



In partnership with

horner + maclellan
landscape architects



SLVIA Baseline and Technical supporting document

BASELINE DESCRIPTION

Introduction

In this section the existing conditions of the landscape, seascape and visual resources of the study area are described to provide a basis against which changes can be assessed.

This stage includes:

A desk study to establish the existing conditions, including the seascape, landscape and visual resources of the study area, and initial mapping of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) for the Project components;

Field survey work, initially at strategic/reconnaissance level and later at detailed level, to verify the important seascape, landscape, and visual characteristics of the area highlighted by the desk study; and

Identification of key seascape, landscape, and visual receptors.

Seascape Baseline

Baseline seascape character will be described by reference to:

- Seascape Character Types: as already identified at national level, derived from SNH Commissioned Report No.103 (2005);
- Coastal Character Areas (CCAs): to be identified in accordance with the method in SNH Commissioned Report No.215 (2007), reflecting both a consistency in overall character at a broad scale or known geographical area; and
- Local Coastal Character Areas (LCCAs): to be identified in accordance with the method in SNH Commissioned Report No.215 (2007), by further subdivision of CCAs into areas of distinct coastal character, by examining coastal characteristics and issues which may include: maritime influences, character of the coastal edge and immediate hinterland, and experience of wildness.

The key seascape receptors (the components of the seascape that are likely to be affected by the proposal) will be identified from the above descriptions and will include:

- Overall seascape character and key characteristics;
- Particular coastal elements and features; and
- Specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities.

National Seascapes Character Types (NSCT)

Two national seascape character types apply to the study area (SNH Commissioned Report no 103).

The key physical characteristics of the Deposition Coasts of Islands NSCT are:

- Long sandy beaches backed by dunes and low lying machair or pastures and with crofting or farms set back from the coast.
- An open, low lying, largely treeless and windswept landscape with views of the Atlantic Ocean or North Sea, although dunes can often screen views of open sea and coast inland.
- Sparsely settled, low key land management and lack of coastal development.

This NSCT covers all of the coastline of the study area with the exception of the western coast of Hoy between Rand Wick and Torness where the NSCT is Remote High Cliffs. The key physical characteristics of this NSCT are:

- High cliffs, often over 200m tall, with occasional small sandy or stony bays at their base, contained by rocky headlands.
- Stacks, caves and collapsed cliffs are often features of this coastline.

- There is a strong contrast of line and form arising between the sheer verticality of cliffs and wide horizontal expanse of the sea.
- This type usually has a high moorland, or occasionally, mountainous, hinterland where semi-natural heathland is the dominant landcover.
- Settlement is generally absent although occasional small villages can be found tucked in bays and inlets or extensive crofting on tops within Highland areas.
- Light houses can be prominent features on headlands.
- This type has a remote, wild character due to the absence of roads and settlement.
- Where roads exist they are aligned parallel to the coast, for example, the North Sutherland coast.
- Access and views to the coast from the hinterland are restricted due to the cliffs.
- Wide elevated views are directed along the coast and out to open sea, although views of other islands are possible from parts of Orkney.
- Views of rigs or boats can be a focus within the maritime component of this type. The Northern quality of light often gives intense clarity in views.

Coastal Character Areas

For the purposes of the assessment Coastal Character Areas (CCAs) have been identified. These reflect both a consistency in overall character at a broad scale or known geographical area. In this instance, these are usually a stretch of coastline, a single island or group of small islands:

South East Hoy;

North Bay - Long Hope;

South Hoy/South Walls;

North West Hoy;

Cava, Rysa Little and Fara;

Flotta;

Switha;

Swona;

Stroma; and

Mainland.

Consistent with the method in SNH Commissioned Report No.215 (2007), the descriptions of Coastal Character Areas are limited to a very brief overview.

CCA1 - South East Hoy

Extending from Green Head to Crock Ness, this east facing coastal character area offers a varied and indented coastline, backed by moorland hills, of quiet, sheltered bays and relatively intensely developed hinterland with a network of roads, tracks, dwellings, ruins and a number of piers and associated infrastructure. The intertidal zone is relatively deep especially within the shallow bays, but punctuated by the hard edge of Lyness harbour. Existing finfish farms form visual elements within the water and extend the sense of industry from land to sea. This section of the coast is sheltered by Cava, Rysa Little, Fara and Flotta with occasional, framed glimpses beyond to more open waters and the distant mainland.

CCA2 - Cava, Rysa Little and Fara CCA

This area is characterised by a collection of three small, tear-drop shaped, isolated islands all of which are low lying with a domed profile and a blanket mosaic of moorland, rough grassland and pasture. Above the rocky coastline of low cliffs and small, shingle bays ruined houses stand out as prominent features often silhouetted on the skyline or highlighted

against the simple backdrop of moorland. Low cliffs, rock platforms and shingle shores characterise the relatively narrow intertidal zone.

CCA3 – Flotta

The island of Flotta is characterised by low settled pasture, interspersed by rough grassland and scattered dwellings. Low moorland and rough grassland border the coast to the west and to the north along Golta. Moorland and rough grassland also flank cliff tops to the east. The coastline is largely stepped with a rocky shoreline and stretches of sand and shingle at low tide. Cliffs and rock platforms on the exposed south east corner shelter shingle bays to the north and west. Man-made influences such as the oil terminal, gas flare and the wind turbine influence the character of this area and form visual features within the simple landscape and associated coastline. Views of adjacent shores to the east and west provide a degree of shelter, however the open exposure, heightened at Tween the Wicks and Stanger Head, emphasises the influence of the sea.

CCA4 - Switha

Switha forms a distinctive small island, isolated within strong tidal waters. It is simple in profile with a uniform cover of pasture and rough grassland. Pronounced cliffs form an atypical feature at The Ool, while the majority of the coastline comprises rock platforms and shingle bays. The influence of the sea is strong in relation to the scale of the island and is heightened by open sea/sky horizons to the south.

CCA5 - North Bay - Long Hope

The North Bay - Long Hope CCA includes North Bay and Long Hope and extends southeast to Cantick Head including Kirk Hope. The majority of this area is characterised by an enclosed area of coastline, with an outer sea loch and a shallower inner sea loch both of which have sections of wide bands of rocky, shingle and sandy shore within the intertidal zone. The coast is readily accessible by road with dispersed linear development including a concentration of settlement at the boundary between the two lochs. The coastline is largely rocky, but broken in places by shingle shores and sandy bays.

CCA6 – South Hoy

This CCA extends from just south of Rackwick to Point of Hackness to Tor Ness. It comprises the rocky, outcropping coast at Brimms and the southern and eastern coast of South Walls where there are frequent heads and geos. The coastline also includes small sandy bays at the Aith Hope and Kirk Hope.

CCA7 – West Hoy

This CCA extends from Tor Ness to Point of Hackness. The undulating coastline is characterised by high cliffs, caves, heads and geos with occasional waterfalls. The coast faces south west and looks over the Pentland Firth.

CCA8 – Swona

Swona is approximately 2 km long by about 0.8 km wide, with a maximum height of approximately 41 metres (135 ft). Situated in the tidal stream of the Pentland Firth, a tidal race is present at both the north and south ends of the island, being minimal briefly at the turn of the tide. Between the races is a calm eddy which extends down-tide as the tide strengthens. It is made up of Old Red Sandstone with cliffs on the east coast.

CCA9 – Stroma

Stroma lies some 3 km off the north coast of Mainland Scotland. It is mostly low-lying and flat, covering an area of around 375 hectares and rising to a height of 53 m at Cairn Hill in the southeast. It is oriented in a north-south direction

and measures about 3.2 km long by 1 mile (1.6 km) wide. The island is ringed by cliffs which vary in height from low cliffs with a narrow rocky foreshore to around 33 m on the west coast.

CCA10 – Mainland

The part of the mainland which lies within the study area is at St John's Head. Dunnet Head. This area is characterised by its stacks and rocky foreshore with folded sandstone cliffs.

Local Coastal Character Areas

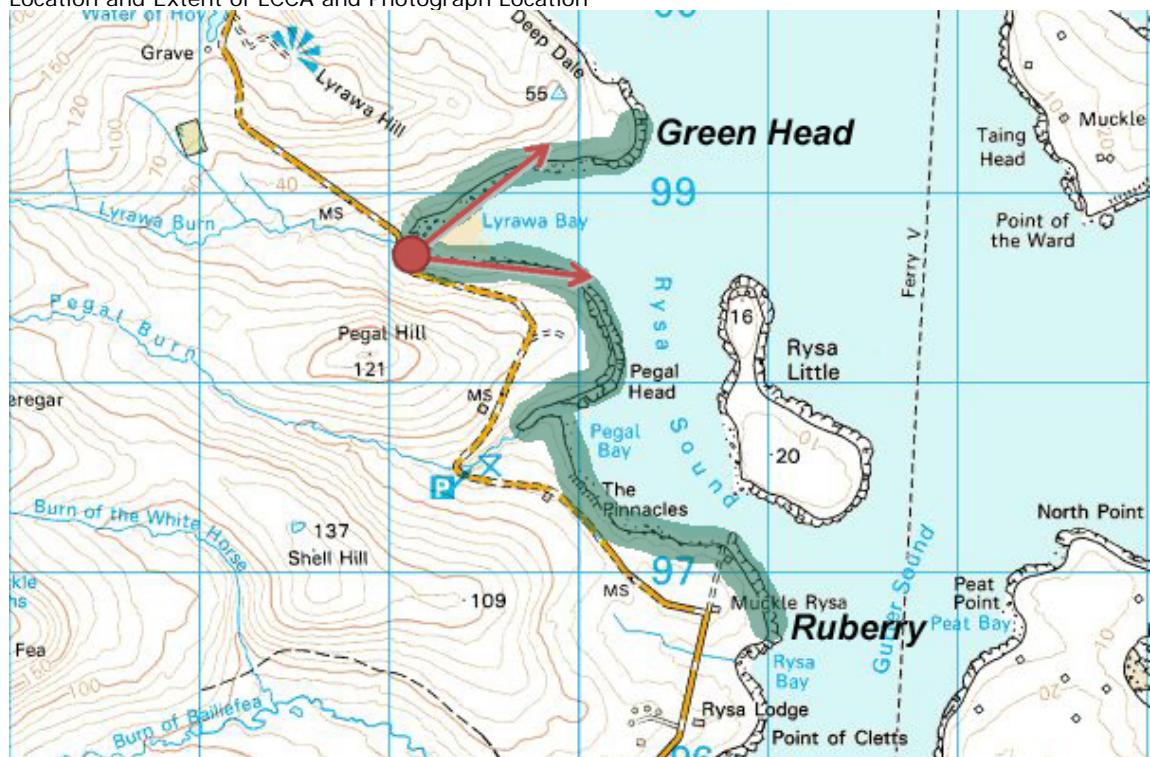
Seascape Character Areas were identified by applying the methodology set out in Guidance for Landscape/Seascape Capacity for Aquaculture (SNH, 2008). Under this methodology, the units are termed Local Coastal Character Areas, representing a more detailed breakdown of the "Seascape Character Types" identified in Scott et al (2005). The Local Coastal Character Areas are shown in Figure 03 and are described and illustrated below.

LCCA 1 - Green Head to Ruberry/Rysa Sound



Plate 1: Lyrawa Bay from the 9047- note finfish cages in the centre of the Bay.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

A small, semi enclosed, stretch of water off the east coast of Hoy, between the promontories of Green Head and Ruberry, with framed views out across Scapa Flow towards the Mainland Orkney and Burray.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Relatively deep flow of tidal water, animated by wind action, but generally calm, and shallow within bays.
- Small-scale boat traffic, including fish farm maintenance boats, and associated navigational aids.
- Existing fish farm activity occupies central locations in both bays and is generally seen from low level sections of the B9047.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Sense of semi-containment provided by the rising backdrop of moorland to the west on Hoy and Cava, Rysa Little and Fara to the east.
- Intricate coastline comprised of rugged low cliffs, rock platforms, rock and shingle shores and deeply indented bays and river mouth, separated by low cliffs and defined by a deep intertidal zone.
- Exposed band of rock provides a pale contrast between the dark moorland and seaweed tide line.
- Gently, convex landform of uniform wet heath and rough grassland slopes relatively evenly to the low lying coastline through which a steeply sided, wooded watercourse with an associated stone bridge cuts at Pegal Bay.
- High degree of exposure at more elevated parts of the coast contrasting with the sheltered character of the bays in close proximity with Rysa Little.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Simple moorland hinterland results vertical elements including a line of telegraph poles being prominent.
- 'Moorland Hills' giving way to, 'Inclined Coastal Pastures' in the south.

Wildness:

- Access to the coast is by rough track or by boat or where the B9047 skirts the coastline.
- A number of isolated buildings lie close to road but settlement is generally sparse.
- Man-made influences include the B9047, access tracks, existing finfish farms and associated onshore infrastructure.

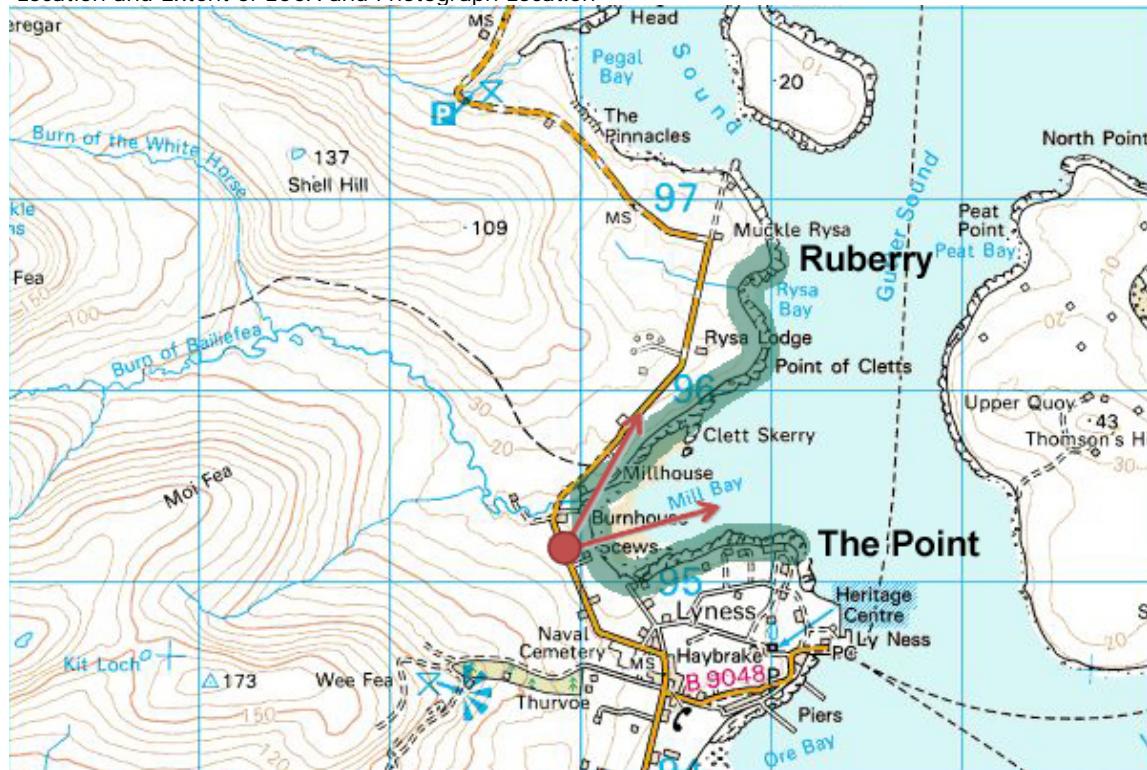
Visual Assessment:

- Channelled views to the north east along the length of the bays with panoramic views from areas of higher ground.
- Views are generally dominated by the low horizontal profile of the islands and mainland with sections of open sea.

