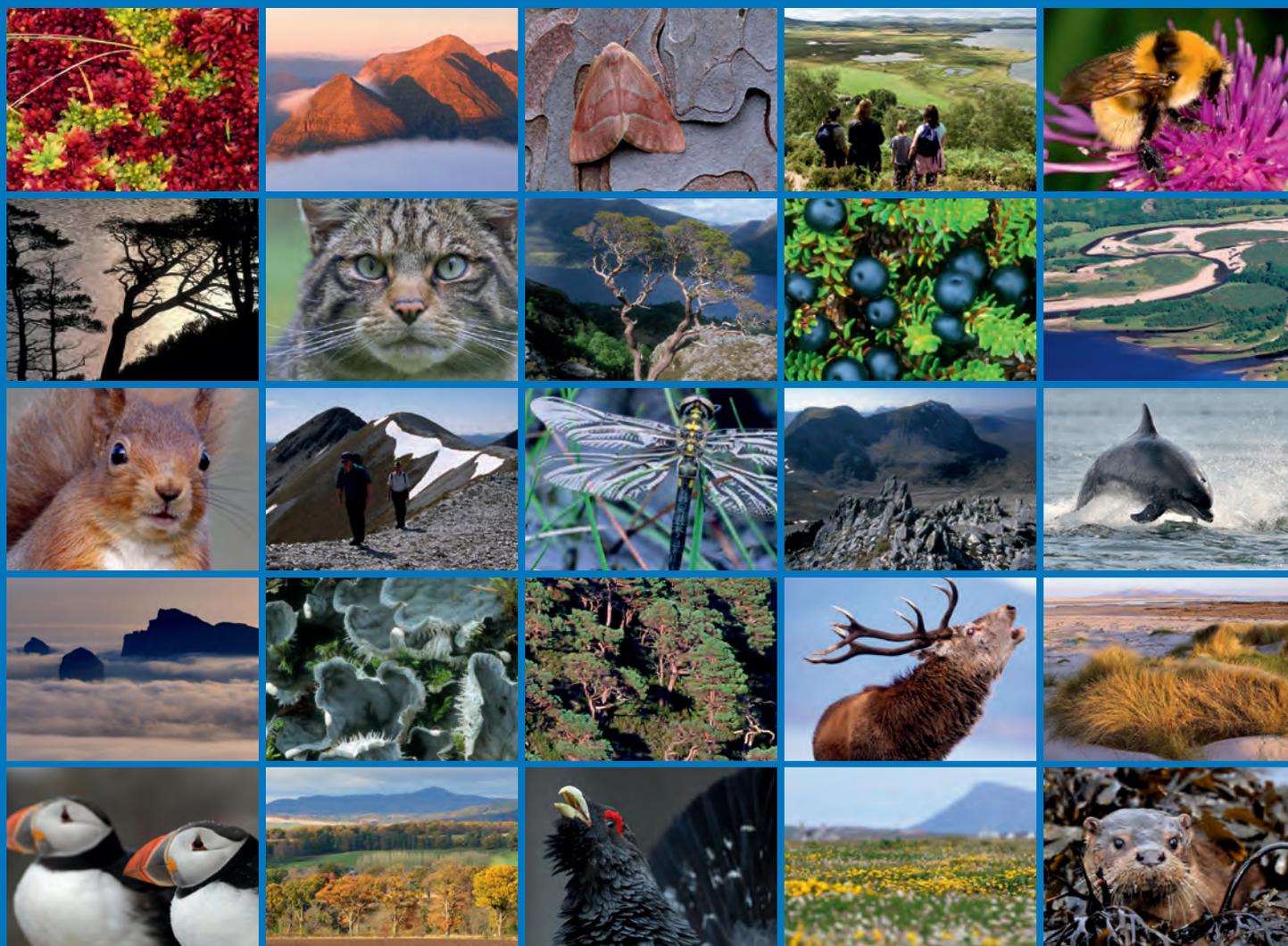


The special qualities of the National Scenic Areas





Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

COMMISSIONED REPORT

Commissioned Report No. 374

The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas

(iBids and Project n° 648)

For further information on this report please contact:

Dr James Fenton
Scottish Natural Heritage
Great Glen House
INVERNESS
IV3 8NW
Telephone: 01463-725 000
E-mail: james.fenton@snh.gov.uk

This report should be quoted as:

Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). The special qualities of the National Scenic Areas.
Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.374 (iBids and Project n° 648).

This report, or any part of it, should not be reproduced without the permission of Scottish Natural Heritage.
This permission will not be withheld unreasonably.



COMMISSIONED REPORT

Summary

The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas

Commissioned Report No. 374 (*iBids and Project n° 648*)

Contractor: SNH project staff

Year of publication: 2010

Background

There are 40 National Scenic Areas (NSAs) in Scotland, representing the country's finest landscapes. In the period 2007-09 staff from Scottish Natural Heritage visited the NSAs and undertook a detailed assessment of the qualities that make the landscape of each one special. The work used a standard methodology, developed during a pilot study undertaken in 2006.

The result of this work is reported here, in effect updating and expanding the short citations for each NSA given in the original 1978 publication *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*.

Main findings

- A list of the special landscape qualities for every NSA is given, together with supporting information. 'Special qualities' are here defined as 'the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery'.
- The special qualities have been derived using a professional, transparent and repeatable method. This involves background research on each NSA; identification of key viewpoints giving representative coverage; the use of field sheets at each viewpoint to record the characteristics of the landscape; and finally the combination of the viewpoint information with the background research to produce a list of the special qualities.
- The format is such that the qualities can be presented in the form of a short, bulleted list of qualities, or a longer, more evocative textual description.
- The identification of the special qualities underpins the original reason for designating these areas and also provides a sound baseline for future work on the celebration, promotion and safeguarding of these outstanding landscapes. This national overview also provides a consistent basis for future consultation.

The four NSAs within Scotland two National Parks are not included in this report. Their qualities are described within separate reports on the special landscape qualities of the National Parks (SNH & Cairngorms National Park Authority, 2010; SNH & Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, 2010).

For further information on this project contact:

Dr James Fenton, SNH, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW
Tel: 01463 725 000

For further information on the SNH Research & Technical Support Programme contact:

DSU (Policy & Advice Directorate), Scottish Natural Heritage, Great Glen House, Inverness, IV3 8NW.
Tel: 01463 725000 or pads@snh.gov.uk

Table of Contents	Page
PART 1 BACKGROUND	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the work	1
1.2 Definition of a 'special quality'	2
2 METHOD USED TO DETERMINE THE SPECIAL QUALITIES	3
2.1 Approach taken	3
2.2 Summary of the method	4
2.3 Deskwork and fieldwork undertaken	6
3 PRESENTATION OF THE QUALITIES	8
3.1 Layout	8
3.2 Different ways of presenting the qualities	8
4 SPECIAL QUALITIES AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT	10
5 CONCLUSIONS	11
6 REFERENCES	12

List of Figures	Page
Figure 1. Deciding what is special – a guide to the approach	5
Map 1. Map of all NSAs in Scotland	16

PART 2
THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS

Grouped by local authority area	Page	Listed alphabetically	Page
<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>		Assynt – Coigach	138
East Stewartry Coast	18	Ben Nevis and Glen Coe	146
Fleet Valley	26	Cuillin Hills, The	154
Nith Estuary	34	Dornoch Firth	162
<i>Scottish Borders</i>		East Stewartry Coast	18
Eildon and Leaderfoot	42	Eildon and Leaderfoot	42
Upper Tweeddale	52	Fleet Valley	26
<i>North Ayrshire</i>		Glen Affric	168
North Arran	58	Glen Strathfarrar	176
<i>Argyll & Bute</i>		Hoy and West Mainland	286
Jura	64	Jura	64
Knapdale	70	Kintail	182
Kyles of Bute	78	Knapdale	70
Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull	84	Knoydart	190
Lynn of Lorn	92	Kyle of Tongue	196
Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs	98	Kyles of Bute	78
<i>Perth & Kinross</i>		Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull	84
Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon	106	Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon	106
Loch Tummel	116	Loch Shiel	202
River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans)	122	Loch Tummel	116
River Tay (Dunkeld)	128	Lynn of Lorn	92
<i>Highland</i>		Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan	208
Assynt - Coigach	138	Nith Estuary	34
Ben Nevis and Glen Coe	146	North Arran	58
Cuillin Hills, The	154	North-West Sutherland	218
Dornoch Firth	162	River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans)	122
Glen Affric	168	River Tay (Dunkeld)	128
Glen Strathfarrar	176	Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs	98
Kintail	182	Shetland	294
Knoydart	190	Small Isles, The	224
Kyle of Tongue	196	South Lewis, Harris and North Uist	252
Loch Shiel	202	South Uist Machair	268
Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan	208	St. Kilda	278
North-West Sutherland	218	Trotternish	234
Small Isles, The	224	Upper Tweeddale	52
Trotternish	234	Wester Ross	240
Wester Ross	240		
<i>Eilean Siar (Western Isles)</i>			
South Lewis, Harris and North Uist	252		
South Uist Machair	268		
St. Kilda	278		
<i>Orkney Islands</i>			
Hoy and West Mainland	286		
<i>Shetland Islands</i>			
Shetland	294		

Note that the NSAs below are not included here because their qualities are set out within separate reports on the special qualities of the National Parks (SNH & CNPA, 2010; SNH & LLTNPA, 2010):

The Cairngorm Mountains	(within Cairngorms National Park)
Deeside and Lochnagar	(within Cairngorms National Park)
Loch Lomond	(within Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park)
The Trossachs	(within Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park)

This report has been produced by **Scottish Natural Heritage**



in association with
Historic Scotland



and the
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS)



Acknowledgments

The two project officers – Krystyna Campbell and Alastair Simmons – must be particularly thanked for spending over a year of their lives visiting each of the NSAs to carry out the fieldwork; and also for sifting through reams of literature to extract relevant landscape information for each NSA. Input to the report was made by a number of SNH staff, and we are also grateful to Dr Lesley Macinnes of Historic Scotland and Dr Piers Dixon of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland who patiently read through and commented on many versions of the report. Dr James Fenton oversaw the management of the project and led the final editing of the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the work

Scotland is renowned for its outstanding scenery, and 40 of its very best areas have been designated as National Scenic Areas (NSAs). Legislation defines these as areas “of outstanding scenic value in a national context” (OPSI, 2006). The work here represents work undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to identify what it is that makes the scenery of each NSA so special, and hence widely valued.

To-date the only descriptions for most NSAs are the short paragraphs given in the 1978 report *Scotland's Scenic Heritage* (CCS, 1978) which formed the basis for their subsequent designation in 1980/1. A few NSAs have more detailed descriptions from later work. For example, the then Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) in a pioneer report on Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon NSA (CCS, 1987) included a heading ‘What makes the Landscape Special’, and identified five main qualities:

- Its setting and physical grandeur
- Its glacial landforms
- Its natural beauty and tranquillity
- Its cultural heritage
- Its man-made resources

Later work in Wester Ross NSA (Highland Council, 2002) and the three NSAs in Dumfries & Galloway (D&G Council, 2002) went further, with more detailed listing of each NSA's special qualities.

However, for most NSAs there have only been the original descriptions in *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*, citations which nowadays are felt to be wanting in terms of both their detail and their application to managing development and land-use change. In 2006 SNH considered it was time to revisit these early descriptions, take on board the findings of any later work, and identify in a systematic manner what particular aspects contribute to the inspiring scenery of each NSA.

SNH commissioned David Tyldesley & Associates to devise such a systematic methodology, resulting in the report *Identifying the Special Qualities of Scotland's National Scenic Areas* (Tyldesley & Associates, 2007). This study reviewed previous work on this topic, both in NSAs and in designated landscapes in England and Wales. The findings contributed to the development of a methodology that was piloted in five contrasting NSAs. With minor modifications SNH used this report to produce guidance on determining special qualities (SNH, 2008).

Together with the work to determine the special qualities of the two National Parks (SNH & Cairngorms National Park Authority, 2010; SNH & Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, 2010), this work results in a complete picture for Scotland's nationally designated landscapes derived from the application of a standard methodology across all NSAs and National Parks. Although to-date it has been a professional-led process, it does provide a firm basis for wider stakeholder consultation.

1.2 Definition of a 'special quality'

A given NSA will have many qualities, some special and some not. In this report, we define 'special qualities' as 'the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery' (SNH, 2008). Hence these special qualities underpin the reason for designation of an area as an NSA.

It should be emphasised that the term as used here refers to the special landscape qualities. A given NSA may well have other special qualities, for example related to culture, history, archaeology, geology or wildlife, but this work only analyses the qualities of the landscape pertinent to the area's designation as a National Scenic Area.

This work moves beyond objective description of the landscape to an assessment of the qualities of the landscape. Hence it is necessary to differentiate between a 'description' and a 'quality'. For example, a given view might contain a loch and a mountain, and an objective description of the view would be:

OBJECTIVE DESCRIPTION: "*A loch and a mountain.*"

However, such views are common in Scotland, and this does not convey what is special about this particular juxtaposition of loch and mountain. The conversion of a description to a quality involves making an assessment based on the response that the described landscape evokes: the mountain might appear 'massive' and the loch 'sinuous and gloomy'. Hence, a special quality might appear as follows:

SPECIAL QUALITY: "*Massive mountain towering above a sinuous, gloomy loch.*"

Although it is relatively easy to produce a description of a landscape, it is generally more difficult to assess the qualities of the landscape and sometimes it can be difficult to express a given special quality in words. Where this is the case, a good description can serve the purpose in that it creates a strong mental image of the scene that in turn evokes a special quality or qualities. For example, the description "an indented rocky coast with many islands" can create an appealing seascape in the mind, giving to the landscape a quality which it is hard to express.

In summary, although ideally it is important to separate a description of a landscape feature from its qualities, this is not always possible. Hence some of the 'special qualities' derived by this method contain more description than others, in which case the 'specialness' is derived from the presence of the particular described feature or features.

2 METHOD USED TO DETERMINE THE SPECIAL QUALITIES

The method to identify special qualities was designed to meet the following criteria (David Tyldesley & Associates, 2006):

- a) Realistic – achievable and practical in terms of skills, staff resources, finance and timescales.
- b) Repeatable – from one NSA to another, now and in the future with different compositions of personnel.
- c) Resonant – understandable and meaningful to those who undertake it and those who use its outputs.
- d) Relevant to people – involving as wide a community of people as possible.
- e) Respected – capable of being adopted and perceived as a method generating consensus through informed professional judgement and wide public opinion that is as free from dispute as possible.
- f) Robust – capable of withstanding scrutiny, learning lessons from past work but nevertheless flexible and capable of adaptation over time; self evidently it should be applicable to all NSAs.
- g) Related to the scenery and landscape of NSAs.

Note that the involvement of as wide a community of people as possible is a necessary part of the process. However to-date the application of the method as reported here has been a professional-led process designed to produce a consistent overview of the NSAs using a standard and transparent method. The special qualities identified by this process does, though, provide a firm basis for wider consultation in the future.

2.1 Approach taken

In undertaking this work the following approach was taken:

2.1.1 *Existing sites and boundaries*

This work made the assumption at the outset that, as the National Scenic Areas had previously been identified as worthy of a national designation, all the NSAs did have special qualities of national merit. The work also made the assumption that the qualities were contained within the existing NSA boundaries, and fieldwork was confined to these.

2.1.2 *Not comparing one location with another*

The work did not compare one location with another: the identification of the qualities that came across as special was made without reference to other locations. Hence there has been no attempt to compare one NSA with another, or with the undesignated surrounding areas.

2.1.3 *No ranking of landscape types*

Neither has there been any attempt to rank different landscape types. For example, mountainous terrain has not been ranked higher or lower quality than lowland terrain, or seascapes higher or lower than inland landscapes.

2.1.4 No ranking of qualities

Nor has there been any attempt to rank the qualities listed for a given NSA, to say that one quality is more important than any other. The disaggregation of the landscape into separate qualities is to some extent an artificial exercise because it is the combination and integration of all the individual qualities which creates the appealing landscapes deemed worthy of national designation. However the disaggregation does help us understand what is special about a given NSA, and makes it easier to plan future management in keeping with individual qualities.

2.2 Summary of the method

The method used to determine the special qualities followed the guidance mentioned in 1.1. above (SNH, 2008) and follows a similar approach to that used when carrying out a Landscape Character Assessment (SNH & Countryside Agency, 2002), although with its own distinct steps. See the guidance for the full details, but in summary the process consists of:

- a) A desk study to collect background information on the NSA, including the description in *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*, the relevant Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Land Use Assessment (HS & RCAHMS, 2009) and other literature.
- b) A familiarisation visit to the NSA, and the identification of enough key viewpoints to give representative coverage of the whole area.
- c) Fieldwork at each key viewpoint, where three field sheets are completed:
 1. An objective description of the landscape.
 2. A visual analysis.
 3. A personal response.
- d) Analysis and collation of viewpoint information.
- e) Combining of viewpoint information and background information, including the descriptions in *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*, to determine what is special about the landscape.

The decision on what qualities to include as special will be the judgement of the surveyors. Identifying the special qualities is a challenging task, but the method used here enables a systematic, transparent and professional approach to explain its conclusions in a rational way. Figure 1 below illustrates the process of teasing out the qualities from the preceding deskwork and fieldwork. The final stage shown in Figure 1 is to check that the list of special qualities covers the full scope and range of potential qualities, and the following checklist is used for this – although under some headings there may be nothing special in a particular NSA.

Landform including geomorphology, natural processes and systems and water.

Land use and land cover, especially their relationship with landform and settlement.

Settlement including villages, steadings, crofts, houses, industrial and agricultural infrastructure, road and other transport structures.

Authenticity and integrity expressed, for example, as areas of distinctiveness, sense of place, unspoilt character or historic environment.

Time depth, especially where there is a strong palimpsest, with features from earlier periods being a key aspect, such as field patterns, designed landscapes, buildings, monuments, or archaeological sites.

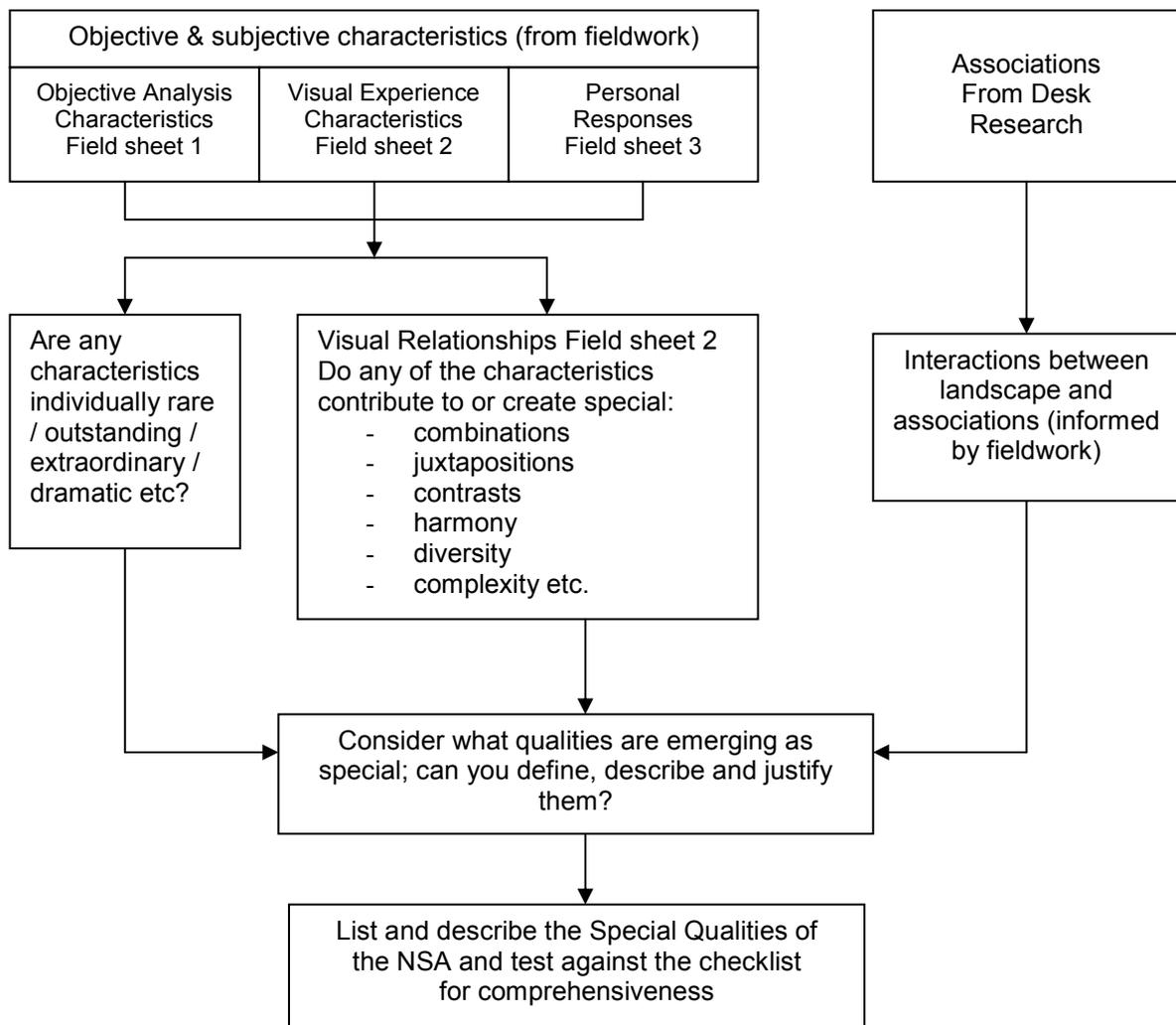
Visual experience, especially the combinations, contrasts, harmony, variety and complexity of the scene.

Emotional response such as perceptions of remoteness, secrecy, wildness, exhilaration, safety, shelter, etc.

Wildlife, where flora and fauna make a special contribution to the scenery without necessarily expressing them in habitat or species specific terms or scientific language.

Cultural and historical associations, where landscapes are associated with particular people or events.

Figure1. Deciding what is special – a guide to the approach



2.3 Deskwork and fieldwork undertaken

Two SNH project staff undertook the deskwork and fieldwork between November 2007 and March 2009, each being responsible for writing-up the qualities for a particular NSA. The location of the viewpoints used in the fieldwork, the fieldwork sheets themselves and subsequent viewpoint analyses are not included here but are available for inspection if required.

For those NSAs where work had already been carried out to determine the special qualities, the special qualities have been derived from this work rather than from new fieldwork.

The following NSAs had primary fieldwork undertaken during 2007/8 and followed the full methodology to determine the special qualities:

Dornoch Firth	Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull	Scarba, Lunga and the
Cuillin Hills, The	Loch Shiel	Garvellachs
Glen Affric	Loch Tummel	Shetland (7 areas)
Glen Strathfarrar	Lynn of Lorn	Small Isles, The
Hoy and West Mainland	Morar, Moidart and	South Lewis, Harris and North
Jura	Ardnamurchan	Uist
Kintail	North Arran	South Uist Machair
Knoydart	North-West Sutherland	Trotternish
Kyle of Tongue	River Earn (Comrie to St Fillans)	
Kyles of Bute	River Tay (Dunkeld)	

The following NSAs had the fieldwork undertaken by David Tyldesley & Associates during 2006 as pilots during the development of the methodology. Originally written as textual descriptions, they have been reformatted to match the current work:

Assynt - Coigach	Knapdale
Ben Nevis and Glen Coe	Upper Tweeddale

The following NSAs had the special qualities developed from previous work (see reference), with some additional fieldwork and research:

East Stewartry Coast (D&G, 2002)	Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon (CCS, 1987)
Eildon and Leaderfoot (Grant, 2004)	St. Kilda (Secretary of State for Scotland, 2003)
Fleet Valley (D&G, 2002)	Wester Ross (Highland Council, 2002)
Nith Estuary (D&G, 2002)	

The following NSAs are within National Parks. The special qualities of the parks as a whole have been determined using the same method, and are published separately (SNH & CNPA, 2010; SNH & LLTNPA, 2010):

The Cairngorm Mountains	Loch Lomond
Deeside and Lochnagar	The Trossachs

For each NSA where fieldwork was undertaken during 2007/8 there is a bibliography listing the main texts consulted. For the other NSAs the lists are less exhaustive, although for every NSA the reference to the relevant Landscape Character Assessment report is given.

Other standard texts were consulted which will not have been listed in the bibliography and these are: the historic land use assessment data (HS & RCAHMS, 2009); relevant entries in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (HS, 2010); data on nature conservation sites within NSAs (SNH, 2010); and data on Geological Conservation Review sites within NSAs (JNCC, 2010).

Drafts of the special qualities for each NSA were discussed and agreed with staff of Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. David Tyldesley (of David Tyldesley Associates) carried out a quality assurance process in July 2009.

3 PRESENTATION OF THE QUALITIES

3.1 Layout

Part 2 of this report has adopted a standard layout to present the special qualities of the 36 NSAs located outwith the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks.

The original description of each NSA from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage* (CCS, 1978) is given before the special qualities, together with a map delineating the boundary. These descriptions provide a succinct overview of the area, and their use has been a key part of the methodology, both at the start of the fieldwork and in the final listing of the qualities.

A bullet-list of all the special qualities is followed by a standardised table format with the detail. The special qualities are derived by reading down the left-hand column, where textual descriptions expand on the bullet-heading. The right-hand column contains further information to support, explain or bring-to-life the qualities.

Some NSAs have qualities that are specific to a given area or location rather than being experienced more widely within it. Where these are present they are listed at the end under the heading 'Location-specific qualities.' However, the distinction between location-specific and general qualities is not always clear-cut. For example, in the Eildon Hills NSA the hills themselves are given as a generic quality even though they occupy only one area; this is because they can be seen from most parts and tend to dominate the whole NSA. Similarly, although a coastline within an NSA will occupy a defined area, it will not have been classified as location-specific as it generally traverses the length of the NSA.

It is important to note that location-specific qualities are integral to the NSA as a whole. For example, a location-specific quality of St Kilda is "*The superb landscape setting of Village Bay*". It is impossible, though, to imagine St Kilda without Village Bay; it is just that many of the characteristics of this particular part of St Kilda do not apply to the other islands.

This reinforces the point that, although it is now possible to produce a list of all the individual qualities for each NSA, it is how the qualities come together that makes the landscape of a given NSA nationally important. All the qualities are integral to the NSA.

3.2 Different ways of presenting the qualities

The table format presented in Part 2 is the most succinct way of providing all the information, but the information can be extracted and used in different ways depending on how the qualities are to be used.

A summary list of the qualities for a given NSA can be given by listing the separate bullet points. An example from the River Earn NSA:

- ***A harmonious combination of highland and lowland***
- ***An enclosed and unified strath***
- ***The sinuous river at the heart of the NSA***
- ***Rocky hillocks rising out of the level floodplain***
- ***Diverse tree cover of woods and forests***
- ***A managed, ordered landscape***
- ***The spectacular De'ilds Cauldron and Dunmore Hill***
- ***The viewpoint of Dundurn, St Fillans Hill***

Alternatively, the text in the left hand column can be run together to produce a longer and more flowing description of the qualities, either with or without the preceding bullet points. An example again from the River Earn NSA:

A harmonious combination of highland and lowland

Entering this NSA gives a feeling of transition, of leaving the rugged highlands behind and entering the fertile lowlands (or *vice versa*). The highland aspects of rocky hills, enclosing glen, fast flowing rivers, waterfalls and gorges are all present, but so are fertile lowland fields and ordered designed landscapes of hedges, policy woodlands and big houses. These lowland features soften the harsher highland elements, resulting in a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing landscape of great charm.

An enclosed and unified strath

With its bare, rocky open hills descending through slopes of wood and bracken to the fields on the flat valley floor, this area of Strathearn exhibits a unity and coherence. There is a feeling of enclosed and encircled space at the centre, which reinforces its compact and unified nature.

The sinuous river at the heart of the NSA

The River Earn, running through the heart of the NSA, meanders across its level flood plain. With its pools, riffles and rapids, it is both swift and leisurely, providing constant variety and change. Sometimes it is visible hard against the main road, at other times it takes its own course through the fields and woods.

4 SPECIAL QUALITIES AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

This work presents a snapshot of the qualities of the National Scenic Areas as they appear today. However the importance given to different qualities does vary over time, reflecting the attitudes and aspirations of the society of the day.

It is recognised that these landscapes are the current endpoint of a long period of evolution, involving a complex interplay of the natural elements of climate, geology, geomorphology, soil development, vegetation succession and herbivore impact – and with a rich overlay of human elements linked to settlement, transport, farming and forestry. Similarly, we should expect these landscapes to continue to evolve in future in response to on-going social, economic and environmental change.

Previous land-use has had a significant influence on the landscape today, in particular the clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the associated changes of land-use such as the creation of sheep farms and sporting estates. Additionally, many west coast locations now seen as remote were at the centre of transport routes when the sea was the main highway and travel inland was difficult. Hence, although application of the special qualities methodology has identified 'wildness' and 'remoteness' as qualities of many National Scenic Areas, there is ample evidence that these qualities would not have applied in the past, particularly at lower altitudes.

Abandoned features, such as farmsteads, shielings, field systems and defensive structures, are reminders of earlier times when the landscapes were more populated, and eloquently evoke the historic events that changed this situation. These relict landscapes can be complex and multi-period, often including prehistoric elements, and contribute to the understanding of the human forces that have helped shape the landscape.

This archaeological evidence is of great cultural significance because it relates to areas or periods for which there are no written records and is therefore of fundamental value in understanding the development of the current landscape. The historic environment makes a special contribution to the landscape of these NSAs through the story it tells of past history, through providing a human scale to the dramatic natural environment and through vividly demonstrating the tenacity and strength of the human spirit in the face of difficult circumstances. This evidence of historic land use is consequently an important quality of the landscape of many NSAs.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Scotland's finest landscapes, as represented by the suite of NSAs, are highly valued by residents and visitors alike. This work has used a professional-led approach to identify the qualities that make each NSA special and hence underpin the reason for its designation.

Defining the special qualities of a particular NSA does not in itself safeguard the area – it only clarifies what needs to be safeguarded to maintain its outstanding scenery. However this national overview of special qualities does provide a firm basis for future consultation and policy development, particularly in relation to managing development and land use change within NSAs. This should help ensure that we pass on the appeal and value of our finest landscapes to future generations. This work will also provide a solid basis for any activity designed to celebrate or promote these areas, whether to residents, businesses or visitors.

6 REFERENCES

Reports:

Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) 1978. *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*.

Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) 1987. *Loch Rannoch & Glen Lyon National Scenic Area: Policies for Landscape Conservation & Management*.

Grant, A. 2004. *Eildon and Leaderfoot NSA: A Preliminary Survey*. Report prepared by Alison Grant, Landscape Architect, on behalf of Scottish Natural Heritage (unpublished).

Secretary of State for Scotland 2003. *Revised Nomination of St Kilda for Inclusion in the World Heritage Site List*. UK submission to UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 2003

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) & the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), 2010. The special landscape qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No.375*.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) & the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) 2010. The special landscape qualities of the Loch and the Trossachs National Park. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No.376*.

Tyldesley, D. & Associates 2007. Identifying the special qualities of Scotland's National Scenic Areas. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No.255*.

Web:

Dumfries and Galloway Council (D&G) 2002. *Management Strategies for East Stewartry Coast, Fleet Valley and Nith Estuary National Scenic Areas*.
www.dumgal.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1991 (accessed 12 December 2009)

Highland Council 2002. *Wester Ross Revised Draft Management Strategy November 2002*.
www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/westerrossnationalscenic.htm (accessed 9 April 2010)

Historic Scotland (HS) 2010. Information on Gardens and Designed Landscapes has been gained from the inventory at www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/gardens.htm (accessed 16 April 2010)

Historic Scotland (HS) & Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) 2009. Information on historic land use has been gained from the data at jura.rcahms.gov.uk/HLA/start.jsp (accessed 12 December 2009)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) 2010. Information on Geological Conservation Review Sites has been gained from www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2947 (accessed 16 April 2010)

Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) 2006. *Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006*,
www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2006/asp_20060017_en_13#pt10 (accessed 12 December 2009)

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) 2008. *Guidance for identifying the special qualities of Scotland's National Scenic Areas*, www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B232041.pdf (accessed 13 April 2010)

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) 2010. Information on designated nature conservation sites has been gained from SiteLink at gateway.snh.gov.uk/portal/page?_pageid=53,910284,53_920284&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL (accessed 13 April 2010)

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) & The Countryside Agency 2002, *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland*, www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/lca/guidance (accessed 12 December 2009)

INDEX TO THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS

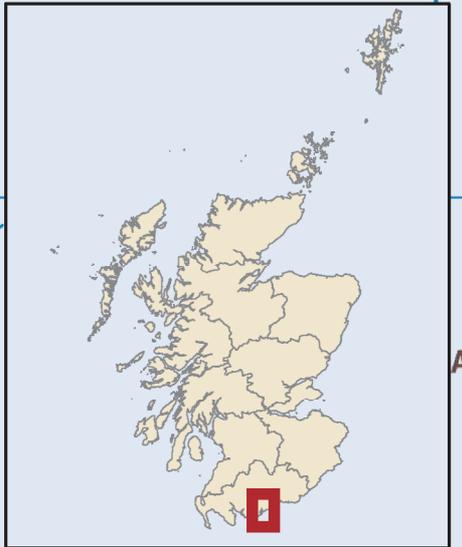
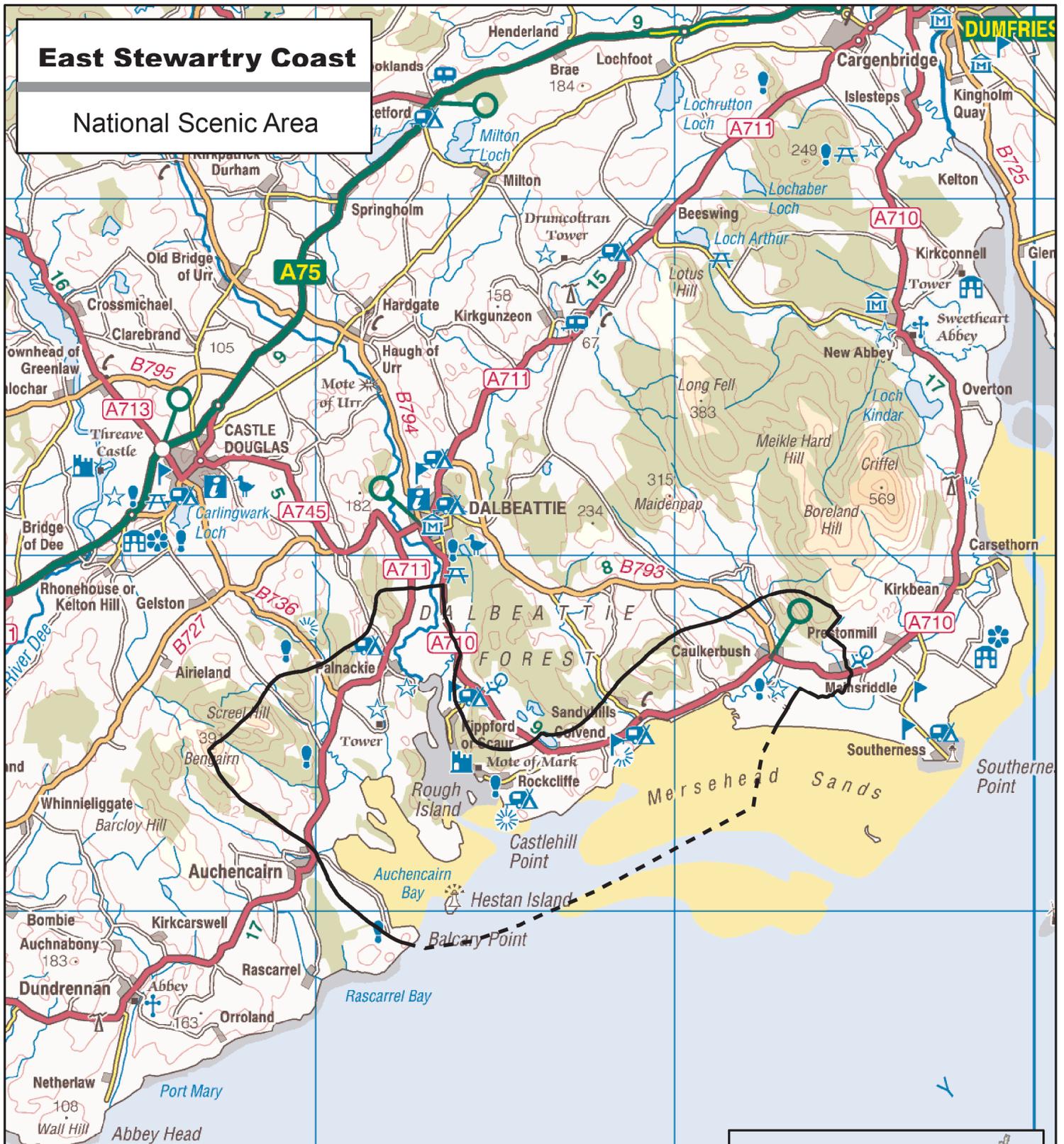
GROUPED BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA	PAGE	LISTED ALPHABETICALLY	RELEVANT SECTION
Dumfries & Galloway		Assynt – Coigach	<i>Highland</i>
East Stewartry Coast	18	Ben Nevis & Glen Coe	<i>Highland</i>
Fleet Valley	26	Cuillin Hills, The	<i>Highland</i>
Nith Estuary	34	Dornoch Firth	<i>Highland</i>
Scottish Borders		East Stewartry Coast	<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>
Eildon & Leaderfoot	42	Eildon & Leaderfoot	<i>Scottish Borders</i>
Upper Tweeddale	52	Fleet Valley	<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>
North Ayrshire		Glen Affric	<i>Highland</i>
North Arran	58	Glen Strathfarrar	<i>Highland</i>
Argyll & Bute		Hoy & West Mainland	<i>Orkney Islands</i>
Jura	64	Jura	<i>Argyll & Bute</i>
Knapdale	70	Kintail	<i>Highland</i>
Kyles of Bute	78	Knapdale	<i>Argyll & Bute</i>
Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull	84	Knoydart	<i>Highland</i>
Lynn of Lorn	92	Kyle of Tongue	<i>Highland</i>
Scarba, Lunga & the Garvellachs	98	Kyles of Bute	<i>Argyll & Bute</i>
Perth & Kinross		Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull	<i>Argyll & Bute</i>
Loch Rannoch & Glen Lyon*	106	Loch Rannoch & Glen Lyon	<i>Perth & Kinross</i>
Loch Tummel	116	Loch Shiel	<i>Highland</i>
River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans)	122	Loch Tummel	<i>Perth & Kinross</i>
River Tay (Dunkeld)	128	Lynn of Lorn	<i>Argyll & Bute</i>
Highland		Morar, Moidart & Ardnamurchan	<i>Highland</i>
Assynt - Coigach	138	Nith Estuary	<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>
Ben Nevis & Glen Coe**	146	North Arran	<i>North Ayrshire</i>
Cuillin Hills, The	154	North-West Sutherland	<i>Highland</i>
Dornoch Firth	162	River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans)	<i>Perth & Kinross</i>
Glen Affric	168	River Tay (Dunkeld)	<i>Perth & Kinross</i>
Glen Strathfarrar	176	Scarba, Lunga & the Garvellachs	<i>Argyll & Bute</i>
Kintail	182	Shetland	<i>Shetland Islands</i>
Knoydart	190	Small Isles, The	<i>Highland</i>
Kyle of Tongue	196	South Lewis, Harris & North Uist	<i>Eilean Siar</i>
Loch Shiel	202	South Uist Machair	<i>Eilean Siar</i>
Morar, Moidart & Ardnamurchan	208	St. Kilda	<i>Eilean Siar</i>
North-West Sutherland	218	Trotternish	<i>Highland</i>
Small Isles, The	224	Upper Tweeddale	<i>Scottish Borders</i>
Trotternish	234	Wester Ross	<i>Highland</i>
Wester Ross	240		
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)			
South Lewis, Harris & North Uist	252		
South Uist Machair	268		
St. Kilda	278		
Orkney Islands			
Hoy & West Mainland	286		
Shetland Islands			
Shetland	294		

* Also includes a small part within Stirling Council area

** Parts are also within Perth & Kinross Council and Argyll & Bute Council areas

East Stewartry Coast

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

EAST STEWARTRY COAST NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Dumfries and Galloway

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The wide tidal flats of Mersehead Sands occur at a point where the saltings of Preston Merse meet the fossil cliffs and raised beaches of the rocky Sandyhills coast. Sandyhills Bay with its dunes and enclosing woodland is separated from Mersehead Sands by the meandering intertidal stretch of the Southwick Water which adds visual interest to the wide expanse of sand. Inland the containing hills are part wooded and part moorland, and at Caulkerbush there is a diverse pattern of hedgerow trees, parkland and wooded hillside.

Westwards the hills become progressively more wooded in a way which strengthens the feeling of enclosure that they contribute to the inshore waters of Rough Firth, Orchardton Bay and Auchencairn Bay. Within the bays, divided by the wooded promontories of Almorness Point and Torr Point, lie Heston Island and Rough Island which strengthen the character of enclosed intimacy and shelter that these inlets exhibit.

Around their shores the land use pattern of mixed farming and forestry and undulating relief underline this small scale intimacy of landscape, which contrasts well with the open character of the sand flats. The villages of Rockcliffe and Kippford add to the diversity of the scene, and elsewhere buildings tend to be of a traditional character which harmonises well with the nature of the landscape.

The Special Qualities of the East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area

Note: Management Strategies have previously been produced for the three NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway, including the East Stewartry Coast NSA. The Strategies contain scenic qualities which were identified through a public consultation process, and the documents were adopted in 2002 as Supplementary Guidance to the Development Plan. The special qualities given here have originated from and complement those in the Management Strategies and are presented in the new format.

- A working landscape of great beauty
- A coastline of endless variety
- A landscape of woods, fields, dykes and hedges
- A sense of calm and enclosure at the heart of the NSA
- Both 'Scottish Riviera' and the 'Secret Coast'
- A dynamic coast contrasting with the static inland landscape
- The sense of the sea without seeing the sea
- A rich variety of texture, colour, light and scale
- The sound and sight of many birds
- Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area
- The use of locally distinctive stone
- A wide horizon of the Cumbrian Fells and the open sea

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A working landscape of great beauty</i> 	
<p>This intimate area of farms and woods possesses an indented and complex coastline. The natural and cultural elements come together to create a gentle, working landscape of great beauty that has been a draw to visitors since Victorian times.</p>	<p>Various landscape character types meet in this NSA to create a varied and complex area. The landscape types are Peninsula with Gorsey Knolls, Coastal Granite Uplands, Narrow Wooded Valley and Estuarine Flats.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A coastline of endless variety</i> 	
<p>The coastline exhibits endless variety, from sheltered bays to long exposed shores, from mudflats and sandy beaches to rocky coasts and cliffs. Undeveloped shores, headlands, cliffs and islands add a wild feel that contrasts with the managed landscape of farm and coastal village.</p>	<p>The coast possesses: merse (saltmarsh), mud & sand flats, small beaches of shingle, sand & crushed shell, and dunes; intimate bays; wooded shorelines; rocky coasts of promontories, headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, stacks and skerries; causeways, islands, a rock arch and a tidal estuary.</p> <p>The villages are Palnackie, Rockcliffe, Kippford and Auchencairn. The indented nature of coast, together with the proximity to the Irish Sea and Isle of Man, made the</p>

	<p>coast ideal in the past for smuggling. This in turn has inspired books such as SR Crockett's <i>The Raiders</i>.</p>
<p>• <i>A landscape of woods, fields, dykes and hedges</i></p>	
<p>It is a landscape of farmland and woodland whose appeal lies through the presence of many traditional agricultural features. A network of irregular fields stretch over rolling hills and knolls, bounded by dry-stone dykes, and many fields contain the distinctive Galloway cattle.</p>	<p>As well as agricultural land of permanent pasture, there are also significant stands of commercial forestry.</p> <p>Past agricultural improvement were carried out in a way that related to the landscape and resulted in the distinct pattern of enclosure. The nature of the landform also means the area has not experienced the enlargement of fields to the same degree as much of lowland Britain.</p>
<p>• <i>A sense of calm and enclosure at the heart of the NSA</i></p>	
<p>The slow passage of water through Rough Firth, at the heart of the NSA, provides a sense of calm, which is enhanced by the small-scale nature of the bays and beaches, and their enclosing gentle hills and woodland.</p> <p>The sense of peacefulness is reinforced by small boats and yachts moving up and down the waters and by the well-established, unhurried, attractive, traditional settlements of Rockcliffe and Kippford.</p>	<p>Many of the roads to the coast are dead-end (e.g. Kippford, Rockcliffe) and this adds to the slow pace, as there is no through traffic.</p> <p>Much of the coast is only accessible by path, reinforcing the sense of privacy and seclusion of the small bays and headlands.</p> <p>The existence of National Trust for Scotland Conservation Agreements has helped maintain the distinctiveness.</p>
<p>• <i>Both 'Scottish Riviera' and the 'Secret Coast'</i></p>	
<p>Although the area receives numerous visitors, tourism is generally well absorbed into the landscape. Many areas have a feeling of being secret and secluded due to the complex indented nature of the coast.</p>	<p>Much of the coast is inaccessible by car or is on remote headlands or points, containing numerous secret bays, beaches and woodlands. This is balanced by tourist areas with hotels and caravans, which to a large extent are absorbed into the undulating and wooded landscape.</p> <p>The villages of Rockcliffe and Kippford have been tourist attractions since Victorian times. The coastal path between Rockcliffe and Kippford, and onward to Castlehill Point allows an appreciation of the coast, from inland firth to wide seascape.</p>
<p>• <i>A dynamic coast contrasting with the static inland landscape</i></p>	
<p>There is a constant movement of estuarine waters, whether the waves rippling Rough Firth and Auchencairn</p>	<p>A contrast can be had between the calm of the enclosed Rough Firth, Auchencairn or Orchardton Bays, and the open, exposed sea at Mersehead, Hestan Island, Balcarry or</p>

<p>Bay, or bigger waves coming in over the sands of Mersehead, or crashing on exposed points and islands.</p> <p>The tides are constantly moving in and out over the sands and mud. At low tide, these large areas reflect and double whatever is in the sky, be it stormy weather or a beautiful sunset – adding to the big sky which typifies the Solway Firth and its surrounds.</p> <p>Sea and land often appear intermingled, with islands only becoming islands at full tide. The coastal areas provide a dynamic contrast to the static inland landscape, or to the apparently unmoving waters of the Solway Firth far out in the distance.</p>	<p>Castlehill Points.</p> <p>Tidal areas can be mud (Kippford) or rippled sand (Rockcliffe, Sandyhills Bay, Mersehead).</p> <p>Movement can be fast or slow: the shifting channels of Rough Firth, the constant erosion and accretion along the coast, the diurnal change in the tides, the shifting patterns in the mud and sand flats; the waves crashing on the exposed coast. The tide can come in particularly fast over the flat sands and muds.</p> <p>An important quality is that Rough Firth and Auchencairn bay are perceived as part landscape/part seascape due to the enclosed bays being intertidal and the islands becoming connected to the land by causeways at each ebb tide.</p>
<p>• <i>The sense of the sea without seeing the sea</i></p>	
<p>Although always nearby, the sea itself is often invisible. Inland, though, its presence is felt through the sound of seabirds, the sight of the meandering tidal channel of the Urr at Palnackie, the smell of seaweed and mudflats, changes in light with the changing tides, or the sudden drop-off of gorse-covered knolls.</p>	<p>The muddy channel at Palnackie is not visible from any distance, but its presence is made known by the sight of a boat seemingly afloat on the fields at high tide. It is famous for the annual Palnackie flounder tramping championship held here at low tide.</p>
<p>• <i>A rich variety of texture, colour, light and scale</i></p>	
<p>The land is varied and interesting, with many contrasts in form and texture. Smooth mudflat and merse are present, as are gently shelving beaches and rolling farmland; also steep cliffs, rocky islands, gorse knolls and rough moorland.</p> <p>The variety of colour and light adds further beauty to the area. The sea and the firth continually change with the weather and tides, and the mosaic of houses, water, woodland, fields and hills results in a tapestry of different colours that changes with the season.</p> <p>There are changes of scale, views varying from a small intimate bay to a vast coastal seascape, from an enclosed</p>	<p>There are many shades of green, brought about by the differing merse, improved grassland, rough grassland, deciduous trees and evergreen forestry. Great swathes of seasonally changing colour are brought about by gorse on the knolls, heather on the moorland, and flowers on the saltmarsh and coastal grasslands. Colour from many policy woodlands can be a key element of this NSA, particularly the landscapes at Munches, Orchardton and Southwick</p> <p>Tidal changes result in differing reflectivities, whether off water, wet or dry sand, or mud.</p> <p>There is a great variety of scale: from an enclosed, small scale landscape of bays such as at Port o' Warren Bay, to the medium scale of Rough Firth, with headlands, and enclosing woodland at Rockcliffe and Kippford; to vast open views along the Solway coast and inland to the surrounding Galloway hills (especially Screele), and</p>

<p>field to a wide vista of coast and shore.</p> <p>Together, this variety of texture, colour, light and scale is aesthetically pleasing, and has drawn many visitors and artists over the years.</p>	<p>across the Solway to the Cumbrian coast and hills, such as can be gained from Castlehill Point.</p> <p>The painter John Copeland has been one of those attracted by the visual appeal of the area.</p>
<p>• <i>The sound and sight of many birds</i></p>	
<p>The distinctive sound of birds, whether the piping call of the waders on the coast or the melody of the songbirds inland, are an evocative aspect of this landscape.</p>	<p>Bird sounds include the honking of the barnacle geese and the cry of the gulls; the call of the oystercatcher and curlew; songbirds in wood and garden; the drumming of the woodpecker in Rockcliffe on the Jubilee trail. RSPB has a bird reserve at Mersehead and the National Trust for Scotland at Rough Island.</p>
<p>• <i>Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area</i></p>	
<p>There are several focal points which reinforce the identity of the area. These include Rough Island and Hestan Island, and the cultural landmarks of Orchardton Tower and the Mote of Mark.</p>	<p>Owing to the intimate and enclosed nature of this NSA, there are no features which are visible from all or most of the NSA. Instead, there are features key to certain limited areas.</p>
<p>• <i>The use of locally distinctive stone</i></p>	
<p>Granite is the local building stone, and its grey and white colour in vernacular houses and dykes adds to the distinctiveness of the area.</p>	<p>Most of the NSA is underlain by granite. Granite is used extensively for many cottages and houses, with the softer sandstone used more for lintels and quoins. The numerous dykes are mainly of granite.</p>
<p>• <i>A wide horizon of the Cumbrian Fells and the open sea</i></p>	
<p>Although many of the views are enclosed and intimate, particularly within Rough Firth, distant views can open up to the Cumbrian Fells of the Lake District and to the wide horizon of the Irish Sea.</p>	<p>Roadside trees along the coastal road in the east often obscure the open views over the sea. However there are occasional glimpses of the wider Solway Firth beyond, and viewpoints such as Castlehill Point give a wide panorama.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Dumfries & Galloway Council 2002. *East Stewartry Coast Management Strategy*.

Land Use Consultants 1998. Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 94*.

MacLeod, I. 1986. *Discovering Galloway*. Edinburgh: John Donald.

Ratcliffe, D. 2007. *Galloway and the Borders*. London: Collins.

RCAHMS & Historic Scotland 2002. *The Historic Land-Use Assessment of the Solway Coast National Scenic Areas*.

Solway Firth Partnership 1996. *Solway Firth Review*. Dumfries: Solway Firth Partnership.

www.artistsfootsteps.co.uk. A website containing details on all the paintings done by the artists who have lived in or visited Dumfries & Galloway (accessed March 2009).

www.rspb.org.uk. Mersehead Reserve (accessed March 2009).

FLEET VALLEY NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Dumfries and Galloway

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Fleet Bay is dominated by the hill mass of Cairnharrow (456m) on its western side, of which Ben John and Mill Knock are outliers. On the east relief is not so pronounced but enclosure is given by the ridge which culminates in the well wooded Bar Hill just south of Gatehouse. Woodland contributes significantly to the Fleet Bay landscape, with policy planting and hedgerow trees being dominant.

The village of Gatehouse of Fleet plays a prominent part in the scene, acting as a pleasing focal point for the valley which changes character at the village from estuarial to upland. While there is a greater amplitude of relief in the inner valley the landscape is also softer, more enclosed and intimate.

There is a variety of woodlands from young plantations to mature broadleaved woods clothing the valley sides, while above them extends the open moorland of the hills, and below the riverside pasture. The pattern is one of rich, well-managed, mixed land use farming in which the woods are particularly striking, and where there is evidence of long established prosperity in the number of castles, churches, monuments and ancient remains.

The Special Qualities of the Fleet Valley National Scenic Area

Note: Management Strategies have previously been produced for the three NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway, including the Fleet Valley NSA. The Strategies contain scenic qualities which were identified through a public consultation process, and the documents were adopted in 2002 as Supplementary Guidance to the Development Plan. The special qualities given here have originated from and complement those in the Management Strategies and are presented in the new format.

- A compact, working landscape of great charm
- A sense of timelessness arising from a rich heritage
- The gradation from coastal islands to upland hills
- The traditional boundaries of dyke and hedge
- Abundance of trees and woodlands
- The variety and influence of water
- A rich variety of colour, light, texture and scale
- Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area
- Views out of the Fleet Valley to the Isle of Man and the Merrick
- Gatehouse as a picturesque and historic centre

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A compact, working landscape of great charm</i> 	
<p>With its coastland, farmland, woodland and upland, together with a picturesque town and a designed landscape, this area contains great variety within a small area. Its various elements, both natural and cultural, blend well together, resulting in a working landscape of great charm.</p>	<p>Natural elements include mudflats, sandy beaches, merse (saltmarsh), islands, rocky coast, grasslands, gorse knolls, woodlands, burns, rives, moorlands and rocky hills.</p> <p>Cultural elements include a planned town, a designed landscape, a canalised river, mill lades, forests, fields, farms, hedgerows, field trees, dykes and landmark buildings.</p> <p>The upper Fleet Valley gives has the appearance of an upland glen with a flowing river at its centre.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A sense of timelessness arising from a rich heritage</i> 	
<p>It is a landscape where land management is carried out in a manner that maintains the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, creating intermingled and pleasing mosaics of trees, fields, habitats and buildings.</p> <p>The presence of traditional houses, dykes, hedges and field patterns, the</p>	<p>The Fleet Valley is very much a working landscape, with cattle grazing on the lower slopes and sheep on the upper slopes. Cattle are often the distinctive black Galloways.</p> <p>Most of Gatehouse of Fleet is a Conservation Area, and Cally Estate is in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Evocative cultural features include the deserted house on Murray's Isle, Anwoth Old</p>

<p>numerous historical and archaeological sites and ruins, together with the abundant natural heritage, lend the area an air of timelessness – a sense of historical continuity across the ages.</p>	<p>Church, the ruins of Cardoness Castle, and a variety of ancient monuments. These latter include an Iron Age fort, a Roman fort, early historic symbol stones, mottes and castles.</p> <p>The richness of the natural heritage is reflected in the presence of six SSSIs, two of which are also Special Areas of Conservation. The existence of many National Trust for Scotland Conservation Agreements has helped maintain the distinctiveness of the area.</p>
--	---

• ***The gradation from coastal islands to upland hills***

<p>With coastal scenery dominating in the south, moving inland there is a gentle transformation through ordered farms and fields, to a landscape with a wilder feel of hills and moors. This juxtaposition enables contrasting aspects of the Scottish countryside to be experienced within a short journey or a single view.</p>	<p>A wide variety of landscapes can be experienced as one journeys northwards from Fleet Bay: from the wide outer bay, the valley becomes more enclosed and the sides steeper, until a narrow upland valley is reached, with slopes of moorland; the high peak of Cairnsmore of Fleet (outside the NSA) is visible from the upper slopes. There are few buildings here and the whole area feels remote. The Knocktinckle Viewpoint on the moor road to Laurieston at just over 100m provides a good view of the upper part of the NSA (the viewpoint itself is outside the NSA).</p> <p>Over a shorter distance, the moorland hills of Ben John and Mill Knock can be reached from the coast of Fleet Bay after a short transition of farmland and wood.</p>
---	--

• ***The traditional boundaries of dyke and hedge***

<p>Particularly distinctive is the pattern of fields bounded by dykes and hedgerows, traditional boundaries which are still active elements of this farmed landscape.</p>	<p>Hedges and dykes have long been used as boundary markers in the Fleet Valley. Many different techniques have been used in wall building (using local rock including granite) and in hedging (using mainly hawthorn). Different styles of Galloway dyke include those that are a combination of dyke and hedge; and those with holes visible between large blocks, which act as deterrent to livestock jumping over them.</p> <p>The area has been formative in the re-establishment of dyking skills in Britain.</p>
---	---

• ***Abundance of trees and woodlands***

<p>The abundance of trees and woods, whether acting as field boundaries, old coppice, wood pasture, policy woodlands or modern plantation, adds great variety and texture.</p>	<p>The well-wooded landscape includes: Scots Pines on rocky promontories, isolated field trees, old coppices and pollards, field boundary trees, hedgerow trees, veteran trees; ancient and deciduous woodlands, old wood pasture, policy woodlands and commercial forests.</p>
--	---

<p>However trees do not appear overly dominant but, by breaking up the open fields and hills, give an enclosed and intimate feel to many areas.</p>	<p>The Fleet Valley contains the best examples of upland oakwood in Kirkcudbrightshire, and Carstramon oak wood (an SSSI) is particularly notable. The woodlands of the Designed Landscape of the Cally are also an important feature.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• The variety and influence of water</p>	
<p>Fleet Bay, open to the Solway Firth, dominates the southern half of the NSA. At times, a sea of sand, at others brimful of water, it provides an ever-changing vista. With its numerous sandy beaches, it is a key draw for the summer visitors.</p> <p>In contrast, the Water of Fleet is the focus in the north. Meandering peacefully through the glen, it provided both access to the sea and contributed to the power that gave Gatehouse its prosperity.</p>	<p>Humans have influenced the waterscape; for example, the use of Loch Whinyeon (outside the NSA) as the principal source of water to power the mills, the lades that run through Gatehouse, the canalisation of the Fleet, and the Lake within the designed landscape of Cally.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• A rich variety of colour, light, texture and scale</p>	
<p>The variety of colour and light adds great beauty to the area. The sea and the bay continually change with the weather and tides, and the mosaic of houses, water, woodland, fields and hills results in a tapestry of different colours that changes with the season.</p> <p>Additionally there is a range of different textures, often adjacent – such as the mud and sandflats next to the rocky shore, or the smooth fields interspersed with gorse and woodland.</p> <p>A great variety of horizons can be experienced, through the overlapping of uneven isles, knolls, hills and ridges. Likewise a range of scales, varying from the intimate scale of the Anwoth Valley, to the open, exposed landscapes of bay or moorland.</p> <p>Together, this variety of colour, light, texture, horizon and scale appeals to the senses, and has attracted many visitors and artists over the years.</p>	<p>Variety of colour includes: the colours of the sea, mud flats and tidal waters of Fleet Bay; the fields of greens with a splash of yellow from the gorse; the browns and greens of the rough grassland, heather, and bracken; and the light browns of the reed beds.</p> <p>Also there are changes in colour on the Water of Fleet in differing weathers, blue to black; the seasonal changes of deciduous woodland and its ground flora in spring; the dark greens of the forestry and the varying shades of green of Cally Policy Woodland; the greys of granites in the dykes and walls, covered with a patchwork of lichens; and the white-washed buildings of Gatehouse of Fleet.</p> <p>The shore at Carrick was a favourite location for artists, such as David Sasson, from Kirkcudbright Artists colony. Other painters have included Eric Robertson and William Daniell; the Victorian artist John Faed was born in Gatehouse.</p> <p>The area has also been immortalised in Dorothy Sayers' book <i>Five Red Herrings</i>.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area 	
<p>Several landmarks are particularly distinctive and provide focal points for different areas. They become familiar features that help give the area its unique identity.</p> <p>These include structures such as Cardoness Castle, Rusko Tower, the Gatehouse Clock Tower and the Rutherford Monument; and also natural features such as Carstramon Wood, Murray's Isles and the hills of Ben John and Mill Knock.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views out of the Fleet Valley to the Isle of Man and the Merrick 	
<p>Although the landscape is generally enclosed and intimate, there are places where expansive vistas out to the Isle of Man to the south, or the Merrick to the north, create a contrasting feeling of spaciousness.</p>	<p>The Isle of Man is 30 miles away to the south and is visible from, for example, Knockbren Viewpoint. It is said locally that if you can see the Isle of Man it is about to rain, and if you cannot it is raining!</p> <p>The Merrick about 20 miles to the north is the highest mountain in Scotland south of the Highland Boundary Fault.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific quality</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatehouse as a picturesque and historic centre 	
<p>Gatehouse of Fleet was originally a planned town and, with its characteristic white-washed stone buildings, retains its original integrity. Now by-passed by the main road, it is both peaceful and picturesque.</p> <p>Situated at the upper tidal reach of the river, it was once a prosperous mill town and port and is nowadays both the geographic centre and the economic heart of the area.</p>	<p>Historically it has long been the centre of human activity with, in 1795, four cotton mills. Being largely a planned town, the houses built for the workers, its sense of identity is closely linked to its history. Most of the town is a Conservation Area.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Coombey, N. 2007. *The development of the parks and pleasure grounds of Cally by the Murray family*. Solway Heritage.

Dumfries & Galloway Council 2002. *Fleet Valley Management Strategy*.

Land Use Consultants, 1998 Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 94.*

MacLeod, I. 1986. *Discovering Galloway*. Edinburgh: John Donald.

Norman, P. 2005. *Trees in Fields*. Dumfries: Dumfries & Galloway Council.

Ratcliffe, D. 2007. *Galloway and the Borders*. London: Collins.

RCAHMS & Historic Scotland 2002. *The Historic Land-Use Assessment of the Solway Coast National Scenic Areas*.

Solway Firth Partnership 1996. *Solway Firth Review*.

www.artistsfootsteps.co.uk. A website containing details on all the paintings done by the artists who have lived in or visited Dumfries & Galloway (accessed March 2009).

Nith Estuary

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

NITH ESTUARY NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Dumfries and Galloway

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The River Nith and the Lochar Water flow into the Solway Firth to form a wide tidal estuary comprising the Carse Sands, Blackshaw Bank and Priestside Bank. These extensive sands, mudflats, and saltings of an openness and horizontal scale unusual in Scotland, are complemented and enhanced by the presence of the gentle granite cone of Criffell and the long well-wooded ridge extending back to Marthrow Hill. The eastern flank of the hill, best seen from Caerlaverock, has steep convex slopes with a mixture of woodland and moorland descending into the richer sylvan and pastoral landscape around New Abbey.

By contrast Marthrow Hill is heavily wooded, but below it the riverside flats are a mixture of pasture and peat moss with associated birch trees. To the east of the tidal channel of the Nith relief is low, but the long valley is given emphasis by a long low ridge parallel with the river. The river at this point is broad and bordered by open fields, marshes and riverside trees in some places. The variety of elements constitutes a whole that is of great beauty, and constantly changes with the coming and going of the tide, which in this vicinity affects an intertidal zone of enormous width.

The Special Qualities of the Nith Estuary National Scenic Area

Note: Management Strategies have previously been produced for the three NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway, including the Nith Estuary Coast NSA. The Strategies contain scenic qualities which were identified through a public consultation process, and the documents were adopted in 2002 as Supplementary Guidance to the Development Plan. The special qualities given here have originated from and complement those in the Management Strategies and are presented in the new format.

