



ROADS AUTHORITIES & UTILITIES COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

ADVICE NOTE 25

UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECTS

Version 2
November 2025

UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECTS

Version History

Version	Date	Notes
0.1	December 2015	Initial draft.
1	December 2015	Approved by RAUC(S) on 2 December 2015.
2	November 2025	Changes required following implementation of Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. Changed title to “Unexpected Buried Objects” from “Unidentified Buried Objects”. Approved for release by RAUC(S) co-chairs on 26 November 2025.

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UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECTS

1. Introduction

Unexpected Buried Objects (UBOs) are assets which have no clear owner or are shown in the wrong location in the Community Apparatus Data Vault (Vault). The apparatus shown on Vault are those assets owned by organisations who would normally fall within the general definition of undertaker, NRSWA Section 109 licence holder or roads works authority.

While UBO is a broad term, for RAUC(S) purposes it includes any apparatus where there is no identified or traceable owner in Vault, or where the apparatus is on Vault but shown at the wrong location.

Such objects may be found during excavation works and may be historical in nature.

2. Identification

Not all buried apparatus is legitimately a UBO. This process should only be used where the road works authority or undertaker has discovered the UBO while excavating.

General reports from the public or other sources that something may be buried should not be recorded unless verified. Only instances where the apparatus has been actually seen, or where evidence the apparatus exists is presented, should be considered.

Every effort must be made to identify the owner of the apparatus. In most cases the likely owner can be easily determined, but in more difficult cases the Scottish Road Works Register can be interrogated to identify organisations who have carried out work in the area. Should there be any dispute regarding the ownership of a piece of apparatus advice should be sought from the relevant Area RAUC group.

Under the [Roads \(Scotland\) Act 1984](#), a roads authority has additional powers to remove unused/ownerless apparatus. If it is to be removed or filled in as part of other works there is no requirement to record the apparatus as a UBO.

Guidance on what assets should be recorded can be found in the [Code of Practice on Recording of Underground Apparatus in Roads](#).

3. Recording

Whenever an undertaker or road works authority comes across an Unexpected Buried Object they must record details of what was found in the Scottish Road Works Register. This is a requirement of [New Roads and Street Works Act 1991](#). The register has a dedicated notice for recording details of an UBO.

This notice should contain the following information:

- SPECIFIC LOCATION – a textual description of where the object was discovered.
- PLOT OF LOCATION – a point, line or polygon representing the location geographically. No point of this geometry should be further than 500m from any point representing the road in the gazetteer.
- ORIGINATOR CONTACT NAME and TEL NO – contact details for an individual representing the organisation who found the object.
- UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECT OWNERS – who the organisation which found the Unexpected Buried Object believes owns the object, or “Unknown” if this is not known.

The register will pass copies of the notice to the organisations identified as UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECT OWNERS, or if UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECT OWNERS is set to “Unknown”, to all organisations who have a relevant area of interest set up for the road.

4. Resolving

Each undertaker and road works authority sent a copy of an Unexpected Buried Object notice should review the notice, and if they recognise the apparatus as an asset belonging to them, they should record this fact on the Scottish Road Works Register. They must then arrange for information about the asset to be added to their next submission to Vault. Once the asset is visible on Vault the UBO should be updated to reflect that the ownership is confirmed and the UBO is complete.

If following a review by the authority or undertaker they establish that the assets do not belong to them, the register will allow them to record that they are not responsible for the asset identified in the notice. Using this function will also remove their organisation name from the UNEXPECTED BURIED OBJECT OWNERS identified in the notice.