LCCA 2 - Ruberry to the Point/Mill Bay


Plate 2: View of Mill Bay from the B904.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

A small, semi enclosed, stretch of water extending from Ruberry to The Point, with framed views out, either side of Fara, towards the mainland and Flotta.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Small, semi enclosed, stretch of water extending from Ruberry to The Point, with framed views out, either side of Fara, towards the mainland and Flotta.
- Relatively deep flow of tidal water, animated by wind action, and generally calm and shallow within bays.
- Small-scale boat traffic, including fish farm maintenance boats and the Houton to Lyness ferry, and associated navigational aids, creates a maritime influence.
- Existing fish farm activity, visible adjacent Fara, is generally seen from low level sections of the B9047 and associated settlement although more elevated locations offer almost 'bird's eye' views of the cages.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Sense of semi-containment and shelter is provided by the rising backdrop of moorland to the west on Hoy and Fara to east.
- Indented, generally east facing coastline is characterised by two bays of contrasting scale with the larger of two having very shallow waters and a deep intertidal zone.
- Rugged low cliffs, rock platforms, rock and shingle shores, sandy bays, points and small skerries, and an incising burn mouth.
- Exposed band of rock providing a pale contrast between the dark seaweed tide line and the rough grass/heath along the cliff edge.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Low lying, gently 'Inclined Coastal Pastures' and arable land, with patches of wet heath and grassland, forms the sheltered hinterland with scattered dwellings and farmsteads strung out along the roadside with associated wind shaped vegetation cover.

Wildness:

- Stonewalls, fence lines and telegraph poles provide vertical structure, scale and a sense of perspective.
- Access to the coast is by rough access track or boat or where the B9047 skirts the coastline.

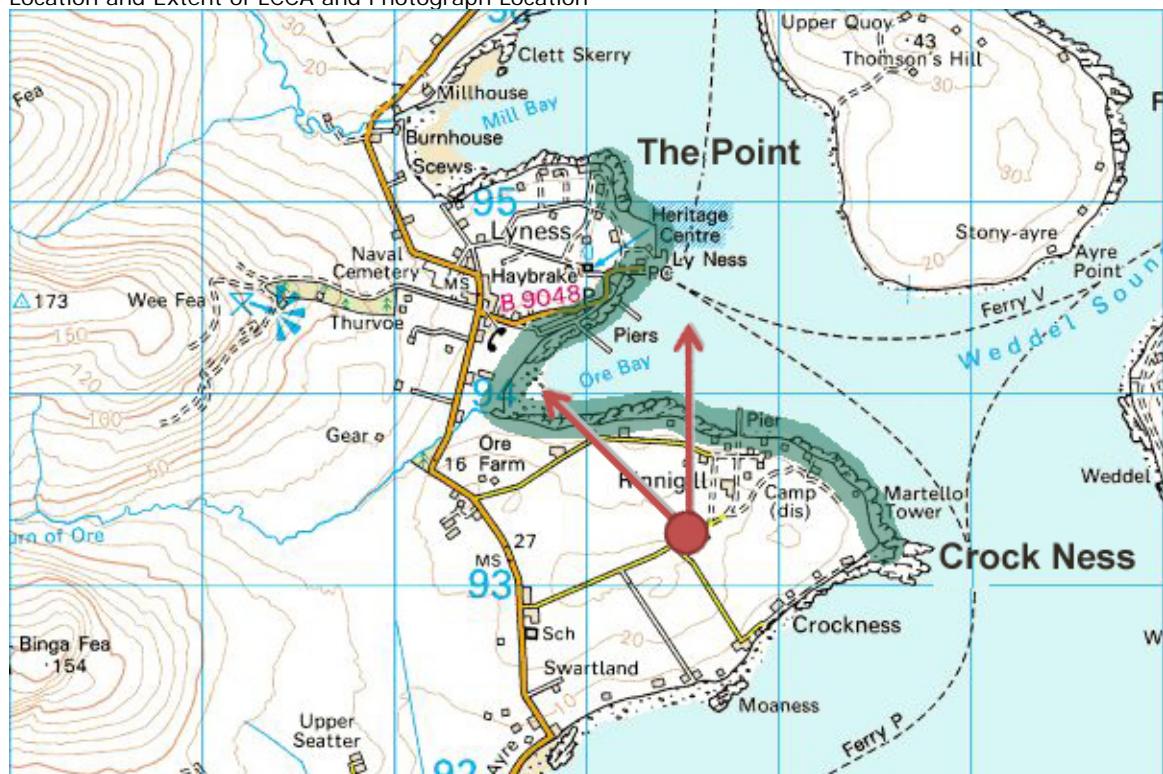
Visual Assessment:

- Views are dominated by the horizontal scale afforded by the expanse of Gutter Sound and the low lying profiles of the distant mainland and Fara to east.

LCCA 3 - The Point to Crock Ness/Ore Bay


Plate 3: Looking over Ore Bay to Lyness.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

A small, semi enclosed, stretch of water extending from The Point to Crock Ness, focused around Ore Bay with framed views along Gutter Sound to Bring Deep and towards Flotta, Switha and South Ronaldsay.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The relatively deep flow of tidal water, animated by wind action, is generally calm especially within bays where deep intertidal zones are blanketed with seaweed.
- Frequent boat and ferry traffic and associated navigational aids create a strong maritime character.
- Existing fish farm activity, visible within Ore Bay, is generally seen from low level.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Sense of semi-containment and shelter provided by the rising backdrop of moorland to west on Hoy and Fara and Flotta to east.
- The indented, generally east facing coastline comprises low cliffs, deep rock platforms especially at Crock Ness, rock and shingle shores, sandy bays, and hard man made edge and elements including Lyness harbour and numerous piers.
- Low lying rough grass and pasture land, scattered with dwellings, farmsteads, harbour buildings and infrastructure, light industrial sheds and building conversions, and World War structures and ruins including a disused wartime camp site, creates a diverse hinterland backed by moorland hills and some blocks of forestry.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- 'Inclined Coastal Pastures' overlaid with a complex arrangement of man-made elements and structures of the surrounding hinterland. There are some focal features of interest including a Martello Tower and several pieces of sculpture formed from recycled/reclaimed materials.

Wildness:

- Access to the coast is by rough access track, by boat or from pier/harbour locations.

Visual Assessment:

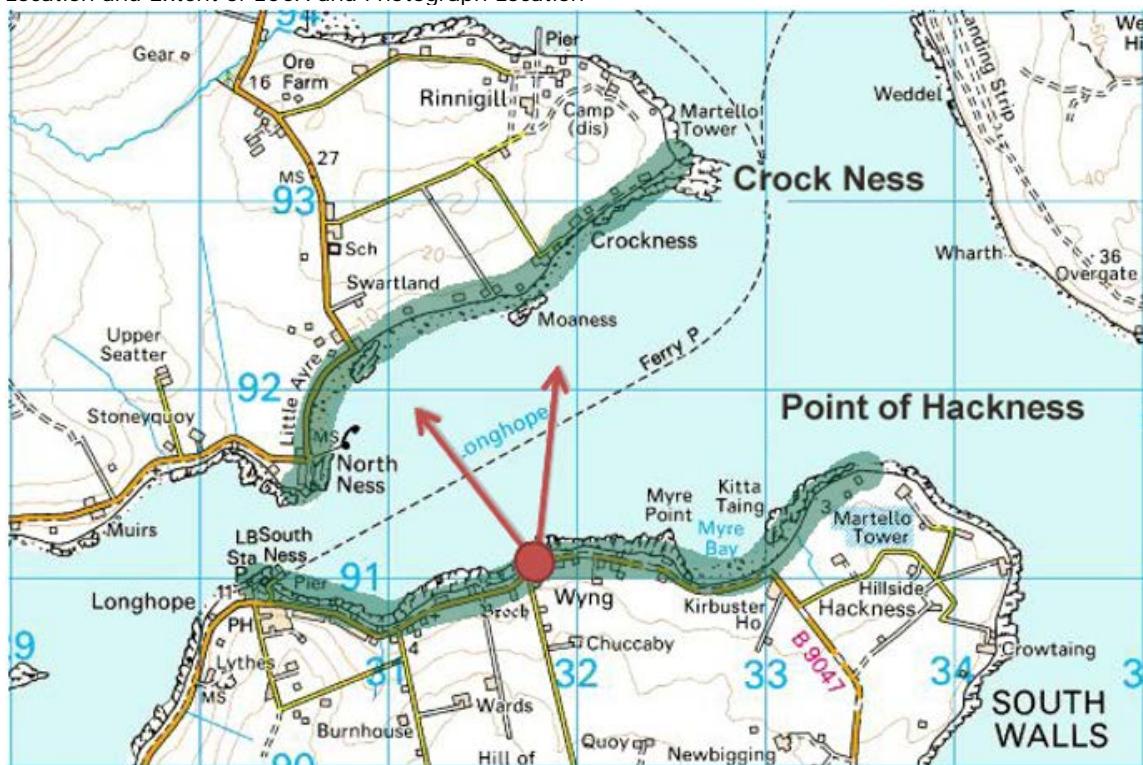
- Views are predominantly focused on the complex pattern of man made elements and industry, particularly within Lyness itself, and the frequent passage of boat traffic.

LCCA 4 – Crock Ness to North Ness and South Ness to Point of Hackness /Longhope



Plate 4: Looking north over Longhope.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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.

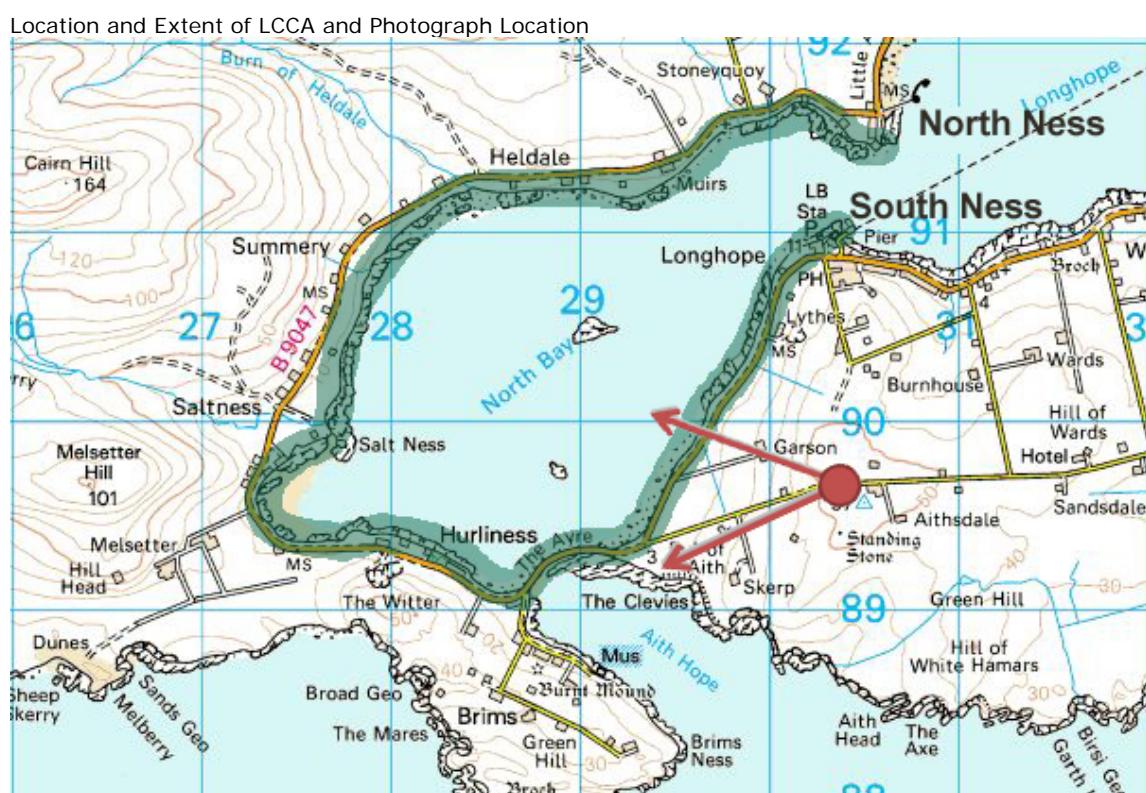
Visual Assessment:

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

LCCA 5 - North Ness to South Ness/ North Bay



Plate 5: 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 Longhope 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.

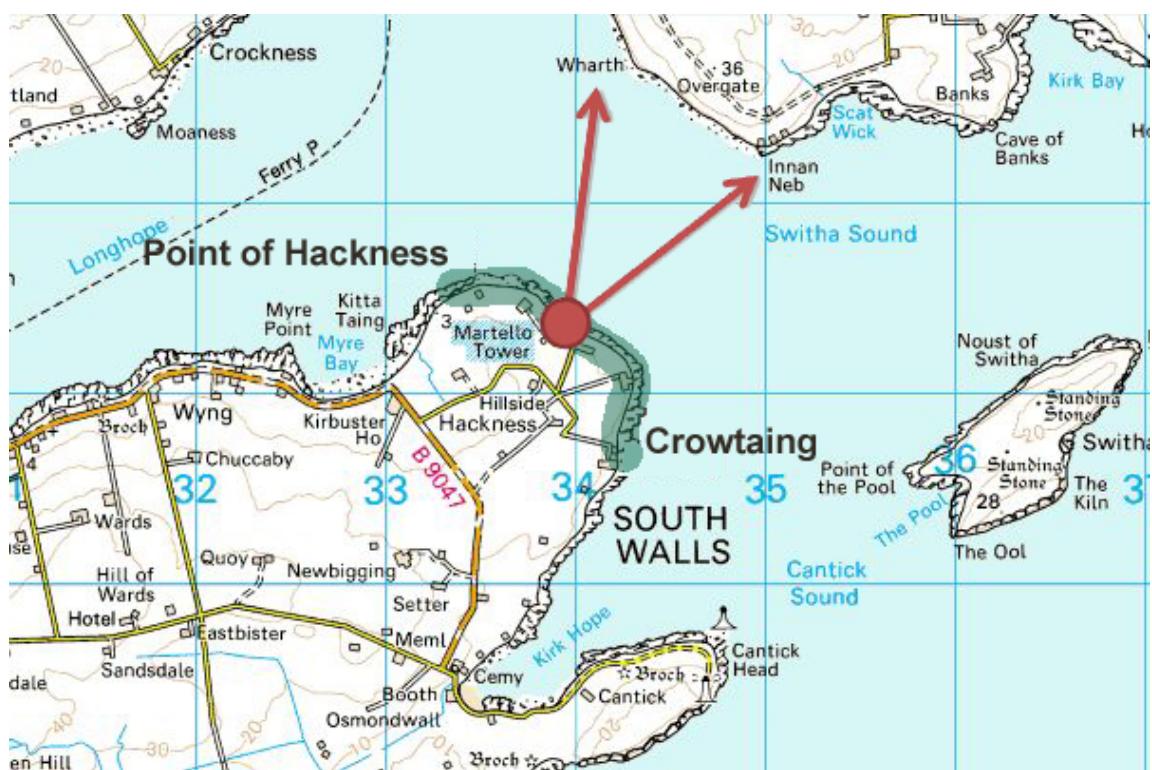
Visual Assessment:

- Framed views north to Longhope 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 6 - Point of Hackness to Crowtaing/Switha Sound


Plate 6: Looking north from the Martello Tower on Flotta.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This small, semi enclosed, stretch of water experiences expansive views northwest across eastern extents of Longhope 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.

