

Appendix 15.2.3

SLVIA Local Coastal Character Areas

Appendix 15.2.3 LOCAL COASTAL CHARACTER AREAS

LCCA 1 – Lyre Geo to Neblonga



Plate 1: Looking north at Bight of Mousla. (© Copyright Colin Smith and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

This section of coastline takes in the cliffs between Lyre Geo and Neblonga. The cliffs are characterised by their horizontal strata.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Sound and spray of wave action at the foot of the cliffs.
- Animated by the movement and sounds of sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Generally west facing cliffs with rock platforms.
- Waterfalls.
- Promontories and headlands with caves and sea stacks.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Pasture to the edge of the cliffs.
- Incised burns.
- Infrequent settlement.
- Landscape Character Types: Cliff Landscapes; Coastal Hills and Heath.

Wildness:

- Nearest habitation 1km from the coast.
- Medium Relative Wildness.¹
- 'aspirational core path'.

Visual Assessment:

- Views along the coast and out over the Atlantic from high elevation.

LCCA 2 – Neblonga to Breck Ness



Plate 2: Looking south along the coast towards Kame of Hoy. (© Copyright Claire Pegrum and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

Extending from the small promontory at Neblonga to Breck Ness, this section of coastline is generally west facing and comprises tilted stone platforms and the sedimentary pavement at Billia Croo.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Wave action on the tilted stone beach.
- Sea birds.
- Wave test centre.

¹ SNH Relative Wildness Map 2014 (applies to all descriptions)

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Indented profile with some enclosure at Billia Croo.
- Headlands projecting into the Atlantic.
- Tilted sedimentary pavements.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Settled landscape with farms and dwellings at Outertown.
- Agricultural grazings on south west facing slopes rising to Hill of Lynedardy.
- Landscape Character Type: Inclined Coastal Pastures.

Wildness:

- Some settlement and tracks close to the coast.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- 'aspirational core path'.

Visual Assessment:

- Long views over the sea and along the coastline.

LCCA 3 – Breck Ness to Skerry of Ness



Plate 3: From the ferry towards Innertown. (© Copyright Mike Pennington and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

This LCCA extends from the western promontory of Breck Ness to the headland at Skerry of Ness and comprises a low rocky coast with some small areas of sandy beach.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Scrabster to Stromness ferry.

- Skerries.
- Sea birds.
- Lighthouse.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Gently indented coastline with rocky foreshore and sandy beaches.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Largely agricultural grazings with some arable in rectilinear fields.
- Scattered settlement of Outertown on the slopes below Mewie Hill.
- Landscape Character Type: Inclined Coastal Pastures.

Wildness:

- Cemetery, Car park and Breckness House close to the coast.
- Core Path WM33.
- Low relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Spectacular views of Hoy, particularly at sunset.
- Close range views of ferry and other vessels. Views along the coast are contained by skerries and headlands.

LCCA 4 - Innan Neb to the pier



Plate 4: Looking towards Flotta from Martello Tower.

General Description

This area is characterised by a linear stretch of low coastline on the island of Flotta. It overlooks a semi enclosed stretch of water to the west extending from Switha Sound to Weddel Sound. There are with framed views southwest along Long Hope, south east

towards Switha, northwest towards Lyness, and north across Scapa Flow towards the mainland beyond Fara and Cava.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The significant area of semi-enclosed seascape is animated by wind action and seldom completely calm.
- Frequent close passage of boat and ferry traffic approaching and leaving Lyness and Flotta, with views of associated navigational aids.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The uniform, linear west facing, coastal edge comprises rock platforms, stretches of rock and shingle, and a narrow intertidal zone defined by a dark tide line.
- A simple sea, land, sky composition with a dominant horizontal dynamic.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The simple hinterland is characterised by gently convex, sloping moorland and rough grassland with a smooth profile and little distinction except for access tracks associated with the airstrip, a few ruined wartime structures including coastal batteries, and views of Flotta wind turbine and oil terminal.
- Landscape Character Type: Low Moorland.

Wildness:

-
- Medium relative wildness.
- Artefacts include access tracks, disused airstrip and coastal batteries
- Core path F1.
- Access to the coast is by access tracks across the moorland or by boat.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are largely focused on the passage of boats to and from Lyness and by Flotta oil terminal with elevated views of the coast gained from further inland at West Hill.

LCCA 5 - The pier to the jetty



Plate 5: View towards Heyspan Pier and Flotta oil terminal from the ferry. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence2010).

General Description

This small stretch of coast has an open aspect north to Scapa Flow with views towards the mainland alongside Cava and Fara.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The frequent passage of boat and ferry traffic and close views of oil tankers creates a strong maritime character.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- There is a sense of open exposure to the sea and the relatively deep flow of tidal water, animated by wind action, is seldom completely calm.
- The north facing coastline is generally consistent comprising rock platforms and shingle shores, with hard man made edge and elements including numerous piers and the oil terminal jetty.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Low lying rough grassland forms the immediate hinterland and is dominated by the Flotta oil terminal. The oil terminal occupies and interrupts views east and southeast.
- Landscape Character Type: Urban and Rural Development.

Wildness:

- Access to the coast is gained from the ferry pier, but is generally limited by the oil terminal.
- Low relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are focused on the oil terminal, wind turbine and the passage of ferries and tankers.

LCCA 6 - The jetty to Tween the Wicks



Plate 6 – Looking towards Flotta over Calf Sound from Calf of Flotta. (Copyright George Brown and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2008).

General Description

This area is dominated by the large, open expanse of Scapa Flow with views west to Hoy, Fara and Cava, north to the mainland, and east to Burray and South Ronaldsay.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Views of frequent boat and ferry traffic especially oil tankers, and navigational aids including Nevi Skerry, create a strong maritime influence.
- The sense of scale is often dominated by the presence of massive oil tankers.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The low lying coastline and hinterland is exposed and influenced by the animated seascape to north.
- The consistent, straight, north facing coastal edge is comprised of narrow rock platforms and stretches of shingle, with a narrow intertidal zone, deeper within the Calf Sound, and defined by dark seaweed.
- The Calf of Flotta forms a distinctive island when viewed from certain alignments.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The hinterland is simple and characterised by a narrow band of gently sloping moorland and rough grassland with a smooth profile and little distinction except for a number of access tracks and wartime structures including a disused campsite.
- The composition is largely horizontal with views focused externally.
- Landscape Character Types: Low Island Pastures, Holms.

Wildness:

- A number of scattered ruins and abandoned buildings form visual features within the uniform land cover and emphasise its remote character and exposure to the sea.
- Access to the coast is via boat or access track from oil terminal.
- Medium relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are predominantly focused on the Flotta oil terminal and the passage of tankers or out across the expanse of Scapa Flow.

LCCA 7 - Tween the Wicks to Quoy Ness



Plate 7: View over Pan Ness to Golta. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.2010).

General Description

This small, semi enclosed, stretch of water, is known as Pan Hope. It is a shallow area of tidal water, animated by wind action, but generally calm within inner reaches.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Piers, boats, hawl out sites and lobster creels.
- Beach.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- There is a sense of semi-containment and shelter provided by the surrounding landform, however a low-lying skyline creates a degree of exposure and dominance of the sky and water over the landmass.
- Distant elevated landmasses including moorland hills on Hoy and moorland on the mainland are revealed above the immediate skyline with South Ronaldsay occupying views to east.
- The subtly indented coastline is punctuated by Curries Firth, and comprises two opposing shores of shallow water and deep intertidal zone defined by dark seaweed.
- Northern shores comprise long stretches of shingle with a large sandy bay to the west within Curries Firth, backed by low lying moorland and rough grassland and influenced by the presence of the oil terminal.
- Southern shores are characterised by fragmented rock platforms, stretches of sand and shingle with man made features including a pier and jetty, and backed by low pastures with regular field patterns emphasised by stonewalls and fence lines.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Grazings overlying gently rising ground.
- Landscape Character Type: Low Island Pastures.