- A working, farmed landscape against a backdrop of hill and estuary
- Criffel, a Border landmark rising above the coastal flatlands
- The meeting of land, sea and sky
- The tide coming in at the 'speed of a galloping horse'
- The interplay of natural and cultural landscapes
- A great diversity of habitats and wildlife
- The detailed patterns of merse and estuary
- A landscape of movement
- A rich variety of colour, light, texture and scale
- A landscape of distinctive sounds and smells
- A peaceful landscape but with a long and troubled history
- Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area
- The use of locally distinctive stone
- The view out to the Cumbrian Fells

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A working, farmed landscape against a backdrop of hill and estuary</i> 	
<p>Distinctive villages sit in a farming landscape of verdant pasture, the fields bounded by dykes, hedges and ditches, and stretching over rolling hills and coastal flats.</p> <p>Water and its influence provides the focus, with the River Nith emerging into a vast tidal landscape of merse, mudflats, sandflats and open water – and all under the impressive backdrop of Criffel.</p> <p>The landscape presents a picturesque mosaic of water, merse, pasture, bog, woods, forests, hill and settlement.</p>	<p>Although most of the land is farmed, there are significant commercial forestry plantations in the north west corner.</p> <p>'Merse' is the local term for an area of flat, often marshy, alluvial land adjacent to a river or estuary.</p> <p>As well as the River Nith and the estuary itself, other main water features are the meandering channel of the Lochar Water; the New Abbey Pow, powering the settlement's water mill, and the waters of Loch Kindar. Associated with this water is a wide variety of wetland habitats, including raised bog, reed bed and saltmarsh.</p>

<p>• Criffel, a Border landmark rising above the coastal flatlands</p>	
<p>Rising steeply above the surrounding lowland is the heather-covered mass of Criffel. This hill has a dramatic and dominant impact on the whole Nith Estuary. It is the most southerly major hill in Scotland and is an important landmark around the Solway coast.</p>	<p>Criffel is the highest point along the north Solway coast. It provides an upland contrast of steep slopes to the surrounding expanse of lowland, and estuary. It dominates most views within the NSA, and from the north Cumbrian coast looking north. It can be seen from the West Coast mainline railway and the M74/M6 motorway. Rising up above the estuary and merse it is often difficult to judge its true height of 569 metres (1866ft). The view from its summit provides a great panorama of the whole Solway Firth and the lowlands of Dumfriesshire and the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright.</p>
<p>• The meeting of land, sea and sky</p>	
<p>The expansive merse, sand and mud flats mark the gradual transition from land to sea. Under a vast, open sky, the constantly changing tides and weather blur the boundaries between land, sea and sky.</p> <p>Although the sea is a dominant influence on the landscape, its actual presence can remain unseen. However it can be sensed by the start of the large flat merse landscape; by the changing light on the Solway, varying with distant tides; by the smell of the sea and the sea breezes, and by the call of sea birds.</p>	<p>At low tide, there is the knowledge that the sea is out there somewhere but it cannot be seen beyond the extensive sand and mudflats.</p>
<p>• The tide coming in at the ‘speed of a galloping horse’</p>	
<p>The Nith and the Inner Solway have often been described as having tides moving at the ‘speed of a galloping horse’. There is rapid movement of water over a wide area, occasionally fronted by a tidal wave or bore.</p>	<p>The tidal reach covers a wide area and the speed of the incoming tide can be very fast, often catching people unawares, confounded by quicksand, mud and hidden channels.</p> <p>As Walter Scott said: ‘He that dreams on the bed of the Solway, may wake up in the next world.’ This illustrates what happens to those that linger on its tidal flats. (Walter Scott 1824, Redgauntlet)</p>
<p>• The interplay of natural and cultural landscapes</p>	
<p>The Nith Estuary contains large uninhabited, wilder areas clothed in natural vegetation of hill, bog and merse.</p> <p>Sandwiched between these lie the inhabited, settled and working</p>	<p>Naturalistic landscapes cover large parts of the NSA: the granitic upland and steep heather covered slopes of Criffel; lowland raised mire at Kirkconnell Flow NNR; and the stretches of merse, mud and sand flats, for example at Caerlaverock and Carse sands.</p>

<p>landscapes of well-established farms, traditional villages and designed landscapes. The countryside here consists of green pastures, bounded by dykes and hedges, and parkland of copses and boundary trees.</p> <p>This interplay of human activity and nature results in a landscape of great appeal.</p>	<p>The main settlements are the traditional stone-built (with some brick) villages of New Abbey, Carsethorn and Glencaple. The county town of Dumfries, immediately outside the NSA, acts as a pivot between the two halves of the NSA because it is located at the lowest bridging point of the Nith.</p> <p>Carsethorn is a planned village, laid out originally as workers' houses. New Abbey, now a Conservation Area, was established around the former medieval abbey. Arbigland is a designed landscape.</p>
<p>• <i>A great diversity of habitats and wildlife</i></p>	
<p>The Nith estuary contains a wide variety of natural habitats in close proximity, including a variety of wetlands, grasslands, woodlands and upland moorland. The raised bog, saltmarsh and estuary are internationally important.</p> <p>The abundance of geese, waders and other waterfowl is a key component of this coastal landscape, particularly in winter when many species make the area their home.</p>	<p>The area contains many areas designated for their nature conservation value.</p> <p>The Nith Estuary and immediate surrounds are part of the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes SSSI/Special Protection Area/ Ramsar Site, and the Solway Firth Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Kirkconnel Flow, a raised mire, is designated as an SSSI and SAC. The Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve is largely within the NSA. The Kirkconnell Merse RSPB reserve, the Drummains Reed Beds SWT reserve, and two Local Wildlife sites, at Loch Kindar and The Loshes, lie wholly within the NSA.</p> <p>Important and evocative birds include wintering barnacle geese (the entire Svalbard population), curlews and oystercatchers. The area contains some of the northernmost populations of natterjack toad.</p>
<p>• <i>The detailed patterns merse and estuary</i></p>	
<p>From a distance, the merse and mudflats appear as a uniform flat mass, but closer inspection reveals numerous, creeks, pans, braided and shifting channels. Together with the tide marks, these create diverse, ever-varying patterns.</p>	<p>Tidal movements have resulted in complex patterns of erosion and deposition, creating a wide variety of temporary landscape features.</p>
<p>• <i>A landscape of movement</i></p>	
<p>There is eternal movement of river, waves and sea; of clouds scudding across the sky; of flocks of seabirds and skeins of geese; and of the wind coming off the sea, keeping the reeds and trees in continual motion. In spite of this movement, the landscape comes across</p>	<p>The Nith Estuary is a dynamic environment. The initial stillness and calm of the merse, sands and mud is balanced with the constant diurnal movement of the tides, the shifting river channels and the continual accretion and deposition by river and tides. The open skies bring constant changes in weather. The estuary attracts a flocks of migrant birds.</p> <p>The movement of water dictates the timing of</p>

<p>as a tranquil and peaceful rural area.</p>	<p>Haaf netting, a traditional netting technique still undertaken on the Nith.</p>
<p>• <i>A rich variety of colour, light, texture and scale</i></p>	
<p>The sea and the estuary continually change with the weather and tides, and the mosaic of houses, water, woodland, fields and hills results in a tapestry of different colours that changes with the season.</p> <p>Colours include the red soil of recently ploughed fields, the bright green of pastures and the rich greens and pinks of the merse.</p> <p>A wide array of textures can be found, varying from the smooth pastoral fields and expanses of merse, sand and mud, through to the rougher textures of woodland, moorland and rocky uplands, and the spiky textures of hawthorn hedges and scrub of gorse.</p> <p>A range of scales are also experienced. There are vast views across the Solway to the open Irish Sea and Cumbrian Fells, and medium-scale views looking up and down the Nith at Glencaple. But intimate, small-scale views are also present, such as those of the cottages in the village of New Abbey.</p> <p>Together, this variety of colour, light, texture and scale brings great beauty to the area, attracting both tourists and artists alike.</p>	<p>The visual appeal of the NSA depends on the interplay of colour, light, texture, form and scale.</p> <p>This has resulted in artists coming to the area such as William Ferguson (Junior) <i>Haaf-net Fishers near the Solway</i>, and E A Walton <i>Sweetheart Abbey</i>. Turner painted scenes at Caerlaverock.</p>
<p>• <i>A landscape of distinctive sounds and smells</i></p>	
<p>The area is rich in evocative sensory experiences. Sounds include the call of geese, curlews and oystercatchers, the ripple of waves and the wind in one's ears.</p> <p>The smell of the sea is often present, including the sulphurous smell of the merse and the mud. Inland there can be the sweet scent of heather or gorse, and the resinous scent of a coniferous forest.</p>	<p>Non-visual sensory experiences have a large part to play in the experience of the Nith Estuary.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A peaceful landscape but with a long and troubled history</i> 	
<p>Today the Nith Estuary comes across as a peaceful and harmonious place but it has had a long and troubled history. Being relatively near the Scotland-England border, it has been at the edge of many disputes and conflicts, which is reflected in the range of sites that have survived in the landscape.</p>	<p>The Crannog in Loch Kindar, the Roman Fort at Ward Law, and Caerlaverock Castle illustrate a long history of defensive structures.</p> <p>In the wars between England and Scotland, the siege of Caerlaverock Castle by Edward I is notable.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area</i> 	
<p>Several landmarks, both natural and cultural, are particularly distinctive and contribute to the identity of the area. These include the summits of Criffel and Ward Law, the ruins of Caerlaverock Castle and Sweetheart Abbey, and the policy woodlands around the big houses.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The use of locally distinctive stone</i> 	
<p>The grey-white granites of the west and the red-brown sandstones of the east are the local stones used in the vernacular buildings and dykes, adding to the distinctiveness of the area.</p>	<p>The western half of the NSA, including Criffel, is underlain by granite, with a strip of Silurian and Carboniferous metamorphic rocks along the coast. The eastern half is largely Permian New Red Sandstone.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The view out to the Cumbrian Fells</i> 	
<p>On a clear day, the distant view across the Solway Firth to the Lake District mountains adds a great depth to the landscape.</p>	<p>On many days it is too hazy or misty to see the Cumbrian Fells; instead there is a blurred horizon of land, sea and sky.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Dumfries & Galloway Council 2002. *Nith Estuary Management Strategy*.

Land Use Consultants 1998. Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 94*.

MacLeod, I. 1986. *Discovering Galloway*. Edinburgh: John Donald.

Ratcliffe, D. 2007. *Galloway and the Borders*. London: Collins.

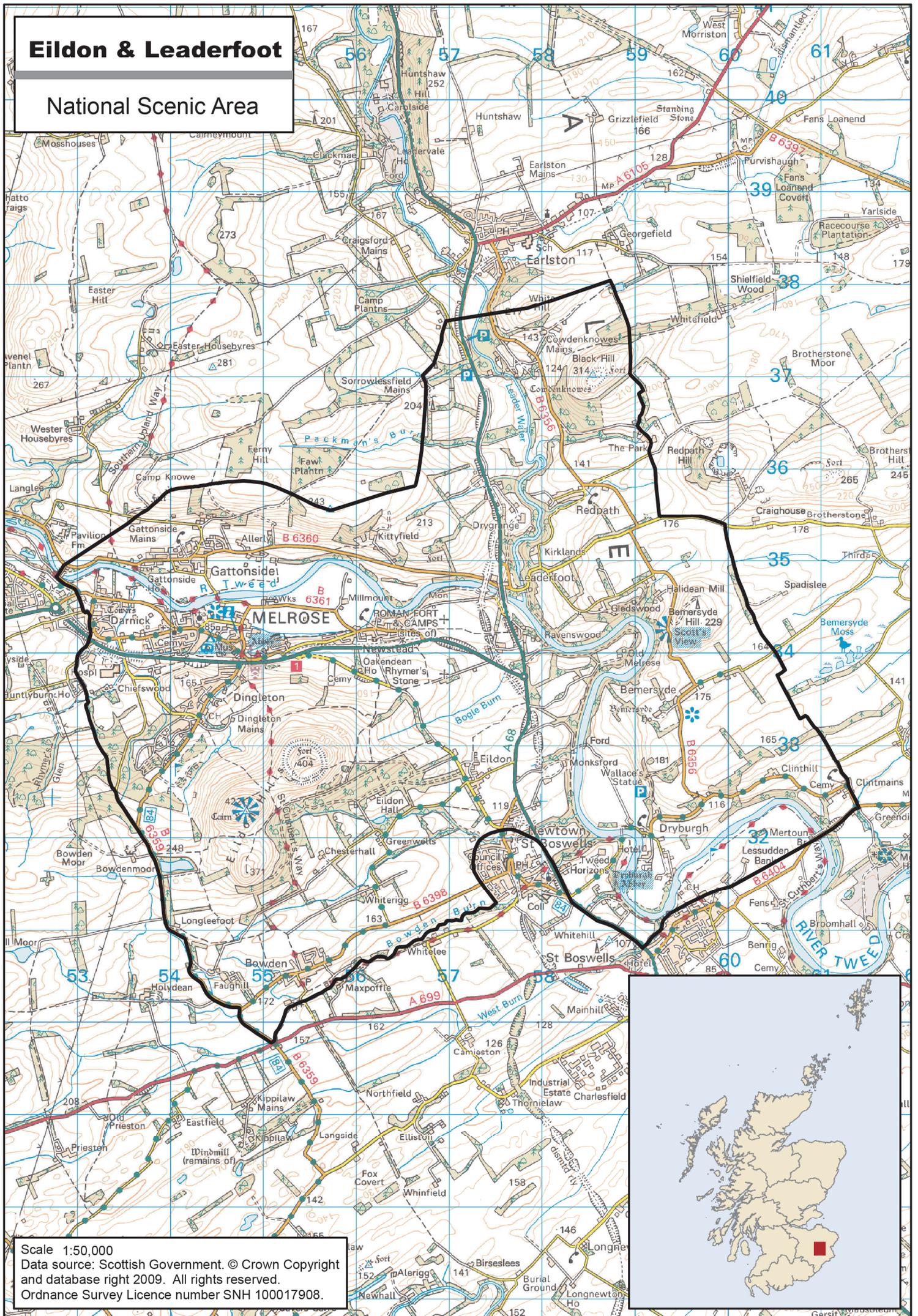
RCAHMS & Historic Scotland 2002. *The Historic Land-Use Assessment of the Solway Coast National Scenic Areas*.

Solway Firth Partnership 1996. *Solway Firth Review*.

www.artistsfootsteps.co.uk/. A website containing details on all the paintings done by the artists who have lived in or visited Dumfries & Galloway. (accessed March 2009)

Eildon & Leaderfoot

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:50,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

EILDON AND LEADERFOOT NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
The Scottish Borders

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Between its confluence with the Ettrick and that with the Teviot, the Tweed exhibits neither the youthful characteristics of an upland river, nor the mature nature of a lowland river that it assumes below Kelso, but its valley is wide and moderate, open and fertile, while still affording fine views of the surrounding hills. The scene comprises shapely uniform hills enclosing the valley, the winding, incised and wooded course of the river, mixed land use of arable, pasture, plantation and moorland, and a settlement pattern that still bears a scale and form closely related to the topography.

Adding drama to the landscape the trio of the volcanic Eildon Hills elegantly overhangs the valley, and dominates from this position a wide area of Border scenery. Across the Leader, Black Hill echoes their shape and character, the whole area being seen to best advantage from the famous Scott's View above Dryburgh. Abbeys, bridges and mansion houses add variety of incident to this very humanised and cultivated landscape.

The Special Qualities of the Eildon and Leaderfoot National Scenic Area

- Great landscape diversity within a compact area
- The distinctive triad of the Eildon Hills
- Spectacular views from the hill summits
- A strongly united landscape pattern of lively rhythm and colour
- A richly wooded scene of great variety
- The Tweed, an iconic river of international renown
- A rich array of historic buildings, structures and estates
- The hub of Border settlement
- A harmonious and varied prospect from unequalled viewpoints
- Inspiration for the arts, literature and painting
- Border country ballads and battles
- The historic crossings of Leaderfoot
- Scott's View
- The Wallace Statue

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great landscape diversity within a compact area</i> 	
<p>At the confluence of two rivers and with its dramatic hills arising from inhabited, pastoral surrounds, this area distils the essence of the Borders' landscape.</p> <p>Although a compact area, no one land use dominates the scene. Instead it contains a rich intermingling of landscape types, with sharp delineation between the long-established settlements, the fertile fields, the woodlands, the rough grazing and the steep, heather-clad slopes.</p>	<p>The NSA is situated where the Border uplands meet lower lying lands, encompassing areas of both and the transitional lands between. Six different landscape character types merge in the NSA: Grassland with Hills, East Gala Undulating Grasslands, Lowland Margin with Hills, Pastoral Upland Fringe of the Lower Leader Valley, Upland Fringe Valley, and Lowland Valley with Farmland.</p> <p>It is also the meeting point of three Regional Landscape Areas: the Tweed Lowlands, the Lammermuir and Moorfoot Hills, and the Central Southern Uplands.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The distinctive triad of the Eildon Hills</i> 	
<p>The three Eildon Hills, with their strikingly isolated, heather-capped summits rising from the ordered farmland below, are the heart of the NSA. Their distinctive profiles instil a strong scenic drama, and the peaks have long been recognised for both their aesthetic appeal and their strategic</p>	<p><i>'From almost any viewpoint on the Middle Tweed basin the triple summits of the Eildon Hills dominate the skyline, and they remain as aesthetically stimulating today as they must have been to the Iron Age people (who built a hill-fort on the northern summit) and to the Romans (who placed the aptly named fort Trimontium at their feet)...'</i> Whittow (1977)</p>

<p>importance.</p> <p>As identifiable landmarks, commanding attention from many viewpoints both near and far, the prominence of these three hills gives this NSA a particular focus and sense of place. The hills have become a cultural icon – a potent symbol of the Scottish Borders.</p>	<p>They are distinctive because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are isolated topographically, standing proud amidst other lower, less accentuated landform types. • They have concave slopes and pyramidal summits that contrast markedly with other Border hills (which are dome-shaped and merge into long ridges enclosing linear river valleys). • They have heather-topped, moorland summits rising dramatically from the Tweed-valley fields, pastures and woods. • They appear relatively natural within wider surroundings which are more managed and settled. <p>The fact that there are three peaks provides a naturally balanced visual focus. They act as key locators, assisting in orientation because views of them change as one moves through the countryside. The number of peaks visible changes, with two generally seen from the north and all three from the south.</p> <p>The long history of strategic importance is witnessed by Eildon North having an Iron Age fort and a Roman signal station.</p>
<p>• <i>Spectacular views from the hill summits</i></p>	
<p>The summits of the hills provide unparalleled viewpoints for long-distant panoramas over the Border landscapes.</p>	<p><i>'The Eildon Hills cannot be equalled as a viewpoint in the Border Country for, although their highest point is only 1,385 feet (422 metres), their central location and their isolation give them an advantage over some of their loftier neighbours.'</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>From the Eildon summits, the panorama extends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwards across the Middle Tweed Basin, with a backdrop of the East Gala Undulating Grasslands to the east, and the Lammermuirs forming the outer visual boundary. • To the south, towards the hills of Liddesdale and Eskdale, and beyond appear the summits of the Cheviots.
<p>• <i>A strongly united landscape pattern of lively rhythm and colour</i></p>	
<p>Land-use is distinctive and long-established, with the different uses set out over a strongly undulating landform and related to the topography and relief.</p> <p>The visual and spatial patterns formed by woodlands, enclosed fields, unenclosed moorlands, together with the colours of fallow or ploughed lands and</p>	<p><i>'The country is extremely picturesque, valleys with fine trees and streams; intermingled with great cultivation'. Queen Victoria (1817)</i></p> <p>Agricultural improvements exerted considerable impact in shaping the landscape seen today, while the influence of the earlier monastic estates has also been important.</p>

pastures, all give a strong sense of unity and lively rhythm. The red-coloured soil and stone add warmth to the landscape.

This patterning affects more than just the scenery. It imbues the entire landscape with a sense of place, affecting the way that the area is experienced spatially, in terms of movement, sound and shelter.

Distinctive elements that make-up this pattern and patchwork of colours are:

- A pattern of rectilinear fields of grazed pasture, interspersed with arable, possibly dating from 18-19th Century agricultural improvements.
- Field boundaries made up of hedgerows, lines of field trees and drystone dykes that highlight the landform by accentuating undulating land and flatter areas.
- Woodlands of diverse species and age-structure, especially along the river valleys, with conifer plantations mainly on upland slopes.
- Designed landscapes with their policy parklands and woodlands, and individual parkland trees.
- The sinuous meandering of the river, with flatter haughlands and meadows enclosed by loops of the river.
- River terraces that form distinct sinuous edges and linear undulating ridges, between the uplands and lower, flatter haughs.
- Villages whose distinctive street layouts originated in the medieval period.
- The red of ploughed soils in Lauderdale.

• ***A richly wooded scene of great variety***

The variety of woodland adds greatly to the NSA, whether clothing the steep banks of a river or hill, providing shelter to the fields or occurring as individual parkland trees.

The woods provide habitats for wildlife, a setting for buildings and settlements, and give an intimate, enclosed feel to many areas. With the presence of both broadleaves and conifers, the form, texture and colour varies both spatially and seasonally, adding great interest to the scene.

In the farmed valleys there are riparian woodlands along the Tweed; mixed woodland across steeper slopes; policy woodlands and parkland planting (with some policy woodlands, specimen parkland exotics).

The River Tweed meanders cut through steep wooded slopes; tributaries of the Tweed cut through steep, wooded gullies. Diverse woodlands provide structure planting for designed landscapes and elsewhere farmland shelter.

In the Leader Water, a narrower farmed valley, woodland is dense compared to elsewhere within the NSA, but it provides a framework for several fine buildings. The dome-shaped upland hills, containing the Leader Water are dissected and defined by steep slopes which form well defined wooded valleys.

Melrose is especially well wooded to its south-west, where land is undulating and complex. Riverside poplars, especially bordering haughlands are distinctive (Sunnybrae at Leaderfoot, Mertoun Bridge).

• **The Tweed, an iconic river of international renown**

The River Tweed forms a strong serpentine feature as it meanders through the landscape, its banks varying from the flat, haughlands to steep-sided, wooded slopes. This powerful river forms the core of an essentially picturesque landscape.

It is also of international renown, synonymous with excellent fishing.

The Tweed is the principal river of the Scottish Borders and, at 96 miles (155 km), the fourth longest in Scotland. In its middle reaches it flows through the NSA, between its confluence with Gala Water and the Leader Water. The river valley is broad with flat river terraces raised above the valley floor. Surrounding, dome-shaped, Border hills are cut by the Tweed's winding, incised course.

Fishing on the Tweed has been a great source of food and profit since the 11th century. Anglers catch more salmon on the Tweed than any other river in the European Union, and it ranks among the very top salmon rivers in the world. Brown trout and grayling also provide good sport.

• **A rich array of historic buildings, structures and estates**

The area is rich historically and archaeologically, so that the landscape exhibits a distinct time-depth. Within a small area can be found visible remains of structures and buildings dating back through Victorian, medieval and Roman times to the Iron Age.

The ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, prominent within a horseshoe bend of the River Tweed, and Melrose Abbey, forming the focus of the town, are both renowned.

The Eildon Hills, the Tweed and the surrounding area have lent themselves to the creation of designed landscapes and to the siting of follies, which are now key components of this landscape.

The Iron Age hillfort on Eildon North sits on a very prominent landscape feature, and is one of the largest such sites in Scotland, particularly unusual for the presence of a Roman signal station within it. The Roman fort at Newstead is extremely well-known. Crop-mark evidence shows it sits within an earlier hub of pre-Roman settlement.

Additionally there are the remains of the village of Old Melrose, the famous, ruined Border abbeys of Melrose and Dryburgh, villages dating from the medieval period, and later designed landscapes.

Both Dryburgh and Melrose were great ecclesiastical centres with large surrounding estates. Dryburgh Abbey is the most complete, although ruined complex, founded in 1150.

Dryburgh Abbey evolved into the ornamented, designed landscape of Dryburgh Abbey House. Follies in the policies celebrate national history and the arts. Designed landscapes and agricultural estates were also created at Bemersyde, Priorwood House, Drygrange House, and Chiefswood.

• **The hub of Border settlement**

The sheltered valleys of the middle Tweed are well-cultivated, the hub of human population, settlement and activity in the Borders. Settlement is strongly related to the landform, the rivers and natural communication corridors, with buildings often set just above the flood plain.

'Most of these towns have developed as part of the tweed and knitwear manufacturing complex that has brought fame to the Scottish borders, utilizing the well-known Cheviot hill sheep and the availability of water power for the earliest looms...' Whittow (1977)

Stone is the traditional building material, a mixture of dark Silurian greywackes and

<p>A blend of both English and Scottish settlement characteristics and elements in building-style create a strong Borders identity.</p>	<p>ruddy Old Red Sandstone (reflecting the location of the towns astride a geological boundary).</p> <p>The strong Border identity of the settlements includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some village greens (St Boswell's, Bowden). • A wooded setting to many of the settlements (Gattonside, Melrose). • Settlements historically tightly constrained. • A lack of large-scale development. • Individual farmsteads and estates. <p>St Boswell's 40 acre common is reputedly the largest village green in Scotland.</p>
<p>• <i>A harmonious and varied prospect from unequalled viewpoints</i></p>	
<p>Many elevated viewpoints provide broad, sweeping views encompassing both wild-looking land and areas of more richly intimate, managed character.</p> <p>This varied prospect of beauty and grandeur is memorable. The balance, visual composition and variety of land use create an attractive landscape of great delight.</p>	<p><i>'And what a varied prospect lies around! Of hills, and vales, and woods, and lawns, and spires.'</i></p> <p>James Thomson, quoted in Andrews (1989)</p> <p>The scene is harmonious on account of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear hierarchy of visual dominance in views, the eye is drawn from the upland summits of the Eildons down to other scenic components in succession. • The balance between elements in the scene - so that woodland, open land, uplands and lowlands flow on from one another, with no element dominant. • The serpentine course of the Tweed that flows through the composition. <p>Accessible ridges and key summits are found both within the NSA, at Black Hill, Bemersyde Hill, Craighouse, Clintmains, St Boswells, Gattonside; and from the variety of ridges and small rounded, isolated hills - outliers to the NSA.</p>
<p>• <i>Inspiration for the arts, literature and painting</i></p>	
<p>The picturesque scenery around Melrose, Dryburgh and the Tweed has long been an inspiration to writers, poets, dramatists and artists, and contributed to the discovery of 'Nature' and its appreciation as a major subject in literature and the arts.</p> <p>The major influence in establishing its distinctive image and identity internationally in literature was Sir Walter Scott. He in turn introduced and</p>	<p>Sir Walter Scott found inspiration for his work in this area, an example being his use of Melrose Abbey in <i>The Lay of the Last Minstrel</i>.</p> <p>The painter J.M.W. Turner visited Scott at Abbotsford in 1831 and his illustrations portray the NSA, highlighting the timelessness of its special qualities. These include <i>View of the Tweed with Melrose and the Eildon Hills</i> and <i>A view of the River Tweed and Dryburgh Abbey</i>.</p> <p>Between 1750 and 1850, there were three hundred separate editions of the poet James</p>

<p>enthused the renowned painter Turner, whose sketches and watercolours of the area were widely circulated as engravings in the nineteenth century.</p> <p>There are also strong associations with the landscape poet James Thomson, and through him Robert Burns.</p>	<p>Thomson's <i>The Seasons</i>. 'No single British poet contributed more to awakening and broadening the appreciation of the natural world' Andrews (1989). A Borderer, born in Kelso, he is commemorated by the Temple of the Muses, erected in 1817 on the banks of the Tweed within the NSA. Robert Burns wrote a poem <i>Address to the Shade of Thomson</i> for the opening of the temple.</p>
<p>• Border country ballads and battles</p>	
<p>The area is rich in romantic and historic associations, with Border ballads, legends and accounts of battles.</p> <p>Thomas the Rhymer is especially connected with the area. The Rhymer met with the Queen of Elfland on the Eildon Hills, and the ballad tells of the Eildon Tree. The Eildon Tree Stone, a large moss-covered boulder, lies on the road two miles west of Melrose. It marks the spot where the Fairy Queen led the Rhymer into the heart of the hills.</p>	<p>'I can stand on the Eildon Hill,' said Sir Walter Scott, 'and point out forty-three places famous in war and verse.'</p> <p>There are long-established traditional oral and historical ties to this tract of Border landscape. Places associated with the legend of Thomas the Rhymer include Huntly Banks and Bogle Burn.</p> <p>Rhymer's Glen was created by Sir Walter Scott at his home in Abbotsford, just outwith the NSA. The symbol of the Eildon Tree has persisted as inspiration in Scottish modern poetry through the work of Sydney Goodsir Smith and through the Eildon Tree poetry magazine.</p> <p>It is said that beneath the Eildon Hills there is a hidden cave, which is the resting place of King Arthur.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• The historic crossings of Leaderfoot</p>	
<p>The tightly constrained Leader Water meets the broad River Tweed at Leaderfoot, a site of historic river crossings. Bridges here comprise the distinctive and prominent Drygrange Viaduct with its nineteen slender piers, and the three-arched Drygrange Old Bridge.</p>	<p>The hills to the east and west of the Leader Water contrast with one another in form but together they enclose an intimate wooded and farmed valley. At its foot the river joins the Tweed; thereafter the Tweed enters a series of tighter meanders than elsewhere.</p> <p>The Drygrange Railway (Leaderfoot) Viaduct opened in 1865 for the Berwickshire Railway which ran from St Boswells to Reston. The railway was closed in 1964.</p> <p>Drygrange Old Bridge (1779-80) is a three-arched stone bridge, now closed to vehicular traffic. Traffic is now taken by a reinforced concrete and steel box girder Road Bridge (1971-73) a short distance downstream from this viewpoint.</p>
<p>• Scott's View</p>	
<p>The Eildon Hills, their shapely, heather-clad summits rising above the neatly ordered fields and woodlands of the meandering Tweed, are best seen from</p>	<p>'But it was Sir Walter Scott who brought most fame to these conical eminences, for the graceful lines of his "delectable mountains" stimulated some of his greatest writings and it is not by chance that his</p>

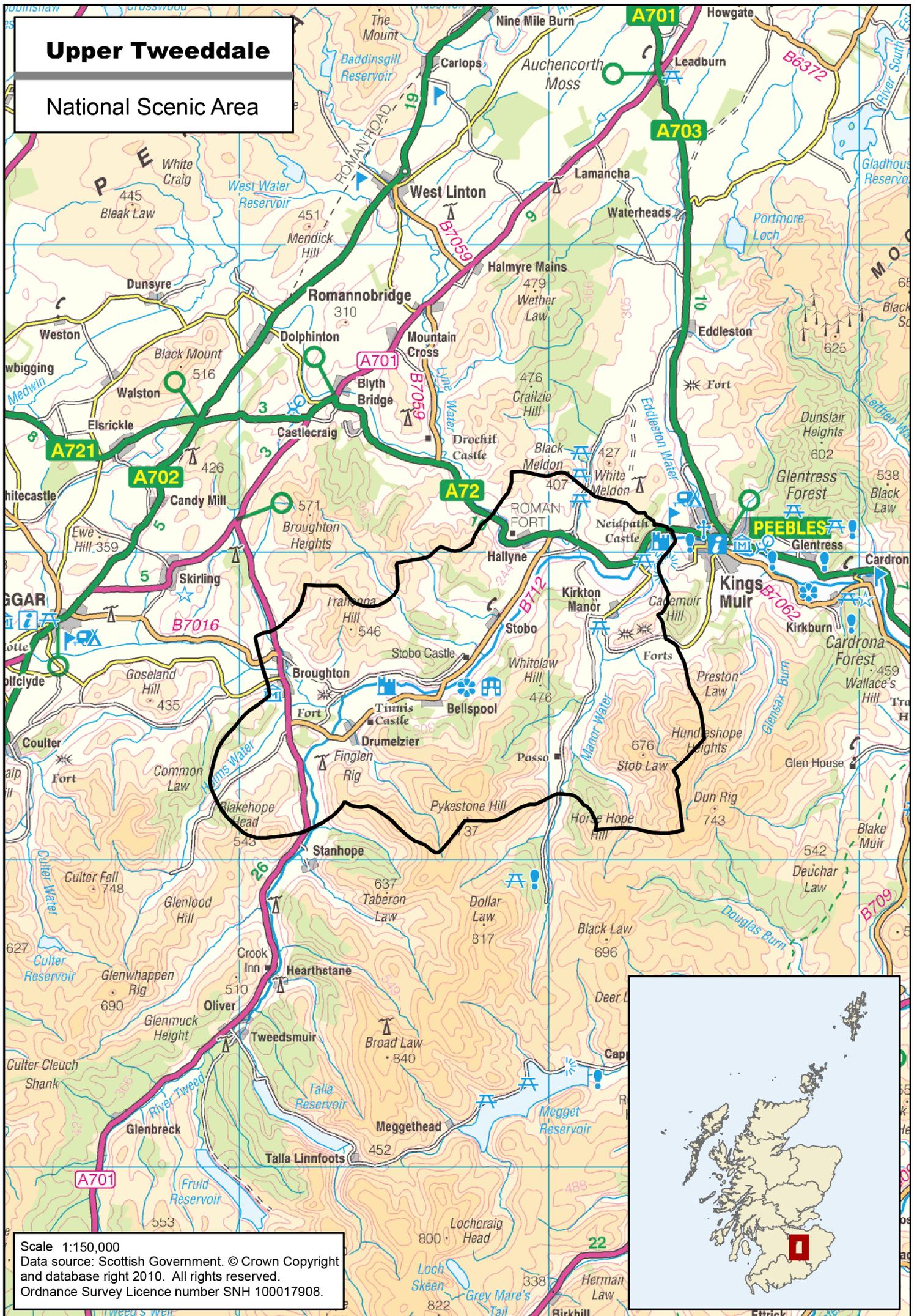
<p>Scott's View, a panoramic beauty spot high on Bemersyde Hill, above Dryburgh.</p> <p>This long-recognised, classic viewpoint is known to be one of Sir Walter Scott's most loved views; his funeral hearse stopped here as a mark of respect.</p>	<p><i>home, the famous Abbotsford, "that Romance in stone and lime", was built only a short distance away. The hills are best seen from the east, from the so-called Scott's View near Melrose, where ...' Whittow (1977)</i></p>
<p>• The Wallace Statue</p>	
<p>A prime viewpoint to the Eildons is marked by a tall, red sandstone statue of William Wallace. He stands looking out over the Tweed, his broadsword in his right hand and his shield resting at his left.</p> <p>As one of the follies within Buchan's designed landscape at Dryburgh, its siting (as with other follies) indicates awareness and appreciation of the scenic beauties of the area, allied with a conscious historical and cultural expression.</p>	<p>The statue is some 31 ft high, made by John Smith of Darnick. Originally painted white, the statue was unveiled on 22nd September 1814.</p> <p>Born in 1742, the 11th Earl of Buchan was responsible for much of the building and development work on Dryburgh Estate during the early 19th century, including the Suspension Bridge, the Orchard and its Gates, The Temple of the Muses and the Wallace Statue. Buchan persuaded Sir Walter Scott to accept a burial plot at Dryburgh Abbey.</p>

Selected Bibliography

- Andrews, M. 1989. *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*. Aldershot: Scholar Press.
- ASH Consulting Group 1998. The Borders Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 112*.
- Fortey, R. 1996. *The Hidden Landscape: A Journey into the Geological Past*. Jonathan Cape.
- Grant, A. 2004., *Eildon and Leaderfoot NSA: A Preliminary Survey*. Report prepared by Alison Grant, Landscape Architect, on behalf of Scottish Natural Heritage (unpublished).
- Groome 1882 & 1885. *A historical perspective, drawn from the Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Biographical and Historical*. Edited by and originally published in parts by Thomas C. Jack, Grange Publishing Works, Edinburgh between 1882 and 1885.
- Strang, Charles A. 1994. *RIAS Illustrated Architectural Guide to the Scottish Borders and Tweed Valley*. Edinburgh: The Rutland Press.
- Whittow, J.B. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

Upper Tweeddale

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

UPPER TWEEDDALE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
The Scottish Borders

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The upper course of the River Tweed is contained in a narrow steep-sided valley flanked by rounded hills of considerable stature. The general sense of containment created by the narrow valley is given interest and variety by the inter-relationship of woodlands, sometimes shelterbelt, hedgerow or plantation, and both deciduous and coniferous, with farmland which ranges from roughgrazing on the hill, through parkland, pasture and arable to riverside meadows.

The valley floor widens at each of the confluences of the Holm, Lyne and Manor Waters to give longer views into these tributary glens and the higher summits at their heads, and then narrows again at Neidpath where the castle guards the defile between Cademuir and the Meldons. The river itself contributes greatly to the scene, winding through its haughlands with a majesty that assumes greater magnitude than it really possesses. The dale is ornamented with castles, mansions, kirks, and prosperous farmhouses, and the hills marked with the innumerable remains of ancient occupation.

The Special Qualities of the Upper Tweeddale National Scenic Area

- Diverse scenery of great charm and soft beauty
- The historical continuity of settlement
- Green, intimate pastoral valleys
- Expansive, open hills with panoramic views
- The variety of woodlands and trees
- The large, geometric fields
- The distinctive vernacular buildings
- Tranquil riverine landscapes

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diverse scenery of great charm and soft beauty</i> 	
<p>This is a richly diverse landscape. Its prominent landforms combine with rivers, woods and moorlands, to produce a pleasing physiography, with varied land use and scenery of great charm and soft beauty.</p>	<p>Compared to the wider, gentler, more open valleys elsewhere in this part of the Scottish Borders, the NSA is distinguished by having, the most sharply defined, densely wooded valleys; and by higher, steeper, darker rather more rugged and wilder surrounding hills, which provide greater enclosure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The historical continuity of settlement</i> 	
<p>The valleys are varied, safe, inviting, interesting, settled landscapes with innumerable remnants and reminders of the historic past scattered throughout.</p> <p>The many towers, castles, sheepfolds, stone and hut circles, standing stones, cultivation terraces, ancient settlements, cairns and forts emphasise the historical continuity of settlement and timelessness of the valleys. The forts are often located atop conspicuous promontories which offered commanding fortification sites and now the best vantage points to enjoy the scenery.</p>	<p>Significant cultural elements include Dreva Craig (one of several prominent hill forts), Neidpath Castle, Barns Tower (sitting within a designed landscape), and Castle Hill in Manor Valley. There are also designed landscapes at Stobo Castle and across the river at Dawyck.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Green, intimate pastoral valleys</i> 	
<p>The valleys have even slopes, steepening as they rise to scree-strewn ridges or rolling, rounded wooded hills with a backdrop of interlocking moorland</p>	<p>The valleys are green and pastoral, the profiles of the larger ones typically flat bottomed, and the smaller often narrow and 'V'-shaped. The Tweed flows smoothly down the middle of a narrow floodplain.</p>

<p>slopes or high, rolling moorland hill massifs.</p> <p>Sometimes there are wider, flat-bottomed, green pastoral valleys, with the river on one side of the valley floor eating away at the hillfoot, below a precipitously steep, rocky edge to the high moorland massif.</p> <p>The valleys are also invariably enclosed at each end, usually by massive humps of steep-sided, seemingly free-standing hills that block and guard the ends of the valleys. The brown moorland on these hills provides a sharp contrast with the rich pastoral fields and woods of the valleys.</p>	<p>The intimate, sheltered valleys are tightly enclosed by wooded or open moorland slopes along the flanks of the valleys, rising more steeply with elevation to either a gently undulating series of hill tops or a valley-long series of interlocking ridges, in turn often backed by a hill massif.</p> <p>The valley floors widen at the confluences of the Tweed with the Holm, Manor and Lyne Waters which run as small rivers or large burns, giving views up the tributary glens.</p>
<p>• <i>Expansive, open hills with panoramic views</i></p>	
<p>A relatively short, sharp, steep scramble up bracken, heather or grassy moorland slopes will lift the walker to a peak with a 360° panoramic view across the Southern Uplands. From here and other viewpoints above the valley floor and lower slopes, the sinuous line of the rivers and burns are more conspicuous.</p> <p>The tops of the hills are vast, open, windswept, inspiring, exhilarating, and rewarding landscapes. From the hill tops and ridges the view may be spectacular in its sun-lit clarity with deep summer purples, greens, browns, grey and gold, or blue and hazy, or covered in crisp, white snow, or misty, or darkly overcast, depending on season and weather.</p>	<p>The enclosing hills appear as great guardians of the valleys, their height and mass often appearing greater than they actually are because of the contrast with the valleys.</p> <p>From the tops of the hills and ridges, and especially from the few landmark summits such as Black Meldon, the views are panoramic across a vast rolling hill mass covered in grass and heather moorland. Occasional bare rock and scree add variety to the colours and textures of the varied hills which appear to recede endlessly to the horizon, way beyond the boundaries of the NSA.</p> <p>The hills are varied in their landform; there are interlocking lines of steep-sided ridges sweeping from the surrounding hill mass into the valleys; and gently undulating or rolling, smooth, rounded, massive, bulky, steep-sided hills with stone-piled cairns visible from far away and mysterious. They have evocative names such as Hammer Knowe, Horse Hope Hill, Hundleshope Heights, Stob Law, Trahenna Hill and White Meldon.</p>
<p>• <i>The variety of woodlands and trees</i></p>	
<p>Everywhere across the valleys are coniferous or mixed plantations, mature broadleaved trees, groups of trees around steadings and houses; and large billowing crowns of trees marking the sinuous line of the otherwise often inconspicuous rivers and burns crossed</p>	<p>Dawyck is an outstanding designed landscape of 430ha dating from the 18th century. It comprises an important and attractive Botanic Garden, scenically impressive parkland and woodland, interesting architectural features and a well documented history with which the development of the design can be traced.</p>

<p>by distinctive but disused railway bridges and old stone arched or modern flat road bridges.</p> <p>In several places, small designed landscapes with a strong parkland ambience enrich the variety of woodlands and trees.</p>	<p>The magnificent parkland and water gardens of Stobo Castle are an outstanding work of art and the designed landscape as a whole provides an impressive setting for the category A listed Castle. The designed landscape again dates from the 18th century and comprises 320ha.</p>
<p>• <i>The large, geometric fields</i></p>	
<p>In contrast to the sinuous line of the river, picked out by mature riparian trees, the improved grasslands are laid out in large, regular, geometrically-shaped, flat or gently sloping fields, divided by straight stone dykes or occasional fences and hedges. The field pattern is locally emphasised by mature shelterbelts.</p>	<p>The steadings and large fields are typical of the period of agricultural improvement to which they belong.</p>
<p>• <i>The distinctive vernacular buildings</i></p>	
<p>Buildings comprise steadings, most of which are compact and traditional in style, splendid houses of Victorian 'baronial' architecture, lodges and cottages strung along the roads as they wind through the valleys. The predominant building materials are a distinctive, mellow grey stone and slate, or contrasting, white rendering with slate.</p>	
<p>• <i>Tranquil riverine landscapes</i></p>	
<p>There are no lakes, ponds or waterfalls but the rivers and burns are clean and fast-flowing over pebbly, boulder-strewn or sandy and gravelly beds with natural weirs and riffles. The Tweed, famed for its salmon, is central to this landscape and is wider, flowing more sedately with a smooth surface that reflects the sky or clouds, and trees and buildings close by.</p> <p>The sounds of the river are complemented by those of grazing animals, insects and wading birds; birdsong is seasonally ubiquitous in the valleys. Apart from the sounds and movement of traffic on the roads that pass down the dales, the valleys are calm, quiet, still, tranquil landscapes with</p>	<p>These valleys and hills were the chosen home of John Buchan, author of <i>The Thirty-Nine steps</i>, who used this landscape in many of his books and stories.</p> <p>The valleys have been photographed and painted by innumerable artists but perhaps the most enduring fame of Upper Tweeddale is that of its history as a great salmon river, epitomised today by the sight of an angler casting over the river from its grassy banks.</p>

<p>occasional agricultural activity and sometimes an angler or walker.</p>	
--	--

While the angler keeps to the rivers, the walker may choose between the intimate shelter of the quiet, tranquil, wooded pastoral valleys and the short rewarding climb up the slopes to the welcoming tops, with their exhilarating panoramas across the valleys and the hills.

Selected Bibliography

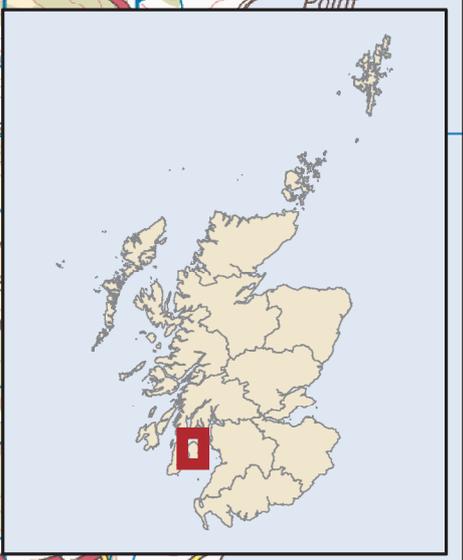
ASH Consulting Group 1998. The Borders Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 112.*

North Arran

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.



NORTH ARRAN NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
North Ayrshire

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The island of Arran makes a major contribution to the wider landscape character of the Firth of Clyde, its highland mountains being particularly outstanding in a southern setting, and adding greatly to scenic enjoyment of Bute, Ayrshire and Kintyre. On the island itself, however, it is the northern part which is scenically outstanding. Here the older Highland rocks and a massive granite dome have been fashioned into a deeply dissected highland massif with rugged peaks rising to nearly 900 metres, separated by deep glens.

These mountains fill the whole centre of the island and there is only a narrow coastal plain before the boulder-strewn slopes sweep upward to the shapely serrated peaks like Goat Fell (874m) and Cir Mhor (798m). The coastline has raised beaches on which typical clachan settlements have developed, and where the mild climate permits the growth of luxuriant vegetation, best exemplified in the gardens of Brodick Castle (National Trust for Scotland). If the island contributes to all its neighbouring districts by its dramatic presence, it must also be said that views from it to Bute, Cowal and Kintyre also add to the quality of the scene in Arran.

The Special Qualities of the North Arran National Scenic Area

- A mountain presence that dominates the Firth of Clyde
- The contrast between the wild highland interior and the populated coastal strip
- The historical landscape in miniature
- A dramatic, compact mountain area
- A distinctive coastline with a rich variety of forms
- One of the most important geological areas in Britain
- An exceptional area for outdoor recreation
- The experience of highland and island wildlife at close hand

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A mountain presence that dominates the Firth of Clyde</i> 	
<p>Soaring above the sea, the Arran mountains with their distinctive profile hold the eye and dominate the Firth of Clyde and its surrounds. Sometimes they are clear and distinct, reflected in a mirror-calm sea, at other times they are capped in cloud or wreathed in mist.</p>	<p>Arran has been described as 'the sleeping giant', its head and body comprising the mountains and moors of the island.</p> <p>The peaks of the NSA can be seen from along the North Ayrshire coast and from many places inland. It likewise dominates the views from the east coast of the Kintyre peninsula, and there are further imposing views from Bute.</p> <p>Gemmell (1998) states that, because the presence of the island is so dominating, the Firth of Clyde cannot be imagined without the presence of Arran and its mountains.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The contrast between the wild highland interior and the populated coastal strip</i> 	
<p>The contrast between the upland and lowland landscapes is striking. The interior is rocky, wild, unpopulated and mountainous, with a surrounding foil of moorland and coniferous forestry. The coastal strip is a narrow ribbon of fields, scrub, hedgerows, dykes and settlement, an intimate, human landscape, with well-kept, whitewashed cottages and gardens looking out over the sea.</p> <p>The interior appears harsh and barren whilst the inhabited coastal strip comes across as lush and welcoming.</p>	<p>The highland interior of North Arran is comparable with many mountainous areas to the north, showing a landscape shaped by glaciation. It consists mainly of open heather moorland and peat bog, with bare rock a dominant feature of the higher ground. It is an SNH Wild Land Search Area.</p> <p>A very different, lowland landscape is found on the coast, with its pastoral fields, enclosed by hedgerows and drystone dykes, and small areas of woodland and scrub. Many of the fields occur on the flat tops of raised beaches.</p>

• **A historical landscape in miniature**

It is the 'Scottish historical landscape in miniature.' Different periods of historic land use appear as different layers in the landscape (a palimpsest) and can often be seen in one view.

Features range from evocative stone circles and chambered cairns, through ruined houses and field systems as in Glen Sannox, to the designed landscape of Brodick Castle.

The Arran historical landscape is best described by McLellan (1995):

'Everywhere in the upper glens are the ruins of old black-houses and turf dykes. In the straths or on the shores are the little oblong sites of ancient chapels. On the hilltops are faint traces of fortifications and on the moors standing stones, stone circles and chambered cairns. All this on the same island as stone built Victorian hotels and villas, brick and roughcast boarding houses built in the 1930s, and more recent bungalows of precast concrete and coloured tiles, all of which dominate the main villages.'

Added to this are the gardens and designed landscapes of Brodick Castle, with smaller designed landscapes at Dougarie and Mid Sannox.

Many of the field dykes show considerable variation depending on the rock type and the stone available.

Boguillie, where the coast roads goes inland, presents a good example of this palimpsest: an ancient hill fort on the skyline, above a parallel series of head dykes; the cleared village on terraces below the fort in ruins beside its runrig; the improvement farmstead and field pattern further down the glen above the Mid Sannox designed landscape; modern, commercial forestry on the high ground.

• **A dramatic, compact mountain area**

Pointed peaks, sharp ridges, high corries, boulder fields and grey granitic slabs comprise the high mountains which rise from sea level to the heights of Goatfell. Contained within a small, compact island, these mountains are dramatic and spectacular, bringing a Highland feel deep into southern Scotland.

The steep glens, with their roaring burns, penetrate into the heart of the mountains and are classic, glacially-carved U-shaped valleys.

Goatfell (874m) - 'Mountain of Wind' (from the Gaelic *gaoth*) or 'Goat Mountain' (from the Norse *geita*).

Glaciation has been responsible for shaping this granitic landscape. The original large igneous intrusion has been denuded to form the distinctive conical and pyramidal peaks, joined by narrow ridges and saddles between steep-sided corries. The peaks on the east side of North Arran tend to be more pointed and angular while those on the west side more rounded. Erratics are common and include the Cat Stone and the Rocking Stone.

Most visitors to Arran take the ferry to Brodick, and Goatfell rising above Brodick Bay provides a key first experience of the island.

- ***A distinctive coastline with a rich variety of forms***

Geology, glacial and coastal processes have created a coastline of constant change in terms of shape, form, texture and colour – cliffs, rocky shores, shingle and sandy beaches.

Ancient beaches raised above the surrounding sea abound, with relic cliffs, stacks and caves on their inland edge. In many places, the old cliffs have become colonised by scrub of ivy and birch.

Roads often follow the raised beach above the modern shore, enabling both the detail of the coastline and distant views over the sea to be enjoyed.

Coastal schists and sandstones create blue/grey and burgundy colouration respectively; further colouration is added with the lichens and seaweeds growing on the rocks.

Postglacial, isostatic uplift has led to the distinctive raised beaches, best seen on the west coast.

- ***One of the most important geological areas in Britain***

North Arran exhibits an impressive variety of rocks from different geological periods, and the area has long been studied by geologists; from Hutton's discovery of the geological 'unconformity', to the groups of students ever-present on the island today.

Its importance is further seen in the past economic geology of the area: barytes mining in Glen Sannox, lime kilns on the Northeast coast, red sandstone quarried near Corrie, and coal mining near the Cock of Arran.

Geological rocks and features include Precambrian schists; sedimentary rocks including limestones, Old and New Red Sandstones; the Highland Boundary Fault running through the middle of the island; a tertiary igneous granite intrusion making up the bulk of the mountains; dolerite dykes; and more recent Cretaceous chalk deposits.

- ***An exceptional area for outdoor recreation***

Reflecting its accessibility and its dramatic scenery, the island has long been popular with visitors. Over the years it has attracted painters, poets and writers as well as the day-tripper and walker.

The ascent of Goatfell from Brodick is a classic hill walk, providing spectacular panoramic views of the Firth of Clyde, while a visit to Brodick Castle and its beautiful gardens provides a less strenuous alternative.

The dramatic North Arran mountains, in particular Goatfell, are a magnet for walkers. The National Trust for Scotland (2000) states with respect to the Goatfell area, '*the landform with its jagged, granitic summits and ridges provides a dramatic and awe inspiring setting for the walking experience.*'

Recreation also includes golf and cricket; visits to Lochranza Castle or to the National Trust for Scotland's designed landscape and gardens of Brodick Castle; boating or playing on the sandy beach of Brodick Bay; or just enjoying views from many viewpoints.

<p>North Arran provides an 'island adventure' for people throughout southern Scotland.</p>	<p>The landscape is an accessible holiday or daytrip destination for large centres of population - particularly Glasgow and southwestern Scotland.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• The experience of highland and island wildlife at close hand</p>	
<p>The presence of wildlife normally associated with the Highlands or distant coasts adds greatly to the enjoyment of this landscape.</p> <p>Eagles can be seen soaring over the mountains, and hen harriers and herds of red deer on the moors. On the coast, the sound of gulls contrasts with the evocative call of the curlew, and seals can be seen basking on the rocks. Out at sea gannets can be seen plunging into the water and basking sharks can sometimes be glimpsed.</p> <p>Unique species of whitebeam can be found on certain crags in the upland glens.</p>	<p>Most of the interior of the NSA is designated SSSI for its birds, plants and geology, and the eastern part is also designated as a Special Protection Area for its hen harriers.</p> <p>Arran whitebeams are tree species unique to Arran: <i>Sorbus pseudofennica</i> and <i>Sorbus arranensis</i>, and the discovery in July 2007 of <i>Sorbus pseudomeinichii</i> another new species (Catacol whitebeam).</p>

Selected Bibliography

Gemmell, A. M. D. 1998. *Discovering Arran*. John Donald.

Land Use Consultants 1998. Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.111*.

McLellan, R. 1976. *The Isle of Arran*. Revised by Norman Newton, Pevensey Press (1995).

National Trust for Scotland 2000. *Goatfell Management Plan*.

Jura

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

JURA NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Argyll and Bute

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Jura forms the western visual limit of a large-scale coastal tract which encompasses Mid Argyll, but it is the southern part of the island which has outstanding scenic interest. The island is made up of quartzite, which usually results in remarkable upland landforms and Jura is no exception.

The Paps of Jura, all three between 700 and 800 metres in height, are dominant in views from the mainland and Islay. Their shapely cones rise abruptly from rolling moorland, and their summits shimmer with quartzite screes. 'In the opinion of the well known Scottish writer Alisdair Alpin McGregor, their steep-sided elegance can be compared only with the famous Cuillins of Skye' (Whittow, 1977). The coastal fringe has dramatic raised beaches and cliff lines on the west side of the island, and indented bays and islets on the east shore, with some woodland, both semi-natural and planted.

The Special Qualities of the Jura National Scenic Area

- The distinctive Paps of Jura
- Human settlement on the margins of a vast moorland terrain
- A continually varying coast
- Large tracts of wild land
- The raised beaches of the west coast
- An island of deer
- An island close yet remote
- The inaccessible Loch Tarbert

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The distinctive Paps of Jura</i> 	
<p>The Paps of Jura tower over the whole landscape. Their steep, rounded cones rise out of the surrounding moorland, and their summits of silvery rock and scree provide unparalleled views to the Inner Hebrides, the Mull of Kintyre and beyond.</p> <p>Their distinctive profiles also make them readily identifiable landmarks, visible from much of the west coast, from the inland mountains and from as far afield as the north coast of Ireland.</p>	<p>The three Paps of Jura are composed of quartzite and are distinctive in shape, texture and colour. They are Beinn an Oir (785m), Beinn Shiantaidh (757m) and Beinn a Chaolais (733m). There are also several intermediate height hills in the NSA: Scrinadle (506m), Corra Bheinn (569), Beinn Bhreac (439), Glas Bheinn (561), Dubh Bheinn (530m). Although less prominent than the three Paps, these hills can dominate the view from certain angles, particularly on the east side of the NSA. However, when the NSA is viewed from afar, it is the Paps that stand out.</p> <p>The Paps can be seen from the County Antrim coast in Ireland, from the Isle of Man, from many islands, peninsulas and mountains on the west coast of Scotland, including The Cobbler and Ben Lomond. Some of the best views are from Islay's northeast coast.</p> <p>They are the subject of William McTaggart's 1902 painting <i>The Paps of Jura</i>, now in Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Human settlement on the margins of a vast moorland terrain</i> 	
<p>The moorland that covers most of Jura is akin to a <i>'quartzite desert, albeit very beautiful and very wet'</i> Newton (1988). The moors tend to be gently sloping and featureless, enlivened by occasional lochs and rushing burns.</p> <p>This wild, trackless interior is relieved by the inhabited, green coastal strip of the</p>	<p>Except for small strips on the east coast, Jura is underlain by Dalradian quartzite, an extremely hard and resistant rock, which results in infertile, acid soils and vegetation dominated by wet heath and bog.</p> <p>The island's population is around 200, centred on the east coast along a single track road. Within this area is the township of Keils, famous for having retained traditional strip fields and cruck-buildings, as well as the Isle of Jura</p>

<p>south and east, with human settlement on the margins of the vast terrain of uninhabited moorland.</p>	<p>distillery.</p>
<p>• <i>A continually varying coast</i></p>	
<p>Much of the appeal of the NSA lies in the variety of coastal scenery. There is the east coast of bays, beaches and headlands, in places settled and cultivated, and in the north with steep slopes descending straight into the sea. There is the short south coast with forestry plantations, Jura House, its associated garden, and the Singing Sands. There is the uninhabited and inaccessible west coast with its spectacular raised beaches and caves, and the remote Loch Tarbert in the north.</p>	<p>The <u>east coast</u> with its parallel ridges is the most populated area and contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bay and headland topography of the southeast corner between Poll a Cheo and Rubha na Traillie. • The linear coastal settlement of Craighouse, with sandy and shingle beaches. • The Small Isles, individual parallel rocky isles marking the entrance to Small Isles bay and Loch na Mile. • The long J-shaped rocky headland at Lowlandman's Bay, with its isolated lighthouse cottages. • Small curved bays and settlements between long coasts of steep slopes, such as at Tarbert and Lagg, with pockets of deciduous woodland, grassy fields and small beaches and jetties. <p>The <u>south coast</u> is gentle, with woodlands, the walled garden of Jura House, the 'singing sands' and offshore islands.</p> <p>The <u>west coast</u> is dominated by raised beaches, cliffs, natural arches and caves and is uninhabited.</p> <p>The <u>north coast</u> of the NSA is the uninhabited Loch Tarbert.</p>
<p>• <i>Large tracts of wild land</i></p>	
<p>Away from the coastal settlements of the south and east, there is little obvious sign of human impact. The moorland interior is clothed with natural vegetation of wet heath and peat, and is largely pathless.</p> <p>Whether alone on the moors, the Paps towering overhead, or wandering the uninhabited coasts of the west, or suddenly encountering a herd of deer, the sense of 'nature in charge' is overwhelming. This combination of remoteness and naturalness imbues much of the NSA with a great sense of wildness.</p>	<p>Situated adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, the climate of Jura is cloudy and windy with high levels of precipitation, contributing to a 'wild and wet' feel when distant from habitation.</p> <p>Accessing the remote west coast, or an ascent of the Paps, provides walkers with a challenge of rough terrain, bog, river, moor and rock. A coastal walk along the west coast takes several days, and it is likely that no-one will be encountered. Much of the area is one of SNH's Search Areas for Wild Land.</p> <p>The presence of occasional shielings and Mesolithic sites indicates that human populations once occupied now uninhabited parts of the west coast.</p>

• **The raised beaches of the west coast**

The raised beaches of the west coast are amongst the finest in Scotland, with their quartzite boulders sometimes as much as 40 metres above sea level.

There is also an impressive array of other features, relics from a higher sea level, including ancient caves and sea cliffs.

Isostatic uplift has resulted in raised beaches throughout western Scotland, with Jura having some of the best associated geomorphological features.

• **An island of deer**

Herds of red deer are often visible and comprise a key component of the landscape. Their population significantly outnumbers that of humans and the history of deer management goes back over a 1,000 years. It is possible that the island itself gets its name from the Old Norse for deer – *hjørtr*.

The deer population of about 5,500 compares with the human population of about 200.

The island is divided into several large estates, each supporting large herds of red deer. The deer appear at home in their natural habitat, well camouflaged amongst the moorland grasses. Herds are seen in many locations on the island, from the beaches and grassland pastures, right across the moorland to the lower slopes of the Paps.

• **An island close yet remote**

Although Jura is close to the mainland and has a central location within Argyll, surrounded as it is by Kintyre, Knapdale, Islay, Scarba, Colonsay and Mull, the island feels remote and inaccessible.

It has often been described as being '*at the edge*', being a long journey from the mainland; and within the island itself, away from the settlement of Craighouse, many houses and crofts exhibit a feeling of remoteness, seclusion and isolation. This is reinforced by the island's vast uninhabited interior.

It is a place to find solitude, to be well away from the hectic life of the mainland – what George Orwell described as '*a very ungettable place*.'

Much of the northwest end of Jura is only 6km from the mainland, but the main ferry access is from the south via Islay (although there is now a summer only passenger ferry direct from Tayvallich to Craighouse).

George Orwell, or Eric Blair as he was known to islanders, needed to find what he called '*very ungettable place*' so he could write his novel *1984* in peace. He stayed at Barnhill (north of the NSA).

Although Jura is currently remote in terms of access, this would not have been the case in the past when sea travel was the main means of transport because it is central within the west coast of Argyll. Its importance is shown by the early medieval high cross at Keils, while the former centre of the Lordship of the Isles is at Finlaggan, just across the sound of Islay.

<i>Location-specific quality</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The inaccessible Loch Tarbert</i> 	
<p>Loch Tarbert is a sea loch with a complex, rock-bound shoreline that cuts across the centre of Jura. Surrounded by moorland, its shores are largely inaccessible, except by boat or long walks across boggy terrain. It is a lonely and remote place.</p>	<p>Loch Tarbert has an indented coastline with extensive areas of rock outcrop. It varies greatly in width, with some extreme narrows and at its eastern end pools and mud flats. It contains jagged strata, skerries, small rocky isles, and raised beaches. It is surrounded by rough, uninhabited moorland, and although a sea loch, the open sea is invisible from its inner reaches.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Campbell, M. 1977. *Argyll, The Enduring Heartland*. Bath: Gateway Books.

Environmental Resources Management 1996. Landscape Character Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 78*.

Newton, N. 1988. *Islay*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Whittow, J.B. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

www.juradevelopment.co.uk (accessed November 2008)

KNAPDALE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Argyll and Bute*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The strongly grained topography of Knapdale, with long parallel ridges and glens aligned on a north-west south-east axis, presents a miniature 'Appalachian' type landscape. Heavily wooded now, the glacially overdeepened glens either have narrow ribbon lakes in their bottoms or else have been invaded by the sea. Loch Sween is a complex series of parallel channels intruding long narrow fingers of sea into the coniferous forests of Knapdale.

This ever present combination of fresh and sea water with their different plant life, small waterside meadows, and heavily wooded ridges makes up a series of narrow enclosed landscapes gradually opening out to the lower, more open, and mixed land uses of the wider topography at the mouth of Loch Sween, from where there are fine views to the Paps of Jura. By contrast Loch Caolisport is a wide sea loch. It is contained by sufficient amplitude of relief to frame the views of Jura, and in this more open loch basin there is a pleasing mixture of forestry and well kept farmland, with moorland on the high land, and some deciduous woodlands on the hillsides.

To the north the flat moss, meadow and arable land of the Moine Mhor, the finely curving meanders of the River Add, and the abruptly upstanding heights of Dunadd and Cnoc na Moine, the former rocky and bare, the latter heavily mantled in oakwoods, provide a sharp contrast to the tightly grained and forested hills of Knapdale. Loch Crinan, with its wide expanse of flats, continues this character seawards, and is enclosed on its north side by a series of miniature glens and hills, echoing the scale of Knapdale to the south, but offering a gentle, open, cultivated contrast to the forest. The historic and cultural interest of this landscape adds a further dimension to the scene.

The Special Qualities of the Knapdale National Scenic Area

- Distinctive ridges and loch-filled trenches
- A landscape of skylines
- A clothing of oak woodland over the ridges and hollows
- A profoundly evocative, ancient place
- Ever-changing patterns of colour, sound and smell
- In the north, dramatic juxtaposition of ridges and volcanic plugs arising from the flat expanse of Mòine Mhòr bog
- A centre of parallel ridges and secret lochans
- Long, slow journeys to the sea
- Dramatic sea views in the south
- The Crinan Canal

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Distinctive ridges and loch-filled trenches</i> 	
<p>This is a landscape of long, linear, narrow, steep-sided ridges which sweep down to the coast and plunge beneath the sea, reappearing as chains of rocky islands off-shore.</p> <p>The lochs in middle and lower, coastal Knapdale penetrate finger-like, deeply into the land, to create the distinctive peninsulas, each subtly different to the others.</p> <p>The combination of the distinctive ridged landform and the loch-filled trenches of the deeply folded rocks epitomises the Knapdale landscape.</p>	<p>The landform has a strong south-west to north-east direction formed by the tightly folded metamorphic Dalradian rocks.</p> <p>The lochs form gateways and corridors to the sea. The tidal edge adds interest and diversity as well as a cyclical change to the shorelines. The surface of the lochs is continuously moving with ripples or waves, usually quiet and calm, owing to the deep shelter of the incised glens of which they form the floor.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A landscape of skylines</i> 	
<p>It is an area dominated by skylines. In upper, forested Knapdale the skyline is of blunt or jagged lines of conifers at the top of parallel ridges; in middle, moorland Knapdale the ridges are often bare rock or grassy moorland where the variety of skylines are revealed as rounded, undulating, sweeping, crenulated or toothed moorland. In lower coastal Knapdale the ridges fall to the sea</p>	<p>The skylines provide strong linear features within the landscape, framing and enclosing views, particularly from the sea lochs and within the ridge-framed basin of the Mòine Mhòr moss.</p> <p>The shorelines provide as strong horizontal lines as those of the ridged skylines.</p>

<p>forming a steep, rugged coast interspersed with sandy coves, and seaweed-strewn rocky shores.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">• A clothing of oak woodland over the ridges and hollows</p>	
<p>The Atlantic oak woodland is characteristic and adds a wild and natural dimension to many views throughout middle and lower, coastal Knapdale; it rolls around the hills, clings to the cliffs and scarps, flows into the gullies and dips of the burns, billows and wraps around the ridges and occasionally clothes the skyline.</p> <p>It provides a rich haven for wildlife and peaceful, seclusion for people, offering a welcoming, safe and natural invitation. The woods lend harmony to the scene, and are a contrast to the plantations in upper Knapdale, which never quite seem to fit the ridges in the same natural way.</p>	<p>Modern conifer plantations are nowadays more common in the NSA than oakwoods, particularly in the central part of the NSA.</p> <p>The coniferous-covered ridges have different flora and fauna, they can be silent or still and can feel dominating and disorientating, an awareness increased by their height and imposing stature, exaggerated by the height of the trees.</p> <p>The modern plantations have destroyed or masked many of the archaeological field patterns and other evidence of previous human settlement, and an understanding of this can add a tinge of sadness to one's perception of the forest.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• A profoundly evocative, ancient place</p>	
<p>The sense of place and history is profound, stretching from prehistory through the centuries to the ancient kingdom of Dalradia.</p> <p>The prominent hill of Dunadd was a key stronghold of the kings of Dalriada and holds an iconic place in the early history of Scotland. Its summit offers a breathtaking 360° panorama, more spectacular than its modest height might portray.</p> <p>Here and across the northern part of the NSA, in the Glens of Kilmichael and Kilmartin are found some of the finest examples in Scotland of standing stones, stone circles, burial mounds, cup and ring marked slabs and other prehistoric landscape features.</p> <p>This is a profoundly evocative, ancient place where everyone will draw some inspiration, sense of place or history; a landscape of great historical continuity.</p>	<p>The carvings on the summit of Dunadd (a boar, footprints and an ogham inscription) suggest that it was an important location and may have been associated with the inauguration of kings.</p> <p>Pottery discovered at Dunadd during excavation suggests that there was widespread trading here at a time when the river was navigable to the sea.</p> <p>Although the most evocative remains relate to the distant past, many later elements of the landscape testify to the history of the area, for example castles, pre-improvement settlements, agricultural field patterns and designed landscapes.</p>

• ***Ever-changing patterns of colour, sound and smell***

The hills and woods adopt an ever-changing, dynamic of patterns created by sunlight or cloud, rain or mist, sometimes casting light and brightness on the foreground contrasting with the darker ridges, alternately hidden and revealed as the mists or cloud lift and fall.

Along the coast is the contrast of the bright greens of pastures and iris beds with a backdrop of dark green or grey moorland.

Birdsongs and calls from woodland, moorland and bog are complemented by the cries of seabirds and waves gently lapping in the bays and coves.

Inland, the water moves slowly along sinuous rivers, marked by riparian tree belts, or lies still in the drains of the bog, or rests mirror like in the canal until the lock gates are released.

Smells add considerably to the landscape, especially the smells of the sea, the shore, the dank coniferous woodlands, damp oakwoods, bog myrtle and iris beds on and near the moss, and the freshness of the moors.

The colours and striking flora of the iris beds, saltmarsh, rush pasture, wet cotton grass and short turf of grazed rocky outcrops adds to the sense of place and naturalness of the scenery.

• ***Long, slow journeys to the sea***

Journeys to the sea are slow, along narrow winding roads through the trenches of Knapdale, with views ever-changing and unfolding. Often the view is restricted by trees or slopes to the immediate surrounds, but sometimes the landform or woodland suddenly open to present surprise vistas across the hills and sea.

The reward at the end of the journey is views of the sea and remoteness, isolation and seclusion, a place to stay and contemplate. The peninsula feeling is as strong as that of disembarking onto an island after a sea journey. The sea views are exhilarating, mysterious, sometimes dramatic yet enjoyed without

The visitor is compelled to explore the narrow roads right to the end of the seemingly endless peninsulas, just to see what is there.