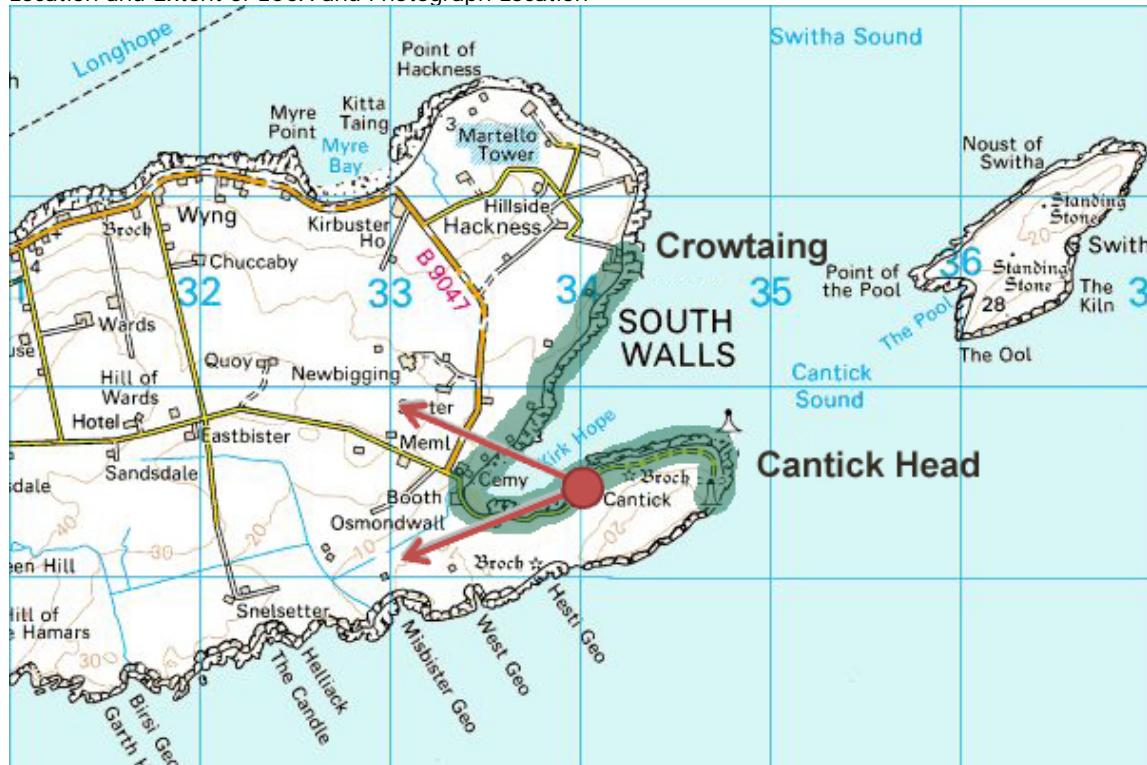
Visual Assessment:

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

LCCA 7 – Crowtaing to Cantick Head/Kirk Hope


Plate 7: Looking west along Kirk Hope.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 of this 'Whaleback Island Landscape'.
- Topography is emphasised or broken by stone walls 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.

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 8 – Cantick Head – Aith Head/Pentland Firth


Plate 8: Looking west along the coast near Birsay Geo.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 – Styromness 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 Margaret's Hope ferry 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, heads, 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.
- 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.

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 9 – Aith Head to Brims Ness/Aith Hope


Plate 9: 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).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 area is inextricably linked with the Longhope disaster when the Lifeboat, the TGB, was launched from Aith Hope in an effort to rescue a vessel which had been driven aground off South Ronaldsay: all eight crew members were drowned.
- The former lifeboat station on the southern shore is now a 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 head of the Hope, a wide sweeping sandy beach and the B9847 separate it 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 (Hoy)

Wildness

- The area is relatively well settled with a network of minor roads which provide access close the southern shore.

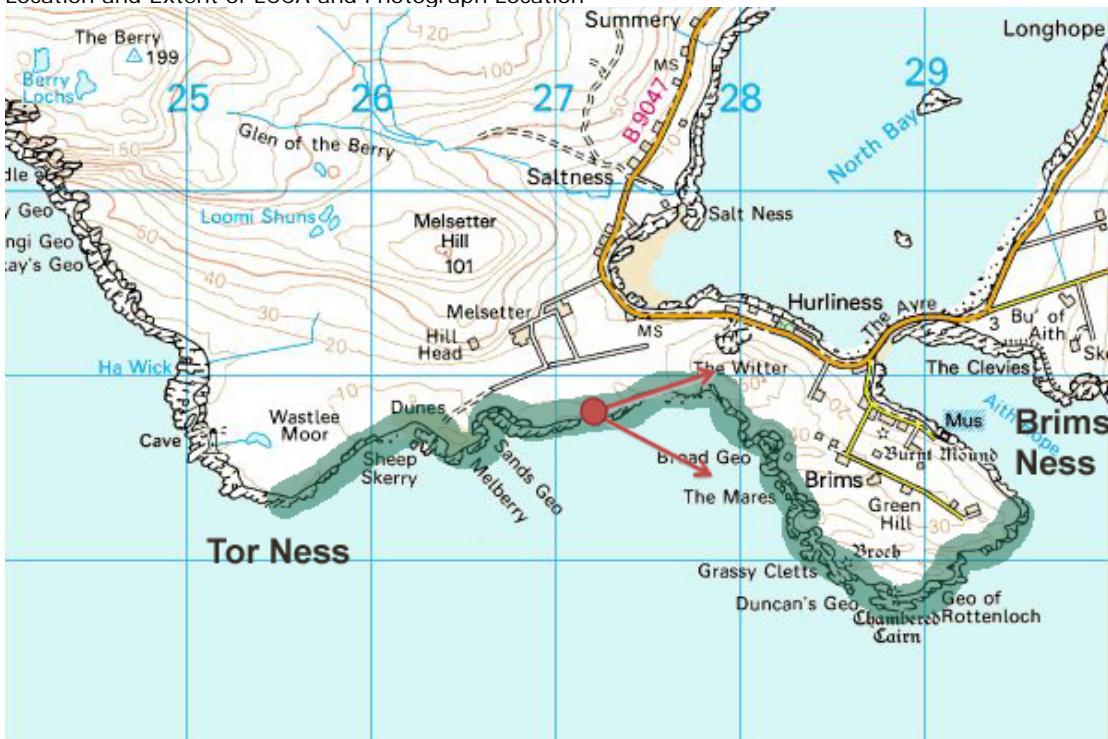
Visual Assessment

- 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 10 – Brims Ness to Tor Ness/Pentland Firth


Plate 10: Looking east towards Broad Geo. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This section of coast is the southernmost part of the Hoy coastline and its higher, south eastern cliffs project slightly into the Pentland Firth while the more gentle cliffs to the west are indented and have enjoy a degree of shelter.

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:

- Contrasts of sheltered, often sandy, bays with shallow waters and exposed cliffs with offlying skerries and deeper waters.
- Intricate coastline within the broad bay with rugged cliffs, rock shingle and sandy shores.
- 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 Brimms and tracks at Melsetter House.

Visual Assessment:

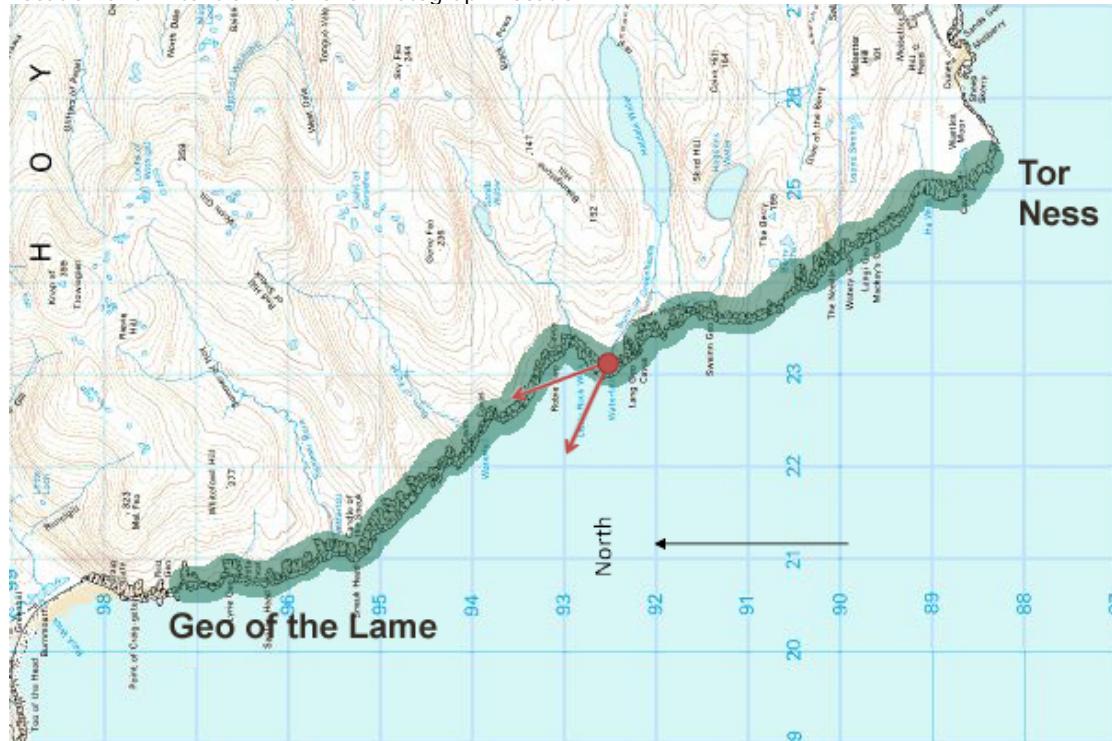
- Some visual containment within the sheltered bays contrasting with open views from headlands and clifftops.
- Views along the coast with bays and geos being revealed in successive views.
- Visibility of the mainland is very much weather dependant – at times detail on the Caithness cliffs can be made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

LCCA 11 – Tor Ness to Geo of the Lame/Pentland Firth



Plate 11: Looking north west over Little Rackwick to Sneuk Head and Bora Head. (Copyright Roger McLachlan and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

A striking coastline of high, vertical cliffs extending from just south of the sandy bay at Rackwick 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 Rackwick 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.

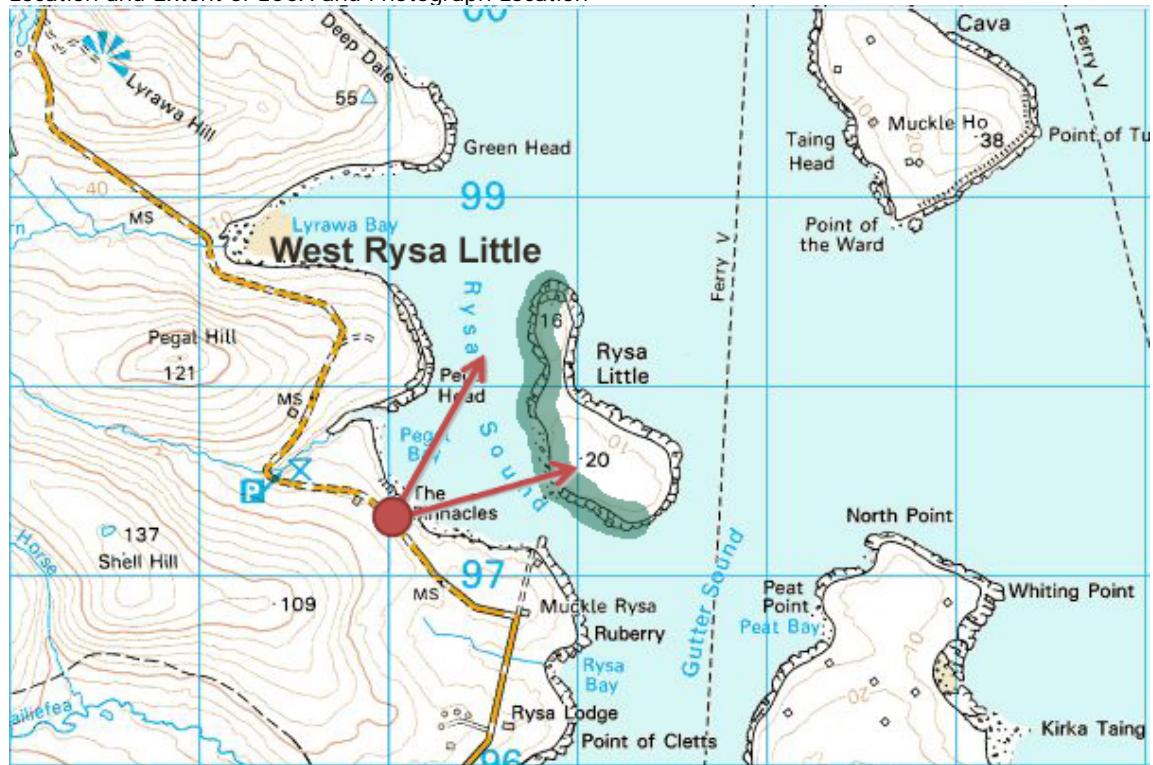
Visual Assessment:

- 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 12 - West Rysa Little/Rysa Sound


Plate12. Looking over Rysa Sound from the Pinnacles.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This small, semi enclosed stretch of water between Rysa Little and Hoy, is known as Rysa Sound. The low lying coastline and hinterland is overlooked by the moorland hills on Hoy with views west over Scapa Flow to Cava, Fara and Flotta, with the mainland and Burray beyond.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Narrow flow of tidal water animated by wind action which is seldom completely calm.
- Some small-scale boat traffic and views of associated navigational aids create a maritime influence including existing finfish farm activity within close proximity.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The coastline has a strong visual relationship with the coastline of Hoy and shares a small area of intertidal zone.
- Largely consistent, west facing, and comprises low cliff, rock platforms, stretches of shingle shore and a relatively deep intertidal zone defined by dark seaweed.
- The simple sea, land, sky composition creates a dominant horizontal dynamic.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The hinterland is characterised by generally flat moorland and rough grassland with a smooth profile and little feature.
- Landscape Character Types: Holms.

