



Y Plâs, Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8ER.

November 2024 v1.0



Archaeological Monitoring & Recording

Project Code: A0502.1

Report no. 0496

Event PRN: 150494



æon archaeology

**Y Plâs, Community Centre, Heol
Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth, Powys,
SY20 8ER.**

November 2024 v1.0

Report no. 0496 / Event PRN:150494

Archaeological Monitoring & Recording

Aeon Archaeology

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Y Plâs, Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8ER.

November 2024 v1.0

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Comisiynwyd Aeon Archaeology gan George+Tomos ar ran Cyngor Tref Machynlleth, a gyfeirir ato yma wedi hyn fel 'y Cleient', i gynnal cam monitro ac adrodd archeolegol (a elwid yn flaenorol yn frîff gwyllo archeolegol) wrth wneud y gwaith cloddio i dynnu'r ramp mynediad presennol, yn ogystal ag addasiadau a gwelliannau i'r ardal fynediad i gerddwyr a newidiadau i'r ffenestri, i ddarparu mynediad i bobl anabl yng Nghanolfan Gymunedol Y Plas, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER (SH 74541 00566).

Nod y gwaith oedd canfod unrhyw nodweddion archeolegol tanddaearol a allai fod yn gysylltiedig â datblygiad hanesyddol Y Plas. Fodd bynnag, darganfuwyd tystiolaeth o aflonyddwch modern sylweddol, gyda haenau o isbridd a cherrig mân modern wedi'u mewnforio, sy'n awgrymu gwaith tirlunio helaeth yn ystod yr 20fed ganrif. Ni ddarganfuwyd arteffactau nac unrhyw nodweddion archeolegol, ac roedd y monitro'n cadarnhau bod dyddodion cynharach, yn ôl pob tebyg, wedi'u tynnu neu'u cuddio.

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by George+Tomos on behalf of Machynlleth Town Council, hereafter 'the Client', to carry out a phase of archaeological monitoring and recording (formerly archaeological watching brief) during the groundworks associated with the *removal of existing access ramp, alterations and improvements to pedestrian access area and alterations to fenestrations, to provide disabled access* at The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER (SH 74541 00566).

The work aimed to identify potential sub-surface archaeological features linked to the historic development of Y Plas. However, significant modern disturbance, characterised by imported subsoil and modern aggregates, indicated extensive 20th century landscaping. No artefacts or archaeological features were recovered, and monitoring confirmed that earlier deposits had likely been removed or obscured.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by George+Tomos on behalf of Machynlleth Town Council, hereafter ‘the Client’, to carry out a phase of archaeological monitoring and recording (formerly archaeological watching brief) during the groundworks associated with the *removal of existing access ramp, alterations and improvements to pedestrian access area and alterations to fenestrations, to provide disabled access* at The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER (SH 74541 00566), hereafter ‘the Site’ (figures 01-03).

Full planning permission (ref: 22/1991/FUL) and Listed Building Consent (22/1992/LBC) was secured by the Client from Powys County Council, hereafter ‘the Council’, on the 24th February 2023 and the 24th March 2023 respectively, with the following conditions concerning archaeology being applied to the permission:

22/1991/FUL Condition 3 and 22/1992/LBC Condition 7

The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during the undertaking of any ground works in the development area so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted. The archaeological watching brief must meet the standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs and will be completed in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been approved in advance by the Local Planning Authority.

A copy of the resulting report should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (The Offices, Coed y Dinas, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 8RP Email: neil.bayliss@cpat.org.uk).

After approval by the Local Planning Authority a copy of the report and resulting archive should also be sent to the Historic Environment Record Officer, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust for inclusion in the regional Historic Environment Record and to the National Monuments Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth

REASON: To secure preservation by record of any archaeological remains which may be revealed during link creation works and during the creation of new foundations for the consented development.

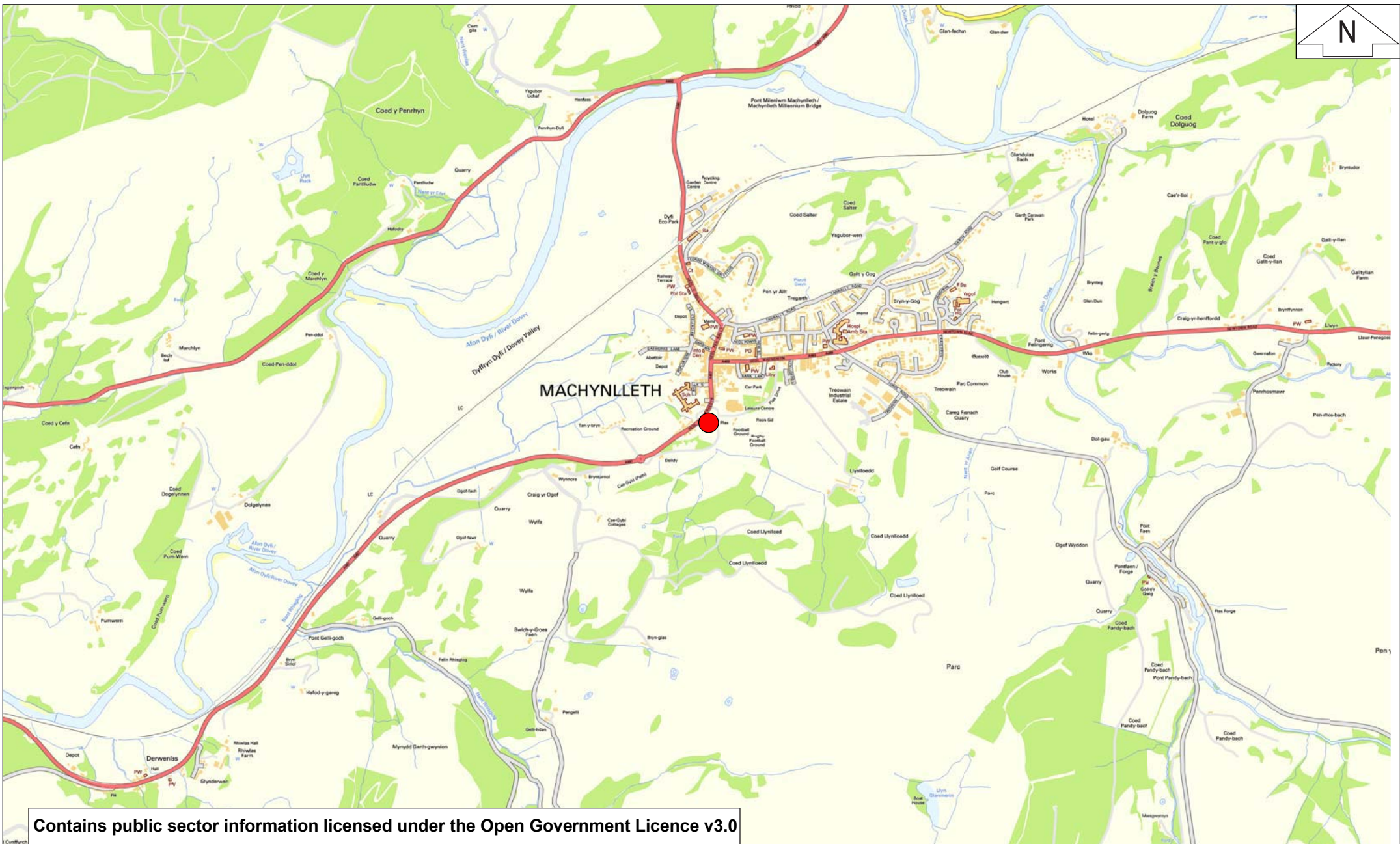
This PD details the aims and objectives of the project and the methods by which they will be met in order to meet the spirit and intent of the archaeological condition 3 of permission 22/1991/FUL and condition 7 of 22/1992/LBC.