In the past the sea was the main means of communication and trade, and areas now seeming remote would have appeared more central. At one time the River Add was navigable to the sea from Dunadd.

effort, risk or exposure.	
<i>Location-specific qualities</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In the north, dramatic juxtaposition of ridges and volcanic plugs arising from the flat expanse of Mòine Mhòr bog</i> 	
<p>The distinctive ridges have a strong identity and, together with Dunadd, are dramatically juxtaposed to the flat expanse of the Mòine Mhòr bog, crossed by the sinuous line of the River Add slowly flowing to the equally unusual morphology of the double bay at Crinan.</p>	<p>The northern part of the NSA is a distinctive flat moss, with Dunadd and oak-wooded, lower, outlying ridges protruding out of the bog. To the west is the coastal bay at Crinan with its extensive intertidal mud and sand flats, an inner and outer bay each with its own character and a variety of coastal grassland and wetland habitats merging into the toe of the bog.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A centre of parallel ridges and secret lochans</i> 	
<p>The upper, northern parts of the parallel ridges are almost entirely blanketed with coniferous plantations obscuring the landform and hiding the secret lochans within the afforested trenches of the deeply folded ridge. The lochans form rich oases for wildlife and portray a rather magical, slightly unsettling but calm, secluded, intimate tranquillity.</p> <p>Further south, in middle Knapdale, the forest subsides and is replaced by the billowing crowns of Atlantic oakwoods or open grassy or bracken covered moorlands with a variety of textures and colours.</p> <p>Here the shape of the ridgelines is revealed providing a dynamic, sweeping strongly horizontal skyline enclosing the loch-filled trenches.</p>	<p>South of the Mòine Mhòr, the NSA is comprised of the parallel ridges evocative of this part of Argyll.</p> <p>The small lochs appear almost as if they are large wildlife ponds, or a secret garden reminiscent of 'Alice in Wonderland' with a disorientation of scale.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dramatic sea views in the south</i> 	
<p>Lower, southern and coastal Knapdale is dominated by the presence of the sea and dramatic sea views from the comfort and safety of sheltered bays, inlets and sea lochs, looking across to sparkling or misty offshore islands and the massive, looming, bulk of Jura, with Islay in the distance.</p> <p>The coast is interesting, often quite active with the movement of people,</p>	

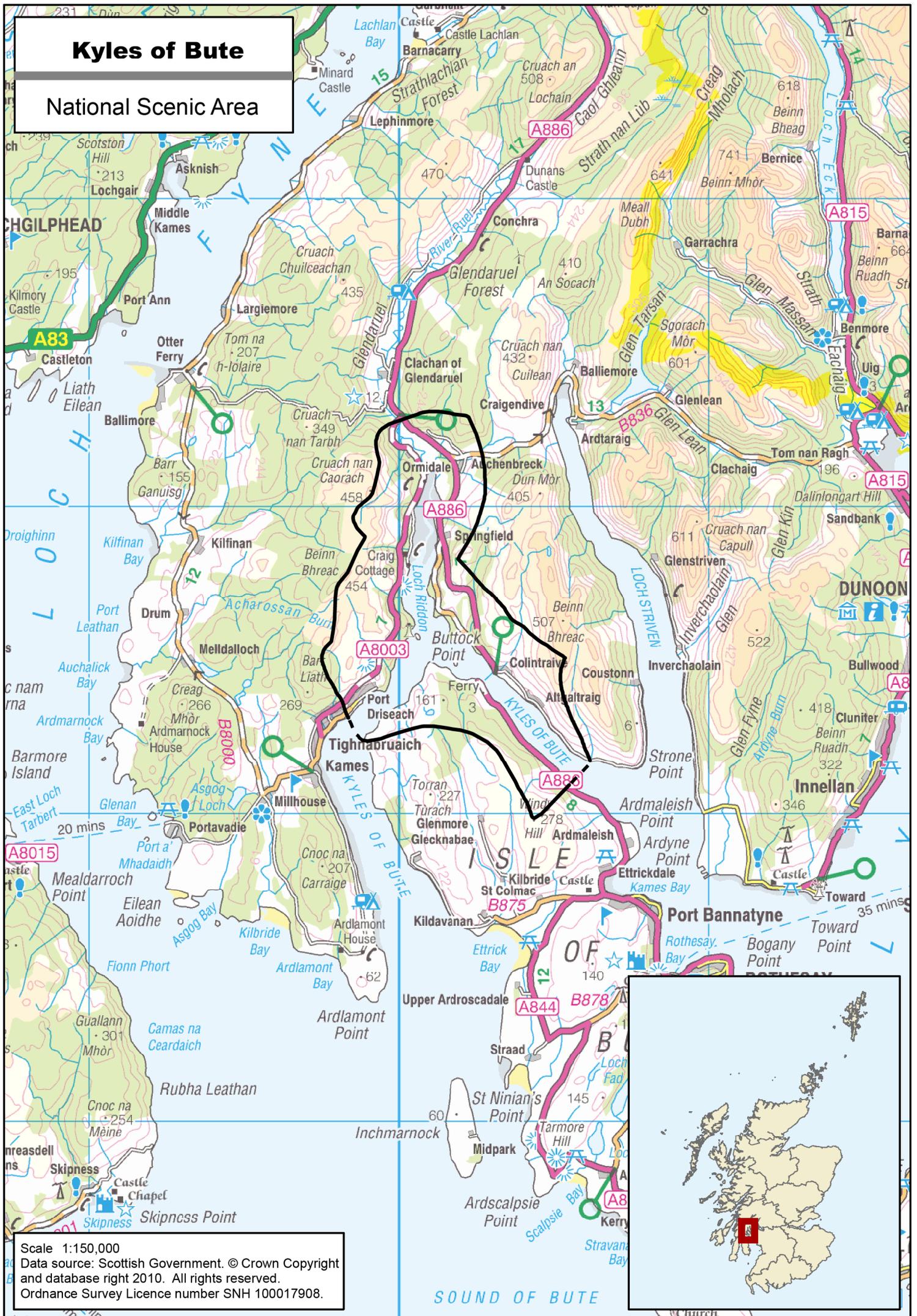
<p>boats and vehicles, but always peaceful and relaxing with a seaside holiday ambience heightened by children playing and people camping.</p>	
<p>• <i>The Crinan Canal</i></p>	
<p>At the foot of the steep edge of the ridges and at the edge of the bog, wends the historic and fully restored sometimes quite busy, basin of the Crinan Canal. This adds to the specialness and distinctiveness of Knapdale, as nowhere else is there this juxtaposition of ridge-land, canal and flat moss close to coastal bays.</p>	<p>The Crinan Canal links Loch Fyne and the Sound of Jura, obviating the need for smaller vessels to go round the Mull of Kintyre. It is nine miles long, has 15 locks and was opened in 1801.</p> <p>This area has always had wide networking and communication links, and the canal is a particular manifestation of the area's importance.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Environmental Resources Management 1996. Landscape Character Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 78.*

Kyles of Bute

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

KYLES OF BUTE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Argyll and Bute

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The juxtaposition of the island of Bute to mainland Cowal at the mouth of Loch Ruel gives rise to a deeply enclosed passage of the sea through an area of broken and well wooded hill country, the whole combining to form a scene of great variety and interest. Loch Ruel is markedly tidal with extensive mud flats at its head. The lochshore is mantled with mixed woodland and the hillsides are roughly undulating with rock out-cropping frequently.

There are views to northern Bute, which has an undeveloped moorland character, with bluffs containing the Kyles. The mainland hills overhang the Kyles steeply, and afford striking views of the three arms of water. The rich verdure of the banks and the high degree of enclosure confer an appearance of peaceful calm on these narrow waters, which underlines their physical beauty.

The Special Qualities of the Kyles of Bute National Scenic Area

- The drama of the Kyles
- Verdant woodland on the enclosing hills
- Rocky outcrops punctuating the wooded slopes
- Small fields between the water and the woods
- The juxtaposition of human settlement and a wider undeveloped landscape of sea and hills
- A peaceful landscape of constant movement
- The ever-changing vistas
- The gradual transition from land to sea in Loch Ruel

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The drama of the Kyles</i> 	
<p>The narrow Kyles dominate this landscape of wooded slopes and rough hills. The sea is the focus, holding the eye with the varied drama of straits, islands, promontories, bluffs, coves, flats and bays.</p>	<p>The Kyles vary in width from 300m to over a kilometre.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Verdant woodland on the enclosing hills</i> 	
<p>The enclosing hillsides coming down to the sea are clothed in extensive areas of mature, mixed woodland. These possess a verdant and luxuriant canopy, often reaching the water's edge. Individual mature trees spread their boughs across small pastures, glades and clearings.</p>	<p>Woodland types include stretches of native woodland, planted designed landscapes and forestry plantations at higher levels. There are also many isolated mature trees.</p> <p>Many of the native woods were managed in the past to provide charcoal and timber.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rocky outcrops punctuating the wooded slopes</i> 	
<p>Rocky hill tops, numerous rock outcrops and rocky shores punctuate the tree cover and hill slopes to give contrast in colour, texture and form.</p>	<p>Much of the NSA is mapped in the Landscape Character Assessment as comprising Craggy Upland, with small areas designated Steep Ridgeland and Open Ridgeland. The outcrops consist of quartz mica schist with basaltic minor intrusions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Small fields between the water and the woods</i> 	
<p>In many places small fields and pastures rise from the shore to the foot of the steep wooded slopes, adding an area of green</p>	<p>These fields exist on the only significant areas of level ground.</p>

<p>fertility and intimacy to the shores of the Kyles.</p>	
<p>• <i>The juxtaposition of human settlement and a wider undeveloped landscape of sea and hills</i></p>	
<p>Human habitation, where present, is confined to a narrow coastal strip, comprising in most part domestic-scale housing and well-maintained gardens. This area exists in contrast to the open water and the steep, enclosing rocky and wooded hill slopes.</p> <p>Settlements are well integrated into the landform and, although easily accessible by road and sea, the whole area has a relatively remote and undeveloped character.</p>	<p>Settlement pattern within the Kyles of Bute generally has a strong and logical relationship with the land. Due to the steep gradient of the slopes, weather conditions, past land and sea use, development has tended to be confined to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow strips along the loch edges. • Clusters in protected small bays. • Dispersed dwellings in sheltered locations along the lower ridges at the head of the loch. <p>The biggest settlement within the NSA is Colintrave located on the eastern Kyles, which has strong linear pattern. Adjacent to this is northern Bute, the most sparsely populated area of the NSA. The head of the loch, which includes Stronafian, has a more dispersed development pattern. Housing is of mixed style, age and type, including many elegant 19th century villas.</p> <p>Remains of deserted human settlements are evident throughout the area, replaced by occasional farms and estates.</p>
<p>• <i>A peaceful landscape of constant movement</i></p>	
<p>The surrounding landscape of woodland, hills and promontories provides a peaceful setting. But the waters are also a centre of movement: the passage of canoes, sailing boats, motor cruisers and the ferry plying from Bute to Colintrave; the swimming and flying of birds; waves, currents, shadows, and reflections on the water itself.</p> <p>In spite of this activity, the area remains a tranquil place which is evidently enjoyed by many.</p>	<p>The enclosing elements and thick deciduous woodland cover, in many cases coming down to the water's edge, provide a peaceful backdrop to the Kyles.</p> <p>The Kyles of Bute are a very popular yachting area with many sheltered anchorages.</p> <p>Birds are plentiful: eider ducks swimming down the Kyles; wheeling oystercatchers, black, white and orange, flying across the shore; or a solitary heron fishing patiently on the estuarine waters of Loch Ruel.</p> <p>The landscape at the head of the loch continually changes with the ebb and the flow of the tide, and there are constant waves and ripples across the Kyles.</p>
<p>• <i>Ever-changing vistas</i></p>	
<p>The views over the Kyles continually change travelling through the NSA. Some roads follow the shore, providing close-up</p>	<p>The continuous changes in the morphology and topography of the coastline give a constantly changing visual impression of the landscape.</p>

<p>views of the sea, while others are well above the coastline, affording distant panoramas.</p> <p>Hence intimate views of small bays and local settlements vie with large scale, distant views south to Arran or east to the hilly moorland and coastal settlements of North Ayrshire.</p> <p>The road north from Tighnabruaich provides particularly spectacular panoramic views over the Kyles to the undeveloped moorland of northern Bute and beyond.</p>	<p>The roads through the NSA - mainly the A886 and especially the A8003 - frequently change direction and altitude, to give a wide range of vistas in terms of scale.</p> <p>Views reach as far afield as Arran and the North Ayrshire coast. The large scale views provide a sense of orientation in the complex interweaving of land and water in the Argyll and Firth of Clyde landscape.</p> <p>There are several viewpoints along the A8003. The National Trust for Scotland's panoramic viewpoint at Creagan Dubh overlooks the three arms of water.</p> <p>Further south, another good viewpoint is at Creag Rubha Bhàin. This hill is a key landscape feature in the vicinity of Tighnabruaich. It encloses the settlement and marks a clear transition between the Rocky Mosaic landscape in the south and the start of the Craggy Upland landscape to the north.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific quality</i></p>	
<p>• <i>The gradual transition from land to sea in Loch Ruel</i></p>	
<p>The head of Loch Ruel shows one of the best transitions in the west of Scotland from woodland, through extensive shingle, sand and mud to open water.</p>	<p>At the head of Loch Ruel (Loch Riddon) there is deciduous woodland of oak, ash and birch with hazel and rowan under-storey; and carr woodland of willow and alder. There is then a transition to wet grassland, rich in wildflowers; to saltmarsh rich in thrift; to tidal shingle gravel, sand and mudflats rich in seaweeds; to river channel; and finally to open water.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Environmental Resources Management 1996. Landscape Character Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 78*.

Munro, I. 1973. *The island of Bute*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles.

Loch na Keal, Isle of Mull

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:200,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

LOCH NA KEAL, ISLE OF MULL, NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Argyll and Bute

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Loch na Keal is the principal sea loch on the Atlantic shore of Mull. The outer loch is divided into two by the island group of Ulva and Gometra, and the northern water forms Loch Tuath. Although the whole forms one island-studded seascape, the component parts of Loch Tuath, inner Loch na Keal and outer Loch na Keal have distinctive but complementary characters.

The shoreline of the inner loch is of low relief, the bayhead beach backed by meadow and woodland, above which the south slopes sweep uniformly up to the shapely peak of Ben More. Eorsa is a green island of the same smooth appearance, but it is the innermost of a group of islands in the outer loch of astonishing variety of shape and form.

The outer loch has a bold and dynamic coastline of cliffs rising in landslipped tiers, unmasked by tree growth, but studded with huge boulders. The north shore has a more intimate character which develops in Loch Tuath where the shoreline is indented by a number of small bays, into which hazel, rowan and alder-lined burns tumble swiftly and sometimes, like Eas Forss, fall over small precipices which echo the larger cliffs of the south shore.

The hillsides of Loch Tuath have a mixture of rough grazing and semi-natural woodland which contributes to its more intimate and gentle character. Although Loch Tuath has a sense of enclosure that contrasts with the bold rugged and wild character of outer Loch na Keal, they share views of the same groups of islands, whether the dramatic profiles of the basaltic Staffa and Treshnish Isles, or the greener, shelved islands of Ulva, Gometra and Little Colonsay, or the innumerable skerries that pepper the whole bight with eyecatching shapes.

The Special Qualities of the Loch na Keal National Scenic Area

- Highly distinctive seaways and shores
- A voyage from enclosed sea loch to the open Atlantic
- Dramatic coast of basalt terraces and cliffs
- Views of an island-studded sea
- Islands and islet groups of astonishingly varied character
- A vast natural world, dwarfing human settlement
- World famous Staffa and Fingal's Cave
- The horizontal Treshnish Isles
- The instantly recognisable Dutchman's Cap

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Highly distinctive seaways and shores</i> 	
<p>Loch na Keal, the major sea loch on Mull's Atlantic seaboard, is a place where ancient, horizontal lava flows have resulted in a highly distinctive landscape of coastline and seaways.</p> <p>There is a wide, outer loch divided in two by the island group of Ulva and Gometra and a narrow inner loch. This results in three distinct areas and, within each one, the scenery is composed of dramatic but complementary contrasts to north and south.</p>	<p>Loch na Keal (<i>Loch na Caol</i> - Loch of the Kyle, or Narrows.)</p> <p><u>Outer Loch na Keal</u> is bordered on its north by Ulva, to the south by the Ardmeanach peninsula's north coast. These two shores offer dramatic contrasts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ulva coastline is lower, made up of indented and weathered basaltic ridges and ledges, with off-shore outlying rocks and islets. Craggs and rock-forms are smaller in vertical scale, with a greater diversity in form and vegetation than the opposing shores of • The southern coastline (Ardmeanach Peninsula) has a bold, dynamic, coastline of cliffs, stepping back and up in landslipped tiers, to unstable scree slopes. The slopes are bare and monumental in scale, studded with huge boulders. There is a distinct lack of trees and few human elements. <p><u>Inner Loch na Keal</u> is enclosed to the north and south by mainland Mull; its bayhead beach is backed by meadows and woodland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its north shores are steeply sloped with indistinct summits and scant pockets of scrubby woodland on the shores; contrasting with • The steep, cliffed and scree covered hill slopes to the south, sweeping up steadily to the distinct peak of Ben More, and the wind-pruned trees of the Gruline shore and Scarisdale Wood. <p><u>Loch Tuath</u> is enclosed by Ulva's north coast and by Mull's western seaboard at Kilninian. Loch Tuath gives a sense of intimate</p>

	<p>enclosure, with gentler hill slopes, that contrast markedly with the bold, rugged and wild character of outer Loch na Keal. Furthermore, they have a mixture of rough grazing and semi-natural woodland. The loch's shoreline is indented by a number of small bays into which hazel, rowan and alder-lined burns tumble swiftly. Waterfalls, such as Eas Forss, cascade over small precipices which echo the larger cliffs of the southern shore.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• A voyage from enclosed sea loch to the open Atlantic</p>	
<p>The area stretches from the sheltered waters of inner Loch Keal, through the archipelago of Ulva, Gometra and their outliers, to the outer Treshnish Islands, exposed to the full fury of the Atlantic Ocean. Although covering an extensive area, the seascapes, island and coastal landscapes are an indivisible whole.</p> <p>To experience the area to the full, it is essential to travel through it by sea. Such an Atlantic voyage offers impressive and unique seascapes, together with beauty and wildlife specific to the Atlantic and Scotland's western seaboard.</p>	<p>Nowadays the islands appear remote and inaccessible, and this is appreciated as a modern quality. However this perception is very different to that of the past, when the sea was the main highway and islands were, for example, at the centre of the Lordship of the Isles. This is testified by the visible remains of the once strategically important castles on two small islands in the Treshnish group - Cairn na Burghe More and Beg.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• Dramatic coast of basalt terraces and cliffs</p>	
<p>The high terraced hills across much of the NSA form a highly distinctive tract of land, with the coastal cliffs being particularly dramatic.</p> <p>The ancient lava flows give a horizontal emphasis to the whole area. Geometric, strongly stepped profiles lead up and back from a rocky, steeply edged coastline to flat-topped summits.</p> <p>Passage along the eastern shores of Loch na Keal is tightly confined to the narrow and spectacular coastal road. In the case of western Ardmeanach, 'The Wilderness', there is no road at all.</p> <p>There is little tree cover to break-up the exposed hills and slopes, woods only occurring in sheltered gullies and on a few steep slopes. It is absent from the outer islands.</p>	<p><i>'Coastal cliffs are particularly distinctive. Here the basalt cliffs are surrounded by a fan of rocky scree and the flat terraces at the foot of the cliff are strewn with large boulders which have broken away from the sheer rock faces above. The islands to the west also have the typical stepped profile, but here the terraces are crisply defined, with sharply eroded flat surfaces and vertical cliffs.'</i> Environmental Resources Management (1996)</p> <p><i>'Along the whole eastern horizon was Mull, a fine skyline indeed, topped by the shapely cone of Ben More. Between us and Mull were Gometra and Ulva and Little Colonsay, and as we gazed we were impressed once more with the characteristic features of this country of the west side of Mull. The cliffs are sheer, then there is a little flat; then another steep slope and cliff and another flat on top of that.'</i> Fraser Darling (1952)</p> <p>On the Ardmeanach peninsula, coastal cliffs, screes and a series of basalt terraces rise up to 492m (1704 ft.). The southwest part of the peninsula (designated SSSI) provides one of the finest continuous sections through the early part of the sequence of lava flows which built the main cone of the Mull</p>

	volcano. This is where McCulloch's Tree - the famous fossil tree - is found. Each lava flow (there are between 25-30) is marked by a sequence of cliff and terrace - a key site illustrating this is Aird na h-Iolaire.
<p>• Views of an island-studded sea</p>	
<p>This is essentially a broad, island-studded seascape with an abundance of islands of different shapes, sizes and character, although all reflect the horizontality of the lava flows from which they are derived. Innumerable skerries pepper the whole bight with eye-catching shapes.</p> <p>Views of the islands are shared from many vantage points within Loch na Keal and Loch Tuath. Views from the various islands to others in the group, and views back to the mainland are distinctive, and clearly bounded.</p>	<p>The principal islands are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eorsa. • Inch Kenneth and Samalan Island. • Ulva, the largest and its sister island Gometra. • Little Colonsay. • The Treshnish Isles - Fladda, Lunga, Bac Mòr and smaller isles. • The unique and magical island of Staffa.
<p>• Islands and islet groups of astonishingly varied character</p>	
<p>The islands and islet groups have surprisingly varied characters:</p> <p>Eorsa is smooth and green, and the historic Inch Kenneth is encircled by serrated reefs and skerries.</p> <p>Ulva, the largest island, is the most green and lush. It is low-lying and settled, with a mixture of pasture, policy woodlands and rough grazing. The transition from land to sea is fragmented and vertically less challenging than other of the Mull and island coasts. Yet nevertheless, at close hand it still gives dramatic drops onto turbulent seas.</p> <p>Gometra and Little Colonsay both have distinctly shelved coastlines.</p> <p>The more distant Treshnish Isles are a chain of horizontal, basalt islands which form a very distinctive island group. They are important landmarks, particularly Bac Mór, the Dutchman's Cap.</p> <p>Staffa is world famous for Fingal's Cave and its basalt columns.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Merrily, merrily goes the bark On a breeze from the northward free So shoots through the morning sky the lark Or the swan through the summer sea The shores of Mull on the eastward lay And Ulva dark and Colonsay And all the group of islet gay That guard famed Staffa round.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Sir Walter Scott, The Lord of the Isles, canto iv, verse X)</p> <p><u>Eorsa</u> is a green island, with smooth rounded slopes and a cliffed west coast, with an attendant island - Samalan. Eorsa once belonged to the Priory of Iona. It is a compact island in the centre of Loch na Keal, with dramatic views from the east coast of Ben More and the cliffs along the Ardmeanach peninsula. The west shores are high cliffs that become lower to the east. Eorsa served as a natural barrier across Loch na Keal during the First World War when the loch was used as a deep-water naval anchorage.</p> <p><u>Inch Kenneth</u> is an anomaly in the group as its rocks are sedimentary and it has exceptionally fertile soils. Like Eorsa it is very green. Its hazardous, outlying low-lying islets, drying rocks, reefs and skerries, appear as a series of serrated teeth alongside the island, encircling it - except for its west, cliffed side. It has a distinctive profile.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Inch Kenneth's name is said to derive from</p>

	<p>St. Cannoch, a contemporary of St Columba, and on the island there are ruins of a 13th century church. It is said that Kings of Scotland were buried here if storms prevented passage to Iona.</p> <p><u>Ulva:</u> East Ulva's basalt plateau is low-lying and settled, with a mixture of pasture, policy woodlands and rougher grazing. The coast has numerous low stepped headlands, islets, outlying rocks and skerries leading down and into the sea.</p>
<p>• <i>A vast natural world, dwarfing human settlement</i></p>	
<p>Within this vast, natural landscape, ranging from the heights of Ben More to the distant Treshnish Islands, settlement is sparse. Where houses do occur, they are dwarfed by the mountainous and sea-dominant scene. The eye is swept down from the hills, along the coastline of Loch na Keal and out to sea.</p> <p>This increases the drama and accentuates the feeling nature is dominant, impervious to humans and their actions.</p>	<p>At the eastern end of the NSA lies the massif of Ben More, rising to 966m.</p> <p>Settlement is confined to small linear groups on the Kilninian coast, Gruline and Gribun. Ulva is lightly settled, as are Gometra and Inch Kenneth. The Treshnish Isles and other inner isles are now uninhabited.</p> <p>It should be noted that in the past there was a larger human population, with the west coast of Mull well populated before clearance. Even though many of the earlier townships were converted to crofting settlements during the clearance phase in the early 19th century, the ruins of many townships can still be seen - around Loch Tuath in particular. With the loss of population, much of the vegetation has returned to a more natural character.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• <i>World famous Staffa and Fingal's Cave</i></p>	
<p>Staffa is world famous and has long inspired artists, writers and composers. Uninhabited, isolated and remote, it is readily accessible by boat. On arrival, basalt columns both straight and curved, some of the most impressive in the world, dominate the view. Fingal's Cave penetrates the cliffs, disappearing into the darkness, with the sound of the swell echoing back from far inside.</p> <p>The island provides an all-round experience. Visitors walk beneath the columns, perhaps surprised to see such regularity sculpted by nature, and then enter the cave itself.</p> <p>Thereafter they can climb to the top of the island, walk the length of the plateau and get excellent close-up views of</p>	<p>Staffa's natural importance is recognised through the designations of National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest.</p> <p>Staffa is characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of remoteness, but at the same time readily accessible by boat (weather permitting). • Impressive examples of regular basalt columns, with cliffs over 40m high, riddled with extraordinary sea caves. • A natural paradise for breeding seabirds. They accentuate the larger, natural world, wherein humans are visitors, with the isles left to the birds on departure. • On the island's plateau, a feeling of 'floating on the sea', with grand panoramas in all directions. <p>Fingal's Cave, 83m long and 23m high, is the</p>

<p>puffins and other seabirds. It is also the centre of a wide and grand vista across the sea to Coll and Tiree, the Treshnish Isles, Ulva, the Ardmeanach Peninsula, Ben More, the Ross of Mull, Iona and Dun I.</p>	<p>best known sea cave. It is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily accessible, and visually and atmospherically spectacular. • A natural, geological, wonder of the world, said to be the only sea cave in the world formed entirely out of columnar basalt. • Associated in legend with Fionn MacCool (Fingal). • Renowned at home and abroad. <p><i>'Artists, authors, poets, musicians and royalty have all visited the island and helped establish Staffa as an integral part of the Grand Tour. The first recorded visit was by the scientist Joseph Banks in 1772... Many of those who followed Banks helped to immortalise Staffa - in music through Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture or in paintings such as Turner's Staffa, Fingal's Cave...'</i> National Trust for Scotland (2004)</p> <p>Poets such as Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Sir Walter Scott recorded their impressions and Queen Victoria wrote about it in her journal.</p>
<p>• The horizontal Treshnish Isles</p>	
<p>The Treshnish islands are an isolated, uninhabited, undeveloped chain of islands, and a natural paradise for breeding sea birds. Their horizontal profiles and vertical cliffs, comprising the remnant of an ancient lava flow, are particularly distinctive.</p> <p>Cruachan, the summit hill of Lunga, provides a magnificent panorama of the surrounding islands and seas.</p> <p>Although nowadays seen as remote, in the late medieval period, the castles on the adjacent small islands of Cairn na Burgh More and Beg were strategically important, being a seat of the Lordship of the Isles, granted to the Macleans of Coll.</p>	<p>Some of the eight main islands in the group are rarely visited due to difficulty in landing and access, for example Cairn na Burgh Mor and Beg. The islands are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.</p> <p>Lunga (<i>langr-oy</i>, Old Norse longship island), is the largest of the Treshnish islands at 81 hectares. Cruachan ('conical hill'), a rounded hill of 103m (338ft) is the highest point. There is a ruined village, situated on a plateau below Cruachan, last occupied in 1857.</p>
<p>• The instantly recognisable Dutchman's Cap</p>	
<p>Of the Treshnish Isles, Bac Mòr, the Dutchman's Cap, is the most notable. With its domed summit rising from the centre of a flat, vertically-sided platform, it has perhaps the most distinctive profile</p>	<p>Bac Mòr (<i>the big bank</i>) is an eroded volcanic cone rising to 86m, encircled by a grassy rim of lava. It is only possible to land in the quietest of sea and weather. There are the remains of shielings there.</p>

of any island in Scotland. As a highly prominent landmark, it assists with navigation over a wide area.	
---	--

Selected Bibliography

Boswell, James 1786. *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*

Environmental Resources Management 1996. Landscape Character Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 78.*

Fraser Darling, F. 1940. *Island Years.* G Bell and Sons.

Gillen, C. 2003. *Geology and landscapes of Scotland.* Terra Publishing.

Haswell-Smith, H. 2008. *The Scottish Islands. The bestselling guide to every Scottish island.* Edinburgh: Canongate.

Munro, R, W. Macquarrie, A., 1996. *Clan MacQuarrie: A History* (information on Ulva)

National Trust for Scotland 2004. *Staffa property statement 2005-10.*

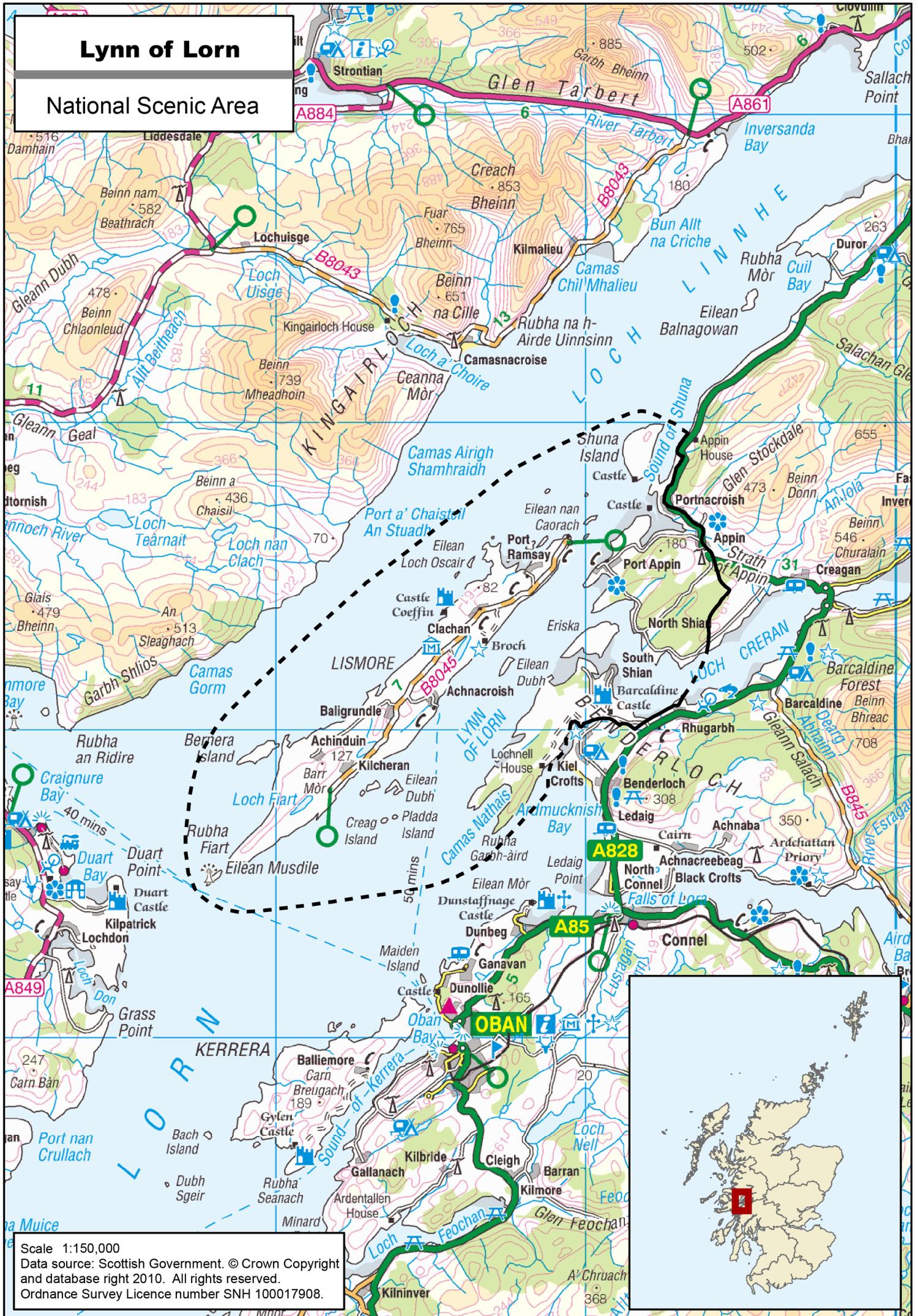
National Trust for Scotland 2006. *Burg property statement 2006-11.*

Scott, Walter, Sir. 1771-1832. *The poetical works of Sir Walter Scott, with memoir of the author.*

www.hebrideantrust.org/treshnish.htm (accessed December 2009)

Lynn of Lorn

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

LYNN OF LORN NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Argyll and Bute

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The Lynn of Lorn is an island-studded waterway at the confluence of the Sound of Mull with Loch Etive and Loch Linnhe, from which it is separated by the island of Lismore. The Lynn follows the north-westerly alignment of the prevailing relief in the area, which, set in the wider context of sea lochs and mountains, is a small scale region of parallel limestone ridges.

It is these ridges, whether submerged, so that only their tops form islets, or whether raised in succession, with the waters of the Lynn, Loch Creran and Loch Laich lapping in between them, that give the area its distinctive character. Made of limestone they support a rich vegetation, either green, lush meadows in the intervening glens and on the surrounding raised beaches, or thick luxuriant oakwoods, at times extended by new coniferous plantations, covering their slopes. It is a small scale, secluded landscape, with constantly changing views as the pattern of ridges and valleys, islands and inlets, is traversed. Lismore translates as 'Great Garden,' a name which is not at variance with the character of the whole area, and which is realised in the fine policies of the big houses of the area

Lochnell, Eriska, Airds and Appin, to which Castle Stalker on its diminutive island offers a complete contrast.

The Special Qualities of the Lynn of Lorn National Scenic Area

- A long-inhabited, green oasis
- A small scale, low-lying landscape within a vast highland backdrop
- A landscape strongly orientated northeast-southwest
- The coastline of great variety and diversity
- A strategic location, rich in history
- A place of retreat and seclusion
- Castle Stalker, one of Scotland's iconic romantic images

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A long-inhabited, green oasis</i> 	
<p>Set where Loch Linnhe opens out to the Firth of Lorn and the Sound of Mull, the islands of Lismore and Shuna are low, fertile, emerald green oases of limestone amongst a wider and wilder landscape of hill and mountain.</p> <p>The neighbouring mainland of Appin and Benderloch is a picturesque landscape of small, wooded ridges and sheltered meadows.</p> <p>The rich soils together with a climate kept mild by the surrounding seas, has resulted in the area being long inhabited.</p>	<p>Lismore translates from the Gaelic as 'great garden or enclosure'. It is formed of Dalradian limestone, providing rich, fertile soils. The surrounding rock of the mainland is less fertile, primarily consisting of schist and quartzite.</p> <p>Evidence of a lime industry is seen in the remains of old lime kilns on both Lismore and Shuna, where lime was exported as fertiliser to many parts of western Scotland. There is a former grain mill at Achnacroish.</p> <p>The Appin mainland part of the NSA supports a rich vegetation of damp meadows, thick luxuriant oak woodlands, and policy woodlands. It contains both designed landscapes and crofting settlements.</p> <p>The area is still well inhabited, in spite of the desertion of many late 19th century townships.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A small scale, low-lying landscape within a vast highland backdrop</i> 	
<p>The pattern of the land is intimate, with small, walled fields, woods and lush meadows. Even the natural features of hill and crag tend to be of the small scale. It is a distinctive landscape, an area of lowland set within a backdrop of high mountains.</p> <p>Lismore is a green and settled island of rich farmland, good for both crops and livestock, and containing a profusion of</p>	<p>On Appin, a patterned landscape of small hilly parallel ridges and crags emerges, often with deciduous wooded sides and small glens of meadows, and some mossland at the centre leading out to small bays or beaches.</p> <p>Lismore is an island of small knolls and horizontal, uneven limestone crags, and enclosed irregular, undulating, walled fields rich in wildflowers. The land is mainly used for grazing, but a variety of crops are also grown, including flax in the past. Shuna to the north has one farm.</p>

<p>wild flowers.</p>	<p>The area supports numerous small woods and copses, including hazel coppice. Native birch and oak woodland and scrub are common on the mainland and Shuna.</p> <p>In contrast to this fertile oasis are the rugged mountains beyond the NSA. There are glimpses out to a large-scale, vast landscape beyond: Kingairloch, Morvern, Mull, and the mountains of Lochaber and Glen Coe - their massive, conical and angular profiles dominating the backdrop to the NSA in many areas.</p>
<p>• <i>A landscape strongly orientated northeast-southwest</i></p>	
<p>The pattern of ridges and valleys, of crags and slopes, of islands and promontories is particularly distinctive, the uniform orientation lending a sense of coherence to the land.</p> <p>The strong northeast-southwest direction mirrors the far shore of Loch Linnhe and the Great Glen to the north.</p>	<p>The orientation follows that of the rift valley of the Great Glen. It is particularly obvious when the narrow, southern end of Lismore is viewed from the Oban-Craignure ferry.</p>
<p>• <i>The coastline of great variety and diversity</i></p>	
<p>The array of islands and islets, horseshoe bays, shingle beaches, geometric cliffs, rocky shores and tidal flats, together with the narrow mouth of Loch Creran, provide continual interest to the eye. The natural rock arch of Clach Tholl is particularly striking.</p> <p>In places sheltered woods extend right down to the tideline, in others there are cliffs that bear the brunt of the gales that whip up the Firth of Lorn. The enclosed Lynn, long a sheltered sea route and a place of anchorage, contrasts markedly with the open and exposed Loch Linnhe.</p> <p>This great variety within a small area results in unparalleled, intimate coastal scenery. However, views over the sea to the distant mountains of Mull or the mainland, can bring a vastness of scale to the scene.</p>	<p>The NSA lies at the confluence and mouths of many waterways. The coastline is complex and broken, with sounds, skerries, islets, islands, cliffs, horseshoe bays, coves, shingle beaches, rocky shores, tidal mud flats, raised beaches, firths, and sea loch mouths. Landform varies from the highly sinuous Loch Creran to the geometric cliffs and rocky shore of Lismore.</p> <p>The Lynn itself, with Loch Creran, Ardmucknish bay, Camas Nathais and Loch Etive, provides relatively calm waters compared to the broad, expansive Loch Linnhe and Firth of Lorn.</p> <p>Loch Creran is one of the richest lochs in Britain for its underwater life.</p> <p>The importance of the geology of Lismore and the rock arch of Clach Tholl on the mainland, is recognised by both being part of the Isle of Lismore, The Dog Stone, Clach Tholl Geological Conservation Review Site.</p>

• ***A strategic location, rich in history***

The Lynn of Lorn and Lismore occupy a key strategic position on the west coast of Scotland, with commanding views of surrounding mountains, sounds and sea lochs. They are situated on what was a major sea route linking Ireland to the lands of the north and west.

Throughout history this area has been a place of both defence and religion, as shown by the numerous historic remains found throughout the area.

Lismore lies at the confluence of the Sound of Mull, Loch Etive, Loch Linnhe, and the Lynn of Lorn. It is also at the mouth of Loch Creran and Loch Laich. Beyond lie the mountainous areas of Glen Coe and Lochaber. Across from Loch Linnhe is Morvern and Kingairloch, to the southwest the highlands of Mull, and to the southeast the hills of Argyll.

Historically it was an important trading and transport route by sea and coast from the head of Loch Linnhe (now Fort William) to the sea and west coast of Scotland.

This has led to many defensible installations such as brochs, duns and numerous castles. These include Tirefour Castle Broch, Castle Coeffin (of Norse origin) and Achadun on Lismore; Castle Shuna, the Black Castle at Barcaldine; and, most famous, Castle Stalker, with the original fort dating from around 1320. Defensive installations date right through to the 20th century, with five World War II sites on Lismore.

Its strategic location was also recognised by the church, with Lismore having the seat of the Bishopric of Argyll until the 16th century. Appin itself translates from the Gaelic *Apuin* (Abbey Lands). One of the largest Bronze Age Cairns in Argyll is also found on Lismore.

• ***A place of retreat and seclusion***

From early religious settlements to present-day, secluded estates, the area has long been an important place of retreat, quiet and seclusion.

This perhaps reflects the intimate nature of the land, with its low hills, sheltered hollows and wooded slopes.

A turn off the busy Fort William to Oban road leads to a quiet, hidden world of single track roads, small walled meadows and fields and copses and woods, opening onto small bays; the same is repeated on Lismore.

St. Moulag was the first Christian to establish himself on Lismore (arriving in 561AD) and was reported to have spent much time meditating on a small mound now known as Moulag's Chair.

St. Columba was believed to have spent time on Bernera isle and preached under a large yew tree.

The area contains several estates, some well hidden and secluded such as Lochnell which is almost surrounded by woodland and water and Eriska an island hotel. There are also houses and cottages almost hidden in the well-wooded landscape.

<i>Location-specific quality</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castle Stalker, one of Scotland's iconic romantic images 	
<p>Castle Stalker, standing prominent on an islet guarding the entrance to Loch Laich, and with its dramatic backdrop of island, sea and mountain, is one of the most recognisable and romantic of Scottish castles.</p>	<p>'As you turn off the main A828 towards Port Appin your attention is immediately caught by Castle Stalker, set on its own very small islet in Loch Laich. Castle Stalker was built in about 1495 by Duncan Stewart of Appin who was granted lands in the area by James IV for his support in destroying the power of the Lords of the Isles. The castle was taken by the Campbells in 1620, before being recaptured by the Stewarts after a siege in 1685. The castle was abandoned in the late 1700s and roofless by 1830. What you see today has been restored since the 1960s.' www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk</p>

Selected Bibliography

Environmental Resource Management 1996. Landscape Character Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 78*.

Lismore Historical Society 2006(?). *Lismore*. (booklet)

Ritchie, W. 2005. *Isle of Lismore*. Lismore Kirk Session. (booklet)

www.castlestalker.com/castle.htm (accessed July 2008)

www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/appin/portappin/ (accessed July 2008)

Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

SCARBA, LUNGA AND THE GARVELLACHS NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Argyll and Bute*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

In the clutter of islands in South West Argyll one group stands out in many views, and by virtue of its form, relief and inter-relationships makes up an area of varied character and distinctive identity.

The holy 'Isles of the Sea' or 'Rough Islands' as the Garvellachs are otherwise called, are sharply angular when viewed from the north-east, and present vertical cliffs to the north-west. Inwards to the rest of the group, they are green scrub-clad islets, rich in flowers among the pink quartzose limestone boulders. They carry the most ancient ecclesiastical buildings in Scotland, and contrast strangely with the black slaty profiles of Belnahua and Lunga nearby, where the derelict slate quarries glisten in the sun or raise bleak black unnatural profiles to the storm.

The dark pyramid of Scarba (449m) raises its summit high above these lower islands, supporting moorland that is in striking contrast to their green meadows or slate wastes. On its eastern flank Scarba is well-wooded, an element of surprise in this oceanic context. Between the islands tidal races rip with ferocity that is easily seen, and the streaming waters are themselves an important visual element in the total scene.

The Special Qualities of the Scarba, Lunga and the Garvellachs National Scenic Area

- Uninhabited, remote, wild islands
- A seascape of distinctive and contrasting island groups
- Solitude, sanctuary, reflection and retreat
- Exceptional marine life
- The notorious Corryvreckan and the Grey Dogs
- The pyramidal island of Scarba
- The irregularly-shaped Lunga, and its attendant islands and reefs
- The low-lying slate island of Belnahua
- The sloping and rocky Garvellachs

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Uninhabited, remote, wild islands</i> 	
<p>Set between the large mass of Jura and the Argyll mainland, this arc of islands presents a remote and isolated aspect. They are far removed from urban centres, accessible only when sailing conditions are favourable.</p> <p>Today there is no permanent habitation on any of the islands, although the remains of past settlement show that it has not always been so. While there is still some grazing by sheep and cattle, the islands nowadays have a wild and undeveloped appearance with an absence of overt human influence that belies their history.</p>	<p>The South-West Argyll coast has innumerable off-shore islands, islets, skerries, reefs and tide-swept rocky reefs and islands. These lie in a sea with powerful tidal currents and deep waters. Lying west of the Slate Islands of Seil and Luìng are the islands that comprise the NSA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Garvellachs (four islands). • Lunga, the three Fiolas, Ormsa, Fladda and Belnahua, Eilean Dubh Beag and Mor. • The larger island of Scarba.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A seascape of distinctive and contrasting island groups</i> 	
<p>These island groups are distinctive in the south-west Argyll seascape, all with interesting but contrasting rock formations. There is great variety in their individual shapes, sizes and colours, and in their relationships to off-shore islets and skerries. The pyramidal mass of Scarba contrasts with the more horizontal, irregularly profiled Lunga, which in turn contrasts with the wedge-shaped Garvellachs.</p>	<p>Despite their rocky and rough terrain, the Garvellachs' close-cropped green swards and distinctive hillsides of pink banded stone make a strong and surprising contrast with the Slate Isles dark coloured rocks.</p> <p>A prime viewpoint for these islands is from Easdale on Seil where island summits appear in the view with Jura; another is from Cullipool on Luìng.</p>

<p>The west-facing shores of these islands are exposed to the fully fury of the Atlantic Ocean, with steeper cliffs, whereas their eastern shores are gentler, opening out onto the Sound of Luing. Hence the islands tend to slope downwards, west to east.</p> <p>The archipelago is conspicuous in many of the breathtaking views from the nearby islands and the mainland.</p>	
<p>• Solitude, sanctuary, reflection and retreat</p>	
<p>Despite appearing isolated and remote, the islands have a long history of human occupation, myth and legend. They were once on a key sea route between monastic houses, which were established to take account of the islands' overriding sense of solitude and sanctuary.</p> <p>The Garvellachs are also known as the 'Holy Isles of the Sea', in recognition of their early Christian monastic settlement. St Brendan founded a monastery on Eileach an Naoimh (<i>'Rocky Place of the Saint'</i>) to take advantage of the reflection and retreat offered by the islands. These qualities later attracted St Columba, who used the island as a retreat. Columba's mother Eithne, Princess of Leinster is said to be buried here. Links with Iona were particularly important.</p>	<p><i>'On such isolated oceanic rocks as the Garvellachs and Skelligs that Christianity managed to survive in the Celtic fringe... the islands have been uninhabited for centuries, and only the ruins bear mute testimony to the Golden Age of the Celtic church.'</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>An early Christian monastery was founded on Eileach an Naoimh by St Brendan in 542 AD. Eileach an Naoimh (56ha) and A Chuli have some of the oldest and most evocative Christian ecclesiastical buildings to survive in the British Isles. They are linked with St Columba and St Brendan.</p>
<p>• Exceptional marine life</p>	
<p>The seas within the NSA are particularly rich and any visit may result in sightings of basking sharks, whales, dolphins or seals. Golden eagles or white-tailed eagles often soar overhead.</p>	<p>The surrounding seas are part of the Firth of Lorn Special Area of Conservation, designated for its rich marine life.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• The notorious Corryvreckan and the Grey Dogs</p>	
<p>The seas between the islands are renowned for their dangerous tidal races, roaring whirlpools and standing waves.</p>	<p><i>'Scarba's Isle, whose tortured shore rings with Corrievreckan's roar.'</i> Sir Walter Scott, quoted in Whittow (1977)</p>

<p>The Gulf of Corryvreckan is particularly notorious, with the tidal currents here reaching ten knots, the strongest on the open coast of Britain. When conditions are right, with incoming waves meeting an outgoing current, the whirlpools and waves can be both spectacular and terrifying.</p> <p>The narrow channel between Lunga and Scarba, known as Bealach a'Choin Ghlais or the Grey Dogs, can be as dangerous and equally spectacular.</p>	<p><i>'The sea begins to boil and ferment with the tide of flood, and resembles the boiling of a pot; and then increases gradually, until it appears in many whirlpools which form themselves in sort of pyramids and immediately after spout up as high as the mast of a little vessel and at the same time make a loud report'</i>. Martin Martin (1703)</p> <p>The Corryvreckan whirlpool forms around a submerged rock stack between Scarba and Jura. Beside it lies 'the Gateway to Hell' a great, narrow, undersea pit. The whirlpool is also known as 'Cailleach' (old woman). It is at its most dramatic when spring tide is in full flood, the tide flowing westwards at a speed of ten knots against a strong west wind.</p> <p>It is said that it was named after Breacan, a Norse Prince, who foundered with his entire fleet.</p>
<p>• <i>The pyramidal island of Scarba</i></p>	
<p>The largest island within the NSA, Scarba emerges sharply out of the sea, appearing as a pyramidal mountain peak rising to 449m. Its sheer bulk and scale dominates all the other, lower-lying islands, and its coastline is bleak and rugged with many caves.</p> <p>The west coast is precipitous, forbidding and exceptionally high, with a raised beach more than 30m above sea level and with steep heather-clad slopes tumbling downwards to an unstable boulder-set shore. On its eastern flank, Scarba is well-wooded which adds an element of surprise in this oceanic context.</p> <p>It can be a hazardous boat journey to get to the island, and once there, an arduous climb leads to the summit Cruach Scarba, where there are extensive panoramic views to the Argyll and Irish coasts.</p>	<p>Scarba (Old Norse <i>skarpoe</i>, sharp, stony, hilly terrain) is 1474 ha/3,642 acres in area. The interior of the island is very rough and wet moorland.</p> <p><i>'The dominant position of Scarba in the landscape of the country... and the somewhat hazardous boat journey and arduous climb are well repaid by the bird's-eye view of the Netherlorn plateau and islands, and a wide extent of territory from the Irish coast in the south-west to Ben Nevis in the north, which is obtained from the summit.'</i> Gillies (1909)</p> <p>It is the site of an early Christian settlement. In the late 18th Century the island was divided into two farms, inhabited up until 1963 and intermittently since then. Luing cattle are grazed here and red deer are present. There is currently the summer shooting lodge of Kilmory.</p>
<p>• <i>The irregularly-shaped Lunga, and its attendant islands and reefs</i></p>	
<p>Lunga and its many attendant isles are all rough and rocky, with craggy and lumpy outcrops, knolls and slanting rock strata. The coastlines are misshapen,</p>	<p>This middle archipelago includes Lunga (254ha/628 acres) and the islands of Eilean Dubh Mor; Eilean Dubh Beag; Ormsa; Belnahua; Fladda; Eilean nan Ceann; Sgeir</p>

<p>breaking down into scatters of reefs, and small tidal islands extend northwards.</p> <p>Fladda Lighthouse provides a focal seamark in the Sound of Luing.</p>	<p>Poll nan Corran; Sgeir Mhic Altair; Eilean a’Bhealaich; Guirasdeal; An Tudan; Liath Sgeir.</p> <p>The islands of Eilean Dubh Mor (65 ha) and Eilean Dubh Beag (15ha) are similar in character. Eilean Dubh Mor comprises a single mound-shaped hill of 53m high connected to another small promontory with hill. Both islands contrast in shape with the mass of rocky, linear reefs and islets of Lunga.</p>
<p align="center">• <i>The low-lying slate island of Belnahua</i></p>	
<p>Belnahua, one of the slate isles, is highly distinctive. It appears low and flat, barely emerging from the surrounding seascape, with a stark profile, its skyline formed by ruined slate-workers cottages, bleak, black unnatural rock profiles, machinery and its single hill lump.</p> <p>Its shores are strewn with slate and its interior comprises a freshwater loch – a flooded slate quarry.</p>	<p>Belnahua lies 1 mile (1½ km) north-west of Luing and east of the Garvellachs. Along with Seil, Luing and Easdale it forms the ‘Slate Isles’ but is the smallest island in the group. At its peak, it supported over 100 slate workers. The ruined workers cottages, machinery and disused slate quarry are still visible.</p> <p>Associated with the slate workings was a sea-based transport network, which illustrates that in the past there was a ‘connectedness’ to these islands, rather than the remoteness that is experienced today.</p> <p>The island has an extensive drying reef to its north-west.</p>
<p align="center">• <i>The sloping and rocky Garvellachs</i></p>	
<p>Known also as the ‘Rough Islands’, reflecting both their topography and the rough surrounding seas, the Garvellachs appear to have been violently ‘thrown into the sea’, with their north-west coasts tilted sharply upwards. They have inhospitable, exposed northwest coasts made up of steep cliffs rising above a rock-platform at sea level, with the cliffs of Garbh Eileach being particularly impressive.</p> <p>From the northeast the islands appear sharply angular and uncompromisingly rocky. Limestone pavement is present and gives rise to emerald green, grassy slopes on south-east facing slopes, with many appearing as turf lawns hanging above the sea. In season they are richly dotted with flowers amongst the pink boulders. Surprisingly for such remote islands, red deer are present, sometimes</p>	<p>The Garvellachs form a chain of four small, islands flanking the south-east side of the Firth of Lorne. Garbh Eileach, (‘rough, rocky mound’) the largest island of 142ha is flanked to its north-east by Dun Chonnuill and to its south-west by A ‘Chuil and Eileach an Naoimh. Sgeirean Dubha is a range of skerries along the alignment of the chain, parallel to south-east coast of Eileach an Naoimh.</p> <p>The islands contain limestone pavement of clints and grykes.</p> <p><i>‘Their hoary stones are now surrounded by a carpet of beautiful flowers, including scarlet pimpernels, blue pansies, yellow flag irises and primroses, all of which flourish on the rich, dark, alkaline soils of the limestones.’</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>There is scrubby woodland of ash, wych, elm, birch, rowan and alder on Garbh Eileach. An Clarsach is a prominent natural arch, situated at the north-east tip of Eileach an Naoimh.</p>

seen skylined against the horizon.

The monastic beehive cell and ruins form conspicuous features on the south-east coast on Eileach an Naoimh, and are the most ancient ecclesiastical buildings in Scotland.

Selected Bibliography

Environmental Resources Management 1996. Landscape Character Assessment of Argyll and the Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 78*.

Gillies, P. H. 1909. *Netherlorn and its Neighbourhood*.

Haswell-Smith, H. 2008. *The Scottish Islands. The Bestselling Guide to Every Scottish Island*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Heriot-Watt University 1994. *The Perception of Coastal and Island Landscapes: A Report for Scottish Natural Heritage*.

Martin Martin 1703. *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*.

Whittow, J. B. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

LOCH RANNOCH AND GLEN LYON NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Perth and Kinross (with a small part in Stirling)*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The shores of Loch Rannoch, an open, spacious loch are richly wooded. Pine, birch, oak, ash, larch, chestnut, holly, alder, cypress and juniper abound. On the south slopes of the loch is the great Black Wood of Rannoch, a remnant of the native pinewoods of Scotland.

The north slopes are fringed with a more open canopy of birch woods which frame the views to be obtained from here of the almost perfect cone of Schiehallion, soaring skywards. Westwards along the broad loch are views of the distant hills of Rannoch and Glen Coe. The Loch of Dunalistair is a creation of hydro-electric works, but its reed beds and willow beds, and tranquil shallow waters set amongst meadows and woodlands, offer a pleasing contrast with the bigger loch to the west.

Glen Lyon is separated from Rannoch by the broad summits of Cairn Maig. Said to be the longest glen in Scotland, it exhibits along its length a great diversity of glen scenery. Deeply entrenched between Cairn Maig and Ben Lawers and Meall Ghaordie (1,039m) it descends from bare wild mountains around Cashlie to Gallin and Meggernie where a change occurs. Here it becomes a broad strath with Meggernie Castle set in the midst of woodlands, its park traversed by the broad leisurely loops of the River Lyon.

The woodlands clothing the lower slopes of the mountains contrast well with the barer but colourful higher slopes, and as one descends the glen, the farmlands of the strath and the woodlands of the lower slopes become ever richer and more varied. At each turn of the road, a new scene of river, wood, mountain and meadow is revealed, until at the Pass of Lyon the river rushes through a light rocky gorge closely screened by magnificent canopies of beech to open finally on to the pleasant purlieu of Fortingall.

W.H. Murray has written (1963): 'Glen Lyon has no counterpart in Scotland. Other glens..... show a similar change from desolate upper reaches to lower fertility..... Others possess some unique feature of gorge, or loch, or waterfall, or forest, not to be seen in Glen Lyon. But there is none that displays such varied loveliness of river and woodland scene and maintains it unmarred throughout so great a length of changing landscape.'

The Special Qualities of the Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon National Scenic Area

- Epitome of the mountain grandeur of Highland Perthshire
- A clear linkage of land use and landform
- A combination of natural and cultural beauty
- The great diversity of woodland
- Secluded side glens and ancient shielings
- The wild summits
- Peacefulness and tranquillity
- Rich, varied cultural features
- The long, narrow and sinuous Glen Lyon
- The great expanse of Loch Rannoch
- The long, symmetric mass of Schiehallion
- The dominance of Ben Lawers

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Epitomises the mountain grandeur of Highland Perthshire</i> 	
<p>The long, narrow, sinuous Glen Lyon, and Loch Rannoch in its glen to the north, penetrate deep into high mountains and hills, and epitomise the exceptional landscape and scenery of Highland Perthshire.</p> <p>The enclosing mountains create a monumental backdrop, dwarfing the more intricate, human-scale and detailed features at loch side, glen floor and lower slopes.</p> <p>The seasonal changes in texture and colour of vegetation serve to enhance the drama of this vast outer landscape, against which human activity is set.</p>	<p>The dramatic mountains lie for the most part above 610 metres (2,000 feet) with many summits over 1,000 metres including Schiehallion, Carn Gorm, Carn Mairg, Ben Lawers and Meall nan Tarmachan.</p> <p>Essentially, there are three broad mountain ranges, running east-west:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Lawers range - a series of distinctive mountain peaks. • Schiehallion, Carn Mairg and Carn Gorm forming a ridge rising to over 1,000ft between Glens Lyon and Rannoch. • Craiganour Forest, north of Loch Rannoch, a more gently rolling moorland ridge 600-800m high. <p>Mountain passes that cut through, allowing access north-south are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lairig Ghallabhaich, a track which is a right of way leading from Rannoch Basin to Glen Lyon. • Lochan na Lairige, served by a public road linking Glen Lyon to Loch Tay.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A clear linkage of land use and landform</i> 	
<p>The area makes up a substantial part of the historical territory of Breadalbane,</p>	<p>Four major relief zones are mentioned in Whittow (1977):</p>

<p>covering a great tract of the southern Grampians. Here <i>'fingers of lowland farming and settlement infiltrate into Grampian mountainland'</i> (Whittow, 1977).</p> <p>The landform varies from fertile and farmed alluvial flats, through steep hill slopes to exposed mountain summits. The intensity and type of land-use, the settlement pattern, the degree of exposure and the sense of remoteness is strongly related to the landform, giving a strong structure to the scenery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haughland - where the alluvial floodplain and river terraces are relatively fertile and therefore farmed. • Braes - the rocky benches and pronounced hummocks of glacial material on the glen floors which support poorer grazings and smaller, marginal farms. • Steep hill-slopes - formed by glacial scouring, which support the surviving, varied broadleaf woodlands, (where afforestation has occurred slopes can be blanket forestry). • Open plateaux and summits - of montane grassland, heathland and rock.
<p>• <i>A combination of natural and cultural beauty</i></p>	
<p>The mountain ranges are timeless and unchanging in comparison to the small scale human activity on the lower ground. They frame the scenic views and panoramas gained from within the NSA, and are the focus or backdrop of views into the NSA.</p> <p>Where development does occur, it is closely restricted to loch-side, to glen floors and to the lower hill-slopes. However, this lower ground is a working landscape and possesses an ordered, scenic beauty of its own – from the pattern of fields, dykes, woodland plantings and vernacular buildings.</p> <p>The vast natural background combined with the more intimate scale of human activity creates an area of great visual appeal.</p>	<p>Although human activity over many centuries has modified the landscape, most human activity is concentrated on the lower hill-slopes and, more intensively, on lochside and glen floor. These areas lie at the base of a great untamed expanse of attractive mountain ranges which remain unspoilt by garish and unsightly development. Human impact seen within this broad scale can appear incidental.</p> <p>A matrix of different land uses, including farming, forestry and game management has evolved over 200 years, creating a harmonious pattern which enhances the natural features. Tree-planting in particular has enhanced the low-ground landscape in many places.</p> <p>The Loch of Dunalastair is artificial, a creation of the hydro-electric works. Its reed beds, willow beds and tranquil shallow waters set amongst meadows and woodlands, offer a pleasing contrast with Loch Rannoch - the bigger loch to the west.</p> <p>However, some hydro-electric development is larger-scale with dramatic landscape impact - Rannoch power station, Stronach reservoir and dam, or the dam at Lochan na Lairige.</p>
<p>• <i>The great diversity of woodland</i></p>	
<p>The woodlands and trees across the area are scenically of great importance due to their richness of form, species and age structure.</p> <p>The ancient Caledonian pinewoods – the Black Wood of Rannoch and the smaller woods in Glen Lyon – stand dark against</p>	<p>Woodland types other than commercial, conifer plantations are:</p> <p>The <u>Black Wood of Rannoch</u> is predominantly Caledonian pine with some birch and oak, stretching along most of Loch Rannoch's southern shore. The expanse is broken up by contrasting open areas located where major burns issue into the loch.</p> <p><u>Glen Lyon's Caledonian Pine Woods</u> at</p>

<p>the hillsides. The lighter, native birchwoods prevalent in many areas are particularly notable in their autumn colours. Rivers, water courses and lochs are often highlighted by trees along their banks, and the policy woodlands of the settlements and big houses provide a focus on the glen floors.</p>	<p>Meggernie and Croch na Keys, are more open in character. Here the pines develop a variety of statuesque, branched forms with an understorey of heather. Those at Meggernie are especially prominent on the northern flanks of Creag Dhubh, while the stands of pines within Croch na Keys are prominent from the Gallich-Stromich Dam road.</p> <p><u>Birch woodlands</u> are notable along the north shores of Loch Rannoch, the Schiehallion road and along mid Glen Lyon, above the bridge of Balgie where they frame views of Schiehallion and views westwards to the distant hills of Rannoch and Glen Coe. Their open character and airy canopies means they form a visually permeable screen, allowing views to mountains, lochs and running water.</p> <p><u>Mixed broadleaved woodlands</u> range in type from ancient semi-natural woods of oak, ash, hazel, wych elm and alder to richly planted amenity woodlands of bird cherry, beech and elm. Riparian woodland along the many watercourses draining the upper hill slopes and along the course of River Lyon is visually prominent.</p> <p><u>Policy woodlands</u> include individual specimen trees, open-grown parkland forms (native and exotic), groups of exotics and formal avenues. These ornament the designed grounds around the major country houses, as well as estate farmhouses, ancillary buildings and lodges. They mainly date from the early 19th century and are found along the principal areas of settlement at Meggernie Castle, Fortingall, Dall House, Rannoch Lodge and around the southern shores of Dunalastair Water.</p>
<p>• <i>Secluded side glens and ancient shielings</i></p>	
<p>Development and human activity is centred along the two main glens running east-west, and most roads also follow these. The side glens, of which there are many, are generally hidden and secluded, limited to access by foot.</p> <p>However, they often contain visible signs of past habitation, in particular the presence of old shielings. These abandoned, historic sites accentuate the current remoteness of the glens, and contrast with the comparatively well settled and managed Glen Lyon and Loch Rannoch areas.</p>	<p>The landscape is heavily dissected, with the two main glens all possessing side glens, generally orientated north-south. The narrow road from Loch Tay to Glen Lyon via Lochan na Lairige provides the one opportunity for the public to experience these glens by car.</p> <p>The glens generally contain previous summer grazings (shielings) and some are long, such as at Gleann Mòr which stretches for five miles along the southern flanks of Schiehallion. This glen also contains caves and wells (e.g. Uamh Tom a Mhòr-fhir).</p> <p>The shielings date from before the change from the transhumance and cattle droving system to large scale sheep farming.</p>
<p>• <i>The wild summits</i></p>	

<p>The high tops, slopes and moors are mountain terrain, only accessible on foot. A climb to the summits is a journey from habitation into a wild landscape of ridges, corries and cliffs, seemingly remote from civilisation and at the mercy of the elements.</p>	<p>The distance to the summits from the nearest road is generally not great, enabling hill walkers to be able to leave the comforts of the Central Belt, drive to the area, ascend the summits and return home easily within one day.</p> <p>The wildness of the hills is emphasised by the absence of built structures, although hydro-electric infrastructure ascends to 500m at Lochan na Lairige between Ben Lawers and Meall nan Tarmachan.</p>
<p>• <i>Peacefulness and tranquillity</i></p>	
<p>The sense of remoteness increases westwards up Glen Lyon or along Loch Rannoch. The roads are not through-routes and still mirror the landform, with traffic limited to local use. There is a comparative lack of large-scale modern development.</p> <p>These factors engender a sense of peacefulness and tranquillity, reinforced by the predominance of natural sounds of wind and birdsong, and by the presence of water: the broad expanse of Loch Rannoch, with the lapping of waters along its southern shores; the tumbling of the rapids of the River Lyon and its more calmly but swiftly flowing meanders; the sound of the many burns and waterfalls draining the surrounding hill-slopes.</p> <p>The presence of native woodland, where it provides shelter and an intimate feel in an otherwise exposed landscape, also reinforces the tranquillity. Additionally, human settlement and man-made features are dwarfed by the large, expansive landforms, resulting in a peaceful, rural feel.</p>	<p>Roads follow the basic alignments of cart tracks and drove roads, and have not been upgraded by major road widening, straightening or evening-out of gradients. Late 18th and early 19th century bridges still carry road traffic over rivers and burns, creating focal points along the route.</p> <p>Bridge of Gaur and Finnart at the head of Loch Rannoch are relatively isolated, compared to Kinloch Rannoch. The south shores of Loch Rannoch are sparsely settled with farmsteads spaced regularly along its length.</p> <p>Human-generated noise tends to be highly localised.</p> <p>There are some areas of this NSA where man-made features are prominent, in particular plantation forests and hydro-electric infrastructure. However, in such a large area, there is still a feeling of the dominance of the natural landforms.</p>
<p>• <i>Rich, varied cultural features</i></p>	
<p>The area boasts many rich and varied cultural features that date from different periods, thereby infusing a great time depth and attesting to man's long settlement and diverse land use.</p> <p>These can take the form of focal landscape features, or imbue the wider landscape with a sense of history – for</p>	<p>Archaeological evidence shows that these areas have been used by humans since Neolithic times.</p> <p>Cashlie is where the legendary Celtic war hero, Fingal, was said to have four castles. His son Ossian, a famous bard, recounted his father's mighty deeds: '12 castles had Fionn, in the dark bent glen of stones' (Glen Lyon). The remains of only five can be seen today, four at Cashlie, close to Loch</p>

<p>instance in designed landscapes and field patterns.</p> <p>In themselves they may comprise the major scene as within the estate village of Fortingall; or they may have associations or have given rise to history, folk history, songs and poems. These are more often evoked in the minds of those acquainted with the area and its histories.</p>	<p>Lyon at the western point of the Glen. The walls of one of these forts are between 12 and 14 feet thick. Another, at Cambuslaie, is unusual in structure in that within the perimeter are two more circular structures, with the centre one a solid block of masonry 13 feet thick.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• The long, narrow and sinuous Glen Lyon</p>	
<p>Glen Lyon is deeply incised, narrow and winding, and reputed to be the longest glen in Scotland.</p> <p>Scenery in the westernmost, upper glen is of dramatic glacial landforms. These distinct, towering, pyramidal summits are scored by numerous waterfalls and burns falling, parallel to one another, down into the River Lyon. Wild, rocky mountain tops and rough grasslands on the upper slopes give way to relatively poor, rough pasture enclosed below head dykes. The mountain slopes enclosing the glen to the south soar upwards from the glen floor, and there is a feeling of being deep within the enclosing mountain ranges.</p> <p>At Meggernie the glen broadens out to become a strath, marking mid-Glen Lyon, which with its wide-ranging woodland diversity, farmed lands, isolated farmsteads and features forms the most complex, rapidly unfolding series of scenes to be found.</p> <p>A further change in character to lower-Glen Lyon is marked by the Pass of Glenlyon at Chesthill and Coille Dhubh (the Black Wood). Here the strath narrows, to become a deeply incised gorge, tightly enclosed by mountains, the steep sides heavily wooded with deciduous trees. The river takes a rapid change of course and character by rounding bends of rocks to leap over Sput Ban (the White Cascade), descend between crags, and then flow a straight</p>	<p><i>'...Glen Lyon has no counterpart in Scotland. Other glens... show a similar change from desolate upper reaches to lower fertility... Others possess some unique feature of gorge, or loch, or waterfall, or forest, not to be seen in Glen Lyon. But there is none that displays such varied loveliness of river and woodland scene and maintains it unmarred throughout so great a length of changing landscape.'</i> Murray (1963)</p> <p>The special scenic qualities in the Meggernie area of mid-Glen Lyon derive from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Meggernie Castle designed landscape with its lengthy formal lime avenue; picturesque, curving approach drive; flat, smooth parkland set on the strath floor traversed by the broad leisurely loops of the River Lyon; and its rich and diverse policy woodlands. • The relict Caledonian Pine woodland of Croch na Keys and Meggernie. • Substantial woodlands and tree cover - made up of rich stands of deciduous and conifer woodland alternating on the strath sides. • Open birch woodland on the upper slopes intermixed with glades. • The barer but colourful higher mountain slopes of heather, bracken and moorland. • Variations along the strath floor, from the Meggernie parklands to improved pasture, areas of wetter, rougher pastures, enclosed farmsteads associated with their own, smaller, policy plantings. • Variations in the valley width from broad strath, narrower glen to tightly enclosed gorge. • The River Lyon's changes in character,

<p>southward course until broadening out after the Bridge of Lyon.</p>	<p>with broad-flowing serpentine reaches contrasting with constrained rocky bedded courses.</p>
<p>• The great expanse of Loch Rannoch</p>	
<p>Loch Rannoch creates a vast sense of space and possesses an air of natural calmness and openness.</p> <p>Across the waters from the north shore there are spectacular views to the soaring, almost perfect cone of Schiehallion; and westwards, views along the broad loch focus on the distant hills of Rannoch and Glen Coe.</p> <p>Most settlement, tourist facilities and farming occur along its east and northern shores. Here, drystone dykes and fences establish clear field divisions, and policy plantings around farms and houses create a mature, tended landscape that contrasts with the surrounding, wilder moorlands and mountains.</p>	<p>Loch Rannoch is an expansive loch basin, its linear scale matching the vertical scale of the grand mountain ranges surrounding it. It seems to flood the glen floor so that the surrounding lochside road is tightly constrained between the water's edge and the surrounding hill-slopes.</p> <p><i>'The south-facing slopes of the valley are not as steep as those opposing them across the loch; indeed they are called in Gaelic Ann Slios Min - The Side of the Gentle Slopes. The contrast in gradient is partly reflected in the land use, for patches of improved land are common on the gentler (and also sunnier) south-facing slopes.'</i> Whittow (1977)</p>
<p>• The long, symmetric mass of Schiehallion</p>	
<p>Schiehallion is a prominent landmark, a shapely, symmetrical conical peak with a long east-west axis. It is visible and readily identifiable across a wide area because it stands alone, separate and apart from other summits and ridges.</p> <p>As an elevated viewpoint at 1083m (3,547ft) nearly in the centre of Scotland, its summit of shattered quartzite scree provides extensive views over Loch Rannoch, the expansive Rannoch Moor and the Central Highlands generally.</p> <p>Schiehallion has an important place in scientific history and discovery because in the 18th century its regular form made it suitable for the first accurate determination of the mass of the earth.</p>	<p>Schiehallion or <i>Sidh Chaillean</i>, The Fairy Mountain.</p> <p><i>'Perthshire afforded us a remarkable hill, nearly in the centre of Scotland, of sufficient height, tolerably detached from other hills, and considerably larger from east to west than from north to south, called by the people of the low country Maiden-Pap, but by the neighbouring inhabitants Schiehallion, which I have since been informed signifies in the Erse language Constant Storm; a name well adapted to the appearance which it so frequently exhibits to those who live near it, by the clouds and mists which usually crown its summit'</i> Maskelyne, quoted in Sillitto (1957).</p> <p>In 1774 the Rev Neville Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal, camped near Schiehallion collecting data on the mountain's gravitational pull. With the aid of a plumb line and the stars, 237 measurements were taken from two stations, still discernible, on the N and S of the hill. The calculated weight of the earth was substantially correct. Charles Hutton, during his work on the survey data, devised the concept of contour lines.</p> <p>There is evidence of human presence on</p>

	<p>Schiehallion going back 3,000 years, with settlement and cultivation dating back 1,500 years. The mountain has a rich flora in places, because it is underlain by areas of Dalradian limestone (mainly on its eastern flanks).</p>
<p>• The dominance of Ben Lawers</p>	
<p>The high massif of Ben Lawers and its associated peaks, together with the more uneven ridge of the Tarmachan range to the west, dominate the landscape around Loch Tay. The open hills provide a dramatic and contrasting backdrop to the farmed and wooded shores of the loch.</p> <p>Ben Lawers is internationally important for both its flora and archaeology, and is also readily accessible to the hillwalker. It is a spectacular vantage point for vistas to the surrounding highlands, and also down to the gently curving Loch Tay.</p>	<p>Ben Lawers (1,214 metres, 3,984 feet) is the dominant feature of the north Loch Tayside landscape. It is the 10th highest mountain in Scotland and the highest peak in the Southern Highlands. Together with the Tarmachan range to the west, it contains seven Munros.</p> <p>Known as the botanists' Mecca since the 1760s, it is botanically the most species-rich mountain in Britain, owing to the outcropping of Dalradian calcareous schists at high altitude. The rich soils provide suitable habitat for many arctic and alpine plants rare in Britain.</p> <p>There has been extensive archaeological research in the area through the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project. Ben Lawers has significant archaeological remains dating from the Mesolithic to the present day. It contains a rare surviving example of an extensive medieval and post-medieval farming landscape of shielings and townships stretching over 400 years, and is regarded as both nationally and internationally important.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project: see www.benlawers.org.uk (accessed February 2010)

Centre for Environmental Management and Planning 1986. *A Landscape review of the Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon National Scenic Area.*

Countryside Commission for Scotland 1987 (reprinted 1989). *Loch Rannoch & Glen Lyon National Scenic Area. Policies for Landscape Conservation and Management.*

Cunningham, A.D. 1984. *A History of Rannoch.*

John Muir Trust (undated). *Factsheet: East Schiehallion, Perthshire.*

John Muir Trust. *Schiehallion Management Plan 2005-2009.*

Land Use Consultants 1987. *A Landscape Strategy for Loch Rannoch & Glen Lyon National Scenic Area: Report to the Countryside Commission for Scotland.*

Land Use Consultants 1999. Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 122.*

Murray, W. H. 1963. *The Scottish Highlands.* The Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

National Trust for Scotland 2004. *Ben Lawers Property Statement 2004-2007.*

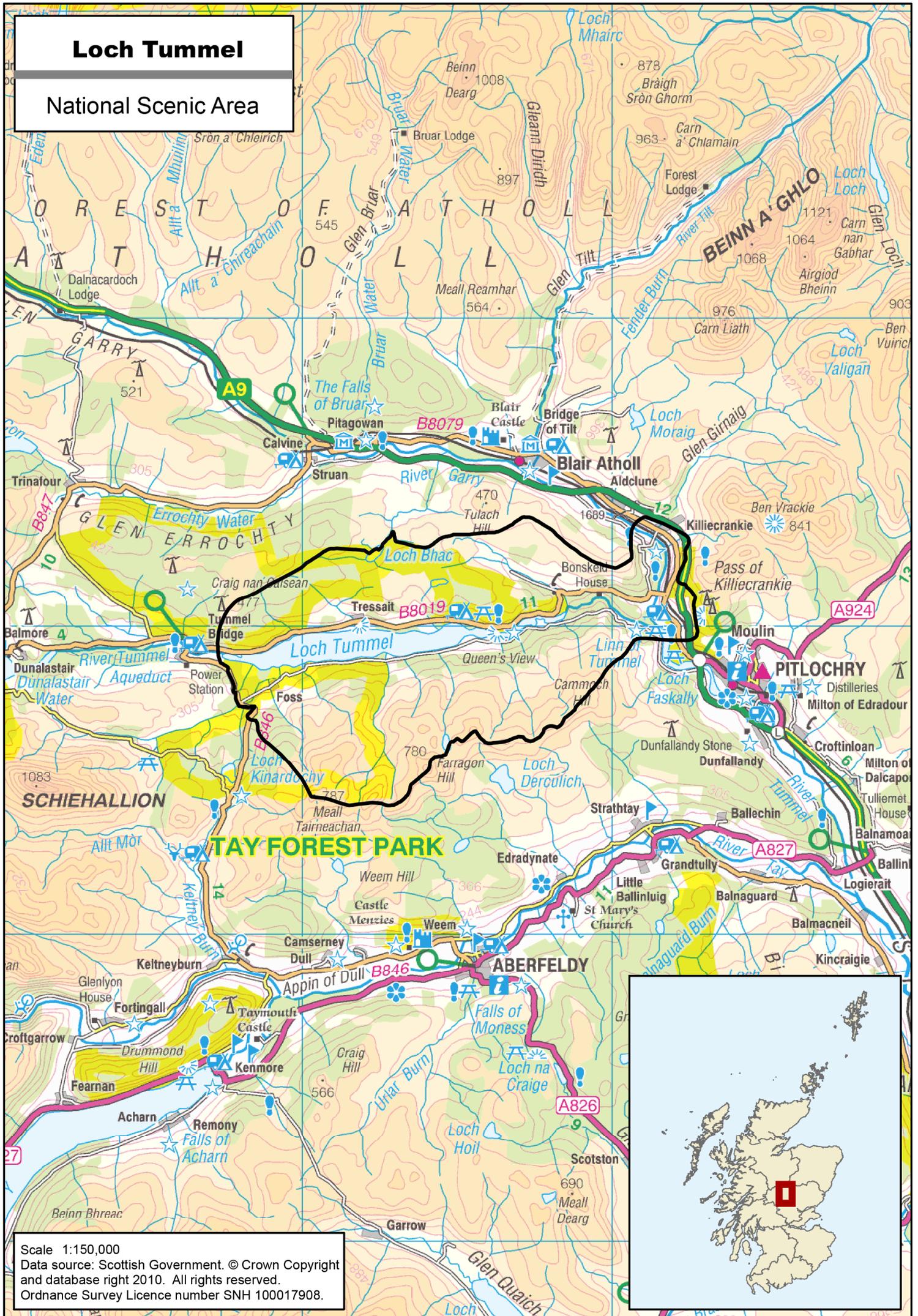
Sillitto, R. M. 1957. *Maskelyne on Schiehallion.* The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow: 31st October, 1990.

