

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT REVIEW : SCOTLAND'S COAST.

Extracted from Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 103

In *An assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the Scottish seascape in relation to windfarms* (SNH Commissioned Report 103, 2005) one of the preliminary study stages was a review of the landscape character assessments which provide comprehensive coverage of Scotland (SNH, 1996–1999). Eighteen of these Landscape Character Assessments (LCA) were reviewed – the ones covering our coast. The review formed the main resource for the descriptions of coastal and hinterland character. This summary (from Appendix C) follows below.

Overall, the LCAs define coastal types or areas, on the basis of the coastline's characteristics. Generally, most LCAs only consider whether the coast is rocky or 'hard', forming cliffs, or whether it is soft, forming sandy beaches, often with dunes and other deposition features. This corresponds to the broad scale of working (1:50,000); more detailed characterisation was generally not feasible in these reports. There are notable exceptions to this:

- the **Caithness & Sutherland**, and **Skye & Lochalsh LCAs** : these assessments are more detailed. Some coastal character types are defined in their own right, based on significant coastal features, The coastal edges are strongly influenced by the hinterland, and to some extent marine views and aspect.
- the **Lochaber** and **Ross & Cromarty LCAs**: broadly follow the above pattern, but are less detailed;
- the **Fife LCA** also considers coastal (with some landscape 'hinterland' elements), intertidal and maritime components;
- the **Moray Firth LCA** to some extent more fully describes the relationship between land and sea, as well as the marine element – the so-called 'seascape' character
- the **Shetland LCA**, **Orkney LCA** and that for the **Western Isles** (island groups), where the majority of types defined about the coast, although little description is given of the character of the coast and relationship of land and sea.

There are differences in the level of detail and way in which the coast is described within these LCAs. Nevertheless they provide a useful starting point for any baseline study. Many similarities in the method of describing coastal character were found – all broadly following this broad typology of a 'hard' or 'soft' coast, but then considering different characteristics drawn from the hinterland character, and adjacent coastal landscape types or areas, as well as marine characteristics. The following is just a summary, please refer to the individual, relevant LCA as required.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT	COASTAL TYPES	LOCATION	SUMMARY OF KEY CHARACTERISTICS
Borders (SNH Review No. 112)	19. Coastal Farmland	Coldingham/Cockburnspath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cliffs ● Rolling farmland hinterland, cut by incised valleys
	20. Coastal Pasture	Lamberton Moor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cliffs ● Varied knolly hinterland, coastal pasture ● Exposed/rugged/open views
	21 Coastal Moorland	Coldingham Moor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expansive moorland plateau sloping steeply to cliffs ● Dramatic open views/exposed/barren
Lothians (SNH Review No. 91)	23. Dunbar Plain		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Undulating agricultural plain backed by Lammermuir Hills ● Rounded headlands and cliffs to north enclose small sand and pebble beaches backed by grass-turfed dunes ● Road and rail routes often highly visible as is cement works and Torness Power Station ● Open views across sea
	24. North Berwick Plain	Dunbar to Port Seton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coastal plain extends well inland due to flat to gently undulating landform ● North Berwick Law/Bass Rock important foci ● Crag and low rocky outcrops form much of coastal edge and enclose sandy bays, backed by dunes – particularly extensive at Aberlady and Gullane ● Arable land backs coast – historic golf courses and settlements. Major transport routes present but not generally intrusive ● Views across the sea common in most of this type due to openness of plain
	25. Musselburgh/ Prestonpans Fringe		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Backed by well-defined ridgeline and merges with urban area ● Coastline of low rock platforms, small rocky headlands and sandy beaches ● Semi-industrial character with Cockenzie Power Station, bings, pylons and transport routes visually dominant ● Agricultural hinterland and continuous settlement along coast

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	26. Linlithgow/ Queensferry Farmlands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coastline west of Forth bridges fringed with mud flats and backed by wooded slopes with areas of raised beach above ● East of bridges, small rocky headlands and sandy flats Drum Sands to Cramond Island ● Diverse coastal scenery with wide reaching views of coast dominated by Forth Bridges, views of Fife across Firth have semi-industrial character interspersed with wooded policy landscapes
Fife (SNH Review No. 113)	11. Coastal Hills	13 units around Fife coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Close association with coast but do not directly abut water – cliffs, Coastal Terrace or settlements generally form seaward edge ● Predominantly open farmland with few trees ● Extensive views across North Sea or Firths and to land beyond – inland views restricted by landform
	12. Coastal Terrace (Raised Beaches)	9 locations lying above the Coastal Flats and below Coastal Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flat or gently sloping landform ● Heavily settled in parts eg St Andrews, Newburgh, Leuchars
	13. Coastal Cliffs	St Andrews, Kinkell Braes, Kittock’s Den, Buddo Ness and south of Kinraig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cliffs, cut by steep sided wooded dens ● Absence of settlement although some ruins and historical features ● Landward views generally confined
	14. Coastal Wooded	3 locations on north coast at Braes Drybrae, near Newport on Tay, south of Balmerino and at Flisk. Also on the south coast at Castleback, Culross, from Torryburn to Limekilns and from Aberdour to Burntisland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High steep wooded rounded braes ● Narrow platforms of land at the foot of the braes, usually occupied by small linear traditional settlements ● Views tend to be seawards where they are of a vast scale across the Firth of Forth