The Development Management Archaeologist (DMA) at Clwyd Powys Archaeology (CPA) made the following consultee comments regarding the proposed development in their role as archaeological advisors to the Council:

CPAT has been consulted on the proposed development to remove the access ramp and pedestrian access at The Plas and noted the works will result in ground disturbance in the Medieval Core of Machynlleth. Excavations in 1994 revealed traces of buildings, including a malt-house, as well as the former line of Heol Pentrehedyn, and Pottery associated with the buildings dated from c. 1650-1820. The area to the east where the proposed alterations to the access are to take place may also hold sub-surface archaeology and artefacts relating to the Medieval, and Post-Medieval periods.

CPAT therefore recommend that an appropriate scheme of archaeological monitoring is completed during the groundworks for the removal of the ramp and alterations to the access to the east of the Plas Machynlleth.

The work will adhere to the guidelines specified in *The Standard for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023) and *The Universal Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023).

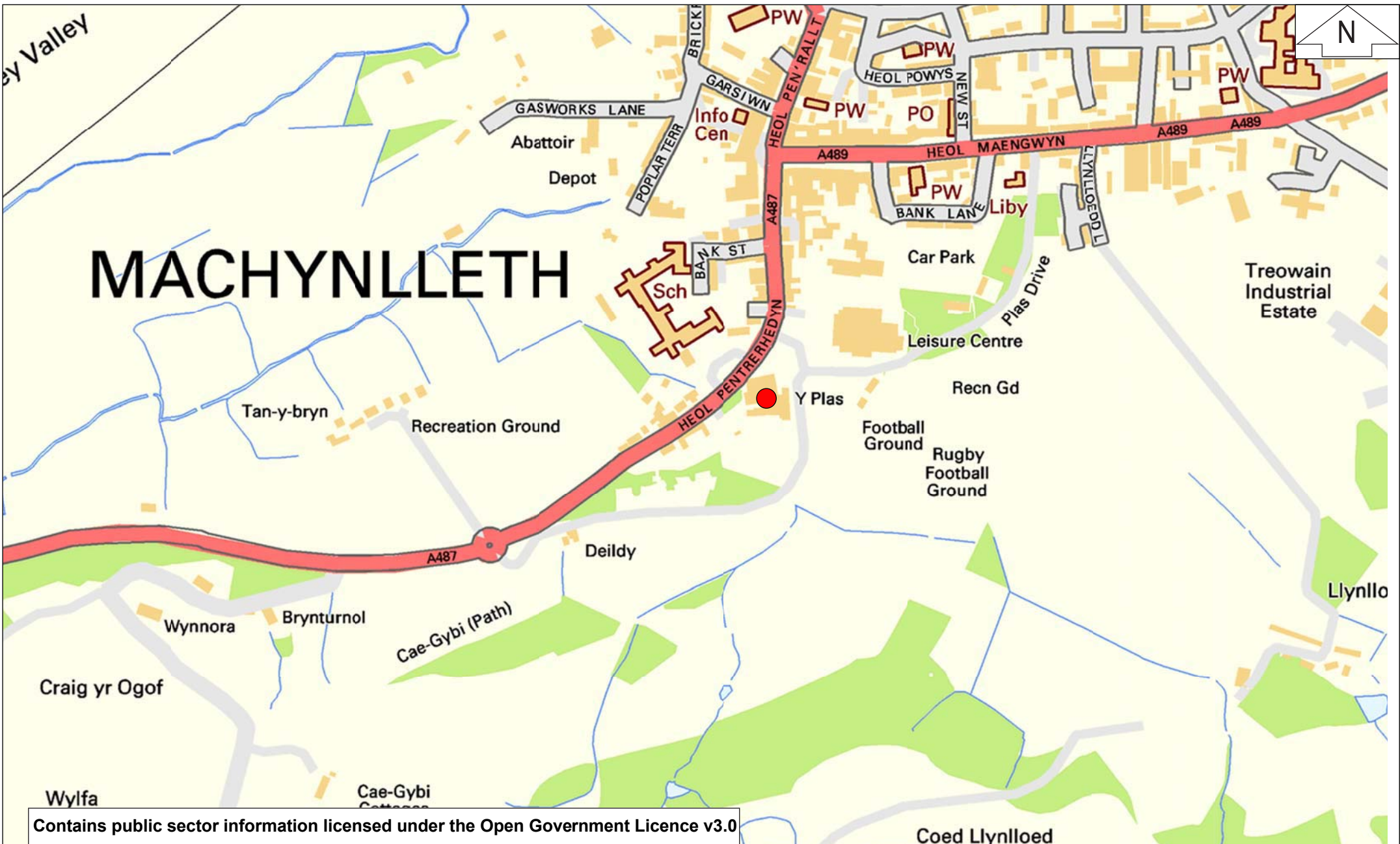


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Figure 01: Location of The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER (SH 74541 00566). Scale 1:20,000 at A4.

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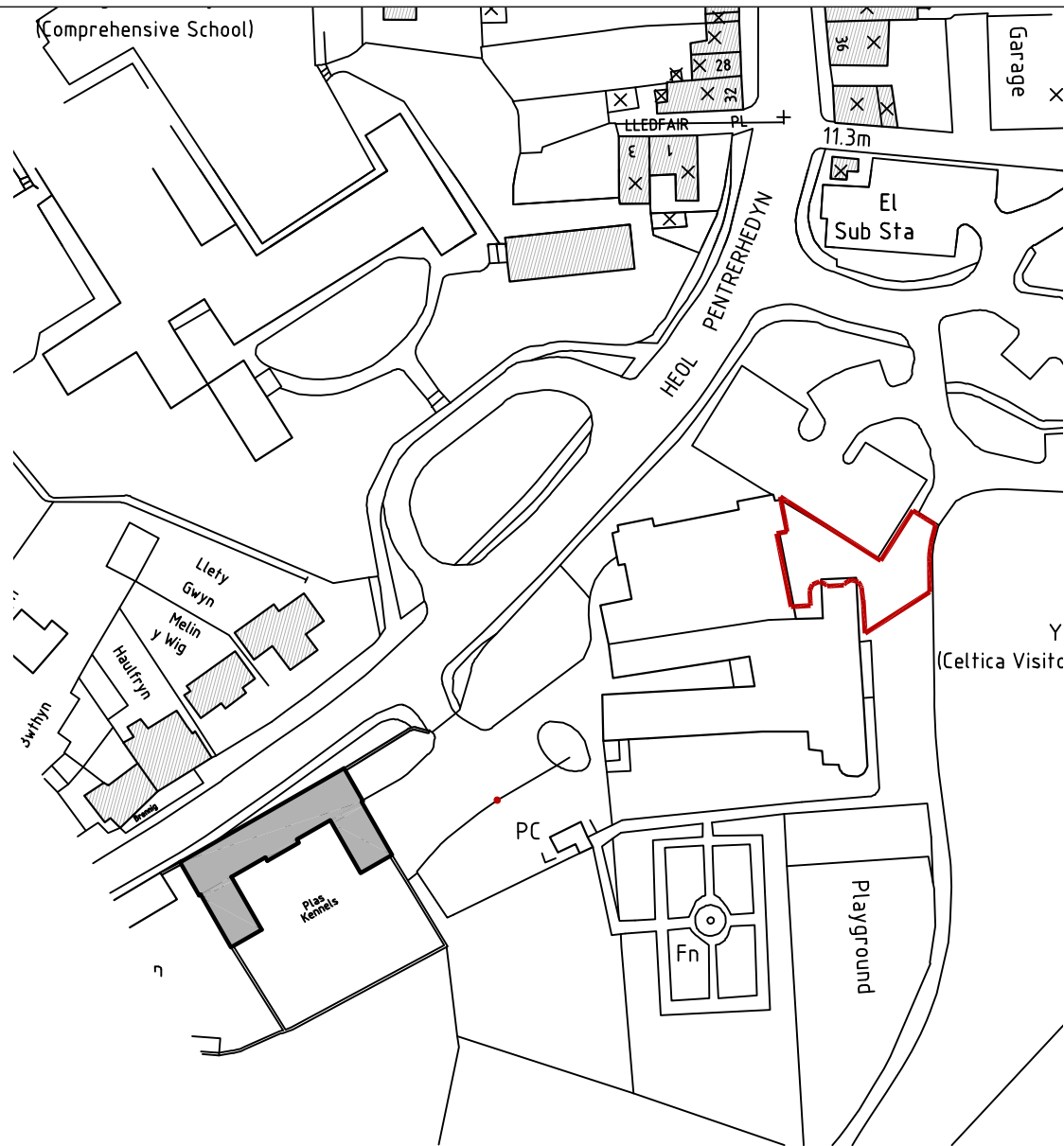