Stewart, Alexander 1928. *A Highland Parish.*

Whittow, J. B. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland.* Penguin.

Loch Tummel

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

LOCH TUMMEL NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Perth and Kinross*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The valley of the Tummel in the vicinity of its confluence with the Garry is very different from the stern straths of the north or the wild glens of the west. This is an upland sylvan landscape to which mountain peak, rocky crag, sparkling river and stunning loch add a variety of incident.

The deep gorge of the Garry in the Pass of Killiecrankie, with all its historical associations, the picturesque rapids of the Linn of Tummel, the bare overhanging heather-clad summits of the southern Grampians, and the prosperous looking houses and farms of the strath, are all framed in woodlands of an unusual richness and variety, the many species of which ensure constant but changing colour throughout the seasons.

Despite the presence of main roads, railway, and hydro-electric installations, it is a landscape with sufficient strength of character for all the man-made intrusions to be dominated by the natural beauties of water, wood and mountain. Westwards along Loch Tummel, notwithstanding the fame of the Queen's View, the topography becomes simpler and less intimate but still displays a pleasing scene, composed of loch enclosed by wooded knolls and grassy braes, with fertile farms and estates, prosperous and well-populated.

The Special Qualities of the Loch Tummel National Scenic Area

- A breathtakingly beautiful landscape, both lowland and highland
- Loch Tummel, the heart of the NSA
- Rich and varied woodlands
- Peacefulness and tranquillity
- The celebrated Queen's view
- Spectacular and famous mountain gorge – the Pass of Killiecrankie
- The picturesque Linn of Tummel

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A breathtakingly beautiful landscape, both lowland and highland</i> 	
<p>The Tummel valley dramatically differs from the stern straths of the north and the wild glens of the west.</p> <p>It is a breathtakingly beautiful wooded landscape containing a sparkling river and a stunning loch. It is a fertile, lowland strath with a long history of settlement and prosperous-looking houses and farms; and on the higher slopes there is a wilder landscape of rocky crags and bare, heather-clad summits.</p>	<p><i>The area is 'breathtakingly beautiful with a mix of mountains, moorland, lochs, rivers and forests.' Forestry Commission (2008)</i></p> <p><i>The steep sides and deep trough of the valley result from glacial action; it is one of 15 major glacial troughs in the southwest Grampians. Nevertheless, it differs from the others in that its surrounding hills are lower (500-600m as opposed to 600-1000m); the slopes are shallower; there is a loch at the lower end; and there is a high proportion of broadleaf woodland.</i></p> <p><i>The area has been inhabited, exploited and appreciated by people over many centuries, with many historic land-use and cultural associations. Peaceful, pastoral settlement is set on the shores of the loch which visually contributes to its prosperous character. Vernacular farms and cottages are associated with 18th century field patterns; they form a fringe along the loch shores with some larger 17th-19th century estates and policies (e.g. around Bonskeid, Fincastle, Faskally and Altean houses). Remains of settlement from the prehistoric period onwards are found on the loch edges and glen sides, with crannogs in the loch itself.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Loch Tummel, the heart of the NSA</i> 	
<p>The long and narrow Loch Tummel, beneath its rocky hills and wooded slopes, fills most of the floor of the strath. Presenting a tranquil aspect, the peaceful waters of the loch are the heart of the NSA.</p>	<p>Modern hydro-electric schemes have doubled the loch's original length to six miles. However, water levels are maintained at a high level, without large fluctuations or an ugly draw-down zone, thus maintaining the area's scenic value.</p>

<p>The loch was extended by hydro-electric schemes in the 1950s and <i>'enlargement of Loch Tummel itself has created one of the most beautiful sheets of water in the country.'</i> Sylvia Crowe (1958)</p>	
<p>• <i>Rich and varied woodlands</i></p>	
<p>Extensive woodlands of unusual richness and variety frame the low-lying loch and lochside farms and ensure constant but changing colour throughout the seasons.</p> <p>The woods provide a restful transition between the loch waters and the heathery upper hills and bare rocky summits. Ancient oakwoods frame the western flanks of the Pass of Killiecrankie.</p>	<p>Not only are the woodlands extensive but they also vary in origin and type, comprising native woodland, commercial forestry, farm woodland, field boundary trees, policy and estate woodland. A major factor in the extent of woodland cover is Forestry Commission planting from 1919 onwards.</p> <p>The variety of species means that colour is an important component of the scene, varying between native and exotic species, and also with the seasons.</p>
<p>• <i>Peacefulness and tranquillity</i></p>	
<p>With its scenery of water, woods and hills, together with its many sheltered paths and tracks, the area remains a major draw for visitors seeking peacefulness and tranquillity.</p> <p>Away from the main roads, natural sounds predominate, whether the lapping of waves on the loch shore, the roar of a waterfall, the songbirds in the woods or the sound the wind in the trees.</p>	<p>Incorporating good access and recreation opportunities into the landscape planning of the hydro-electric scheme has maintained widespread public appreciation of the Tummel's scenic qualities.</p> <p>The importance of the area to recreation and enjoyment has been recognised through much of the NSA being designated as part of the Tay Forest Park. Additionally, the National Trust for Scotland provides woodland and riverside walks through the Pass of Killiecrankie to the Linn of Tummel.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• <i>The celebrated Queen's view</i></p>	
<p>From the high vantage point of the Queen's View the eye is drawn westwards through the strath of wood, pasture and rocky moor, over the shimmering waters of Loch Tummel to the distant hills: to the simple lines of the high peak of Schiehallion, and, on a clear day, as far as the great mountains of Glencoe low on the horizon.</p> <p>The Queen's View has long been</p>	<p>The earliest history relating to the lands of Bonskeid, on the north shore of Loch Tummel, tells how Robert the Bruce came that way when a fugitive after his defeat at the battle of Methven, 1306. He hid and was given refuge at Coille Bhrochain, between the Tummel and Garry, and Athol Brose for refreshment.</p> <p>Hence the Queen's View is said to be named after Queen Isabella, King Robert the Bruce's wife. These associations document the 700 year time-depth in assigning a royal recognition to Loch Tummel and the valley's</p>

<p>celebrated, perhaps as far back as Queen Isabella, the wife of Robert the Bruce, 700 years ago. The loch is also celebrated in song for its location on the Road to the Isles.</p>	<p>scenic qualities. Queen Victoria also visited and her love of Highland Perthshire fed into popularising the area's spectacular scenic qualities to a wider audience.</p> <p>The loch is mentioned in this famous World War I song <i>The Road to the Isles</i>:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'By Loch Tummel and Loch Rannoch and Lochaber I will go, by heather tracks wi' heaven in their wiles'.</i></p>
<p>• Spectacular and famous mountain gorge – the Pass of Killiecrankie</p>	
<p>The deep, wooded gorge of the River Garry in the Pass of Killiecrankie, famous for its historical associations, is spectacular. Its deep pools and narrow rapids are dramatic when viewed from the surrounding woodland walks or briefly glimpsed from a window of a train.</p> <p>Above the gorge, the view from Craigower Hill provides a stunning panorama westwards over the whole NSA; and the main A9 road, as it exits the narrow pass, presents a grand vista northwards into the Vale of Atholl, a 'Gateway to the Highlands'.</p>	<p>The Pass of Killiecrankie (or Coille Creitheannich, the Aspen Wood) is strategically located at a pinch-point on one of the main routes between the Highlands and the Lowlands. Within the pass, the River Garry flows through a spectacular, steeply-sided wooded gorge with deep pools and the narrow Soldier's Leap.</p> <p>It is renowned in Scotland and beyond both for its history and its spectacular scenery. In the past it was a dangerous trap for travellers and its natural defile required troops to march in single file.</p> <p>It was the scene of the Battle of Killiecrankie (1689), the first Jacobite uprising when Bonnie Dundee (Claverhouse) defeated William of Orange's government army, headed by General Mackay. A traditional spot of homage is the Soldier's Leap commemorating the leap and escape of Donald MacBean, contrasting with the reality of the death toll and loss of Viscount Dundee on the battlefield. The event is also commemorated in the traditional tune and song Killiecrankie.</p> <p>John Ruskin (1819-1900) painted <i>In the Pass of Killiecrankie</i> in 1857 which captures the lichen, moss and rocky surfaces with the tumbling waters of the Garry.</p>
<p>• The picturesque Linn of Tummel</p>	
<p>The picturesque rapids of the Linn of Tummel provide an exciting spectacle of sound and vision, contrasting with the peacefulness of Loch Tummel above and Loch Faskally below.</p>	<p>Despite the transformation of the Fall of Tummel from waterfall to rapids due to construction of the 1930s hydro-electric scheme, the rapids still provide an exciting spectacle. A granite obelisk near the site of the old falls marks Queen Victoria's visit in 1841 to the Fall of Tummel.</p> <p>Originally the river narrowed and leapt five metres into a swirling pool to form the Fall.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Crowe, S. 1958. *The Landscape of Power*.

Forestry Commission 2008. Quote taken from an interpretation board at Loch Tummel.

Land Use Consultants 1999a. *Loch Tummel National Scenic Area. Landscape Character Assessment*.

Land Use Consultants 1999b. Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 122*.

Payne, Peter L. 1988. *The Hydro. A Study of the development of the Major Hydro-Electric schemes undertaken by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board*.

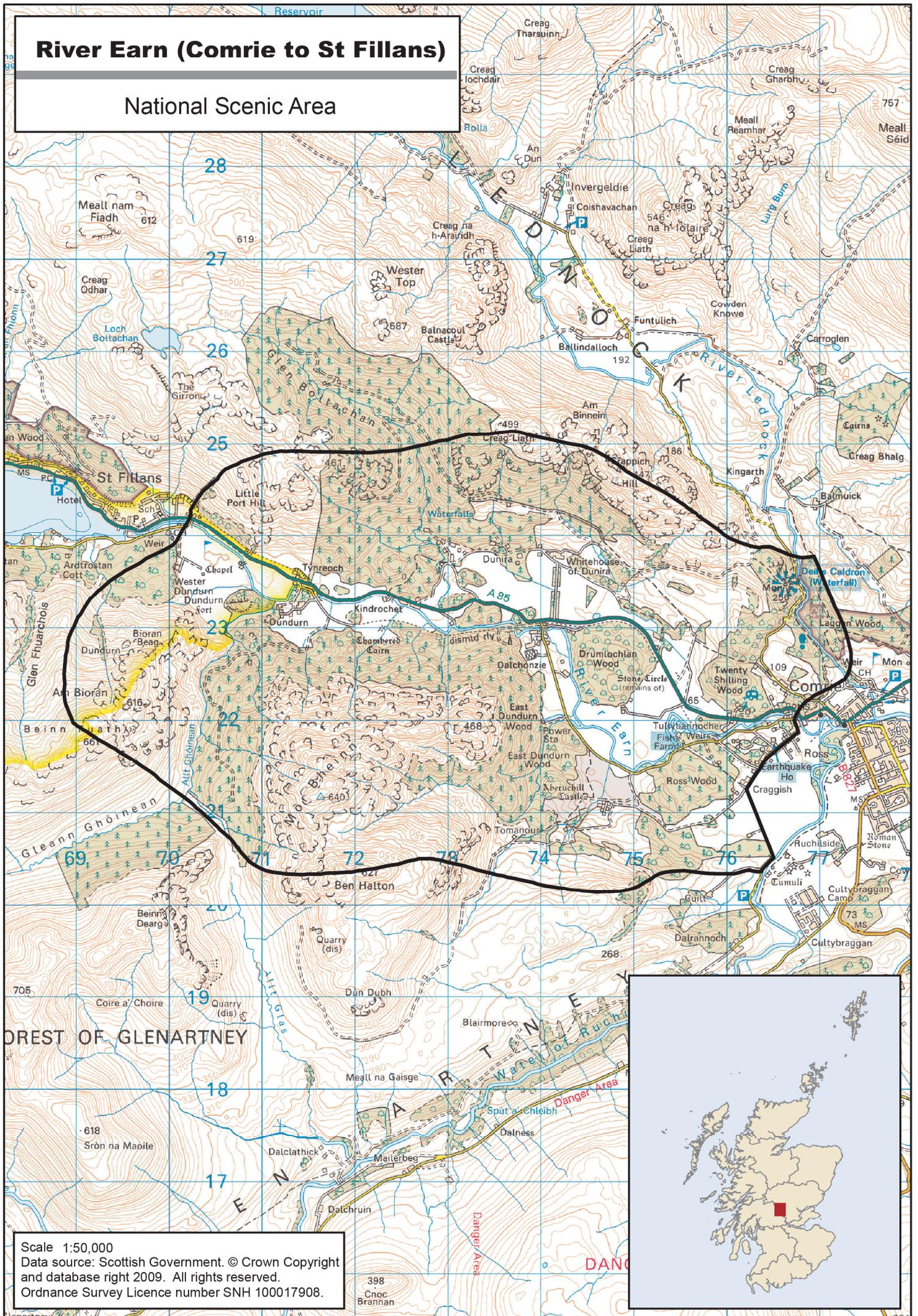
Scottish Hydro-electric plc 2005. *Power from the Glens*.

Stott, L., and Renny, J. 1987. *The Waterfalls of Scotland*. Aberdeen University Press.

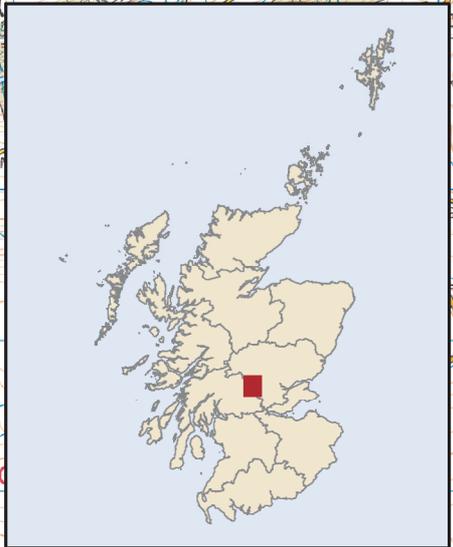
www.plural.freeuk.com/bonskeid/history.html; references to Robert the Bruce and Coillebhrochain (accessed February 2008)

River Earn (Comrie to St Fillans)

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:50,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.



RIVER EARN (COMRIE TO ST. FILLANS) NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Perth and Kinross

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

This upper part of Strathearn lies at the conjunction of highland and lowland scenery and the variety of landscape elements that derive from this combination result in a very distinctive character of pleasing appearance. There is a strong textured pattern resulting from the variety of vegetation and landform. The hillsides are punctuated by rocky outcrops and patterned with heather, bracken, grass or plantation.

The valley has a strong sense of enclosure though the hills are not high. There is an intimacy of scale reinforced by the strong human influence of well managed farmland and woodland but the hill tops have a wild rugged character. Plantations make a major contribution to the scene, the shape and extent of afforested areas respecting and relating well to the natural landform. There are very fine strands of broadleaved trees in the form of woodlands, parklands and hedgerow plantings, and the river is alternatively swift and leisurely, open-meadowed or alder enclosed. Buildings are generally traditional in appearance and in tune with their surroundings. This is a landscape of great harmony.

The Special Qualities of the River Earn (Comrie to St Fillans) National Scenic Area

- A harmonious combination of highland and lowland
- An enclosed and unified strath
- The sinuous river at the heart of the NSA
- Rocky hillocks rising out of the level floodplain
- Diverse tree cover of woods and forests
- A managed, ordered landscape
- The spectacular De'il's Cauldron and Dunmore Hill
- The viewpoint of Dundurn, St Fillans Hill

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A harmonious combination of highland and lowland</i> 	
<p>Entering this NSA gives a feeling of transition, of leaving the rugged highlands behind and entering the fertile lowlands (or <i>vice versa</i>). The highland aspects of rocky hills, enclosing glen, fast flowing rivers, waterfalls and gorges are all present, but so are fertile lowland fields and ordered designed landscapes of hedges, policy woodlands and big houses.</p> <p>These lowland features soften the harsher highland elements, resulting in a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing landscape of great charm.</p>	<p>The NSA represents the boundary or interface between highland and lowland landscapes, and comprises three principle elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highland landscapes of distinctively shaped, steep-sided, hills of bare rock (not high in relative terms); and moorland of bracken and heather. • Gentler hilly slopes which mark the transition from highland to lowland, and which consist of rough grazing, grassland pasture. • A lowland landscape along the flat valley bottom in the middle of the NSA; this is intensively grazed and consists of improved, rectilinear, fields of grass. <p>The east end of the NSA is close to the Highland Boundary Fault.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An enclosed and unified strath</i> 	
<p>With its bare, rocky open hills descending through slopes of wood and bracken to the fields on the flat valley floor, this area of Strathearn exhibits a unity and coherence. There is a feeling of enclosed and encircled space at the centre, which reinforces its compact and unified nature.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The sinuous river at the heart of the NSA</i> 	
<p>The River Earn, running through the heart of the NSA, meanders across its level flood plain. With its pools, riffles and rapids, it is both swift and leisurely, providing constant variety and change. Sometimes it is visible hard against the main road, at other times it takes its own course through the fields and woods.</p>	<p>A particular feature is the presence of bankside trees along much of its length. The River Earn is noted for the good quality fishing it provides, particularly salmon, sea trout and grayling.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rocky hillocks rising out of the level floodplain</i> 	
<p>The flat floor of the strath is punctuated by rounded hillocks, often rocky and planted with trees. Contrasting with the surrounding open fields, these create a picturesque and balanced landscape of open ground and woodland cover.</p>	<p>There is a distinctive flood plain where lies most of the farmland. The craggy outcrops have been planted as features of a designed landscape or to provide commercial woodland. Both the main road and the river wander through these hillocks.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diverse tree cover of woods and forests</i> 	
<p>As well as the wooded hillocks, there is a great variety of other woodland, so that no one type dominates. Policy woodlands surround the big houses, hedgerow and isolated trees stand out in the fields, alders follow the river, native woodland of birch and oak occurs on the hill slopes, and there are many stands of commercial conifer plantation.</p> <p>The varied cover of trees, woods and forests provides constant interest throughout the year – in colour, form, species, type, canopy spread and coverage.</p>	<p>Much of the woodland in the eastern half is part of the Dunira and Aberuchill Castle designed landscapes, including an old pinetum at the former, with some of the tall old conifers visible from the road.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A managed, ordered landscape</i> 	
<p>Two extensive designed landscapes cover much of the eastern half of the NSA. The clipped hedges, ordered fields, parklands and policy woodland associated with these and the other farmland give the appearance of a managed and ordered land. Buildings are generally traditional in appearance and well integrated into the landscape.</p>	<p>Well-kept boundaries of clipped beech hedges, fences and drystone walls are features of this landscape.</p> <p>Dunira is a late 18th century designed landscape of 350 ha with formal garden terraces by William Burn and gardens by Thomas Mawson added in the early 20th century. The Glen Boltachan burn cuts steeply down over waterfalls through the hills to the northwest of the parkland and flows through the west park to join the River Earn.</p>

	<p>Aberuchill Castle is a 19th century designed landscape of 315 ha with historical connections to the Scottish plant hunters. The parkland and woodland makes a major contribution to the surrounding scenery and provides the setting for a category A listed building.</p> <p>The area has a long history of settlement and land use, as shown, for example, by the presence of prehistoric burial cairns and medieval tower-houses.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• <i>The spectacular De'ils Cauldron and Dunmore Hill</i></p>	
<p>At the eastern extremity of the NSA the River Lednock leaves its glen and descends to Comrie in a spectacular narrow gorge, the De'ils Cauldron, surrounded by beautiful native woodland of oak and birch.</p> <p>In contrast to this enclosed and highly focussed experience, a short walk away can be found the Melville Monument on the summit of Dunmore Hill. Here a magnificent panorama of the NSA to the west unfolds, with Loch Earn beyond. Views to the south extend to the Ochils, and northwards can be seen Glen Lednock, with its Munro of Ben Chonzie towering above.</p>	<p>The impressive Melville Monument was built in 1811, commemorating the first Lord Melville, Henry Dundas, who was the Chief Minister in Scotland under William Pitt the Younger and who was regarded as the uncrowned King of Scotland.</p> <p>The monument also provides a focal feature in views eastwards from within the NSA.</p> <p>The route to the De'ils Cauldron and the Melville Monument is a popular circular walk from Comrie.</p>
<p>• <i>The viewpoint of Dundurn, St Fillans Hill</i></p>	
<p>At the western end of the NSA lies the early historic fort of Dundurn atop St Fillans Hill, indicating its past strategic importance. Nowadays this isolated, rocky hill offers grand views of the ordered landscape of Strathearn.</p>	<p>Although there are few physical remains of this fort dating from the seventh century or earlier, it is particularly significant in the development of Scotland in the early historic period.</p> <p>West of the hill are remains of St Fillan's chapel and burial ground. The present chapel is 16th century, and is on the site of an earlier chapel said to have been erected by St Fillan (7th century) and of which nothing remains except a round stone basin. The village of St Fillans adjacent to the NSA is named after this saint.</p>

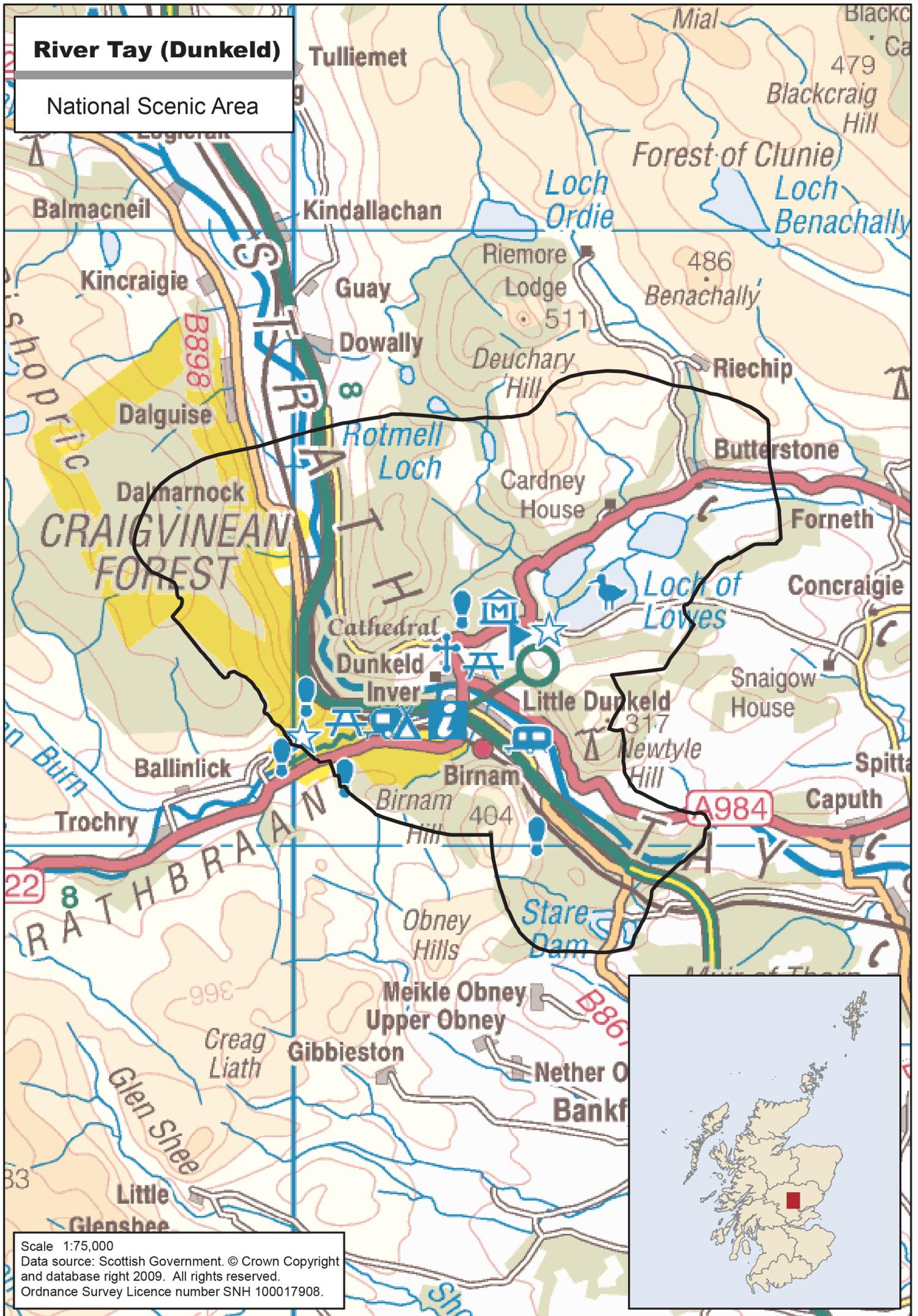
Selected Bibliography

Land Use Consultants 1999. Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish *Natural Heritage Review*, No. 122.

www.strathearn.com (accessed January 2008)

River Tay (Dunkeld)

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:75,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

RIVER TAY (DUNKELD) NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Perth and Kinross

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The beauty of the Dunkeld area derives from the presence of the river between the rugged hills of the highland edge, which are clothed with a variety of different kinds of woodland, and the presence of a small and ancient ecclesiastical settlement. In addition to the Rivers Tay and Braan which contribute the interest of water to the scene, the former in great loops of deep shining peaty water, the latter in tumbling rapids and waterfalls, the area is peppered with lochans of varying size, many of which have been harnessed to human use and surrounded by broadleaved plantations.

The northern part of the area consists of the broad strath of the Tay, strongly contained between heavily afforested valley sides where larch, pine and fir predominate. At Kings Seat, a narrow defile, the river swings east to flow between more broken hills clothed in oak woods and more mixed plantations. Below Inver where the Braan tumbles through the picturesque gorge of the Hermitage into the Tay, the haughlands are occupied by the little cathedral city of Dunkeld on the north, and the Victorian railway resort of Birnam on the south, then by pasture or woodland as the river winds eastwards out of the Highlands.

The Special Qualities of the River Tay (Dunkeld) National Scenic Area

- The beauty of cultural landscapes accompanying natural grandeur
- The 'Gateway to the Highlands'
- Characterful rivers, waterfalls and kettle-hole lochs
- Exceptionally rich, varied and beautiful woodlands
- The picturesque cathedral town of Dunkeld
- Drama of The Falls of Braan and The Hermitage
- Dunkeld House policies
- Significant specimen trees
- The iconic view from King's Seat

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The beauty of cultural landscapes accompanying natural grandeur</i> 	
<p>Appreciation of this area's scenery goes back at least as far as the 18th century, when it was seen as a 'sublime' landscape, combining the qualities of power, vastness, light, colour, sound and loudness, and remoteness.</p> <p>The area is now an extensive cultural landscape of managed policies, designed landscapes, compact settlements, farmland and forest.</p> <p>The balance, variety and composition of these cultural features accompany, and often utilise, the natural grandeur of the surrounding highlands, straths, rivers, and haughlands. It is a delicate balance that relies on a blend of both cultural beauty and majestic natural scenery.</p> <p>Even stretches of the apparently natural rivers and waters were modified in the late 18th century. This harnessed water power to service the flourishing linen industry. Many stretches of the River Tay's banks have been enhanced with tree planting, access and fishing stations.</p>	<p>Describing the scenery in 1803, Dorothy Wordsworth succinctly described its enduring qualities: <i>'From one hill, through different openings under the trees, we looked up the vale of the Tay to a great distance; a magnificent prospect at that time of evening: woody and rich - corn, greenfields, and cattle, the winding Tay, and distant mountains. Looked down the river to the town of Dunkeld, which lies low, under irregular hills, covered with wood to their rocky summits, and bounded by higher mountains, which are bare.'</i> (1997 edition)</p> <p>The town of Dunkeld sits within a series of consciously designed and managed landscapes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The townscape of Dunkeld itself, with its late 17th century houses, and the park of Stanley Hill. • The riverside walks and plantings, bordering important fishing beats. • The landscape garden of the Hermitage, along the River Braan. • The Cathedral policies, laid out with ornamental plantings leading down to the river. • The garden policies of Dunkeld House. It is now smaller than its historic extent, which formed the framework of much of the surrounding landscape. In 1885 it had 7,700 ha (18,500 acres) of plantations, 50 miles of path and 30 miles of carriage drives.

	<p>Work carried out by John Murray 3rd Duke of Atholl 1764-74 and continued by his successors forms the basis of the greater part of the area's character.</p> <p>Birnam is a planned settlement dating from the arrival of the railway in 1856.</p>
<p>• <i>The 'Gateway to the Highlands'</i></p>	
<p>Dunkeld has for long been lauded and visited as the 'Gateway to the Highlands', where lowland scenery changes to highland and both can be appreciated, often in the same view.</p> <p>Strath Tay is at its narrowest here, with the river curving around under the crags of Craig a Barns to the north, and rocky Birnam Hill, with its old slate quarries, to the south.</p> <p>The wide and smooth-flowing River Tay has a lowland appearance, whereas the River Braan, whose confluence is opposite Dunkeld, presents a highland alternative.</p> <p>This transition from highland to lowland is especially marked in winter, when snow covered summits are the backcloth to a low-lying mosaic of green and brown.</p> <p>Nowadays this 'gateway feel' is experienced when travelling north on the A9 trunk road, descending the hill to Dunkeld, then rounding the corner to behold vistas opening-up of Strath Tay and the Highland hills behind.</p>	<p>As a tourist spot, easily reached on short tours from Edinburgh, the scenery distils what many traditionally regard as Highland scenery.</p> <p><i>'Dunkeld... was reckoned to be the entrance to the Highlands, the place to pause and tune one's sensibility to the sublime experiences which lay ahead...'</i> Andrews (1990)</p> <p><i>'The rugged backdrop of Craig a Barns and Craig Vinean, the two imposing hills which guard this gateway to the Highlands.'</i> Dingwall (1994)</p> <p>Broadly speaking the geological units of the Grampian Highlands and the Central Lowlands are separated by the Highland Boundary Fault which runs through the NSA.</p> <p>The different landscape characteristics, highland and lowland, in the NSA are broadly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rounded uplands of the Mounth Highlands in the east of the NSA that lead down to • The lower, broad undulating slopes of the Highland Foothills landscape character type. • The settled, riparian banks of Strath Tay (Lower Highland Glen LCT) that crosses through the NSA. • The narrower gorge and falls of Strath Braan leading in to meet Strath Tay from the west and • Further to the west, the higher craggier summits of the West Highlands. <p>To the south the landscape changes further with the River Tay flowing through flatter, broader lowlands.</p>
<p>• <i>Characterful rivers, waterfalls and kettle-hole lochs</i></p>	
<p>The rivers, falls and lochs vary greatly, with different water bodies adding different interest, experiences and atmosphere to the scene. The River Tay</p>	<p>The Falls of Braan include a waterfall of about 40 feet, described in 1789:</p> <p><i>'The two rocky cheeks of the river almost uniting compress the stream into a very</i></p>

meanders in great loops of deep shining peaty water, the river gravelly rather than rocky and with alternating long pools and swift glides. In contrast the River Braan's course has spectacular turbulent and tumbling rapids and waterfalls as it forces its way through a deep gorge.

Contrasts between the characters of these two rivers were intentionally and consciously exploited in the Hermitage and Dunkeld designed landscapes. Walks led through from the broad, quiet course of the Tay at Inver, into the narrow, craggy valley of the swift, rushing waters of the Braan.

Other contrasts lie further east, where the Highland foothills that extend from Dunkeld to Rattray are cut by the Lunan Burn, a small, fast flowing highland burn arising in the Mounth Highlands north of Dunkeld. It forms a steep gorge as it descends through the hills.

As the burn flows eastwards forming the Lunan valley, so the area is peppered with tranquil lochans of varying size. These have all formed in a series of kettle-holes; three lie closely together in the east of the NSA, Loch of Lowes, Loch of Craiglush and Loch of Butterstone.

narrow compass; and the channel, which descends abruptly, taking also a sudden turn, the water suffers more than common violence from the double resistance it receives from compression and obliquity... This whole scene... is... picturesqueley beautiful in the highest degree. The composition is perfect, but yet the parts are so intricate, so various, and so complicated, that I never found any piece of nature less obvious to imitation...'
Gilpin quoted in Andrews (1990)

The Tay and its many large tributaries drain an area of 3,000 square miles giving an average flow of about 200 cubic metres per second, the greatest flow of any river in the country. The river is one of the most notable salmon fishing rivers, famed for its large salmon, and angling has long been popular.

The Lunan Burn rises on Craig More, three miles (5 km) north of Dunkeld, to flow south and then east, through the lochs of Lowes, Butterstone, Clunie and Drumellie. It joins the River Isla two miles (3km) west of Coupar Angus.

Loch of the Lowes is a Scottish Wildlife Trust nature reserve, famous for its ospreys.

• **Exceptionally rich, varied and beautiful woodlands**

The NSA is richly afforested and wooded. The tree-cover varies widely with different tree species, management history and age structure, which creates exceptional variety. However, key to this variety are the areas of open field and pasture that provide an important setting for the woods and enable longer views to be possible.

The smaller areas of natural and semi-natural woodlands contrast with the extensive managed forests planted in the great 18th century forestry expansion, centred principally in this area. The Dukes of Atholl pioneered large-scale forestry and from 1738 to 1830 planted some 27 million conifers – *'for beauty*

Craigvinean Forest (*'Crag of the Goats'*), one of Scotland's oldest managed forests, was created from larch seed brought from the Alps for the Second Duke of Atholl. This was part of the great expansion of forestry in the eighteenth century, centred on Perthshire. Innovative tree seeding techniques were employed, including (allegedly) scattering seed by cannon onto the dramatic crags of Craig and Barns. Craigvinean was laid out as part of The Hermitage policies. It has been popular since the time of the Victorians, who delighted in forest paths leading to follies and dramatic viewpoints.

Woodland types include:

- Open deciduous woodlands on the steep, rocky slopes of the Highland edge.
- Riparian woods along the Tay on steep, inaccessible banks, as at Craig Tronach

<p><i>and profit'</i> – around Dunkeld.</p> <p>The Hermitage woodland, originally planted in the 18th century, is now largely mixed conifers of Scots pine, Douglas fir and Norway spruce.</p> <p>Craigvinean Forest is the greatest of the plantations. This was originally planted mainly with larch, but now the lower slopes have a mixed woodland of Scots pine and beech, while the upper slopes are mixed conifers including the third generation of larch.</p> <p>On the opposite banks of the Tay are the Craig a Barns and Crieff Hill policy woodlands.</p>	<p>in the southern part of the NSA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upland, mixed woods of ash, hazel and oak with beech and wych elm in gorges along the Lunan, as at Den of Riechip. • Lunan Valley coppiced oak woodlands, at Cardney Wood. • Fungarth Juniper Wood, at just under 25ha, one of the largest juniper woods in Perthshire. <p>Important unwooded areas of field and pasture are found along the floor of the strath and around the kettle-hole lochs in the east of the NSA.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The picturesque cathedral town of Dunkeld</i> 	
<p>At the NSA's centre is the compact and picturesque cathedral town of Dunkeld, nestling in the hills on the Tay's north haughlands, connected by Telford's old stone bridge to the Victorian railway resort of Birnam with its distinctive station.</p> <p>It is of special cultural and historic significance being strategically placed on a major north-south route to the Highlands crossing an east-west route leading through from Strath Braan to the Lunan Valley.</p> <p>It has been a major ecclesiastical centre from the 7th century and then in the 9th century, Kenneth MacAlpin, the first King of Scots, made Dunkeld head of the Church in Scotia and the capital of the newly-formed nation created by the union of the Scots and the Picts.</p> <p>It was a market town set at the junction of cattle-droving roads and a crossing point on the Tay; poor communication and transport links were improved in 1809 when the ferry across the Tay between Dunkeld and Birnam was replaced by a bridge built by Thomas</p>	<p>At Dunkeld there has been a monastery since around 600 AD, founded by either St Columba or Adamnan. After Pictland and Dalriada merged in 843, Columba's sacred relics were moved from Iona to Dunkeld in 849. Thereafter Dunkeld became the main religious centre in Scotland. Kenneth I held court here making this his joint capital with Scone. The Cathedral, started in 1325, was extremely important in ecclesiastical terms until the Reformation in the 16th century, when it was destroyed.</p> <p>After the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689 the victorious Jacobites attacked Dunkeld which was in Government hands and held by Covenanting Cameronians. The battle destroyed most of Dunkeld and the houses seen today were built immediately after this event.</p> <p>Key views are to and from the Cathedral, Cathedral policies, Telford bridge and the riverside walks.</p>

<p>Telford.</p> <p>Dunkeld's compact built form, its integrity, its domestic scale, its close relationship to the River Tay and its beautiful setting results in a town of great charm and character. This, together with its historical sites, makes it popular with tourists.</p>	
<p>• Drama of The Falls of Braan and The Hermitage</p>	
<p>The height of scenic drama is met below Inver, where the River Braan falls, tumbling through the picturesque gorge of The Hermitage into the Tay.</p> <p>The Hermitage is of outstanding cultural significance, exploiting the wild nature of the waterfall in giving visitors experience and enjoyment of it.</p> <p>The natural riverside landscape is dramatic, with the roaring sound heard from woodland walks north of the river. Long distance views are limited as woodlands provide the main structure. However, this is intentional to guide movement through the landscape and, by its presence or absence, hide or reveal 'surprises' such as Ossian's Hall, Hermitage Bridge and Ossian's Cave.</p>	<p>The Hermitage was designed as part of the Dunkeld House landscaped policies.</p> <p><i>'The Hermitage... may be understood in the context of movement through the landscape, in which a carefully designed route manipulates the experience of the visitor to exploit the sensations aroused by the rugged, wild aspects of nature. Moving from the expansive formal landscape of the main pleasure grounds via the broad, quiet course of the Tay at Inver, into the narrow, craggy valley of the swift, rushing waters of the Braan, the main Hermitage path at first followed the riverbank, then gradually drew the visitor farther and farther away from the stream until only the noise of the water remained. The curve of the path then revealed, quite suddenly, the summer house... Entering the garden and approaching the Hermitage, the volume of noise increased as the visitor came closer to the waterfall beyond, carefully screened by the building itself and a hedge... The reaction of wonder and surprise visitors had on entering the Hermitage, discovering the intensity of noise and movement created by the utterly unexpected Black Linn Falls, was thus the Sublime culmination of a carefully-designed sensory experience extended in time and space.'</i> NTS (2003)</p> <p>The original Hermitage was built by John Murray, as a surprise for his father-in-law and uncle the 2nd Duke of Atholl. It was further improved and added to over the years and grew in popularity throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It became one of the most visited tourist attractions, illustrated in numerous engravings. The Hermitage is recognised as a designed landscape of national significance.</p>
<p>• Dunkeld House policies</p>	
<p>The Dunkeld House designed landscape makes up a major portion of the NSA, along the riverside from Dunkeld</p>	<p>Dunkeld is recognised as a designed landscape of national significance. The major planting and landscape design we see today originated with the 4th Duke of</p>

<p>westwards and northwards. It forms a significant extent of designed and managed ornamental planting and walks.</p> <p>Within this the River Tay is an important component, its banks laid out with walks and the remnants of ornamental planting, principally the fine trees which survive from the mid 19th century American Garden.</p> <p>It is a place that exploits the dominant views on each side of the Tay and Braan to the coniferous woodlands and mountains beyond.</p>	<p>Atholl (the 'Planter Duke') from 1774 onwards. He remodelled walks and terraces, and undertook extensive work along the riverside.</p> <p>The American Garden comprises large specimens of spruce and fir.</p> <p>Views into the policies can be gained from the A923, north of Dunkeld; and from the minor road linking it with the A9 south of Dowally.</p>
<p>• Significant specimen trees</p>	
<p>There are trees of a great age, known individually for their historic, or even legendary, significance and associations: The Birnam Oak, Niel Gow's Oak, the Parent Larch and the Hermitage's Douglas Fir.</p> <p>Many significant ornamental tree groups add to the visual variety and managed countryside character. These form avenues along some of the walks, and tree-lines along stretches of the river, such as the Bishop's Walk which extends around the beeches on Bishop's Hill to the Cathedral Lawn.</p>	<p>The Birnam Oak is said to be a sole survivor of Birnam Wood, referred to in Shakespeare's Macbeth: '<i>I will not be afraid of death and bane till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane.</i>' (Macbeth, Act V, Scene III)</p> <p>The gnarled oak is certainly very ancient. Next to it is an even larger and equally venerable sycamore which is an introduced species, and must have been one of the earliest plantings in Scotland.</p> <p>According to local tradition Niel Gow, the famous fiddle player, composed and played many of his best strathspeys and reels under an oak tree on the banks of the Tay. Known as Niel Gow's Oak, it stands near Inver, where Gow lived in a cottar house.</p> <p>The Parent Larch, immediately west of Dunkeld cathedral, sited just outside the cathedral grounds is the sole survivor from a group of larches planted as seedlings over 250 years ago. The saplings had been collected from the Tyrol mountains in 1738 and were used as the seed source for the large-scale larch plantings carried out by the Dukes of Atholl on the Dunkeld hillsides.</p> <p>A Douglas Fir, at the Hermitage growing on the right banks of the Braan, on Forestry Commission land, is over 60m (200 feet) in height (in 1986). It can best be seen from the Hermitage side of the Braan.</p>
<p>• The iconic view from King's Seat</p>	
<p>Standing proudly on the edge of the Highland boundary fault line, King's Seat, the summit of Birnam Hill is an iconic</p>	<p>The hill rises steeply to 404m (1300ft) and can be climbed by circular route that starts either from the centre of Birnam or from Quarry car park. Lower slopes are gentle and</p>

Scottish viewpoint.

To the north is a panorama of the hills and glens of the Highlands, to the south the fertile fields of the Lowlands. Eastwards there are views along the boundary fault, across Loch of the Lowes to the fertile farmland of Strathmore. Westwards, the Perthshire hills lead the eye into the far distance.

cloaked in deciduous woodland, while the path to the summit is heathery and rougher as it leads onto high open ground. Roe deer, black grouse and capercaillie can sometimes be glimpsed when ascending the hill. The eastern slopes possess extensive remains of old slate workings.

Selected Bibliography

Andrews, M. 1990. *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*. Aldershot: Scolar Press.

Dingwall, C. 1994. *Gardens in the Wild*. Garden History, **22** No.2, pp. 133-156.

Land Use Consultants 1999. Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 122*.

National Trust for Scotland (NTS) 2003. *Ossian's Hall, The Hermitage, Conservation Plan*.

Whittow, J. B. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

Wordsworth, D. 1997 edition. *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*.

ASSYNT-COIGACH NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Highland

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Assynt and Coigach present a landscape unparalleled in Britain. Steep hills with idiosyncratic profiles rise from hummocky surroundings in some of the most rugged and spectacular scenery in Scotland.

The area contains seven well known mountains: Ben More Coigach, Stac Pollaidh, Cul Beag, Cul Mor, Suilven, Canisp and Quinag. They are famed for their strange spectacular shapes, which are thrown into relief, higher than their statistical height would indicate, by the comparatively uniform ground of moorland and loch out of which they rise. Some of them have knife-edged ridges of white quartz and grey scree slopes that contrast with the weathered red sandstone that forms the core of their structure.

The contrasting lowlands are a jumble of morainic hillocks and pink-grey rock, interspersed with lochans and peaty hollows. Of Suilven, perhaps the most famous of these peaks, Frank Fraser Darling has written: 'There is only one Suilven and it is undoubtedly one of the most fantastic hills in Scotland. It rises 2,309 ft (731m) out of a rough sea of gneiss..... probably the Dolomites would be the nearest place where such an extraordinary shape of hill could be seen.'

To the east Ben More Assynt, lying east of the Moine Thrust, has a different character deriving from its different geological history. Its vaster bulk and wild, rugged grandeur form the backdrop to the drama of the peaks of Assynt and Coigach, mirrored as they are in tranquil weather in the lochs as Assynt, Veyatie, Sionascaig and Lurgainn.

The coast of the area is as diverse as the interior. Badcall Bay has a scatter of islands which catch the constantly changing western light. The long narrow sea loch of Loch a'Chairn Bhain and its tributaries Loch Glendhu and Loch Glencoul are surrounded by towering peaks and bare rugged hills. The Summer Isles off Achiltibuie form a broken seaboard to contrast with the solid mass of Ben More Coigach.

A. Wainwright has written: 'The mountains, although sparsely distributed, are the dominant feature of the landscape, but in other respects too this area has great appeal. Around the seaboard is a richly diversified pattern of inlets and sandy bays, rivers and native woodlands; of hamlets and crofts that cling close to the narrow coastal fringe, because only there do land and sea provide a living.'

The Special Qualities of the Assynt-Coigach National Scenic Area

- Spectacular scenery of lone mountains
- Rocky topography of great variety
- Settlements nestled within a wider landscape of mountain peaks, wild moorlands, and rocky seascapes
- Extensive cnocan landscapes
- A coastline of endless drama
- An intricate multitude of lochs and lochans
- A landscape of vast open space and exposure
- Significant tracts of wild land
- Unexpected and extensive tracts of native woodland
- A still, quiet landscape under a constantly changing sky

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Spectacular scenery of lone mountains</i> 	
<p>This is a land where lone mountains rise dramatically above cnocan, moorland and loch, where rocky hills dominate the scenery and stay long in the memory.</p> <p>The peaks are afforded a platform, a broad stage from which they thrust upwards, often with striking, steep-sided profiles recognisable from many miles away.</p>	<p>The mountain of Suilven (731 m) perhaps most encapsulates the splendour and mystique of Assynt-Coigach. Other mountains areas in Scotland may offer greater elevation and concentration of hills, but few other areas can challenge their grandeur, distinctiveness and impact on the viewer.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rocky topography of great variety</i> 	
<p>Within the NSA, the lone mountains stand as the hallmark of the area, but there are also bluffs, sweeping moorlands, sea cliffs, lush grassy slopes with rocky outcrops, massive boulder fields and scree slopes, caves and shallow gorges, sink holes, jagged pinnacles and broad, powerful sweeping summits. Colours range from dark solid sandstone to extensive, dominant limestone greys.</p> <p>The landscape presents a stark but harmonious juxtaposition of rocky landscapes of mountain, moorland and coast.</p>	<p>Whilst distinctive by the notable separation of the mountains, the scenery of Assynt-Coigach also offers great variety of topography, colour, water, vegetation cover, land use and recreational potential.</p> <p>There is a distinct transition in landform and elevation from the coastal fringe and peninsulas of low lying crofts. Smooth moorland and cnocan; through lone mountains of the central area; and upwards to the eastern extent of the NSA across the Ben More Assynt massif, stretching from the head of Loch Glendhu south to the Benmore Forest.</p> <p>The wider, open and less steep country of uninhabited rough cnocan and smooth moorland emphasises the remoteness of the mountains, offers a stage from which they are best admired and yet also presents a deceptively</p>

	<p>tough obstacle to their entry.</p> <p>Rock is a dominant feature of the landscape generally. The geological complexities of the area were gradually unravelled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries through extensive study around Inchnadamph, and helped establish the modern understanding of earth sciences.</p>
<p>• Settlements nestled within a wider landscape of mountain peaks, wild moorlands, and rocky seascapes</p>	
<p>Concentrations of pasture around small crofting settlements on the coast and inland around Elphin, offer an occasional contrast to the general dominance of mountains, moorland and rock. Here human activity is at its most obvious but still widely scattered and always dwarfed by the wider landscape of wild moor and dramatic peak.</p> <p>Along the coast, the bays are often framed in part by strings of small croft houses on the fringes of inbye land above the seashore. Lobster pots, fishing boats and netting reveal the importance of the sea to the remote crofting and fishing communities.</p>	<p>The low-rising and generally flat cnocan landscape of the peninsulas of Assynt and Coigach screen inland views from the small settlements which perch on the slopes down to the rocky shore or silvery beaches. From the shore the same cottages and crofts can appear perched and standing firm in the face of the prevailing elements.</p> <p>The presence of limestone at Elphin, and Inchnadamph along to Ardvrek, with the resultant richer soils, has encouraged human settlement inland. The Inchnadamph caves indicate settlement of this area since early prehistory, as does the chambered cairn at Ardvrek.</p> <p>Evidence of former settlement in now uninhabited areas is visible in many areas. For example, Loch Assynt with Ardvrek Castle and a church was once a centre of settlement, with former shielings common in suitable areas. Additionally, the Duke of Sutherland built a golf course here in the 19th Century.</p>
<p>• Extensive cnocan landscapes</p>	
<p>The cnocan landscape has an unusual character. It is extensive, secretive and mysterious, but its extent is not appreciated until viewed from higher ground or the summits of the lone peaks.</p> <p>The road network is sinuous and rarely conspicuous in the scenery, apart from the striking Kylesku bridge. Small single track roads provide the road user with a very close and intimate experience of their surroundings.</p>	<p>'Cnoc' (plural 'cnocan') is Gaelic for a hillock. As a geographical term, a cnocan landscape is one of small, rounded, rocky hillocks, as typified when the bedrock is Lewisian gneiss. The term 'cnocan and lochan' landscape is often used, as the hollows between the cnocan are often water-filled.</p> <p>The ancient Lewisian gneiss appears deceptively flat, in comparison to its backdrop of high peaks, but it has a coarse, rough surface hiding many hollows and gullies making access difficult, once off the miles of single-track road.</p> <p>Locally, the Coigach area reflects a smoother moorland characteristic but the harshness of the Assynt cnocan is readily viewed from the coastal road and the area behind the settlements of Drumbeag and Clachtoll.</p>

• ***A coastline of endless drama***

The majesty of the mountains, steep, rocky, individual and dramatic, is framed not only by the flats of cnocan, moor and pasture, but also by the sea. At Badcall Bay, and in the south from Coigach to the Summer Isles, the profusion of islands and islets, bays and coves affords a sometimes confused mosaic, blurring the transition from land to sea.

The meeting of sea and land is sometimes dramatic and abrupt. The Stoer Peninsula, crowned by its whitewashed lighthouse and adorned by its great sea stack, further emphasises remoteness. Here relentless north Atlantic waves and tides meet some of the oldest rocks on earth and the movement and noise this affords is in stark contrast to the quiet stillness of the area's interior.

However, the seascapes of Assynt-Coigach are not always fierce or dramatic. On occasion the weather affords still conditions and blue skies which reveal an idyllic coastal refuge of small bays and tight sandy coves, particularly on the Coigach peninsula.

From low elevations the islands can sometimes falsely suggest unbroken land far into the sea, or appear as monumental stepping-stones out from the shore.

• ***An intricate multitude of lochs and lochans***

The long, narrow Loch Assynt and the twin sea lochs of Glencoul and Glendhu offer significant expanses of deep water in the shadows of Quinag and Glas Bhenn. The mountains here fall steeply through their moorland skirts to plunge to the water's edge, with little change in character, land use or vegetation along the way.

Elsewhere, there is an intricate array of lochs and lochans in the cnocan and moorland interior and coastal fringe. The true extent of this water network is mostly apparent from the elevated vantage points of the lone mountains.

Only the linear, Loch Assynt and the twin sea lochs of Glencoul and Glendhu offer significant expanses of deep water.

Extensive tracts of rough and rugged gorse, heather and peat bog contain significant networks of medium and small lochans and burns, with intricate irregular form, interlocking with the low land around them and creating a significant challenge to the cross-country walker.

Most lochans suggest a relatively shallow depth surrounded by peatlands, which often show evidence of old peat diggings. Loch Lurgainn, Loch Sionascaig and Loch Veyatie in the heart of Coigach may appear to rival Loch Assynt in terms of their extent, but their shorelines are more complex and small isles more common.

<p>• <i>A landscape of vast open space and exposure</i></p>	
<p>The juxtaposition of cnocan, sweeping moorland and concentrated pockets of pasture emphasises the extreme openness of Assynt-Coigach.</p> <p>There are few trees and the skies are often expansive, particularly on the coastal fringe.</p>	<p>Although most of the NSA appears open and expansive, there are a few areas with a more enclosed feeling: the heart of the Coigach range around Beinn Mor Coigach, and the hidden steep sided folds of wooded valleys on the B869 Assynt coast road.</p>
<p>• <i>Significant tracts of wild land</i></p>	
<p>Most of the human settlement is concentrated around the coast, with much of the inland being uninhabited and possessing a wild character. Large areas possess no roads or tracks, with access inland only possible on foot.</p> <p>The absence of modern artefacts, or overt human activity, over much of the landscape emphasises the feelings of openness, remoteness and wildness.</p> <p>This can be reinforced by the sight of an eagle soaring over some remote cliff, or by the lonely call of a golden plover amongst the moors.</p>	<p>The feeling of remoteness is particularly notable between Inchnadamph and the Elphin area.</p> <p>The eastern highlands of Ben More Assynt, the high Coigach Massif and the western cnocan fringe, behind the crofting settlements, have a wild land character. They are part of an SNH Wild Land Search Area.</p> <p>There has been a long history of land use in the area, and areas now uninhabited often show signs of former settlement or shielings.</p>
<p>• <i>Unexpected and extensive tracts of native woodland</i></p>	
<p>Although many parts of the NSA are virtually treeless, the cnocan, especially that of Assynt, can hide the most unexpected and extensive tracts of semi-natural woodland. Here the deep folds in the Lewisian gneiss, which generally run north-west to south-east, afford some shelter and sufficient soils for linear woodlands of birch and willow to flow along the landform.</p> <p>These stand in welcome relief and stark contrast to the openness and barrenness of the cnocan.</p>	<p>Trees are scarce in the NSA with many eastern parts virtually treeless. Although the term 'forest' is applied to areas such as Inverpolly, Drumrunie and Inchnadamph, these refer to the open deer forest rather than woodland.</p>
<p>• <i>A still, quiet landscape under a constantly changing sky</i></p>	
<p>Assynt-Coigach is a landscape where human movement tends to be minimal,</p>	<p>Often the lack of human activity is apparent rather than real, with, for example, the land being used for deer stalking, angling</p>

although on the coast small inshore craft slowly working the bays of the peninsula do offer occasional movement. In contrast, the skyscape, governed by the north Atlantic weather systems, provides almost constant change, often characterised by heavy cloud scudding across the landscape, in turn obscuring the higher peaks and providing a more horizontal emphasis to the scene. At other times this movement reveals, sometimes fleetingly, the same peaks.

The extensive waters of the NSA offer a constant, if subtle, sense of movement and change, fuelled by the relentless march of the ocean's weather systems.

The absence of significant tree cover in the landscape, as well as the openness, remoteness and rarity of roads, also contribute to this being a very 'still' landscape.

or sheep grazing.

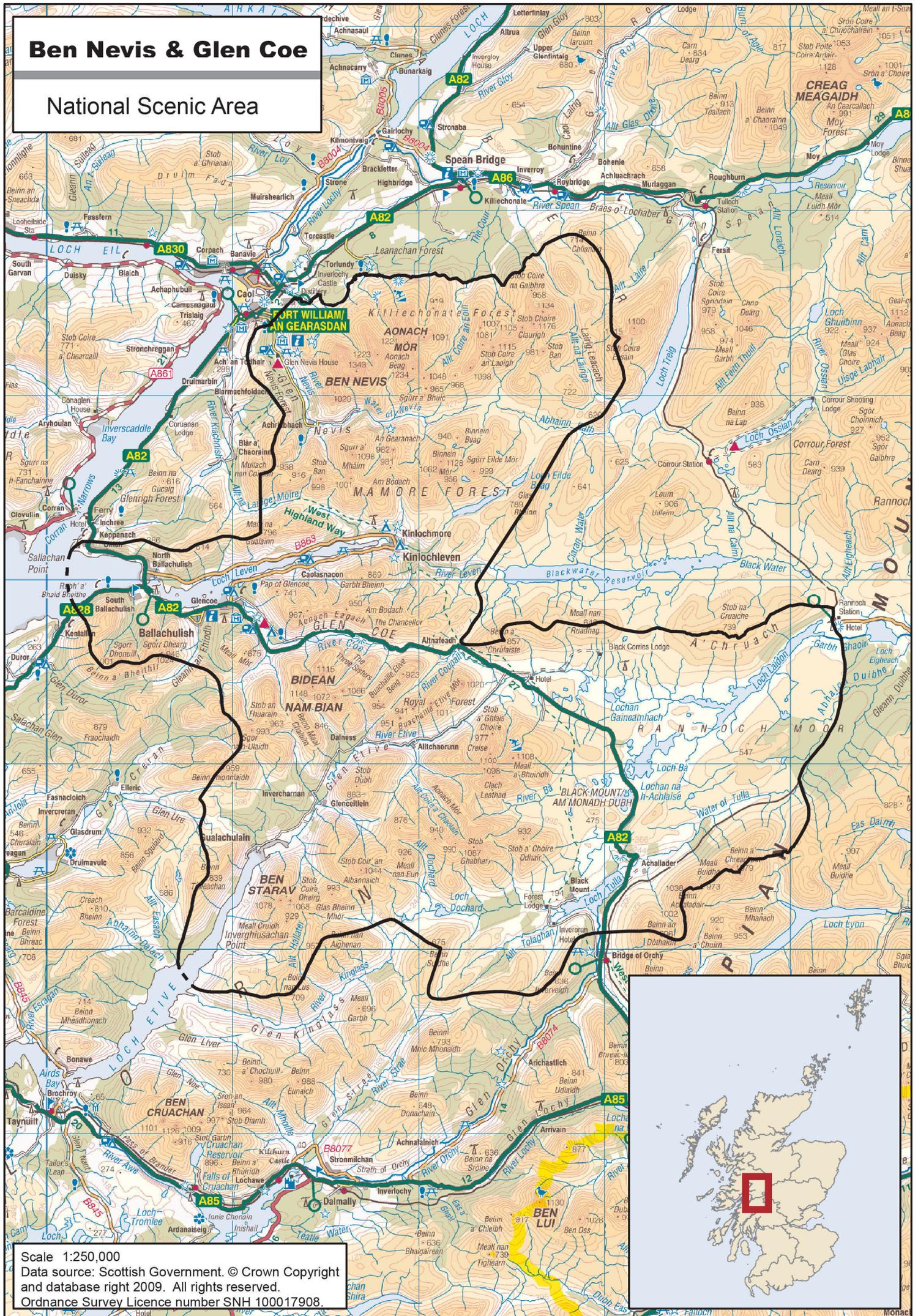
Selected Bibliography

RCAHMS 1997. *Achiltibuie: The Archaeology of a Crofting Landscape*. RCAHMS Broadsheet.

Stanton, C. 1998. Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.103*.

Ben Nevis & Glen Coe

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:250,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

BEN NEVIS AND GLEN COE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Highland, with parts in Argyll & Bute and Perth & Kinross

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

There is a great variety of landform and scenery within this area, attributable in the main to the intricacy of its geological structure. Granite outcrops form the dominant features around Ben Nevis, Glen Etive and Rannoch Moor, while Glencoe is of volcanic origin. The variety of scenery throughout the area is witnessed in hills that may be smooth or jagged, rounded or precipitous, grass or heather covered. The glens may contain moorland, meadow, arable or forest, and swift streams or calm lochs. The sea shore may be wooded and bayed as in outer Loch Leven, or fjord-like as in the inner loch and Loch Etive.