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Fife <i>(continued)</i>	15. Coastal Flats	17 locations including 9 on the east coast of Fife, 2 on north coast and 6 on the south coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flat, low-lying, open large scale exposed coastal landscapes at sea level – some created artificially ● Intensively cultivated, arable fields or forestry ● Variety of other land uses including industrial, golf courses and grasslands ● Seaward and landward views across the flats themselves invariably extensive
	16/17 Intertidal Mudflats and Other intertidal Shores	Located almost continuously around coast of Fife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Natural landscape dominated by sea comprising intertidal mudflats, sands, shingle and rock between mean, high and low watermarks ● Typically large scale and open, simple aspect ● Views extensive in seaward direction
	18/19 The North Sea and the Firths of Forth and Tay	Two major Firths to south and north. North Sea at St Andrews Bay from Tentsmuir Point to Fife Ness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large scale flat horizontal natural maritime landscape ● Many prominent off-shore islands ● Navigation and shipping artefacts on the water plus movement of these ● Effects of lights reflecting on Firths at night ● Views of famous bridges, extensive and distinctive views and clear sense of place ● Clutter of industrial infrastructure particularly where made-ground juts out into Firth
Tayside (SNH Review No. 122)	14 A. Coast with Sands	Broughty Ferry-Carnoustie South of Arbroath Lunan Bay Montrose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low sections of coast ● Sand dunes inland/blown sand deposition ● Golf courses/some settlement
	14B. Coast with Cliffs	North of Carnoustie Arbroath – southern end of Lunan Bay Lunan Bay – Montrose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cliffs, arches, bays and rocky reefs ● Headland castles/fishing villages ● Productive farming up to cliff edge ● Exposed

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South and Central (SNH Review No. 102)	1. Formantine Links and Aberdeenshire Dunes	North of Aberdeen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extensive sands, beaches and dunes ● Gorse/grass behind dunes, backed by flat farmland ● Long expansive views along beaches and across sea ● Some settlements
	2. Kincardine Cliffs	30km coastline between Aberdeen and Inverbervie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Steep cliffs, stacks and arches, raised beach platforms ● Farmland extends to cliff edge ● Fishing settlements ● Expansive views/exposed
	3. Kincardine Links	South of Inverbervie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raised beaches backed by soft eroded and vegetated cliffs ● Agricultural hinterland ● Settlement – some new extensive building on cliff tops
Banff and Buchan (SNH Review No. 37)	Cliffs of the North and South-East Coasts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cliffs, headlands, inlets occasional sandy bays and notable blow holes ● Fishing villages at base of cliffs
	Dunes, Beaches from Fraserburgh to Peterhead		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long sweeping beaches backed by dunes ● Uninterrupted views ● Loch of Strathbeg enclosed by dune system north of Rattray Head ● Little settlement although St Fergus Gas Terminal present
Moray and Nairn (SNH Review No. 101)	Soft Coastal Shore	3 areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broad intertidal flats, dunes, marsh and spits and sandy beaches ● Settlement including RAF Base
	Hard Coastal Shore	2 areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small coves, cliffs, pebble beaches ● Farmland up to cliff edge ● Views over Moray Firth to distant land ● Settlements on headlands and in coves
	Coastal Forest	Hinterland to Soft Coastal Shore type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distinctive backdrop with forestry on dunes and gravel ● Provides a feeling of remoteness and containment of views ● Little settlement although sand & gravel extraction

