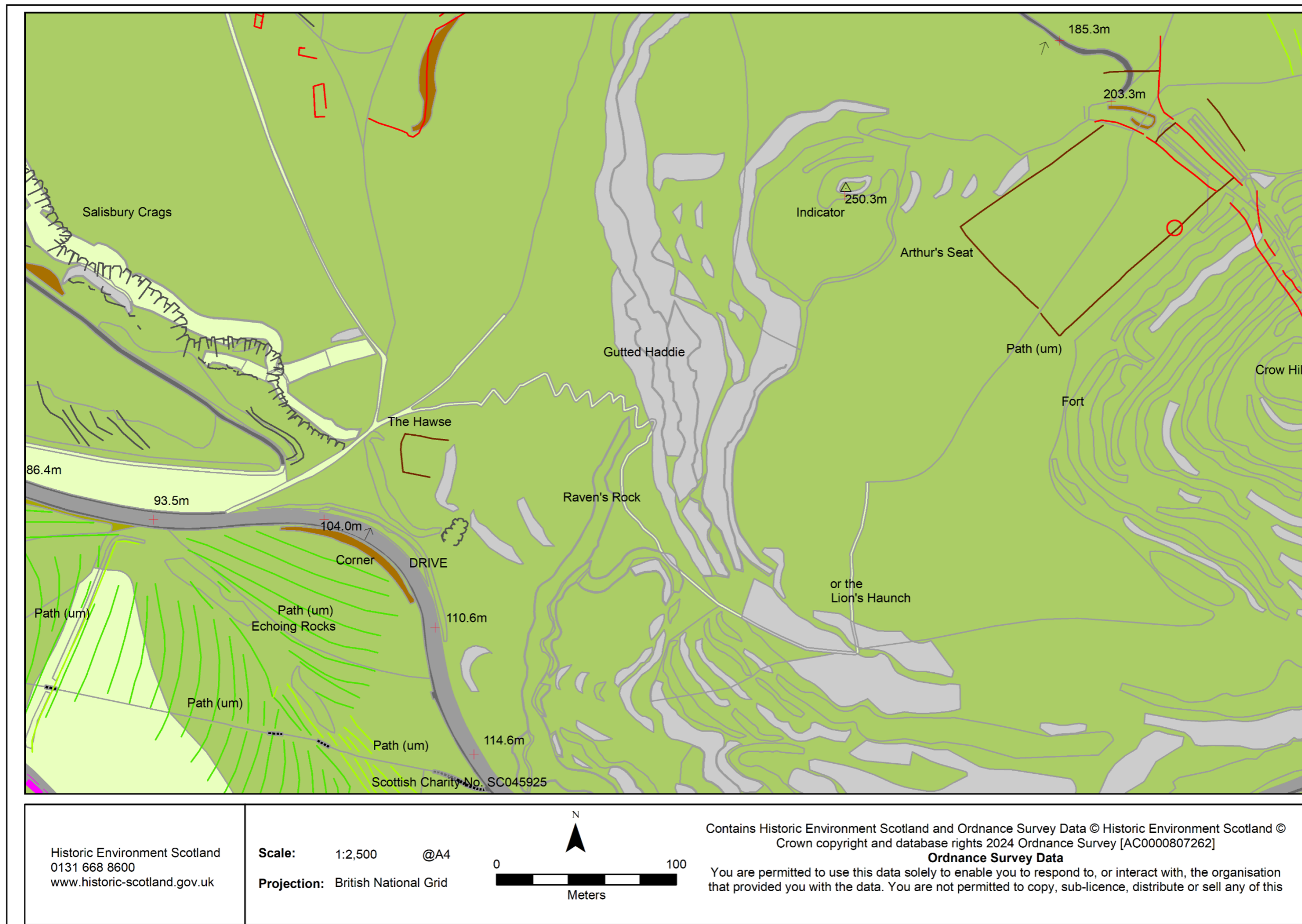


Figure 2. Detail plan showing archaeological survey data in the area of the proposed pathworks.