Many people would consider that Glen Nevis ranks with Glen Affric and Glen Lyon as one of the most beautiful glens in Scotland. No other part of the country has greater relative relief. But it is not scale alone which makes Glen Nevis memorable. The lower reaches are pastoral, with an alder threaded river and woodlands clothing the glen sides. The middle section exhibits a 'Himalayan' character, while the upper glen is a place of peaceful meadows, Alpine in feeling, enhanced by the presence of the graceful Steall waterfall. On the north side of Ben Nevis is Coire Leis, 'the most splendid of all Scottish corries' (Murray).

South of the Mamore Forest lies the fjord-like trench of Loch Leven. The soaring mountain walls rising from the deciduous wooded shores of the deep and narrow waters of the inner loch give it a character not replicated elsewhere in Scotland. Its beauty is further enhanced by the islands at the mouth of Glen Coe, and by the swift tidal race which flows through the narrows at Ballachulish below the sharp cones of Beinn a'Bheithir.

Glen Coe itself '.... must rank high among the most spectacular scenic experiences in Scotland' (Whittow). Lying between the 6 mile-long notched ridge of Aonach Eagach and the truncated spurs of Bidean nam Bian, the highest mountain in Argyll (1141m), the glen is an ice worn valley mantled with screes and debris from the mountains. The place called The Study offers impressive vistas of the Three Sisters. Here the River Coe flows westwards over foaming cascades and through clear pools to the calm waters of Loch Achtriochtan. The peaty flats of the lower glen are in sharp contrast to the towering precipices and waterfalls around them.

Glen Etive is not of the same awe-inspiring grandeur, but nevertheless it is a deep cleft through towering peaks, notably the portal peaks of the Buachailles and the great slabs of Ben Starav. The River Etive with its numerous waterfalls is an important feature of the glen. To the east lies Rannoch Moor, probably the best known moor in Scotland. Its sometimes endless-seeming wastes have a beauty derived from the inter-relationship of water and islands with the moor, and the relationship of the moor to its surrounding mountains.

The Special Qualities of the Ben Nevis and Glencoe National Scenic Area

- A land of mountain grandeur
- A land of classic highland vistas
- Human settlement dwarfed by mountain and moorland
- The expansive Moor of Rannoch
- The spectacular drama of Glen Coe
- The wooded strath of lower Glen Coe
- The narrow and enclosed Loch Leven
- The impressive massif of Ben Nevis
- The wild Mamores and secretive Glen Nevis
- The fjord-like upper Loch Leven
- Long and green Glen Etive
- The dark heritage

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A land of mountain grandeur</i> 	
<p>This is a landscape of massive proportions, breathtaking grandeur and great variety. It offers the highest altitude and greatest vertical relief in Britain.</p>	<p>Ben Nevis at 1343 metres (4406 feet) is the highest mountain in the British Isles, and the neighbouring Aonach Mor and Aonach Beag are both over 1200 metres. Numerous other Munros are present, particularly in the massifs of the Grey Corries, the Mamores and Glencoe.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A land of classic highland vistas</i> 	
<p>With each crossing of a glen or watershed, the scenery dramatically changes, from open moor to mountain pass, from smooth hillside to towering crags, from enclosed glen to long sea loch.</p> <p>The journey by road northwards across the open Moor of Rannoch Moor, past the sentinel of Buachaille Etive, and down through spectacular Glen Coe to the sea at Loch Leven, is a journey of great contrasts – one of the classic Highland journeys.</p> <p>The mountains, moors and glens are visited by many of those in search of the outstanding scenic experience, or outdoor exhilaration and challenge. It is</p>	<p>It is the inter-relationships as well as the individual qualities of the mountains, moors, glens and lochs that elevate the landscape scenery of Ben Nevis and (particularly) Glen Coe, to iconic status.</p> <p>Much of the core mountain area lies within SNH Wild Land Search Areas.</p>

<p>not remote by distance or time from major settlement, particularly Fort William, and a sense of true remoteness must be searched for, with human contact in the upper glens and moors to be expected.</p>	
<p>• Human settlement dwarfed by the mountain and moorland</p>	
<p>Although in places humans have left a marked impression on the landscape, particularly around Loch Leven, overall this is a landscape where human endeavour and activity is dwarfed by the mountain grandeur.</p> <p>Where houses and settlements are present, they appear small amongst the large scale surrounds of mountain, moor, glen and sea loch. Scenic quality and drama prevail.</p>	<p>Human settlement is sparse, highly concentrated around the shores of Loch Leven, with only occasional houses elsewhere. Around the loch, human impact can itself be a dominant feature of the landscape, for example the old Ballachulish slate quarries; Ballachulish itself and its bridge; Glencoe Village; Kinlochleven with its previous aluminium works (now only a hydro-electric power station); and the surrounding forestry plantations. The coast of Loch Leven is characterised by aquaculture, inshore fishing and pleasure-craft activities.</p> <p>In some places the road and ski infrastructure penetrate deeply into the mountains and moorlands. In most other inland areas human influence comes across as minimal. However, populations have come and gone, with evidence of former occupation in many locations.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• The expansive Moor of Rannoch</p>	
<p>Rannoch Moor is a wide open expanse of barren, wet peat moorland and peaty lochans which seems primeval in its character.</p> <p>The framing of the moor by the highland peaks which funnel towards Glen Coe is striking. The Black Mount range rises ominously to the south, gradually encroaching upon the moor until the entrance of the glen presents a striking contrast to the openness of Rannoch Moor.</p>	<p>The most striking landscape drama, contrast and juxtaposition of moor, mountain and seascape is experienced as the visitor crosses from south-east to north-west across the NSA along the A82. The route from Bridge of Orchy rises gradually from the Tulla basin to the lip of Rannoch Moor.</p> <p>The road bisects the moor on a true and straight line; there is a sense that departure from its line would lead to isolation and exposure in an inaccessible, intricate mosaic of high, but gently profiled, wet moorland and shallow peaty lochans.</p>
<p>• The spectacular drama of Glen Coe</p>	
<p>The soaring, dramatic splendour of Glen Coe alters the traveller's experience and a sense of deep enclosure prevails, whilst the scenery increases yet in splendour and drama as the glen is</p>	<p>Access to the foot of the mountain slopes is straightforward, but their high, vast, sheer slopes require skill, energy and determination to scale.</p> <p>The usually broad glen floor of grassland</p>

<p>descended.</p> <p>The pyramidal profile of the mountain of Buachaille is striking as it stands sentry to the glen's entrance, but is challenged by numerous other distinctive peaked summits along the glen's twin ridges, one of which is the ten kilometres long, notched ridge of Aonach Eagach.</p> <p>From here the steep and high sided rocky, rugged mountains soar from the generously proportioned, flat valley floor, adorned with burns, waterfalls, scree fans, vertical outcrops and hanging valleys. This gives rise to one of the most iconic views in Scotland – the dramatic buttresses of the Three Sisters.</p>	<p>and heather falls gradually to the north-west and the river Coe masks its seasonal powers as it cascades through gorges and across stony washlands, fed by many waterfalls and lively mountain burns which spill almost vertically into the glen from their lofty source. The view across Loch Achtriochtan to the cottage of Achnambeithach, dwarfed by the mountain above, is another iconic Scottish view.</p> <p>In the lower reaches of the glen the river plays only a minor role in the summer-time scenery, but its broad and braided gravel beds and boulder debris tell of a thundering power in spate.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• The wooded strath of lower Glen Coe</p>	
<p>Glen Coe's splendour is not diminished as it falls to sea level and meets Loch Leven, albeit some way from the open sea. The meeting of the glen and the loch is enhanced by the suddenness of the transition between high mountain pass and the lightly wooded strath which separates the two dominant landscape elements. Population and human influence on the landscape begins to increase markedly.</p>	<p>The twisting line of the glen afforded by the western sentinels of Meall Mor and Sgorr nam Fiannaich emphasises the suddenness of the transition and from the north serves to obscure the entrance to the mighty breach through the mountains.</p> <p>The deep enclosure of the glen is relieved by the narrow, lightly wooded strath with meadows and plantations, aside the loch which prevails as the dominant element in the coastal scene.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• The narrow and enclosed Loch Leven</p>	
<p>Loch Leven is a fjord-like sea loch which strikes deep into the upland of the NSA's core.</p> <p>The wooded slopes of the north shore, the peak of the Pap of Glencoe and the forested southern valley sides provide a sense of enclosure, which the bridge contributes to by affording a visual barrier to the openness of the outer loch. The abandoned slate quarries above are an impressive reminder of human endeavour.</p> <p>The expanse of calm waters affords a far brighter light to pervade than across the moor or within the Glen, and this glistening reflection, particularly in early</p>	<p>The A82 meets the loch close to its opening out to the sea beyond the distinctive bridge and narrows, and enters a concentration of settlement: Glencoe and Ballachulish villages, with old slate quarries above.</p> <p>Here the islands of the middle loch add to the detail of the waterscape and provide natural refuge and shelter for mooring pleasure craft and fishing boats.</p>

or evening hours adds a magical air to the place. The hills of Ardgour with their distinctive, irregular profile often stand out across the water.

• ***The impressive massif of Ben Nevis***

The huge Ben Nevis range dominates the setting of Fort William. The brooding mountain, with its massive rolling shoulders and dramatic eastern cliffs, attracts a wide variety of walkers and climbers. Some are drawn to the challenging rocky precipices and snow-filled gullies of Coire Leis Dearg, while others are simply wanting to reach the highest point in Britain.

The eastern ridge of Ben Nevis links to the grand, high-level hill walking country of Aonach Mòr and the Grey Corries.

Ben Nevis is a rolling rounded massif when viewed from the west. Vegetation is simple, grass and heather moorland flowing over convex slopes. Boulder fields and outcrops proliferate with increasing altitude, but this remains a simple, exposed, open massive mountain landscape. The prospect from the east is very different, with the precipices and gullies of Coire Leis Dearg.

The massif of Ben Nevis continues eastwards with a range of high hills, generally scree-covered with narrow ridges. From the north the hills named collectively 'The Grey Corries' appear as a series of high corries.

About 100,000 people a year ascend Ben Nevis.

• ***The wild Mamores and secretive Glen Nevis***

The Mamore Forest consists of open rolling moorland and rounded, rocky mountains exhibiting an unspoilt character and a wild integrity.

Penetrating between the Ben Nevis range and Mamores, Glen Nevis offers a striking transition from the pastoral and wooded lower valley, through a boulder-strewn gorge of Himalayan proportions, into a secretive upper glen bounded by steep rocky slopes and waterfalls.

In the pastoral lower valley where the river Nevis meanders into Fort William, lined with alder woodlands and stands of mature oak, flanked by gentle meadow, but bounded by the mass of the Ben's foothills. Tenuous groups of willow and birch cling to burn sides in vertical green fingers.

Travelling eastwards into the mid glen the valley floor narrows and the steepness and the broken character of the glen sides gradually increases, the hillside profiles become more rugged, with rocky outcrops prevailing. Here the lightly forested glen sides are complemented by remnants of ancient, gnarled Scots pine woods, clinging precariously between boulder and outcrop, and dominating the less dramatic willow, birch and alder woodlands. Here the river energetically tumbles through an increasingly rocky, boulder-strewn and secretive gorge, affording, in the words of *Scotland's Scenic Heritage*, a Himalayan character to the scene. The previous use of the woods in this area for charcoal production highlights the relationship between the natural and cultural aspects of the landscape.

The upper glen is secretive inviting exploration of its extremely flat alpine meadow, bounded by steep upper slopes of the Ben and the Mamores. The drama of the Steall waterfalls is complemented by the

	peacefulness of the enclosure and detail of the cotton grass and broad, gravelly river beds.
<p>• <i>The fjord-like upper Loch Leven</i></p>	
<p>Loch Leven, a long, linear, narrow, fjord-like sea loch penetrates deep into the mountain setting.</p> <p>Vistas from sea level, or from its upper slopes, are stunning, with the distinct conical peaks betraying its point as transition between the more rounded northern ranges and the pinnacles and drama of the Glen Coe range.</p> <p>At its head lies the isolated settlement of Kinlochleven, a small town built on the aluminium industry. The settlement has a particular charm enhanced by its long access route and its enclosed setting amongst wooded slopes.</p>	<p>Its sides are often concave and banded from the water's edge through thick broadleaved and coniferous woodland, to the open moors of the Mamores and northern Glen Coe ridge. Woods in this area were once used for charcoal production.</p> <p>Before the arrival of the aluminium smelter in 1907, Kinlochleven consisted of two small hamlets - Kinlochmore and Kinlochbeag. The smelter closed in 2000, with the associated large Blackwater Reservoir and its power-plant in Kinlochleven now feeding hydro-electricity into the national grid.</p>
<p>• <i>Long and green Glen Etive</i></p>	
<p>Glen Etive, a long and dramatic glen with a fast-flowing rocky river, is generally green and grassy, affording tranquillity and peacefulness. Surrounded by high mountains, its narrow, sinuous single track road extends to the shores of Loch Etive, where it abruptly ends at the disused pier.</p> <p>From here the narrow, elegant Loch Etive stretches seawards, free of obvious human infrastructure, settlement or intrusion.</p> <p>The upper reaches of the River Etive offer interesting and sharply contrasting detail to the overall simplicity of the landscape. Its shallow, gorged profile within the sweeping, smooth grassland draws attention, emphasised by the crystal pools and waterfalls over a complex geological bedrock.</p> <p>Settlement in this glen is limited to the occasional cottage and a single hunting lodge, but it is influential with the policies of the lodge dominating the lower reaches.</p>	<p>This glen runs south from the upper reaches of Glen Coe flanked by the towering peaks of the Buachailles and the great slabs of Ben Starav. It is a generally smooth-sided and extremely long, cleft valley, gradually sloping to the head of Loch Etive, a remote, relatively inaccessible sea loch.</p> <p>There is a harmonious transition from the broad lower valley floor of the braided river Etive to the open water of the sea loch.</p> <p>The simple profile of the glen is nevertheless dramatic, with smooth, high, U-shaped valleys meeting the main glen. The upper slopes give way from grass to rocky conical summits, and their sides characterised by steep streambeds opening out to rocky fans of scree.</p> <p>The glen's vegetation is predominantly of smooth grassland, with trees in small, sporadic stands or plantations, particularly in its lower reaches; there are extensive conifer plantations immediately north of the loch end. In places rhododendron colonises the western glen sides detracting from the semi-natural vegetation but adding striking colour in the early summer months.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dark heritage 	
<p>The grandeur and drama of the NSA is undeniable and irresistible, and modern development seems not to have diluted this grand scenery. However the village of Glencoe at the foot of the glen witnessed an historical betrayal and massacre which is still an integral part of the area's character and ambience.</p> <p>Whilst infamous for the massacre the glen also carries with it legend of cattle rustling and banditry between clans and government, secret refuges in hidden valleys and tales of incredible hardship. All weave together with the scenery of the area to present a dramatic and fascinating experience to the visitor.</p>	<p>The murder of 38 of the Clan Macdonald in 1692 by order of the Crown, and the subsequent loss of life of women and children from exposure after the King's soldiers had lodged within the village for several nights, engenders feelings of sorrow and disquiet.</p> <p>In later years, the village of Glencoe was populated by workers from the nearby slate quarries, and, later still, the Kinlochleven aluminium works.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Environmental Resources Management 1998. Lochaber Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.97.*

Murray, W. H. 1963. *The Scottish Highlands.* The Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

Whittow, J. B.1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland.* Penguin.

The Cuillin Hills

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

THE CUILLIN HILLS NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The jagged gabbro of the Black Cuillin and smooth pink granite of the Red Cuillin combine their contrasting shapes to form a mountain area of dramatic and distinctive outlines of great scenic splendour. These remarkable hills contrive to dominate much of the island seaboard of north-west Scotland, making their presence felt in clear weather from places as far apart as Ardnamurchan and Pairc in Lewis.

Closer at hand Sligachan is famous for its view of the shapely and serrated Sgurr nan Gilleann in marked contrast to the pudding profiles of the Red Cuillin to the east. Glen Brittle has magnificent waterfalls, Torrin is dominated by the grey slabs of Bla Bheinn, and Elgol provides the classic view of the Black Cuillin in serried ranks about the concealed amphitheatre of Loch Coruisk. The sharp-edged ridges are scalloped by high corries in which lie small lochans, but the lower slopes are also extremely steep, bare and often scree-covered.

The surrounding U-shaped glaciated glens form a contrast in their simplicity, and to seaward the Island of Soay is a low, brown, heath-covered hump of Torridonian sandstone, unspectacular, but providing a further foil to the mountains in the wider setting of Loch Scavaig.

The Special Qualities of The Cuillin Hills National Scenic Area

- Magnificent mountain scenery
- The contrast and complement of the Black and Red Cuillin
- The surrounding wild landscape, a fitting foil for the mountains
- Iconic images of crofting townships with dramatic backdrops
- The Cuillin Ridge, a landmark throughout the northwest
- The ever-changing weather
- A place of inspiration
- The most challenging mountains in Scotland

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Magnificent mountain scenery</i> 	
<p>This area presents magnificent, imposing, upland scenery of serrated ridges, deep rocky corries and scree-clad slopes.</p> <p>The mountains rise up dramatically from the sea creating formidable, enclosed sea lochs, with the absence of foothills enhancing their vast scale. Many iconic views of Scotland are centred here, whether Sgurr nan Gilleann soaring above Sligachan, Loch Scavaig and the Cuillin ridge from Elgol, or Bla Bheinn above Torrin.</p> <p>Roads and paths are hard against the towering mountains, and the lack of human settlement or activity gives a sense of entering one of the wildest quarters of Europe.</p> <p>The Black Cuillin in particular have been described as '<i>the most spectacular mountain scenery in the British Isles</i>' (McNeish, 1999). Loch na Cuilce and Loch Coruisk penetrate this landscape of rock, allowing low-level access into the heart of the inhospitable, remote and wild mountain core.</p>	<p>Within this NSA are three main mountain areas: the Black Cuillin with its spectacular ridge; the massif of Bla Bheinn; and the more rounded Red Cuillin, also known locally as the Red Hills (<i>Am Binnean Dearg</i>).</p> <p>Lochs Slapin, Ainort, Scavaig, Sligachan and Brittle present fjord-like tongues into the mountains.</p> <p>The Red Cuillin are imposing from the A87 trunk road at Luib looking across Loch Ainort, and at Sconser looking across Loch Sligachan, where the road sits tight between the sea loch and the mountains</p>

• ***The contrast and complement of the Black and Red Cuillin***

The two main mountain areas within this compact area, the Black Cuillin and the Red Cuillin, both contrast and complement each other.

The Black Cuillin, with their broken cliffs of black rock, deep corries and narrow, irregular summit ridges differ markedly from the individual, rounded, red-tinged, scree-covered peaks of the Red Cuillin. Similarly, the steep, rock-girt Loch Scavaig contrasts with the smoother-sided sea lochs of Sligachan and Ainort.

Acid and basic igneous rocks create a diverse and complementary igneous geological landscape, with a clear distinction in the morphology of the two mountain types. In terms of magma activity, the Black Cuillin formed first, comprising dark, basic gabbro. Thereafter, there was an intrusion of acidic, granitic rock leading to the Red Hills.

The ridge of the Black Cuillin with the highest point Sgurr Alasdair (992m), and Bla Bheinn form irregular angular, mountain massifs. Although the rock is dark, particularly in the shade, when sunlit it can appear grey to brown in colour. The peaks are jagged and angular, not much higher than the ridge itself, with imposing steep ridges and deep corries, often consisting of just bare rock.

In contrast, the Red Cuillin are composed of lighter acidic, igneous rock, mainly granite which is richer in silica-based minerals.

They are more rounded mountains, often steep sided and with lone, conical peaks: Marsco, Beinn Dearg, and peaking with Glamaig (775m). Numerous loose screes smother the summits, often with deep gullying. Appearing red in certain light, but often appearing reddish brown, pink to grey in colour.

• ***The surrounding wild landscape, a fitting foil for the mountains***

A fitting contrast to the dramatic steep-sided mountains is provided by the undulating moorland and grassland that surrounds them, and by the flat-bottomed, once glaciated glens. Signs of human activity are minimal and the whole area comes across as wild and untamed.

To the south, the eye is led on to the islands of Canna, Rum and Eigg, each with its distinctive profile, and these distant islands emphasise the remoteness of the coast.

As well as the sea, the backdrop to the mountains includes the flat island of Soay; Glen Sligachan, a large extensive area of smooth moorland broken with numerous hummocks; Srath a Crèithech; and the stepped swathes of acid grassland and moors above Glen Brittle, below the steep ascent of the Black Cuillin.

These areas all show minimal signs of human activity, whether buildings, agriculture or forestry, giving a strong appearance of wildness. The area is an SNH Search Area for Wild Land. However, in contrast to the generally minimal human influence inland, there is ample evidence of previous use along the fringes of the mountains, particularly in the form of prehistoric hut circles and later shielings. One location Rudha an Dunain, has exceptionally good evidence of settlement and field systems from the Neolithic period onwards, including a canal, reputed to be of Viking date.

The Small Isles rise out of the sea to the south, with Canna appearing as a flat platform, mountainous Rum with its own

	Cuillins and Eigg with its distinctive ridge.
<p>• Iconic images of crofting townships with dramatic backdrops</p>	
<p>The contrasting crofting settlements of Torrin and Elgol, although themselves mostly outside the NSA, present a foreground to some the most recognisable images of Bla Bheinn and the Black Cuillin – iconic images of the Isle of the Skye or even Scotland itself.</p> <p>Torrin with its mixture of small crofts and enclosed sheltered fields feels human and domestic. In contrast, Elgol has a feeling of a frontier open to the sea and the departure point both for the wildland to the north and the distant islands to the south.</p>	<p>The approach along the B8083 road to the east is first dominated by the Red Cuillin, and then, suddenly, the dark wall of Bla Bheinn takes over the view. The crofting township of Torrin holds the attention in the foreground, but the eye is ever-led to the waters of Loch Slapin and the massif of Bla Bheinn behind.</p> <p>Torrin possesses an intricate pattern of dry stone dykes, fields, and buildings, built on the greener richer soils of Jurassic limestone. Beyond Loch Slapin, and rising above the forest, the rugged massif of Bla Beinn provides a spectacular limb of the Black Cuillin, with the familiar jagged, angular, asymmetric peaks of dark gabbro – appearing formidable and dominating the backdrop.</p> <p>The scene from Elgol, presents a different picture. Perched on slopes overlooking the sea, the settlement feels more exposed – a frontier or departure point by sea for Loch Coruisk and the Black Cuillin, which emerge spectacularly out of the water across Loch Scavaig. The view is enhanced by an active harbour in the foreground, with a rocky shore and cliffs of Jurassic limestone. Although the eye is at first led up the loch which narrows to the Black Cuillins, it is later held by views to the widening sea to the south, open to the west winds and the Small Isles beyond.</p>
<p>• The Cuillin Ridge as a landmark throughout the northwest</p>	
<p>Rising as a jagged ridge, the Black Cuillin presents a rocky crown to the Isle of Skye, providing both a focus for the island and also a landmark throughout much of northwest Scotland.</p>	<p>The Cuillin Ridge looks formidable from a distance, with its jagged, serrated edge. It can be seen from many places on the island, e.g. from Portree Bay. It is also visible from many parts of the west coast, from as far afield as Sutherland, Ardnamurchan and the Long Island.</p>
<p>• The ever-changing weather</p>	
<p>Sometimes the Cuillins are lost in the cloud and rain, to suddenly appear through a rent in the mist. At other times they are shimmering in all their glory above a mirror-calm sea. The colour and light on the mountains is rarely the same from day-to-day or even hour to hour.</p>	<p>The continuously changing wind, sun, cloud, mist, rain and snow are a key aspect of these mountains.</p>

• **A place of inspiration**

The Cuillin landscape has long been an inspiration for folklore, story tellers, writers, poets, artists and musicians.

Loch Coruisk, surrounded by towering walls of dark gabbro, the walls reflected in the dark water of the loch, inspired the painter Turner, and was called '*That Dread Lake*' by Sir Walter Scott in his poem *The Lord of the Isles*.

The name Cuillin is derived from Celtic mythology, where Cuchullin, hero of Ulster, learned the art of archery from Sgathach – a formidable female warrior that lived in these hills.

The Cuillin Hills and Loch Coruisk provide a highly enclosed high-walled amphitheatre.

'Rarely human eye has known
A scene so stern as that dread lake
With its dark ledge of barren stone
Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
Have rent a strange a shattered way
Through rude bosom of the hill;
And that naked precipice
Sable ravine and dark abyss.'

Extract from Sir Walter Scott's poem *Lord of the Isles* (1815)

It inspired J.M.W Turner, with his dramatic painting of Loch Coruisk (1831), and many others including Sorley MacLean with his epic poem *The Cuillin*. More recently it was the setting for the 2007 Gaelic language film *Seachd (The Inaccessible Pinnacle)*. The mountains have also inspired musicians such as Runrig with, for example, their haunting song *Nightfall on Marsco*.

• **The most challenging mountains in Scotland**

The narrow and precipitous Cuillin ridge presents the ultimate challenge amongst hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers in the British Isles.

'*The Cuillin are the most challenging mountains in Scotland.*' Scottish Mountaineering Club (1986)

Many hillwalking books have as their concluding chapter the traverse of the seven-mile long Cuillin Ridge, e.g. Poucher (1991), McNeish (1999). Its difficulty is reflected by the fact it was not traversed until 1911, and much later in winter.

Climbers talk about the excellent grip of gabbro and also the futility of using a compass in iron-rich rocks. The ridge has airy crests, precipices, very narrow sharp ridges with long drops, massive buttresses, and a large amount of scrambling; climbing with a rope, is needed to complete it. Names such as the Inaccessible Pinnacle reflect both the severity and challenge to the hillwalker and mountaineer.

Selected Bibliography

Bennet, D., ed. 1986. *The Munros*. Glasgow: Scottish Mountaineering Club.

McNeish, C. 1999. *The Munros*. Lomond Books.

Poucher, W. A. 1991. *The Scottish Peaks*. Constable. Republished in 2005 by Frances Lincoln.

Stanton, C. 1996. Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review No. 71*.

DORNOCH FIRTH NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Highland

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

By comparison with other east coast firths the Dornoch Firth is narrow and sinuous, yet it exhibits within its compass a surprising variety of landscapes. It is enclosed by abrupt rounded granitic hills clad in heather moor and scree, their Gaelic names of cnoc, meall and creag giving the clue to their character. Their lower slopes are frequently wooded, oakwoods being a noticeable feature of the area, but with other deciduous and coniferous species represented in plantations which vary from the policy plantings of Skibo Castle to the pines of the Struie Forest.

Interspersed among these hills and plantations are areas of pasture and arable on the lower alluvial lands, with whin and broom a common feature in the hedgerows and on the sandy links of the outer firth. But above all it is the firth itself, with its innumerable bays, sands, flats, shallows and promontories which presents a constantly changing scene as much with the coming and going of the tide as with the changing scene afforded by passage round its shores.

Migdale with its loch expresses an inland variation of the same theme and has been included for the complement it makes to the firth, the last undeveloped estuary of its kind on the east coast.

The Special Qualities of the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area

- The contrast between the enclosed west and the expansive east
- Inhabited surrounds within a wilder backdrop of hills and moors
- A wide diversity of woodland cover
- A rich variety of alluvial lands, dunes and links
- The ever-changing firth
- The tranquillity of an undeveloped coastline
- Migdale, a microcosm of the wider Dornoch Firth

Special quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The contrast between the enclosed west and the expansive east</i> 	
<p>The Dornoch Firth exhibits a surprising variety of landscapes, with dramatic contrasts to east and west.</p> <p>To the east there is expansiveness where offshore views lead out to sea and a limitless horizon.</p> <p>To the west there is a sinuous firth and a sense of enclosure, where inland views are bounded by opposing shores against a backcloth of hills.</p>	<p>The NSA unfurls from the narrow pinch-point of Bonar Bridge seawards to the open firth. It is enclosed to the north, west and south by a range of different landscapes. Their juxtaposition creates a remarkably complex interplay of scenery. The contrasts east and west are brought to the fore when crossing the A9 road bridge.</p> <p>Curving, sinuous, undulating natural forms of the shoreline and hills are interwoven, and often interlocking. These forms are set within a broad landscape extending the length of the firth, which tends to be horizontally structured. The landforms and land use appear as layers in the landscape: the rolling, rounded hills provide the backcloth; then there are the lower hill slopes; then the alluvial flats; the firth shoreline, and finally the firth itself.</p> <p>An expansive feel, looking over water to the distant, blue hills, can also be had by looking into the NSA from, for example, Tarbert Ness.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inhabited surrounds within a wilder backdrop of hills and moors</i> 	
<p>The inner firth wends its way inland until the hills and moors sweep round to provide an undulating backdrop to the green and fertile alluvial lands. This horizon of wilder hills contrasts markedly with the mosaic of farms and woods on the coastal flats – which comes across as an ordered, long-inhabited land.</p>	<p>The Firth is enclosed by hills. To the south, the rounded hills of Ross-shire form an extensive sweep from east to west; their rolling, open slopes convey a sense of grandeur, enclosing views southwards from the northern shores.</p> <p>Passage through the hills is confined to the base of the hill slopes at coastal level, or to the natural road-crossing (B8176) at The Struie. As this road leaves the confines of the hills at Cadha Mòr (Great, Narrow Pass), a broad panorama opens out across the Firth.</p>

	<p>To the north, the moorland hills are lower, more sloping and can be less pronounced in form. The higher peaks tend to be rocky. An area of sweeping moorland forms a distinctive backdrop to Migdale's settlement and character.</p> <p>Although the hills and moors possess a long history of land use, they come across as wilder and less intensively managed than the alluvial lowlands.</p>
<p>• A wide diversity of woodland cover</p>	
<p>The interplay of open ground, trees and woods results in a landscape mosaic of great beauty. In places, dark forests of conifers clothe the hillsides, in others lighter, more rounded, broadleaved woodland reaches the shore. On farmland the fields are often interspersed with small copses or lines of boundary trees, whilst policy plantings adorn the Skibo Estate. This rich variety of vertical form and texture complements the horizontals of the firth itself.</p>	<p>The lower slopes of the Ross-shire rounded hills have blocks, ribbons and belts of forestry plantation, with some deciduous planting. Larger pine woodlands of Struie Wood alternate with smaller copses in the vicinity of estate farms along the coastal route. Together with the small farm holdings located at the forest edge, this results in a complex mosaic.</p> <p>In comparison, the northern shore oakwoods on the lower slopes and lower rolling hills are distinctive. They contrast with the conifers which are prominent on the promontories which project into the firth. The variety of tree-cover on this side includes the extensive policy planting of Skibo Castle, and Skibo estate planting which extends far beyond the parkland policies into Creich.</p> <p>The mosaic-like quality of the landscape is emphasised by the relationship of the planting and promontories. Some promontories projecting into the firth are accessible; others appear cut off by planting including the prominent Dun Creich. The latter forms a strong focal point on the north firth shore.</p>
<p>• A rich variety of alluvial lands, dunes and links</p>	
<p>The low ground of the coastal flats shows endless variety and contrast, whether sandy links or well-managed farmland; level saltmarsh or undulating sand dunes; policy woodland or thickets of whin and broom.</p>	<p>Examples of different landscape types are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Skibo policies and farmland, originally forming part of the 13th century Bishop of Caithness and Sutherland's estate. Despite changes of ownership the estate has enjoyed long periods of stability (1560-1744; 1786-1866; 1900-46) with structured land management and agricultural improvements forming a major scenic component. • The rich alluvial coastal flats form another aspect of land management and settlement, sheltered at firth level and, in places incorporating distinctive geological and fluvial landforms. • The extensive dune systems and sandy

	<p>links of the outer firth are distinctive. Their characters are complex and varied with different types of naturally occurring formations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of whin and broom occur throughout the firth shores. Some areas can be extensive, forming thick dense banks and thickets. Although these areas can invade important habitat and pasture, they do add visual diversity.
<p>• <i>The ever-changing firth</i></p>	
<p>Above all it is the firth itself, with its innumerable bays, sands, flats, shallows and promontories which presents a constantly changing scene – a dynamic foreground to the landscape of farms and hills beyond.</p> <p>Dynamism comes from the ebb and flow of the tides, the shifting of sediments, the clouds scurrying above, the waves below, and flocks of birds feeding or flying along the shore.</p> <p>The reflections off the water and the wet sands, together with wide-open skies, show dramatic changes in colour and texture on a daily and seasonal basis, with light itself the determining factor in the experience.</p>	<p>In contrast to the surrounding landscape, natural forces rather than human influences are dominant within the tidal waters.</p> <p>The firth possesses many glacial and estuarine landforms. These are valued and recognised by specialists but appreciated and enjoyed by many – both residents and visitors.</p>
<p>• <i>The tranquillity of an undeveloped coastline</i></p>	
<p>The Dornoch Firth lacks any major ports or industry along its shoreline and possesses a rural ambience of great tranquillity.</p>	<p>The firth is not without its obvious structures. Infrastructure includes the railway along the south side, the A9 crossing, with its long bridge, and the A836 metal bridge at Bonar Bridge. This transport infrastructure offers opportunities for good views of the NSA, whether travelling by train or crossing the bridges, but does not diminish the rural character of the area.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific quality</i></p>	
<p>• <i>Migdale, a microcosm of the wider Dornoch Firth</i></p>	
<p>Migdale, with its loch, agricultural land, woodland, moorland and crag, expresses, an inland variation of the same themes of water, lowland and upland. This diversity in a small area gives Migdale great visual appeal.</p>	<p>Unlike most of the rest of the NSA, the area around Migdale is croftland, with fields generally of a smaller size. Similarities between this area and the wider Dornoch Firth are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The long and linear Migdale Loch, enclosed by prominent ridges and hills.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The low-lying agricultural land at the western end. • A diverse land cover presenting a varied scene, with a mosaic of plantations, croftland, native woodland and other areas of semi-natural vegetation. • The distinctive, prominent, whale-backed form of Migdale Rock (a <i>roche moutonnée</i>) corresponds with Dun Creich - both in form and visually acting as a focal point. • The sweeping moorland on the north shores of the firth act as a hilly backdrop to Migdale loch and crofts. It parallels the backcloth of the higher Ross-shire hills and their relationship with the firth.
--	---

Selected Bibliography

Fletcher, S. 1998. Inner Moray Firth Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.90.*

Gunn, Rev. Adam, and Mackay, John, eds, 1897. *Sutherland and the Reay Country.*

McIlveen, F. 1999. Ross and Cromarty Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No.119.

Mowar, I.R.M. 1981. *Easter Ross 1750-1850: the Double Frontier.* Edinburgh: John. Donald.

Nature Conservancy Council 1973. Dornoch Firth Study. *North West Region Report, No.142.*

Sage, D. 1899. *Memorabilia Domestica: or Parish Life in the North of Scotland.* Reprint of 2nd edition.

Scottish Natural Heritage 2002. *Natural heritage futures: The Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland.*

Stanton, C. 1998. Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.103.*

Strang, T. 1975. *The Northern Highlands, 2nd edition.*

GLEN AFFRIC NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Highland

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Glen Affric is flanked on the north by the highest mountains of the North West Highlands, shapely conical peaks ranged above a long glaciated valley, with steep sides and a broad floor in which are set two great lochs and a river. The lower slopes of the hill are clothed in forest, one of the most beautiful remnants of native Caledonian Pine forest, with a leavening of birches and a sufficiently open canopy to permit the growth of heather and blaeberry.

Glen Affric is often cited as Scotland's loveliest glen. From the rich woodland at the dam to the stark mountains of the upper glen, where all is moor and heather, it displays a fine variety of glen scenery. Fiona Leney, writing of the area in 1974, caught the essence of the place: '... the area maintains a sense of wilderness, less rugged than the remote area of North West Scotland and has a grandeur and classic beauty that is not found in the bleaker lands to the north.'

The Special Qualities of the Glen Affric National Scenic Area

- One of the most beautiful glens in Scotland
- A glen of transition, from dense forest to exposed moorland
- A journey into wildness
- The prominence of water
- A glen for all seasons
- A historic and popular route through the Highlands
- Venerable pine forest
- Beautiful Loch Affric
- The baronial Affric Lodge

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One of the most beautiful glens in Scotland</i> 	
<p>Glen Affric has frequently been described as the most beautiful glen in Scotland, representing the romantic, iconic, image of the Highland landscape. Its appeal arises through a combination of:</p> <p>Dramatic mountains with high corries rising above a narrow glen.</p> <p>Ancient Caledonian forest of beautiful trees and deep heather, grading to open moorland in the west.</p> <p>Lochs with rocky shores, small bays and promontories, occasional beaches and wooded isles.</p> <p>Fast flowing and broad rivers, tumbling burns with falls.</p>	<p><i>'A unique combination of mountains, lochs, rivers and ancient forest.'</i> A. Watson Featherstone(2004)</p> <p>The glen passes through a highland mountainous landscape with extensive ridges, peaks and high corries. Side glens branch off the main glen. Carn Eige (1183m) is the highest mountain north of the Great Glen.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A glen of transition, from dense forest to exposed moorland</i> 	
<p>Travelling westwards, at first the glen is heavily wooded, with stands of pine and birch interspersed with glades of deep heather, but by the time Loch Affric is reached the trees are thinning. Open, exposed moorland and bog soon comes to the fore, with the high and pointed mountains of Kintail providing a spectacular backdrop. At the far end of Glen Affric, three glens open up, each leading deeper into the hills.</p>	<p>Aligned east-west, the glen experiences significant changes in climate and topography along its length. Woodland is dense on the lower slopes around Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin at the east end, consisting of both original native pinewood and plantations. Tree cover starts to decrease westwards once Loch Affric is reached.</p> <p>Heather is common in the east of the NSA, on the forest floor and the hill slopes, whereas it is rare in the west where wet heath and bog dominate the lower slopes.</p>

	<p>The transition to a wooded landscape previously began along Loch Affric, although this transition in recent years has been heavily modified by extensive native woodland planting to the west of the loch along the lower slopes of the glen.</p>
<p>• <i>A journey into wildness</i></p>	
<p>This long glen leads one further from the inhabited lowlands of the east into the heart of the wild mountains of the west. Travelling westwards gives a strong feeling of leaving civilisation and moving into a harsh environment where nature and natural forces dominate. Roads give way to tracks, which in turn give way to paths. There is often a strong wind funnelling down the upper glen, with the western peaks enveloped in cloud and rain.</p> <p>In contrast, it can at the same time be calm and sheltered amongst the trees of the eastern glen, with the surrounding mountains clearly visible in the sunshine.</p> <p>The general absence of buildings and other obvious man-made features, other than occasional, single-storey cottages, lends a sense of remoteness to the whole length of the glen.</p>	<p>From leaving Cannich and Fasnakyle power station, the landscape becomes remoter, along a single track road past Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin to the car park at the road end. Then one continues on along the forest track (south side), or footpath (north side), to the head of Loch Affric and on to the old settlement of Athnamulloch and Strawberry Cottage Bothy. Here it feels wild and remote, reinforced as one passes the isolated Altbeithe Youth Hostel and into the heart of the open mountains, and within one of SNH's a Wild Land Search Areas.</p> <p>In the west the weather is wetter and the ground rockier with few trees in evidence. The landscape feels open, harsh and exposed.</p> <p>Recent plantations in fenced enclosures on the lower slopes along the length of the NSA have resulted in many fences now being visible, although the plan is to remove these in the long-term. It should be noted that the signs of previous human settlement illustrate that the glen was once less wild, with a long history of summer grazing and sheep farming and timber extraction.</p>
<p>• <i>The prominence of water</i></p>	
<p>In the east the valley floor is filled by Lochs Affric and Beinn a'Mheadhoin, in the west the glens contain fast-flowing rivers with their pools and riffles. Numerous rocky burns tumble down the mountainsides from the high corries.</p> <p>The often-present rain, drizzle, mist or snow adds another dimension, emphasising the prominence of water within this landscape.</p>	<p>The glen contains two linear lochs in the east, Loch Affric and Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin, characterised by rocky shores, occasional beaches, isles and wooded sides, and a 'bay and promontory' topography.</p> <p>The River Affric, which connects the lochs, is broad and meandering in the west, in contrast to the steep and rocky burns such as Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh that fall off the mountains.</p>
<p>• <i>A glen for all seasons</i></p>	
<p>The tranquillity of the lochs and woods, and the wildness of the surrounding mountains have drawn visitors to the area since Victorian times. The continual</p>	<p>A Forestry Commission leaflet (2008) describes the eastern glen as the '<i>glen of a thousand whispers, the glen of alluring of aromas, the glen of countless colours.</i>'</p>

<p>changes in mood and colour provide a feast of sensory experiences throughout the year:</p> <p>The light and airy birchwoods along the road at Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin; the darker pine woods, enlivened by the orange of their bark; the beautiful ancient trees, the horizontals of old pines contrasting with the rounded birch; the purples of the heather, the greens of the blaeberry, the oranges of the bracken in autumn.</p> <p>The wind whipping up the waters of the lochs, or bringing rain down the glen; the mountains reflected in Loch Affric on a beautiful day; distant panoramas of inaccessible mountains; a glimpse of a deer, the hope of an otter, an eagle soaring overhead; the peace of a landscape where the motor car does not dominate.</p>	<p>The glen is a possible location for background of Landseer's famous painting Monarch of the Glen (1851).</p>
<p>• <i>A historic and popular route through the Highlands</i></p>	
<p>Once a drove road, the glen is still popular with walkers of all descriptions: from those out for a day's stroll, to serious hillwalkers and those wishing to traverse the width of Scotland.</p>	<p>Historically it was a drove route for cattle herdsmen taking the cattle from the highland pastures on the west coast to the east coast livestock markets such as the Muir of Ord or Falkirk. Today most long distance journeys are for recreation, either by hillwalkers for access to the surrounding hills; or as a backpacking route from Kintail through Glen Affric and Strathglass to Beaully, many breaking their walk in the remote Altbeithe Youth Hostel (only accessible on foot).</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• <i>Venerable pine forest</i></p>	
<p>The eastern end of Glen Affric is famous for its stands of ancient Caledonian pine trees, containing as it does the third largest remnant in Scotland.</p> <p>The mature trees, with their horizontal crowns, orange bark and their dark blue-green foliage are particularly beautiful, especially when in small clumps or emerging singly above the heather. They add a sense of timelessness to the dramatic setting of loch and mountain. In places the dark of the pines is enlivened</p>	<p>Glen Affric translates from the Gaelic Gleann Afaraig '<i>the glen of the dappled woodlands</i>', or possibly '<i>the speckled glen</i>' (Forestry Commission 2008). There is great variation in the tree and canopy cover: closed canopy woodlands and forests, including stands of birch, with heather and blaeberry dominated glades; wider spaced trees with a heather and blaeberry ground flora; and isolated 'granny' pines.</p> <p>Much of Glen Affric was bought by the Forestry Commission in 1951, with subsequent pioneering conservation work on the core Caledonian pine forest led by the forester Findlay MacRae. This conservation effort has</p>

<p>by the lighter foliage of the birch.</p>	<p>continued to the present day, with planting of native trees within fenced enclosures now extending to the western march of the NSA and beyond.</p> <p>Although the woods are now managed primarily for conservation, there has been a long history of multi-use in the glen, including timber extraction, sheep farming and deer stalking.</p>
<p>• Beautiful Loch Affric</p>	
<p>Loch Affric is the key to the beauty of this glen. Ancient pine trees, single or in groups, emerge from deep heather to surround the loch, providing a foreground to the dramatic backdrop of Carn Eige and Mam Sodhail. These mountains, with their steep and rocky slopes and burns falling out of the high corries, tower above the water.</p> <p>Views eastward over this long and narrow loch are towards a gentler landscape of rolling hills, westward the eye is led over a sandy beach into a panorama of narrow peaks.</p>	<p>Because it has long been recognised as an iconic loch, it escaped hydro-electric modification. Hence it maintains a natural inflow, outflow and water levels so that, unlike Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin, it never has a wide, unvegetated draw-down zone</p>
<p>• The baronial Affric Lodge</p>	
<p>The baronial Affric Lodge, and its surrounding buildings, brings a sense of human order into the heart of a landscape dominated by nature.</p>	<p>There are few buildings in the NSA, and Affric Lodge, with its associated buildings, surrounded by mature pine, stands out as a focal point. It is located on a small peninsula at the eastern end of Loch Affric and has uninterrupted views towards the mountains of Kintail.</p> <p>It was built in 1864 in the Victorian baronial style as a hunting lodge by the first Lord Tweedmouth. It is still in use as a shooting lodge. Edwin Landseer the landscape painter visited the Glen in the 19th century.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Featherstone, A.W. 2004. Glen Affric: The Return of the wild. *Wild Land News*, **61**. Scottish Wild Land Group.

Forestry Commission Scotland 2003. *Upper Beauly Forest Design Plan*.

Forestry Commission Scotland 2008. *Glen Affric* (leaflet).

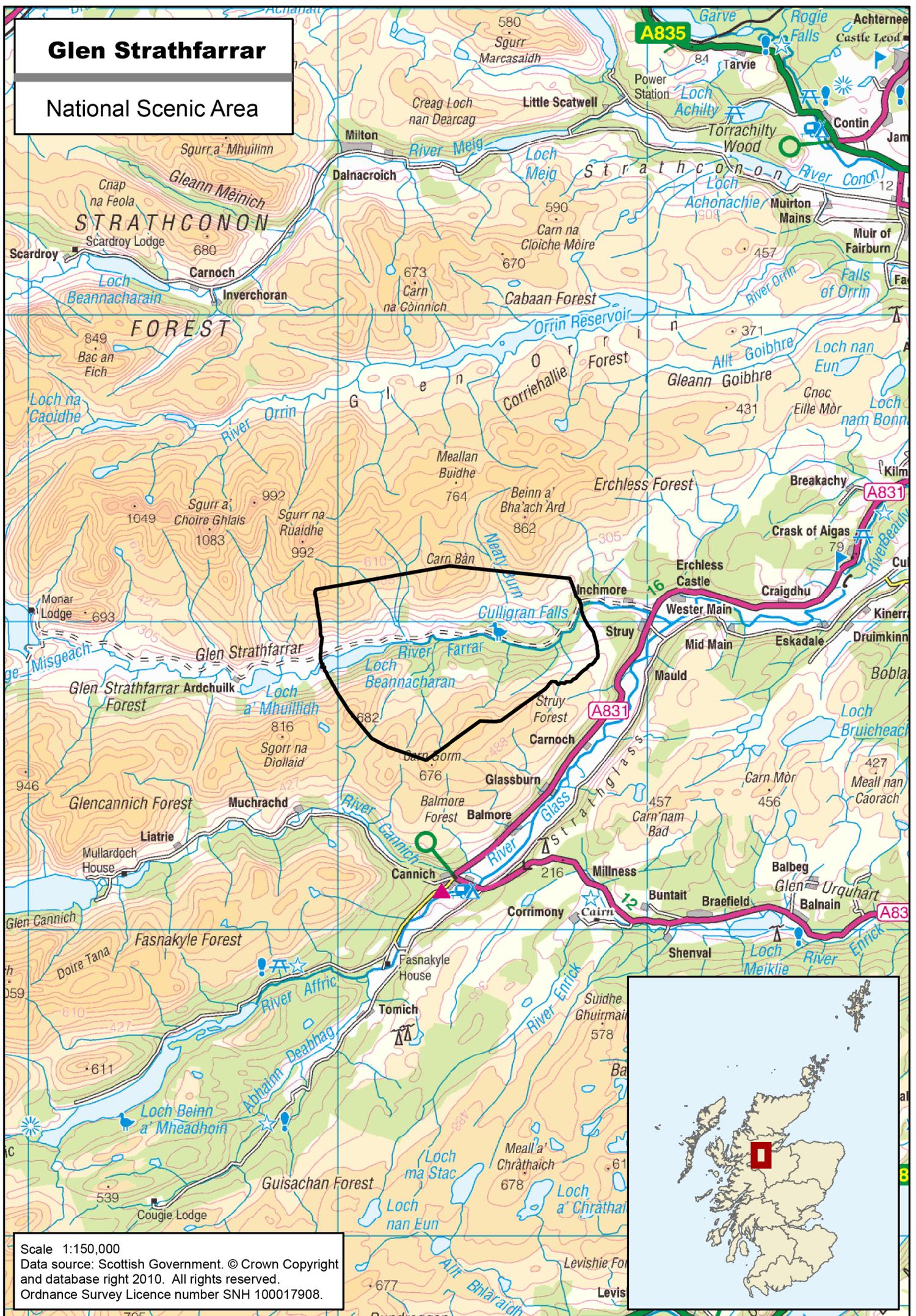
National Trust for Scotland 2006. *Kintail, Falls of Glomach and West Affric, Property Statements 2006-2011..*

Richards, J. 1999. Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 114.*

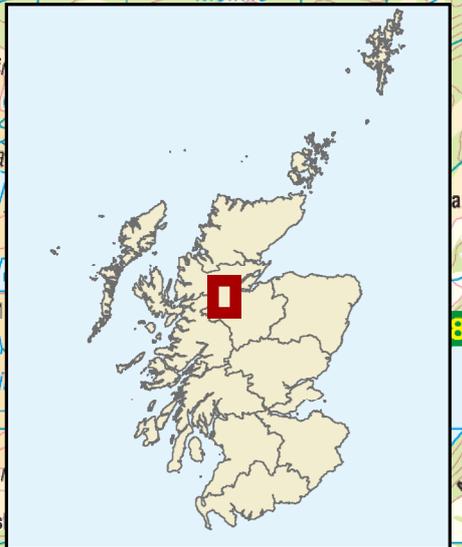
Scottish Natural Heritage (undated). *Glen Affric*, (NNR leaflet).

Glen Strathfarrar

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.



GLEN STRATHFARRAR NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Three great glens feed into Strathglass and the Beaully River: Glen Strathfarrar, Glen Cannich and Glen Affric. Of these the last has already been described. All three are in the form of long deep troughs, studded with lochs, declining eastwards from high mountains and becoming avenues of wooded verdure while still flanked by lofty skylines. In scenic terms, all three have been adversely affected by hydro-electric schemes, Glen Cannich and Glen Strathfarrar more so than Glen Affric.

Neither of these two northern glens attains the excellence of Glen Affric, with the exception of the lower middle portion of Strathfarrar. Here the sinuous steep-sided glen is enhanced by its shining river and extensive natural pine woodland. Loch Beannacharan offers a calm contrast to the river, the rushing waters of which finally plunge over the Culligran Falls into the lower strath.

The Special Qualities of the Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area

- An archetypal Highland glen
- Ancient Caledonian pine forest amidst rocky slopes
- A sinuous, fast-moving river emerging out of a peaceful loch
- The contrasts in colour, light and views
- A sense of peace and tranquillity

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An archetypal Highland glen</i> 	
<p>This is an inspiring and invigorating landscape where many of the features considered as romantic and iconic of the Highlands are found within a small area: distant views of snow-capped mountains; rocky ridges and heather-clad slopes; a rock-bound loch and glen; a rushing river; dark Caledonian pinewoods and beautiful individual trees – and all without obvious intrusion of modern artefacts.</p>	<p>The NSA includes the eastern part of a long, linear glen stretching from high mountains in the west, eastwards to Strathglass and gentler hills.</p> <p>A combination of elements – river, a steep-sided glen, Caledonian forest reaching up the ridges to the skyline – gives an enclosed but wild and remote feel to the lower and middle glen (the NSA). This sense of enclosure in turn contrasts with Loch Beannacharan where the landscape opens to views of distant mountain peaks.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ancient Caledonian pine forest amidst rocky slopes</i> 	
<p>Ancient forests clothe the lower slopes of this narrow, rocky glen. Dark green pine woods are interspersed with stands of the lighter birch, and by glades of heather, bracken and grass. Deer can sometimes be glimpsed amongst the trees.</p> <p>Scattered, mature pine trees hold the eye as they venture far up the sides of the glen, rising out of the rocks and heather. With their great size, orange bark, wide, spreading branches and their horizontal crowns, they add to the air of antiquity and timelessness of this glen.</p>	<p>There are extensive fragments of Caledonian forest. Although dominated by Scots pine, they include stands of birch and oak. Open areas and glades are variously dominated by heather, blaeberry, bracken or acid grassland.</p> <p>In addition there are single or small groups of mature trees, especially Scots pine ('granny' pines); some are distant from the main forest blocks and are a prominent landscape feature where they arise out of the rocks and heather.</p> <p>There has been management of this forest both in the past and in modern times. Recent management has been to encourage regeneration, particularly through fenced exclosures to exclude deer; these are not prominent and the woods have a natural appearance.</p> <p>Although well camouflaged in the heather, red deer are often visible, the stags sometimes seen standing proud on the promontories.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A sinuous, fast-moving river emerging out of a peaceful loch</i> 	
<p>The River Farrar, a winding and sinuous river, full of interest and variety, roars down the glen, finally plunging over the Culligran Falls into the lower strath.</p> <p>At the western end of the NSA, the still waters of Loch Beannacharan offer a tranquil contrast.</p>	<p>Areas of rapids, riffles, falls and pools, a rocky river bed with boulders, rocky banks and cliffs create a constantly changing scene.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The contrasts in colour, light and views</i> 	
<p>Pattern and colour vary constantly as one moves through the glen, brought about by the interplay of forest, clearing, river, loch and mountain.</p> <p>Views vary from the intimate to the extensive: one minute a rock-bound river framed by a canopy of trees, the next a distant, snow-bound peak reflected in the calm waters of a loch.</p>	<p>The wide variety of visual experience possible here relates to the mosaic of landscape elements found along the glen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interplay of the evergreen canopy of the pine and the fox-brown colours of the mature pine bark. • The orange, browns and purples of bracken and heather. • The muted greens of grassland clearings. • The deciduous trees with their seasonal changes. • The ever-changing light on the loch, and on the river, depending on its speed. • The emerging view of distant peaks travelling up the glen or as the clouds break apart.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A sense of peace and tranquillity</i> 	
<p>With its extensive native woodland and moorland, its flowing river, its surrounding hills and general absence of artefacts, the glen has a natural and peaceful feel, an oasis from the modern world.</p>	<p>Although possessing an undeveloped feel, there are isolated estate buildings and houses, and screened works related to hydro-electric schemes (a dam and power station). Evidence of previous use is evident in the shooting estate around Benachran Lodge, abandoned farmsteads on the lochside, and the prehistoric site of Culligran Dun. A single-track, tarred road and power lines traverse the length of the NSA.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Richards, J. 1999. Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 114*.

Scottish Natural Heritage 1995. *Glen Strathfarrar*. National Nature Reserve booklet [note the glen is no longer an NNR].

Thomson, I. 1983. *Isolation Shepherd*. Inverness: Bidean Books.

KINTAIL NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Highland

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Three long mountain ranges terminate around the head of Loch Duich: Beinn Fhada, the Five Sisters of Kintail and the Cluanie Forest which culminates in the Saddle. The glens which radiate from Loch Duich between these mountains, which form the watershed of mainland Scotland within a few miles of the western sea, are short, steep-sided and deep. They contain burns or rivers which rush and tumble through waterfalls and pools girt with alder to flow through pastures in the lower glens, while high corries and ridges contain their upper reaches.

It is the grandeur of the mountains that makes the scenery here so magnificent. Glen Shiel is dominated by the pinnacles of the Saddle and the spearlike cone of Faochag. The Five Sisters of Kintail, when viewed from Mam Ratagan, Letterfearn or Carr Brae, are supremely elegant peaks, forming a graceful and imposing background at the head of Loch Duich. The serrated ridge of massive Beinn Fhada towers over Glen Lichd and Glen Choinneachan. W. H. Murray (1962) has written: 'In Kintail nothing lacks; all things culminate. It is the epitome of the West Highland scene.'

The Special Qualities of the Kintail National Scenic Area

- Drama epitomising the West Highland scene
- Renowned mountain ranges composed of identifiable, well-known peaks
- Human settlement and activity circumscribed and dwarfed by towering hills
- A remote and wild interior
- The rich heritage of historic sites
- An inland coast
- A natural, theatrical stage

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Drama epitomising the West Highland scene</i> 	
<p>The dramatic Kintail landscape encapsulates the West Highlands. Magnificent mountain scenery is composed of stately peaks sweeping up steeply from lochs and glens. Waterfalls descend from high corries and mountain ridges, adding a background sound of thunderous, roaring water and movement to the monumentally steep and still mountains.</p> <p>Glens, glacially formed and deeply U-shaped, cut through the mountains and contain burns or rivers that rush and tumble over rapids and falls into pools girt with alder. Loch Duich, a deep and narrow sea loch, leads far inland, the steep hills and mountains appearing to rise almost directly from the water.</p> <p>Human settlement is sparse and dispersed, appearing incidental within a landscape sculpted by nature.</p>	<p><i>'In Kintail nothing lacks; all things culminate. It is the epitome of the West Highland scene.'</i> W H Murray (1962)</p> <p><i>'Emotive wild landscape of magnificent West Highland scenery.'</i> NTS Property Statement (2006)</p> <p>The Falls of Glomach, one of the highest waterfalls in Britain, lies in a remote area of the NSA, accessible only on foot; numerous other waterfalls are found throughout the area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Renowned mountain ranges composed of identifiable, well-known peaks</i> 	
<p>In Kintail the highest, most distinctive peaks combine with the narrowness and most distinctive of the glens to form identifiable and memorable scenic images. Those readily identifiable and widely renowned as landmarks are:</p> <p>The Five Sisters of Kintail – a group of</p>	<p>Three long mountain ranges terminate around the head of Loch Duich: the Five Sisters of Kintail, the Cluanie Forest which culminates in the Saddle, and Beinn Fhada.</p> <p>The Five Sisters of Kintail, when viewed from Mam Ratagan, Letterfearn or Carr Brae, are supremely elegant peaks, forming a graceful and imposing background at the head of Loch Duich. Legend relates that two Irish</p>

<p>supremely elegant, conical peaks standing north of Glen Shiel and best appreciated from the slopes of hills around Loch Duich.</p> <p>The spear-like cone of Faochag and the pinnacles of The Saddle that dominate the southern slopes of Glen Shiel.</p> <p>The serrated ridge of massive Beinn Fhada (Beinn Attow) that towers over Glen Lichd and Glen Chòinneachain.</p>	<p>Princes washed ashore during a storm, fell in love with two of the seven daughters of the King of Kintail. Having promised to send their five brothers for the remaining sisters, the Princes married the two youngest Princesses and returned to Ireland. The five sisters waited in vain, and eventually asked the Grey Magician of Coire Dhunnaid to extend their vigil beyond life itself, whereupon he turned them into mountains.</p> <p>These landmarks are the subject of illustrations, drawings, landscape paintings and photographs. They have long been portrayed, from the 'discovery of the Highlands' in the 17th century to the present day.</p>
<p>• Human settlement and activity circumscribed and dwarfed by towering hills</p>	
<p>The scale of human activity appears dwarfed by these ever-present mountains. Steep and precipitous slopes strongly circumscribe the possibility of human settlement, which is limited to the fertile coastal fringe and the lower glens in the west. The pattern is of small-scale crofting, with forestry on many of the lower slopes and fish-farming on the loch.</p> <p>Narrow glens penetrate the mountain core, through which once-important drove roads gave access to the markets and towns of the east.</p>	<p>The area suffered from the Highland Clearances, with the cleared areas planted with trees or converted to sheep grazing. The township of Letterfearn, on the south shores of Loch Duich, is the survivor of an early 19th century clearance event, and stands out for that reason.</p> <p>Before the rise of motor transport the glens provided a web of communication for passage on foot and by packhorse. Many were drove roads like Glen Lichd which was used, in the 18th and 19th centuries, to drive cattle from the Isle of Skye to the rail routes at Beaully and Muir of Ord. Glen Shiel, a major route through to Inverness and Spean Bridge, became the modern trunk road (A87).</p>
<p>• A remote and wild interior</p>	
<p>Moving inland from Loch Duich, the landscape and its atmosphere gradually shifts from being active and populated to being remote and wild. As the mountain fastnesses are penetrated, buildings and settlement are left behind and a sense of wildness comes to the fore.</p> <p>A feeling of seclusion is engendered by narrow and winding glens that constrain the view and hide both the nearby summits and the distant settlements.</p> <p>Access is often only possible on foot, following the well-maintained paths through the glens and upward to the summits. However the wildness and drama of the mountain core can also be</p>	<p>The best way of experiencing the interior of the NSA is on foot, particularly following the footpath up Glen Lichd and on to Glen Affric, or round to the Falls of Glomach. And the best way of experiencing how Loch Duich breaks through mountain ranges to reach far inland, is by boat.</p> <p>The Kintail ranges attract large numbers of mountaineers and hill walkers. The eastern half of the NSA and the extreme southwest are included within an SNH Wild Land Search Areas.</p>

<p>experienced by motorists as they travel the main road through narrow Glen Shiel.</p>	
<p>• The rich heritage of historic sites</p>	
<p>In the days when the main highway was the sea, the area had significant strategic importance. This is shown by the presence of Eilean Donan Castle, standing lone sentinel on its rocky islet at the meeting point of three sea lochs – Lochs Long, Duich and Alsh. It is a fortress of solid stone and formidable defences, despite its dreamlike, island setting amidst silent, tree-clad hills and a rugged mountain backdrop. With its arched bridge, it is the classic, romantic picture of a Scottish castle.</p> <p>Further inland can be found the site of the Battle Glen Shiel which dates from the 1719 Jacobite uprising. This is a rare survival of a site still containing visible remains of defensive constructions.</p> <p>The nearby Prince’s Stone marks where Prince Charles Stuart and his companions sheltered after the Battle of Culloden, which signalled the end of the Jacobite uprisings.</p> <p>Considerable evidence of settlement over some five millennia can be observed on the lower ground of this largely open landscape, with abandoned cultural remains becoming more common near the coast. Remains include turf buildings and summer shielings, attesting to pre-clearance, transhumance.</p>	<p>Eilean Donan castle is located at what was once a strategically important location. It originated as a vitrified fort of the early historic period, and the island is said to be the place where St Donan lived (died 618AD). It was restored from a ruin in the 20th century.</p> <p>The Battle of Glen Shiel took place on 10 June 1719 between the Hanoverian army and the Jacobites. Its course and outcome were strongly related to the inhospitable terrain, and saw the Jacobites defeated. The action of Spanish troops, amounting to some 300 men in support of the Jacobite cause, are commemorated in the following place-names:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coire nan Spainteach - Corrie of the Spaniards, where two hundred Jacobites were captured. • Sgurr nan Spainteach. • Bealach nan Spainteach. <p>Tilleman’s painting of the battle depicts it from the government position. Based on eye-witness accounts and contemporary battle plans, it shows an accurate representation of the Glen Shiel landscape.</p> <p>On 27th July 1746, after Culloden Bonnie Prince Charlie and his companions passed through Kintail, eluding the Redcoats. They rested for a day in Glen Shiel, on the north side of the river, in the shelter of a great rock boulder one mile north of Achnangart.</p>
<p>• An inland coast</p>	
<p>Views are of an inland sea, the open ocean being far distant and unseen. However, Loch Duich, with its surrounding ring of houses and crofts, reaches far inland, bringing the sea into the heart of the hills: the movement of water within tidal currents, the sound of breaking waves, stony beaches and mudflats, sea birds and mammals, the orange of seaweed on the shore, and the</p>	<p><i>‘Although there are a few isolated areas within the Lochalsh interior which have a predominantly inland character, the penetration of the sea into much of this district results in the dominance of coastal landscape characteristics...’</i> Stanton (1996)</p> <p>A distinctive feature of the shoreline at the extreme east end at low tide is the orange seaweed that sits unattached on the shore. It is a variant of the common</p>

dampness and smell of the salty sea air.	knotted wrack (<i>Ascophyllum nodosum</i> ecad <i>mackaii</i>).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A natural, theatrical stage 	
<p>Above all, Kintail's scenery is dynamic. It experiences a barrage of westerly Atlantic weather systems, bringing plentiful wind, rain and cloud. Weather can be highly changeable and extremely localised, the bottom of a glen, for example, being calm and sheltered, while there is a raging gale on the summits; or the coast can be dry and sunny, with the mountains inland obscured by cloud and rain.</p> <p>This changeability brings continual drama. A shaft of sunlight can suddenly break through after a morning of greyness and rain. A hidden summit can be revealed briefly as the clouds scud past. The sea can be a mirror calm one minute, and then whipped up as a squall passes. The mountains can gain an alpenglow of gold as the sun sets following a cloudless winter's day.</p>	<p>The area possesses a maritime climate, with the mountains causing significant orographic precipitation. Calm, sunny conditions are the exception rather than the norm.</p> <p>In low cloud, visual emphasis rests on the foreground and smaller-scale features; but there is an awareness of a higher land, creating a sense of anticipation and mystery. In the past, geological surveyors referred to the 'Kintail Curtain', a curtain of rain often present over the watershed but not elsewhere.</p> <p>In clear conditions, this higher land is revealed. It is only when human-scale elements can be seen in relation to the peaks that their full vertical scale can be registered, with their height and steep slopes dwarfing human activity and settlement.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Dickson, W. K. 1895. The Jacobite attempt of 1719. *Scottish Historical Society*, **19**, pp. xlvii-liv.

Galbraith, J. J. 1928. The Battle of Glenshiel. Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, **34**, pp. 280-313

Murray, W. H. 1962. *Highland Landscape*. A survey commissioned for the National Trust for Scotland.

National Galleries of Scotland 1719. *The Battle of Glenshiel*. Peter Tillemans (c 1684 - 1734) Accession no. PG 2635.

National Trust for Scotland 2006. *Kintail Property Statement*.

Stanton, C. 1996. Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review*, No.71.

Taylor, I. C. 1965. The Affair in Glenshiel. *Scotland's Magazine*, November 1965, pp. 104-114.

Whittow, J.B. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

www.ambaile.org.uk (accessed October 2008)

www.ainmisait.co.uk/english/history.html (accessed October 2008)

www.clan-macrae.org.uk (accessed October 2008)

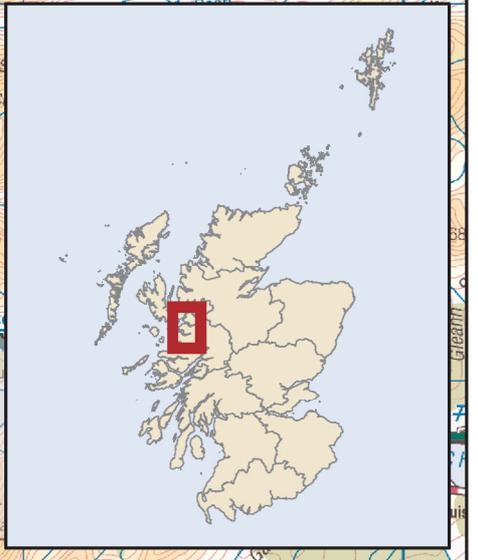
www.sannabay.co.uk/castle/castle2.htm (accessed October 2008)

Knoydart

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:200,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.



KNOYDART NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Highland

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The outstanding scenic value of this area derives from the penetration by sea lochs deep into remote and rugged mountain country that has experienced intense glaciation. The extensive coastline contributes significantly to the character of the area, as do the deep glens carved between high graceful peaks, with the intervening ground broken by rocky crags.

Loch Nevis and Loch Houran are archetypal western sea lochs, wide outer lochs separated by narrows from narrow inner lochs. Both penetrate the mountain mass but they differ in character. Loch Houran is reminiscent of a Norwegian fjord, especially in its sombre inner reach, while Loch Nevis is lighter and more open, thanks to the lower hills on its southern flank. The bays of Loch Nevis add interest to the southern shore of Knoydart, but equally important are the soaring peaks like Sgurr na Ciche which ring the head of the loch. Loch Houran is entrenched between steeper and more massive mountains, Beinn Sgritheall to the north, and Ladhar Bheinn with its corries to the south. Looking west from both lochs, and from the intervening coast of Knoydart, there are magnificent views of Skye and the Small Isles.