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Inner Moray Firth (SNH Review No. 90)	Open Firth	Outer Moray Firth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low-lying coastal ledge, sand/shingle beaches ● Panoramic views/lack of foci, opposite shoreline pale band
	Enclosed Firth		N/A
	Hard Coastal Shore	Portmahomack – Tarbet Ness South to the Sutors and Rosemarkie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raised beaches/cliffs ● Abrupt edge to farmland ● Greater area of sea visible as raised viewpoints ● Exposed
Caithness and Sutherland (SNH Review No. 103)	High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays	North and north-east coast–extensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long narrow exposed stretches of very high cliffs interrupted by bays at glen intersections ● Stacks, caves, pebbles and collapsed cliffs views directed along coast and out to sea focussing on islands, rigs or boats ● Backed by moorland or small farms/crofts. Road aligned parallel to coast ● Access and views to coast restricted due to cliffs
	Long Beaches, Dunes and Links	East Caithness/Sutherland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Soft linear edge to sea ● Wide open space, extensive visibility ● Recreation/golf links/caravan parks ● May be backed by farmland or settlements
	Kyles, Firths and Sea Lochs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relatively well populated along shore ● Frequently offer views of mountainous interior and funnelled views to sea
	Coastal Shelf	East Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elevated platform, linear semi-enclosed by inland hills thus directing views out to sea ● Transport corridor/small settlements. Often farmed.
	Open Intensive Farmland		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No specific coastline characteristics outlined in LCA for these types which abut the coast.
	Mixed Agriculture and settlement		
	Dispersed Small Farms and Crofts		

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Ross and Cromarty (SNH Review No. 119)	Enclosed Bay and Offshore Islands	Covers the entire coast of Wester Ross and islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fingers of land, islands, sea and sky ● Offshore islands site within or at edge of bays allowing some views to distant open sea ● Indented coastline with sheltered rocky and sandy bays, exposed rocky promontories ● Islands strong focal points within simple horizontal composition ● Views from bays contained by headlands ● Dead end roads to remote promontories although development with through roads aligning bays and cutting across headlands, settlement concentrated along coast and bays ● Fish farms a feature within some sea lochs and bays
	Fjord		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narrow sea loch strongly contained wither side by steep vertical shore ● Rugged Mountain massif often directly backs this type ● Funnelled views directed out to sea and often framed by mountains
	Moorland	A variety of moorland types are identified in this LCA. Although they form the hinterland to the coast, the shoreline itself appears to fall with the 'Enclosed Bay and Offshore Islands' LCT	
	Cnocan	Occurring occasionally in Wester Ross (also in Western Isles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complex landform forming highly indented and undulating rocky knolls and dips ● Intimate scale and often remote ● Small islands create a fragmented coastline
	Rugged Mountain Massif	Occurs directly against the coast in parts of Wester Ross. In other areas, mountain massif further inland also influences views from coast	

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Skye and Lochalsh (SNH Review No. 71)	Fjord	Only occurs in small areas such as Loch Hourn and Kylerhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deep dark waters/narrow sided fjords contained by steep sided mountains ● Land appears to sink into water due to steepness of slopes ● Often inaccessible and remote
	Sounds and Narrows	Covers extensive areas of coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Linear spaces ● Views dominated by sea and coastal edge ● Settlement and activity concentrated along shoreline with crofting and roads ● Tranquillity in narrow channels due to sheltered aspect ● Tidal banding prominent on shore ● Islands often present ● Fish farming
	Off shore Islands	Found in sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Views of islands dominant feature; character of islands varies. ● Visibility of island dependent on whether it is seen against land backdrop; and its location relative to mainland is important in terms of whether it is focal in views
	Moorland	Various forms of moorland present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stepped moorland on north west Skye forms cliffs; settlement and access routes utilise shelter of steps in moorland ● Smooth moorland has a weakly defined coastal edge ● Rocky Moorland forms indented coastal edge often with scattering of off shore islands
	Harbour Settlement	Associated with Sounds and Narrows LCT NB Linear Crofting LCT also associated with coast but no specific description given and only small areas defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shelter offered by Sounds and narrows attract harbour development
	Rugged Massif/ Sweeping Peaks	These appear to abut coast; description focuses on characteristics of type only	(need to take account of presence of these types as hinterland to coast)

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Lochaber (SNH Review No. 97)	Rugged Coastal Hills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low rounded hills with relatively steep sides and rugged ice scoured rocky surface • Generally wild and inaccessible • Views of sea and island; hills descend either directly to the coast or via more gentle 'Rocky Moorland'
	Rocky Coastland		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low rounded rocky peninsulas heather covered/grazed • Incised coastal edge with off-shore rocky outcrops • Occasional white sandy beaches often backed by crofts or machair • Views of characteristic profiles of Small Isles
	Stepped Basalt/Crofted Basalt Coast		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In places, dark basalt cliffs with stepped profile • Views across sounds and narrows emphasising dramatic cliff profiles of eroded stacks and arches • Small patchwork of fertile croft farmland backed by exposed basalt hills • Presence of sea and interceding beaches is a key component of views lending an exposed feel to the landscape
Argyll and the Firth of Clyde (SNH Review No. 78)	Coastal Plain	NB This LCA defines landscape types directly abutting the sea rather than type solely categorised on the basis of characteristics shoreline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat linear coastal plain • Pasture, transition to marsh, mudflats and beach
	Rocky Mosaic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocky indented coast with off shore islands and small sandy bays • Raised beaches, cliffs and distinctive rounded knolls
	Low Coastal Hills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow sandy beaches at coast