Wildness:

- Clusters of settlement, scattered dwellings and farmsteads frequent the southern hinterland and along skyline.
- A number of scattered ruins and abandoned buildings form visual features within the monotonous land cover and emphasise the remote nature of the Golta promontory.
- Access to the coast is via track or local lane along the southern shore. Access is limited along the northern shore due to the oil terminal.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- Core path F4 lies inland.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are primarily channelled, by the nature of the bay, out towards the Sound of Hoxa and South Ronaldsay.
- Flotta oil terminal and the backdrop of Hoy dominate to the west.

LCCA 8 - Quoy Ness to House Geo



Plate 8: View towards Stanger Head from the sea. (Copyright Des Colhoun and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.2007).

General Description

This largely open stretch of deep, strong tidal water extends from Scapa Flow to the Pentland Firth, and is known as the Sound of Hoxa.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Views of oil tankers and the Pentland ferry service approaching and leaving the oil terminal and St Margaret's Hope respectively.
- The coastline comprises rugged high cliffs, rock platforms, stacks and deep ravines, highlighted by breaking waves.
- Large scale, panoramic views unveil animated waters including rough tidal races to the east of Switha, which enhance the overall sense of exposure to the seascape.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Relatively close range views of Switha, South Walls, South Ronaldsay and Burray create a sense of semi-enclosure in contrast to views north to Scapa Flow and south to 'open sea' in the Pentland Firth.
- The inaccessibility of the cliffscape creates a degree of separation from the sea, a sense of overall remoteness, and a limited opportunity to easily experience the intimate character and smells and sounds of the coast.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The immediate hinterland is characterised by moorland and rough grassland and backed by views of Hoy.

- The convex and concave landform of uniform heath and rough grassland slopes relatively evenly to the cliff and coastal edge.
- Landscape Character Type: Low Island Pastures.

Wildness:

- There is limited settlement within the immediate hinterland. A number of wartime ruins and abandoned structures create focal points on the cliff line plus a disused quarry.
- Access to the coast is by boat or from access tracks within lower lying northern reaches.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- Core path F4 to hole off Row.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are generally focused south to 'open sea' or directly east towards the Hoxa Head cliffscape and associated military structures.

LCCA 9 - House Geo to Innan Neb



Plate 9: Looking across Kirk Bay from east to west. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.2010).

General Description

This area is characterised by a largely open flow of deep, tidal water extending from Switha Sound to Sound of Hoxa, with views south to 'open sea' either side of Switha. Rough tidal races and animated waters enhance the sense of exposure to and influence of the seascape character.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Views of oil tankers and the Pentland ferry service approaching and leaving the oil terminal and St Margaret's Hope respectively create a distant maritime influence.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The coastline is generally low-lying and indented by Kirk Bay and Scat Wick and sheltered by cliffs to the east and west. There is a contrasting sense of shelter between the coastline bays and settled hinterland and the open aspect to sea.
- The south facing coastal edge comprises rock platforms, stretches of rock and shingle within bays, and a relatively deep intertidal zone defined by dark seaweed against pale shingle.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Stonewalls and fence lines emphasise small scale field patterns and undulating topography through which well spaced dwellings and farmsteads are scattered.
- The largely concave landform slopes relatively evenly to the coastal edge creating a strong visual relationship with coast.
- Pasture and arable land with patches of moorland and rough grassland form an outstretched, rolling hinterland backed by views of Hoy to the west.

Wildness

- Abandoned buildings and ruins are common within the more remote eastern reaches.
- Access to the coast is by boat or from tracks and local roads.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- Core path F3 to Kirk Bay and F1 to Scat Wick.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are primarily focused south towards Switha and beyond to the 'open sea'.

Swona

LCCA 10 – West Swona



Plate 10: Looking east towards Swona and ruined buildings. (1216641_bab40cc2 Copyright Ian Balcombe and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

General Description

The western and southern coastline of Swona extending from South Cleet in the south to The Lighthouse at The North Head.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Strong currents and tidal streams of the Pentland Firth.
- Distant views of vessels passing through the firth.
- Seabirds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep, tilted wave cut platforms of Old Red Sandstone.
- High degree of exposure and sense of isolation emphasized by the tidal streams, buffeting waves and whirlpools off shore.
- Small skerries and stacks.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Low lying (41m AOD) rough grassland clothed gentle slopes with semi improved pasture in the north and south dotted with ruinous buildings structures.
- Inland Loch and small lochans.
- Landscape Character Type – Holms.

Wildness

- Archaeological sites in the hinterland include a pre historic chambered Cairn, an early Christian burial ground and Viking remains.
- Derelict buildings and rusting agricultural machinery left behind when the last inhabitant left the island in 1974.
- Light houses at the north and south tips.
-
- High relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- A high degree of visual exposure
- Provides a visual focus in the expanse of the Pentland Firth when looking west from South Ronaldsay.

LCCA 11 – East Swona



Plate11: Looking west towards the cliffs and caves on north east Swona. (Copyright Ian Balcombe and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

General Description

The eastern coastline of Swona extending from The Lighthouse at The North Head to Sooth Cleet.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Strong currents and tidal streams of the Pentland Firth.
- Close range views of the Gills Bay to St Margaret's Hope ferry and other vessels in the Pentland Firth.
- Seabirds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep cliffs with strong horizontal banding emphasized by weathering and wave action.
- High degree of exposure and sense of isolation.
- Small skerries.
- Steeply incised bays and inlets.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Low lying (41m AOD) rough grassland with semi improved pasture in the north and south dotted with ruinous buildings structures.
- Inland Loch and small lochans.
- Landscape Character Type – Holms.

Wildness

- Archaeological sites in the hinterland include a pre historic chambered Cairn, an early Christian burial ground and Viking remains.
- Derelict buildings and rusting agricultural machinery left behind when the last inhabitant left the island in 1974.
- Radio mast.
- .
- Hi relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- A high degree of visual exposure although having a visual link to South Ronaldsay.
- Provides a visual focus in the expanse of the Pentland Firth when looking west from South Ronaldsay.

Hoy

LCCA12 - Longhope



Plate 12: Looking north over Longhope.

General Description

A small, semi enclosed, stretch of water between North Bay and Flotta which is a relatively deep flow of tidal water, animated by wind action although generally calm.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Small-scale boat traffic and associated navigational aids, together with tidal patterns, changing light conditions, and prevalent sounds and smells of the sea, create a maritime influence.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The subtly indented coastline, almost bay like in character, comprises two opposing shores of shallow waters and a deep intertidal zone defined by dark seaweed.
- The low lying coastline is characterised by low cliff/embankment, fragmented rock platforms and points, rock and shingle shores, sandy bays, and piers and jetties.
- A sense of semi-containment and shelter is provided by a rising backdrop of moorland to the northwest on Hoy and rising pasture and arable land on the whaleback landscape of South Walls to the south, with Flotta sheltering to the northeast. Moasound to the west forms a narrowing where North Ness and South Ness protrude and interrupt views of North Bay from certain alignments.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- A gently inclined patchwork of 'Inclined Coastal Pasture' and arable land, with patches of rough grassland rising to 'Moorland Hills to north with 'Whaleback Island Landscapes' on South Walls.

Wildness:

- Scattered dwellings and farmsteads are strung out along roadsides with associated wind shaped vegetation cover. There is a concentration of development at South Ness dispersing thereafter along the southern shoreline.
- Regular field patterns are emphasised by stonewalls, fence lines and dykes.
- Access to the coast is readily available where the B9047 skirts the coastline. Outer reaches of the coastline to the northeast are less accessible with a greater sense of exposure and influence of sea.
- Low relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are primarily channelled out towards Weddel Sound or Cantick Sound by the nature of bay dynamic.