From coastal features of elevated cliff lines and terraces, the deep glens of Knoydart run inland, often with stepped long profiles, so that broad marshy flats or lichens alternate with steep wooded gorges. Despite the roughness of the ground, the hills are shapely and well defined, the peaks almost bare of vegetation, while the slopes carry bracken, grass and sedge, the more precipitous parts often wooded with birch, ash and oak. It is one of the most remote inhabited parts of Scotland. This remoteness, together with its extreme ruggedness and fine coastline and sea-lochs, make the Rough Bounds of Knoydart one of the wildest and most beautiful parts of mainland Scotland.

The Special Qualities of the Knoydart National Scenic Area

- One of the remotest places on mainland Britain
- One of Scotland's last great wild areas
- Some of the grandest coastal and mountain scenery on the west coast
- The majesty and extent of the mountains experienced from sea level
- Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, dramatic but contrasting sea lochs
- Views across to the Inner Hebrides
- An exemplar of a previously glaciated landscape

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One of the remotest places on mainland Britain</i> 	
<p><i>'There is no part of our dominions so remote.'</i> Pennant (1772) on Loch Hourn</p> <p>This is a remote, inaccessible, far distant place: a place on the horizon, almost beyond reach. The Knoydart peninsula is the last major area on the mainland not to be connected to the road network: roads reach only to the periphery, with entry to the deep interior only possible by ferry or a long walk-in.</p> <p>Human activity and influence, confined to the coastal strip, feels small and insignificant and vast areas remain uninhabited. However, traces of former settlement do indicate a long history of the comings and goings of people in this harsh environment.</p> <p>The three main settlements exist as small pockets of habitation, nestling within a wider natural landscape of mountain and sea. Arnisdale and Kinloch Hourn are found at the end of long, winding single track roads, and Inverie, reached by ferry, has an island feel. Isolated houses scattered along the coast represent the only other signs of human occupation in this otherwise uninhabited landscape.</p>	<p>Traditionally in Gaelic the area of Moidart, Arisaig, Morar and Knoydart was known as the Rough Bounds or <i>Garbh-Chriochan</i>. Hence Knoydart lies at the northern end of the Rough Bounds.</p> <p>There is no road access to the Knoydart Peninsula itself: Inverie is only accessible by a 16 mile hike on foot or by passenger ferry from Mallaig. Barrisdale on the north side of Knoydart is either a long walk from Kinloch Hourn or a ferry from Arnisdale. The Old Forge pub at Inverie markets itself as the remotest pub in Britain. There are also isolated houses around the coast, accessible by footpath or boat</p> <p>Knoydart is frequently viewed from a distance, such as the view from the Glen Garry viewpoint, from Mallaig, or Arnisdale; from Armadale on Skye; or from the Small Isles. Sgurr na Ciche is a distinctive, inaccessible, pointed mountain visible in the distance from many locations; and the distant, looming mass of Beinn Sgritheall dominates the view from Sleat.</p> <p>Although particularly remote nowadays, this was not so much the case in the past when sea travel was the main form of transport in the west Highlands.</p>

<p>The sea was for long the main highway in western Scotland and this still holds true for Knoydart today. It is a landscape suited to travel by boat or foot and is not influenced by the needs of the motor car.</p>	
<p>• <i>One of Scotland's last great wild areas</i></p>	
<p>Knoydart is often seen as one of the last, great wild areas of Scotland. It is a majestic, mountainous peninsula between two dramatic sea lochs, and large tracts are isolated, inaccessible and exposed to the elements. There is extensive terrain of rough, rugged, harsh, bare rock, cliff and scree.</p> <p>The landscape is clothed with a natural vegetation of open moorland, and in many places native woodland clings to the lower and steeper slopes.</p> <p>The combination of wildness, naturalness and remoteness is a major draw to those seeking an experience of wilderness.</p>	<p>Extensive areas are unpopulated and are of harsh terrain, and the land cover has a high degree of naturalness. It should be noted, though, that the human population from many areas was cleared in the 1850s, with much of the settlement infrastructure destroyed to make way for sheep farming. The remains of cleared settlements are scattered around the coast and within the inland glens.</p> <p>Ancient oakwoods occur on the lower slopes of Beinn Sgritheall, and remnant Caledonian pinewoods are present around Barrisdale. Birchwoods are extensive along the north shore of inner Loch Hourn, and scattered elsewhere on steep coastal slopes and glen sides. Commercial forestry plantations occur in the Inverie area and at the north west end of Loch Hourn. The Inverie woodlands are being restructured into native woodland by the Knoydart Forest Trust.</p> <p>Much of the eastern half the Knoydart NSA is an SNH Wild Land Search Area.</p>
<p>• <i>Some of the grandest coastal and mountain scenery on the west coast</i></p>	
<p>Containing high, rocky mountains over 1000m tall, dramatic cliffs, narrow, steep-sided and winding glens, fast-flowing rivers, tumbling burns and tongues of the sea bringing the coast far inland, the area epitomises the West Highland mountain landscape.</p>	<p>The area contains many fine craggy mountains, peaks, ridges and corries that arise from rocky moorland. The fjord-like sea lochs of Loch Nevis and Loch Hourn extend far inland and isolate the Knoydart peninsula.</p> <p>There are eight Munros within the NSA, the highest being the narrow, pointed ridge of Sgurr na Ciche (1040m) and the more massive Ladhar Bheinn (1019m). The mountain ridges are separated by deep, flat-bottomed glens.</p> <p>The coastline consists of rocky shores and promontories, with isolated bays, beaches and small isles.</p>
<p>• <i>The majesty and extent of the mountains experienced from sea level</i></p>	
<p>Whether viewed from the small settlements, from a boat, or from the flat-bottomed glens, the full majesty of the mountains can be experienced from sea level. There are no foothills or obscuring</p>	<p>Unlike many areas of the Highlands, the full scale height of the mountain landscape can be experienced from sea level: from hard-up against the fjord-like loch sides at Kinloch Hourn; from Eilean Chioninich across the remote Barrisdale Bay to Ladhar Bheinn; from</p>

<p>views to conceal the true height of the summits.</p> <p>Additionally, a boat trip along the length the sea lochs, or the long walks needed to reach the area, emphasises the scale and extent of this mountain fastness.</p>	<p>the old fishing huts on the remote shores of Corran; or from the ferry to Inverie looking up Loch Nevis.</p>
<p>• Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, dramatic but contrasting sea lochs</p>	
<p>Inner Loch Hourn, remote, narrow and enclosed by steep-sided hills, is perhaps the most fjord-like of any sea loch in Scotland. With its often sombre and gloomy atmosphere, and the wind funnelling down its length, it perhaps deserves a name given to it, 'Loch of Hell', particularly in winter when the low sun finds it hard to enter.</p> <p>The loch has a remarkably similar morphology to Loch Nevis, both taking the sea far inland and both curving through narrows to a wider outer loch. However, in contrast, Loch Nevis is more open and spacious, perhaps explaining why it has been called 'Loch of Heaven.'</p> <p>Hence the Knoydart peninsula has been described as 'between heaven and hell.'</p>	<p>Both offer dramatic, fjord-like sea loch landscapes, with rocky shores, dramatic, steep slopes with mountains above, and occasional bays and beaches.</p> <p>It has been said the name Loch Hourn derives from <i>Loch Iutharn</i>, Loch of Hell (but although the Celtic Hell was a cold dark place, this derivation is disputed). The loch is the more enclosed of the two, especially the inner loch, with a much steeper coastline and higher hills above both shores. Some parts do not receive direct sunlight for five months in winter, which creates a sombre, austere feeling.</p> <p>It has been said that the name Loch Nevis derives from <i>Loch Néimh</i>, Loch of Heaven (although this is also disputed). This loch is the more expansive in aspect, with open bays on south facing shores. The hills on the south shore are gentler and less high, allowing greater winter sun.</p>
<p>• Views across to the Inner Hebrides</p>	
<p>From many parts of the NSA there are grand views across the Sound of Sleat to Skye and its Cuillins, to Rum and its Cuillins, and to the distinctive profile of the Island of Eigg.</p>	
<p>• An exemplar of a previously glaciated landscape</p>	
<p>The rugged landscape vividly illustrates many features of glaciation, from narrow mountain ridges, corries and hanging valleys, to steep-sided U-shaped glens and sea lochs.</p>	<p>The underlying geology consists of hard, metamorphic rocks resistant to erosion, mainly Moinian mica-schist and quartz-feldspar granulite, with Lewisian gneiss on northwest Loch Hourn.</p> <p>This results in the ancient, glacial features remaining prominent: over-deepened sea lochs and U-shaped valleys, hanging valleys, corries, arêtes and moraines. Post-glacial raised beaches are also present.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Environmental Resources Management 1998. Lochaber Landscape Character Assessment, *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.97*.

John Muir Trust 2010-14. *Li & Coire Dhorrcail Management Plan*.

Knoydart Foundation 2007. *Land Management Plan 2007*.

Murray, W.H. 1968. *The West Highlands of Scotland*. London: Collins.

Pennant, Thomas 1772. *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 2 vols. Reprinted: Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1998.

Rixson, D. 1999. *Knoydart: A History*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

Stanton, C. 1996. Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 71*.

KYLE OF TONGUE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Ben Hope (927m) and Ben Loyal (764m) are well known as two of the finest mountains in the north of Scotland. Their isolation in the landscape emphasises on the one hand the massive asymmetric cone of Ben Hope which dominates the northern seaboard, and on the other, the stately succession of granite peaks of Ben Loyal which form a compelling skyline at the head of the Kyle of Tongue.

The Kyle of Tongue itself exhibits a constantly changing character with the ebb and flow of the tide, and the varied woodlands and pattern of crofting settlements along its shores add landscape diversity to the scenic relationship it enjoys with the two bens. The coastline at the mouth of the Kyle, with its islands cliffs and indented bays with sandy beaches and crofting settlements, forms a visually related coastal extension to the inner part of the Kyle. This character extends in undiminished quality to the mouth of the Naver in Torrisdale Bay.

The Special Qualities of the Kyle of Tongue National Scenic Area

- An ever-present backdrop of mountains
- The Kyle – a link from an inhabited coast to a wild, moorland
- Scale, from domestic to monumental
- The constantly changing character of the Kyle
- Rich variety of coastal scenery
- Distinct pattern of settlement

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An ever-present backdrop of mountains</i> 	
<p>Ben Hope and Ben Loyal, standing isolated above the open moorland, are well known as two of the finest mountains in the north.</p> <p>Both hills rise above their eponymous lochs and each has its own distinct profile. Ben Hope appears as a large asymmetric cone whereas Ben Loyal, 'The Queen of Scottish Mountains', forms a stately succession of granite peaks.</p> <p>They have a timeless and lofty presence, forming an ever-present backdrop and acting as landmarks over a wide area. They provide the whole locality with a sense of place and symbolise the boundary between the populated coast and the wild and generally uninhabited interior.</p>	<p>Ben Loyal (764m) forms a compelling skyline at the head of the Kyle of Tongue, while Ben Hope (927m) dominates the northern seaboard. These isolated mountains are distinctive and their individual shapes make them easily recognisable.</p> <p>Ben Loyal is known as the 'Queen of Scottish Mountains' for its aesthetically pleasing profile. Its vegetated summit ridge has four prominent, granitic tors, and there are impressive corries on its northwest side.</p> <p>Ben Hope (Hill of the Bay), the most northerly Munro, is asymmetric in shape and generally less complex. Its western slopes form a very steep, forbidding foil to the head of Loch Hope and Strath More. This edge is formed by two tiers of crags, the highest one forming the edge of the main north-south ridge. The east side of the mountain has three fine, remote corries.</p> <p>Although there is a wide variety of landform within the NSA, the mountains are a link that contributes to the coherence of this NSA, even though at times they are shrouded in cloud, or wreathed in mist.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Kyle – a link from an inhabited coast to a wild, moorland</i> 	
<p>Lying between the sea to the north, the mountains to the south, and expansive moorlands to the east and west, the Kyle of Tongue appears as a green, inhabited oasis on the exposed north coast of Scotland. It brings sea and settlement well inland, into the heart of the interior.</p>	<p>Settlement lies almost exclusively within the coastal zone, along the kyle shores as far south as the A836 Causeway; with occasional habitation south to Kinloch Lodge at the head of the kyle. Inbye land lies within the coastal zone or in pockets of less steep moorland.</p> <p>The interior shows the least human activity, which is largely restricted to sporting and</p>

<p>Human presence, both ancient and modern, is centred on or near the coast, with an outlier at the head of the Kyle. In contrast, the sweeping moorland and mountain is a wild and remote land of heather, bog, loch, river and burn; of rock, crag and high mountain corrie.</p>	<p>hill-walking interests.</p> <p>The southern half of the NSA includes part of an SNH Wild Land Search Area.</p>
<p>• Scale, from domestic to monumental</p>	
<p>The small domestic scale of crofting and other activity around the coastal shores contrasts markedly with the monumental outer landscape presented by the mountains to the south and the open ocean to the north.</p>	<p>It can be difficult to appreciate the mountains' height and scale when there are few scale indicators such as trees or buildings.</p>
<p>• The ever-changing changing character of the Kyle</p>	
<p>The Kyle itself exhibits an ever-changing character of light and texture: the ebb and flow of the tide over sands or mudflats; the pattern of wind and waves; or reflections of the sun and scudding clouds.</p> <p>Diversity is enhanced by the woods and crofts around the shores, and this endless variety provides a dynamic foreground to spectacular views of the surrounding moors and mountains.</p>	<p>Variety comes from the extensive intertidal mudflats in the inner kyle, with their variation in pattern and colour; and the extensive intertidal sandbanks in the outer kyle, also with variation in pattern and colour.</p>
<p>• Rich variety of coastal scenery</p>	
<p>From the sheltered Kyle to islands exposed to the full force of the ocean, the area exhibits a rich variety of coastal scenery. This includes both soft landscapes of sand and mud and harder landscapes of rock and cliff.</p> <p>One of the highlights of the north coast is the long, sandy Torrisdale Bay.</p>	<p>Along its length the Kyle displays a combination of what can be considered as 'east coast' and 'west coast' characteristics. This is due to the intermix of rocky, coastal sections and flatter, sand flats and estuarine deposits.</p> <p>The northern coastline has high cliffs, shelving shores and sandy sheltered bays. This variety increases at the broad mouth of the kyle where a scatter of islands mirror the landform of the rocky coastal promontories, and mark the transition from the open sea to the sheltered kyle.</p> <p>In the east, the NSA includes coastal crofting areas, the headland between the Rivers Naver and Borgie, and the raised beach of Invernaver.</p>

- **Distinct pattern of settlement**

In this open landscape, the pattern of settlement and land use, both modern and historic, is often clearly visible. Each crofting township possesses its own distinct character, some linear and some clustered. Inland, shooting lodges and sheep farms provide a contrasting land use, as does the designed landscape surrounding Tongue House.

The presence of chambered cairns and brochs illustrates that people have occupied this land for many centuries.

Crofting patterns are distinctive. They vary according to the topography and access to local resources, so that the location of croft houses and boundaries create distinct township characters. For example, the Melness townships have a linear crofting pattern compared to the clustered pattern at Strathan Skerray.

Traditional rig boundaries are landscape features which can often be picked out from a distance, although many are now falling into disrepair.

18th century improvement landscapes add to the diversity of woodland and significant boundaries. Tongue House is included in the Inventory of Gardens & Designed Landscapes. The western garden wall of Tongue House is especially significant from the western shore of the Kyle of Tongue and the coast road on the eastern shore. The rectangular enclosures of Melness House are prominent from the A836 at Rhitongue and from the approach into Midtown on the western shores.

The presence of major sporting estates has had an impact on the landscape, with shooting lodges and other infrastructure notable at Strathmore, Loch Loyal and Kinloch, as well as Tongue House.

The large sheep farms at Ribigill, Tongue Mains and Melness also provide a link to the area's history.

Selected Bibliography

Gunn, Rev. Adam, and Mackay, John, *eds*, 1897. *Sutherland and the Reay Country*.

Sage, D. 1899. *Memorabilia Domestica: or Parish Life in the North of Scotland*. Reprint of 2nd edition.

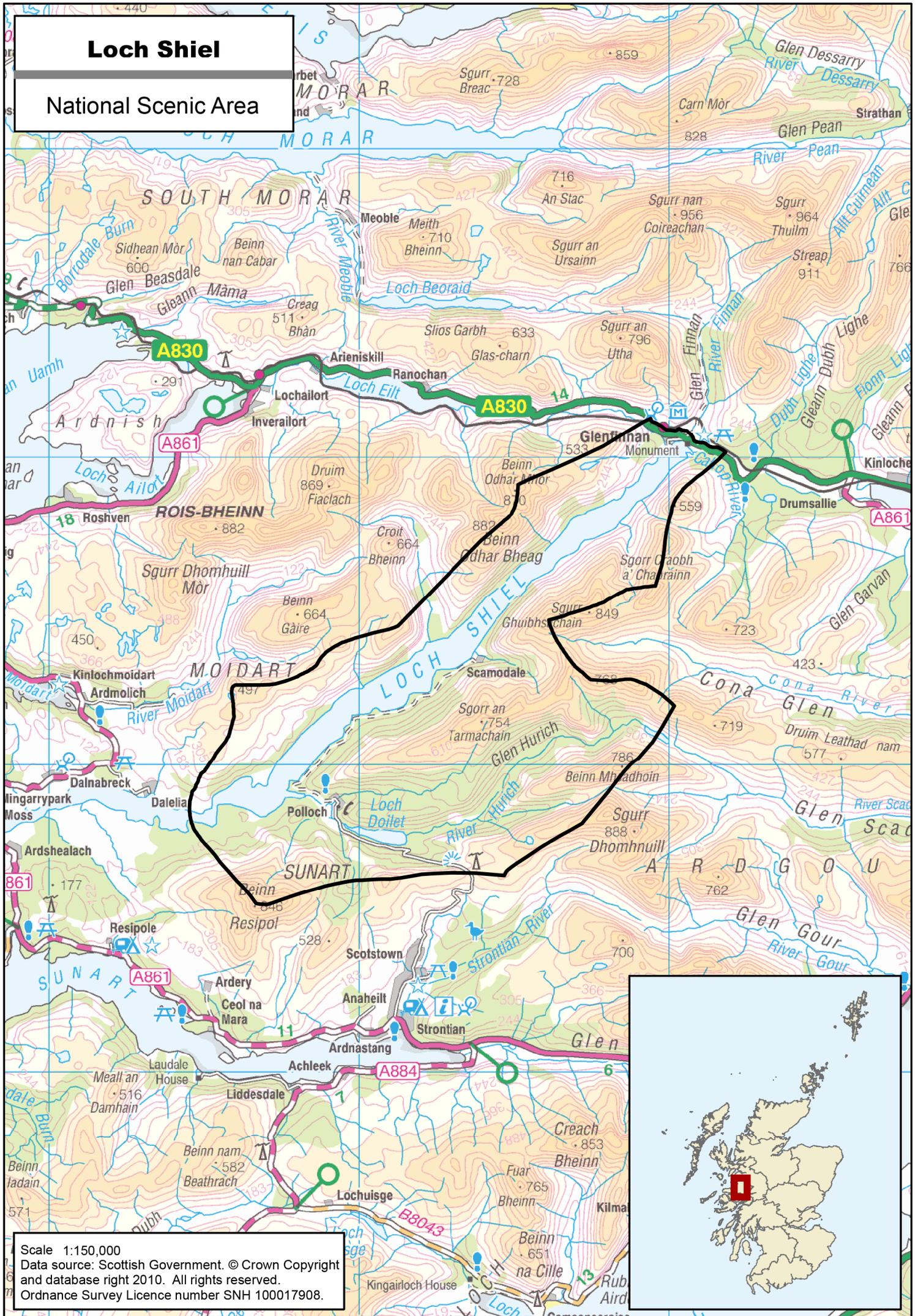
Scottish Natural Heritage 2002. *Natural heritage futures: The Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland*.

Stanton, C. 1998. *Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Assessment*. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review*, No.103.

Strang, T. 1975. *The Northern Highlands*. 2nd edition. Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

Loch Shiel

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

LOCH SHIEL NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Loch Shiel separates Moidart from Ardgour. Seen from Glenfinnan it presents the unity of appearance of a deep fjord winding its way between the interlocking spurs of precipitous mountains. The lowest slopes of these interlocking ridges are sometimes bare grass and rock, sometimes mantled in woodland, some of it planted conifers, some of it native oak.

Beneath the high peak of Ben Resipol the loch twists out of its highland grandeur into a gentler lowland moss landscape, but before it does so its character is enriched by Eilean Fhianain, the narrows of the Linne Gorm, and the wooded bay at the foot of Glenhurich, a deep, remote, now heavily afforested glen, with a fine river and loch, Loch Doilet, enclosed by the rugged Ardgour Hills. The fine receding views along the sinuous trench of the loch are perhaps further enhanced for many people by the strong historical associations with the Macdonalds, and their role in the Jacobite uprising.

The Special Qualities of the Loch Shiel National Scenic Area

- A fine long loch, leading into the heart of remote and rugged mountains
- A rich cover of woodland, forest and trees
- Variety and interest from the ever-changing topography and shore line
- The hidden glens
- One of the largest undisturbed lochs in Scotland and a haven for wildlife
- The nationally recognisable landmark and enduring cultural icon

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A fine, long loch, leading into the heart of remote and rugged mountains</i> 	
<p>The narrow waters of Loch Shiel lead the eye from the iconic monument at the head of the loch down into a remote, wild and rugged countryside, nowadays far distant from centres of population.</p> <p>Steep-sided and fjord-like in appearance, the remoteness and inaccessibility is reinforced by the fact that the loch has no roads or tracks along the north side, only accessible by boat. The south side is only accessible by a private track.</p>	<p>Queen Victoria in 1873 described the remote scene: <i>'We suddenly came upon Loch Shiel. The fine long loch and the rugged mountains, which were about 3000 feet high, were rising all around, no habitation or building to be seen except the house of Glenaladale.'</i></p> <p>A large area of the north shore and surrounding hills is one of SNH's Wild Land Search Areas, as is some of the land on the eastern side.</p> <p>Settlement is sparse with only isolated houses - apart from Polloch, a remote settlement of mainly forestry workers; and Glenfinnan on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig Road and the West Highland Railway.</p> <p>Although today much of the area is wild and remote, it once hosted a larger human population and contains a scatter of now deserted townships. Eilean Fhianain at the southern end of the NSA is significant in Highland history, containing the first Scottish home of St. Finnan (a teacher of St. Columba), a small chapel, and is also the burial place of the Clan MacDonald.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A rich cover of woodland, forest and trees</i> 	
<p>Trees and woods of many different types, textures and hues clothe the steep sides of the loch and the few small islands. They soften the harsh, highland landscape, but also add interest and variety as one ventures down the loch.</p>	<p>Woodland types include large areas of Atlantic oak woodland, varying from areas of dense canopy, to more open canopy especially on the north shore. The woods are also characterised by stands of holly and hazel.</p> <p>These were once working woodlands, with evidence of charcoal burning in the woods; the charcoal was shipped out by boat.</p> <p>Alder woodland can be seen on some of the fluvial plains where the burns meet the loch. Birch woodland has regenerated</p>

	<p>naturally in areas of low deer grazing. Steep sided ravines and gullies are also wooded with wych elm and ash.</p> <p>There are small areas of Caledonian pine forest on the loch isle, such as Eilean Camas and Eilean Ghleann Fhoinainn and on the precipitous sides of Meall na h-Airigh.</p> <p>The native woodlands have a rich bryophyte flora and are designated SSSI for their conservation importance.</p> <p>Large areas of commercial, coniferous forest cover the south east of the NSA, including most of Glen Hurich. Implementation of a forest design plan will add further interest to the forest landscape.</p>
<p>• <i>Variety and interest from the ever-changing topography and shore line</i></p>	
<p>The rich variation in topography results in exciting scenery. There are rugged massifs, interlocking peaks, linear ridges, extensive areas of moorland, rough pasture and a complex shoreline.</p> <p>The loch itself presents a grand prospect, being long and narrow, continually and subtly twisting and turning along its whole length. The scale of the view varies from small, intimate lochside beaches surrounded by trees, to the loch receding into the distance surrounded by large, steep-sided mountains.</p>	<p>At the northeast end of the NSA, both sides of Loch Shiel exhibit fjord-like topography. Steep precipitous sides form part of a rugged massif rising to stepped hills, with interlocking, sweeping peaks, separated by high corries; and with long, flat, linear ridges. At the southwest end in contrast, is a large area of extensive, lowland mossland, dominated by Claish Moss National Nature Reserve (outside the NSA).</p> <p>The complex topography of the surrounding hills is matched by that of the loch shore: steep-sided, narrow and enclosed in places, but also with long spurs and promontories of various sizes ('rubha' or 'ceann' in Gaelic), interspersed with small bays and beaches; and the loch itself with many small isles. Some areas of the loch have an open, pool-like feel, such as around Camas Bhlathain, whereas others feel narrow and enclosed, such as around Eilean Fhianian.</p>
<p>• <i>The hidden glens</i></p>	
<p>Glens Aladale and Hurich, which feed into Loch Shiel, feel remote, almost secretive, hidden by the tree cover at the mouth of the glens and also by the subtle twisting and turning of the loch side.</p>	<p>Glen Aladale rises northwards from the centre of the loch, with the River Aladale in the middle of a steep sided glen; it extends beyond the NSA and is enclosed by various peaks which reach a height of 869m on the ridge Druim Fiaclach.</p> <p>Glen Hurich is a long sinuous, glen stretching east to northeast from Loch Shiel. It consists of the complex curiously shaped wetlands where the River Polloch (Gaelic for 'bog by loch') meets Loch Shiel, the sinuous sides of Loch Doilet, and the steep-sided, forested head of the glen, surrounded by the mountains of Ardgour - Sgorr an Tarmachain (756m) and Beinn Mheadhoin (786m).</p>

- **One of the largest undisturbed lochs in Scotland and a haven for wildlife**

Loch Shiel remains one of the largest lochs in Scotland to have retained its natural form, its water levels fluctuating to the whim of nature rather than under human influence.

The loch waters are clean and unpolluted, which, together with the surrounding natural vegetation, has created a haven for wildlife: from damselflies and otters, to birds such as elegant black-throated divers swimming the waters and golden eagles soaring overhead.

Loch Shiel at 28km is the fourth longest loch in Scotland. Importantly it has a natural outflow into the sea via the River Shiel (through the Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan NSA); in contrast, the other lochs of this length in Scotland have human regulation of water flow (e.g. Lochs Awe, Lomond, Ness and Shin).

There is a rich juxtaposition of semi-natural habitats: the loch itself and its variable shore, woodland (Caledonian pine and oak), moorland, grassland and peat bog.

The waters of the loch are oligotrophic (nutrient poor), and have become home to large populations of breeding birds, notably black-throated divers, and otters.

Location-specific quality

- **Nationally recognisable landmark and enduring cultural icon**

Bonnie Prince Charlie raising the royal standard on the banks of Loch Shiel at Glenfinnan in 1745 is an iconic event in Scotland's history.

Glenfinnan Monument, built to celebrate this, has become a national landmark, standing out in evocative contrast to the impressive landscape of the loch and mountains behind.

Bonnie Prince Charlie was rowed down Loch Shiel having landed on mainland Scotland at Loch nan Uamh. Although the exact spot where he arrived in Glenfinnan is not exactly known for certain, it was a wet a misty August day. He was met by the McDonalds, strong supporters of the Jacobite cause, and later that day by other clans.

The Glenfinnan Monument was designed by James Gillespie Graham and was built in 1815 by Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale. The lone highlander at the top of the monument was added later.

The monument with Loch Shiel behind has become one of the most famous images of the Scottish Highlands, even appearing on bank notes. It has a backdrop composed of Scots pine forested isles; wooded lochsides; fjord-like topography; and with the sweeping interlocking peaks overlapping and coming down into the water - the waters leading off into the horizon.

Selected bibliography

Steven, C. 1970. *Glens and Straths of Scotland*. London: Robert Hale, London.

Simpson, D. 1969. *Portrait of the Highlands*. London: Robert Hale.

National Trust for Scotland 1993. *Glenfinnan Monument Management Plan 1993-1998*.

Environmental Resource Management 1998. Lochaber Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 97*.

www.highlandcruises.co.uk (accessed March 2008)

Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:200,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

MORAR, MOIDART AND ARDNAMURCHAN NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The area exhibits a coastal landscape of great diversity and interest, in places enhanced by the mountain background, although it is the coastal fringe that is considered to be outstanding. This coastal fringe is made up of four main subsidiary areas each with a character of its own, but complementing the others and all linked together by views of the enhancing offshore islands of the Small Isles.

The indented rocky coastline of northern Ardnamurchan with its succeeding bays and headlands affords fine views from each successive glen, aligned as they are in the direction of the Small Isles, with oblique views across to the sands and hills of Morar. The volcanic landforms contribute greatly to the character of this shore.

Across the flat sandy bay and moss of Kentra, the steep wooded enclosing slopes of Loch Moidart offer a contrast. This is a sheltered, introverted landscape of intimate seclusion and charm, so closed in upon itself that the rounded forms of the wooded islands amongst the braided channels of the loch reveal vista after vista of water, sand, rock, woodland and grassland in ever-changing western light.

Loch Ailort and Loch nan Uamh are more open in aspect, again with fine views to the Small Isles, but in the foreground is a richly wooded shore of rocky promontories, while the waters of the lochs are studded with heather and scrub-covered islets which do not frame the view as in Loch Moidart, but are an enhancing element in the wider prospect. This richly patterned western prospect typifies for many people the scenery they associate with the romance of 'the Road to the Isles.'

The Special Qualities of the Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan National Scenic Area

- A landscape of outstanding coastal scenery
- Seascapes both intimate and distant
- The distinctive backdrop of the Small Isles
- Peaceful, unspoilt and remote
- The formal element of designed landscapes
- Strong historical associations
- The indented Ardnamurchan coast
- The spectacular volcanic landforms
- The flat expanse of Kentra Bay and Kentra Moss
- Loch Moidart and its islands
- Castle Tioram, romantic ruin and cultural icon
- Sound of Arisaig, Loch Ailort and Loch nan Uamh

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A landscape of outstanding coastal scenery</i> 	
<p>This extensive area of the western seaboard possesses richly varied scenery of outstanding quality. The coastline is deeply fragmented with numerous promontories, bays, islands and sea lochs. Inland there is a backdrop of hills and mountains, while out to sea there is a horizon of spectacular islands. The small settlements are interspersed with lengths of wild, uninhabited coast.</p> <p>Hence strikingly different views can be had, depending on whether the location is open to the sea or enclosed by islands; whether it borders a sea loch or an estuary; it falls gently to the sea, or is stepped or cliffed; it is rocky, sandy, boggy, or wooded; it is inhabited or uninhabited; or whether the backdrop is of mountains or islands.</p> <p>This variety ensures the eye is constantly drawn to the next turn in the road or path, in the expectation of another breathtaking view.</p>	<p>Seven Landscape Character Types either lie within or directly adjoin the NSA. It is the relationship between these adjoining types - their arrangement, transitions, relative dominance and sequence - which gives the area its unique combination of characteristics, producing a distinct sense of place.</p> <p>The mountain backdrop varies north to south:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pyramidal mountain summits (e.g. Rois Bheinn) can be glimpsed along the Ardnish peninsula and the north Moidart coast. • The lower, rounded rocky coastal hills of South Morar form a backdrop to north-facing views along the north Moidart coast. • The skyline at Kentra Bay is formed by Ardnamurchan's Rugged Coastal Hills, which present a distinctive series of ridges to south and east, e.g. Beinn Gheur.

• **Seascapes both intimate and distant**

As the coastline itself varies, so do the views out to sea. Large-scale outward panoramas contrast with those which are enclosed and inward-looking; views of far distant islands contrast with those of small, inshore archipelagos.

Seascapes vary as follows

- In the north, the coasts of the Arisaig and Ardnish peninsulas, and the north Moidart coast from Genuig eastwards, enclose the Sound of Arisaig. Seascapes here are enclosed to north and south, and on the mainland side by the Morar and Moidart hills.
- In contrast seaward views, northwards and north-westwards from the Ardnamurchan coast, and from Smirisary, Moidart are open, outward-looking and panoramic.

The Loch Moidart coast offers strongly enclosed, channelled glimpses of the sea.

Intermittent views from the north boundary of the NSA on the A830 look out over Loch nan Uamh, and Loch Ailort. Other sections are screened by thick Atlantic oakwoods.

• **The distinctive backdrop of the Small Isles**

The Small Isles, each island with its own distinct profile, dominate the western horizon: the long extended line of Canna, the verticality of Muck's basalt cliffs, Rum's jagged peaks, and Eigg's distinctive, sloping Sgurr.

'...through the western peninsulas of Ardnamurchan and Morvern, we cannot fail to be lured by the tantalizing presence of those fabled isles across the sapphire-coloured seas.' Murray (1970)

These landmarks engender both a strong sense of place and anticipation – a tantalizing prospect of further places to reach and explore.

The Small Isles are visible northward from much of the Ardnamurchan peninsula; and north-west from Moidart.

• **Peaceful, unspoilt and remote**

The area is rural, there is a lack of large-scale development, housing is generally scattered and human population is low.

The majority of the NSA cannot be accessed by roads or vehicular tracks, in particular:

Road access is constrained, with many small coastal settlements being found at the end of no-through roads. The interior is rugged, rock-strewn moorland, with great tracts of land uninhabited and not served by any roads, being accessible only to the walker.

- The Arisaig peninsula.
- The Ardnish peninsula.
- The rugged, mountainous ranges of Moidart (a small area at the eastern end of the NSA lies within an SNH Wild Land Search Area).
- The seaward, rocky coastal extremities of Smirisary, and those north of the Ardtoe peninsula.

This imbues the landscape with a strong sense of solitude and peace, although at times tinged with melancholy owing to

Access to northern Ardnamurchan's coast is along a series of single track, no-through roads, with footpaths leading to the shore.

<p>the evidence of long-gone populations from the abandoned townships and blackhouses.</p>	<p>Few places are directly accessible by road.</p> <p>In the past, settlements were cleared to make way for sheep-farming, and crofts were created. Hence there has been considerable depopulation, as witnessed by the visible remains of houses and settlements. This can evoke the memory of a once-populated landscape where people are now largely missing.</p>
<p>• The formal element of designed landscapes</p>	
<p>Four designed landscapes create a formal element within the wider countryside. Their policy woodlands offer variety and more managed looking places within the wider untamed landscape. This is highlighted by ornamental plantings, managed woodland and estate-style buildings (lodges and architectural features).</p> <p>Generally, these private estates are secluded and situated to take advantage of spectacular scenery – as with Eilean Shona’s landscape design, which has strong views of the sea, smaller off-shore islands, Castle Tioram and the South Channel of Loch Moidart.</p> <p>Elsewhere the public road passes through or alongside the policies, for example Kinlochmoidart, the riverside plantings at Shiel Bridge and the drive to the Dorlin shore at Loch Moidart.</p>	<p>Arisaig House, Kinlochmoidart and Eilean Shona, are all recognised on the <i>Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes</i> on account of their outstanding scenic value and their historical, architectural and horticultural interest. From Shiel Bridge northwards, the River Shiel, an important sporting river, is laid out with ornamental plantings and pools, the 19th century design dating to activity by the Dorlin and Ardnamurchan Estates.</p> <p>The Dorlin estate belonged to James Hope Scott (1855), married to Charlotte Mariot Jane, the granddaughter of Sir Walter Scott. They did much to improve the estate, as did Lord Howard of Glossop who bought it in 1871. The house was demolished post World War 1.</p>
<p>• Strong historical associations</p>	
<p>Strong historical associations link Loch nan Uamh to Jacobite history. It is the place where Prince Charles Edward Stuart first set foot on the mainland (25 July 1745). He also departed from here to France after his wanderings following the defeat of the Jacobite forces at the Battle of Culloden in April 1746.</p> <p>Landscape features at Kinlochmoidart House, dating from the 19th century, commemorate the ‘45: ‘The Seven Men of Moidart’, originally seven beech trees but now replanted are said to represent the Prince’s loyal companions – of whom Aeneas MacDonald, of Kinlochmoidart</p>	<p>There is a cairn on the shores of Loch nan Uamh (Loch of the Caves) commemorating Bonnie Prince Charlie, erected by the 1745 Association in 1956.</p> <p>Kinlochmoidart House also has historical associations with Prince Charles Edward Stuart, who stayed here in August 1745, before raising the Jacobite standard at Glenfinnan.</p> <p>The book <i>Commando Country</i> (National Museums of Scotland) describes the use of the landscape during WWII; Dorlin, Inverailort, Kentra and many other places were used.</p>

<p>was one. The Prince's Walk is a formal avenue leading to the Kirk.</p> <p>The area was also extensively used for commando training during the Second World War, which has left its legacy on the landscape.</p>	
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>• The indented Ardnamurchan coast</p>	
<p>North Ardnamurchan has an indented, rocky coastline typifying Hebridean scenery. To arrive here necessitates a journey along the length and breadth of the Ardnamurchan peninsula, the most westerly landmass on mainland Britain. After experiencing the volcanic landforms of the interior, the coastal landscape is a marked contrast and surprise.</p> <p>The long coast is distinctive due to the strong rhythmic landscape of rugged, rocky headlands interrupted by coves and sandy bays. Some bays are backed by dunes and machair, as at Sanna.</p> <p>Although an exposed coastline, small, localised pockets of shelter can be found within a succession of small glens that cut through the rocky landscape to the sea. Each glen has its own fine view out to the Small Isles.</p> <p>Additionally, many coastal spots give oblique views across to Morar's beautiful 'Silver Sands' and hills.</p>	<p><i>'We are now in the realms of the Hebrides, which have their own special scenery... Were it not for a narrow isthmus near Salen, the long arm of Ardnamurchan would itself be insular... In most other ways, however, it is Hebridean, not least in its remarkable geology and scenery.'</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p>The western section of the coast differs from those further east. This is due to the peninsula's geological structure (volcanic in origin) and sea-erosion. <i>'Marine erosion is currently battering away at the outer ramparts of the igneous complex, and at Sanna Bay has broken through as far as the Great Eucrite ridge. The coasts of western Ardnamurchan, therefore, are characterized by an alternation of dark, forbidding cliffs and headlands with delightful bays backed by beaches of creamy shell sand.'</i> Whittow (1977)</p>
<p>• The spectacular volcanic landforms</p>	
<p>The interior of the Ardnamurchan peninsula is composed of distinctive volcanic landforms.</p> <p>The most spectacular example lies within the NSA, at Achnaha and Glendrian, where there is an unbroken ring of hills some three miles in diameter – a ring dyke. These descend towards Achnaha and the abandoned village of Glendrian, in a striking series of steep slopes and crags, <i>'which in turn give way to a nested</i></p>	<p>Ardnamurchan's mass is made up of arcs of high, volcanic moorland hills. These form spectacular features, the remains of what was once three separate volcanoes that erupted in the area, 60 million years ago.</p>

series of circular valleys and ridges' (Whittow, 1977).

Standing inside these hills gives a real impression of being inside the cone of an ancient volcano.

• **The flat expanse of Kentra Bay and Kentra Moss**

Surrounded by rugged hills on three sides, the expanse of Kentra Bay and Kentra Moss is both surprising and intriguing. The coastal hills rise dramatically from the boggy plain, contrasting with, and emphasising, the sandy bay and the level moss.

The plain is vast, uniformly flat and devoid of trees. This, taken with the lack of development on the moss itself, results in open views and a feeling of exposure. Crofting settlement is confined to drier areas on the fringes and is loosely clustered, which helps maintain the open feel of the area.

The area marks the division between Moidart and Ardnamurchan. Kentra Moss, together with the neighbouring Claish Moss, represents a highly oceanic raised bog type found on the north-west coast of Scotland. They are two of only three known eccentric mires, more commonly found in central Scandinavia.

They are of special interest as they are a very unusual raised bog landscape, with a rich *Sphagnum* flora. Transitions to saltmarsh are a notable feature of Kentra Moss.

Apart from a sole vertical radio mast, vertical features are absent.

• **Loch Moidart and its islands**

Loch Moidart, a very sheltered, shallow, slightly brackish sea loch, cuts deeply through coastal hills, to form an extensive area of intertidal mudflats. It is almost totally enclosed by steep, rocky and wooded coastal hills and the landscape closes in upon itself, with limited sea and land access.

Its specific attributes differ and contrast totally from Kentra because this is a sheltered, introverted landscape of intimate seclusion and charm, offering peace and tranquillity. The loch's shores are made up of long stretches of undisturbed rocky shore and oakwoods, and views are framed by wooded islands and scrub-covered islets.

The rounded forms of the wooded islands set amidst the loch's braided channels mean that at low-tide long, low, ever-receding vistas of water, sand, rock, woodland and grassland are interleaved with one another in ever-changing

'Tucked away in the corner of the Ardnamurchan peninsula, Loch Moidart is split in two by tidal Eilean Shona which was leased by J M Barrie in the 1920s as a peaceful place to write... This lovely island.. has high and precipitous hills, natural woodland, exotic trees and a large house and grounds. The house overlooks South Loch Moidart with a densely wooded islet called Riska, and romantic Castle Tioram.' Haswell-Smith (2008)

The inner, eastern, half of the loch is studded with islands. The western half, at its sea- mouth, is tightly constrained, being divided in two by the tidal island of Eilean Shona (joined to the smaller Shona Beag, by a narrow isthmus). Thus sea-borne travel is constrained and controlled to north and south of the island through narrow but navigable channels.

<p>western light.</p> <p>Views from the north shores of the loch are of a largely undeveloped landscape, and visible man-made features are minimal, being small-scale and set amidst thickly wooded hills.</p>	
<p>• Castle Tioram, romantic ruin and cultural icon</p>	
<p>The picturesque ruins of Castle Tioram stand on the rocky tidal island of Eilean Tioram, situated where the river Shiel issues into Loch Moidart. The castle is the focus of the widely recognised romantic landscape of Loch Moidart, and is of outstanding cultural importance.</p> <p>It is a popular visitor attraction, and also an important part of the view from the houses and designed landscapes of Eilean Shona and Dorlin House.</p>	<p>Castle Tioram belongs to a remarkable group of seaboard castles in Argyll and the Isles, and is linked with the long history of the dominance of seafaring in the political and social culture of the Western Highlands in the post-Viking period. The castle was an important centre and significant within Gaelic culture. It was supported by the produce of the extensive estates that surrounded it, the surrounding area being considerably more populated in the past.</p> <p>Castle Tioram was constructed with the other similar castles at Mingarry and Kismull, in the 13th to 14th centuries. It ceased to be the family residence of the Clanranalds when they built a more comfortable house at Ormicleat, South Uist; subsequently it fell into disrepair.</p> <p>As a ruined Highland castle, standing within loch and West Highland landscape, it composes a prime, iconic image of Scotland. The author J M Barrie took one story from the castle, that of the maid who was tied to a rock on the beach for stealing silver, and used it in <i>Peter Pan</i>.</p>
<p>• Sound of Arisaig, Loch Ailort and Loch nan Uamh</p>	
<p>Loch nan Uamh and outer Loch Ailort open into the Sound of Arisaig, providing fine views to the Small Isles. Their shores are richly wooded with rocky promontories, and the lochs are studded with heather and scrub-covered islets which enhance the wide panoramic seascapes.</p> <p>The alternating views from the A830 of sea-loch, heather-topped islands and sweeping hills and oakwoods have a rich pattern and typify the romantic scenery associated with The Road to the Isles – marking progress in journeys westwards to Arisaig, Mallaig and the islands.</p>	<p><i>'Thomas Telford... directed the government to build the so-called "Parliamentary Road", beginning in Banavie and Corpach in 1803 and running out to Arisaig. It was called in the official papers of the Commission for Highland Roads and Bridges the "Loch-na-Gaul" road, and it is this same piece of road, from Loch nan Uamh to the village of Arisaig, that is now finally going to be engineered to finish the process begun by Telford in the early 1800s.</i></p> <p><i>'If we think of the Highlands as bare and rocky hills and high tops, this once-hidden land to the west of Fort William challenges this impression with its cover of birch and rowan and its ancient oak woods.</i></p> <p><i>'The last winding stretch of the former "Parliamentary Road" will always be remembered for the trees crowding down the slopes and obscuring the view of the</i></p>

The Sound of Arisaig, Loch Ailort and Loch nan Uamh offer prime, West Coast sea-faring.

motorist. But this was a symbol of the wealth and fertility of the lands of Clanranald, praised by its poets and remembered proverbially as "dark Arisaig of the woods" - Arasaig dubh ghorm a' bharraich.' Cheape (2007)

The oakwoods were important in the past for charcoal, bark and timber, which has probably contributed to their survival.

Selected Bibliography

Cheape, H. 2007. Historic route hailed in song. *The Scotsman*, 7 March 2007.

Crawford, V, & Moffat 1990. *Ardnamurchan, Annals of the Parish*.

Environmental Resources Management 1998. Lochaber Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.97*.

Gillen, C. 2003. *Geology and landscapes of Scotland*. Terra Publishing,

Haswell-Smith, H. 2008. *The Scottish Islands. The Bestselling Guide to Every Scottish Island*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

MacKinnon, C. R., of Dunakin 1961. *The Highlands in History*.

Mcfarlane, P. J. *The Geology Of Ardnamurchan*. See www.ardnamurchanstudycentre.co.uk (accessed February 2009)

New Statistical Account Renfrewshire & Argyllshire VII 1845. Written 1838 by Rev Angus Mclean, Minister.

Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland 2004. *An Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Supplementary Volume 2. Highlands & Islands*.

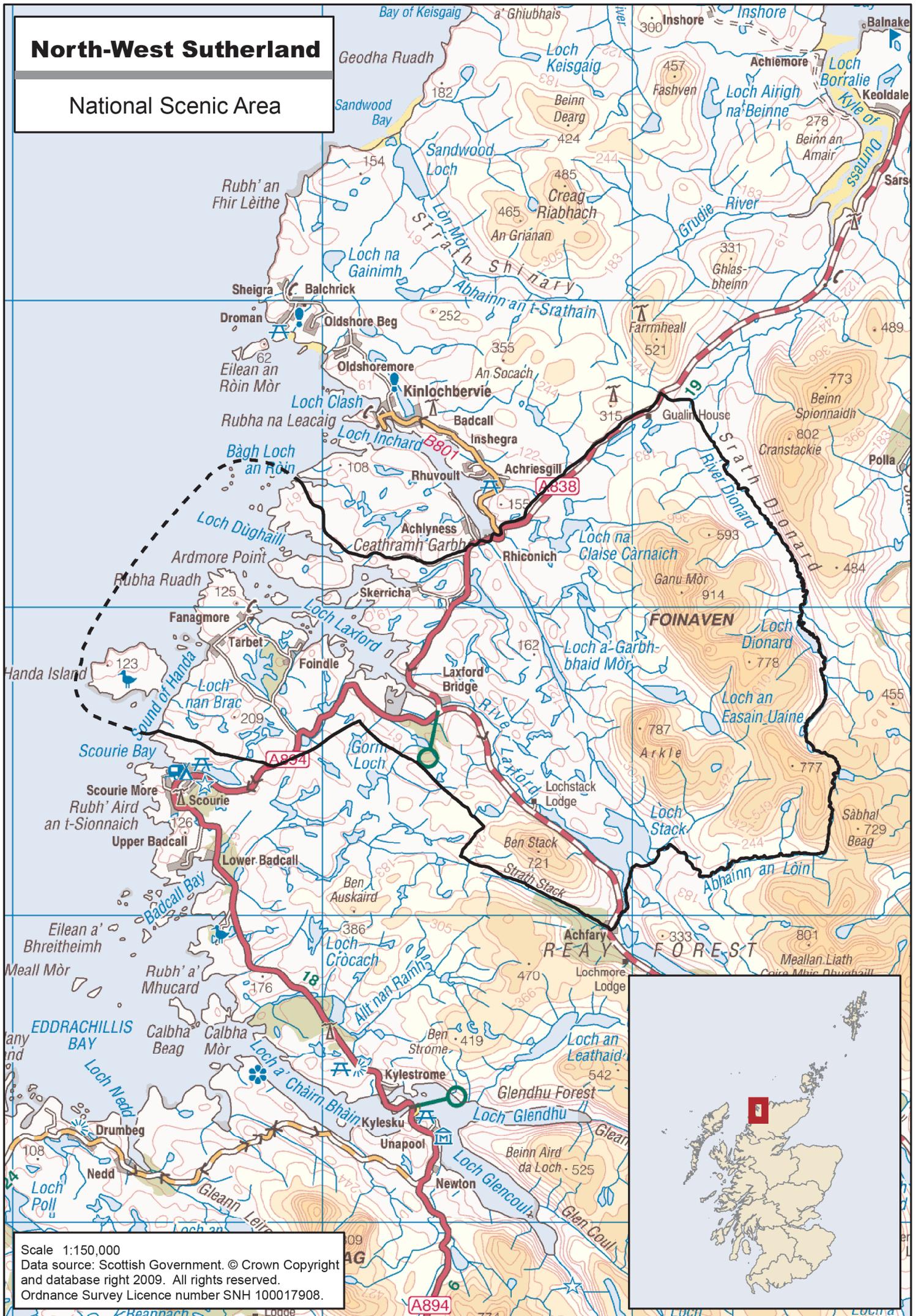
Whittow, J. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

www.1745association.org.uk/ ref. Kinlochmoidart and Loch nan Uamh (accessed February 2008)

www.walkingbritain.co.uk/ ref. Walk 3506 - The Silver Walk, Loch Moidart (accessed February 2009)

North-West Sutherland

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

NORTH-WEST SUTHERLAND NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Highland

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Foinaven, Arkle and Ben Stack are mountains of quartzite resting dramatically on Lewisian gneiss. Ben Stack (721m) is a shapely remnant cone, Arkle (787m) a whale-back, and Foinaven (909m) a long slab broken into separate summits. The summits and flanks of the latter two form a stark desert of white quartzite scree broken occasionally by lines of tiered crags. The knock and lochan topography of the gneiss landscape extending to the west forms a suitable foil for this varied trio, as hard and uncompromising as the mountains themselves.

Loch Laxford is made up of the same bare rocky topography and is clearly related to the mountain core of the area. Its indented coast does not have the wooded inlets and bays that are found further south, but there are some sheltered beaches from which Handa Island with its towering sandstone cliffs and bird colonies can be seen.

The Special Qualities of the Northwest Sutherland National Scenic Area

- A landscape of rock
- The backdrop of distinctive mountains
- A complex cnocan landscape of rock, water and sky
- Intimate mix of sea and land
- Contrast between extensive uninhabited land and localised human settlement
- Extensive tracts of wild land
- Handa's towering sea cliffs

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A landscape of rock</i> 	
<p>This is an uncompromising, open landscape of ancient, hard rock, sparsely clothed with vegetation. Grey and white scree-covered mountains rise steeply above a landscape of rocky cnocans interspersed with numerous lochs and lochans.</p>	<p>In many landscapes the geology provides the underlying template for the other landscape features. In this NSA it is the geology itself that stands out. The importance of the geology has been recognised through the accolade of GeoPark, the NSA being in the middle of a GeoPark that stretches beyond it both north and south.</p> <p>The Moine Thrust passes through the eastern side of the NSA. The mountains of Foinaven and Arkle are composed largely of brittle, white Cambrian quartzite, which readily erodes into scree. The land between the mountains and the sea consists of Lewisian gneiss which has eroded into a cnoc and lochan topography. The gneiss here, at over two billion years old, is amongst the oldest rocks in the world.</p> <p>The harshness of the environment is reflected in the Gaelic name <i>Ceathramh Garb</i>, the Rough Quarter.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The backdrop of distinctive mountains</i> 	
<p>Three distinctive shaped peaks, all with a hard, steep and inaccessible appearance, stand sentinel over the landscape and dominate the views.</p> <p>The lone, cone-shaped peak of Ben Stack contrasts with the whaleback ridge of Arkle and the angular broken ridge of Foinaven. With their tiered crags, they come across as a forbidding fortress to Sutherland's interior.</p>	<p>Foinaven (911m), Arkle (787m) and Ben Stack (721m) rise dramatically from the lower-lying, cnoc and lochan topography.</p> <p>The distinctive peaks of Foinaven and Arkle are coarse, angular, irregular massifs of numerous small summits, dominated by light, grey cliffs, tiered crags, loose scree and gullies. Ben Stack, in contrast, is simpler in structure, appearing as a steep cone when viewed from the seaboard.</p>

• ***A complex cnocan landscape of rock, water and sky***

Most of the NSA is a complex landscape of cnoc and lochan, composed of the fundamental elements of water and rock. The low height of the numerous cliffs and hillocks contrasts with the massive vertical scale of the mountains beyond. Ancient glacial erratics of rocks and boulders are common in places, still in place after being dropped by glaciers thousands of years ago.

Although this landscape can appear harsh and unforgiving, it also contains areas of intimacy – small crags, lochans, burns and hollows. Woods, however, are rare.

Abundant water, whether loch, lochan or burn, fills the hollows. Its ripples and reflections add light and movement to the static, ancient rock that is so prevalent. The waters of Loch Stack provide a reflective foreground to the dramatic slopes and cliffs of Arkle rising up behind.

Across this uneven and treeless topography no two horizons are the same, although the sky always a dominant feature. It is an unusual landscape of great fascination.

Although generally low-lying (below 150-200m), great variety can be observed in the cnocan landscape. However, this variety is based on a repeated pattern of generally rounded cnochs interspersed with lochs or lochans. On the other hand, the vegetation cover, where it exists, tends to be relatively uniform.

• ***Intimate mix of sea and land***

The cnocan topography descends slowly into the sea, resulting in a coastline of great complexity and interest – skerries, rocks, islands, cliffs, and bays. Many stretches are only accessible on foot which, combined with the highly indented shoreline, gives the coast a wild, secluded and secretive feel.

Loch Laxford, with its heather-clad shores, brings the sea into the heart of this landscape of rock. In places, only the ebb and flow of the tide, exposing the orange fringe of seaweed, is a reminder that it is saltwater at all. The open sea appears far away.

Compared to the Sutherland coast further south where small woods of birch and hazel often fringe the inland coast and soften the landscape, pockets of woodland are rare within this NSA.

• Contrast between extensive uninhabited land and localised human settlement	
<p>Most of the land is uninhabited and uncultivated and, where not bare rock, is clothed with natural vegetation. Settlement is rare and, apart from the occasional shooting lodge, is restricted to coastal areas. Human activity is both constrained and dwarfed by the surrounding mountains, rock and moorland.</p>	<p>The area is sparsely populated with habitation restricted mainly to isolated coastal, crofting settlements with limited inbye land; and with associated jetties, fish farms and mussel lines.</p> <p>Elsewhere there are occasional shooting lodges and access tracks, with much of the land comprising sporting estates.</p> <p>Roads and paths are sparse, with mostly single track roads following the uneven and undulating ground of the cnocan landscape.</p>
• Extensive tracts of wild land	
<p>The super-abundance of rock and water makes passage into the interior difficult, and paths are few and far between. This is the domain of the serious hillwalker and sportsman, keen to enjoy a wild and remote landscape where natural forces predominate.</p>	<p>Although the land is used for grazing and shooting, overall the landscape exhibits a wild character, an impression of natural forces being in charge.</p> <p>The interior comprises part of an SNH Search Area for Wild Land.</p>
<i>Location-specific quality</i>	
• Handa's towering sea cliffs	
<p>The towering, sandstone cliffs and stacks of Handa Island contrast with the broken cnocan coastline found elsewhere.</p> <p>These vertical cliffs provide ideal nesting sites so that during the summer the crags and surrounding seas are teeming with seabirds.</p>	<p>Compared to the surrounding mainland which consists of Lewisian gneiss, Handa is composed of Torridonian sandstone. This rock is horizontally bedded and tends to result in vertical cliffs rather than the lower, more broken cliffs of the mainland.</p>

Selected Bibliography

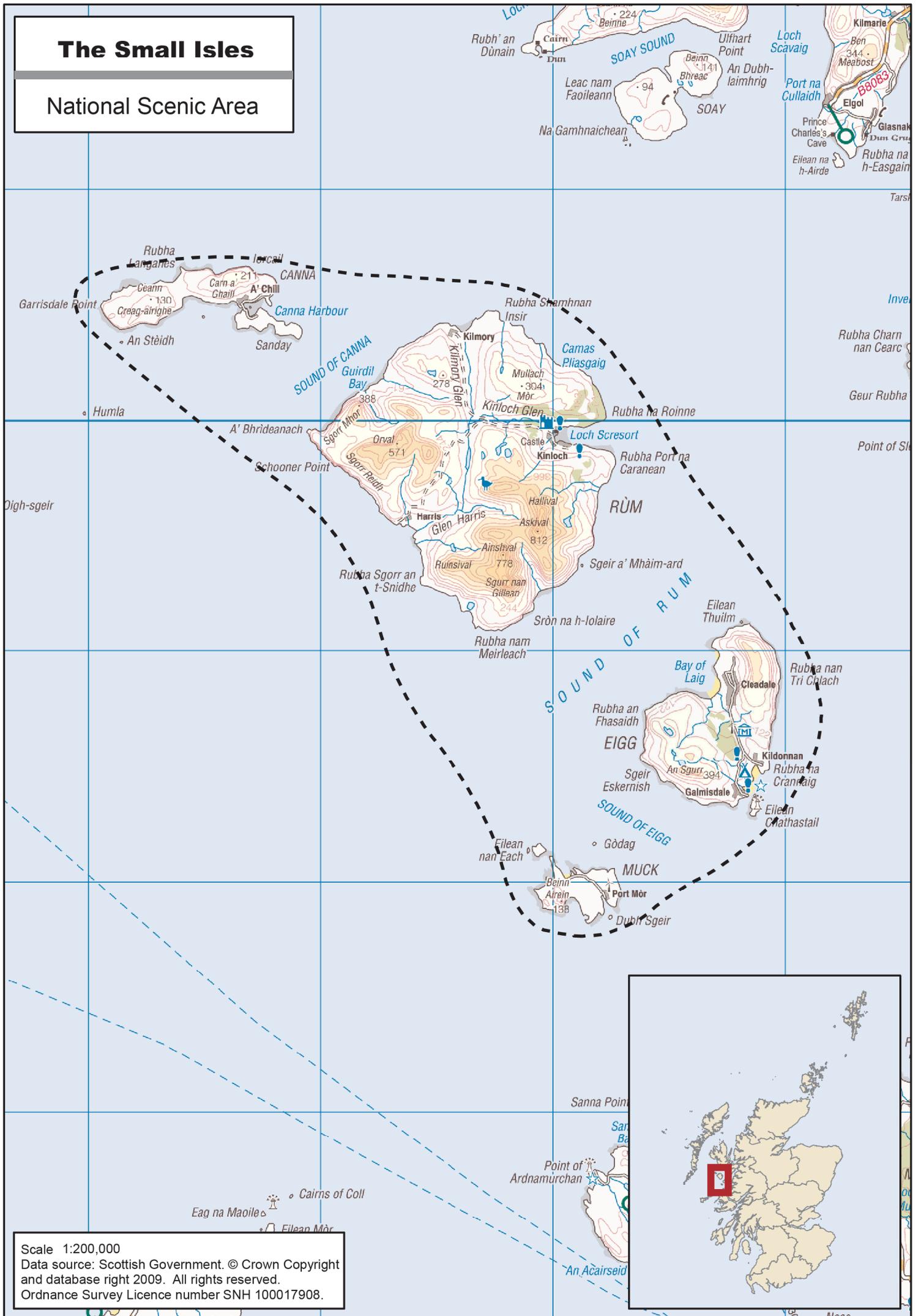
Dunning, F. W., Mercer, I. F., Owen, M. P., Roberts, R. H. & Lambert, J. L. M. 1979. *Britain Before Man*. London: HMSO.

Stanton, C. 1998. Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.103*.

www.northwest-highlands-geopark.org.uk (accessed December 2007)

The Small Isles

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:200,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

THE SMALL ISLES NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Each island has a different landscape character and outline that contrast one island with the next, and the sea inevitably plays an important role in setting of and linking the varying shapes of the islands, which make a major contribution to a seaboard of the highest scenic quality.

The scenery of Rum contains within a small compass nearly all of the elements found in the other inner islands; brown, stepped country of Torridonian sandstone in the north, green grassy terraces separated by cliffs of basaltic lavas in the west, and steep slopes, sharp peaks, and knife-edged ridges in the south, where hard ultrabasic rocks have been carved like the Cuillin gabbro. Massive granite cliffs add yet another group of landforms around Bloodstone Hill, Glen Dibidil is a fine U-shaped valley, and at Kilmory is a stretch of machair and a small line of sand dunes. There is little cultivable land.

Basalt predominates on Eigg, giving good agricultural land, and a steep-sided ridge of Jurassic sandstone in the north forms impressive cliffs when viewed from the sea. At the southern end of the island the spectacular Sgurr of Eigg is a residual block of pitchstone lava which forms a long undulating ridge of bare grey rock and which, viewed on end, forms a flat-topped tower almost 400m above sea level. On the coast there is a series of large caves. There is a considerable amount of fertile ground, but natural woodland is confined to a few patches of hazel scrub, and mixed woodlands have been planted on the east side of the island.

Muck is a low island of Tertiary basalt giving a stepped profile, but having a rich soil and fine green pasture. The rock has been worn into cliffs and caves at sea level, more interesting than the low rocky headlands of the nearby mainland.

Canna at the far end of the group is like Muck, but higher, with inland cliffs of reddish rock above grassy slopes, and a spectacular coastline of caves, arches and stacks carved from the basalt. The lower island of Sanday, linked by a ridge to Canna, contrasts with the higher ground, and has on it a church which forms a strong landscape feature on the seaward approach to Canna harbour.

The Special Qualities of The Small Isles National Scenic Area

Note: Qualities common to all the islands are listed first. Thereafter qualities particular to a given island are listed, avoiding duplication where possible with the general list.

- An archipelago of individually distinctive islands
- Populated fertile areas within a hinterland of moorland
- A geology of ancient igneous activity
- A dramatic coastline
- Remote but centrally located within the Hebrides archipelago
- Abundance of wildlife

Island of Rum

- The distinctive silhouette of the Rum Cuillin
- A wild, now empty landscape

Islands of Canna and Sanday

- The sanctuary of Canna Harbour
- Columnar cliffs

Island of Eigg

- The Sgurr of Eigg
- The fascinating shapes and sounds of the Cleadale Coast

Island of Muck

- A productive island farm

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An archipelago of individually distinctive islands</i> 	
<p>This is an archipelago of individual, contrasting islands, each with its own recognisable profile when viewed from afar and each possessing its own distinct landscape, history and culture.</p> <p>Rum is a mountainous island of moorland, rock, cliffs and glen, distinctive with its high ridge of the Rum Cuillin. It is mostly wild and uninhabited, except for the small settlement in the sheltered woodlands at the head of Loch Sresort.</p> <p>Canna, together with its smaller neighbour of Sanday, is more horizontal in form although with vertical scarps and</p>	<p>Each island possesses its own distinct characteristics, and it is this heterogeneity within a small archipelago that is key to the quality of the NSA as a whole.</p> <p><u>Rum</u> (population 30*): most of the island is uninhabited apart from around Kinloch, with large tracts of moorland and mountain terrain, dominating the islands topography. Within Kinloch Glen is the Castle and walled garden, policy woodland, pasture, and extensive areas of new, native, planted woodland.</p> <p><u>Canna & Sanday</u> (pop.12*): the settlement is centred on the low lying relatively sheltered bay between southeast Canna and Sanday. Most of Canna consists of stepped, basalt plateau, covered by moorland, with high cliffs along its north coast. However,</p>

cliffs. Much of the island is farmed and its small population is centred around the sheltered Canna Harbour.

Eigg, higher than Canna, is distinguished by its long basalt cliffs and its dramatic Sgurr – a long ridge from some quarters, and a sharp peak from other angles. With centres of habitation at the northwest and southeast, it contains an active crofting community.

Muck, the smallest of the four, is low-lying, with a wedge-shaped profile, and comes across as a farmed, productive landscape.

the southeast corner is particularly sheltered and fertile, with lush fields, a working livestock farm and crofts. There are also several small plantation woodlands in this area. The low ground of Tarbert to the west is also enclosed pasture.

Eigg (pop. 67*): most of the population is centred on Galmisdale, Kildonan and Cleadale, and above the basalt cliffs on An Cruchan. It is an island of crofts, with rich grazing pastures and meadows especially around Cleadale, deciduous woodlands, young conifer plantations and also exotic garden planting around the Lodge and at Galmisdale. There are large areas of rough moorland to the southwest and the north.

Muck (pop. 30*): the population mainly resides in Port Mor, with the Berinn Airein and Eilean nan Each areas uninhabited. It has coastal topography with inland rough grassland. The farm has low lying, fertile, well managed fields, with lush pastures and arable cultivation. There are some small plantations.

* 2001 Census returns

• **Populated fertile areas within a hinterland of moorland**

The islands all have pockets of habitation standing out in contrast to a hinterland of wilder, uncultivated moorland. Human populations are small and settlements occur on low-lying, sheltered bays.

However where there is shelter, the eroded volcanic soils are fertile, with plantations and lush pasture. These areas have always been attractive to humans and evidence for human settlement goes back millennia.

A song taken down in Uist in 1893 shows how special the Small Isles were to the people of the Hebrides (Cheape 2008):

“If I were dividing the land,
You would have your share instantly.
You should have Rum and Eigg,
Canna and the Isle of Muck.”

*‘Nam bithinn-sa roinn an fhearainn,
Cha b’ e ur cuid a bhith falamh dheth,
Bu leibh Rum is Eige,
‘S Canaigh is Eilean nam Muc.’*

The North Atlantic Current provides a mild humid climate but the islands also experience frequent Atlantic gales. However, where there is shelter, the generally rich soils can provide good growing conditions for grass, crops and trees. In many places areas once cultivated have reverted to moorland.

• ***A geology of ancient igneous activity***

Although each island has its own unique appearance, all have been formed or shaped through Tertiary volcanic activity, resulting in hard, resistant rocks that result in landscapes of drama.

Canna, Muck and Eigg are the outpourings of vast, horizontal lava flows, with vertical, columnar cliffs visible in many places. The southern end of Rum contains the remains of an ancient volcano and a granite batholith, both intruded through the surrounding Torridonian sandstone.

Rum has been highly shaped by a extinct Tertiary volcano and has some of the most distinctive massifs and peaks composed of gabbro, peridotite and some basaltic lavas. Additionally, the western granite hills are the remains of a Tertiary batholith.

Canna is shaped by horizontal, basaltic lava flows forming a large plateau and has a stepped geometric morphology, with cliffs and platforms in sequence repeating itself, and with some columnar jointing.

Eigg is dominated by Tertiary basaltic lava, creating plateaux and cliffs, forming the natural amphitheatre around Cleadale, the imposing cliffs on the coast, and the vertical ridge and peak of An Sgurr. Columnar jointing is visible in some cliffs.

Muck is generally flatter and low lying, with a stepped, basaltic landscape of small, vertical crags and flat-topped hills.

• ***A dramatic coastline***

The coastline of all the islands is impressive and spectacular. It is predominantly steep and rocky and common to all are cliffs, caves, natural arches, wave-cut platforms, skerries, isles, stacs and raised beaches.

Sandy shores provide a gentler contrast but are rare, and generally restricted to single bays on the north sides of the islands. Harbours all occur in eastern bays, sheltered from the full fury of the Atlantic gales.

On Canna, Eigg and Muck the coastline is derived from the weathering of stepped basaltic lavas, often with vertical columns. In contrast, most of the coastline of Rum is derived from Torridonian Sandstone, with cliffs of igneous rocks along its southwest coast.

• ***Remote but centrally located within the Hebrides archipelago***

The Small Isles are centrally located within the Hebrides, and in the past when sea travel was the predominant means of travel along the Scotland's west coast, they were relatively accessible.