Wildness:

- There is no apparent evidence of settlement or man-made influences thus emphasising the sense of remoteness.
- Access to the coast is limited solely by boat.

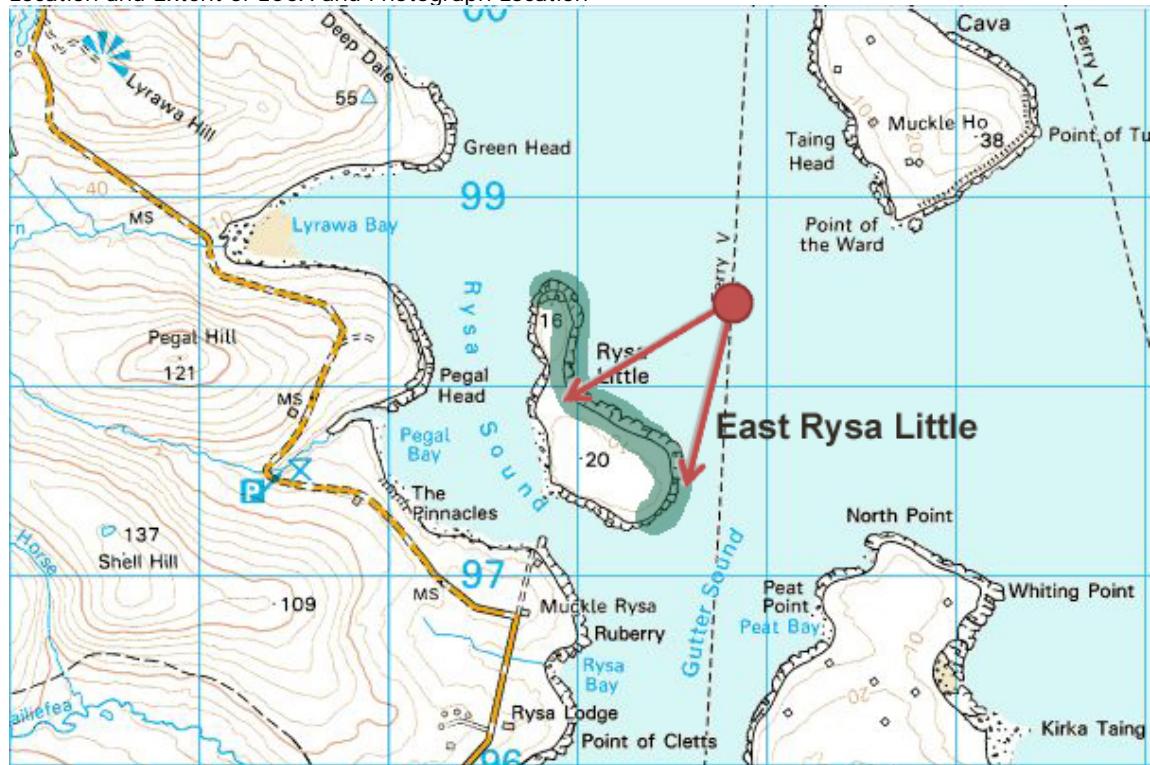
Visual Assessment:

- Views are primarily focused on the imposing moorland hills.
- There are framed views northwest towards the mainland and southeast towards Gutter Sound with Fara beyond.

LCCA13 - East Rysa Little/Gutter Sound


Plate 13 Looking towards Rysa Little from the Ferry.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This large, semi enclosed stretch of water from Bring Deep to Gutter Sound has views directly towards Cava, framed views northwest towards Graemsay between Hoy and mainland, and southeast towards Fara with Flotta beyond.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The low lying coastline and hinterland is backed by the hills on Hoy and fronted by a significant extent of open tidal water.
- Water is animated by wind action and seldom completely calm.
- Some small-scale boat traffic and views of associated navigational aids create a maritime influence.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The largely consistent, east facing, coastal edge is comprised of low cliff, rock platforms and a narrow intertidal zone defined by a dark seaweed tide line.
- The area has a strong horizontal dynamic formed by the simple arrangement of sea, land and sky.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The simple hinterland is characterised by generally flat moorland and rough grassland with a smooth profile and little distinction.
- Landscape character type: Holms.

Wildness:

- There is no apparent evidence of settlement or man-made influences which emphasises the overall sense of remoteness and exposure to the sea.
- Access to the coast is limited solely by boat.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are focused on the open expanse of Scapa Flow framed between Cava and Fara to the east.

LCCA 14 West Fara/Gutter Sound


Plate14 Looking towards Fara with aquaculture cages in the mid ground.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This small, semi enclosed stretch of water from Gutter Sound to Weddel Sound experiences framed views north to Rysa Little and south to South Walls and Switha.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Significant extent of tidal flow animated by wind action which is seldom completely calm.
- The frequent passage of boat and ferry traffic, with views of associated navigational aids, creates a maritime influence.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The low lying coastline is overlooked by moorland hills on Hoy to the west and has a strong visual relationship with the coastline at Lyness.
- The indented west facing, coastal edge is characterised by low cliffs, narrow rock platforms, stretches of rock and shingle, and narrow intertidal zone defined by a dark seaweed tide line.
- The area has a dominant horizontal dynamic due to the simple arrangement of sea, land and sky.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The simple hinterland is formed from gently sloping and undulating moorland and rough grassland with a smooth, featureless profile except for a few dykes and incising burns.
- Landscape Character Types: Whaleback Islands Landscapes

Wildness:

- A few scattered ruins and abandoned buildings form visual features within the monotonous land cover and emphasise the remote character of the island. There is some evidence of field patterns and access tracks with existing sheep grazing.
- Access to the coast is limited solely by boat.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are dominated by the diverse man-made coast and hinterland at Lyness including existing finfish farms in the waters between.

LCCA 15 – East Fara/Scapa Flow



Plate 15: Looking towards the east coast of Fara from the ferry.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

A significant, semi enclosed expanse of tidal water animated by wind action and framed between Flotta, Cava and the mainland with distant views towards Burray.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The frequent passage of boat and ferry traffic with views of associated navigational aids, including the Barrel of Butter.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The low lying island is backed by the moorland hills on Hoy. It experiences open views west over Scapa Flow and has a strong visual relationship with the coastline of Flotta.
- The area has a strong horizontal dynamic formed by the simple arrangement of sea, land and sky.
- The indented east facing, coastal edge is comprised of sloping rock platforms, points, stretches of shingle, and a relatively deep intertidal zone defined by a dark seaweed tide line.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The simple island hinterland is characterised by gently sloping moorland and rough grassland with a smooth profile and little distinction except for a few dykes.
- Landscape Character Types: Whaleback Islands Landscapes.

Wildness:

- There are a number of scattered ruins and abandoned buildings forming visual features within the monotonous land cover and emphasising the remote character of the island and its exposure to the sea. There is also some evidence of field patterns and access tracks with existing sheep grazing.
- Access to the coast is limited solely by boat.

Visual Assessment:

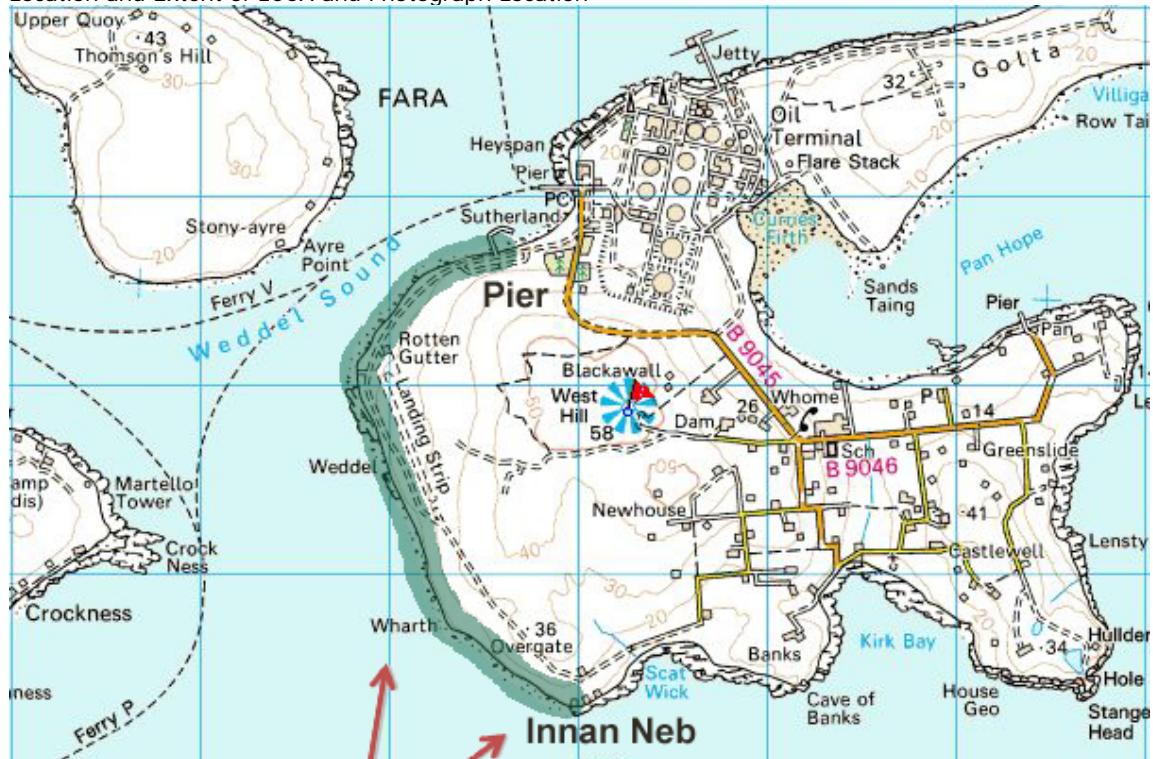
- Views are largely focused on the Flotta oil terminal and the passage of tankers or out across the open expanse of Scapa Flow.

LCCA 16 - Innan Neb to the pier/ Switha Sound/Weddel Sound



Plate16: Looking towards Flotta from Martello Tower.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This area is characterised by a long, semi enclosed stretch of water from Switha Sound to Weddel Sound with framed views southwest along Longhope, southeast towards Switha, northwest towards Lyness, and north across Scapa Flow towards the mainland alongside Fara and Cava.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- The significant extent of tidal flow is animated by wind action and seldom completely calm.
- The frequent close passage of boat and ferry traffic approaching and leaving Lyness and Flotta, with views of associated navigational aids, creates a maritime influence.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The relatively consistent west facing, coastal edge is comprised of cliffs, some narrow rock platforms, long stretches of rock and shingle, and a narrow intertidal zone defined by a dark seaweed tide line.
- A simple sea, land, sky composition with a dominant horizontal dynamic is broken only by vertical cliffs which as a result form a visual feature.

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 Types: Low Moorland.

Wildness:

- There is an absence of settlement and a sense of exposure within the open moorland and along the coastline which is emphasised by onshore winds.
- 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 West Hill.

LCCA 17 - The jetty to Tween the Wicks/Scapa Flow/Calf Sound



Plate 17 – Looking towards Flotta over Calf Sound from Calf of Flotta. (Copyright George Brown and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence2008).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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.

Visual Assessment:

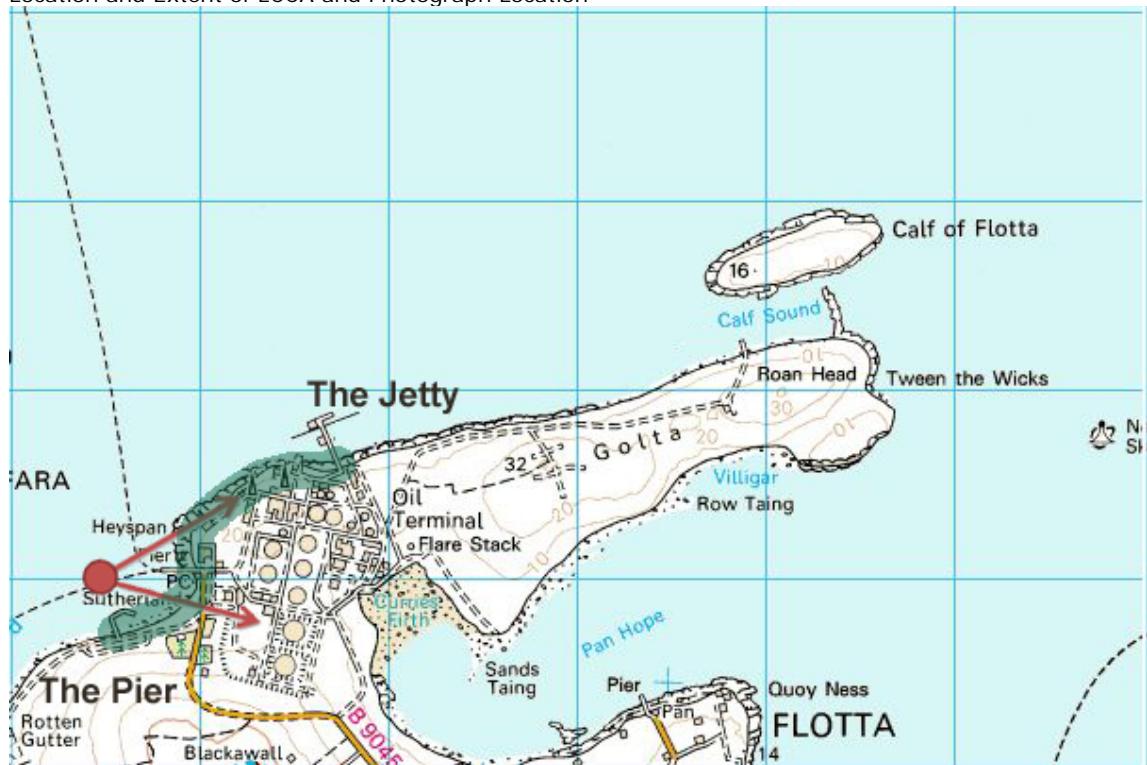
- Views are predominantly focused on the Flotta oil terminal and the passage of tankers or out across the expanse of Scapa Flow.

