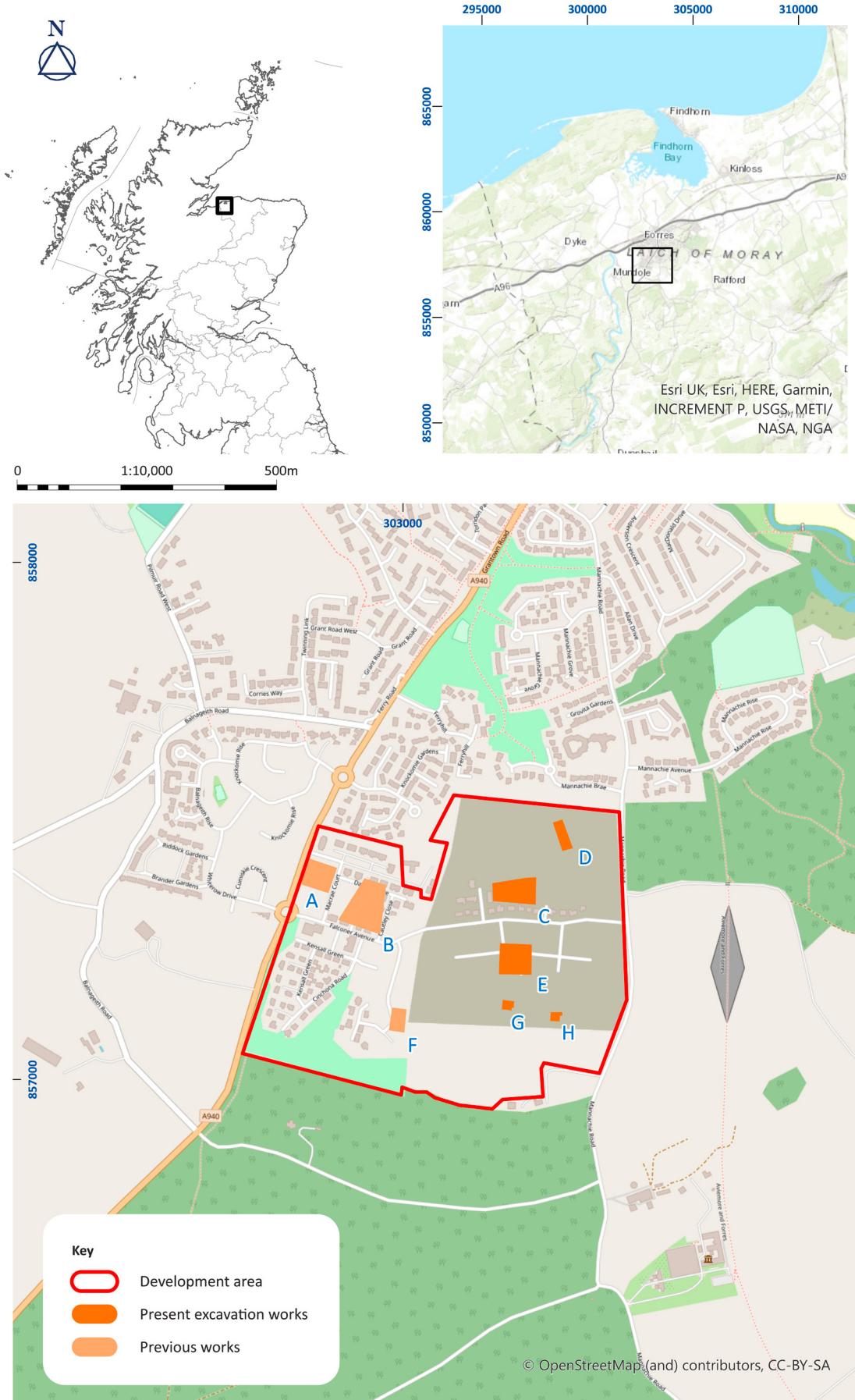


2. INTRODUCTION

The entire Grantown Road site covers an area of more than 70ha on the south side of Forres, Morayshire and has been subject to a series of archaeological evaluations, excavations, and watching briefs since development started on this greenfield site in 2002. Most of the archaeological findings were covered by a report published in 2016 by Martin Cook (Cook 2016), which includes Areas A, B, and F; however, the last phase of site works was not undertaken until March and April 2017 (Dunbar 2017). An evaluation in 2010 (Cook 2010) had identified five areas, C, D, E, G, and H, which required an archaeological mitigation programme of 'strip, map, and record' (centred on NGR NJ 0325 5730; Illus 1) that is reported here. This evaluation also confirmed the survival of an enclosure along with clusters of likely prehistoric pit activity that was a continuation of the Iron Age and prehistoric settlement identified in earlier phases of excavation completed between 2002 and 2013.

The previous works suggested a landscape occupied episodically from the Neolithic through the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age to the early medieval period, comprising both domestic and funerary activity, with a particular concentration of activity during the last two centuries cal BC and the first two centuries cal AD, in the form of an extensive Iron Age settlement including a souterrain, four-posters, ring-ditches, and post-ring structures with accompanying assemblages of pottery, coarse stone, and metalworking residues (Cook 2016).

In 2017, the five areas subject to stripping and excavation measured approximately 8,650m². They lay within an area of undulating farmland to the south of Forres, bounded to the east by Mannachie Road and to the west by recently completed residential properties. These works lay to the immediate east of the archaeological features discovered during the earlier phases of works with the main focus of the Iron Age activity discussed by Cook (2016) lying *c* 500m due west and *c* 10m to 15m lower in altitude.



Illus 1 Site location plan showing excavation areas