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Figure 02: Location of The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER (SH 74541 00566). Scale 1:5,000 at A4.



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Figure 03: Location of The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER (SH 74541 00566). Scale 1:1,250 at A4.

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3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

At an international level there are two principal agreements concerning the protection of the cultural heritage and archaeological resource – the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, commonly known as the Valetta Convention. The latter was agreed by the Member States of the Council of Europe in 1992, and became law in 1992. It has been ratified by the UK, and responsibility for its implementation rests with Department for Culture Media and Sport.

The management and protection of the historic environment in Wales is set out within the following legislation:

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (As amended)
- The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 (As amended)

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act is the most recent legislation for the management of the Historic Environment and amends two pieces of UK legislation — the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The new Act has three main aims:

- to give more effective protection to listed buildings and scheduled monuments;
- to improve the sustainable management of the historic environment; and
- to introduce greater transparency and accountability into decisions taken on the historic environment.

With respect to the cultural heritage of the built environment the Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990 applies. The Act sets out the legislative framework within which works and development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas must be considered. This states that: -

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses” (s66(1))

Other known sites of cultural heritage/archaeological significance can be entered onto county-based Historic Environment Records under the Town and Country Planning 1995.

Planning Policy Wales sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. Chapter 6 covers the historic environment and emphasises that the positive management of change in the historic environment is based on a full understanding of the nature and significance of historic assets and the recognition of the benefits that they can deliver in a vibrant culture and economy.

Various principles and policies related to cultural heritage and archaeology are set out in the Planning Policy Wales which guide local planning authorities with respect to the wider historic environment.

The following paragraphs from Planning Policy Wales are particularly relevant and are quoted in full:

Paragraph 6.1.5 concerns planning applications:

The planning system must take into account the Welsh Government's objectives to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. The historic environment is a finite, non-renewable and shared resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales. It contributes to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life. The historic environment can only be maintained as a resource for future generations if the individual historic assets are protected and conserved. Cadw's published Conservation Principles highlights the need to base decisions on an understanding of the impact a proposal may have on the significance of an historic asset.

Planning Policy Wales is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TAN). Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment contains detailed guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan, preparation and decision making on planning and listed building consent applications. TAN 24 replaces the following Welsh Office Circulars:

- 60/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology
- 61/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas
- 1/98 Planning and the Historic Environment: Directions by the Secretary of State for Wales

4.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Site Location

Machynlleth is a historic market town located in the heart of the Dyfi Valley in Powys, mid-Wales. Positioned at the intersection of the A487 and A489 roads, Machynlleth offers connections to key towns and regions: Aberystwyth lies approximately 18 miles to the south, Dolgellau is 17 miles to the north, and Newtown is about 29 miles to the east. The town sits on the edge of the Dyfi Biosphere, Wales' only UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve, which encompasses a diverse range of landscapes. These include high peat moorland, broad estuaries, sand dunes, and beaches, supporting habitats such as broadleaved woodlands, coniferous forests, saltmarshes, farmland, and expansive lowland peat bogs, making the area a haven for wildlife.

Machynlleth's central location within these landscapes has contributed to its historical role as a local centre for trade and community gatherings, serving nearby rural areas and towns across mid-Wales. The surrounding area combines natural beauty with cultural heritage, with notable sites such as Y Plas providing insight into the town's storied past and its place within the broader environmental and cultural landscape of the Dyfi Valley.

4.2 Historical Overview of Machynlleth

Machynlleth is a historic market town in Powys, Wales, with roots that trace back to early medieval times. The town's recorded history began in the late 13th century, when Welsh prince Owain de la Pole was granted the right to hold a weekly market and two annual fairs by King Edward I. This privilege helped establish Machynlleth as an important trading centre along the route between Aberystwyth and Gwynedd. By 1291, Machynlleth had a defined town layout, centered around Maengwyn Street and a T-shaped market area—a structure still visible in the town's present-day form.

Machynlleth is perhaps best known for its association with Owain Glyndŵr, the Welsh prince and rebel leader who convened a parliament here in 1404 during his campaign for Welsh independence. Although short-lived, this event remains a defining moment in the town's identity, with Parliament House, traditionally associated with the parliament, still standing as a symbol of Welsh heritage.

Following a period of decline in the late medieval era, Machynlleth revived in the 16th century as a key regional market and legal centre, hosting assizes and gaining importance in Montgomeryshire. The town thrived during the 17th to 19th centuries as a hub for the Welsh cattle droving trade, with large numbers of cattle driven through Machynlleth en route to English markets. The arrival of the railway in 1864 further boosted its economic and social profile, connecting Machynlleth to broader networks of trade and industry.

In the 20th century, Machynlleth continued to grow, becoming a centre for cultural heritage and tourism. The town's rich history, scenic location in the Dyfi Valley, and vibrant local events—such as the annual Machynlleth Comedy Festival—have solidified its role as a focal point for both local life and visitors to the region. Today, Machynlleth retains its historical character while serving as a gateway to the stunning landscapes of mid-Wales.

4.3 Historical Background of Y Plas, Machynlleth

Y Plas, formerly known as Greenfields, holds a significant place in the history of Machynlleth and has deep-rooted connections to prominent local families and historic events. Originally constructed in the mid-18th century by John Edwards, a solicitor and notable landowner, the property began as a brick-faced townhouse—a rarity in Machynlleth at the time and one of the earliest uses of brick in the area. Through strategic marriages, the Edwards family expanded their wealth and influence, acquiring Lledfair Hall and consolidating ownership of extensive estates. These included lands stretching across Wales and Ireland, as well as the coalfields of Northumberland and Durham.

In the 1840s, Sir John Edwards embarked on a grand remodelling project, transforming Greenfields into an expansive mansion with additional wings and a new east-facing portico, reflecting the aesthetic and social aspirations of the family. This remodelling included the demolition of nearby structures and the realignment of Pentrerhedyn Street to accommodate the new estate boundaries. The property later passed to George Vane-Tempest, the 5th Marquess of Londonderry, upon his marriage to Sir John Edwards' daughter, Mary Cornelia. Renamed Plas Machynlleth, the estate became central to the Londonderry family, hosting various dignitaries and royalty, including visits by members of the British royal family in 1896 and 1911.