LCCA 18 - The pier to the jetty/Weddel Sound



Plate18: View towards Heyspan Pierr and Flotta oil terminal from the ferry. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence2010).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 Types: Urban and Rural Development.

Wildness:

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

Visual Assessment:

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

LCCA 19 - Tween the Wicks to Quoy Ness/Pan Hope


Plate19: View over Pan Ness to Golta. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.2010).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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:

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 stone walls and fence lines.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Landscape Character Types: Low Island Pastures.

Wildness:

- Clusters of settlement, scattered dwellings and farmsteads frequent the southern hinterland and along the 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.

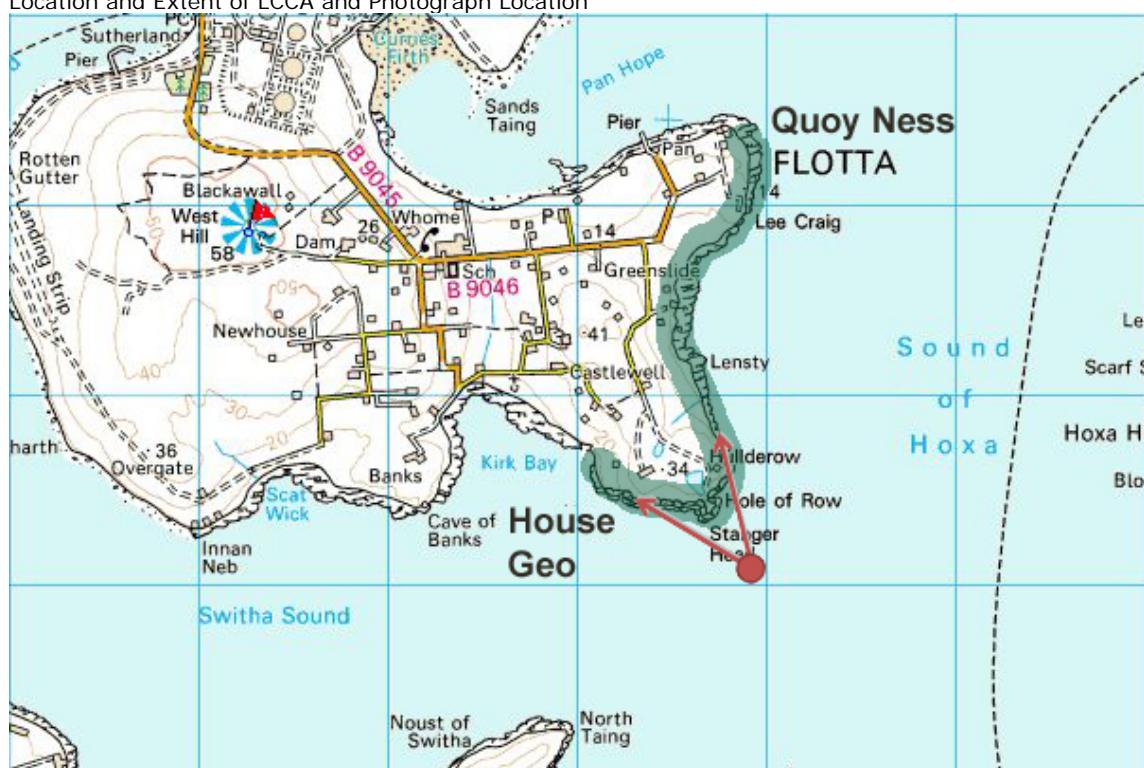
Visual Assessment:

- 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 20 - Quoy Ness to House Geo/Sound of Hoxa


Plate 20: View towards Stanger Head from the sea. (Copyright Des Colhoun and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.2007).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 Types: 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.

Visual Assessment:

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

LCCA 21 - House Geo to Innan Neb/Switha Sound


Plate 21: Looking across Kirk Bay from east to west. (Copyright Calum McRoberts and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.2010).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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:

- Stone walls 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 the 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.

Visual Assessment:

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

LCCA 22 – North Switha/Cantick Sound/Switha Sound


Plate 22: Looking towards Switha from Cantick Head.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

The isolated, small scale island is dominated by the vast seascape but maintains a strong visual relationship with both Flotta and South Walls.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- This large, semi enclosed expanse of strong, tidal water, animated by tidal races, is framed between Flotta and South Walls with views towards Hoy.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- The relatively consistent, west facing, coastal edge is comprised of low cliffs, sloping rock platforms and a shingle bay, is highlighted by breaking waves and defined at the southwest by a dynamic cliff face known as The Ool.
- The composition of sea, land and sky is largely horizontal with a predominance of sea and sky.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The simple hinterland is characterised by gently sloping rough grassland and patches of heath with a smooth profile and little distinction except for small waterbodies and incising watercourses.
- Landscape Character Types: Holms.

Wildness

- There is no apparent evidence of settlement thus emphasising the island's remote character. Standing stones and cairns suggest man's primitive influence.
- Access to the coast is limited solely by boat.

Visual Assessment:

- Views are focused on the cliffscapes of Flotta and South Walls and channelled towards the backdrop of Hoy.

LCCA 23 - South Switha/Pentland Firth


Plate 23: View to Switha from Hoxa Head.

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This large, open expanse of water, bordered by South Ronaldsay to the southeast, has expansive views of 'open sea' within the Pentland Firth and a backdrop of landmasses concluding with the hills on Hoy.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Significant extent of strong tidal water animated by wind action and tidal races, and is seldom calm.
- 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 isolated, small scale island dominated by the vast seascape.
- The island has a stepped, east facing, coastal edge comprised of both low and high, sheer cliffs, sloping rock platforms, skerries, caves, and a shingle bay, highlighted by breaking waves and defined at the southwest by the dynamic cliff face of The Ool.

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- The simple hinterland is characterised by gently sloping rough grassland and patches of heath with a smooth profile and little distinction except for small waterbodies.
- Landscape Character Types: Holms.

Wildness

- There is no apparent evidence of settlement thus emphasising remote character of the island.
- Standing stones and cairns mark man's primitive influence.
- Access to the coast is limited solely by boat.

Visual Assessment:

- The island forms part of a dominant horizontal seascape when viewed at distance.
- Views are predominantly focused south towards 'open sea'.

LCCA 24 – West Swona/Pentland Firth



Plate 24: Looking east towards Swona and ruined buildings. (1216641_bab40cc2 Copyright Ian Balcombe and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

The western and southern coastline of Swona extending from Sooth 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 into Old Red Sandstone bedding planes.
- 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 (41 m 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.
- Lighthouses at the north and south tips.
- Feral cattle left behind when the last residents left.

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 25 – East Swona/Pentland Firth


Plate25: Looking west towards the cliffs and caves on north east Swona. (Copyright Ian Balcombe and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2009).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 (41 m AOD) rough grassland with semi improved pasture in the north and south dotted with ruinous buildings structures.
- Inland Loch and small lochans.
- Landscape Charcter 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.
- Feral cattle left behind when the last residents left.

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.

LCCA 25 – West Stroma/Pentland Firth


Plate 25 Looking north along the coast. (Copyright Mo and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2008).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 Glop.
- A generally gently indented coastline with small, shallow bays, caves, geos and small promontories.
- A deeply incised narrow northeast to southwest tending inlet lies to the north of Mell Head while the subterranean passage at The Glop lies to the west of Netherton.
- 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.
- Lighthouses.
- Inaccessible except by boat.

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 26 – East Stroma/Inner Sound


Plate 26: Looking towards Mains of Stroma. (Copyright Mo and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence 2008).

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



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 southwest.

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 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.
- Pier and harbour.
- Inaccessible except by boat.

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 27 St John's Point


Plate 27: View of the old harbour looking towards Stroma (© Copyright Mo and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.)

Location and Extent of LCCA and Photograph Location



General Description

This headland has excellent views across to Orkney and numerous stacks on the mainland coastline.

Key Landscape and Visual Elements

Maritime Influences:

- Old harbour – ‘the Bocht’.
- Waves crashing over the ‘Men of Mey’.
- Sea birds.

Character of Coastal Edge:

- Steep cliffs of distinctive, folded sandstone.
- Rock foreshore.
- Distinctive landform features include the old harbour, the ‘Men of Mey’ .

Character of Immediate Hinterland:

- Inland agricultural grassland extends over gently sloping land to the top of the cliffs.
- Scattered settlement, minor roads and tracks with close relationship with the Pentland Firth.

Wildness

- The immediate hinterland is easily accessible via the minor roads at East Mey.
- The point is accessible via a track.
- Overlooked by scattered settlement.
- Historic landuses – fort and harbour.

Visual Assessment:

- Views to the sheer cliffs are enlivened by the changing light and weather conditions, the waves crashing over the ‘Men of Mey’ and the sea birds.
- In clear conditions expansive views are obtained, extending across the sea to Stroma and Orkney.

Landscape Baseline

Settlement pattern

Settlement on Hoy is dispersed along the road network on the south east coast of Hoy with concentrations of houses at Lyness, Longhope and Brims.

Communications and infrastructure

The B9047, which hugs the lower lying ground near the coast, is the main road extending along the eastern coast of Hoy around North Bay and Longhope to Kirk Hope on South Walls. The Houton Ferry berths overnight at Longhope and makes regular crossings from Lyness via Flotta to the Orkney Mainland. The Gills Bay – St Margaret's Hope ferry service runs through the eastern portion of the study area – normally passing to the east of Stroma and Swona but sometimes to the west.

Project site

The site is located some 1km off the southern coast of Hoy between just west of Tor Ness and east of Aith Hope. There are three proposed alternative cable corridors:

- From the western portion of the development site in to Sheep Skerry;
- From the mid-western portion of the development site in to the shore between Sands Geo and Broad Geo; and
- From the mid-eastern portion of the development site in to The Ayre through Aith Hope.

Forces for change

Forces for change are those that are currently affecting the character of the landscape resource and which may, consequently, affect the perception of the Project in the future.

- Industry - Any future local industrial development, outwith this proposal, is likely to be limited to the Lyness and Longhope harbour areas. Future renewables development may impact on the wider landscape and seascape;
- Tourism – Hoy is a nationally known tourist / visitor destination but it is unlikely that tourism development would be anything other than low key.
- Agriculture - Agriculture within the region will continue to be influenced by the provision of subsidies and grants through Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other funding mechanisms. It is not clear how current or future changes in subsidies or agricultural policy will affect the local landscape but historically such changes as far as they affect the landscape, are likely to be minor; and,
- Housing and settlement – Numerous initiatives and development programmes – including tourism and renewables development – are in place to sustain the local economy and population. It is not envisaged that there will be any significant housing development within the study area with any settlement development comprising single house renewals or additions.

Landscape Character Types

Landscape Character Types (LCTs) occurring within the Study Area are shown in Figure 04. The descriptions of key characteristics in Table LV.1 below reflect text within the Orkney landscape character assessment, selected and adapted to apply to the specific units of each type present within the study area, as distinct from the overall generic type, which may occur more widely throughout the Orkney Islands.

Table LV.1 – Description of Landscape Character Types

LCTs	Landform	Land use and Landscape Pattern	Man made elements
Holms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smooth, domed, oval shaped islands. Wave cut platforms and occasional low cliffs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rough grassland with heather. Grazed by sheep. Valuable sites for wildlife - seals and sea birds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remnants of former crofts or fishing stations. Cairns and tumuli. Beacons and wartime structures.
Whaleback Island Landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gentle, domed shaped islands. Undramatic coastline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pastures. Rough grass and heath land. Rock platforms and shingle beaches. Feeling of isolation and solitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stone wall enclosures. Scattered settlements. Roads, tracks. Abandoned crofts and small farms.
Low Island Pastures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low and flat with open and extensive views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large, regular fields. Machair. Links grasslands. Coastal dunes. Wetlands. Dominant skies and feeling of vulnerable exposure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prominent built features. Farm mounds, Treb-dykes, settlements and farmsteads. Mobile landscape.
Inclined Coastal Pastures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently sloping land down to the sea. Bay coastlines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pastures/ grassland. Rectilinear field patterns. Fields appear to drop away and merge with the sea giving clear views out to sea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clusters of small scale crofts. Less developed, geometric landscape of estate farms. Stone walls. Roads running parallel to coast. Occasional large houses and farms with tree frameworks. Rich coastal archaeology - brochs and coastal defences from WWII.

LCTs	Landform	Land use and Landscape Pattern	Man made elements
Cliff Landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eroding coastal features – cliffs, stacks, caves, and arches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rough grassland up to cliff edge. Montane and peatland . Wildlife interest of salt tolerant flora. Sea bird colonies. 	
Low Moorland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low moorland often isolated from higher moorland hills. Low undulating hill areas or convex headlands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Un-enclosed heather moorland. Maritime heath at the coast. Abundance of sea birds. Little grazing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal cairns and brochs. Peat cutting.
Moorland Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undulating hill land – steep to gentle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peat and heather moorland mostly un-enclosed. Montane species at higher altitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few isolated farmsteads and tracks Small fenced grazings. Active and redundant peat cutting sites. Occasional hill dykes and signs of sub-peat archaeological farmsteads and field systems. Bronze age barrows on skyline. Vertical structures – telecommunications, hydro poles and wind power generation are an obvious human influence.
Urban and Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often situated within shallow basins and sheltered bays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined by its urban or industrial land use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main settlements and villages. Harbours. Structures often visible from considerable distances.

LCTs	Landform	Land use and Landscape Pattern	Man made elements
Open Intensive Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide plain of simple ordered landscape. Open and flat or gently undulating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme exposure and extensive visibility. Smooth, open sky above agricultural land. Ordered pattern of fields. Shelterbelts and hedgerows. Wetlands and lochs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads and access tracks. Fence lines and dykes. Buildings. Historic features. People and machinery. Large commercial farms. Estate properties.
Sweeping Moorland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide open and flat landscape. Gently sloping or undulating landforms eroded by watercourses to form shallow glens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predominantly grouse and upland species, lacking in distinctive features. Influenced by weather and light conditions. Punctuated by watercourses - lochs, juvenile streams, and mature, meandering rivers. Peatland, coarse, damp and mossy vegetation cover. Ribbons of broadleaf woodland. Coniferous plantations. Pockets of improved grazing land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruined buildings. Field boundaries and drainage channels. Small settlements. Estates. Roads, rail, vehicle tracks and wheel markings. Power lines. Peat cuttings and hagging. Grouse management.

<i>LCTs</i>	<i>Landform</i>	<i>Land use and Landscape Pattern</i>	<i>Man made elements</i>
Small Farms and Crofts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable. • Moorland or coastal areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open moorland. • Fragments of broadleaf woodland. • Woodlots. • Single trees. • Cultivated fields and grazing land. • Grassland. • Coastal areas/harbours. • Open space and dominance of sky. • Rough grassland. • Grazing land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordered crofts. • Open and fairly rich, small farms. • New 'kit' housing/holiday homes. • Ruined properties. • Roads and access tracks. • Fences, walls. • Power lines. • Machinery. • Local facilities. • Sparse habitation. • Croft ruins. • Ancient structures.