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Argyll and the Firth of Clyde <i>(continued)</i>	Coastal Parallel Ridges		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narrow rocky ridges which break down to form chain of rocky islands at coast ● Horseshoe shaped narrow sandy bays and extensive mudflats
	Rocky Moorland/ Boulder Moors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Steep cliffs ● Rocky Bays with off-shore islands ● Wild rugged landscape
	Slate Islands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low coastal hills, distinctive dark ledges of slate jutting into the sea ● Wedge shaped islands ● Deeply indented coastline with peninsulas and chains of rocky off shore islands
	Sand Dunes and Machair		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open windswept sand dunes in broad coastal bays ● Golf courses/hotels
Ayrshire (SNH Review No. 111)	Raised Beach Coast	Forms much of Ayrshire coastline and western coast of Arran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level shelf backed by steep, sometimes craggy escarpment ● Mostly farmed, woodland on escarpment ● Settlements, transport routes ● Views of Arran and Ailsa Craig distinctive
	Lowland Coast		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lowland wind blown sand, rounded bays with sandy beaches backed by dunes ● Settled and heavily developed in areas
	Coastal Fringe with Agriculture	Found on Great and Little Cumbrae and on Arran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agricultural fringe backed by mountains and hills
	Coastal Headlands	Found on Arran – too detailed to be significant in capacity study	N/A
	Coastal Lowland Moor	Found on Arran – too detailed to be significant in capacity study	N/A

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Dumfries and Galloway (SNH Review No. 94)	Coastal Flats	Found adjacent to river mouths in 3 areas – various sub-types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exposed, long views across coastal flats as they merge into waters of Solway ● Coastal Plain (sub-type) comprises gently undulating pasture/major communications/ sparse settlement ● Estuarine flats, sand and mud, salt marsh occasional dunes, hinterland of coastal moss and forestry
	Peninsula	In western half of D+G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intimate sheltered bays with stony beaches or narrow shelf used as transport corridor, frequently inaccessible coastline ● Mull of Galloway – steep cliffs up to 180m ● Farmed, pasture or gorse moorland forms hinterland ● Old forts and castles on rocky western coast ● Coast and its influences not generally apparent beyond 1km on mainland
	Coastal Granite Uplands	Present in 3 locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rugged granite hills rising steeply from coast to 100m altitude ● Improved pasture/rough grazing, gorse and rocky outcrops, farms ● Forested hill slopes, policy parkland ● Exposed
Shetland Isles (SNH Review No. 93)	Farmed and Settled Lowlands and Coast		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scattered crofts, grazing land, gently sloping to flat landform ● Open exposed landscapes ● Views of outlying islands and fragmented coastline NB many sub-types of this
	Coastal Edge	Covers much of coastline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dramatic cliffs, stacks, arches and some sandy beaches ● Backed by moorland/rough grazing
	Farmed and Settled Voes and Sounds		

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Orkney (SNH Review No. 100)	Cliff landscapes	This is a particularly complex LCA with a number of LCTs lying on the coast – some of these are small and only significant types are therefore outlined in this review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Predominantly found on Atlantic west coasts ● Eroding coastal features, cliffs, stacks and caves with cliffs up to 200m ● Rough grassland/moor to cliff edge
	Coastal Sand		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generally flat with sand deposition landforms and features ● Wide sandy bays and dunes, backed by grassland ● Archaeologically sensitive landscapes
	Holms and other Islands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Holms: small rocky uninhabited islands ● ‘Whaleback’ and ‘Ridgeback’ islands also identified
	Low island Pastures		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flat pastures – machair and links, allowing extensive views over sea ● Exposed and open
Western Isles (SNH Review No. 92)	Knock and Lochan	Mainly found on the east coast of Harris/Uists bays and off shore skerries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small knocks and depressions, fragmenting into coast, small rocky promontories ● Small scale intimate landscape with filtered views to open sea
	Rocky Moor	Found on western coasts in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Views across sounds dotted with small islands to larger islands beyond and out to sea
	Mountain Massif		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deeply indented coast dominated by rocky headlands, sea cliffs and occasional caves
	Crofting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parallel to coast, backing either sandy bays or rocky coasts (in case of sub types 2 or 3)
	Machair	Found on western coasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sweeping curves of coastal beaches, low headlands backed by dune systems protecting expansive machair grasslands ● Views to open sea predominate, more varied in Harris where islands and mountain landscapes add diversity