In the mid-20th century, the Londonderry family gifted Y Plas and its surrounding 40 acres of parkland to the people of Machynlleth. The property was repurposed over the years, first serving as council offices and later transformed into the Celtica Visitor Centre in the 1990s—a cultural and educational attraction designed to highlight Welsh heritage. Following Celtica's closure in 2006, Machynlleth Town Council took ownership of Y Plas in 2008, subsequently adapting it into a community hub with office spaces, meeting rooms, and a community hall that serves as a focal point for local events, including the annual Machynlleth Comedy Festival. Y Plas continues to embody the layered history of the region, from its origins as a private estate to its present role as a public amenity and cultural landmark.

4.4 Archaeological Background

4.4.1 Prehistoric Archaeological Evidence

The area surrounding *Y Plas, Machynlleth*, holds evidence of prehistoric activity, suggesting periods of occupation, resource utilisation, and environmental significance. One notable discovery is an edge-trimmed flint flake (PRN 17977), found approximately 0.5 km southwest of Y Plas in 1991. This flake, identified as a prehistoric artefact, indicates early human activity and demonstrates skilled tool-making. Such finds add to the corpus of lithic evidence across mid and north-east Wales, shedding light on prehistoric settlement and tool use (Silvester & Owen, 2002).

Approximately 0.7 km southeast of Y Plas lies Llynllloedd marsh (PRN 80305), a low-lying, boggy area with potential environmental data within its peat deposits. This site, drained and backfilled around 200 years ago, is believed to have been the original "Llyn Llonydd." Local history suggests the presence of peat-cutting huts along the bog's eastern side, indicating the use of natural resources in the prehistoric period (Copleston, 2000; Fenwick, 2014). Peat bogs like this often preserve organic materials, providing valuable insights into prehistoric environments.

To the southwest, a circular or oval feature (PRN 131001) is visible on the ground and in aerial photographs, located roughly 4 km from Y Plas. This feature, interpreted as a prehistoric enclosure,

could indicate early settlement or defensive structures, with its form aligning with similar prehistoric enclosures in the region (Fenwick, 2014).

Evidence of prehistoric mining activities appears at a multiperiod site near Machynlleth Park Lodge (PRN 23434), about 1.5 km northeast of Y Plas. Excavations have uncovered Bronze Age artefacts, including three hammers and over 70 hammer stones, alongside traces of charcoal. These finds illustrate the exploitation of local mineral resources like copper or lead, indicating early industrial use of the area (Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, 1995; Shropshire Star, 1997).

Collectively, these sites present a landscape with significant prehistoric activity near Y Plas. Although no prehistoric features or artefacts were identified directly within the Y Plas grounds, these nearby finds contribute to our understanding of resource use, environmental management, and possible settlement patterns within the Dyfi Valley.

4.4.2 Medieval Archaeological Evidence

The medieval period in Machynlleth is represented by a number of sites and artefacts suggesting a well-established settlement with infrastructure, domestic activity, and ecclesiastical connections.

One primary feature of the medieval landscape is Heol Penrallt (PRN 128610), located about 100 m east of Y Plas. Excavations conducted in 2005 uncovered evidence that Heol Penrallt originally extended further west than it does today, occupying what is now a wide pavement outside Royal House. Archaeological investigations revealed earlier road surfaces constructed of river cobbles, although no artefacts were recovered to aid dating. The current road level was found to be raised by 0.4–0.65 m over time, likely due to resurfacing. Additionally, a stone culvert was discovered running from south to north along the former western side of Heol Penrallt, hinting at medieval drainage infrastructure (Jones, 2005).

A medieval findspot (PRN 57674) near Machynlleth Town Hall, approximately 130 m northeast of Y Plas, yielded four sherds of medieval pottery during excavations in 1983. Although post-medieval finds dominated the excavation, these medieval ceramics offer insights into local material culture, suggesting ongoing settlement and possibly pottery production or trade in Machynlleth during the medieval period (Barfoot, 1986).

Another important medieval feature, a rubbish pit (PRN 128514), was discovered near Parliament House, about 200 m northeast of Y Plas. This steep-sided, oval pit, measuring about 1.0 m deep and 2.5 m in diameter, contained well-preserved organic material, such as straw, wool, animal hair, plant fibres, and fly pupae. A small sherd of green-glazed pottery, likely dating to the 16th century, as well as slate and glazed roof tile fragments, were also found, providing further evidence of medieval waste disposal and roofing materials (Jones, Silvester & Hankinson, 2005).

One of the most significant medieval buildings in Machynlleth is Owain Glyndŵr's Parliament House (PRN 1270), located approximately 400 m northeast of Y Plas. Traditionally associated with Glyndŵr's parliaments of 1402 and 1404, the hall house is a symbol of Welsh heritage. Dendrochronology, however, dates the current structure to around 1470, two generations after Glyndŵr's revolt. Small-scale excavations in 2004 revealed a latrine or rubbish pit containing 15th- or 16th-century pottery. This well-preserved structure reflects medieval Welsh architecture and Machynlleth's historical prominence in the medieval period (Cadw, 2016; Miles, Worthington, & Bridge, 2004).

Additionally, the original medieval churchyard boundary of St. Peter's Church (PRN 37011) lies around 0.4 km north of Y Plas. This medieval boundary highlights Machynlleth's ecclesiastical and community centre, reinforcing the role of St. Peter's Church as a focal point in the area's medieval religious and social life (Silvester, 1992).

These sites collectively reveal the infrastructure, domestic culture, and religious aspects of medieval Machynlleth. Although no direct medieval features were found within Y Plas itself, the surrounding discoveries highlight the area's integration within a broader network of medieval activity, contributing to its role as a centre of governance, trade, and daily life in Powys.

4.4.3 Post-Medieval Archaeological Evidence

In the post-medieval period, Machynlleth saw considerable development, with key buildings, roadways, and industries shaping its emergence as a regional centre for governance, commerce, and community life. During the late 17th and 18th centuries, the town expanded with the construction of prominent homes, including Heol Pentrehedyn 12 (PRN 31086), a late 18th-century stone residence. Additional Grade II listed houses on Heol Pentrehedyn, such as Nos. 15, 17, and 19 (PRNs 31926, 40292, and 40293), reflect the architectural growth that coincided with the town's increasing prosperity (Cadw, 2000).

The 19th century brought further expansion and industrialisation, illustrated by the blacksmith's workshop (PRN 31927) and Norbury Lodge (PRN 31943) located along the former Llynllloedd drive (PRN 80308). Originally depicted in an 1828 estate map, this drive once served as a public route before it was modified to suit the expanding estate boundaries (Copleston, 2000; Fenwick, 2014).

By the mid-19th century, large-scale remodelling of Plas Machynlleth under the Londonderry family expanded the mansion and its formal gardens. The renovations included key features such as a boundary wall (PRN 32484), a coach house (PRN 31932), and a fountain (PRN 31942), each reflecting the site's transition into a regional landmark (Cadw, 2000).

The economic landscape in Machynlleth during this time is further reflected by Heol Pentrehedyn Road (PRN 19465), an important route connecting the town to Aberystwyth. This road was enhanced with clay-bonded gravel layers to support regional trade and transport. A nearby malthouse (PRNs 57727 and 19468) contributed to Machynlleth's economy through brewing and malting, indicating the importance of grain processing in the local industry (Barfoot, 1991).