LCCA13 - North Bay



Plate 13: Looking west towards the Ayre and Melsetter House.

General Description

A small almost totally enclosed area of water known as North Bay, separated from the waters of Scapa Flow by Longhope.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The shallow area of tidal water is animated by wind action but generally remains calm and sheltered. This contrasts with the sense of exposure gained from views of the open Pentland Firth via The Ayre.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- There is a sense of containment and shelter provided by the surrounding hinterland. Moasound forms a narrowing where North Ness and South Ness protrude and block views of Long Hope from some locations.
- The subtly indented coastline comprises areas of low cliff/embankment, fragmented rock platforms and points, small skerries, rock and shingle shores, sandy bays, and an extensive intertidal zone emphasised by vast seaweed cover.
- Maritime influences are limited to the character of tidal patterns, seaweed cover and seaside smells, but the close relationship with shoreline from the B9047 allows intimate experience.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The low lying, gently inclined, patchwork of rolling pasture and arable land, with patches of rough grassland, backed to the north by moorland hills, forms a well-settled hinterland.

- Landscape Character Types: ‘Inclined Coastal Pastures’ and ‘Moorland Hills’ to the north and ‘Whaleback Landscapes’ to the south.

Wildness:

- Dwellings and farmsteads are well spaced and strung out along roadsides around the bay. Melsetter House and its associated wind shaped tree coverage forms an important landscape feature at the western end of the bay.
- Regular field patterns emphasised by stonewalls, fence lines and dykes follow low lying reaches of the hinterland.
- Access to the coast is readily available where the B9047 skirts the coastline around the full extent of the bay and at Melberry Links.
- Low relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Framed views north to Long Hope and southeast to the ‘open sea’ of the Pentland Firth over The Ayre.
- Views are dominated by the cyclical nature of sequential views around the bay, especially from the B9047.

LCCA 14 - Point of Hackness to Crowtaing



Plate 14: Looking north from the Martello Tower to the Wind Turbine on Flotta.

General Description

This small, semi enclosed, stretch of water experiences expansive views northwest across eastern extents of Long Hope to Weddel Sound backed by Hoy, Fara and Flotta including distant views of the mainland, and southeast to Switha Sound, Cantick Sound and Pentand Firth backed by South Walls, Switha, Flotta and South Ronaldsay.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The exposed headland overlooks a relatively deep flow of strong tidal water including views of rough tidal races and breakers to the east.
- Views of boat and ferry traffic to the northwest and Cantick Head lighthouse to the southeast.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The coastline comprises areas of relatively high cliff, rock platforms, and a narrow intertidal zone. The shoreline is essentially hidden from view below the cliff top.
- The exposed aspect to sea and onshore winds enhances the influence of the seascape character over the land.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The hinterland is predominantly flat pastureland gently falling to the cliff edge.
- Landscape Character Types: Whaleback Island Landscapes

Wildness:

- There are few dwellings and farmsteads scattered over the hinterland. The simple, open character of pastureland results in vertical elements becoming prominent including World War II structures, a Martello Tower and a wind turbine on Flotta
- The shoreline is largely restricted by the nature of the cliffs however, access can be made via private access tracks or from the northern reaches, before the B9047 leaves the coastline.
- Low relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are dominated by the cliff-scape opposite on Flotta where the wind turbine provides a dominant vertical man-made feature.

LCCA 15 – Crowtaing to Cantick Head



Plate 15: Looking west along Kirk Hope.

General Description

A small, semi enclosed, area of water, known as Kirk Hope, with an outlook over Cantick Sound, Switha Sound and Flotta.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The shallow area of tidal water is animated by wind action but is generally calm and sheltered. There are contrasting views of rough tidal races within Cantick Sound.
- Cantick Head lighthouse and other navigational aids, including distant views of boat traffic around Lyness, create a sense of maritime character.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- A sense of semi-containment and shelter is provided by the gently rising backdrop of pasture and arable land.
- The low-level skyline enhances the intimate character of the small scale bay and the close relationship shared with the coastline including smells and sounds of the sea.
- The consistent coastline comprises areas of rock platform, shingle shores, sandy bays, and a moderate intertidal zone emphasised by seaweed cover and drift.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Low-lying, gently inclined and undulating pasture and arable land, with rough grassland and grazing characterises the hinterland.
- Landscape Character Type: 'Whaleback Island Landscape'.
- Topography is emphasised or broken by stonewalls and fence lines.

Wildness:

- Dwellings and farmsteads are well spaced along northern shores and around the sandy bay at Booth. Many properties sky line along the low horizon.
- Access to the coast is readily available where the local road skirts the coastline along the southern shore.
- Low relative wildness.
- Core path Wa4 along south side of Kirk Hope.

Visual Assessment:

- Views over 'open sea' are gained over some areas of low skyline highlighting the sense of shelter within bay.
- Views are dominated by the intimate, small-scale nature of the bay or contrasting exposed views out to tidal races and breakers in Cantick Sound.

LCCA 16 – Cantick Head – Aith Head



Plate 16: looking west along the coast near Birsay Geo.

General Description

This section of the South Walls coast lies between Cantick Head and Aith Head with long range views south over the Pentland Firth to the mainland.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- In poor weather conditions when the Scrabster – Stromness Ferry cannot take its usual route round the west side of Hoy, it runs on an alternative course past the southern coast of South Walls to gain a sheltered route through Scapa Flow.
- At other times the Gills Bay to St Margarets Hope can be seen in the distance.
- From the cliff top the waves can be seen and heard crashing over the skerries and buffeting the cliffs.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The coastal edge is sharply defined by steep cliffs, headlands geos and skerries.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The hinterland rises to only 50m AOD – and much of this height is obtained at the sea/land interface.
- Fairly simple pattern of agricultural fields and rough grazing interspersed with scattered dwellings interlinked by a network of minor roads.
- Hill of White Hamars Nature Reserve.
- Landscape Character Type: Whaleback Island Landscapes.

Wildness

- This stretch of coast although relatively close to roads and dispersed settlement is not accessible beyond the cliff top.
- There is limited settlement other than in the hinterland.
- Evidence of Neolithic settlement.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- 'Aspirational core path' and core path Wa4.

Visual Assessment

- Views from the coast are of two main types – along the coastal edge with the associated drama of crashing waves; and south over the wide expanse of the Pentland Firth with views of the mainland coming and going dependent on weather conditions.

LCCA 17 – Aith Head to Brims Ness



Plate 17: Looking east along the southern shore of Aith Hope to The Axe. (Copyright Roger McLachlan and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

General Description

This is a relatively sheltered stretch of coast which surrounds Aith Hope – a bay less than 1km in length and less than 0.5km in width.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

-
- The former lifeboat station on the southern shore is now an RNLI museum.
- The shelter of the Hope is in contrast to the exposed waters of the Pentland Firth.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The northern coast is defined by cliffs while the southern coast is lower lying with a rocky foreshore. At The Ayre, a wide sweeping sandy beach and the B9847 separate the Hope from the waters of North Bay.
- Shallow waters with sandy beaches, rocky shorelines and cliffs.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- A relatively simple, settled landscape of agricultural fields and grazings with low lying topography of no more than 50m AOD.
- Whaleback Island Landscapes (South Walls)
- Inclined Coastal Pastures (Brims)

Wildness

- The area is relatively well settled with a network of minor roads which provide access close the southern shore.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- ‘Aspirational core path’ north of Aith Hope.

Visual Assessment

- Views are from coast to coast along the Hope and along the length of the bay either out to sea or to the sandy beach at The Ayre.

LCCA 18 – Brims Ness to Tor Ness



Plate 18: Looking east towards Broad Geo. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

General Description

This section of coast is the southernmost part of the Hoy coastline. The eastern section forms part of the whaleback Brims peninsula, which merges gradually westwards with flatter, more gentle, topography.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- A degree of shelter in the geos contrasting with exposure in the headlands.
- Distant views of ferries and other vessels in the Pentland Firth.
- Seals in the sheltered geos and sea birds along the cliffs.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Very diverse character: including sheltered, bays, sand dunes, exposed cliffs and skerries.
- Intricate fragmented coastline
- Contrasting experiences of intimacy with the sea where access to the shore exists with exposure when looking down from the coastal cliffs.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- A simple landscape of large scale, rectilinear agricultural fields subdivided by dry stone walls and post and wire fences and overlying a generally convex landform.
- Landscape Character Types - Cliff Landscapes (eastern section); and Inclined Coastal Pastures (western section).

Wildness:

- Some scattered development inland, access track to the dunes at Sheep Skerry and evidence of past habitation in the form of a Broch at Grassy Cletts.
- Limited access on foot from adjacent minor roads at Brims and tracks at Melsetter House.
- Medium relative wildness.
- Core paths Wa3 and Wa4.

Visual Assessment:

- Some visual containment within the sheltered bays contrasting with open views from headlands and clifftops.
- Views along the coast with bays and geos being revealed in successive views.
- Visibility of the mainland is very much weather dependant – at times detail on the Caithness cliffs can be made out while at others the mainland appears as a silhouette or is not visible at all.

LCCA 19 – Tor Ness to Rack Wick



Plate 19: Looking north west over Little Rack Wick to Sneuk Head and Bora Head. (Copyright Roger McLachlan and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

General Description

A striking coastline of high, vertical cliffs extending from just south of the sandy bay at Rack Wick to the headland at Tor Ness.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Distant views of shipping passing through the Pentland Firth.
- Crashing waves and the associated sea spray and noise.
- Lighthouse marking the north western entrance to the Pentland Firth.
- Sea birds around the cliff face.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep vertical cliffs indented by numerous deep geos, caves and waterfalls and punctuated by natural arches headlands and small skerries.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- A series of hills rising from the cliff tops with numerous watercourses flowing to waterfalls at the cliff edge.
- Several hill lochs and lochans in lower lying areas of which the largest is the reservoir at Heldale Water

Wildness:

- Inaccessible save by foot from the car park Rack Wick to the north and from the track used by fishermen to approach Heldale Water.
- Absence of any evidence of human habitation or intervention apart from the lighthouse to the west of Tor Ness.
- High relative wildness.
- Core path Wa3 to Tor Ness.

Visual Assessment:

- A series of ever changing vistas back and forth along the coast.
- Panoramic views out over the Pentland Firth to the mainland in conditions of clear visibility.

LCCA 20 – Rack Wick



Plate 20: Rackwick Bay. (© Copyright Ian Balcombe and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

Wide curving sandy bay flanked by cliffs at the mouth of South Burn.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Waves rolling shorewards.
- Sea birds.
- Passing ferries and other vessels.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Wide, gently curved sandy beach.

- Enclosure either side by high cliffs.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Settled landscape with access road and car parking.
- Glen enclosed by steeply rising landform.
- Landscape Character Types: Enclosed Bay, Glaciated Valley.

Wildness:

- Accessible by road from north Hoy.
- Settled landscape.
- Low to medium relative wildness.
- Core paths H1, H2 and H3.

Visual Assessment:

- Contained and framed by headlands either side of the beach.
- Distant views of Caithness across the Pentland Firth.
- Passing ferries and other vessels.

LCCA 21 – Rack Wick to Rora Head



Plate 21: Cliffs west of Too the head. (© Copyright Russel Wills and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

South facing cliffs to the west of Rackwick Bay.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements***Maritime Influences:***

- Crashing waves.
- Sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Vertical cliffs.
- Geos.
- Waterfalls.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Rough grazing and moorland.
- Steeply sloping hillside of Moor Fea.
- Landscape Character Types Cliff Landscapes, Rugged Glaciated Hills.
- RSPB Hoy Nature Reserve.

Wildness:

- Absence of settlement.
- High relative wildness.
- Core Path H2 to the Old Man of Hoy.

Visual Assessment:

- Long range, elevated views south along the coastline and across the Pentland Firth to Caithness.

LCCA 22 - Rora Head to Kame of Hoy



Plate 22: From the Scrabster Ferry looking towards the Old Man of Hoy. (© Copyright DJB and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

Generally west facing high cliffs on north west Hoy.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Crashing waves at the base of the cliffs.
- Passing ferries and other vessels.
- Sea birds.
- Sea winds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Vertical cliffs with geos, stacks and.
- Old Man of Hoy, world famous sea stack.
- St John's Head cliffs, highest vertical sea cliffs in the UK.
- Hanging corrie at Burn of the Kame
- Strong sense of exposure.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Moorland rising to summits at Moor Fea (304mAOD) and Culaigs (433m AOD).
- RSPB Hoy Nature Reserve.
- Landscape Character Types Cliff Landscapes, Rugged Glaciated Hills.

Wildness:

- Absence of settlement.
- Core path H2 to Old Man of Hoy.
- Internationally renowned climbing location.

- High relative wildness

Visual Assessment:

- Distant views of Sutherland and Caithness across the Pentland Firth.
- Views north along coastline towards St John's Head.

LCCA 23 – West Stroma



Plate 23 Looking north along the coast. (Copyright Mo and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2008).

General Description

The western coastal cliffs of the island of Stroma extending from Mell Head in the south to Swilkie Point in the north.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Turbulent seas and ocean tides including ‘The Merry Men of Mey’ emphasised by the shipwreck of the Danish coaster Bettina Danica which foundered in 1994.
- Distant views of ferries, shipping and other vessels in the Pentland Firth.
- Sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep cliffs up to 40m in height between Red Head and The Gloup.
- A generally gently indented coastline with small, shallow bays, caves, geos and small promontories.
- A deeply incised narrow north east to south west tending inlet lies to the north of Mell Head while the subterranean passage at the Gloup lies to the west of Nether-ton.
- Small, tilted skerries.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Moorland vegetation interspersed with rough grazing along the western hinterland with semi improved grassland subdivided into rectilinear plots each with a farmstead, further east.
- Landscape Character Type – Coastal Island.

Wildness

- Remains of Castle Mestag, forts and chambered cairns.
- Scattered deserted buildings in the settlements of Uppertown and Nethertown.
- Road runs down the central spine of the island linking the farm buildings.
- Light houses.
- Inaccessible except by boat.
- High relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Open expanse of the Pentland Firth and views of distant shipping and other vessels.
- Views along the coastal cliffs with foci of the lighthouses at either end. Inland views to abandoned buildings punctuating the domed horizon.

LCCA 24 – East Stroma



Plate 24: Looking towards Mains of Stroma. (Copyright Mo and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2008).

General Description

The eastern, low lying south and east facing coastline of the island of Stroma extending from Swilkie Point in the north to Mell Head in the south west..

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Turbulent seas and ocean tides.
- Harbour and pier.
- Close range views of ferries, shipping and other vessels in the Pentland Firth.
- Sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Low lying tilted cliffs.
- Gently curving shoreline indented with geos and cave.
- Offshore tilted skerries.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Semi improved grassland subdivided into rectilinear plots each with a farmstead in the immediate hinterland with moorland vegetation interspersed with rough grazing further west.
- Landscape Character Type – Coastal Island.

Wildness

- Remains of Castle Mestag, forts and chamered cairns.
- Scattered deserted buildings in the settlements of Uppertown and Nethertown.
- Road runs down the central spine of the island linking the farm buildings.
- Pier and harbour.
- Inaccessible except by boat.
- High relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- View to Pentland Skerries and the North Sea and over the Pentland Firth to the mainland.
- Views along the coast with offlying skerries providing additional visual interest with sea spray.
- Inland views to abandoned buildings punctuating the domed horizon.

LCCA 25 - Loch Eribol



Plate 25 – Looking east over Loch Eribol

General Description

A 16 km long sea loch on the north coast of Scotland used for centuries as a deep water anchorage safe from the often stormy seas of Cape Wrath and the Pentland Firth.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements**Maritime Influences:**

- Island and skerries.
- Sea going vessels.
- Sea birds.
- Dark intertidal shores.
- Lighthouse.
- Royal Navy associations -

Character of Coastal Edge:

- North west and south east facing undulating coastlines no more than 3km distant.
- Sandy beaches, shingle and low cliffs.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Steadily rising hills with some coniferous plantation cover.
- Crofting townships.
- Landscape Character Type: Inland Island.

Wildness:

- A83 roughly parallel to the shore.
- Low to high relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views from shore to shore punctuated by islands and skerries.
- Long views along the loch with limited views out to the Pentland Firth.

LCCA 26 – Loch Eriboll to Achininver Bay



Plate 26 - Looking down the high cliffs of Whiten Head (Copyright david glass and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.)

General Description

West and north facing indented coast of sea cliffs including Whiten Head.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Sea birds.
- Waves crashing at the foot of the cliffs.
- Distant tankers.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Indented coastline with numerous geos and sea stacks.
- Steep cliffs with northerly and westerly aspects.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Moorland covered hills of minor summits and Ben Hutig (408m AOD).
- Landscape Character Types: Moorland Slopes and Hills and Sweeping Moorland.

Wildness:

- Absence of settlement.
- High relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views towards the islands and skerries and along the coast west of Loch Eriboll.
- View over the Pentland Firth.
- Views inland to the peaks to the east and south.

LCCA 27 Achininver Bay



Plate 27 – Achinver Beach. (© Copyright Clive Nicholson and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

A small sandy bay nestling below the crofting township of Achininver.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Rolling waves over shallow sands.
- Sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Wide sandy beach flanked by rocky headlands.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Crofting townships of Achininver, Lubinvullin and Stathan.
- Landscape Character Types: Small Farms and crofts, and Sweeping Moorland.

Wildness:

- Relatively easy access from the crofting townships although remote from the main road network.

- Overlooked by dwellings.
- Low to medium relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views to sea channelled by the rocky headlands.
- View over the beach from elevated locations to the south.
-

LCCA 28 Achininver Bay to Aird Skinid



Plate 28 – Portvasgo. (© Copyright Brian Smith and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

A rocky coastline with offshore islands and skerries to the west of Tongue Bay.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Pier.
- Port.
- Fishing boats and other vessels.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Tilted rock platforms and low cliffs
- Shingly and sandy beaches.
- Offshore islands and skerries.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Grasslands.
- Crofting townships.
- Landscape Character Types: Small Farms and crofts, and Sweeping Moorland.

Wildness:

- Campsite at Talmine.
- Dwellings along the minor road between Midtown and Midfield.
- Low to medium relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views from shore to ever changing pattern of islands and the mouth of the Kyle of Tongue.
- Enclosed views within small bays.

LCCA 29 - Kyle of Tongue



Plate 29 – looking along the Kyle from the bridge

General Description

A shallow sea loch 8 miles east of Loch Eriboll. A large portion of it is sandy, with a narrow bar-encumbered channel running through it between Melness and Meall Mòr.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Oyster cages.
- Fishing boats.
- Pier.
- Sea birds.
- Whales and otters.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Undulating coastline with some sandy bays and shingly beaches.
- Wooded shore to the south east.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Distinctive settlement pattern including crofts and sporting estates.
- Wooded in the south west with forestry to the south west.
- Settlement north of the causeway on both sides.
- Landscape Character Areas: Moorland Slopes and Hills, Small Farms and Crofts.

Wildness:

- South eastern shore, and north east shore north of Sullamore, is more remote with no road access.
- Settlement at Tongue, Midtown, Coldbackie and Skullamore.
- Low to High relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views from opposing coasts generally from elevated locations.
- The cemetery is a focal point in views.
- Views up and down the Kyle from the causeway west of Tongue House. Wider views to neighbouring mountains

LCCA 30 – Kyle of Tongue to Aird Torrisdale



Plate 30 – Eilean nan Ron (© Copyright Dave Simpson and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.)

General Description

An indented, generally north facing coastline of sea cliffs and tiny bays with offshore islands.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Piers.
- Anchorages.
- Sheltered Bays.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep cliffs interspersed with small shingly bays at Port an t-Stathain, Lamigo, Skerray and Port an Fheadhairigaig.
- Skerries.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Moorland Slopes and Hills, Small Farms and Crofts, and Sweeping Moorland.

Wildness:

- Western portion not readily accessible.
- Settlement at Strathan Skerry, Clashbuie, Skerray, Clashheddy and Achtoty.
- Medium to high relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views from the coast over the mouth of Kyle of Tongue to Rabbit Islands.
- Views over Caol Raineach to Eilan nan Ron.
- Views over the narrow Caol Beg to Coomb Island.
- Sence of enclosure and framed views from within the narrow bays.

LCCA 31 – Torrisdale Bay



Plate 31 – Torridale Beach. © Copyright sylvia duckworth and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.

General Description

Large enclosed sandy bay divided by central ridge separating two distinct river systems.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Pier.
- Active sand dune system – sand influence to over 100m AOD.
- Eroding salt marsh.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- A high glacially scoured flat-topped ridge of ancient metamorphic rock jutting northwards
- Apron of sand flanked by major river depressions.
- Dunes.
- Vast beach with half a mile between the dunes and low water mark and half of this being dry sands.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Rising moorland covered hill with the River Borgie and the River Naver either side.
- Populated straths with scattered settlement.
- Landscape Character Types: Long Beaches, Dunes and Links, Moorland Slopes and Hills, Strath.

Wildness:

- Accessible from the minor roads.

- Medium relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views out to sea are famed by the flanking headlands at Aird Torrisdale and Creag Ruadh.
- Views inland are curtailed by the dunes and Druim Chuibhe and limited to the starths either side.

LCCA 32. - Creag Ruadh to Farr Point



Plate 32 – Looking towards Farr Point. (© Copyright Roger McLachlan and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

This LCCA comprised the U shaped Farr Bay flanked by the promontories of Creag Ruadh Glaisgo and the more distant Farr Point.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

-

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Northwest facing, U-shaped bay which is strongly confined by schist, gneiss and injection complex cliffs.
- Promontories at Creag Ruadh and Farr Point with offshore skerries here and at Glaisgeo.
- Farr Bay comprises a ridge of glacial till, a complex dune and machair system and a beach, and a fourth landscape element is added with the considerable spread of blown sand onto and over the 80m high ridge.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Machair.
- Crofting townships.
- Landscape Character Types: Moorland Slopes and Hills, Small Farms and Crofts.

Wildness:

- Largely inaccessible coastal cliffs with Farr Bay being accessible on foot.
- Overlooked in part by dwellings.

- Medium to high relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

-

LCCA 33 - Farr Point to Armadale Bay



Plate 33 - Looking towards the bay.

General Description

A lengthy stretch of coastline with frequent headlands and points jutting out into the Pentland Firth. Largely inaccessible save for near the settlements of Kirtomy and Armadale.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Frequent sheltered bays and ports.
- Salt spray and crashing waves on the rocky shoreline.
- Sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Deeply indented rocky coastline with geos and skerries and four distinct bays at Swordly, Kirtomy, Port Mòr and Port a' Chinn.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Crofting townships at Farr, Swordly, Kirtomy and Armadale.
- Moorland cover.
- Landscape Character Types: Moorland Slopes and Hills, Small Farms and Crofts.

Wildness:

- Overlooked by dwellings near the bays.
- Some tracks in the hinterland.
- Medium to high relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

LCCA 34 - Armadale Bay



Plate 34 – looking west over the bay.

General Description

Armadale beach occupies the head of a fairly deep, narrow bay on an east-west section of the coast just to the west of Strathy Point. The bay depression does not extend far inland in the form of an open river valley but instead bifurcates into two fairly short, narrow valleys.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The bay is very open to the north, and exposure to winds and waves from this quarter is severe.
- Sea birds.
- Blown sand.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Wide sandy beach flanked by rocky promontories.
- Machair.
- Grazings.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The bay depression does not extend far inland in the form of an open river valley but instead bifurcates into two fairly short, narrow valleys -
- Landscape Character Types: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays and Small Farms and Crofts.

Wildness:

- Difficulty of access from the main north coast road which runs a 1/4 mile or more back from the beach.
- Armadale crofting township
- Low to medium relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views out to sea in a northerly direction, framed by the rocky sides to the bay.
- Views over the bay from Armadale and Lednagullin.

LCCA 35 - Strathy Point



Plate 35 – looking north to the lighthouse

General Description

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Lighthouse.
- Jetty.
- Ports.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Indented coast with numerous small north east facing bays on the eastern shore.
- Complex bays and inlets along the western shore with numerous islands and skerries.
- Natural arches and geos.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Grazings and crofting land uses.
- Farm buildings and equipment.
- Landscape Character Types: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays, Small Farms and Crofts and Sweeping Moorland.

Wildness:

- Linear settlement along the eastern side with scattered, isolated settlement at Aultiphurst, Brawl and Aultvullin.
- Car park and footpath access to the lighthouse.
- Low to high relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Lighthouse obscured from much of the approach road by the topography.
- Elevated views out to sea from the tops of the cliffs.

LCCA 36 - Strathy Bay



Plate 36 – looking east towards the beach

General Description

Strathy Bay occupies the angle between the north pointing promontory of Strathy Point and an east-west trending section of the north coast. The beach is nearly half a mile long, with an upper beach between high water mark and the dune front tapering towards the east.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The bay and beach are not strongly exposed except from the northeast which is fully open to winds and waves, the latter augmented by refraction round Strathy Point.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The sand of the beach tends to be rather coarse and the shell content is high.
- The dune complex consists of two separate dune ridges parallel to each other.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Settlement at Strathy.
- Moorland land cover.
- Landscape Character Types: Small Farms and Crofts and Sweeping Moorland.

Wildness:

- Overlooked by dwellings.
- Track as far as the graveyard.
- Low to medium relative wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Views constrained by the coast of Strathy Point.
- Open views over the beach to the Pentland Firth.
- Views across the beach from side to side over a ½ mile stretch.
- The beach is seen from elevated locations on Strathy Point.

LCCA 37 – Strathy Bay to Melvich Bay



Plate 37 – North of Baligill. (© Copyright Evelyn Simak and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

Heavily-indented North-facing rocky cliffed coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Northerly aspect.
- Large-scale, expansive.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Overall linear trend east – west but with many small scale indentations and enclosed sections.
- Larger scale embayments at Baligill, and around Portskerra.
- Rocky shoreline with exposed platforms at low tide.
- Geos and natural arches.
- Cliffs and vegetated bluffs form steep slopes above intertidal zone.
- Evidence of historical remains including forts in two main bays.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Small Farms and Crofts, Sweeping Moorland.
- Crofting concentrated around Baligill and Portskerra, with intervening area of moorland
- Pier and car park at Portskerra.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness in crofting areas.

- Increasing to High around Rubha Beag headland, with more rugged cliff scenery and high perceived naturalness of moorland vegetation.

Visual Assessment:

- Views typically large-scale, with open seaward aspect.
- Easily accessible areas with sea views are limited, they include Portskerra Pier Car Park, with views over Melvich Bay.
- Views from A836 over sweeping moorland and crofting land.

LCCA 38 Melvich Bay



Plate 38 – Looking east towards the bay

General Description

Enclosed bay with sandy beach and dune system at mouth of River Halladale.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Generally sheltered bay.
- Open to northerly aspect.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Central section of bay has wide exposed sandy beach at low tide, backed by tall dunes.
- Western section mainly shingle and cobble shoreline, backed by vegetated bluffs.
- Eastwards sand merges with rocky platforms, backed by bluffs and cliffs.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Small Farms and Crofts, Long Beaches Dunes and Links, Sweeping Moorland.
- Large gravel pits near Halladale Bridge.
- Caravan and camping site at Melvich township.
- Bighouse Lodge occupies visually prominent site at river mouth.
- Historical remains including Broch, hut circles and cairn.

Wildness:

- Low to Medium Relative Wildness.
- Obvious modification of natural dune system by quarrying.
- Heavily-settled, popular recreation area.
- Very accessible, adjacent to A836.

Visual Assessment:

- Open sea views to north.
- A836 provides wide, elevated views north and east across bay.
- Multiple focal points and features of interest, including dunes, river meanders, Bighouse Lodge.
- Sand and Gravel quarries detract from landscape quality.

LCCA 39 - Melvich Bay to Sandside Bay



Plate 39 – Drumholiston Coast (© Copyright sylvia duckworth and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.)

General Description

Indented, cliffed coastline with northerly aspect

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Northerly aspect.
- Large-scale, expansive.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Overall linear trend east – west.
- Numerous small scale features; including geos, skerries (Cletts), caves and arches.
- Exposed rocky platforms at low tide.
- Sandstone cliffs topped by vegetated bluffs of glacial till.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays, Sweeping Moorland, Mixed agriculture and settlement, Open Intensive Farmland.
- Moorland dominates hinterland landscape.
- Several small lochs within moorland.
- Farmland merges with moorland in the east approaching Sandside.
- Extensive deciduous woodland policies at Sandside House.

Wildness:

- High to Low Relative Wildness.
- Paths and road access at eastern and western margins of the unit.
- Much of central area of cliffed coastline difficult to access – no paths except around Loch Hollistan area.
- High perceived naturalness of moorland vegetation types.

Visual Assessment:

- Expansive seaward views where accessible.
- Hinterland views over moorland from A836.

LCCA 40 - Sandside Bay



Plate 40 – Looking over the bay towards Dounreay

General Description

Enclosed crescent-shaped bay with sandy beach and dune system.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Generally sheltered bay.
- Open to northerly aspect.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Extensive sandy beach at low tide, with mature fixed dunes inland.
- Low rocky platforms of tilted sandstone strata form enclosing arms of crescent.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Mixed agriculture and settlement, Long beaches dunes and links, Open intensive farmland.
- Overall settled character.
- Golf links on dune system : Reay Golf Club.
- Car park and access road on western shoreline behind dunes.
- Small harbour at Fresgoe.
- Historical remains including hut circles.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- Heavily-settled, popular recreation area.

- Very accessible, adjacent to A836.

Visual Assessment:

- Open sea views to north.
- Dounreay Nuclear Establishment a key focal point in many views.
- Views to north from A836 frequently partially enclosed and screened by vegetation or settlement.

LCCA 41 - Sandside Bay to Ness of Litter



Plate 41 – Looking towards Forss Windfarm

General Description

Open, generally north-west to north- east trending rocky coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

- Northerly aspect, open expanse of sea to north.

Maritime Influences:

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Crosskirk Bay and low headland of Brims Ness are key large scale features.
- Overall regular linear trend also modified by numerous small scale features; including geos, arches, and cletts.
- Typical shoreline composed of rocky platforms backed by low cliffs or bluffs.
- Abundant evidence of historic interest including St Mary's Chapel, Brims Castle, brochs, burnt mounds.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays, Open Intensive Farmland, Mixed Agriculture and Settlement.
- Dounreay Nuclear Establishment is dominant landscape feature.
- Forss Business Park and wind farm also very prominent.
- Forss House and associated deciduous woodland provide welcome landscape diversity.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- Overall developed character .

Visual Assessment:

- Eastward views tend to focus on Dounreay or Forss wind farm.
- Extensive seaward views west towards Duncansby Head and north towards Hoy.

LCCA 42 - Ness of Litter to Holburn Head



Plate 42 – Looking towards Forss Wind Farm.

General Description

Short section of cliffed coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Northerly aspect, open expanse of sea to north.
- Views of ferries and other shipping.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- High sandstone cliffs rising to around 70m at Ness of Litter near Brims Hill, and at Spear Head further east, declining eastwards to Holborn Head.
- Generally linear configuration of coastline.
- Caves and cletts in eastern part near Holborn Head.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays, Open Intensive Farmland, Mixed Agriculture and Settlement.
- Woodland blocks on Brims Hill.
- Disused quarries at Ness of Litter.
- Scrabster Loch.

Wildness:

- Low to High Relative Wildness.
- Parts of cliffed section not accessible by road or path.
- Generally well-settled character.

Visual Assessment:

- Eastward views tend to focus on Dounreay or Forss wind farm.
- Extensive seaward views west towards Duncansby Head and north towards Hoy.

LCCA 43 - Thurso Bay



Plate 43 – looking east along the seafront

General Description

A broad bay at the mouth of the River Thurso, with a strong urban character.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Enclosed bay with north-eastern aspect open to Pentland Firth.
- Busy ferry terminal at Scrabster on western side of bay, frequent ferry traffic.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Large scale enclosure, forms western arm of larger embayment feature including Dunnet Bay.
- Generally rocky shoreline with exposed platforms at low tide, interspersed with stretches of pebble and shingle.
- Sandy beach at mouth of river.
- Low cliffs with raised beach in central section.
- Grassy bluffs on western margin merging with higher cliffs at Holborn Head.
- Port development dominant at Scrabster.
- Promenade walkway at Thurso near river mouth.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Harbour and Town dominant, with Mixed Agriculture and Settlement beyond.
- Port development, residential, caravan and camp site, promenade walkway.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- Urban and developed character dominant.

Visual Assessment:

Foreground views dominated by port and other urban development .

Open views seaward tend to focus on western cliffs of Hoy.

Views east towards Dunnet Head peninsula.

LCCA 44 - Thurso Bay to Dunnet Bay



Plate 44 – Looking east to Dunnet Head (© Copyright John Ferguson and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

A section of low open rocky coastline separating more enclosed Thurso and Dunnet Bays to east and west.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Northerly aspect.
- Shipping movement visible further west at Scrabster.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Forms central part of a larger embayment which encompasses Thurso and Dunnet Bays.
- Generally open, with two small scale enclosed sections at Clardon Haven and Murkle Bay.
- Rocky shoreline with exposed platforms at low tide.
- Some short sections of low cliff, generally less than 10m high.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Type: Open Intensive Farmland.
- Rectilinear pattern of large arable and improved grassland fields.
- Frequent houses and steadings.
- Occasional shelterbelts.
- A836 runs parallel to coastline.
- Castletown harbour, village, and disused flagstone quarry on eastern edge of unit.

Wildness:

- Low relative wildness.
- Mixed agriculture and settlement dominant, coastline relatively accessible.

Visual Assessment:

- Open seaward aspect.
- Dunnet Head peninsula forms focus of views eastward.
- Dunnet Bay beach also prominent in views east.

LCCA 45 - Dunnet Bay



Plate 45 – looking over the bay to the Pentland Firth

General Description

A broad enclosed bay with a fine sandy beach and large dune system.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Generally sheltered bay.
- North-westerly aspect.
- Distant shipping and ferry traffic .

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Forms eastern part of a larger embayment which encompasses Thurso and Dunnet Bays.
- Soft deposition coast.
- Wide sandy beach at low tide.
- Extensive dune system.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Type: Beaches, Dunes, and Links.
- Prominent large caravan and camping site with shop.
- Dunnet village on eastern margin of unit.

Wildness:

- Medium to High relative wildness.
- Relatively intact natural duneland/beach system.
- Very accessible, adjacent to A836.

Visual Assessment:

- Open views to north-west across Dunnet Bay and Pentland Firth.
- Strong focus on Dunnet Head peninsula in views to east and north.
- Enclosure by dune ridge in views from A836, particularly in south of unit.

LCCA 46 Dunnet Head



Plate 46: View to Cliffs at Dunnet Head

General Description

This prominent headland forms a striking landmark at the northernmost point of the British mainland.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Lighthouse occupying a commanding position on the northernmost headland (Easter Head) is a prominent feature in views from land and sea.

- Many species of nesting sea birds on cliffs
- Distant shipping traffic in Firth
- Very exposed to wind and waves

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep cliffs of horizontally layered Old Red Sandstone, rising to 90m at Easter Head.
- Distinctive landform features also include geos, subsidiary headlands including The Neback , waterfalls, and wave cut platforms at base of cliffs.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Type: Sweeping Moorland.
- Car park and viewpoint near lighthouse.
- Inland from the sea cliffs the headland consists of area of moorland with scattered lochans.
- The moorland seems extensive, even though it is actually quite small in extent, as its edges are typically not seen from its interior, and there is a lack of comparable size indicators.

Wildness

- Medium to High Relative Wildness.
- Rugged high cliffs.
- The immediate hinterland is easily accessible via the B855.
- Presence of remains of WWI buildings and structures.

Visual Assessment:

- Views to the sheer cliffs are enlivened by the changing light and weather conditions, the crashing waves of the Pentland Firth and the sea birds.
- Views are so expansive that they can prompt strong emotional responses, including evoking an “edge of world” feeling .
- In clear conditions expansive views are obtained, from the cliff tops and from elevated positions, extending across the Pentland Firth to Orkney, west to Cape Wrath and Strathy Point, east to Duncansby Head, and inland to the peaks of Caithness including Morven, Maiden Pap and Scaraben.

LCCA 47 – Dunnet Head to St John’s Point



Plate 47 – Looking east from Dunnet Head

General Description

An open, generally east-west trending section of low rocky coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Northerly aspect, open expanse of sea to north.
- Offshore islands and skerries.
- Views of ferries and other shipping.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Generally linear with few large scale indentations.
- Majority of coastal edge formed by low cliffs or rough vegetated slopes typically around 10m high, with rocky wave-cut platform (*Taing*) below.
- Small scale sheltered coves and piers at Wester Haven and Scarfskerry.
- Geos common in section west of Scarfsferry Point.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Diverse range of Landscape Character Types: Small farms and crofts, Mixed agriculture and settlement, Open intensive farmland, Sweeping moorland.
- Castle of Mey estate and designed landscape.
- Prominent water bodies at St John’s Loch and Loch of Mey .
- Crofts and holiday homes.
- Frequent evidence of historic features – including chambered cairns, chapel, and broch.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- Minor road with frequent crofts and housing runs close to coastal edge.

Visual Assessment:

- Diverse, open sea views to east and west.
- Hinterland views over diverse land use types.
- Extensive seaward views west towards Dunnet Head and north towards Hoy.

LCCA 48 - St John's Point to Gills Bay



Plate 48 – looking south east

General Description

Short section of east-facing cliffed coastline extending from St John's Point to Gills Bay pier and ferry terminal.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Eastward aspect.
- Dominant open expanse of sea to north.
- Views of offshore islands.
- Views of ferries and other shipping.
- Tidal turbulence in Inner Sound.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Generally north-west to south-east trending coastline.

- Majority of coastal edge formed by low cliffs typically around 20m high, with rocky wave-cut platform below.
- Northern section near St John's Point more rugged with deeply indented geos, stacks, and higher cliffs up to 30m high.
- Small sheltered cove at Scotland's Haven.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Sweeping moorland dominant (minor area of Small farms and crofts at Gills Bay).
- Predominantly rough moorland grasses, gorse and heather.
- Ferry terminal and pier at Gills Bay.
- Evidence of historic features – remains of fort on St John's Point headland.

Wildness:

- Medium Relative Wildness.
- Footpath only access to St John's Point, other sections rough footpaths at best.
- Relatively high perceived naturalness of hinterland vegetation cover.

Visual Assessment:

- Expansive seaward views: including northwards across Inner Sound to Stroma and Orkney, west to Dunnet Head, and east to Duncansby Head.
- Hinterland views over perceived natural vegetation types to settled agriculture, roads.
- Main landmark and viewpoint at St John's Point headland, also good views east from A836 east of Mey Hill .

LCCA 49 - Gills Bay to Duncansby Head



Plate 49 – looking west along the cliffs

General Description

Linear, generally east-west trending section of open rocky coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Northerly aspect.
- Open to Pentland Firth/Inner Sound.
- Views to Stroma and Orkney.
- Shipping traffic.
- Tidal streams within Inner Sound clearly visible from shoreline.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Majority of coastal edge formed by low cliffs typically around 10m high, with rocky wave-cut platform below.
- Subsidiary headlands at Ness of Quoys, Ness of Huna, and Ness of Duncansby enclosing shallow embayments.
- Occasional stretches of sandy beach east of John O'Groats.
- Pier and settlement at John O'Groats, with ferry services to Orkney (seasonal only).

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Open intensive farmland, Mixed agriculture and settlement, Small farms and crofts.
- A836 coastal road John O Groat's to Thurso forms dominant linear feature immediately inland.
- Key landmarks include John O'Groats pier and settlement, the old Kirk at Canisbay, Huna House, and the old mill east of Huna.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- A well-settled and readily accessible stretch of coastline, but with visible evidence of strong natural tidal forces.
- Abandoned uninhabited offshore island (Stroma) creates sense of remoteness.

Visual Assessment:

- Striking seaward views across Inner Sound and Pentland Firth to Stroma, Orkney, and Pentland Skerries.
- Key overviews of this unit include from Warth Hill on A99 (from south), and Mey Hill on the A836 (from west).

LCCA 50 - Duncansby Head



Plate 50 – looking south to the Stacks of Duncansby

General Description

Dramatic headland with high rocky cliffs and sea stacks.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Pivotal location at north-eastern extremity of mainland Britain, where overall trend of coastline changes from north to east.
- Prominent Lighthouse.
- Seabird colonies.
- Open Views to Stroma, Orkney, and Pentland Skerries.
- Shipping traffic.
- Very exposed to wind and waves.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Old Red Sandstone cliffs rising to over 50m height.
- Coastline deeply indented by geos and gloups; arches and caves also common.
- Distinctively-shaped free-standing stacks immediately offshore.
- Includes Duncansby Head Special Landscape Area designated by The Highland Council.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Type: High cliffs and sheltered bays.
- Predominant landcover of rough unimproved grassland.
- Car park at Lighthouse.
- Clifftop footpath.

Wildness:

- Medium to High Relative wildness.
- Away from Duncansby Head car park and viewpoint this unit has a remote feel with no roads or footpaths, and few modern artefacts or structures.

Visual Assessment:

- Key viewpoints are Duncansby Head car park, trig point, and clifftop footpath leading southwards: these provide key views over cliffs and stacks with undeveloped open settings.
- Distant expansive views: eastwards to open sea, northwards to Orkney and Pentland Firth, and west along northern coastline.
- Dramatic foreground views provided by coastal landforms.

LCCA 51 - Duncansby Head to Skirza Head

Plate 51 – Skirza Head (© Copyright John MacKenzie and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence).

General Description

East facing section of cliffed coastline extending south from Stacks of Duncansby.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements**Maritime Influences:**

- Large-scale open expanse of sea to east.
- Skirza Head marks change in aspect from east to south at entrance to Freswick Bay.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Old Red Sandstone cliffs rising to over 70m height at Hill of Crogodale, descending to around 20-30m at Skirza Head.
- Generally linear cliffed coastline deeply indented by geos.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: High cliffs and sheltered bays, Sweeping moorland further inland.
- Landcover dominated by unimproved grassland and heather moorland.

Wildness:

- Medium to High Relative Wildness.
- Strong perceived naturalness of landcover, with few modern artefacts.
- Becoming more remote southwards, before influence minor road access from Skirza Head.

Visual Assessment:

- Distant expansive views eastwards to open sea, and inland across open moorland.
- Dramatic foreground views provided by coastal landforms.

LCCA 52 - Freswick Bay



Plate 52 – looking south over the bay towards Stroupster wind farm

General Description

Well-defined crescent-shaped embayment interrupting generally north-south trending linear coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Distant expansive views: eastwards to open sea.
- Relatively sheltered sea conditions although open to east.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Low cliffline at Skirza Head and Ness Head.
- Rocky wave-cut platform forms majority of coastline with small sandy beach and dune system at innermost section of bay.
- Small pier at Skirza.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Mixed agriculture and settlement, Small farms and crofts.
- Grassland and arable dominant landcover types.
- Minor road to Skirza on north side of bay.
- Burn of Freswick enters bay adjacent to ruined Freswick Castle.
- Freswick Mains and Freswick House also prominent on south side of bay.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- A well-settled and readily accessible stretch of coastline.

Visual Assessment:

- Well-defined bay restricts distant views.
- Dominance of coastal views across bay but agricultural hinterland, settlement and roads also prominent.

LCCA 53 - Ness Head to Sinclair's Bay



Plate 53 – looking south along the cliffs

General Description

Linear north-east/south-west trending rocky coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- South-easterly aspect.
- Dominant open expanse of sea to east.
- Distant views of shipping.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Sandstone cliffs and rocky wave-cut platforms form majority of coastal edge, with occasional coves, and geos.
- Height of cliffs gradually declines southwards from Ness Head.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Small farms and crofts.
- Grassland and arable dominant landcover types.
- A99 linking scattered small settlements.
- Frequent relatively new housing around Auckengill and Nybster, minor area of moorland on higher ground at Hill of Harley.
- Evidence of historical associations including ruined castle, dun, and broch.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.
- Well-settled and readily accessible stretch of coastline.

Visual Assessment:

- Dominance of open views but crofting hinterland, settlement and roads also prominent.
- Coastal views diverse including rugged coastline with frequent small scale variation.
- Key views over unit include from A99 at Hill of Harley.

LCCA 54 – Sinclair’s Bay



Plate 54 – Looking south along the bay

General Description

A large open bay with a fine sandy beach and extensive dune system.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Fairly open bay with easterly aspect.
- Distant shipping.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Soft deposition coast.
- Wide sandy beach at low tide.
- Extensive dune system.
- River mouth.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Beaches, Dunes, and Links, Open Intensive Farmland.
- Strong historical associations with clan Sinclair (although Castle Sinclair located outside this unit).
- Ackergill Tower forms focal point in central part of bay.
- Golf links on dune system (Wick Golf Club).
- River draining large wetland system / Loch of Wester.

Wildness:

- Low to Medium Relative Wildness.
- Relatively intact natural duneland/beach system.
- Remainder of unit accessible, settled, farmed, adjacent to A99.

Visual Assessment:

- Open sea views eastwards.

LCCA 55 – Sinclair’s Bay to Noss Head

Plate 55 –

General Description

A short section of rocky coastline in this unit falls within the study area boundary.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Rocky wave-cut platforms form majority of coastal edge, with occasional coves, and geos.
- Jetty at Ackergillshore.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Type: Open Intensive Farmland.
- Remains of medieval Castle Sinclair prominent.

Wildness:

- Low Relative Wildness.

Visual Assessment:

- Open views eastwards, and north across full extent of Sinclair’s Bay beach.