Landscape Designations

National Scenic Area

Recent legislation defines a National Scenic Area (NSA) as an area "of outstanding scenic value in a national context" and as such will have at least a high sensitivity to change.

The Hoy and West Mainland NSA covers the westernmost 1.33% of the study area.

The citation for the NSA is reproduced later in the SLVIA Technical supporting document and the Special Qualities of relevance to the study area are:

- A palimpsest of geology, topography, archaeology and land use;
- The spectacular coastal scenery;
- Sandstone and flagstone as an essence of Orkney;
- A long-settled and productive land and sea;
- The contrast between the fertile farmland and the unimproved moorland;
- A landscape of contrasting curves and lines;
- Land and water in constantly changing combinations under the open sky; and
- The high hills of Hoy;

Gardens and Designed Landscapes

These are gardens and landscapes listed in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland, first compiled and published in 1987. Sites listed in the Inventory are not statutorily designated but are considered to be a national consultation issue under planning legislation.

Melsetter House is the only GDL occurring within the study area. Its location and extent are shown on Figure 06. Its reason for inclusion is as follows:

- An early 20th-century Arts and Crafts style garden and landscape which forms the setting for a category A listed house and plays a very important role in the scenery of the Orkney Islands;
- It has been assessed as having outstanding importance;
- Architecturally – as it provides the setting for category A listed buildings and it the only complete example of WR Lethanby work in Scotland; and
- Scenically – due in particular to the house, boundary walls and woodlands.

It has been assessed as having high importance:

- As a work of art – the gardens in their present form;
- Historically – due to associations with the Moodie Family and WR Lethanby and William Morris; and
- In terms of nature conservation – due to the fact there is very little woodland cover on Hoy.

Wild Land Area

Wild Land can be described as extensive areas where the quality of wildness is best expressed¹.

Scotland's Third National Planning Framework, June 2014, states 'We also want to continue our strong protection for our wildest landscapes – wild land is a nationally important asset.'

In June 2014, SNH published a new map 'Wild Land Areas 2014' which identifies a total of 42 areas within Scotland. There is one Wild Land Area (WLA) which lies partly within the study area.

Wild Land Area 41 – Hoy is some 4990 Ha in extent. 3935Ha of this WLA lie within the western portion of the study area and occupies approximately 7.4% of the study area.

¹ SNH policy statement 'Wildness in Scotland's Countryside' 2002.

Relative Wildness

As there are no citations available for the WLA at present reference is made to the four SNH Relative Wildness Maps and the combined Relative Wildness Map'.

The areas of highest 'Perceived Naturalness' are located on the areas of higher ground at Cairn Hill, Binga Fea, Wee Fee and Knap of Trowieglen, and on the islands of Rysa Little, Fara, Flotta. The remainder of the study area is generally of a high perceived naturalness with the exception of those areas around Lyness, Brimms, South Walls, central Flotta and on Stroma where perceived naturalness has been identified as low.

Only the Hoy cliffs and southern coastline of Brims, South Walls and parts of the coast on Flotta, Swona and Stroma have been assessed as being of a high degree of 'Ruggedness'.

The most 'Remote' areas identified are the islands of Little Rysa, Fara, Switha, Swona and Stroma, and parts of the western cliffs of where there are no ferry links. The western interior of Hoy is classed as being of highly to moderately remote.

The areas of highest level of 'Lack of Built Modern Artefacts' are those areas of high ground in the western interior of Hoy.

The combination of the foregoing assessments results in a 'Relative Wildness Map' where the highest levels of wildness are the islands of Rysa Little and Fara, parts of the islands of Switha, Swona and Stroma, and areas of high ground on the western and central parts of Hoy as shown on Figure 07.

Historic buildings/structures

Full details of buildings/structures of historic interest are provided in Chapter 18.

Visual Resource

Information about the viewpoints and an assessment of the baseline condition of visual resources is described in Table LV.2 following.

Table LV.2 - Information about the Viewpoints

VP	Name	Approx co-ords	Approx. Elevation	Reason for selection	Description of Existing View
1	Hoxa Head, South Ronaldsay	ND40427, 92555	25m	Walkers, visitors	This view is over agricultural fields bounded by post and wire fences towards Scapa Flow, Flotta and the rugged profile of Hoy beyond. The flare at the oil terminal serves as a fairly strong visual focus even though it is about 5km distant. Looking south turbines at in Caithness are visible in conditions of clear visibility.
2	Gills Bay Ferry	ND39929, 88963	3.5m	Ferry travellers	From the deck of the ferry and the western facing windows of the cabin the view looking west is towards Switha and South Walls with the lighthouse at Cantick Head forming a prominent visual focus on the headland. The view towards the development site is along the indented coast of South Walls with a distant landform horizon of the Caithness and Sutherland Coast. Wind turbines in Caithness are visible in conditions of clear visibility.
3	Viewpoint, Flotta	ND35233, 93921	58m	Visitors to viewpoint	A 360 degree panorama is seen from this location. Looking towards the south, the foreground of this view is occupied by the moorland vegetation on the summit and slopes of the hill. In the mid ground, there is a thin sliver of Switha Sound visible and the agricultural land and moorland clad slopes of Hoy. The scene is punctuated by a combination of historic, traditional modern and ruinous buildings. Looking to the north, the view is dominated by the oil terminal and the turbine on Flotta which are both seen on the approach to this viewpoint and which have a detrimental effect on the perceived wildness of the view looking south.
4	Minor road north of Aithsdale, South Walls	ND30220, 89629	48m	Road users, residents	The view from this location in the direction of the proposed development site is over rough grassland and moorland towards Melsetter and the southern end of North Bay with the moorland slopes of Binga Fea and Cairn Hill beyond. There are views of the Pentland Firth which is seen as a thin sliver of sea with the cliffs of Caithness forming the horizon to the south. Looking towards the north and east, the view is over the moorland/grassland plateau which is punctuated by wood pole mounted overhead lines. The view looks over the sweep of the Ayre towards Brims where houses and farm buildings punctuate the ridgeline and a single wind

VP	Name	Approx co-ords	Approx. Elevation	Reason for selection	Description of Existing View
					turbine is seen above the Longhope Lighthouse Museum which is perched on the southern shore of Aith Hope.
5	Brims, Hoy	ND29203, 88243	31m	Residents	The location offers a 360 degree panorama. Looking north, the view is over rough grassland towards Aith Hope, back clothed by the low cliffs at the Cleavies and the agricultural grasslands above. The Ayre forms a narrow separation between the Ayre and North Bay. To the east, the view takes in the farm track, buildings and lobster creels with the heads and geos on South Walls forming an indented coastline. South Ronaldsay is visible in the distance in clear visibility conditions. To the south, the foreground comprises rough grassland with the Pentland Firth beyond and the cliffs of Caithness form a low horizon in conditions of good visibility. To the west, the view is dominated by the minor road and the parallel wood pole mounted overhead line. The farm buildings at Green Hill are visible with the horizon formed by the hills of Hoy.
6	Viewpoint Wee Fea, Hoy	ND29279, 94291	85m	Visitors to viewpoint	The view from this location is down over moorland slopes to the more fertile, cultivated lands along the shore. It extends to South Walls and the southern islands. The view is dominated by long, low, silhouettes formed by the island profiles and the bays. Man-made elements in the view include scattered farmsteads, houses, piers and ruinous buildings. There is no particularly strong visual focus to the view.
7	The Ayre	ND 28828, 89263	2m	Road users	There is a 180 degree panorama from this narrow strip of land; looking north, the view is dominated by the waters of North Bay with scattered dwelling lying along the shore below the moorland slopes of Binga Fea. To the west lie the more fertile and colourful fields around Melsetter House. Looking south, the foreground is occupied by the waters of Aith Hope with the north west facing agricultural slopes of South Walls punctuated by dispersed buildings beyond. To the south east, there are views out to the Pentland Firth, framed by the headlands at Aithe Head and Brims Ness. Looking east, the view is along the Ayre towards the cliffs at the Cleavies and the agricultural fields of South Walls.

VP	Name	Approx co-ords	Approx. Elevation	Reason for selection	Description of Existing View
8	Longhope	ND 29969, 90483	5m	Residents, road users	The views from this location are dominated by the waters of North Bay with views north being along the eastern coastline. Looking west across the Bay the view takes in the colourful agricultural landscape and woodlands around Melsetter House which contrast with the muted hues of the moorland slopes of Cairn Hill. To the south, the view is along the line of the road which lies approximately parallel to the eastern shore of North Bay. The foreground is occupied by the west facing gently sloping agricultural grazings which limit views towards the east. Some farm buildings pierce the skyline.
9	Heldale Mast near Binga Fea	ND28010, 92545	147m	Fishermen, Walkers	This location lies on a spur from the track to Heldale water. Also, lying within a Wild Land Area, the location is dominated by the presence of telecommunications infrastructure and has views of the large scale buildings of the Water Treatment works on the southwest facing slope of the hill. Views to the west take in the fishing loch lying between Bakingstone Hill and Cairn Hill which are moorland clad. This viewpoint overlooks North Bay and South Walls beyond with scattered development punctuating the scene. Looking towards the proposed development site, the view takes in the low-lying ridged landform of Brims with the Pentland Firth beyond and, in clear conditions, the profile of the mainland.
10	Melsetter Hill	ND 26609, 89605	93m	Walkers	This location offers a wide panorama although views are curtailed in places by the drystone dyke surrounding the grave of Thomas and Theodosia Middlemore. The view offers an exceptional vantage point from which to appreciate the layout of the Melsetter House and its surrounding buildings and structures within a wind pruned woodland setting. The dunes at Sheep Skerry are visible to the east of Tor Ness. Looking towards the proposed development site, the view takes in the low ridged landform of Brims with its indented rocky coastline. Looking east, the view is over North Bay towards, The Ayre, Aith Hope and South Walls.
11	Coastal Track, South Walls	ND34314, 89144	30m	Walkers	A 360° panorama is obtained from this elevated location near Cantick Head Lighthouse. The foreground is occupied by rough grazings above the southern facing sea cliffs which are animated by the sights and sounds of

VP	Name	Approx co-ords	Approx. Elevation	Reason for selection	Description of Existing View
					sea birds. Across the Pentland Firth, Duncansby Head, Stroma and Dunnet Head are seen in conditions of clear visibility with the wind turbines at Stroupster being noticeable vertical man-made elements on the horizon. In exceptionally clear conditions Strathy Point and Cape Wrath can be seen in the distant south west. Looking towards the development site, the view takes in the indented sea cliffs topped by rough grazing.
12	Dunnet Head	ND 20533 76502	127m	Visitors to viewpoint	From this viewpoint on Dunnet Head, expansive 360 degree views are obtained. In clear conditions, Orkney can be seen across the Pentland Firth to the north and the island of Stroma to the east. The jagged, north coastline, punctuated by sandy bays and scattered with coastal settlement, stretches to the east with the lighthouse at Duncansby Head marking the north-eastern corner of the British mainland. Moorland over Warth Hill, the highest elevation in the view, sweeps down to coastal farmland with dark blocks and bands of coniferous plantation forestry occupying large swaths of land to the southeast. The coastline becomes more dramatic as it draws closer to Dunnet Head, with towering cliffs, stacks and geos. Open moorland, punctuated by lochans, rocky outcrops and the scars of peat haggling, dominates the foreground of the view to the south, over Dunnet Head, backclothed by mixed agriculture, scattered settlement and coniferous forestry and moorland. Several wind farms can be seen to the west and south.
13	North Walls School	ND30648, 92704	23m		The view from this low lying location is over arable fields and grazings with moorland vegetation on the higher ground on the east facing slopes of Binga Fea. Looking to the north the ruinous B listed Wee Fea Naval Communications and Operational Centre can be seen above a distinctive (and unusual for Hoy) coniferous shelterbelt which descends the hill towards Lyness. The view is dominated by the presence of the road and a parallel wood pole mounted overhead line to the west. Looking along the road to the south, the view takes in the waters of Longhope with the promontories at North and South Ness appearing almost to meet. The

<i>VP</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Approx. co-ords</i>	<i>Approx. Elevation</i>	<i>Reason for selection</i>	<i>Description of Existing View</i>
					waters of North Bay are visible as a thin sliver of grey backclothed by the low landform of Brims.
14	Rackwick	ND19033, 98963	143m		This elevated location takes in a wide sweeping panorama over the low lying dispersed settlement of Rackwick. The eye is drawn along the rugged coastline cliffs of South Hoy. The Scrabster to Stromness Ferry passes close to this location as it heads towards and away from the Old Man of Hoy. In conditions of clear visibility, the mainland can be seen with Dunnet Head being almost due south and Duncansby Head beyond Stoma to the south east.

Orkney - Hoy & West Mainland

National Scenic Area



HOY AND WEST MAINLAND NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Orkney Isles

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The great ice-rounded eminences of the hills of North Hoy dominate the Orkney scene with a power that is scarcely in tune with their modest height (479 metres). Their bold shape, fine grouping, soaring cliffs and headlands, including the famous stack of the Old Man of Hoy, are almost as important to the Caithness scene as they are in that of Orkney.

North Hoy has a particularly strong visual inter-relationship with the south-west mainland of Orkney, the pastoral character of which around the shores of the Loch of Stenness makes a good foil for the bold hills of Hoy. The basin of this loch is enclosed by low rolling hills of lush grassland, some arable land, scattered farm steadings and stone dykes with a noticeable lack of trees, giving a very open landscape, the character of which is enlivened by the abundant remains of ancient occupation.

This landscape culminates in the west in cliffted headlands like a rampart against the sea, which breaks through at Hoy Sound in a tidal race of impressive swiftness. The stone-built settlement of Stromness rising steeply out of its harbour further enhances the character of the area.

The Special Qualities of the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area

- A palimpsest of geology, topography, archaeology and land use
- An archaeological landscape of World Heritage Status
- The spectacular coastal scenery
- Sandstone and flagstone as an essence of Orkney
- A long-settled and productive land and sea
- The contrast between the fertile farmland and the unimproved moorland
- A landscape of contrasting curves and lines
- Land and water in constantly changing combinations under the open sky
- The high hills of Hoy
- The townscape of Stromness, its setting and its link with the sea
- The traditional buildings and crofting patterns of Rackwick

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A palimpsest of geology, topography, archaeology and land use	
<p>This is a landscape composed of different layers that can be readily seen and understood:</p> <p>A base layer of Geology, with its horizontal strata of Devonian sandstones and flagstones, exemplified by the Old Man of Hoy and the cliffs of the western coastline.</p> <p>Overlain by undulating Topography, where a rocky coast rises through gentle lowlands to higher rounded summits.</p> <p>Overlain by Archaeology and Land Use, where a succession of different inhabitants have left their own distinctive patterns and monuments in the Orcadian landscape.</p>	<p>Orkney is a landscape of distinctive geology, topography, archaeology and land use which can be seen as layers within the landscape – a palimpsest. The NSA exemplifies this.</p> <p>The geology is horizontally bedded and relatively uniform. The topography consists of coasts both shallow and steep, extensive lowlands in the basins of the Lochs of Harray and Stenness, and the extensive uplands of Hoy. The surface layer contains archaeological sites, modern farmland and unimproved moorland.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An archaeological landscape of world heritage status	<p>By their location, shape and vertical presence, the Neolithic monuments of the Ring of Brodgar, the Stones of Stenness and the grass-covered tomb of Maes Howe, are distinctive landmarks of international renown.</p> <p><i>'The Orkney imagination is haunted by time.'</i> George Mackay Brown</p> <p>The Neolithic monuments of central Orkney comprise the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, and have become recognisable landmarks of West Mainland. Within the NSA they include:</p>

They lie within a landscape of low-lying farmland, which has been farmed for millennia. Wilder moors and hills rise to the east, and the Hills of Hoy form the backdrop to the south. Unusually for Orkney, there are few clear views of the open sea. The area feels enclosed, in the middle of a vast lowland amphitheatre of glistening loch and fertile pasture.