At the close of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, Plas Machynlleth underwent a transformation into a civic space, gifted by the Marquess of Londonderry to the people of Machynlleth. Subsequent modifications included the addition of gates and gatepiers (PRN 31933) and the establishment of public gardens, securing the estate's place as a cultural asset for the town and its surrounding community.

The post-medieval evidence shows Machynlleth's development from a small market town to a prosperous regional centre. The enduring architectural elements and industrial sites contribute to our understanding of the town's evolution and its significance within Powys.

5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The archaeological watching brief was to be maintained:

1. During the groundworks associated with the *removal of existing access ramp, alterations and improvements to pedestrian access area and alterations to fenestrations, to provide disabled access* at The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER.
2. The CIfA maintains a standard for archaeological watching brief which states that:
3. An archaeological watching brief will record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant by-laws of CIfA. An archaeological watching brief is defined by the CIfA as ‘a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons’ (CIfA 2020). The watching brief will take place within a specified area within the Site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.

The CIfA further identifies the purpose of a watching brief ‘as allowing, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works’ (ibid). It is also important to note that a watching brief provides an opportunity, if needed, for a signal to be made to all interested parties, before the destruction of the archaeological materials, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

A watching brief is, therefore, not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

The aims of the watching brief were:

- To allow, within the resources available, the opportunity to gain information about and record the presence/absence, nature and date of archaeological remains on the Site affected by excavations and groundworks, the presence and nature of which could not be established with sufficient confidence in advance of works which may disturb them.
- To provide the facility to signal to the relevant authorities, before irreversible impact to remains that an archaeological and/or historic find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are inadequate to support their treatment to an adequate and satisfactory standard.

The specific objectives of the watching brief were:

- To observe and recover any artefacts of archaeological significance.

- To record the location, dimensions and nature of any deposits, features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance.
- To recover samples of any deposits considered to have potential for analysis for palaeoenvironmental data should the opportunity arise.

6.0 METHODOLOGY – ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

6.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

The methodology for the watching brief has been prepared with reference to the Cifa's document *The Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (2020)* and will be kept under constant review during the project, in order to see how far it is meeting the terms of the aims and objectives, and in order to adopt any new questions which may arise.

Curatorial monitoring of the archaeological work on behalf of the Council will be carried out by the DMA at CPAT. To facilitate the curatorial monitoring, the officer shall be provided with a minimum of two weeks' notice of the start of the archaeological work.

A suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist(s) from Aeon Archaeology will be commissioned for the maintenance of the watching brief. On arrival on site, the archaeologist(s) will report to the site manager and conform to the arrangements for notification of entering and leaving site. The archaeologist(s) will keep a record of the date, time and duration of all attendances at site, the names and numbers of archaeologists deployed and any actions taken. The archaeologist will be provided with a Health & Safety Induction by the construction contractor and wear a safety helmet, safety footwear and high visibility jacket/vest at all times.

If deposits and or artefacts are exposed during excavations for the development which require recording and recovery, it may be necessary to delay works whilst the proper investigation and recording takes place. Watching brief recording can often be undertaken without delay to groundworks, depending upon the specific circumstances and flexibility of all the staff on site.

Within the constraints of the terms of the watching brief work, the archaeologist will not cause unreasonable disruption to the maintenance of the work schedules of other contractors on site. In the event of archaeological discoveries, the treatment of which (either arising from the volume/quantity of material and/or the complexity/importance of the material) is beyond the resources deployed the Client will be notified and a site meeting/telephone consultation arranged with the DMA at CPAT. The aim of the meeting will be to confirm that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard and identify measures which would be sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard prior to destruction of the material in question.

Any archaeological deposits, features and structures identified which can be investigated and recorded under the terms of the watching brief will be excavated manually in a controlled and stratigraphic manner sufficient to address the aims and objectives of the project – subject to the limitations on site access. It may not be necessary to excavate the complete stratigraphic sequence to geologically lain deposits but the inter-relationships between archaeological deposits, features and structures will be investigated sufficient to address the aims and objectives of the project and the complete stratigraphic sequence to geologically lain deposits will be investigated where practicable.

The method of recording will follow the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation and the stratigraphy will be recorded in written descriptions even where no archaeological deposits have been identified. The archaeologist will record archaeological deposits using proformae recording forms and locate them on a large-scale site plan related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum

references.

The groundworks excavations shall be undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

The drawn record will comprise plans at scale 1:20 and sections at scale 1:10; propriety electronic hardware and software to prepare site drawings may be used as appropriate.

The photographic record will be maintained throughout using a digital SLR camera (Canon 600D) set to maximum resolution (72 dpi) and all archaeological features will be recorded photographically with photographs taken in RAW format and later converted to TIFF format for long-term storage and JPEG format for presentation and inclusion in the archive. The standards for the digital archive will adhere to those set out in '*Guidelines for Digital Archaeological Archives*' (RCAHMW, 2015).

The archive produced will be held at Aeon Archaeology under the project code **A0502.1**.

6.2 Watching brief report

6.2.1 Post-excavation Assessment

A report on the results of the watching brief, in accordance with the recommendations in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006; 2015), and in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2020) will be required to be produced upon conclusion of the archaeological fieldwork. The report will be completed within a maximum of two months of completion of work on site and may include examination and quantification leading to the identification of function, form, date, method of manufacture, material/fabric type, source, parallels, attributes and condition of artefacts; of the exploitation of wild or domesticated resources; the reconstruction of environments; and the nature of human populations.

Full analysis of the results of the project, including: dating and interpretation of excavated features; pottery and other finds analysis; analysis of industrial residues by an appropriate specialist or specialists; analysis of samples for environmental data (including pollen, plant macrofossils and beetles) by an appropriate specialist or specialists; radiocarbon dating; discussion of the results in their local, regional and national context, including relating the excavated features and palaeoenvironmental data to evidence from nearby sites, and discussion of the results in their local, regional and national context may be required.

The scope of post-excavation assessment will subject to a specification for approval by the DMA at CPAT, upon the conclusion of the fieldwork project and preliminary report.

6.2 Archive & Dissemination

A full archive including plans, photographs, written material, and any other material resulting from the project will be prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions will be labelled, and cross-referenced, and lodged with the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) (*EPRN 150428*) within, six months of the completion of the project.

A draft copy of the report will be produced within six weeks of the completion of the fieldwork and will include an updated Data Management Plan (DMP) and an archive content list with updated archive Selection Strategy. A copy of the report will be sent to the Client and the DCA at HGAPS for comment prior to finalisation of the report and dissemination. Digital copies of the report and archive will be sent to the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record and the RCAHMW.

The project report and archive will adhere to CIfA's Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (2014 updated 2020).

7.0 DIGITAL DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

7.1 Type of study

An archaeological watching brief during the during the groundworks associated with the *removal of existing access ramp, alterations and improvements to pedestrian access area and alterations to fenestrations, to provide disabled access* at The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8ER. (centred on **SH 74541 00566**)

7.2 Types of data

File name	File Contents	Linked File(s)
A0502.1 Ynys Gorad Goch, Menai Straits AMR report 1.0.PDF	PDF report	
A0502_1_001 - A0502_1_025.JPG	JPEG site images	A0502.1_Metadata
A0502_1_001 - A0502_1_025.TIF	TIF site images	A0502.1_Metadata
A0502.1_Metadata.XLSX	Excel file of photographic metadata	A0502_1_001 - A0502_1_025 (JPG and TIF)
A0502.1 Watching Brief Day Sheets.PDF	Scanned copies of watching brief day sheets	

All data generated during this project has been selected for archive

7.3 Format and scale of the data

Photographs taken in *RAW* format and later converted to *TIF* format for long term archiving and *JPEG* format for use in the digital report, converted using *Adobe Photoshop*. All photographs renamed using *AF5* freeware with the prefix (*project code_frame number*) and a photographic metadata created using Microsoft Excel (*.xlsx*) or Access (*.accdb*).