Nowadays they come across as distant and remote, the nearest being over an hour's ferry journey from the mainland. This feeling of distance is also felt when on the islands themselves, where island-

In recent years, vehicular access has been improved with roll-on/roll-off ferry facilities provided at every island, although as vehicle access is limited to residents, the islands retain a remote feel - especially as ferries can still be subject to the vicissitudes of the weather.

<p>life is all important and bad weather can fracture the links to the mainland.</p> <p>Their central location does give them commanding views to the surrounding coasts, mountains and islands, whether from Beinn Aireir on Muck, the Sgurr of Eigg, the Rum Cuillin or Compass Hill on Canna.</p>	
<p>• Abundance of wildlife</p>	
<p>The landscape abounds with wildlife, both on the islands and on the seas between them: eagles and buzzards soaring overhead, numerous seabirds including Manx shearwaters, fulmars and puffins; seals and otters along the shore, and basking sharks and minke whales in the Sound of Rum. During the spring and summer the meadows and heaths possess a profusion of wildflowers.</p>	<p>The white-tailed sea eagle was first introduced to Scotland on Rum, and both these and golden eagles can be seen in the area.</p> <p><u>Rum</u> is a National Nature Reserve famous for its rich upland plant life, its populations of Manx shearwaters inhabiting the hill slopes, a well studied herd of red deer and the reintroduced sea eagle.</p> <p><u>Canna</u> has a rich flora and seabird colonies now recovering with the recent eradication of rats.</p> <p><u>Eigg</u> contains many unimproved meadows, rich in wildflowers.</p> <p><u>Muck</u> contains over 300 Greylag geese in winter and in summer the scent of the clover-rich fields is particularly memorable.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific qualities</i></p>	
<p>Island of Rum</p>	
<p>• The distinctive silhouette of the Rum Cuillin</p>	
<p>The towering Cuillin of Rum, with their distinctive and dramatic profile, are recognisable from many parts of the west coast. They have sharp ridges and pyramidal peaks, with corries, lochans, screes, numerous rock outcrops and extensive flanks of moorland.</p> <p>The mountains have a strong, imposing presence. Although not as high as their neighbours, the Black Cuillin on Skye, the Rum Cuillin present an equivalent island mountain topography and are popular with mountaineers and walkers.</p> <p>This mountainous landscape rises up from an equally impressive coastline of</p>	<p>Rum is described by John MacCulloch (1824): <i>'There is a great deal of stormy magnificence about the lofty cliffs as there is generally all around the shores of Rum; and they are in most places abrupt as they are inaccessible from the sea. The interior is one heap of rude mountains, scarcely possessing an acre of level land. It is the wildest and most repulsive of all the islands... The outlines of Halival and Haskavel are indeed elegant and render the island a beautiful and striking object from the sea.'</i></p> <p><i>'The silhouette of Rum is one of the most dramatic sights on Scotland's west coast.'</i> Aubrey Manning, quoted in SNH (2007)</p> <p>Rum is instantly recognisable with its mountainous presence as 'The Big Small Isle', and is best seen from a distance</p>

<p>cliffs, natural arches and raised beaches.</p>	<p>where the profile of the mountainous isle and sections of its rocky coast can be observed. Views are particularly impressive from the Bay of Laig on Eigg, from the island of Sanday or the hills of Canna.</p> <p>Both the Skye and Rum Cuillin have a similar geological composition, of basic, gabbro, igneous rocks forming jagged edges, ridges and peaks. However, the Rum Cuillin tend to be more gently sloped and rounded. The north of the island is composed of the Pre-Cambrian Torridonian Sandstone.</p>
<p>• <i>A wild, now empty landscape</i></p>	
<p>Rum has long had a reputation for being 'the forbidden isle', owing to its forbidding and impenetrable appearance from the sea, and its history of clearances and elitist private ownership.</p> <p>Nowadays the island is a reserve for nature, a place for species reintroduction, habitat restoration and biodiversity research. But it is also a place for people, whether visitors enjoying the island's scenery and wildlife, or, with the recent introduction of crofting, a place to live.</p> <p>Settlement is restricted to Kinloch, where the policy woodlands and sandstone castle dominate the scene. Away from this area, the landscape is wild and uninhabited, a place to experience nature in peace and to find solitude.</p> <p>However, at least on the lower ground, it was not always thus. People have lived on the island since at least Mesolithic times and there are many features visible in the landscape dating from earlier periods: old lazybeds, abandoned settlements and shielings; the ruins of houses in the woods on the south shore of Loch Scresort; the graveyard on Kilmory coast; and the large Harris mausoleum of the Bullough family.</p>	<p><i>'The island of Rum will one day be considered, if not the most remarkable of the Hebrides, at least a very important field of inquiry.'</i> Edward Daniel Clarke (1797).</p> <p>Rum contains evidence of some of the earliest human habitation in Scotland, with evidence of a Mesolithic settlement at Loch Scresort dating back 9,000 years.</p> <p>The island suffered from wholesale clearances in the 19th century with the whole island cleared bar one farmer, to be replaced with sheep; for example, Harris once had a population of over 200 people. This led to the abandonment of many settlements across the island, and wholesale shipment of people to the New World.</p> <p>The island was turned into a shooting estate by the Marquis of Salisbury who introduced red deer. Thereafter it had a variety of owners, the last private one being the Bullough family who used it as a private sporting estate. They built the sandstone Kinloch Castle, which stands as a monument to a bygone era, and their graves still lie in a mock classical Mausoleum at Harris.</p> <p>Crofting was introduced to Kinloch Glen in 2009.</p>

Islands of Canna and Sanday	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The sanctuary of Canna Harbour</i> 	
<p>Canna Harbour provides an intimate sanctuary in the midst of mountain and sea. The houses round the bay, the lush fields, and the scent of clover, the woodland plantations and the sheltered harbour are a pleasing contrast after the wilds of Rum and Skye. They also contrast with the open moorland landscape that covers much of Canna itself.</p> <p>When arriving at Canna Harbour, the immediate presence of St. Edward's Church, St. Columba's Church and St Columba's Chapel around the natural harbour emphasise the long religious history of the island.</p>	<p>Evidence of Canna's religious history comes from the carved stone cross marking the site of Keill, an ancient Christian settlement dating back to St. Columba's time; to the west lies the remains of the Nunnery Rubha Sgorr nam Ban-naomha. The 'rocket' tower of St. Columba Presbyterian Church resembles many of the Scottish and Irish round towers dating from medieval periods.</p> <p>St. Edwards Catholic Church on Sanday was built for the visiting herring fishermen. It commands a prominent position over the harbour, with the mountains of Rum providing a fitting backdrop.</p> <p>Settlement is nowadays centred around the harbour, although there is much evidence on the ground indicating it was once significantly more widespread.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Columnar cliffs</i> 	
<p>Whether crossing Sanday, travelling the coast road to Tarbert, climbing up to Compass Hill or standing above the northern cliffs, a striking feature is the abrupt, vertical, columnar cliffs that occur throughout the landscape.</p>	<p>The basaltic lava flow from which Canna is derived results in a stepped topography of vertical cliffs and horizontal plains.</p>
Island of Eigg	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Sgurr of Eigg</i> 	
<p>An Sgurr dominates the southern end of the island and is a highly distinctive landmark from the surrounding coasts and seas. Rising vertically above the settlement of Galmisdale, the narrow peak is composed of dark, bare rock.</p>	<p>The Sgurr makes Eigg distinctive from afar, either appearing as a long, gently-sloping ridge with a vertical end, or when viewed end-on, as a steep-sided cone. It is the largest outcrop of pitchstone in Scotland.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The fascinating shapes and sounds of the Cleadale Coast</i> 	
<p>With the spectacular, mountainous backdrop of Rum, the Bay of Laig is impressive in many ways. The basalt cliffs create a towering, natural rock amphitheatre, with waterfalls, gullies and pinnacles.</p>	<p>The Jurassic sandstones and the harder basalt and pitchstone have weathered to create unusual shapes.</p> <p>The Victorian geologist Hugh Miller discovered a variety of fossils in the bay and said of the Bay of Laig that there were '<i>few finer scenes in the Hebrides</i>' (1858).</p>

<p>The shore contains many geological curios including honeycombed sandstone cliffs and a wave-cut platform with spherical and cylindrical rocks. The Singing Sands at Camas Sgiotaig emit a high pitched squeak when walked over, due to the silica grains rubbing against each other, and to the south is a small natural rock arch. Basalt dykes bisect the beach to form geometric outcrops.</p>	
<p>Island of Muck</p>	
<p>• <i>A productive island farm</i></p>	
<p>Muck is less rugged than its neighbours and is on a more intimate and domestic scale. Its coastline is heavily dissected and, with its numerous rocky inlets, skerries and islands, displays great variety and interest. Inland it is the green fields and fertile pastures that draw the eye, although areas of rough moorland and stepped cliffs are also common. The perception is of a working, productive landscape.</p>	<p><i>'Most of the island is a single farm with the sea as the boundary.'</i> MacEwen (2008)</p> <p>Muck's igneous soils are rich and have produced rich grazing lands, while some land is given over to crop growing. The settlement is related to the farm and is compact. Coastal rocks are generally orientated northwest-southeast.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Cheape, H. & Cheape, J. (undated). *Gaelic Ring: The Small Isles - Muck, Eigg, Rum and Canna*. www.gaelic-rings.com (accessed December 2008)

Clarke, E.D. 1797. Quoted in: Rixson, Dennis, 2001. *The Small Isles: Canna, Rum, Eigg and Muck*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

Environmental Resources Management 1998. Lochaber Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No.97*.

Love, J. 2001. *Rum*. Edinburgh: Birlinn,.

Lorne Campbell, J. 2002. *Canna*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

MacCulloch, J. 1824. *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland. Vol. IV*. London.

MacEwen, L. 2008. *The Isle of Muck a short guide*. www.isleofmuck.com (accessed December 2008)

Martins, S. 1987. *Eigg: an Island Landscape*. Glenfarg: Countryside Publishing,.

Miller, H. 1858. *The Cruise of the Betsey*. Edinburgh: Constable.

RCAHMS 1999. Canna: the archaeology of a Hebridean landscape. RCAHMS Broadsheet No.5.

RCAHMS 2003. Eigg: the archaeology of a Hebridean landscape. *RCAHMS Broadsheet No.12*.

Scottish Natural Heritage 2004. *Rum and the Small Isles: A Landscape Fashioned by Geology*.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) 2007. *Rum Nature's Island*,

Urquhart, J. & Ellington, E. 1987. *Eigg*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

www.isleofrum.com (accessed December 2008)

TROTTERNISH NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The eastern aspect of the peninsula of Trotternish affords an unusual landscape which combines the spectacular scenery of landslip topography with the fascination of columnar basaltic rock structures. Huge masses of basalt have collapsed at the Quirang to make a landscape of rock pinnacles interspersed with moist green meadows and tiny lochans. Below these strange formations lie peat moors and, on the better land, crofting settlements with improved land affording a green contrast to the brown moors.

On the seaward side the whole landscape drops suddenly into the sea in cliffs of varying height, but made up of more regular columnar formations of basalt. These 'kilt rock' cliffs have occasional waterfalls dropping sheer into the sea and afford spectacular views over the South of Raasay to the fjord coast of the mainland. The culmination of the finest features of this north-eastern coast of Skye centres on Staffin Bay, where the pattern of crofting settlement is enclosed to the west by the spectacular relief of the Quirang.

The Special Qualities of the Trotternish National Scenic Area

- The unique Trotternish landslip topography
- Contrast between the platform of moorland and the ridge above
- The human dimension of crofting settlement
- Variations from dark to light across the landscape
- Dramatic sea-cliffs of basaltic columns
- Distant views over the sea
- Mysterious presence of the Quiraing

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The unique Trotternish landslip topography</i> 	
<p>The Trotternish ridge forms the western boundary to the NSA. The whole eastern slope of these hills has, over the millennia, slipped downwards, creating a strange and unusual landscape in which the spectacular Quiraing provides the focus. It is the largest landslip of its kind in Europe, containing small hills broken away from the fissured cliffs above, small lochs in the hollows below, black pinnacles, and slopes both smooth and disordered.</p>	<p>Tertiary lavas and igneous intrusions have been deposited on older Jurassic sedimentary rocks, creating enormous pressure and instability, leading to massive landslips, which are still active. The landslip topography is particularly complex in the area around Digg.</p> <p>The landslips have also created steep, fissured cliffs of basalt at the higher levels.</p> <p>Much of inland, northern Skye consists of undulating moorland, with little topographic drama to excite the eye. Hence, when approaching the NSA from the south, west or north, excitement is provided as bleak moorland gives way to views of the Trotternish Ridge. The effect is particularly dramatic when approaching along the narrow road from Uig.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contrast between the platform of moorland and the ridge above</i> 	
<p>The mountain ridge, with its undulating horizon and its landslip below, provides an ever-present backdrop, hanging over the moorland and crofts beneath. It provides the whole landscape with a feeling of security and enclosure.</p> <p>Extending from the base of these hills to the top of the sea cliffs is a platform of dark and undulating moorland. It provides a foil to the ridge and a setting for croft and settlement.</p>	<p>The long ridge runs north from Pein a' Chleibh/ A'Chorra Bheinn, just north of Portree (outside the NSA) to Sgurr Mor (the northern boundary of the NSA). Its constantly changing profile dominates the western side of the NSA, with its variety of slopes, shapes and edges (both curvilinear and rectilinear) complimented by lochans on the lower slopes.</p> <p>The moorland separates the sea from the ridge, and the eastern half is the location for much of the crofting settlement.</p> <p>In the middle ground of rounded and stepped moorland, human activity becomes limited to</p>

	<p>peat extraction and sheep grazing.</p> <p>The lower slopes of the ridge, with their relative rich swards on the fertile volcanic soils, step up again to the uninhabited, and wilder upland areas of unstable landslip topography, steep cliffs and a summit of rounded ridge.</p>
<p>• <i>The human dimension of crofting settlement</i></p>	
<p>The well-maintained crofts, with their white-washed cottages and actively-managed inbye land, provide contrast and human scale to the wilder backdrop of landslip and moorland.</p> <p>Human settlement feels long established with remains of brochs and duns to be found around Loch Mealt. These, together with the extensive remains of pre-crofting settlements and field systems, create a sense of long occupation of the landscape.</p>	<p>Crofts occupy the land between the moor and the sea. Generally the pattern is linear, the crofts following the mainly straight roads. Below the landscape of the Quiraing itself, the houses fit snugly into the broken hill-slope.</p>
<p>• <i>Variations from dark to light across the landscape</i></p>	
<p>The dark, distinctive rock formations of the Trotternish ridge contrast with the green flushes of rich vegetation on the slopes below. These contrast again with the darker browns of the sweeping expanse of moorland, which in turn contrast with the greens of the crofting pastures.</p>	<p>The dark, basalt rocks gives rise to large areas of bare rock, but in contrast the eroded rock provides a rich soil, with green swathes of vegetation. The acid and peaty soils of the smooth moorland, results in a darker vegetation pattern of heather and other plants.</p> <p>On a smaller scale, white lichens growing on the basaltic cliffs can add contrast to the generally dark cliffs.</p>
<p>• <i>Dramatic sea-cliffs of basaltic columns</i></p>	
<p>The interplay of igneous and sedimentary rock has created an unusual, interesting coastline with sheer cliffs and fascinating columns of basalt.</p> <p>The coast is particular spectacular at Kilt Rock, where the vertical cliffs are enlivened by a waterfall tumbling straight into the sea.</p>	<p>The Jurassic sedimentary rocks have bedding planes overlain by Tertiary igneous basaltic rock with distinctive hexagonal columnar jointing. Coastal erosion has resulted in sheer formations along much of the coast of the NSA, although these are often invisible from the land. Kilt Rock is one location where the sea cliffs can be appreciated.</p> <p>The columns appear crafted by humans, giving rise to folk tales about their legendary origin</p>
<p>• <i>Distant views over the sea</i></p>	
<p>The Trotternish ridge tends to draw the</p>	<p>Most of the coast of the NSA consists of</p>

<p>eye to the west, whereas to the east the vistas are wider, across the Minch with its shifting patterns of waves, sky and cloud. The distant mountains of Wester Ross can be spectacular on a clear day, above islands which appear to be floating in the sea.</p> <p>However, from much of the platform of moorland, croftland and settlement the sea itself is invisible, but always there as presence below and beyond.</p>	<p>sheer cliffs with the crofts and moorland on a platform above. Hence there is little direct link between the settlements and the sea. Only in the rocky, crescent bay of Staffin does the sea directly link with the wider landscape, but even here the houses are set well back from the sea, as if distancing themselves.</p> <p>Views to the mainland, weather permitting, provide a stunning panorama, including the nearby islands of Staffin and Flodigaray, and the more distant islands of Rona and Raasay.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific quality</i></p>	
<p>• Mysterious presence of the Quiraing</p>	
<p>The distinctive shapes of the Prison, The Table, The Needle and the surrounding slopes that comprise the Quiraing have fascinated visitors to Skye since Victorian times, if not beyond.</p> <p>It presents a feeling of mystery, and when amongst the pinnacles there is a spiritual, cathedral-like feeling – soaring cliffs, narrow pillars, and the crofts far below visible through narrow frames of rock. In the heart of this amphitheatre of sloping and vertical ground, the smooth, level, green table comes as a complete surprise.</p> <p>On misty days, with ravens croaking unseen in the air above, it takes on a mysterious, other-worldly presence.</p> <p>The winding, single track road from Brogbaig, with its hairpin bends, adds to the drama, giving one of the finest views of the Quiraing.</p>	<p>The possible translation of Quiraing from the Gaelic is 'crooked enclosure' or 'pillared stronghold.'</p> <p>Low pressure systems constantly come in off the Atlantic, bringing low cloud and sea mist to the cliffs and landslips. This adds to the sense of drama (and justifies the Norse naming Skye 'The Misty Isle').</p> <p>The scene can feel almost other worldly, further enhanced by ravens flying and croaking around the rocks and cliffs. It is best seen on a misty day, with dramatic blacks suddenly looming out of the mist:</p> <p><i>'The Quirang is a nightmare of nature... is frozen terror and superstition. This is a huge spire or cathedral of rock some thousand feet in height, with rocky spires or needles sticking out of it. Macbeth's weird sisters stand on the blasted heath, and Quirang stands in a region as wild as itself. The country around is strange and abnormal, rising into rocky ridges here, like the spine of some huge animal, sinking into hollows there, with pools in the hollows—glimmering almost always through drifts of misty rain.</i></p> <p><i>'The ascent of Quirang may be pleasant enough; but a clear day you seldom find, for on spectral precipices and sharp-pointed rocky needles, the weeping clouds of the Atlantic have made their chosen home. When you ascend, with every ledge and block slippery, every runnel a torrent, the wind taking liberties.'</i> Alexander Smith (1865).</p> <p>The Quiraing has attracted film-makers and been in films as diverse as the <i>Land that Time Forgot</i>, <i>Breaking the Waves</i>, and <i>The Wicker Man</i>.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Campbell, A. P. 2000. *Trotternish* (leaflet), Travellers Companion, McDermott Marketing.

Robertson, G. 1993. *Isle of Skye Data Atlas*. Portree: Skye Forum.

Simpson, D. 1967. *Portrait of Skye & Outer Hebrides*. London: Robert Hale.

Slessor, M. 1970. *Island of Skye*, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, Edinburgh.

Stanton, C. 1996. Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 71*.

Sillar, F.C. & Meyler, R.M. 1973. *Skye*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles.

Smith, A. 1865. *A Summer in Skye*. Reprinted in 2004, Edinburgh: Birlinn.

www.ambaile.org.uk Highland History and Culture. (accessed February 2008)

WESTER ROSS NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Highland*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The area combines six of the great mountain groups of Scotland. The names of the outstanding individual peaks and their profiles are perhaps better known than the slopes of the mountains themselves, and the descriptive literature is full of hyperbole, at which few beholders of the scene would demur.

To traverse the area from the beetling crags and precipitous corries of the Applecross Forest to the jagged teeth of An Teallach is to experience a sustained crescendo of mountain scenery which could leave no spectator unmoved. Murray has described Liathach in the Torridon Group as 'the most soaring mountain in the North,' and many writers concur with his opinion that An Teallach 'is one of the half dozen most splendid mountains in Scotland,' and that 'its eastern corrie, Toll an Lochain, is one of the greatest sights in Scotland.'

It would be superfluous to describe the individual qualities of all the intervening mountains. For most people their names will suffice to conjure up the splendour of the scene: Ben Damph, Beinn Eighe, Beinn Alligin, Slioch, A'Mhaighdean, Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Beinn Làir, Beinn Dearg Mhor. The area is frequently described as the last great wilderness of Scotland, but contains much that is of a serene and gentler beauty than the rugged splendour of mountain fastnesses.

Loch Maree has been described as 'one of the two most excellent of Scotland's big inland waters' (Murray) and 'the embodiment of what is called Highland Grandeur' (Weir). Of Loch Torridon, Wainwright writes: 'Without the loch, Torridon would be a fearful place, but with it, there is not a grander prospect to be found in Scotland. 'Many other water bodies, notably Loch Shieldaig, Loch Damh, Loch Clair, the Fionn-Fada lochs, Loch-na-Sealga and Loch Tournai contribute variety of character to the scene.

With the exception of the Fionn-Fada group these lochs have in varying degrees shores which between rocky headlands are frequently wooded with semi-natural woodlands of oak, birch, and Scots pine, which together with moorland and scrub soften the lower lying parts of the area to make a gentle foil for the starker mountains.

Around the coast Gruinard Bay, Loch Ewe and Loch Gairloch exhibit a pleasing mixture of beaches, islands, headlands, inlets, woodlands and crofting settlements. The bleaker promontories of Rubha Mor and Rubha Reidh, though not of high intrinsic scenic merit in themselves, are visually inseparable from the mountain backdrop and only at Red Point does the rather plain local scene lose the advantage of this prospect.

The Special Qualities of the Wester Ross National Scenic Area

- Scenic splendour
- Human settlement within a vast natural backdrop
- The spectacular and magnificent mountains
- Recognisable mountain profiles
- Stark geology and rock
- The large sweeps of open, expansive moorland
- The distinctive and populated coastal settlements
- Woodlands and trees that soften the landscape
- Great tracts of wild and remote land
- The superb coast and coastal views
- The abundance of water, a foreground to dramatic views
- A landscape of many layers, with visual continuity of coastal, moorland and mountain
- The ever-changing weather and light
- Loch Maree and Slioch, one of the most iconic and recognisable landscapes in Scotland
- The spectacular high mountain pass of the Bealach na Bà

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic splendour 	
<p>Wester Ross is renowned for its scenic splendour. It is a landscape of distinctive mountains and lochs, of great swathes of moorland, of ancient woods and open peatland, of beautiful coasts and sweeping views.</p> <p>The mountains can be jagged or rounded, terraced or scree-covered; the cliffs can be vast or intimate, the moorland rough or smooth; the coasts can be straight or indented, rocky or sandy; the sea lochs open or enclosed, and lochs linear or irregular.</p> <p>The juxtaposition of so many different landforms ensures the scenery is endlessly varied and always dramatic – and no two views are ever the same.</p>	<p>Wester Ross: 'A landscape that is widely valued both for its beauty and its bleakness, with its dramatic combinations of mainly barren mountain and coastal scenery.' NTS (2007)</p> <p>'It is one of the least hospitable and yet most beautiful parts of Scotland and the most rugged of the Highlands.' Johnston and Balharry (2001).</p> <p>Landforms include rocky peaks, ridges and plateaux; spectacular mountain corries and deep glens; cnocan topography and extensive peat-covered moorland; individual rocks and boulders; a multitude of freshwater and sea lochs, lochans, rivers and burns; and a coast of headlands, bays, cliffs, beaches and rocky shores.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human settlement within a vast natural backdrop 	

After travelling through a wild, moorland landscape, there is always a sense of arrival when centres of population are reached, of reaching a safe haven. The contrast between the populated, cultivated coast and the uninhabited, wilder and mountainous interior is marked.

Inland, grand mountain landscapes dominate, whether enclosed glen or distant panorama. On the coast, there are both expansive views over the Minch and shorter views across to the far shore of a sea loch. This dominance of nature contrasts with the hospitable and intimate detail of crofting settlement, where the eye is drawn to a house, a garden or an enclosed field.

One of the most distinctive features of the NSA is the contrast between the vast mountains and the small, intimate scale human settlements. This is well illustrated by the settlement of Fasag on Upper Loch Torridon, which has Liathach towering up behind.

Except for Kinlochewe, the interior of the NSA is largely uninhabited, with settlement confined to coastal areas. Some of the settlements are in sheltered bays, whereas others such as Melvaig are on exposed, coastal slopes.

There is evidence of human occupation in this area dating back to prehistory. In the past, a few inland areas were more widely settled, for example along Loch Maree, where woodlands were managed to support ironworking in the 18th century.

• ***The spectacular and magnificent mountains***

Many magnificent mountains rise precipitously and dominate the view. These can tower above the glens or rise straight from sea or loch. Their extent, sheer solid mass and physical three-dimensional presence dominates all of Wester Ross.

The mountain scenery is always spectacular, with the corries and vertical rock walls of Beinn Bhàn, Coire Mhic Fhearchair (Beinn Eighe) and Coire Toll an Lochain (An Teallach) being particularly impressive. The area has some of the most challenging and exhilarating mountain walks and climbs in the British Isles.

'Near vertical mountains and sea contained within one view.' Highland Council (2002)

'Torridon has perhaps one of the most dramatic and distinctive landscapes in the British Isles, comparing favourably with other mountain areas of the world, with steep-sided glens and razor sharp mountain ridges, rising almost vertically from sea level.' NTS (2007)

The area contains several major massifs, all renowned for their steep-sided and rocky mountains: the Applecross Mountains, the Torridon Mountains, the Coulin Hills, and the extensive area between Loch Maree and Little Loch Broom (the Fisherfield, Letterewe and Strathnasheallag Forests).

The eastern cliffs of Beinn Lair are the longest inland cliffs in Britain.

Many mountains appear at first sight impregnable, and can only be ascended in a few places. The ridges can be narrow and frightening, sometimes necessitating scrambling. The Carn Mòr Craggs above Fionn Loch provide some of the finest rock climbing in Britain; and in suitable conditions, the mountain corries some of the finest winter climbing.

• **Recognisable mountain profiles**

Although they exist in definite groups, each individual mountain has a unique shape and profile, making it distinct and readily identifiable.

Some of the most vertical and famous mountains in Scotland can be found here, such as Liathach, Beinn Alligin, Beinn Eighe, Slioch and An Teallach.

A key characteristic of the Wester Ross mountains is that they tend to have no foothills, but rise straight from sea level or thereabouts, sometimes up to 1000m in height.

Many peaks once visited or climbed leave a strong visual impression on the mind, and are recognisable landmarks. Some of the most familiar are:

- The precipitous corries, cliffs and ridge of the Applecross mountains.
- The distinctive pyramidal, terraced individual Torridon peaks of Liathach and Ben Alligin.
- Ben Eighe, with its serrated ridge of quartzite above Kinlochewe.
- The dome-like Maol Chean-dearg above Glen Torridon.
- Slioch, a towering castellated peak above Loch Maree.
- The terraced north end of Baosbheinn above Loch Bad na Sgalaig.
- The twin peaks of Beinn Airigh Charr overlooking Loch Ewe and Inverewe Garden.
- The rounded mass of Sail Mhor above Little Loch Broom.
- The jagged ridge and pinnacles of An Teallach.

• **Stark geology and rock**

The prominence of bare rock is a particularly distinctive feature and appears in a variety of forms. The cnooc and lochan landscape of Lewisian gneiss is notable in many low-ground areas. The pink, terraced cliffs of the Torridonian mountains are also unmistakable, as are the white, scree-covered slopes of Cambrian quartzite. In many places, individual large boulders lie scattered on the ground, dropped randomly by the retreating ice.

The presence of so much rock lends the landscape a hard, barren aspect. The geology, being generally impermeable, acidic and resistant to weathering, has given a vegetation cover dominated by infertile heaths and bog.

However, the very hardness and resistance of the rock, combined with extensive glaciation in the past, has

The NSA is mostly west of the Moine Thrust and has a distinctive and easily understandable geology: there is a base layer of Lewisian gneiss, and sitting unconformably on this is the horizontally stratified, pink Torridonian sandstone. These are both ancient, Pre-Cambrian formations, and the gneiss in the Gruinard Bay area is amongst the oldest rocks in the world at 2.5 billion years old. Above the Torridonian sandstone is the horizontally bedded, white and brittle Cambrian quartzite.

Where the Lewisian gneiss outcrops on the lower ground it results in cnooc and lochan topography, with the whitish rock and small cliffs particularly distinctive. The Torridonian sandstone low ground, in contrast, tends to be smoother and peat-covered.

Where the gneiss underlies the higher ground it can result in more rounded hills, such as east of Fionn Loch. In contrast the hills of Torridonian sandstone are particularly distinctive with their horizontal strata, and layer upon layer of pink cliffs.

<p>resulted in the spectacular landscape that today is highly valued.</p>	<p>Cambrian quartzite, which outcrops on some mountains, tends to break-up into block scree as can be seen on Beinn Eighe.</p> <p>Glaciation has resulted in narrow arêtes, steep, flat-bottomed glens, impressive corries and extensive morainic deposits. The hummocky moraine south of Coire Dubh in Glen Torridon is particularly well-known.</p>
<p>• <i>The large sweeps of open, expansive moorland</i></p>	
<p>Not all the landscape consists of high mountains. There are large tracts of moorland, some areas rocky and uneven, and others smooth and peat-covered. The moors are studded with numerous lochs and lochans, and crossed by many burns and rivers. Many of these areas are uninhabited, adding to this expansive landscape a feeling of ruggedness and wildness.</p>	<p>The character of the moorland is dependent on whether the underlying rock is Lewisian gneiss (cnoc and lochan), or Torridonian sandstone (smoother with more blanket peat). Some of these moorland areas are coastal, e.g. the peninsulas of Rubha Rèidh and Greenstone Point.</p>
<p>• <i>The distinctive and populated coastal settlements</i></p>	
<p>There is a diversity of settlement, each distinctive in its own way. All but Kinlochewe overlook the sea, and most are crofting townships with the houses widely-spaced along no-through roads which pass through the enclosed inbye land and its rectilinear fields.</p> <p>However a few do have a concentration of houses along a street, such as the picturesque Shieldaig overlooking its eponymous loch and island, Fasag nestled below the towering Liathach, the population centre of Strath, and Poolewe around the loud waterfall of the River Ewe.</p> <p>Some townships such as North Erradale and Melvaig are above exposed coasts, while other settlements such as Badachro and Charleston surround a sheltered sea. Aultbea and the other settlements around Loch Ewe are famous for their association with the wartime naval base, with many structures from Second World War still remaining.</p>	<p>Many of the coastal crofting settlements were established during the Highland Clearances, although evidence suggests that many were laid out on top of older pre-improvement townships. The general pattern is of widely separated croft houses within the inbye land, which nowadays often consist of rush pasture with the fields separated by post and wire fences.</p> <p><u>Linear Crofting</u> is characterised by a strong regular pattern of clearly ordered crofting strips extending from the upper moorland down to the coastal edge. The houses often show similar orientations to their neighbours and reflect the direction of the prevailing winds. This character type is strongly influenced by the coast and sea.</p> <p><u>Scattered Crofting</u> is found throughout the area usually on irregular undulating ground slightly away from the coast. It has a complex pattern arising from a diverse mix of components such as small houses, scrub and trees, field boundaries and roads. The fields are delineated by stone walls or fences and are viewed as a series of criss-crossing lines which highlight the rolling land form.</p> <p>Within both types there are many new houses and agricultural structures, contrasting in scale with the older buildings. There are also many ruined or abandoned crofts, dwellings and byres.</p>

- **Woodlands and trees that soften the landscape**

Although woodlands cover only a relatively small area, where present they soften the rugged, mountain landscape.

In some areas, for example at Badachro, birchwoods can create a particular intimate feel, and the extensive native oak and birch woods along the north shore of Loch Maree accentuate the linearity of the Loch Maree Fault.

The hanging birchwoods on the northern slopes of Ben Shieldaig are impressive, as are the remnant Caledonian pinewoods of northeast Ben Shieldaig, Glas-Leitire and the islands of Loch Maree.

Pockets of native woodland, mostly downy birch are scattered throughout the NSA. The oakwoods along Loch Maree were exploited in the 18th century to provide charcoal for iron smelting.

There are old plantations such as around Upper Loch Torridon, Coulin, Kinlochewe, Letterewe, Kerrysdale, adjacent to the Gairloch-Poolewe Road, around Inverewe and Kernsary, Laide, Gruinard Bay and Dundonnell. There is also the extensive, commercial Forestry Commission planting at Slattadale.

However, trees only cover a small percentage of the landscape and do not dominate the NSA.

There are also numerous areas of recently planted new native woodland, including the largest new native woodland scheme in Scotland between Gairloch and Loch Maree. Other extensive plantings include Loch Damh, Glen Torridon, along the Fasag-Diabaig road, east of Loch Bad na Sgalaig, Tournaig, and south of Little Loch Broom. When these plantations age, they will significantly increase the dominance of trees in the landscape.

- **Great tracts of wild and remote land**

Roads and tracks are few and far between and much of the mountain landscape is renowned for being wild and remote, with a natural vegetation cover and few, if any, buildings or structures. Wild areas can be far distant from any road, only accessible by long walks on foot.

The grandeur of the mountains and the great hidden lochs that can be found between them, together with the wild, unpredictable weather, makes a visit to these remote areas particularly memorable.

However, wildness can also be found in many of the more accessible areas, whether along a stretch of undeveloped coast, a short walk into rocky moorland, or even beside the road where it traverses the mountain interior.

One can walk from Dundonnell to Kinlochewe over a distance of over 20 miles and not see an inhabited dwelling, and very few human artefacts.

Much of the mountain landscape of Wester Ross has been identified by SNH as Wild Land Search Areas.

The interior is either managed as deer forest or for conservation. Apart from Slattadale, and unlike much of the Highlands, blocks of commercial forestry are limited in extent, although in recent years significant areas of new native woodland have been planted.

The long walk through a wild landscape requires stamina and can necessitate fording burns and rivers. A'Mhaighdean is generally recognised as being the remotest Munro in Scotland (nine miles on foot from any road).

The annual 'Wilderness Challenge' is a sponsored walk through the heart of the wildest part of the NSA, from Poolewe to Dundonnell.

• ***The superb coast and coastal views***

The coast shows great variety, from the sheltered waters of Badachro, through the open sea loch of Loch Ewe, to the exposed cliffs of Melvaig.

When travelling along the twisting and winding coastal roads, the vistas are ever-changing. From views of small coastal settlements, bays, beaches and woodlands, to a vast mountainous panorama; from the interior moorlands, to horizons of distant islands.

Lone islands are the focal point to many views, and the view over the sands of Gruinard Bay to the distant peaks of Sutherland must be one of the most photographed in Scotland.

The uneven undulating topography creates a wide variety of visual experiences travelling through the NSA. On clear days, the islands of Lewis, Harris, Skye, the Shiantas and the Summer Isles are clearly visible.

The coastline detail comprises: sandy beaches, rocky shores, islands, headlands, cliffs, stacks, natural arches, small bays, inlets, coastal woodlands, fishing and crofting settlements.

Islands tend to be single rather than in groups, providing a focal point. They are: Shieldaig Island, originally planted with Scots pine to provide poles for hanging fishing nets; Longa Island, rough moorland containing a gull colony; the inhabited Isle of Ewe, farmed at the southern end and moorland northern end; and Gruinard Island, the centre of anthrax testing during the Second World War (out of bounds until 1990).

• ***The abundance of water, a foreground to dramatic views***

Water is everywhere evident in Wester Ross, from the large sea lochs, linear inland lochs and the fast flowing rivers, to the numerous rushing burns, irregular lochans and boggy pools. Reflections off the water and movement of waves and waterfalls can soften the starkness of the mountains.

Water often provides the foreground to dramatic mountain views. These are many and varied, including Liathach over Upper Loch Torridon or Loch Clair; Beinn Alligin over Lochs Torridon or Gairloch; Slioch over Loch Maree; Baosbheinn over Loch Bad an Sgalaig; Beinn Airigh Charr over Lochs Maree, Ewe or Kernsary; the Torridon Mountains over Loch Ewe; and, looking out of the NSA, the Sutherland hills over Gruinard Bay; and Beinn Ghobhlach over Little Loch Broom.

Also notable are the corrie lochs providing a foreground to the spectacular, backwall cliffs, and the numerous waterfalls which are particularly impressive when in spate.

The sea lochs tend to be wide and large-scale: Gruinard Bay, Loch Ewe, Loch Gairloch, Loch Torridon and Loch Kishorn. Only Upper Loch Torridon and both Loch Shieldaigs have an enclosed feel.

These are complemented by the large freshwater Loch Maree and the hidden Fionn Loch. Smaller, linear lochs occupy the remote, uninhabited glens: Loch Lundie, Loch Damh, Loch na h-Oidhche, Lochan Fada, Loch a'Bhealaich and Loch na Sealga. Numerous smaller, irregularly shaped lochs and lochans occupy large areas of the moorland interior, along with numerous wetland and bog areas.

There are also distinctive corrie lochans, the most impressive being Loch Coire na Caime surrounded by the northern cliffs of Liathach, Loch Coire Mhic Fhearchair by the cliffs of Beinn Eighe, and Loch Toll an Lochain enclosed by the cliffs of An Teallach.

Rivers tend to be short, fast-flowing and meandering along the flat, glen floor. Burns tend to be rocky, with numerous rapids and falls. Particularly notable are the rocky Little Gruinard River; the cascades of waterfalls on the Ardesie Burn; the Victoria Falls; and the long, thin waterfall of Allt na Still above Kinlochewe.

- **A landscape of many layers, with visual continuity of coastal, moorland and mountain**

There is a strong visual continuity between the mountains and coast. The extensive areas of moorland and moorland link the mountainous interior with the indented coast and islands.

In many views, receding horizons, one behind the other, provide a sense of distance and space. When looking inland, rocky foregrounds ascend to distant mountains; or when looking out from the mountains, receding layers descend into the distance.

Each layer can take on a different profile or hue, depending on the light or weather.

Coastal areas can be visually inseparable from the mountainous interior. This is illustrated well on the road through the rocky hills from Diabaig to Inveralligin, where visual continuity is provided from the shores of Loch Torridon to the Torridon mountains themselves. Or the view from Carn Dearg (Gairloch) Youth Hostel across Loch Gairloch and moorland to the Torridon mountains.

'The uneven shapes of mountain, ridge and rocky moorland provide a landscape and horizons that are richly varied, intricate, bold, unpredictable and exciting. The uneven shapes of the indented coastline are similarly varied.' Highland Council (2002)

- **The ever-changing weather and light**

The weather is ever-changing. Clouds, mists, rain, sunshine and light can make the landscape hazy and indistinct, or stark and rich in detail; can give distant views, or restrict visibility to the immediate surrounds; and can even determine whether the mountains are present or not.

Atlantic gales, continual winds and seemingly constant rain batter the landscape, so that there is a feeling of being at the mercy of the elements. However, in strong contrast, a benign, frost-free climate can be found in sheltered, coastal locations, such as at Badachro, in Flowerdale or at the world famous Inverewe Garden.

Hence the landscape can engender opposing emotions, from the enjoyment of a sunny, calm, sandy beach, to the experience of an exposed mountain ridge in the teeth of a gale.

The North Atlantic Current (a northern extension of the Gulf Stream) brings warm water to high latitudes. It moderates the climate, giving mild winters and cool summers.

However, the Atlantic Ocean also instigates a series of low pressure weather systems that cross the area, resulting in a general windy, wet and humid climate.

<i>Location-specific qualities</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loch Maree and Slioch, one of the most iconic and recognisable landscapes in Scotland 	
<p>Loch Maree must be one of the most beautiful and famous lochs in Scotland, with its wooded islands and shores, and Slioch towering up above.</p> <p>The first glimpse of the loch from Glen Docherty, the view up the loch from Tollie, and the view of Slioch from Slattadale are all memorable. The straight edge of the northern shore, following an ancient fault line, is balanced by the irregular southern shore with its rocks, bays and beaches.</p> <p>The wooded isles are clothed with fine examples of Caledonian pine forest, and Isle Maree is famed for its early Christian and pre Christian sites – and for its holy well which is said to be a cure for mental illness.</p>	<p>The loch lies on the ancient and straight Loch Maree Fault, which can be traced from Glen Docherty, along the north shore of the loch, along the west shore of Loch Ewe and inland to Camus Mor.</p> <p>Its shores and islands contains large areas of Caledonian pine forest which have been designated a National Nature Reserve.</p> <p>The remote Letterewe House, only accessible by boat, and its surrounding native woods and plantations create focal points on the north shore.</p> <p>It is one of the largest lochs in Scotland still with a natural waterline and outflow owing to the absence of hydro-electric engineering.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spectacular high mountain pass of the Bealach na Bà 	
<p>The Bealach na Bà on the road from Kishorn to Applecross is one of the most spectacular mountain roads in Scotland. It rises through the imposing corrie of Torridonian sandstone cliffs to reach, after hairpin bends and a gradient of 1 in 5, the mountain plateau at 600m (2000ft).</p>	<p>Before the building of the new road around the north coast of the Applecross Peninsula in the late 1960s, this route provided the only road access to Applecross. It was often cut off by snow in the winter.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Bennet, D. ed. 1986. *The Munros*. Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

Highland Council 2002. *Wester Ross National Scenic Area Revised Draft Management Strategy*.

Laughton Johnston, J., Balharry, D. 2001. *The Mountain Above The Wood*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

McIlveen, L. 1999. Ross and Cromarty, Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 119*.

- National Trust for Scotland 2007. *Torridon Estate Management Plan 2007-2012*.
- Omand, D. ed. 1984. *The Ross and Cromarty Book*. Golspie: Northern Times Ltd.
- Poucher, W. A. 1991. *The Scottish Peaks*. London: Constable.
- RCAHMS & Historic Scotland 2003. *The Historic Land Use Assessment of Wester Ross*.
- Watson, W. J. 1924. *Ross and Cromarty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- www.ambaile.org.uk Highland History and Culture. (accessed February 2009).

South Lewis, Harris & North Uist

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:250,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

SOUTH LEWIS, HARRIS AND NORTH UIST NATIONAL SCENIC AREA *Eilean Siar (Western Isles)*

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

There is a striking contrast between the subdued topography of most of Lewis and the bold rugged hills of South Lewis and Harris which, viewed from the north, rise abruptly out of an expanse of blanket bog. Around the rugged hills, there are a number of different contrasting lowland and coastal landscapes. These have been identified as knock-and-lochan, rocky indented coast, and wide sandy machair beaches contained between rocky headlands. Each type has elements of its own which combine to produce landscapes with a variety of form, colour and grain, which are further diversified by changes of scale and aspect.

North Harris has the highest peaks in the Outer Hebrides. On a clear day views from Clisham (799m) span from Cape Wrath to the Cuillins and St Kilda. The glens are steep-sided and precipitous crags which, despite their relatively low altitude, give to the hills a mountainous character that compares favourably with better known mainland massifs. Exposure and grazing prevent tree growth, and the scenic quality depends on landform and intervisibility with surrounding landscapes, these doing much to enhance the significance of the mountains.

In the east deep fjords, like Loch Seaforth, penetrate the hills, with the surprising presence of tidal water apparently far inland. The east coast of Harris is deeply dissected knock-and-lochan topography, with innumerable bays and islets, where the pattern of crofting settlement enjoys a particularly close relationship with the landform. It is a small scale landscape of detailed variety and visual pleasure that contrasts strongly with the softer, wider landscapes of the island's west coast.

The west coast is comprised of wide sandy machair-backed beaches, the bright clear colours of which lighten the dark greys and browns of inland hills and moors. These superb beaches are further enhanced by views across the vividly coloured inshore waters to islands and the North Harris mountains, which add not only visual interest but scale and enclosure. The rocky headlands that separate the bays have been sculptured by the ocean with geos and stacks.

The scatter of islands in the Sound of Harris acts as a visual link between South Harris and North Uist, as well as creating a seascape of scenic beauty. The wide sandy strands of North Uist reflect much of the character of the west coast of South Harris, and similarly afford views across the sea to the mountains of North Harris.

Loch Maddy and Loch Eport are indented sea lochs penetrating areas of low hummocky relief, containing much exposed rock and many fresh water lochans. Points within the area afford north across the Sound of Harris, and only at the ridge of Mairival does this very diverse island scenery change.

The Special Qualities of the South Lewis, Harris and North Uist National Scenic Area

- A rich variety of exceptional scenery
- A great diversity of seascapes
- Intervisibility
- The close interplay of the natural world, settlement and culture
- The indivisible linkage of landscape and history
- The very edge of Europe
- The dominance of the weather

South Lewis and Harris

- The wild, mountainous character
- Deep sea lochs that penetrate the hills
- The narrow gorge of Glen Bhaltos
- The rockscapes of Harris
- Extensive machair and dune systems with expansive beaches
- The drama of Ceapabhal and Tràigh an Taoibh Thuath
- The landmark of Amhuinnsuidhe Castle
- The distinct, well-populated island of Sgalpaigh
- The enclosed glens of Choisleitir, Shrandabhal and Roghadail

The Sound of Harris

- The dramatic, island-studded Sound of Harris

North Uist

- A watery maze of lochs, lochans, bays and fjards
- The distinctive peninsula of Lochportain
- The low, expansive north machair coast
- The island of Beàrnaraigh – the Uists in miniature
- The dynamic, shifting land

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A rich variety of exceptional scenery</i> 	
<p>The different island landscapes of mountain, moorland, croftland, coast and sea here come together to create an area of exceptional scenery.</p> <p>The bold, rugged hills of South Lewis and Harris complement the islands in the Sound of Harris. These islands in turn appear an extension to the remarkable landscape of North Uist, where water and land are intricately interlocked.</p>	<p>The major landscape types are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountains • Boggy moorland • Rocky moorland • Cnoc and lochan • Rock and lochan • Rocky indented coasts • Coastal mosaics • Wide sandy machair beaches contained within rocky promontories • Sand dune systems • Saltmarsh and tidal zones

<p>A rich scenic variety results from the juxtaposition of the different landscapes, both north to south and east to west. Sharp contrasts are encountered between hills and low-lying lands, between sandy and rocky shores, between peat bog and machair, between island and sea. Additional variety is introduced through the contrast between the settled, crofting landscapes and the uninhabited moorland beyond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Islands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A great diversity of seascapes 	
<p>The sea is rarely far away. The deeply indented coastline and the combination of rock and sand provides seascapes which are hugely varied.</p> <p>Some views of the sea are restricted by a narrow frame of rock or an enclosed beach or bay. Others show an interplay of land and water through an intricate arrangement of islands, promontories and bays. In some places there is such a confusion of sea and land that it is not clear whether it is the sea at all.</p> <p>In contrast, there are grand, open seascapes with islands providing a sense of ever-receding oceanic backdrops. There are panoramas over peninsulas, islands, islets and skerries to distant shores, or further afield to the Minch and the Isle of Skye. Westwards the expansiveness of the Atlantic ocean is a constant reminder that this is the edge of Europe – reinforced by far distant St Kilda visible low on the horizon.</p>	<p>On South Lewis views vary greatly to include narrow, enclosed views across Loch Ròg and wild, exposed seascapes seen from high cliffs along Mangursthadh Head. On Harris visual containment is formed by the dramatic mountains and rocky headlands that contain small to medium scale seascapes. Views on the peninsulas are directed outwards to sea because of the high landform of the interior that restricts any landward physical and visual movement.</p> <p>North Uist's seascapes vary greatly. They can be complex, with thin slivers of white sands far out to sea indicating distant island shores, tidal islands, extended lengths of machair or long sand spits. Elsewhere, seascapes can be contained and restricted by extensive dune systems. In the east, where the watery landscapes of Loch nam Madadh extend, confusion as to the location of the sea, or loch is a common experience to the visitor.</p> <p>An unusual characteristic is that of land-locked islands and islets within sea lochs. This further emphasises the intricacy of boundaries and interfaces between land and water, especially where combined with complex lochside margins and shores.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervisibility 	
<p>The intervisibility between landscapes – views to another landscape type – is an outstanding quality of this NSA. The eye is continually led to distant horizons.</p> <p>Views out from high vantage points are spectacular in terms of their extent and expansiveness – as on a clear day from The Clisham (799m), when views extend</p>	<p>Different combinations of landscape intervisibility contribute to the NSAs extraordinary richness. Examples are too many to itemise but, in terms of combination, the following are examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cliff-top views from Camas na Clibhe over to the bay-heads and machair crofting at Clibhe. • Views from the Losgantir machair out onto Harris's dramatic mountain massif.

<p>from Cape Wrath to the Cuillin and St Kilda.</p> <p>Even low vantage points can include intervisibility between different landscapes within the Long Island, adding to the rich visual variety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seascapes and coastal islands from thin machair strands. • Views of the Harris and Lewis massif from North Lewis' extensive boggy moorlands. <p>Although the low vantage points are more localised, the panoramas are no less important in terms of scenic quality and the resulting rich visual variety.</p> <p>A major distinct quality of landscape intervisibility here is that focal points - eye-catchers - tend to be made up of views of different landscape types, rather than man-made features. Thus one's eye may be caught by the glimmer of a white sand beach on the horizon, or the recognition of a particular summit within a hill-range.</p>
<p>• <i>The close interplay of the natural world, settlement and culture</i></p>	
<p>The physical character and location of human activity has been determined by the natural world, with settlement sparse in a landscape where nature comes across as the dominant force. The greater part of the NSA's vast interior land mass, is largely uninhabited moorland and bog, cnoc and lochan, and bare, ice-scoured mountain massif.</p> <p>Although the area has been long-populated, habitation has always been constrained to the fringes of this vast outer landscape of mountain, moor, rock, loch and ocean. Where development does occur it is small scale and located on the edges of the mountains or the sea. However, its general sparsity does mean that the eye is drawn to the distant view of croft or building.</p>	<p><i>'Harris, where a mere one percent of the land is cultivated and where 96 per cent remains as peaty moorland or ice-scoured rock. In this inhospitable wilderness the settlements are entirely peripheral; J.B Caird describes it thus, "no dwelling is beyond the sound of the waves... Small paths wind down the ice-etched valleys among the minute lazy-beds to the source of the fertilizing sea-ware (seaweed) and the sheltered anchorages of the small ring-netters and lobster boats..."'</i> Whittow (1977)</p> <p><i>'The interior is thickly clad with peat in the north, while in the southern part of the island, bare, ice-scoured mountains rise to over 800m. The agricultural potential is thus extremely low, and only on the coast, where slightly richer land resources coincided with the possibility of fishing, did permanent settlement take place.'</i> Lewis and Harris described in Ritchie and Mather (1970).</p>
<p>• <i>The indivisible linkage of landscape and history</i></p>	
<p>Throughout the isles, scenery and landscape is permeated by a sense of history. Human activity has left subtle, yet perceptible traces that give a strong sense of continuity and place.</p> <p>Sometimes, these traces are only obvious to the onlooker in terms of the varied texture that they add to the landform or vegetation – the <i>feannagan</i> beds (lazy beds) and old peat cuttings being prime examples. Elsewhere activity is more obvious as structures or</p>	<p><i>'The links between landscape and human history are so close as to be indivisible much of the time.'</i> Angus (2001)</p> <p>In Gaelic 'place' equates with a person's identity; each identifiable feature, ben, glen, loch, lochan, field, burn, cnoc, tree clump and rock, is named with a story behind it.</p> <p>Humans have influenced the landscape over time throughout the area, in the form of prehistoric and later settlements and field systems, crofting landscapes, hill grazing and peat extraction. Machairs result from a complex interplay of natural and cultural factors.</p>

<p>features contributing to the scene – for example, crofts, dry stone brochs and duns, and the Bunavoneader whaling station.</p>	<p>Archaeological remains, although many are invisible to the naked eye, attest to man’s long-settlement and activity throughout the Long Island. Particularly noticeable visually, are the islet settings of remains within lochs in peatland landscapes. The remains of stone causeways can often be delineated linking the island to the shore. These date to long periods of activity, like at Eilean Orabhat where remains range from Neolithic, through Iron Age to medieval.</p> <p>Less visible, unless revealed by natural erosion of the machair, is ancient coastal settlement.</p>
<p>• <i>The very edge of Europe</i></p>	
<p>The perception of remoteness is strong, the islands themselves being physically remote from the centre of Europe, and much of the NSA itself being remote from settlements and public roads.</p> <p>This marginality instigates a strong sense of identity, culture and social cohesiveness that in turn finds direct expression in the landscape.</p>	<p><i>‘From the inside edge of the Atlantic to the outside edge of Europe.’</i> British Library (1999-2001)</p> <p>The islands are relatively inaccessible from the core population centres of Scotland due to the greater geographical distance, time and cost in travel to get to them.</p> <p>Europe’s Atlantic coastline really represents <i>‘the physical edge’</i> or the <i>‘fringe of the continental land mass, or at the very least its oceanic frontier.’</i> Garrod and Wilson (2004)</p> <p>However, the greater distance, time and travel cost needed to reach the archipelago, rewards the traveller with the experience of an exceptional landscape and culture.</p>
<p>• <i>The dominance of the weather</i></p>	
<p>The ever-changing wind, cloud, sun and rain cause similar changes in the colour, pattern and visibility of the hills, coasts and sea. No two hours, let alone two days, are the same.</p> <p>Hebridean sounds add richly to the scene: the sound of the wind is a defining quality, and in coastal areas, the sound of waves is ever present – their loudness determined by the prevailing weather. The call of birds is a summer sound of the machair. Natural sounds tend to predominate due to the absence of traffic and other man-made noise.</p>	<p>The oceanic climate and rapidly changing weather patterns means that weather dominates the landscape more than in most other parts of Britain.</p> <p>Exposure to the strong winds, high rainfall and a frequent low cloud base cause both the scenery and one’s experience of it to change rapidly.</p> <p>The high frequency of rain and cloud, combined with the nature of the substrate has caused the vast peatlands and extensive wetlands; persistent westerly winds have contributed to the formation of machair.</p>

<i>Location specific qualities</i>	
South Lewis and Harris	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The wild, mountainous character</i> 	
<p>Although not particularly high compared to other Scottish hills, those within South Lewis and Harris give the impression of considerable altitude. In many places their steep-sided slopes appear to plunge directly into the sea.</p> <p>From the north, the Uig Hills and Clisham, bold and rugged, rise abruptly from the undulating boggy moorland that forms the interior of Lewis. The impressive views are epitomised by that from the natural vantage point of Eitseal that heads Lewis's vast peatlands.</p> <p>The mountains stand still and silent with a distinct lack of movement, and the general absence of development lends a wild and remote character to this whole region of rocky hills, precipitous glens, remote lochs and rushing rivers.</p>	<p>Mountains and rocky hills comprise the greater part of the interior land-mass. The NSA's mountainous character is distinct in terms of its scale and the relationship of the hills to the sea. The highest hill is An Cliseam (Clisham) at 799m.</p> <p>The Uig Hills and The Clisham range rise up abruptly from a low gneiss platform only 10-20m above sea level. Their higher mountain summits are made up of narrow, ice-sculpted ridges, and their barren rocky slopes plunge directly into the sea. The glens that penetrate the massif are steep-sided with precipitous crags which, despite their relatively low-altitude, emphasise the hills mountainous character. The form and appearance of these mountain massifs are no less dramatic than mainland ranges.</p> <p>Access into the interior of the Uig Hills, Morsgail Forest and Pairc (all in South Lewis), North Harris and South Harris is limited to walking or to rough tracks.</p> <p>Much of this area consists of SNH Wild Land Search Areas. The wildness can be experienced from outwith these areas, where vantage points along major routes (for example the A859 at Loch Seaforth) looks into these great hill interiors.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deep sea lochs that penetrate the hills</i> 	
<p>Deep fjord-like sea lochs penetrate the hills of South Lewis and Harris. This lends the surprise of finding tidal water, apparently far inland. The narrow, steep-sided, uncompromising fjords contrast with the softer, more open sea lochs and the lochans found within the cnoc and lochan landscapes. They possess a wild, undeveloped air, with development, if present at all, restricted to the few flatter, sheltered areas of their rocky coastlines.</p> <p>These enclosed sea lochs embrace a surrounding stillness and tranquillity that is only disrupted by the natural forces of the wind and sea.</p>	<p>Enclosed on three sides by opposing land masses, the sea lochs are narrow linear spaces with strongly defined edges. The steep rock slopes enclosing the fjords form dramatic chasms. These contrast with the rounded, horizontal forms of surrounding moorland and mountain landscapes, and accentuate the bold forms and rugged topography of the mountains.</p> <p>The deep, indented Lochs Brollum, Claidh and Seaforth (Shiphoint) in the east, Loch Ròg in the north and Loch Resort in the west of the NSA provide spectacular, uncompromising views of rock and water. Eilean Shiphoint (Seaforth Island) forms a pivot point within the loch, a distinct landmark and recognised boundary marker. The steep-sided keyhole to the sea beyond from the shores of Loch Seaforth is an iconic view.</p>

• **The narrow gorge of Glen Bhaltos**

The route linking Loch Ròg and Uig through Glen Bhaltos, is remarkable and impressive. The road follows a narrow gorge, cutting off all distant views so that the surrounding enclosed landscape offers a completely different experience to that found elsewhere within the NSA.

The 2.5 km long Glen Bhaltos in the north of the NSA is important for glacial geomorphology. It is the most impressive meltwater channel in the Outer Hebrides, part of a group of landforms and deposits that show evidence of how the last ice sheet (18,000-14,000 years ago) decayed. The gorge is a distinct, separate corridor, contained from the coast and sea. The slopes of this steep-sided gorge are mounded with loose deposits of angular glacial debris, with large boulders and rocks at the base.

• **The rockscapes of Harris**

The bedrock that forms The Bays area, on Harris's east coast, is visible throughout and dominates the area. Huge exposed sheets of bare and bold Lewisian gneiss result in an extraordinary rockscape. The pink and grey glaciated slabbed rocks contain hollows of dark-umber peat and sparse patches of contorted heather.

The Golden Road skirts this coast. Travelling along this coastal route, up and down the edge of the promontories and deeply incised firths, instils a strong rhythmical movement; moving seawards and then turning to face the South Harris hills. However, each sea-loch and accompanying settlement is distinctive and there is a clear change in character journeying from north to south.

Gnarled and knobbed, crushed and creviced rock dominates the scene, making one marvel at how humans have been able to live here at all. Harris's east coast is a deeply dissected rock and lochan topography, with innumerable inlets, bays and islets. Vegetated slopes are slightly shallowly concave, sometimes convex, giving an overall appearance of a random ground surface. Areas of existing *feannagan* (lazy beds), and traces of earlier, attest cultivation; a notable example is on Aird Mhànais.

The coastline is complex, dramatic and intricate, with magnificent cliffs and sheltered coves offering safe anchorage to the boats which fish the rich crystal-clear waters of the Minch. The area is rich in seals and otters.

The small settlements situated predominantly at the head of the sea-lochs along this coast were only accessible by sea until the late 19th century. In 1897 a coastal road was built linking these settlements. This has long been known as the Golden Road, supposedly due to the very high cost of building it through this difficult terrain.

• **Extensive machair and dune systems with expansive beaches**

The western fringe of sand, dune and machair along the Harris coast, and at Uig in South Lewis, relieve what would otherwise be a stark, rocky landscape. The soft-gentle, slowly shelving coastline with its beaches contrasts markedly with the inland landscapes of rock, hill and mountain.

The area's beautiful beaches – wide, sandy and machair-backed – are renowned. The clearness and purity of

Dune systems expand along the west coast providing a long, low linear interface between coast and the higher Uig and Clisham hill ranges. In good weather these shine golden white or yellow, emphasising the blue sea and highlighting the vertical scale of the hills.

Within the Horgabost, Seilebost, Corran and Losgantir complex, Losgantir and Corran Seilebost are both made up of machair; the former on a promontory and the latter on a peninsula where the sand spit is dynamic, shifting according to tides and weather. Traigh Losgantir's inter-tidal sand beach is

<p>the water and sands are marked. The machair, created through an interplay of crofting and nature, is famous for its richness of wildflowers and breeding wildfowl and waders.</p> <p>There is a remarkable variety of different coastal lands. Extensive areas are made up of complexes of beaches, sand hills, dunes and machair and, in places, saltmarsh.</p> <p>The expansiveness of the beaches culminates with those at Horgabost, Seilebost, Corran and Losgantir that together form a large beach area where the curving finger-like, sand spit of Corran Seilebost leads out across Traigh Losgantir.</p> <p>In good weather, the bright clear colours appear iridescent against the darker inland hills and moors.</p>	<p>set adjacent to saltmarsh.</p> <p>Machair has arisen through a complex interplay of natural and human influences. Humans traditionally grew crops on the calcium-rich, sandy soils in rotation, using seaweed as a fertiliser; with grazing in the winter. Maintenance of traditional agriculture results in a rich diversity of flowers, associated with rich habitat for breeding wildfowl and waders.</p> <p>Archaeological sites on this low and fertile west coast indicate a long sequence of occupation - especially marked by the extent of <i>feannagan</i> (lazy beds).</p> <p><i>'Traditionally, the Atlantic coast of the Hebrides has been the favoured coast for settlement... In Harris in particular, prior to the nineteenth century the west, machair side was densely settled...'</i> Ritchie and Mather (1970)</p>
---	---

• ***The drama of Ceapabhal and Tràigh an Taoibh Thuath***

<p>Tràigh an Taoibh Thuath (Northton Bay) is a remarkable place due to its striking topographical contrasts. Ceapabhal's bare, steep sides plummet down from a height of 365m to abut a great stretch of flat wet machair. Set abruptly alongside one another, the vast flat expanse of tidal sea-shore serves to emphasise Ceapabhal's height. Because of this juxtaposition and despite its modest height, Ceapabhal is a dramatic massif, a recognisable and familiar landmark.</p> <p>Its summit offers grand 360° panoramas to sea and land. Striking birds-eye views can be had of the great, sweeping, tidal strand of compacted shell-sand, and of the neighbouring machair that continues nearly 11km northward. The mountains of Harris stand sentinel behind.</p> <p>Tuath Taobh (Northton) township is a modest, linear settlement, providing a further contrast to the surrounding, vast natural landscape.</p>	<p>The vast tidal bay is some 3km long, encircled by a sand isthmus and sheltered on its west by Ceapabhal, its attendant, conical, landmark hill.</p> <p><i>'Low hills commanding views over flat land or aquatic surfaces can afford better prospects than higher summits in hillier country... Absolutely flat land, as exemplified in marsh country, can achieve a high prospect value if its surface is free from arboreal vegetation.'</i> Appleton (1975)</p> <p>William MacGillivray (1796-1852) a leading naturalist of his day and, from 1841 professor of natural history at Aberdeen University, was brought up for much of his childhood at his uncle's farm at Taobh Tuath (Northton). He later recounted that here <i>'the solitude of Nature was my school.'</i> The MacGillivray Centre, at Taobh Tuath is an excellent viewpoint and interpretation centre.</p>
--	---

• ***The landmark of Amhuinnsuidhe Castle***

The baronial-style Amhuinnsuidhe Castle is a notable landmark which punctuates the rhythmic coastal pattern of croft and bay. Built as a hunting lodge for the North Harris Estate, it boasts a spectacular location above Loch Leosavay.

The artificiality and intentional design of the castle policies adds a formal element to the scenery of the area, bringing variety to the character of human settlement on Harris's west coast.

The castle dates from 1868, built by architect David Bryce. The positioning of the castle and its designed grounds capitalise on the sea views and shelter of the bay. The lay-out is designed to reveal the Castle as a surprise along the coastal road and the formal grounds are laid out within the limited, but sheltered, coastal zone down-slope of the northern high, rugged hill. Cascades and pools, exotic and colourful shrubs atop a 'natural' rock garden all add highlights to the luxuriant, romantic character of the castle and its policies.

• ***The distinct, well-populated island of Sgalpaigh***

Sgalpaigh na Hearadh (Scalpay) has a relatively populated atmosphere compared to many of the other island and mainland island areas. It is a distinct community with its fishing economy and its own cultural history.

All settlement is on the southwestern seaboard, with the northwest of the island rough and rocky with lochs and lochans running parallel to the coast.

A separate island within Harris, Sgalpaigh is now connected to mainland Harris by a bridge, some 300m long (1998). It has long-distance views over to Skye, Raasay and the Applecross peninsula. There are 60 hectares of mixed conifer and deciduous woodland.

The largest loch, Loch an Duin (Loch of the Fort), has a tiny island on it, with the remains of a fort still visible.

The island population in 2001 numbered 322 people, whose main employment is fish farming and prawn fishing. Its survival contrasts with the history of depopulation on other islands, as on Killegray, Ensay, Pabbay, Scotasay, Shiant Isles, Taransay, Soay Mhor and Scarp.

• ***The enclosed glens of Choisleitir, Shranndabhal and Roghadail***

At the south end of Harris, the road to Roghadail parallels the coast through the enclosed glens of Choisleitir, Shranndabhal and Roghadail, affording a sense of containment and channelled movement. This offers one of the few routes where a sense of the sea is left behind.

The green, improved pastures of the glens contrast markedly with the sparse, extensive, coastal grazings on Harris' east coast, and with the patchwork of extensive west coast machair grazings.

The A859 road from west to east joins the compact linear crofting township of Taobh Tuath (Northton), set at the head of an extensive open tidal bay, and the more dispersed township of Roghadail (Rodel). The latter has the landmark of St Clements Church, and piers set within the enclosed, rocky natural harbour of Loch Roghadail.

A high rugged, rocky ridge separates the U-shaped glens from the coastline, although the sense of containment is broken centrally at Leverburgh and Loch Steiseivat where coastal views are gained.

