ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

NE Scotland Archaeological Research Framework – Methodology

Part 1: 40,000 BC – AD 1100

The Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) provides a national rolling programme highlighting our current research strengths, and areas for future exploration. This Regional Research Framework is designed to support those aims of ScARF, while developing in more detail our understanding of the historic environment for the NE of Scotland. The aim is to enable anyone wishing to contribute to the research to plan their work, ensure that their work is relevant, and that it is effective in developing our understanding of the past.

1.0 Geographical Extent

1.1   The Framework for the North-east of Scotland includes the geographic areas as defined by Moray, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Angus Local Authority boundaries. These areas largely coincide with natural features such as rivers, glens and mountains that make the Framework boundary relevant to any period's activities. In addition maritime activity offshore, out to the 12 nautical mile limit, is also considered within this document.
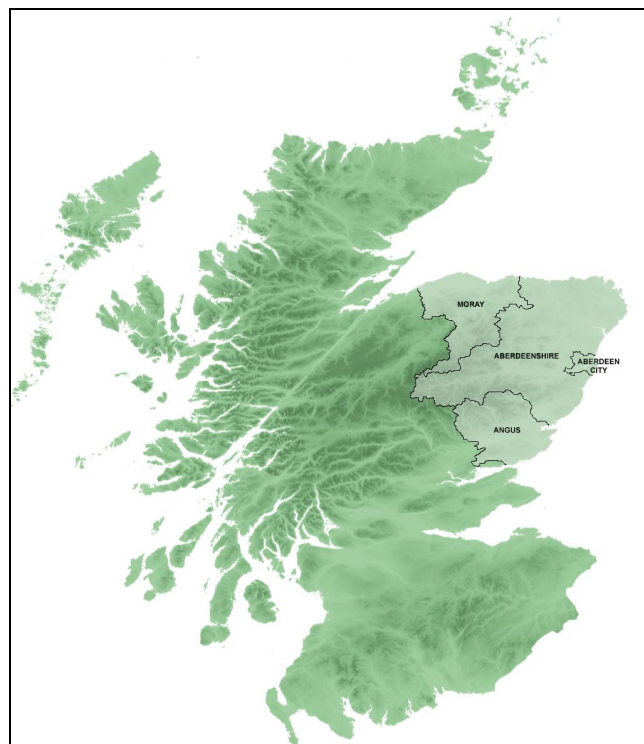

Fig 1 - Map showing extent of the area included within the NE Regional Research Framework

2.0 Chronological Extent

2.1   Owing to the depth of the archaeological record, and the complexities of the research associated with it in this part of Scotland, the Framework has been divided into two parts. The first deals with Prehistoric remains up to the Early Medieval period of 1100 AD, while the second will deal with the period from 1101 AD to 1945 AD.

2.2   It is recognised that chronologies for any period can be debated, and the results from this framework will lead to revisions of any currently accepted model. However, in order to establish manageable divisions of time for analysis within Part 1 of the Framework, the following table will be used when discussing periods within this document.

Lower Palaeolithic	40,000 BC – 8000 BC	
Mesolithic	8000 BC – 4000 BC	Transition Period 1
Early Neolithic	4000 BC – 3300 BC	
Late Neolithic	3300 BC – 2500 BC	Transition Period 2
Chalcolithic	2500 BC – 2200 BC	
Early Bronze Age	2200 BC – 1800 BC	
Middle Bronze Age	1800 BC – 1300 BC	
Late Bronze Age	1300 BC – 800 BC	Transition Period 3
Earlier Iron Age	800 BC – 400 BC*	
Later Iron Age	400 BC – AD 1	
Roman Iron Age	AD 1 – AD 250	
Late Roman Iron Age	AD 250 – AD 400	Transition Period 4
Early Medieval	AD 400 – AD 900	
Late Early Medieval	AD 900 – AD 1100	

Fig 2 – Chronological table of agreed period divisions used within the Framework (*C14 Hallstatt Plateau period).

2.3   Within the table above there are four transition periods designed to help bridge research gaps when discussing the interfaces between particular overarching period designations (e.g. Bronze Age to Iron Age).

2.4 Within the refined divisions of each period there may be specific events (e.g. Roman invasion sequences) that have direct impacts upon the archaeological record but which have not been teased out specifically for the table above. These events are laid out in a detailed timeline associated with each period division chapter within the Resource Assessment section. These timelines also include summary dates known for specific sites derived from techniques such as radiocarbon dating.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 A phased approach to both the development and final format of the Framework is based on the following three-step process:

1. **Phase 1 - Resource Assessment**: an overview of the known sites associated with each period, and of the current state of knowledge and understanding in the region.

2. **Phase 3 - Research Agenda and Strategy**: recognition of the potential of the resource, the gaps in our knowledge, and a prioritised list of research objectives (seen as flexible over time), furthered by implementing specific Research Projects.

3. **Phase 4 – Historic Environment Action Plans:** a review of Regionally Significant Sites, and a prioritised list of sites requiring conservation or investigative works.

In the light of the further knowledge gained from research and other projects, all three steps outlined above will be subject to continuing reviews. These will also be linked back to the national ScARF project to ensure the regional research supports the national framework.

3.2 **Resource Assessment** – comprehensive synthesis of the archaeology of the region, presented in chronological chapters based on the table represented by Figure 2 above. Each chapter will be as concise as possible, and broken down into themes.

The Timeline will consist of known date, usually derived from a C14 date, associated site type, name and SMR Reference Number that is hyperlinked to the corresponding online record. The online records will provide access to bibliographic details on the grey literature, while the list within the Timeline will highlight all known key sites.

3.3 **Research Agenda** – presented in chronological chapters based on the table represented by Figure 2 above. Each chapter will contain a series of numbered initiatives with supporting statements on how future projects can be applied to those areas where knowledge is weak.

3.4 **Research Strategy** – provides a 5-10 year implementation plan in taking forward the initiatives outlined in the Research Agenda

document above. This will include details of which person/group/organisation is undertaking what research.

3.5   **Historic Environment Action Plans** – provides a complete review and update of sites recognised to be of Regional Significance, followed by a prioritised 5-year plan of conservation projects for sites, including built heritage assets, that would follow the current Local Biodiversity Action Plan model.

3.6   The Framework document will be hosted online in order to ensure currency and easy maintenance. Each chapter and its sub-divided themes will be as concise as possible, with relevant summary illustrations highlighting key aspects of artefact or structural remains.

The online hosting will be undertaken by Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, but the Framework will be developed as a partnership document between Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Service, Aberdeen University Department of Archaeology and key individuals currently undertaking research within the region.

4.0 Contact Details

4.1   Any comments or queries regarding this document should be directed in the first instance to Bruce Mann, Archaeologist, Aberdeenshire Council, (archaeology@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

4.2   The following organisations and individuals have contributed to this framework methodology and their help and support is gratefully acknowledged:

Judith Stones (Aberdeen City Archaeology Service), Dr Gordon Noble (Aberdeen University Department of Archaeology), Dr Jeff Oliver (ScARF), Dr Alison Sheridan (National Museum Scotland), Dr Fraser Hunter (National Museum Scotland), Professor Richard Bradley (University of Reading), Murray Cook (Oxford Archaeology North), Neil Curtis (Aberdeen University), Professor Ian Armit (University of Bradford), Deborah Anderson (Western Isles Council), and the Association Local Government Archaeological Officers (Scotland).