All written registers, pro-formas, and scaled drawings scanned as *.PDF* files.

7.4 Methodologies for data collection / generation

Digital data will be collected / generated in line with recommendations made in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2014. Rev 2020). Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 are relevant:

3.3.1 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should include a project specific Selection Strategy and a Data Management Plan.

3.3.3 Project designs or schedules of works etc should outline the methodology used in recording all information, in order to demonstrate that all aspects of archive creation will ensure consistency; for instance in terminologies and the application of codes in digital data sets, highlighting relevant data standards where appropriate

7.5 Data quality and standards

Consistency and quality of data collection / generation shall be controlled and documented through the use of standardised procedure as outlined in the WSI. This will include the use of standardised data capture file formats, digital proformas, data entry validation, peer review, and use of controlled vocabularies.

7.6 Managing, storing and curating data.

All digital data will be organised into Aeon Archaeology proforma project file systems and backed up to the cloud using *Acronis Cyber Protect* with additional copies made to external physical hard drive.

7.7 Metadata standards and data documentation

Digital metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Access (.accdb) of all photographic plates.

Paper metadata created from Aeon Archaeology proformas for contexts, artefacts, environmental samples, watching brief day sheets, trench sheets, and basic record sheets and then scanned to create digital .PDF copies.

7.8 Data preservation strategy and standards

Long term data storage will be through the submission of digital (.PDF) reports to the regional Historic Environment Record (HER); submission of digital (.PDF) reports and the original and digital scanned archive to the RCAHMW; and retention of copies of all digital files at Aeon Archaeology on physical external hard drive and uploaded to The Cloud.

7.9 Suitability for sharing

All digital data will be placed within the public realm (through the channels in 6.8) except for where project confidentiality restricts the sharing of data. All data sets will be selected / discriminated by the Senior Archaeologist at Aeon Archaeology and written permission will be sought from all project specific Clients prior to the sharing of data.

7.10 Discovery by potential users of the research data

Potential users of the generated digital data (outside of the organisation) will be able to source the data and identify whether it could be suitable for their research purposes through access granted via the RCAHMW website. Requests can also be made for data through the regional HER's and directly to Aeon Archaeology (info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk).

7.11 Governance of access

The decision to supply research data to potential new users will be via the associated website request (RCAHMW, HER) or via the Senior Archaeologist when made directly to Aeon Archaeology.

7.12 The study team's exclusive use of the data

Aeon Archaeology's requirement is for timely data sharing, with the understanding that a limited, defined period of exclusive use of data for primary research is reasonable according to the nature and value of the data, and that this restriction on sharing should be based on simple, clear principles. This time period is expected to be six months from completion of the project however Aeon Archaeology reserves the right to extend this period without notice if primary data research dictates.

7.13 Restrictions or delays to sharing, with planned actions to limit such restrictions

Restriction to data sharing may be due to participant confidentiality or consent agreements. Strategies to limit restrictions will include data being anonymised or aggregated; gaining participant consent for data sharing; and gaining copyright permissions. For prospective studies, consent procedures will include provision for data sharing to maximise the value of the data for wider research use, while providing adequate safeguards for participants.

7.14 Regulation of responsibilities of users

External users of the data will be bound by data sharing agreements provided by the relevant organisation or directly through Aeon Archaeology.

7.15 Responsibilities

Responsibility for study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be through the Senior Archaeologist (Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA) at Aeon Archaeology when concerning data generation and early/mid-term storage. Upon deposition with digital depositories the study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be the responsibility of the specific organisations' themselves.

7.16 Organisational policies on data sharing and data security

The following Aeon Archaeology policies are relevant:

- Aeon Archaeology Archive Deposition Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Quality Assurance Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Conflict of Interest Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Outreach Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Digital Management Plan 2022

8.0 QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS

8.1 The Documentary Archive

The following documentary records were created during the archaeological watching brief:

Digital photographs	25
Watching Brief Day Sheets	3

8.2 Environmental Samples

No environmental samples were taken during the archaeological watching brief as no suitable deposits were encountered.

8.3 Artefacts

No archaeological artefacts were recovered during the archaeological watching brief as no significant examples were encountered.

9.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING & MONITORING

9.1 Overview

The phase of archaeological monitoring and recording at *Y Plas, Machynlleth*, was conducted in response to planning conditions set by Powys County Council, with the aim of overseeing groundworks related to improvements at the site entrance. These works included the removal of an existing access ramp and alterations to pedestrian pathways to facilitate access to *The Plas Community Centre*. Given the historical importance of *Y Plas* and its surrounding landscape, the project presented an opportunity to document any archaeological deposits or artefacts that might be present within the impacted area. Prior investigations within Machynlleth and nearby historical sites have established the area as one of significant archaeological potential, with finds spanning from the prehistoric through to the post-medieval period. This monitoring phase, therefore, focused on identifying any sub-surface features or materials that could contribute further to understanding the site's long-standing historical significance.

9.2 Description of the Site

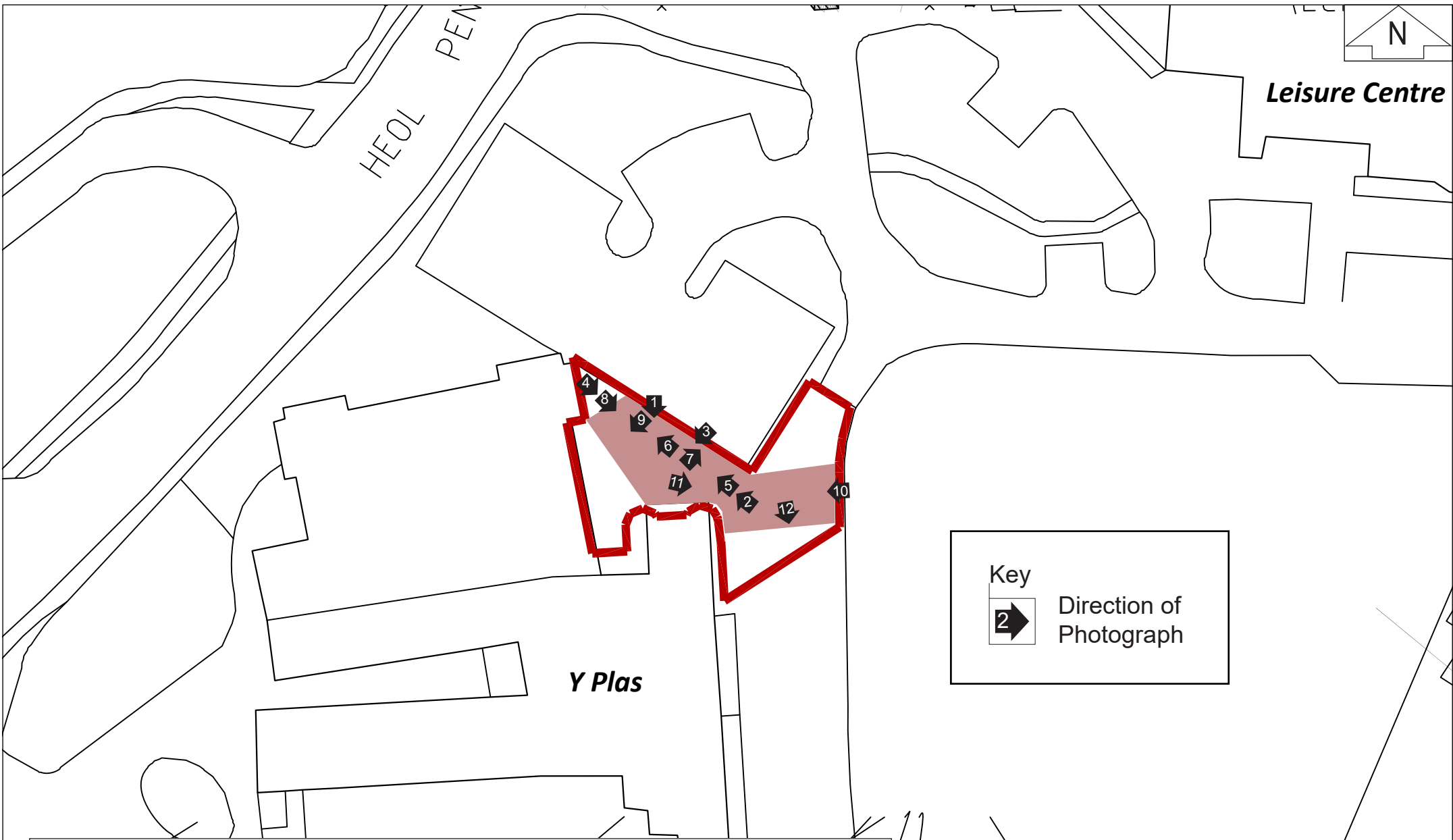
Y Plas, Machynlleth, sits within a rich historical landscape, with the current structure and associated grounds encompassing centuries of documented development. Originally established in the 18th century, with notable expansions during the 19th century, *Y Plas* and its surroundings have been reshaped through multiple phases of landscaping and construction. The monitored area was positioned to the north and northeast of the main structure, close to public access points, where groundworks would be impacting existing pathways and previously landscaped areas (including an ornamental slate block). The local geology consists of the *Devil's Bridge Formation*, comprising mudstone and sandstone bedrock overlain by alluvial gravel deposits typical of the Dyfi Valley. However, the potential for historic landscaping and infilling suggested that original ground surfaces and archaeological deposits may have been altered or obscured over time.

9.3 The Groundworks

The archaeological monitoring & recording at *Y Plas, Machynlleth*, was conducted by Josh Dean, BA, on 23rd September, 24th September, and 6th November 2024. The initial visit involved monitoring the removal of topsoil in the area adjacent to the access ramp located to the north and northeast of *Y Plas*. This process included a ground reduction of approximately 0.50 m, revealing a sequence of deposits with no significant archaeological horizons or artefacts recovered, suggesting extensive modern landscaping in this area.

The stratigraphic sequence began with a top layer consisting of 0.10 - 0.20 m of soft, dark black-brown clay-silt topsoil. Directly beneath this was 0.15–0.20 m of mid-brown-grey, sand-clay-silt, an imported material exhibiting stony characteristics similar to Type 1 MOT aggregate mixed with subsoil. This layer contained modern inclusions such as plastic and timber fragments, along with very rare examples of post-medieval ceramic sherds dating from the late 19th to early 20th century.

Underlying this was a deposit of light yellow-orange stony clay, exceeding 0.05 m in thickness. This layer was initially interpreted as the natural subsoil; however, numerous instances of broken red bricks and other modern intrusions were observed within it. The local geological descriptions do not mention the presence of clay in this area. The bedrock geology is characterised by the *Devil's Bridge Formation*—interbedded mudstone and sandstone—sedimentary bedrock formed between 443.8 and 433.4 million years ago during the Silurian period. This is overlain by superficial deposits of Alluvial Fan Deposits—gravel—sedimentary superficial deposits formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present during the Quaternary period.



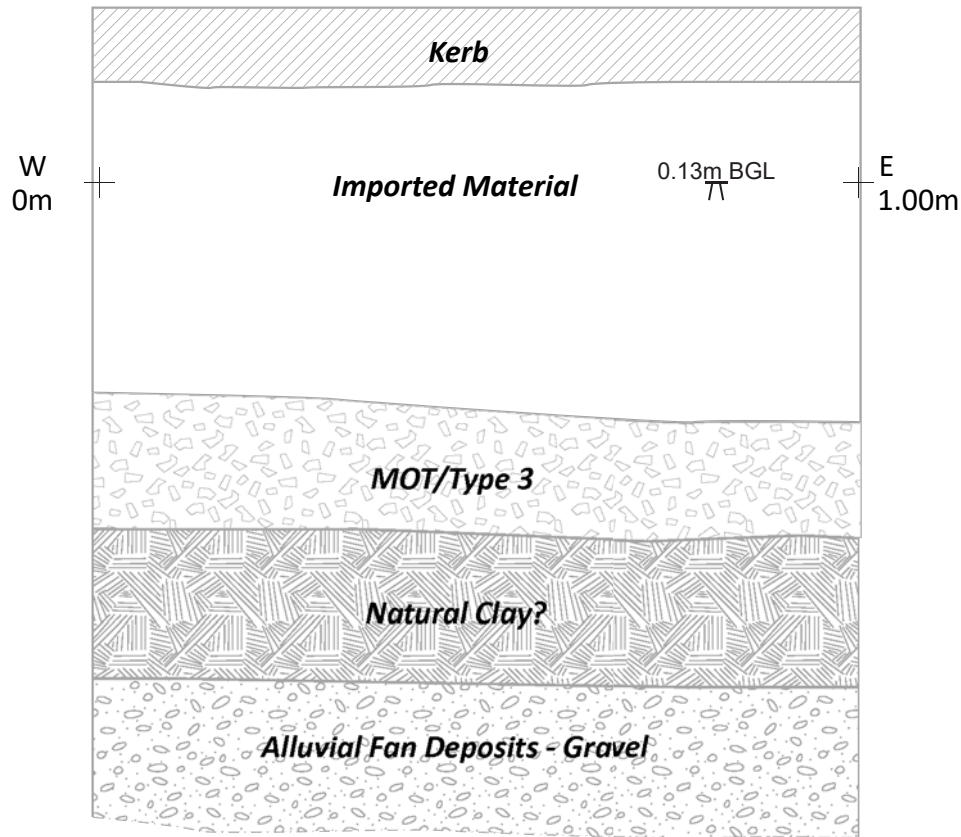
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2021. Licence no. 100019980



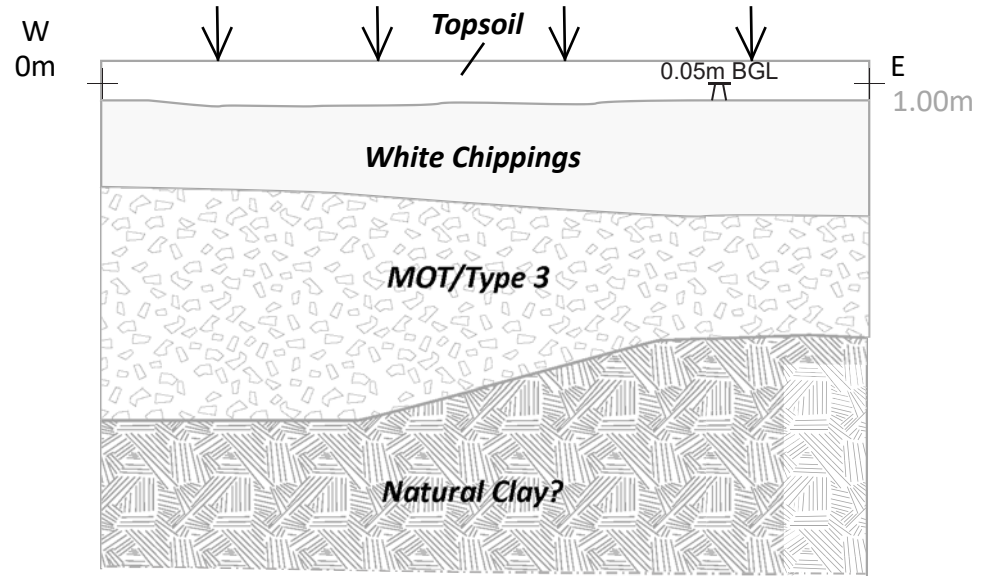
Figure 04: Location of The Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth and direction of archaeological plates. Scale 1:500 at A4.

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a) West Facing Section after Foundation trenches



b) North facing section of pathway



1:10



Figure 05: Generic stratigraphic sections of ground at Plas Community Centre, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth, SY20 8ER. 1:10 @ A4.

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Plate 01: Pre excavation shot of development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the north - 1.00m



Plate 02: Pre excavation shot of development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the southeast - 1.00m



Plate 03: Stone Slab within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the northeast - 1.00m



Plate 04: Topsoil Strip of development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the northwest - 2.00m



Plate 05: Topsoil Strip of development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the southeast - 2.00m



Plate 06: Wall foundation within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the southeast - 1.00m & 0.50m



Plate 07: Wall foundation (section) within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the southwest - 0.50m



Plate 08: Wall foundation within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the northwest - 1.00m



Plate 09: Wall foundation within development area (north), Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the northeast - 1.00m



Plate 10: Pathway (Post ex) within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the east - 1.00m



Plate 11: Pathway (Post ex) within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the northwest - 1.00m



Plate 12: Pathway (section) within development area, Y Plâs, Community Centre, Machynlleth, Powys - from the north - 5cm

The presence of the light yellow-orange stony clay, which does not align with the expected geological formations, suggests that this material may have been at least partially imported or represents a very localised occurrence of clean yellow clay. It's possible that this clay was previously exposed and then affected by landscaping works at Y Plas. The inclusion of modern debris within this layer further supports the idea that it may have been utilised as a transit surface during the remodelling of the park and subsequently covered over with mixed subsoil, Type 3 aggregate, and white chippings in various locations.

An ornamental slate slab was also uncovered during these works. This large solitary piece had been set on a concrete pad reinforced with steel mesh and secured with two steel pins drilled into the slate. The machine operative exercised great care in removing the slab to prevent shattering, given the substantial amount of concrete and steel used to fix it in place.

Following the initial ground reduction, a northwest-southeast aligned trench was excavated for a foundation wall, along with a smaller trench aligned east-west, angled back towards the building. These trenches cut into the light yellow-orange stony clay and, upon deeper excavation, revealed over 0.20 m of friable gravel beneath, which is interpreted as glacial till corresponding to the Alluvial Fan Deposits—gravel—expected in the area. Further excavation for the foundation walls encountered the interbedded mudstone and sandstone of the Devil's Bridge Formation, consistent with the geological descriptions. The occurrence of these formations at the expected depths reinforces the notion that the overlying yellow clay is not a natural deposit in this context but may have been introduced or is a localised anomaly.

No archaeological features or artefacts were noted within these trenches, reinforcing the assessment that the area has undergone considerable landscaping and that the deposits encountered are largely the result of modern interventions.

On a subsequent visit, monitoring was conducted during the removal of topsoil for a pathway southeast of the new seating area. This revealed the underlying silt-clay subsoil immediately southeast of the previous works. To the southeast of this area, a disused and infilled manhole was encountered, containing over 0.30 m of dark grey stone infill resembling Type 3 aggregate. Above this was a 0.12 m layer of white chippings, likely associated with a former garden path. The light yellow-orange stony clay persisted below these layers, consistent with observations in other parts of the site.

The presence of modern materials within both the stony clay layer and the overlying deposits suggests extensive landscaping activities, including the importation and redistribution of materials across the site. The lack of clays in the local geological description, coupled with the discovery of the expected geological formations (Alluvial Fan Deposits—gravel and the Devil's Bridge Formation) at greater depths during excavation, supports the interpretation that the light yellow-orange stony clay may have been imported or is a highly localised deposit affected by landscaping.

In summary, no archaeological horizons or artefacts were encountered during the observation. The evidence suggests that significant landscaping and modern disturbances have altered the site's stratigraphy, impacting the preservation of any earlier archaeological deposits. The anomalies in the stratigraphic sequence, particularly the unexpected presence of the stony clay with modern inclusions, are likely the result of historic landscaping and remodelling activities at Y Plas.

10.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned to conduct a phase of archaeological monitoring and recording in conjunction with the groundworks associated with the entrance project at Y Plas, Machynlleth. This project followed planning requirements set forth by Powys County Council, incorporating guidance from the Development Management Archaeologist (DMA) at the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) regarding the potential for encountering sub-surface archaeology within this historically significant area.

The site's historical relevance is underscored by its location within the grounds of Y Plas, a focal heritage landmark in Machynlleth. Originating in the mid-18th century with expansions in the 19th century, Y Plas, surrounded by historic gardens and parklands, occupies an area shaped by successive landscaping phases and potential archaeological deposits, particularly those linked to Machynlleth's medieval and post-medieval development.

Guidance from the DMA at CPAT highlighted the potential for archaeological features within the project area, such as remnants of former structures, garden features, or other elements tied to the historical development of Y Plas. Investigations in nearby areas, including Llynllgoed and within Machynlleth's historic core, have documented medieval and post-medieval artefacts and features, indicating a well-established historical footprint.

During the phase of archaeological monitoring and recording at Y Plas, no artefacts or archaeological features were recovered. Observations revealed significant modern disturbance and landscaping, with extensive deposits of imported subsoil, rubble, and clay overlying the natural geological strata. The presence of modern aggregates, such as Type 3 MOT and plastic inclusions, alongside fragments of red brick within the stony clay deposits, suggests that the material was likely deposited as part of 20th-century landscaping or remodelling efforts at Y Plas. These findings indicate that much of the area has likely been stripped close to the level of the natural glacial till, diminishing the potential for preserved archaeological horizons within the monitored area.

Given the absence of artefacts or undisturbed stratigraphy, interpretations about the site's historic use remain limited. The substantial modern landscaping and disturbance observed across the monitored areas suggest that prior phases of 20th-century development and remodelling have removed or obscured earlier archaeological deposits.

The phase of archaeological monitoring and recording was conducted in accordance with standards set by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2023) and in line with the recommendations provided by the DMA at CPAT. The results confirm that the area has undergone considerable modern disturbance, reducing the likelihood of encountering intact archaeological deposits within the immediate project scope.

It is therefore recommended that the archaeological condition associated with the planning permission be considered fulfilled, as the monitoring and recording works have demonstrated minimal potential for undisturbed archaeology within the development footprint at Y Plas, meeting the council's requirements.

11.0 SOURCES

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