The NSA is also rich in remains from other eras, from Norse and medieval to the Second World War.

However, visible monuments represent only the clearest element of much more extensive and complex evidence of settlement and use of the landscape as revealed by archaeological excavations.

- The Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar and other standing stones composed of large flags of Devonian sandstone.
- Maes Howe and Unstan (Onston) cairns, and other cairns and tumuli, which form distinctive, often grass covered low mounds in the landscape.

The solid carved boulder block of the Dwarfie Stane on Hoy lies within the NSA (although not in the World Heritage Site).

• *The spectacular coastal scenery*

With their towering red cliffs, the Atlantic coastline creates a spectacular scene, enhanced by the presence of the Old Man of Hoy, the highest sea stack in the British Isles.

These vertical structures of red sandstone, home to numerous seabirds are both a landmark and an iconic image of the Orkney Islands, especially for those arriving by sea from across the Pentland Firth.

In comparison, the sheltered waters and gentle topography of the western approaches to Scapa Flow contrast with the Atlantic-battered western seaboard.

The west coast of Mainland and Hoy contain high vertical cliffs, with St John's Head on Hoy, rising to 338m (the third highest sea cliff in Britain). They are composed of the Devonian Sandstone, with its distinctive bedding planes. The erosive force of the Atlantic storms and waves has exploited weaknesses in the strata to create cavities, skerries, gloups, geos, caves, wave cut platforms and boulder-strewn beaches.

The Old Man of Hoy towers 137m from its resistant, igneous rock foundation at sea level; it was not climbed until 1966.

The cliffs provide home to numerous sea birds. The west coast of Hoy is part of the Hoy SSSI, SAC & SPA, and RSPB reserve, containing around 120,000 birds. These include nationally important populations of fulmar, great black-backed gull and guillemot.

• *Sandstone and flagstone as an essence of Orkney*

The presence of sandstones and flagstones, whether occurring as natural exposures or comprising human artefacts, is a characteristic of the NSA, indeed of Orkney as a whole.

There are the towering cliffs and stacks of Hoy with their rusty reds and ochres, and also the lower rocky coasts with their

Hoy and West Mainland are composed predominantly of Devonian Old Red Sandstone, which includes Hoy Sandstone and Stromness Flags. The sandstone fractures along bedding planes, creating blocky stones and flag stones, which creates an excellent building material, including for standing stones. It is also prone to weathering, leading to changes in the colour and hue of the rock.

wave-cut platforms and beaches of flagstones.

There are the drystone dykes with their characteristic flattened stones, the traditional flagstone roofs as exemplified at Rackwick, and the golden or honey coloured stone of farm buildings and of old Stromness.

There are ancient sandstone tombs, the solid carved boulder of the Dwarfie Stane, and the upstanding standing stones of the ancient circles.

- ***A long-settled and productive land and sea***

The land has the appearance of a long and well-settled agricultural landscape, with solid farm buildings, fertile, green fields and numerous cattle.

Likewise the ever-presence of the sea is a reminder that fishing and whaling have also been key to the prosperity of the islands.

The history of agriculture in Orkney goes back to Neolithic times. The mild climate, level ground and fertile soils have always made Orkney surprisingly fertile compared to Shetland, the Western Isles or mainland Scotland immediately to the south. This has been the key to the prosperity of the islands. Currently there are over 100,000 cattle in Orkney.

It is a working landscape, and the current farms have had a long evolutionary history, including crofting townships and 19th century improvement farms. The steadings often preserve examples of kiln barns and other 19th century structures typical of crofting, such as the linear farmsteads. Examples of old townships include Clouston and Grimeston.

The sea has always provided a source of food, as far back as the fish and shellfish remains found in the Neolithic middens. Additionally, Stromness was a centre of whaling and fishing industries, which brought prosperity to the islands.

- ***The contrast between the fertile farmland and the unimproved moorland***

The fertile low ground with its farms and fields contrasts markedly with the open, uninhabited higher ground of moorland and hill. This is emphasised by the differing colours of the two areas – the bright greens of the farmland and the browns of the uplands.

Much of the low ground of the NSA, around the loch basin of Stenness and on the gentle, coastal slopes, is comprised of rich, fertile agricultural land. The fields consist of improved grassland.

On the higher ground of Ward Hill (Stenness), and on the rugged, glaciated hills of Hoy there is open, unimproved, often heather-dominated, moorland and blanket peat. These areas have long been used for peat extraction, with old cuttings and extraction routes visible in many areas.

- **A landscape of contrasting curves and lines**

The combination of curves and lines is a defining feature of this landscape. The pattern of the landform is smooth, with gentle curves, but the land itself often ends spectacularly in vertical cliffs and a horizontal horizon of sea. Rocks on the seashore and in the buildings and dykes tend to be flat and linear, and the field boundaries take straight lines across the curving landscape.

There are no trees to soften the regular outlines of the farm buildings that stand proud on the undulating pasture, and the ancient monuments can be a combination of the linear and the circular: upstanding stones within a circular surround.

The low-lying land rises gently from the sea, to rounded farmland and moorland; above are the more dramatic, steeper, but smoothly-curved hills of Hoy.

There are curves also in many of the ancient monuments: the distinctive curved forms of Maes Howe and other cairns in the landscape; and the circular forms of the ditches in the henge monuments of Brodgar and Stenness.

These curves contrast with the linear, angular forms, often derived from the underlying sandstone: the geological bedding planes, the joints and fractures in the rocky coastline, the vertical and angular cliffs and stacks, the blocky nature of the stones, the dykes with their flat stones. Additionally, the fields and buildings tend to be rectilinear.

- **Land and water in constantly changing combinations under the open sky**

Under the wide horizons, endless combinations of water, land, sea and sky can be experienced, varying both with location and the weather. Movement is brought to the landscape by the almost ceaseless wind, whether the scudding of clouds, the shafts of sunlight moving across the fields and moors, the patterns on the water, or long grass blowing in the wind.

Sea or loch is never far distant: the lochs of Harray and Stenness, surrounded by smooth lowlands and hills; small voes and wicks such as Hamnavoe; the larger bay of Ireland, leading to sounds and deeps, and to the whale-shaped Graemsay; the enclosed Scapa Flow (bordering the NSA); the exposed Pentland Firth; and the open Atlantic Ocean.

Location-specific qualities

- **The high hills of Hoy**

The high, rounded hills of Hoy form a spectacular backdrop to much of West Mainland. With their corries, deep U-shaped valleys and patterned ground, these rugged, moorland hills reflect their glacial history.

Within a sheltered gully in these hills lies the small Berriedale birchwood, the most northerly native wood in Britain.

Glaciated landforms on Hoy include distinctive U-shaped valleys, moraines, including a terminal moraine at Rackwick, and corries, the most northerly in Britain.

Post-glacial features include patterned ground on the summit of Ward Hill (Hoy) and raised beaches. In contrast to Hoy, Mainland is a drowned coast without raised beaches.

Berriedale Wood is composed of downy birch, with rowan, willow, aspen and hazel. There is an understorey of heather, roses, honeysuckle, ferns and blaeberry.

• ***The townscape of Stromness, its setting and its link with the sea***

The stone-built settlement of Stromness, rising steeply out of its harbour, further enhances the character of the area.

The townscape is distinctive, comprised of sandstone houses around the bay and on the hill behind, its traditional settlement pattern little altered. Particularly notable are its narrow, stone-flagged main street, with vennels leading down to the numerous private wharves; and narrow streets and paths leading up the hill behind.

The town has always been dependent on the sea, and maintains strong maritime links. There is constant movement of boats in the harbour and the surrounding seas, from fishing and diving boats, to the arrival and departure of the ferry from Caithness.

Stromness and Hamnavoe go back to Viking times, if not before, with the natural harbour and relative calm waters compared to the surrounding seaways of the Atlantic ocean and the North Sea.

Immediately north of mainland Britain, Orkney and its seaways have always been a strategic point for sea navigation. In times of war it has been an alternative route to the potentially dangerous English Channel.

The town has had a rich, maritime history, including being of key importance to the herring fishery. It has been an important strategic location in times of war, for example during the Napoleonic and First & Second World Wars. It has had strong links to the arctic, particularly through whaling and as base for the Hudson Bay Company.

• ***The traditional buildings and crofting patterns of Rackwick***

Set at the end of a glacial valley, between towering sandstone cliffs and a rocky beach open to the Atlantic Ocean, the distinctive and attractive village of Rackwick contains stone buildings and crofts in a traditional layout and in a spectacular setting.

'Rackwick... the only example of a ... crofting township on estate land where most of the houses are still in place.'

Bailey (2007)

The distinctiveness of Rackwick is brought about by the prevalence of vernacular buildings. Modern buildings, where present, have broadly retained the vernacular style. There are also examples of old longhouses. Sandstone is the building material and some roofs consist of flagstones or turf.

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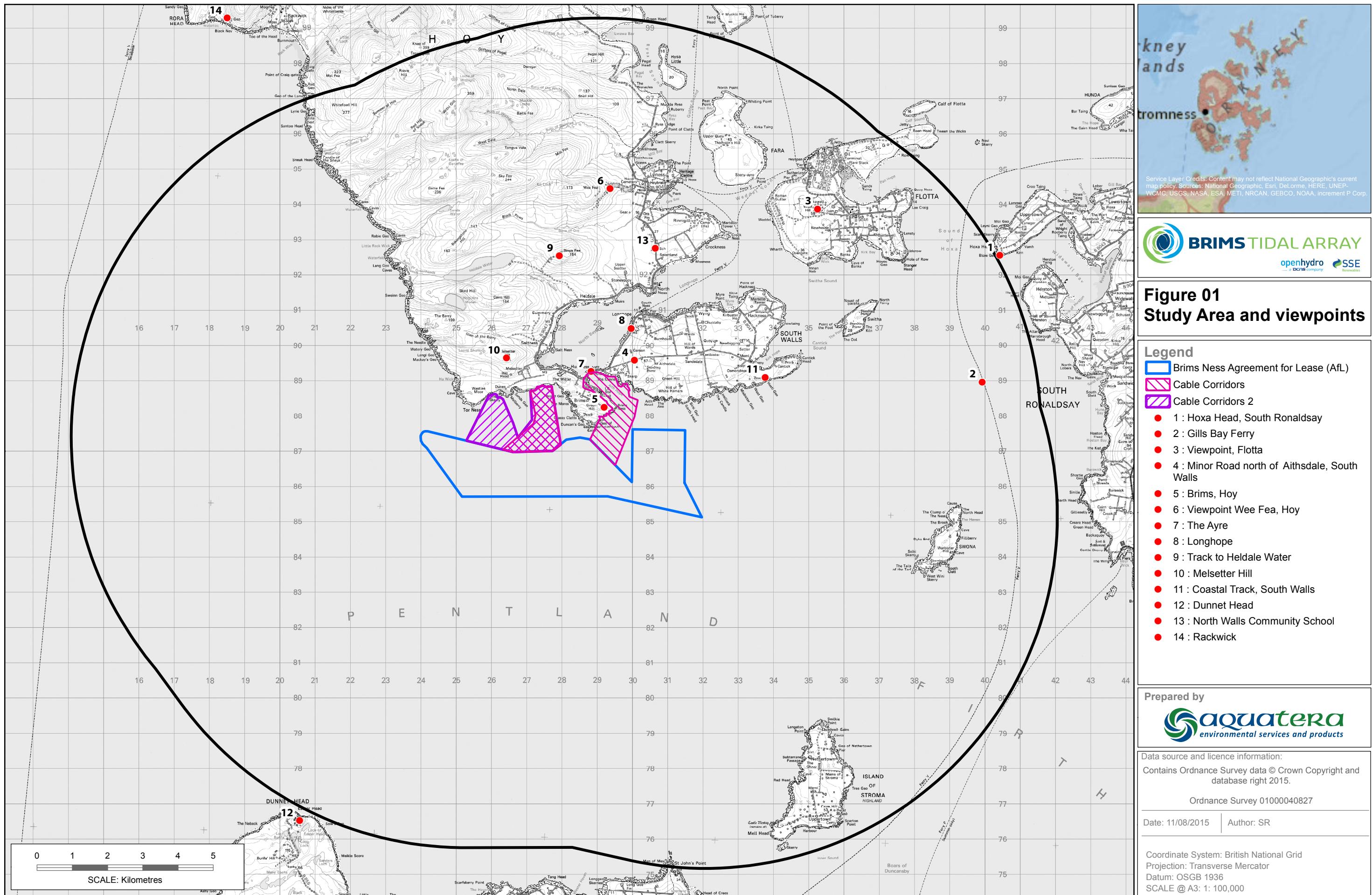
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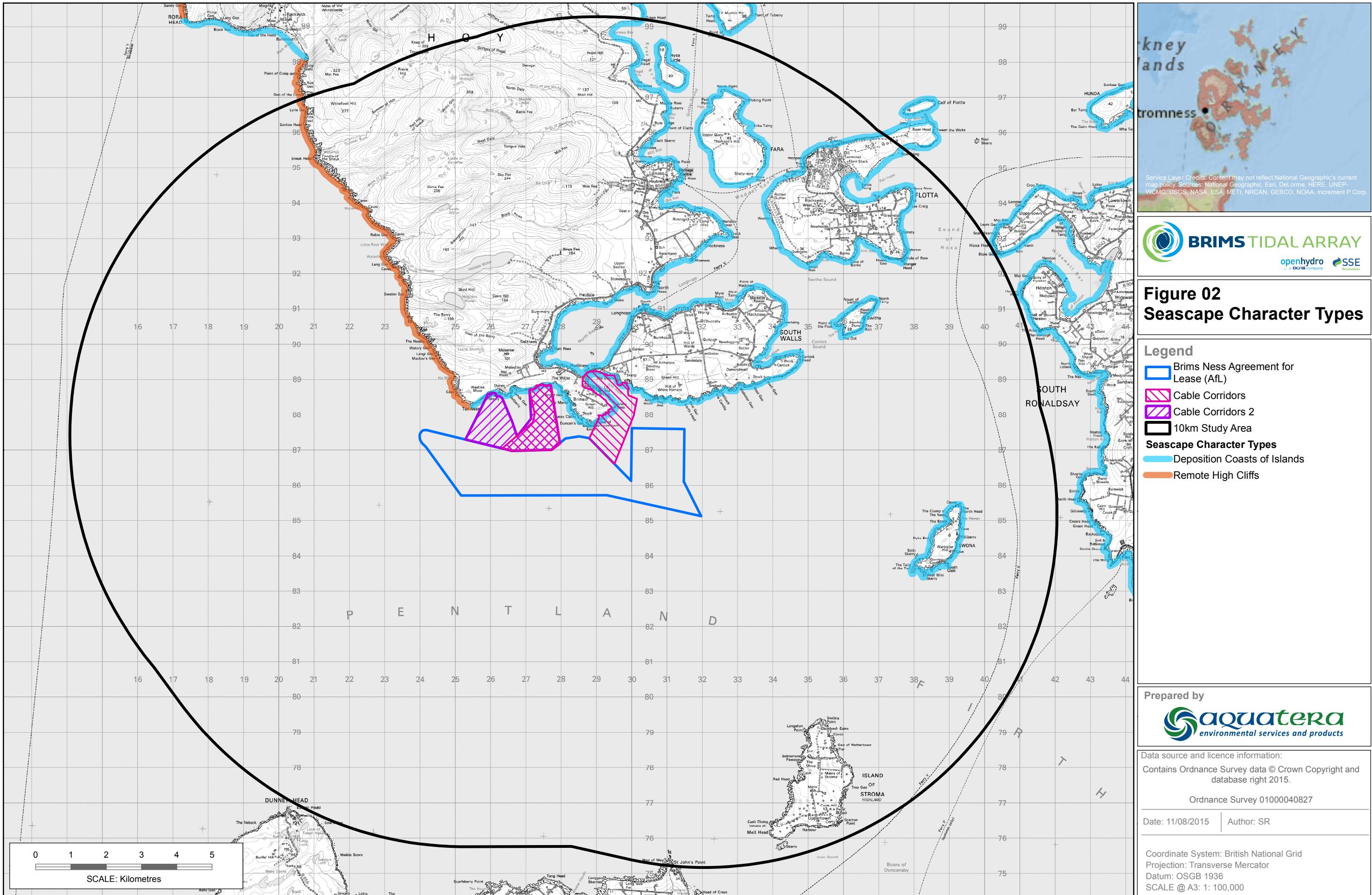
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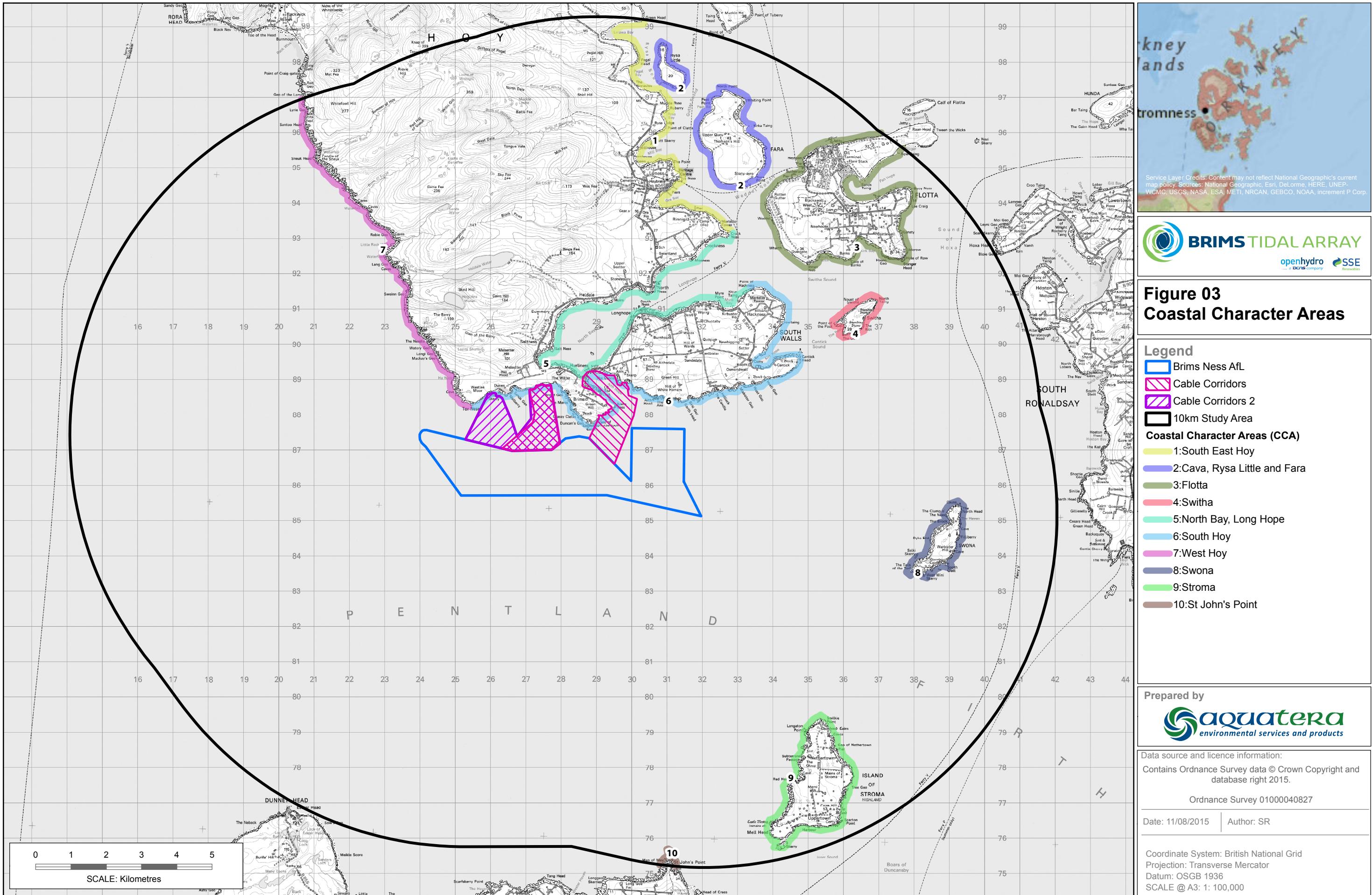
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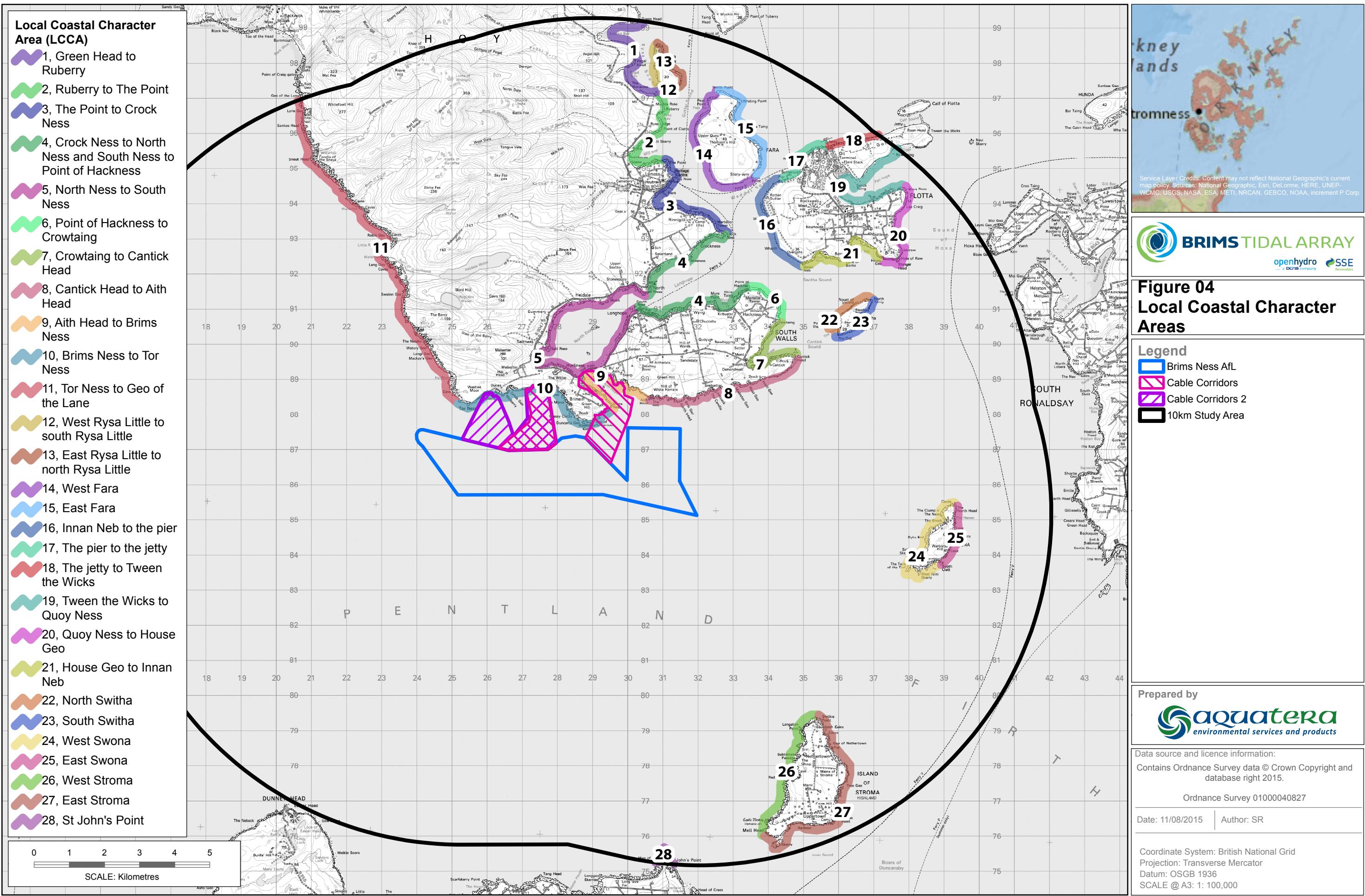
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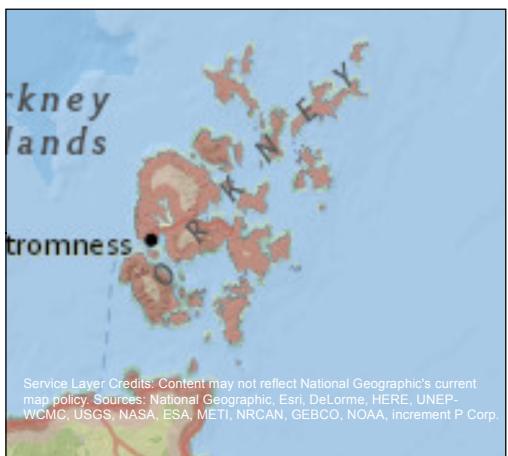
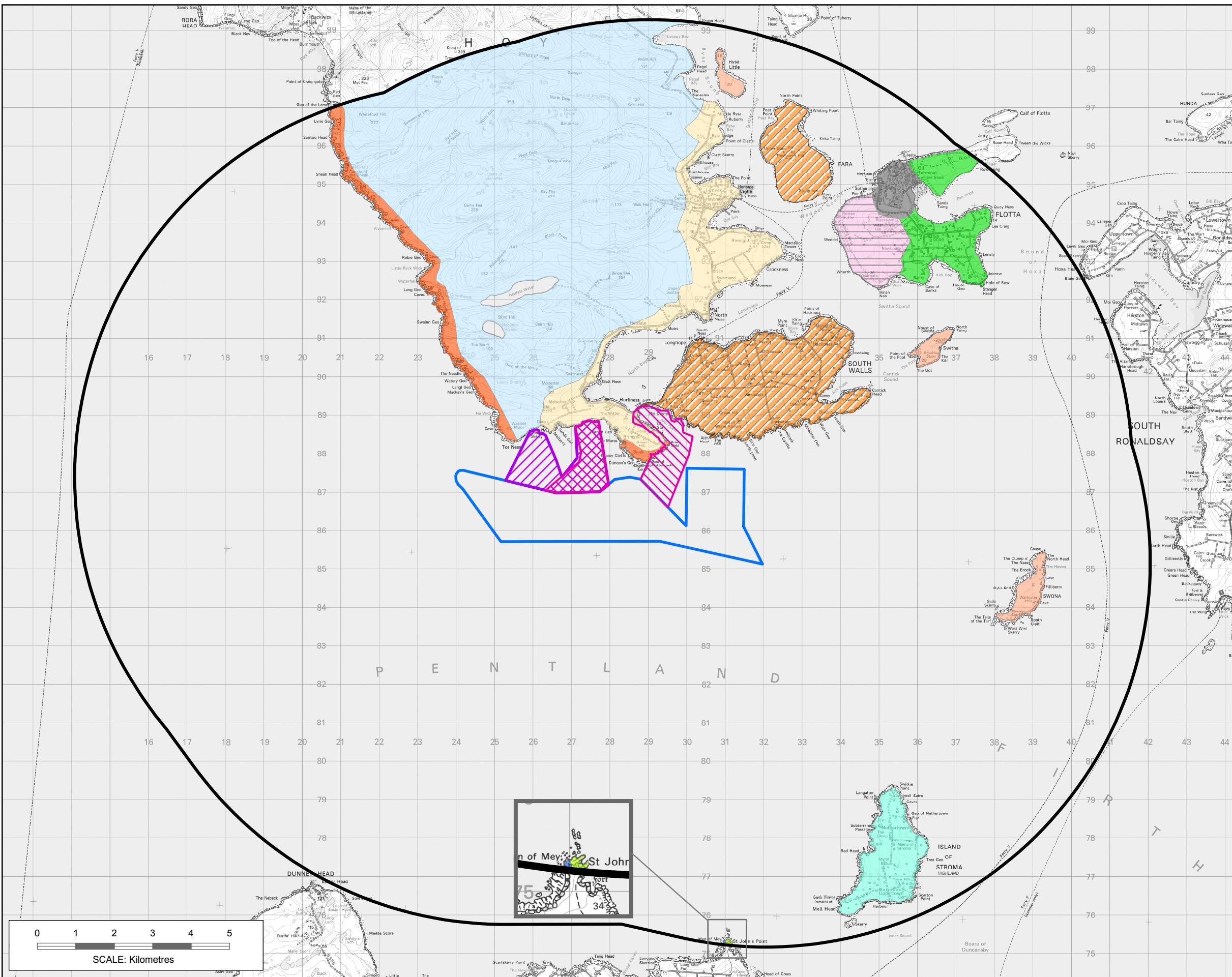


Figure 05
Landscape Character Area