<p>The Sound of Harris</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The dramatic, island-studded Sound of Harris</i> 	
<p>The shallow Sound of Harris forms a dramatic and hazardous passage that must be negotiated if travelling the length of the Long Island.</p> <p>Studded with islands, islets, skerries and sunken reefs, it presents a compelling seascape of islands, forming a transition between the high, rock-clad hills of South Harris and the low-lying, watery and drowned landscape of North Uist.</p> <p>Sand dunes, rich machair and beaches of silver sand fringe many of the islands. The rocks are dark in colour, contrasting with the fringe of brightly coloured seaweeds and the verdant green of the turf.</p> <p>The proportion of land to water constantly changes, depending on one's position and the tide. The movement of currents, waves and shadows provides continual interest and the aquamarine of shallow water over the sands can be startling.</p> <p>Travelling the coast road of the Leverburgh shore (An t-Ob), with views across to the hills of North Uist, engenders a feeling of being immediately within this broken, island-studded sound. This rocky shore provides a major contrast to the softer, gently shelving shores of North Uist.</p>	<p>The rock forming much of the Sound of Harris coastline and the underlying rocks of the Sound, is metanorite, an igneous rock, which is very dark in colour.</p> <p>Views over from the Leverburgh shore, its north shores, show an exceedingly intricate rockscape and seascape with deeply indented, low-lying rocky promontories, small beaches and off-shore islets, cnocans and rocky shore-lines, rockpools, and boulder outcrops. Small silled, rock-cut lagoons are a noticeable feature.</p> <p>Textures vary from rocky knolls to coastal turfs, with roughness predominating on sea and land. Point features that catch one's eye, especially in darker weather, and at night are the numerous navigational lights surmounting some of the islands and skerries.</p> <p>Pabbay has a distinctive largely symmetrical peak, whereas Grodhaigh has a distinctly vertical shoreline and appears block-like within the Sound.</p> <p>There are considerable remains of past island settlement, emphasising the seafaring and the marine highways that predominated as a means of transport and livelihood in the past. Many of the islands support rich summer sheep-grazings, although few are used nowadays.</p> <p>Southeast of Leverburgh (An t-Ob), a narrow coastal route meanders vertically as well as horizontally, giving sea-level as well as elevated views out over the sound's dramatic, island-studded seascape. Rock platforms, reefs and inter-tidal skerries shelter south-facing bays along this shore. The bays form hidden beaches accessible only on foot; secluded and backed by marram-clad dune ridges. The route through the townships contrasts scenically with the rocky ridge and largely inaccessible, uninhabited coastline running westwards from Leverburgh to Taobh Tuath (Northton).</p>
<p>North Uist</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A watery maze of lochs, lochans, bays and fjards</i> 	
<p>The eastern side of North Uist within the NSA is a watery maze of fresh and seawater, with the distinction between</p>	<p><i>'MacCulloch [1824] estimated that the various lochs on North Uist made up at least one-third of the total area of the island. Loch Maddy is a fantasy of inlets, bays,</i></p>

<p>land and sea often lost. The coastline is incredibly convoluted, with freshwater lochs, lochans and bog pools, saltwater sea lochs, bays and fjards (narrow, rocky inlets with low-lying surrounds).</p> <p>The summits of the low, surrounding rounded hills present the best views of this lacework of water and land, including the interplay of freshwater loch and peat bog in the central moorland.</p> <p>At Loch na Madah (Lochmaddy) water is the dominant element, so much so that the vast irregular and indented loch shore encloses a land mass that seems to lie actually within the loch itself. The landscape comes across as inaccessible and disorientating, with human settlement appearing marginal.</p> <p>Shorelines can change rapidly with the changing tide and the noise of tidal rapids is noticeable on still days. On these days, there is a sense of peacefulness and tranquillity; a dominance of natural sounds, the water lapping gently within the sheltered bays and inlets. In summer, the area is enlivened with pink carpets of thrift.</p>	<p><i>narrows and channels, with a coastline estimated at between 44 and 54 miles in length. Loch Eport [Euphort], farther south, is a narrow arm of the sea, 7 miles long.. Loch Scadavay [Sgadabhagh] is the most important freshwater loch on the island; it is shallow and has a calculated shoreline of some 50 miles.'</i> Thompson (1987)</p> <p><i>'Unlike fjords, fjards are surrounded by low-lying countryside and have sinuous, drowned coastlines and islands.. Loch Maddy is one of the best examples in Europe of a fjardic coastline.'</i> Angus (1997)</p> <p><i>'Loch nam Madadh... is an extraordinary lacework of islands, bays, lagoons and narrow twisting inlets, sheltering an internationally important ecological system. Turbulent tidal rapids result for the steps and sills created by ice scouring across the Lewisian gneiss bedrock.'</i> Gillen (2003)</p> <p>Settlement is sparse, confined to dispersed linear crofts along the Lochportain road, east shores of Loch Amhlasaraigh and concentrated at Loch na Madadh (Lochmaddy) itself. There are occasional ruins and derelict buildings elsewhere.</p>
<p>• <i>The distinctive peninsula of Lochportain</i></p>	
<p>The peninsula of Lochportain has a distinctive character and sense of a place. It is predominantly low-lying but the rocky coastline, small rocky inlets, undulating hillocks and slopes offer isolated spots of containment from the remote, inaccessible, watery interior.</p> <p>It is relatively isolated and sparsely populated, with settlement dispersed above the loch shores. Ruined houses, some clustered together in small groups are a noticeable feature. Peat cuttings on islets and promontories add a regular pattern to a landscape whose patterning tends to be irregular.</p> <p>The rocky coast offers a sharp contrast to the softer machair coast to the west. There are fine views out over to the North Uist Hills, the Sound of Harris, the</p>	<p>This peninsula of rocky moorland forms the north coasts of Loch nam Madadh. Its northernmost parts are interspersed with innumerable lochs and lochans, while the easternmost part has undulating ridges and hills (Crogearraidh na Thobha reaches 154m).</p> <p>Access across the peninsula is by a narrow, winding road that ends at Baigh a Chaise, with a spur leading to Tobha Beag (62m). Peat cuttings are especially visible at Mòineach Loch Portain.</p> <p>Despite the apparent inaccessibility and remoteness of the peninsula, archaeological remains show considerable time-depth to the settlement history on the Lochportain peninsula. A Dun on Loch na Cariginn has a substantial causeway over to the island from the loch shore, and there is evidence that the island was completely enclosed by a wall close to the water's edge.</p>

Harris Hills, Berneray and the North Uist coast.

- ***The low, expansive north machair coast***

The wide north coast of North Uist is extensively varied, but its overwhelming characteristics are its low-lying nature, with a great, expansive flatness extending out into the ocean. Horizons are so low, contrasting with the North Uist hills and accentuating their verticality, that it is impossible to realistically sense or define distances.

Broad expanses of sand, covered by the rise and fall of the tides, extend along the coastal edge. These large tidal bays and strands are enclosed by conspicuous coastal sand spits, dunes and flower-rich machair.

Wide open views of land and sea give large scale panoramas, although some views are more contained within the extensive dune systems. These dunes give some measure of shelter and containment, providing a welcome change from the expansive exhilaration of the open shores, seas and skies.

The human eye is quick to pick out any verticality in this horizontal, flat landscape, making any vertical structures stand out sharply – with even small-scale fence posts assuming a surprising visual emphasis.

On the tidal island of Bhàlaigh (Vallay), the ruins of Bhàlaigh House form a stark landmark on the low horizon, and the eye can also pick out the ridges, furrows and old enclosures of abandoned field systems in the dry machair. This presents a bold feature, visually encapsulating the long settlement history of the North Uist machair and coastal sands. It lends an air of timelessness and emphasises that these shores are long-settled in the face of the surrounding, dynamic natural world.

North Uist's north coast has a ring of hills to the south, rising up as long low ridges with undulating and occasionally prominent peaks. The hills form a backdrop and provide shelter from the south and east.

North and north-west trending rock spurs that underlie the machair form the high parts of the machair plain, outcropping along the coastline to interrupt the broad expanses of sand.

Relating to North Uist, '*Two features characterise the north coast; the orientation of the bays to face north-westwards and the large areas occupied by inter-tidal, strand inlets.*' Ritchie (1971)

In reality, the apparent flatness of the landscape is made up by a variety of landforms, some affected by continual coastal erosion and others submerged by rising sea level. These vary from gently sloping coastal machair plains covered with a mosaic of species-rich grasslands to dunes facing towards the sea. Marshes can form a transitional area between the sand and the blackland (peat and sand) lying further inland.

Scolpaig, on the western edge of the NSA is a good example of intertidal rock platforms flanking an outer bay, with a well-formed dune situated at the bay head – a form typical of North Uist's coast.

• ***The island of Beàrnaraigh – the Uists in miniature***

The island of Beàrnaraigh (Berneraay) encapsulates in miniature the fine coastal scenery of the Uists, offering dunes and machair on its west side and rocky hillocks with an indented coast on its east.

Long-settled and well-settled, the compact nature of Beàrnaraigh gives the whole island an intimate and visually appealing feel.

Beàrnaraigh's '*physiography represents the Uists in miniature.*' Ritchie (1971)

The current crofting settlement pattern, and the traces of extensive feannagan (lazy beds) on hillsides, mirror that elsewhere in the NSA.

• ***The dynamic, shifting land***

With so much low-lying, land at sea level subject to the full force of strong winds and waves, the sandy coastline of North Uist and its neighbouring islands constantly changes. It is also highly susceptible to storm damage.

Knowledge of this colours the appreciation of the area, especially when looking out over low shores and islands to the open ocean. It emphasises the feeling of 'being at the edge', and of the precariousness of the favourable conditions necessary for human settlement to exist on these shores.

Fierce storms in January 2005, caused severe damage and loss of life. The west coasts of North Uist, South Uist and Benbecula were affected by extreme westerly and south-westerly winds.

Some features have totally disappeared - as Maol Bahn on Beàrnaraigh. Maol Bahn, was located some 200m inland from the northwest shoulder of the island, as the sand cape of Rudh' a' Chorrain. It was a striking topographical feature, being a prominent 20m high hill. It is still shown as rising from the machair plain on recent Ordnance Survey maps. It no longer exists.

Many areas of coastal dunes on North Uist and Beàrnaraigh are gradually being eroded, so that the dune edge is moving seawards and there is loss of land. Elsewhere sand is deposited as on Pabbay. Machair has formed on hillsides up to 200m above sea level - a so-called 'climbing' dune.

Selected Bibliography

Angus, S. 1997. *The Outer Hebrides: the Shaping of the Islands*. White Horse Press.

Angus, S. 2001. *The Outer Hebrides: Moor and Machair*. White Horse Press.

Appleton, J. 1975. *The Experience of Landscape*. John Wiley and Sons.

Armit, I. 1996. *The Archaeology of Skye and the Western Isles*. Edinburgh University Press.

Benson, J. F., Scott K. E., Anderson C., Macfarlane R., Dunsford H., and Turner K. 2004. Landscape Capacity Study for Onshore Wind Energy Development in the Western Isles. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No. 42*. [Examined for its more recent Landscape Character Assessment findings]

British Library, Archival Sound Recordings. Touring Exhibition of the Sound Exhibition 1999-2001. 'Soundwalk across Northton Machair. Machair Walks.' 'The Sound of Harris and Lewis. Machair Soundwalks'.

Buchanan, J. 1996. *The Lewis Land Struggle: na Gaisgeach*. Acair.

CFA Archaeology 2005. *Coastal Zone Assessment Survey: North Uist*. Report No 1051 commissioned by The SCAPE Trust.

Garrod, B. and Wilson, J.C. 2004. Nature on the Edge? Marine Ecotourism in Peripheral Coastal Areas. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, **12**, No.4, pp. 95-120.

Gillen, C. 2003. *Geology and landscapes of Scotland*. Harpenden: Terra Publishing.

Haswell-Smith, H. 2008. The Scottish Islands. *The Bestselling Guide to Every Scottish Island*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Heriot-Watt University 1994. Landscape Design & Research Unit, Edinburgh College of Art, *The Perception of Coastal and Island Landscapes*. A Report for Scottish Natural Heritage.

MacCulloch, J. 1824. *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland: containing descriptions of their scenery and antiquities, with an account of the political history and ancient manners and of the origin, language, agriculture, economy, music, present condition of the people &c &c*. London.

Macdonald, D. 1978. *Lewis: A history of the island*. Edinburgh: Gordon Wright.

Macdonald, D. 1967. *Tales and traditions of the Lews*.

Miers, M. 2008. *The Western Seaboard: An Illustrated Architectural Guide*. RIAS Publishing.

Perrott, D. ed. 1995. *The Outer Hebrides Handbook and Guide*. Kittiwake.

Richards, J. 1998. The Western Isles, Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review*, No. 92.

Ritchie, W. & Mather, A. 1970. Beaches of Lewis and Harris: a survey of the beach, dune and machair areas of Lewis and Harris. Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen, for the Countryside Commission for Scotland. Reprinted as *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report*, No. 88.

Ritchie, W. 1971. The Beaches of Barra and the Uists: a Survey of Barra, South Uist, Benbecula, North Uist and Berneray. Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen, for the Countryside Commission for Scotland. Reprinted as *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report*, No. 47.

Sharkey, J. 1986. *The Road through the Isles*. Gower Publishing.

Thompson, F. 1987. *Harris and Lewis, Outer Hebrides*. 3rd edition. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Whittow, J. 1977. *Geology and Scenery in Scotland*. Penguin.

SOUTH UIST MACHAIR NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The outstanding physical characteristics of the machair are its low altitude and flatness, rarely exceeding 30 feet in height. The land is interspersed with shallow lime-rich lochans which make up about one third of the surface area, and on the machair itself between the lochans there is a pattern of prosperous crofting settlement. This two miles wide stretch of lime-sand pastureland and water meadow is a cultural landscape of strong individual character and identity, not the least important element of which is its flora.

W.H. Murray has written (1973) 'Until a man has seen a good machair ... he may find it hard to realise that... it grows not grass but flowers. Amongst the most common are buttercup, red and white clover, daisy, blue speedwell, dandelion, eyebright, birdsfoot trefoil, hop trefoil, harebell, wild thyme, yellow and blue pansy and silverweed.'

From May until August these flowers follow in seasonal succession, but by August they have been cropped by grazing so that green is the only surviving colour. This succession of bloom, the dunes, the green pasture, the pleasing pattern of settlement and the beaches combine to form a landscape of great character.

The Special Qualities of the South Uist Machair National Scenic Area

- Distinctive scenery between the mountains and the sea
- Extensive, traditionally-managed machair
- The profusion of flowers
- Birds and song at every step
- An indigenous, South Uist settlement pattern
- White, shell-sand beaches and turquoise seas
- A scalloped coastline
- 'The land of the bent grass'
- A host of lochs and wetlands
- Wide, open horizons and skies
- The force of nature and elemental beauty
- Deserted beaches, remoteness and solitude

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Distinctive scenery between the mountains and the sea</i> 	
<p>The level machair plain, with its distinctive scenery of croft, grass and sand, lies between the high moorland hills that form the eastern spine of South Uist and the expansive Atlantic Ocean to the west. The landscape is strongly structured, the eastern hills grading through blackland and loch, to low-lying machair, sand dune and sea.</p> <p>Within the NSA, a backdrop of hills frames all views inland, the level foreground making the hills appear all the higher. In contrast, views westward over the blackland, machair and seashore appear horizontal and flat, accentuated by the open sea beyond.</p>	<p>The nature of the landform gives to views the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, horizontal skylines and horizons predominate with few vertical features. • All views inland are seen against the backdrop of high hills - an upland spine orientated north-south. • The scenic backdrop of high, individual peaks appears massive in scale, as it is accentuated by the predominance of the comparatively flat land of the blackland, machair and long lengths of sea-shore at sea-level. • All views looking across land to the west are by comparison flat, although in reality the landform is an undulating series of ridges crossing a plain. • Open views westwards look out onto a seascape, or are bounded by the sea on the horizon. • When views eastwards and westwards are backlit, against the sun, this makes for characteristic scenes wherein houses and structures appear in silhouette against a low lying skyline.

- **Extensive, traditionally-managed machair**

The South Uist landscape is a patchwork of ploughed, cropped, grazed and fallow fields, pastures and marshes that present a seasonally changing kaleidoscope of colour, scent and textures.

Its unbroken extent, together with the continuation of traditional crofting practices, makes it unique within Scotland.

Machair has distinct scenic and landscape characteristics. It is a rare habitat globally, especially important for wildlife and strongly dependent on agricultural management. Most occurs on the Outer and Inner Hebrides, with smaller areas on the mainland and the Northern Isles. A significant proportion of this machair occurs within the NSA.

It is believed that machair grassland has been modified by humans throughout its development. Traditionally, machair supports extensive grazing regimes and unique forms of cultivation that rely on low-input systems of rotational cropping. This traditional agriculture sustains a rich and varied dune and arable weed flora.

- **The profusion of flowers**

The traditional management of the machair gives a profusion of wild flowers for which this area is famous. Their colour and brightness vary with the weather and the seasons, but they are at their best in June and July, when the wind becomes charged with the scent of their blossom.

Describing the rich beauty of the machair, the 18th century Gaelic poet John MacCodrum wrote of South Uist as *'the land of the smiling coloured flowers.'*

'Until a man has seen a good machair... he may find it hard to realise that although the crofters call it "grass" it grows not grass but flowers.' W H Murray (1973)

Up to 45 plant species can be found within one square metre. Some arable plant species in the UK are now largely restricted to these traditionally managed areas.

*'Tis a beautiful land, the land of the plain,
The land of the smiling coloured flowers'*

*'S I 'n tir sgiabhach tir a'mhachair,
Tir nan dithean miogach daithte.'*

John MacCodrum, quoted in Angus (2001)

'In May, the main body of the machair puts out its flowers in annual order... till the green turf is almost lost to sight under blossom. In their season or at periods in a cycle of years, one or two species may take over most of a machair... In July, the Berneray and South Uist machairs are a rolling sea of buttercup, clover and daisy, each massing separately in the wide troughs but merging on the green billows. The wind is charged with clover scent... when the cows are first turned onto well-flowered machair, they can soon have scented breath and their milk a flower-sweet taste. June and July is the time to see and scent this dense blossom, for the machair is heavily grazed. By August, most has been cropped short (save on a few machairs kept for wintering) and green is the only surviving colour.' W H Murray (1973)

• ***Birds and song at every step***

A prime characteristic, particularly of the machair, is the density of birds. Their movement and flight animate the skies and their song adds a rich melody to the landscape.

During the nesting season birds appear to be everywhere, with noisy redshank, oystercatcher and peewit creating a distinctive and evocative sound. Birds of prey are often visible overhead, and the elusive corncrake, with its rasping call, provides an element of surprise when accidentally flushed from beds of irises.

In winter, whooper swans and other wildfowl grace the lochs, and flocks of waders can be seen on the beaches, following the rise and fall of the tide.

The machair and blackland provide rich nesting for many waders and ground-nesting birds.

There are over 17,000 pairs of waders breeding on the Uist and Barra machair alone. These include dunlin, redshank, ringed plover, oystercatcher, snipe and peewit (lapwing). Twite are also common, and South Uist provides a good opportunity to hear and see the corncrake, a rare, migratory bird dependent on traditional agriculture.

• ***An indigenous, South Uist settlement pattern***

The pattern of crofts and croft houses, with the unenclosed cultivation and grazing of machair, is an inextricable part of this lightly-populated landscape.

Newer buildings are frequently found alongside older buildings, structures and ruins, and peat cuttings both ancient and modern are a distinctive feature of the blackland. This imbues the area with great time depth, with a feeling of longevity attached to individual house plots.

There is a clear, easily perceived hierarchy of structures; the larger communal buildings (halls, schools, churches) and central, commercial buildings (hotels, shops) are usually prominent and distinctive in size and scale. Cemeteries, on higher coastal ground, also stand-out in this landscape.

An isolated example of a single farm unit, at Ormacleit survives, representing an attempt in the 19th century to rationalise land use and settlement.

Within this part of South Uist most of the settlement is within the NSA, with the land to the east largely uninhabited.

Settlement is typically set well back from the coastal plain on low-lying, almost flat lands backing the machair, and set linearly along spur roads leading westwards off the main spine road. Houses are arranged in townships, with a well-spaced pattern, either single houses or in groups of three or four. Conjoined houses are rare or absent.

The remains of previous settlement, land use and layouts are an important feature of the landscape today, and have survived well because modern use has been less intensive. The area contains good examples of upstanding remains of both crofting and pre-crofting settlements, such as at Howmore, and areas of pre-improvement rigs are visible in many places.

Cemeteries are located near the coast. These are isolated on higher ground, lying outwith the townships at Boisdale overlooking Orasaigh; Cladh Hallan Cemetery; Stoneybridge overlooking Rubh' Aird-mhicheil.

Particular buildings that stand out are the churches of Bornish and 'Our Lady of Sorrows', Ormacleit Castle, Bornish and Askernish Houses and Polochar Inn.

- **White, shell-sand beaches and turquoise seas**

Wide, soft, white shell-sand beaches and dunes sweep South Uist's Atlantic coast. Their comparative flatness leads to a great feeling of expansive linear space at the sea's side, their appearance continually changing with the light and the tide.

In good weather, when the turquoise seas contrast with the white sands, there can be the feel of being on an exotic island. But in storms and winds, there is a sense of exposure and danger, with the beaches' long, linear form appearing never ending.

Of the 35km length of sandy beach on this west coast, 25km form the western shores of the National Scenic Area. The beaches are characterised by:

- Silvery white sands, due to their make-up of shell sand.
- A smooth surface uninterrupted by rock outcrops or pebble deposits.
- A distinct shape - wide and slightly concave in profile.
- A landward edge formed by shingle or cobble storm ridges along the greater parts of their extent.
- Widely available pedestrian access and restricted vehicular access.

- **A scalloped coastline**

The series of crescent shaped beaches along the Atlantic coast are each terminated to north and south, by rock ridges or off-shore islands. This gives a scalloped edge, adding a sense of rhythm to the long, linear coast.

Rubha Aird a'Mhuile and Orasaigh are particularly good vantage points. The panoramic view from the promontory of Rubha Aird a'Mhuile in particular distils South Uist's special qualities and sense of place: the wide expanse of ocean to the west; the coastal margin of beach, dunes and machair visually leading to the islands of Eriskay and Barra in the south, and extending as a long, low silver line to the north, and all against an irregular backdrop of hills.

The scalloped coast arises from a basin and ridge topography, with series of ridges of rock and till running SE-NW under the machair.

Rubha Aird a'Mhuile is a peninsula of rock, the most westerly point on South Uist, linked to Bornish machair by a broad neck of sand and shingle, topped by dunes. Loch Aird a'Mhuile occupies most of the point's interior. It is an excellent viewpoint for birds and seascapes.

Orasaigh, a prominent, dome-shaped island of rock, is a distinctive feature on the South Uist coastline.

- **'The land of the bent grass'**

Tir a 'Mhurain, The Land of the Bent Grass, is one of the names given to South Uist, referring to the marram that clothes the extensive dunes. This grass is forever moving with the wind, appearing golden or silver in the sunshine.

The dunes themselves vary, with zones of hills, ridges, escarpments, flats and hollows, each with distinctive qualities. Within the hollows there is a sense of

The sand dune systems and the associated marram grass is a major characteristic of the NSA. Marram grass serves a vital function in stabilising the shifting sand.

<p>enclosure and shelter, with disorientation possible in the complex pattern. The ridges provide expansive views, and a realisation of both the protection they give and their fragility in respect of the stormy ocean to the west.</p>	
<p>• <i>A host of lochs and wetlands</i></p>	
<p>Multitudinous lochs, lochans, wetlands and marshes intermingle with the machair and blackland, so that often it is hard to distinguish water from land. The water surface is disturbed by the ever-present wind, with the surrounding reeds and rushes rustling in the breeze.</p>	<p><i>'South Uist is the angler's Mecca, as the Cuillin is the climber's...'</i> Murray (1973)</p> <p>Qualities of the lochs and wetlands relate to both specific places and qualities general to the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large expanses of green - there are extensive reed beds, as at Loch Hallan, and large fields of damp, rough grassland. • A varied, seasonally colourful flora is found throughout. Marginal vegetation of meadowsweet, iris, sedges, rushes and reeds softens the edges, forming a transitional zone between land and water. • The shores of the lochs and lochans are deeply indented, often merging the boundary between water and dry land. • Some roads and tracks cross between lochans, giving an unusual feeling of passing through the water, as at Kildonan.
<p>• <i>Wide, open horizons and skies</i></p>	
<p>The open seas to the west and the machair plain itself have strong, horizontal skylines and horizons, with few vertical features. The landscape is open with an absence of landform enclosure, trees and shelter.</p> <p>This gives an exhilarating sense of vastness, expansiveness, and extensiveness, with wide, open horizons and skies.</p>	<p>The limited number of field boundaries, through the continuing use of the rig system, adds to the sense of openness.</p>
<p>• <i>The force of nature and elemental beauty</i></p>	
<p>Lack of enclosure, extensive landscape flatness and the maritime climate give an overwhelming sense of natural forces shaping the island and circumscribing human activity.</p>	<p><i>'With the wind now behind us walking was a pleasure but as soon as we reached the beach and turned north we had it in our faces and were sandblasted. The fine white sand was forced into every crevice including our faces and to this day there are still traces of it in my jacket pockets.'</i> Higginbottom</p>

<p>Wind is the predominant feature, and where trees or shrubs do exist, they are gaunt and wind-pruned. Gales and waves cause transient changes in beach width and outline in winter, with the beaches normally built up again in the summer months.</p> <p>The dune systems that protect the land from the sea are vulnerable and the machair plains behind frequently flood. This adds a precarious dynamic to the landscape and experience of it, with both nature and humans constantly having to fight back.</p>	<p>(2008)</p> <p>Archaeological field evidence points to alternating periods of coastal stability and instability: a constantly shifting coastline with sand dunes, over time, overlying earlier settlement; for example at Kilpehder.</p>
<p>• Deserted beaches, remoteness and solitude</p>	
<p>A great sense of solitude and peace is felt throughout the majority of the area. This is because it is a lightly populated, rural landscape with large open areas between townships.</p> <p>Few people are met when walking on the beaches or machair, or between townships. The machair tracks give easy access to the sea, with only intermittent farm vehicles encountered. When amongst hollows in the dunes, an increased degree of solitude can be found.</p>	<p>The main road runs north-south, some 2km from the beach. Off this, smaller roads lead westwards to service each township, with smaller unmetalled tracks, gated access and dead-ends. This means that vehicular access is restricted, with extensive areas left to those on foot.</p> <p>The machair track, running the length of the island, forms the traditional right of way between townships. It gives freely available foot-access to the length of the island, seaside and cultivated machair lands. It forms a peaceful route with the sound of the sea to one side and birdsong to the other.</p> <p>The population of South Uist as a whole is some 1,800 spread across the 22 mile long and 10 mile wide island.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Angus, S. 2001. *The Outer Hebrides: Moor and Machair*. White Horse Press.

Higginbottom, K. 2008. *Hebridean Odyssey Part 2: You is on South Uist*. www.go4awalk.com (accessed December 2008).

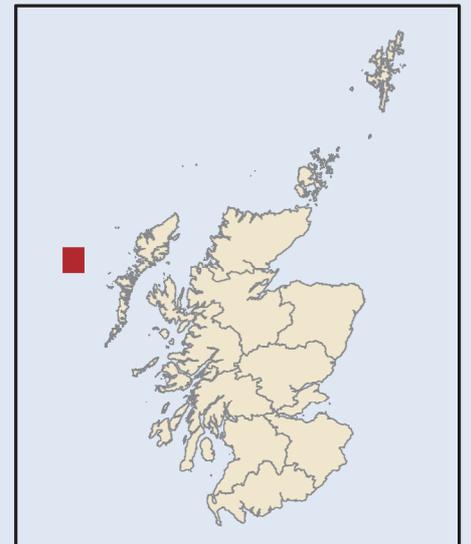
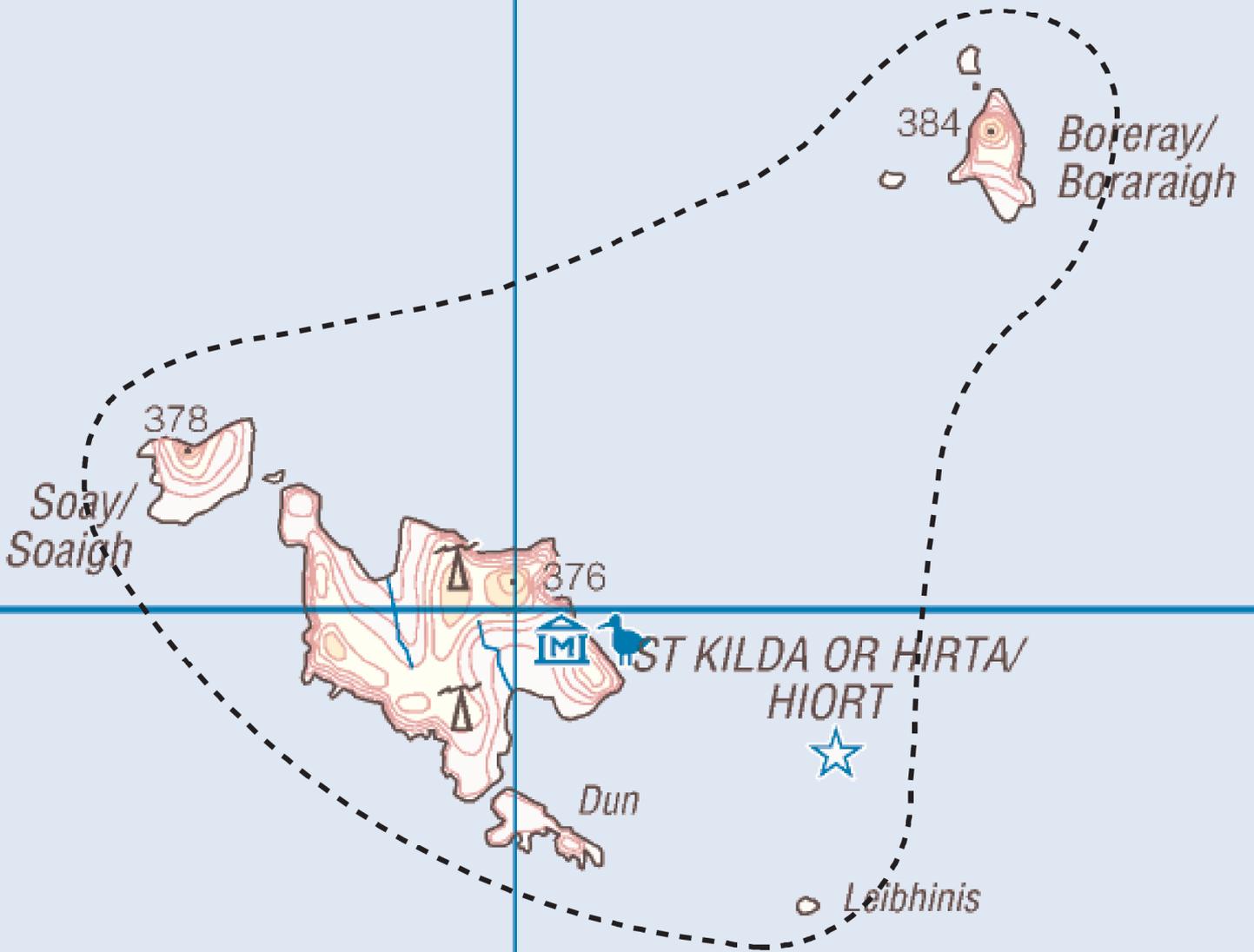
Murray, W. H. 1973. *The Islands of Western Scotland. The Inner and Outer Hebrides*. Eyre Methuen, reprinted 1978.

Ritchie, W. 1971. *The Beaches of Barra and the Uists: a Survey of Barra, South Uist, Benbecula, North Uist and Berneray*. Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen, for the Countryside Commission for Scotland. Reprinted as *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No. 47*.

Richards, J. 1998. The Western Isles, Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review*, No. 92.

St Kilda

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:75,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

ST KILDA NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

The description of St Kilda which does not contain superlatives has not been written. Situated 41 miles west-north-west of Griminish, the islands are of volcanic origin and have been weathered by the ocean into profiles which never fail to impress all who set eyes upon them.

The three larger islands are all in excess of 370m (1,200 feet) high and each exhibits precipices which plunge from that height into the sea. Stark, black, precipitous cliffs contrast with steep grassy green slopes and every element seems vertical. Caves and stacks are a feature of every coast except the smooth amphitheatre of Village Bay on Hirta, and the cliffs are thronged with sea birds, gannet and fulmar being more prolific here than anywhere else in Britain. Sir Julian Huxley called Stac Lee '... the most majestic sea rock in existence' and Geikie has described Conachair as follows:

'Nowhere among the Inner Hebrides, not even on the south-western side of Rum, is there any such display of the capacity of the youngest granite to assume the most rugged and picturesque forms. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the variety of outline assumed by the rock. To one who boats underneath these cliffs the scene of ceaseless destruction which they present is vividly impressive.'

Boreray and Soay are no less impressive with their cliff-girt green turf pasture, and Dun has a highly crenellated profile.

The Special Qualities of the St Kilda National Scenic Area

- Spectacular natural scenery combined with an outstanding cultural landscape
- The magnificence of mountain, cliff and island
- The vivid story of human endeavour on small, isolated islands
- The variety of island form, each with a distinct profile
- Remoteness, and the dominance of weather and sea
- The views from the Western Isles
- An unparalleled abundance of seabirds
- The superb landscape setting of Village Bay
- The completeness of settlement and agricultural remains on Hirta
- Soay sheep

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Spectacular natural scenery combined with an outstanding cultural landscape</i> 	
<p>The archipelago's spectacular natural scenery and its outstanding cultural landscape give it special qualities that work together to give St Kilda its universal value as a World Heritage site.</p> <p>To have one or two of these qualities is special, but to have all is truly unique, resulting in the iconic status of St Kilda in the international consciousness.</p>	<p>St Kilda is a World Heritage Site, recognised for both its natural and cultural values.</p> <p>For many who visit, it is a life-changing experience – the start of a lifelong fascination for the place and its people. The physical remains become even more moving to those who know something of the evocative and often poignant stories that so enhance the spirit of the place, and which have important lessons for everyone about the sustainable use of our resources. The constant international interest in St Kilda shows that it strikes a chord in the lives of people from all over the world.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The magnificence of hill, cliff and island</i> 	
<p>The magnificence of the high hills, vertical cliffs and pounding seas gives a sense of the overwhelming power of nature, against which the very visible remains of human activity fills visitors with awe and respect for past inhabitants.</p> <p>The coastline of the archipelago currently experiences some of the most extreme storm levels on the western European coast and these conditions have facilitated the development of superb sheer-faced and composite cliff</p>	<p>The sea cliffs below Conachair on Hirta are the tallest in the British Isles: '<i>What would Shakespeare have said, could he have looked down from this precipice in St Kilda, which is nearly three times higher [than the Cliffs of Dover], and so tremendous, that one who was accustomed to regard such sights with indifference, dared not venture to the edge of it alone?</i>' Stanley (1838)</p> <p>The combination of marine and glacial erosion imposed upon a hard rock geology, along with sea-level change, has resulted in a complex and spectacular terrestrial landscape that extends uninterrupted into the submarine zone: the underwater</p>

<p>forms, geos, sea caves, tunnels, arches and stacs at all stages of development.</p>	<p>landscape is equally spectacular. This combined terrestrial/marine landscape in an island setting is unique within the Palaeoarctic Realm. The archipelago is globally significant in terms of the physiographic features of the archipelago and significant ongoing geological and geomorphological processes that have created, and continue to influence, the terrestrial and marine landscape.</p>
<p>• <i>The vivid story of human endeavour on small isolated islands</i></p>	
<p>The almost tangible spirit of the place comes from the visible imprint left after the eventual demise of a way of life after several thousand years. The twin aspects of people's resilience in inhospitable surroundings, and the contrasting precarious traditional ways of life in the face of inexorable social and economic development give the place its emotive power.</p>	<p>St Kilda is unique, not only in that so much of the physical evidence of its past culture has survived, embraced by the spectacular natural landscape, but that this is complemented by detailed documentary accounts stretching back four hundred years and more. This provides the means to appreciate and understand the other qualities.</p> <p><i>'It is a place of high cliffs, moody weather and teeming bird life. All of those add to the qualities of St Kilda, but so much of what is special about the islands is rooted in its human history.'</i> Revised Nomination (2003)</p>
<p>• <i>The variety of island form, each with a distinct profile</i></p>	
<p>Each island of the archipelago is different in form and shape, and each is instantly recognisable from its profile.</p> <p>Hirta with its high cliffs and summits, neighbouring Soay, flat-topped but inaccessible, Dun with its serrated ridge, and distant, steeply-pointed Boreray with its massive stacs, come together to create an archipelago that is unsurpassed in scenery and drama.</p>	<p><u>Hirta</u>, rising to the heights of Conachair (430m), is generally cliff-encircled. However, the gentler landscape of Village Bay is the one breach in the archipelago's inaccessible defences, and has made habitation possible.</p> <p>The long, serrated ridge of <u>Dun</u>, providing shelter to Village Bay from the south, is instantly recognisable.</p> <p><u>Soay</u>, characterised by its flat top, is flanked by cliffs and steep, grass-covered slopes. It appears inaccessible.</p> <p><u>Boreray</u>, also cliff-flanked but with some grass slopes on the south, also comes across as inaccessible. It has a distinctive pointed and jagged profile.</p> <p>The smaller <u>Stac Lee</u> and the larger <u>Stac an Armin</u>, satellites of Boreray, are both sheer-sided, rising straight from the sea.</p> <p>The outlying <u>Levenish</u> appears as a rounded lump.</p>

- **Remoteness, and the dominance of weather and sea**

St Kilda is at once stunningly dramatic and acutely isolated. Its remoteness is accentuated because it is and always has been difficult to access. There is a romantic perception of its position as the islands 'at the edge of the world'.

Lying 40 miles out from the nearest land, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the islands have no escape from the weather systems that stream in over the sea. Access on or off any of the islands is at their mercy.

Clouds can descend for days on end, storms are frequent and the noise of the sea and the swell is never far-off. In contrast, the islands can be beautiful and tranquil on the few days when the wind drops, the swell subsides and the sea is calm and blue.

There is a general feeling of nature in charge, of being dependent on the whim of the elements.

'At the edge of the world', a place of drama, a place apart... The description of St Kilda that does not contain superlatives has not been written...' Revised Nomination (2003)

Landing on the island, whether by sea or helicopter, can never be guaranteed in advance, even in Village Bay. For boat landing, the Atlantic swell is ever-present and getting ashore can be hazardous; for helicopters, the downdrafts off the hill in windy weather or low cloud can make it too dangerous to land. This difficulty of access adds to the remote feel of the islands, under the sway of the forces of nature.

- **An unparalleled abundance of seabirds**

During the summer months, the flying and wheeling of thousands of seabirds adds immeasurably the landscape. Around the stacs and cliffs, and above the continuous murmurings of the sea, their sound fills the air.

The vast gannet colonies of Stac Lee, Stac an Armin and Boreray whiten the cliffs, and the seas below are always full of birds bobbing up and down with the swell.

St Kilda is for the most part deserted by birds in the winter months, but 17 species of seabird come ashore to breed in spring and summer, rendering the archipelago the largest seabird colony in Great Britain and Ireland. The archipelago is set in a pristine marine environment and is a seabird sanctuary without parallel in the north-east Atlantic.

- **The views from the Western Isles**

In clear weather St Kilda, low down on the western horizon, draws the eye with its distinctive profile, emphasising that it is a far distant place apart, with its own distinct history and culture.

<i>Location-specific qualities</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The superb landscape setting of Village Bay</i> 	
<p>The sheer scale of the hills, within which the settlement of Hirta seems to fit perfectly, is awe-inspiring.</p> <p>The lack of the bustle of modern life when standing in the village street, and the sense of being enveloped by the hills, is something that is usually only found in the remotest corners of mountain ranges.</p>	<p>The amazing landscape setting, the subject of hundreds of published photographs, is one of the principal assets of the cultural landscape of Village Bay.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The completeness of settlement and agricultural remains on Hirta</i> 	
<p>Draped over the dramatic natural landscape is the relict cultural landscape: layered remains of human occupation by a population of less than 200 souls. The density of the visible structures in the landscape is remarkable, as is the time-depth, from the remains of the Gleann Mor settlement dating back perhaps two or three thousand years, up to the late 19th-century cottages of the Village Bay settlement.</p> <p>Hirta is of outstanding significance for the survival of its 19th century settlement and landscape in an almost complete state, combined with impressive remains of earlier periods. What makes it exceptional is the combination of these remarkable physical remains and an astonishing wealth of literature about the lives of the inhabitants, their stories and their folklore, including the final demise of their unique way of life.</p>	<p>On Hirta one is standing in the middle of an almost intact settlement from nearly two centuries ago, busy with structures from earlier human activity. No relict historic landscape of this period can rival St Kilda in this respect.</p> <p>The heart of the cultural landscape of St Kilda sits within the stunning natural amphitheatre of Village Bay, Hirta. This relict cultural landscape of 1830's blackhouses and their field systems, and 1860's improved houses marks the last main phase of settlement. Dwarfed within the enveloping crescent of near-vertical hills, the string of houses along the Street and the segmented field divisions are a uniquely intact and readily legible example of a mid-19th-century planned settlement.</p> <p>The village is an outstanding example of a type of building ensemble or landscape that illustrates a significant stage in the human history of Scotland: the establishment of crofting townships and land allotment, and the restructuring of communities by remote higher authorities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Soay sheep</i> 	
<p>The numerous Soay sheep, found even on the steepest slopes, are a particularly distinctive feature of the landscape of Hirta and Soay.</p>	<p>Soay sheep are present on Soay and Hirta, introduced to the latter in the 1930s. They are arguably the oldest and best preserved cultural artefact in Scotland, believed to be more or less unchanged since the earliest sheep were domesticated by Neolithic farmers – perhaps some 7,000 years ago.</p> <p>Another flock of feral blackface sheep</p>

	survives on the island of Boreray, unmanaged since the evacuation of the island in 1930.
--	--

Selected Bibliography

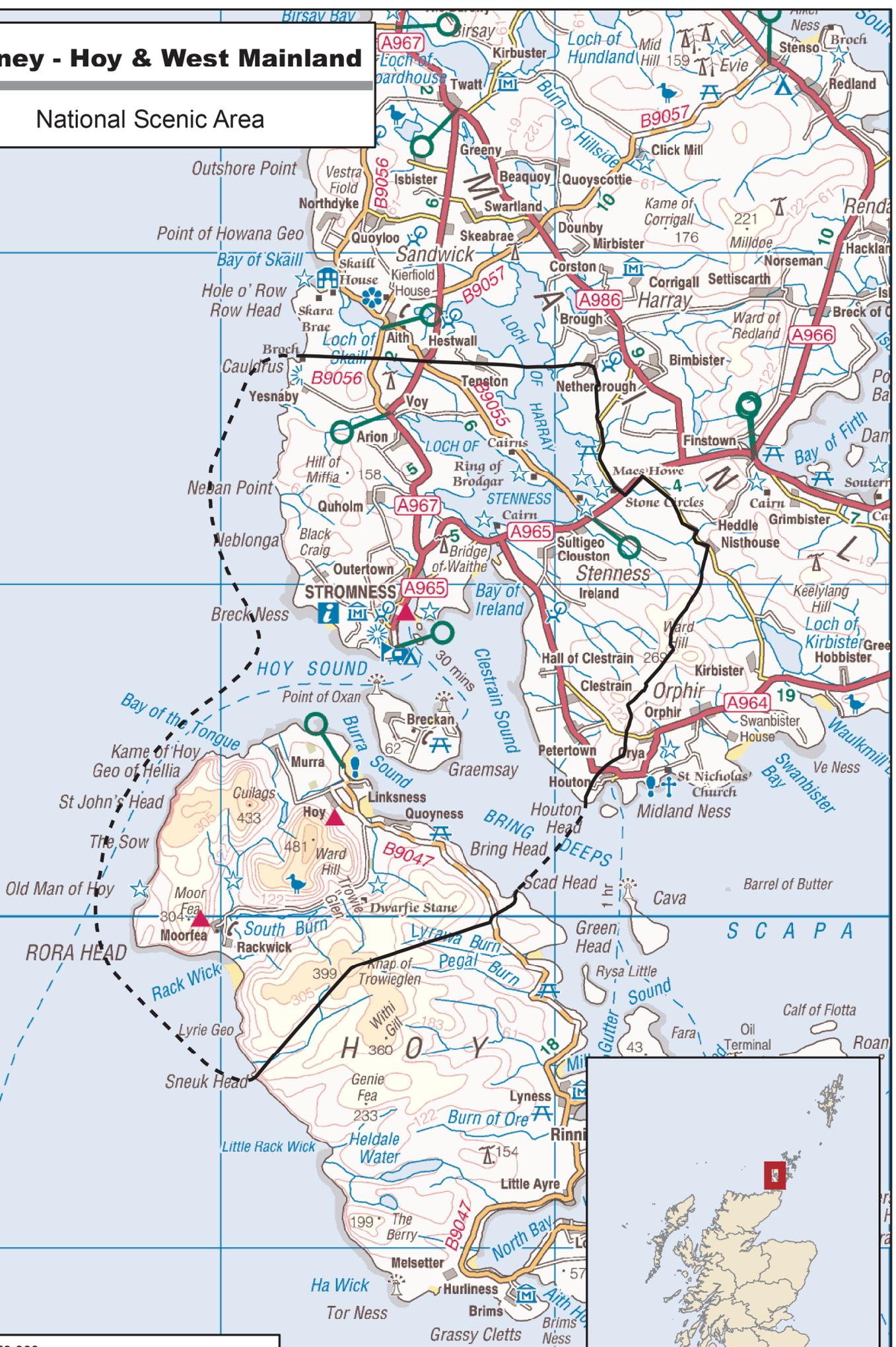
RCAHMS 1998. *St Kilda: Settlement and Structures on St Kilda*. Edinburgh: RCAHMS.

Stanley, Edward 1838. *A familiar history of birds; their nature, habits and instincts*. London: John W. Parker, London.

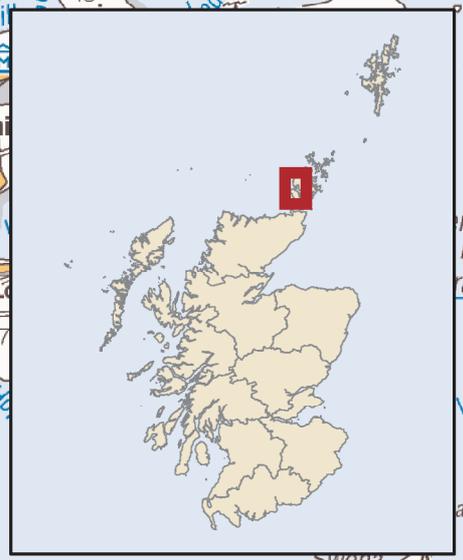
UK submission to UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2003. *Revised Nomination of St Kilda for Inclusion in the World Heritage Site List*.

Orkney - Hoy & West Mainland

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:150,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.



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 cliffed 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"> • <i>A palimpsest of geology, topography, archaeology and land use</i> 	
<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"> • <i>An archaeological landscape of world heritage status</i> 	
<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>'The Orkney imagination is haunted by time.' 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>

<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.</p> <p>The NSA is also rich in remains from other eras, from Norse and medieval to the Second World War.</p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>The solid carved boulder block of the Dwarfie Stane on Hoy lies within the NSA (although not in the World Heritage Site).</p>
<p>• <i>The spectacular coastal scenery</i></p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In comparison, the sheltered waters and gentle topography of the western approaches to Scapa Flow contrast with the Atlantic-battered western seaboard.</p>	<p>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, groups, geos, caves, wave cut platforms and boulder-strewn beaches.</p> <p>The Old Man of Hoy towers 137m from its resistant, igneous rock foundation at sea level; it was not climbed until 1966.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>• <i>Sandstone and flagstone as an essence of Orkney</i></p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>There are the towering cliffs and stacks of Hoy with their rusty reds and ochres, and also the lower rocky coasts with their</p>	<p>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.</p>

<p>wave-cut platforms and beaches of flagstones.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>There are ancient sandstone tombs, the solid carved boulder of the Dwarfie Stane, and the upstanding standing stones of the ancient circles.</p>	
<p>• <i>A long-settled and productive land and sea</i></p>	
<p>The land has the appearance of a long and well-settled agricultural landscape, with solid farm buildings, fertile, green fields and numerous cattle.</p> <p>Likewise the ever-presence of the sea is a reminder that fishing and whaling have also been key to the prosperity of the islands.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>• <i>The contrast between the fertile farmland and the unimproved moorland</i></p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

- ***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.

Selected Bibliography

Bailey, P. 2007. *Orkney*. Newton Abbott: David & Charles.

Berry, R.J. 1985. *Natural History of Orkney*. London: William Collins.

Historic Scotland 2008. *Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, Management Plan 2008 –13*.

Ritchie, A. 1995. *Prehistoric Orkney (Historic Scotland)*. London: Batsford.

Ritchie 1988. *Scotland BC, Historic Buildings & Monuments*. Edinburgh: HMSO.

Land Use Consultants 1998. Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 100*.

www.firth.orkney.sch.uk/trees/berriedale.htm (accessed October 2008)

www.orkneyjar.com (accessed October 2008)

Shetland

National Scenic Area

SHETLAND ISLANDS

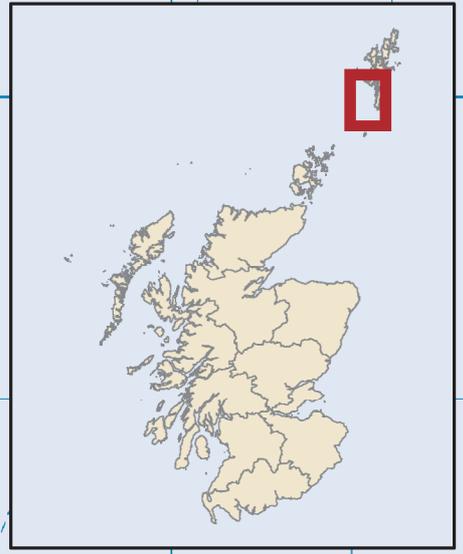
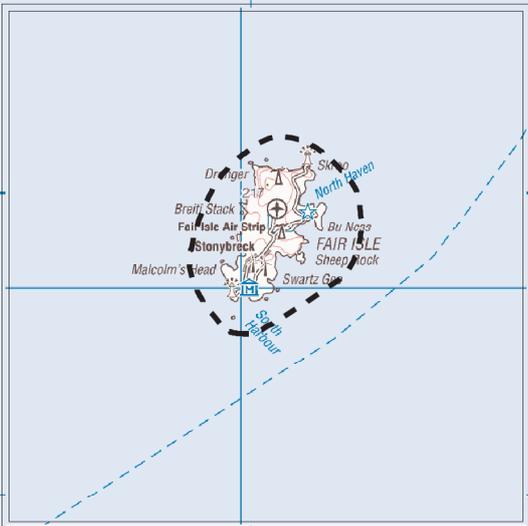
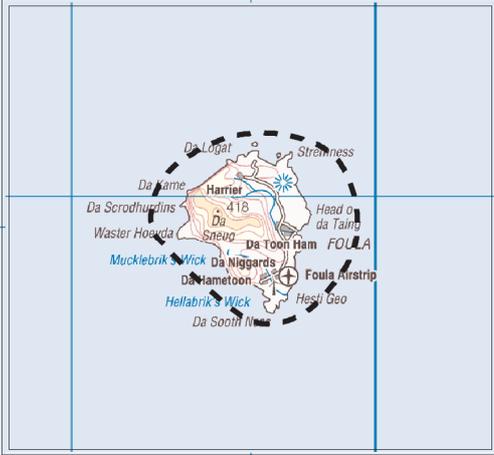


Scale 1:250,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

Map 1 of 2

Shetland

National Scenic Area



Scale 1:250,000
Data source: Scottish Government. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908

SHETLAND NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Shetland Isles

Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978*

Seven separate small areas of coastal landscape in Shetland have been identified as of outstanding scenic interest.

Scenic interest in Shetland is predominantly coastal. Fair Isle is a combination of green fields, moors and sandstone cliffs, all related to the coast. Remote from the mainland of Shetland, it has a great diversity of cliffs, geos, stacks, skerries, natural arches, isthmuses and small bayhead beaches. It is one of the foremost bird observatories in Europe. While it lacks great absolute relief, it has the distinctive features of Sheep Rock and the several eminences of its west coast which add further variety to the coastal scenery.

Foula, because of its greater height (418m), enjoys a more direct visual relationship to the mainland and boasts cliffs in the Kame rising to 366m. The striking form of the island contributes greatly to the coastal scenery of the South West Mainland. The coast of the island itself exhibits a diversity of natural features, including stacks, cliffs, skerries, caves and headlands.

Within the South West Mainland area, stretching from Fitful Head to the Deeps, there is a variety of contrasting landscapes ranging from cliffed coastline of open aspect in the south to fjord-like indentation in the voes of Weisdale and Whiteness. The larger islands of Burra and Trondra have distinctive settlement patterns, and the other numerous small islands and stacks lying in the bight known as the Deeps all combine to make a western oceanic seascape of strong character and atmosphere in which the constantly changing skies play an important part. The area is further diversified and enhanced by the softer features of St. Ninian's Isle with its fine tombolo and the adjacent enclosed and humanised landscape around the Loch of Spiggie.

At Muckle Roe a further significant element of Shetland scenery is found in the remarkable high red sandstone cliffs which make a significant contribution to the wider coastal scene of St. Magnus Bay of which they are the outstanding feature, together with the fine headlands, cliffs, skerries and stacks of Esha Ness.

Further north, the northern extremities of the North Roe peninsula again exhibit a similar range of skerries, stacks, islets, geos, caves, headlands and natural arches, to which the complex geology lends further variety of colour and form between Fugla Ness, Uyea Isle, Fethaland and the Ramna Stacks, and the Ness of Burravoe, Hermaness and Burrafirth including Muckle Flugga and Out Stack, at the northern extremity of the British Isles, are of the same outstanding character.

The Special Qualities of the Shetland National Scenic Area

Shetland has an outstanding coastline. The seven designated areas that make-up the NSA comprise Shetland's scenic highlights and epitomise the range of coastal forms varying across the island group. Some special qualities are generic to all the identified NSA areas, others are specific to each area within the NSA. The seven individual areas of the NSA are: **Fair Isle, South West Mainland, Foula, Muckle Roe, Eshaness, Fethaland, and Hermaness**. Where a quality applies to a particular area, the name is highlighted in **bold**.

- The stunning variety of the extensive coastline
- Coastal views both close and distant
- Coastal settlement and fertility within a large hinterland of unsettled moorland and coast
- The hidden coasts
- The effects and co-existence of wind and shelter
- A sense of remoteness, solitude and tranquillity
- The notable and memorable coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs
- The distinctive cultural landmarks
- Northern light

Special Quality	Further information
<p>• <i>The stunning variety of the extensive coastline</i></p> <p>Shetland's long, extensive coastline is highly varied: from fissured and fragmented hard rock coasts, to gentler formations of accumulated gravels, sands, spits and bars; from remarkably steep cliffs to sloping bays; from long, sheltered voes to cliffs exposed to the full fury of the Atlantic ocean.</p> <p>The landscape is an intimate mix of sea and land. The sea reaches far inland by way of voes, firths and sounds, an inland coast in marked contrast to the dynamic outer coast of wild Atlantic 'oceanscapes'. Here the land reaches into the open sea on many points and promontories.</p> <p>This huge variety has arisen from the interaction between geology, glaciation and sea level changes, and results in the dramatic coastal scenery as encapsulated within the seven areas of</p>	<p>South West Mainland, stretching from Fitful Head (Old Norse <i>hvitfugla</i>, white birds) to the Deeps, displays greatly contrasting coastlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cliffed coastline of open aspect in the south to long voes at Weisdale and Whiteness. • Numerous small islands and stacks, notably in the area west of Scalloway. • St. Ninian's Isle with its fine tombolo. <p>Both Muckle Roe and Eshaness are outstanding stretches of coastline that enclose St. Magnus Bay with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remarkable high red granite cliffs at Muckle Roe. • At Eshaness, fine headlands, vertical cliffs, skerries and stacks, Calder's Geo, the Holes of Skraada, and the Grind o' da Navir, where western storm seas have breached the cliffs to toss up boulders of ignimbrite rock forming a gigantic, inland storm beach. <p>The North Roe peninsula further exhibits a range of skerries, stacks, islets, geos, caves, headlands and natural arches. Its complex geology lends the area distinctive</p>

<p>the NSA.</p>	<p>variations in coastal landform and colour between Fugla Ness, Uyea Isle, Fethaland and the Ramna Stacks.</p> <p>At Hermaness on Unst, the coastal topography varies from the 175m high cliffs at the Neap, to the sandy beach and machair at the head of the narrow Burrafirth.</p> <p>Fair Isle, remote from the Shetland mainland, has a great diversity of cliffs, geos, stacks, skerries, natural arches, isthmuses and small bayhead beaches. Sheep Rock, with its smooth, sloping top and vertical cliffs, is a notable feature, as is The Kirn of Scroo in the north, an 80m subterranean passage which terminates in a gloop.</p> <p>Also a remote island, Foula's coast has a distinctive mix of coastal forms. <i>'The island is outstanding for its assemblage of hard-rock coastal landforms, which include the second-highest sea cliff in Britain. With the exception of well-developed shore platforms, examples of most of the features and stages of coastal landform development in rock are found... conditions have facilitated the development of a fine assemblage of sheer-faced and composite cliff forms, geos, sea caves, tunnels, arches, stacks and stumps, many of which show clear relationships with geological structure.'</i> Hansom (2003b)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal views both close and distant 	
<p>Such a variety of coastal scenery allows for a magnificent range of coastal views. In places distant islands lie low on the horizon, in others there is a near view to an inshore island, or to a neighbouring shore of this articulated coast.</p> <p>The striking form of distant Foula, with its great height of 418m and the Kame cliffs rising to 366m, catches the eye along many stretches of the South West Mainland.</p>	<p>Fair Isle is less prominent as a visual feature than Foula - except when travelling by sea to or from Shetland when the ferry can pass close by.</p> <p>Other notable views within the scenic areas are views across St Magnus Bay to Papa Stour from Eshaness and Muckle Roe; and views of St Ninian's Isle from South West Mainland.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal settlement and fertility within a large hinterland of unsettled moorland and coast 	
<p>Thousands of years of human occupation has given the landscape a rich archaeological heritage, including ancient brochs and modern crofts.</p> <p>Settlement has always been constrained by the nature of the land, largely</p>	<p>The settlement pattern of Shetland is unique in that it was not affected in a major way by clearances: pre-improvement townships were converted to crofts in the late 19th century. Larger farms have always coexisted amongst smallholdings/crofts. There are good examples of crofting townships with strip fields and</p>

<p>confined to strips of ground rarely out of sight of the sea. Houses are concentrated at the heads of voes or in sheltered bays, well placed to make use of the sea and coastal resources.</p> <p>The green, inbye land of the crofts and farms contrasts with the common grazings of wild, unimproved and uninhabited moorland and bog. There are also long lengths of remote and uninhabited coast.</p>	<p>planticrues.</p> <p>The divide between inbye land and moorland has changed little since the mid-19th century, although there has been some intake of moorland in recent years, together with improvement of grazing. The moorland areas contain extensive peat diggings. Fishing has also been vital to the islands' economy.</p> <p>Within South West Mainland the larger islands of Burra and Trondra show the underlying crofting settlement pattern, although this is now tending to be lost through modern development. The areas adjacent to Bigton and the Loch of Spiggie show crofting farmland, and are a more fertile, enclosed and humanised landscape. Bigton Farm is recorded in the early 18th century, and was noted for its productivity even then. St Ninian's Isle is renowned for its early medieval chapel and silver hoard found on the island.</p> <p>The landscapes of both Fair Isle and Foula can be divided into an inhabited area of crofts and inbye land and the common grazings of uninhabited moorland. On Fair Isle the ratio is about 50:50; Foula, by contrast, is 90% moorland with two small crofting areas and an additional half a dozen isolated crofts.</p>
<p>• The hidden coasts</p>	
<p>Because the land is undulating, markedly so in the western mainland, the actual brink of the coastal edge may be hidden or difficult of access. This brings an element of surprise when caves, geos and gloups are suddenly encountered, inviting further exploration.</p>	<p>To suddenly encounter an unseen cliff, geo or gloup (a hole arising from a collapsed sea cliff) when walking along the coast can also be a terrifying experience.</p>
<p>• The effects and co-existence of wind and shelter</p>	
<p>The wind appears ever-present and the absence of trees, or even shrubs, gives an open and exposed feel to much of the landscape. The frequent gales can be awe-inspiring, and in high seas <i>fröde</i> (sea-foam) can fleck the coastal grasslands, well-inland from the coastal edge.</p> <p>Weather, skies and light are rarely static, with continual movement of clouds, waves, sea-spray and grasses. The interplay of light and shade moving across the sea, the coastal grasslands or</p>	<p>The islands are delightful on fine days, and this can happen at any season; but <i>'winter hurricanes they are awe-inspiring. This is the land of the oilskins and the parka, or 'Terre de Vent' (The Land of the Wind), as the French photographer Georges Dif recently described it in his beautiful portrait of the islands.'</i> (www.shetlandtourism.com)</p> <p>The drama and dynamics of the ocean's power on the land is epitomised at the Grind o' da Navir at Eshaness where the velocity of the water moves boulders up to 3m long, 15m above sea level, depositing them in ridges up to 3.5m long. The boulders themselves</p>

<p>the interior moorland adds a special dynamism.</p> <p>With wind a determining force, so the presence of shelter is acutely perceived. Hence, an awareness of both wind and shelter is a particular quality of these areas. There may be the distant sound of stormy seas pounding the mouth of a bay or voe, while inland waters or a sheltered hollow remain still and calm.</p>	<p>frequently exceed 1m in length and are deposited up to 60m inland.</p> <p>Images of airborne, wave water at Eshaness show spray reaching a height of 80m above Dore Holm. (www.fettes.com)</p>
<p>• A sense of remoteness, solitude and tranquillity</p>	
<p>The feeling of being at the northern limits of the British Isles is marked. The Shetland Isles are remote in themselves, and within the archipelago there are also degrees of remoteness. Fair Isle and Foula are the remotest inhabited islands in the British Isles – although they have both been long-inhabited with a rich history of human settlement.</p> <p>Most of the coastline is undeveloped and natural, and long-stretches can be traversed without seeing anyone or any human influence.</p> <p>Hence solitude and tranquillity underpin much of the NSA coast, and it is easy to wander with only the seabirds for company. However tranquillity can give way to alarm as the wind picks up, the rain begins and an Atlantic storm sets in.</p>	<p>The northernmost and most isolated islands in the British Isles, Shetland lies some 150km north of mainland Britain and 340km north of Aberdeen. They are the nearest the British Isles come to Norway, with Lerwick 370km west of Bergen. Muckle Flugga, within the Hermaness section of the NSA, is further from the Scottish/English border than Lands End (Haswell-Smith, 2008).</p> <p>Fair Isle lies 39km south-west of Sumburgh Head, and Foula lies 29km west of Walls. Access to both Fair Isle and Foula is limited by weather and sea conditions, accentuating their remoteness.</p>
<p>• The notable and memorable coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs</p>	
<p>Where open to the full fury of the Atlantic Ocean, the sea has carved impressive cliffs, forming spectacular, towering, vertical scenery, varying greatly in colour according to the complex geology.</p> <p>The coast also contains many distinctive stacks, promontories and other features that form memorable images. Within the NSA these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muckle Flugga with its distinctive sloping, pointed rocks. • The imposing cliffs of Hermaness 	<p>Shetland has nearly 400km of cliffs, a fifth of Scotland's total length (SNH, 2002). The most notable and accessible within the NSA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eshaness (from Old Norse <i>Aesju Nes</i>, headland of volcanic rock): vertical rock faces and volcanic cliffs, and The Holes of Scraada, a deep collapsed sea cave. • Hillswick Ness: a series of dramatic Moine rock cliffs, associated with The Drongs. • Muckle Roe: red granite cliffs. • Foula: Old Red Sandstone cliffs on the west coast rising spectacularly at the Kame. <p>The Grind o' da Navir (Gateway of the Borer)</p>

itself, with its nesting seabirds. Also the western cliffs of **Muckle Roe**, the Cliff Hills area of **Southwest Mainland**, and the lower cliffs on the west of **Eshaness**.

- Ramna Stacks, a group of skerries seen off the Point of **Fethaland**.
- The Drongs of Hillswick within the **Eshaness** area, the outermost and most curious of a series of stacks that emerge from the sea in St Magnus Bay.
- Dore Holm (Old Norse 'doorway islet') within **Eshaness**. Its natural arch 21m high on its western side is a remarkable feature.
- Verdant St Ninian's Isle, joined to the mainland with its distinctive tombolo, within **South West Mainland**.
- Fitful Head, a reference point in many views within **South West Mainland**, and from the northwest Mainland at Eshaness and Hillswick.

On **Fair Isle**:

- Sheep Crag, a distinctive headland semi-detached from the island's east coast.
- Bu Ness (Old Norse *Home Headland*) joined to the island by a narrow isthmus dividing two sheltered bays, North and South Haven.
- On the west coast, a series of distinctive eminences add variety to the coastal scenery, notably Malcolm's Head.

On **Foula**:

- Five distinct peaks all sloping northwards, of which The Sneug is the highest at 418m.
- Sneck ida Smaalie, a spectacular rock cleft 60m deep, 1m wide and that extends for 50m.
- The stacks of Gaada, Sheepie and The Brough; Gaada is dissected by two arches, capped by eroded and loosened boulders.

at **Eshaness** is a unique site displaying a window onto the Atlantic '*between its twin bastions ...in which storm waves thunder through the portal.*' (www.fettes.com)

The Drongs are a series of thin, rocky pinnacles that resemble a fleet of sailing ships in the distance. Their appearance varies with the light and on a misty night they have been compared to a ship under full sail. They include a high rock pillar known as Slender Drong, the taller Main Drong and the two smaller stacks, Slim Drong and Stumpy Drong. David Henry Parry (1793-1826) drew the images for Samuel Hibbert's *Description of the Shetland Islands* published 1822, engraved by Thomson of Edinburgh.

The distinctive headlands of **Fair Isle** and **Foula** tend to have cliffs on the seaward side, with gently-sloping downward profiles inland.

The top of Sheep Crag of **Fair Isle** has 4ha of pasture. This was of value to the islanders who used to climb it with chains, then used ropes to raise and lower the sheep.

The presence of large landslide-blocks along **Foula's** west coast indicates that large-scale failure of the cliffs continues to the present day as a result of failure along bedding planes in the sandstones. Nowhere is this more dramatically displayed than at the Sneck ida Smaalie.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distinctive cultural landmarks 	
<p>There are many cultural features that bear witness to the Shetlanders' long history and their economic reliance on the sea over the centuries. Those that provide focal or incidental points within the over-arching natural landscape of the NSA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lighthouses of Muckle Flugga, Esha Ness, and the North and South Lights of Fair Isle. • The ancient broch on the Loch of Houlland (Eshaness). • The remains of the böds and fishing lodges at Stenness and Fethaland. • Noosts (protective, on-shore boat berths) on Fair Isle. 	<p>Böds were two storey buildings combining shop, residence for the beach master or factor and a store for fish and gear. Fishing lodges were singly storey buildings lived in by the fishermen during the fishing season. Those at Fethaland belonged to the largest Shetland fishing station, with up to sixty boats operating to 50 miles west, to the Far Haaf, the edge of the continental shelf.</p> <p>Hillswick was developed in the 18th century as a haaf fishing station by Thomas Gifford of Busta. The western edge of the Hermaness area contains the northerly military installations in the British Isles at Saxa Vord. The summit of Ward Hill on Fair Isle contains military installations dating from the Second World War.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern light 	
<p>At midsummer there is still light in the sky at midnight, the 'simmer dim'. At midwinter the short hours of daylight are highly appreciated, and the general absence of light pollution enables the night sky to be appreciated in all its glory.</p> <p>On some days there is great visual clarity, with long views often highlighted by intense rainbows; at other times, long days of low cloud and mist restrict views to the immediate vicinity.</p>	<p>Truly dark skies cannot be experienced everywhere on Shetland as there is light pollution from the Sullom Voe oil terminal, Lerwick and some of the larger settlements.</p>

Selected Bibliography

- Berry, R. J. & Johnston, J. L. 1980. *The Natural History of Shetland*. London: Collins.
- Donaldson, G. 1990. *Scotland and Norway: A Northern Commonwealth*.
- Fenton, A. 1997. *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland*. Tuckwell Press.
- Hall, A. & Fraser, A. 2004. *Shetland Landscapes*. Available at www.fettes.com/shetland/
- Hansom, J. D. 2003a. *St Ninian's Tombolo*. In Coastal Geomorphology of Great Britain Volume 28. Chapter 8: Sand spits and tombolos – Geological Conservation Review site reports.

Hansom, J. D. 2003b. *Foula*. In Coastal Geomorphology of Great Britain Volume 28. Chapter 3: Hard-rock cliffs – Geological Conservation Review site reports.

Haswell-Smith, H. 2008. *The Scottish Islands. The Bestselling Guide to Every Scottish Island*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Knox, S. A. 1985. *The Making of the Shetland Landscape*. Edinburgh: John Donald.

Laughton Johnston, J. 1999. *A Shetland Naturalist*. Poyser.

Scottish Natural Heritage 2002. *Natural Heritage Futures: Shetland*.

www.fettes.com/shetland Geology and scenery of Shetland. (accessed December 2008)

www.snh.gov.uk

© Scottish Natural Heritage 2010

Policy and Advice Directorate, Great Glen House,
Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW
T: 01463 725000

You can download a copy of this publication from the SNH website.



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad