

Scottish Natural Heritage

Guidance note

Coastal Character Assessment

August 2017



Guidance on Coastal Character Assessment

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Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Coastal character assessment informs and guides coastal and marine planning, and individual development proposals, by informing landscape/seascape and visual impact assessments. This guidance presents the methodology on how to undertake coastal character assessment to provide baseline information that complements terrestrial landscape character assessment in Scotland. It clearly sets out this well-established characterisation method, emphasises its wider applicability and gives examples of its application.

Background

- 1.2 Scotland has a very diverse coastline ranging from the intricate west coast of long sea lochs, sounds and islands to the more even, sandy beaches and settled broad firths on the east coast. The coast is of national and international significance, featuring many areas of landscape and ecological importance. It provides the setting to many of our major settlements and is also a prime resource for industry in some areas.



Intricate sounds, long sea lochs and islands on the more remote and less settled north-west coast



The well-settled, relatively industrialised coastal character of the broad Firth of Forth.

- 1.3 The coast is dynamic and is constantly changing with erosion and accretion. The modern era has seen bridges and causeways replacing some traditional ferry routes; industries and associated infrastructure along the coast change over time – they become redundant, sites may adapt to other uses; elsewhere there is innovative change. The increased interest in coastal and offshore development, including renewable energy generation, results in a need to consider the coast more fully in terms of planning and assessment.
- 1.4 The new marine planning system provides a framework for the sustainable development of the Scottish marine area and will guide decisions on development licensing and activity management. The National Marine Plan sets economic, social and marine ecosystem objectives at a strategic level, but it is expected that the eleven regional marine plans (in conjunction with adjacent terrestrial plans) will provide a more detailed framework specific to each respective region. Within this context, there is a need to understand particular coastal qualities to aid strategic planning of development and marine management.

- 1.5 Where coastal characterisation is intended as the baseline for Seascape / Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA), it may be necessary to consider the effects of a development proposal on both landscape and coastal character. The intention is to supplement Scotland's [Landscape Character Assessments](#) (LCA) with coastal characterisation, which assesses the particular qualities of the coast. Some coastal character assessments already exist, many as a result of work associated with aquaculture capacity studies or marine renewables, although coverage around Scotland is limited. Table 1 indicates where coastal character studies have been carried out.

location	date	purpose
Aberdeen to Holy Island	from 2011	Baseline studies for offshore wind farm proposals
Dumfries & Galloway Luce Sands to Fleet Bay	2007	Aquaculture capacity study and methodology test
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	2011	Aquaculture capacity study
Firth of Clyde	2013	Coastal forum commissioned study
Moray Firth	from 2011	Baseline study for offshore wind farm proposals
North Argyll	2007	Aquaculture capacity study
North Caithness coast	2016	Commissioned by SNH to produce coastal character assessment based on 2016 guidance
Orkney Isles	2016	Commissioned by SNH to produce coastal character assessment based on 2016 guidance
West Kintyre	2010	Coastal characterisation methodology test (SNH)

Scope of the guidance

- 1.6 This document provides guidance on how to assess the character of the coast. The method is linked to landscape character assessment but considers those additional specific characteristics associated with the coast.
- 1.7 Coastal character is made up of the often narrow margin of the coastal edge, its immediate hinterland and areas of sea. These three key components of coastal character include what is commonly known as 'seascape'. Appendix A is a glossary of common terms.
- 1.8 This guidance will principally be used in undertaking coastal character assessment. This can be used to inform regional marine plans, local/strategic development plans, and other planning policies. It will also form the baseline for sensitivity / capacity for SLVIA of specific coastal and marine development proposals (such as aquaculture and marine renewables).

- 1.9 It should prove useful for Marine Planning Partnerships who are developing Regional Marine Plans. The classification and description of coastal character as outlined here can then be supplemented by judgements on coastal landscapes' sensitivity to inform future use and development of our coasts and seas. It is also likely to be used by Marine Scotland, local authorities, SNH and other bodies with a specific remit for these areas, as well as landscape professionals commissioned to undertake coastal capacity studies and SLVIA. Coastal characterisation studies may also be useful in the tourism sector.

Development of this guidance

- 1.10 'Seascape' refers to '*an area, as perceived by people, from land, sea or air, where the sea is a key element of the physical environment*'.¹ Innovative work in defining seascapes, undertaken by the Countryside Council for Wales, was developed further in a SNH research project that included a strategic assessment: a 'nationwide' look at the character of the coast (Hill *et al.*, 2001). These studies recognise that the coast is a significant part of seascape, together with the immediate hinterland (the landscape immediately adjacent to the coast) and the marine component. Defining the character of the coast and its relationship with both its hinterland and the sea is an important aspect of character assessment.
- 1.11 This guidance is informed by work undertaken by SNH which explored coastal character assessment and capacity in the context of the aquaculture industry. It particularly relies on the assessment methodologies outlined in [Landscape/Seascape Carrying Capacity for Aquaculture](#) (SNH Commissioned Report No 215, 2007) and [Offshore Renewables -guidance](#) (SNH, 2012). The methodology for coastal characterisation set out in both these documents is now well-established.
- 1.12 A different approach is taken in England and Wales. There, seascape characterisation includes both the sea surface and what lies below the waterline: the natural heritage, seabed and cultural heritage. These are all assessed to define 'marine character areas'. The mapped area can extend well out to sea, beyond 12nm, and some marine character areas have no landward boundary. In Scotland the focus is on the coast and its interaction with sea and hinterland, relationships that are quite distinctive in the Scottish context, especially on the West coast. Species, habitats, geological / geomorphological and cultural features are no less important in Scotland, but here the practice is to consider these under separate topic studies, where relevant.

¹ The term is commonly used and is included within the definition of landscape contained within the [European Landscape Convention](#).

2. An introduction to coastal character assessment

- 2.1 Coastal character is a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements on the coast, land and sea that makes one part of the coast different from another.
- 2.2 In planning any assessment, it is expected that an initial scoping study steered by relevant authorities will help to define the parameters and tailor the assessment to meet specific needs (see paragraphs 1.4, 1.9).

Defining the study area

- 2.3 This coastal characterisation methodology outlines what needs to be considered by professionals in carrying out the survey **to identify and describe the key components of the sea and immediate hinterland, which comprise the coastal character**. The methodology offers guidance on naming conventions so that locations are clearly recognised (see para 3.3-4; 4.17).
- 2.4 Some flexibility is necessary in defining the extent of the coast and the assessor will need to consider this on a case-by-case basis. This is principally influenced by the dominance of the sea in terms of physical characteristics, views and experience. The landward extent of the coast can be narrow where edged by cliffs or settlement; or broad where it includes raised beaches, dunes or more open coastal pasture or machair. The seaward extent can also vary considerably depending on the span of water, degree of containment by land and the nature of views to open sea. The strong inter-relationship of land and sea in Scotland will also necessitate exploration of the wider coastal context and of the interaction between sea, islands and land.



Significant cliffs limit the extent of inter-visibility of land and sea, and the immediate hinterland in forming coastal character. (Pennan, Aberdeenshire)



Lower-lying estuaries, wetlands and dune systems will increase inter-visibility of land and sea and the inland extent of coastal character areas. (South Uist)

Relationship to landscape character assessment

- 2.5 Coastal characterisation is directly related to landscape character assessment. It uses the same principles and methodology of desk and field analysis. The major determinant in defining the landward and seaward components of the coast is the sea— the key characteristic. It can be the formative influence on the built environment (for example, ports, promenades, fishing villages) as much as on the natural environment where there are, for example, sand dunes or machair.
- 2.6 SNH's existing suite of landscape character assessment studies, covering all of Scotland, provides information on coastal character but this varies according to the local authority area. While some of these studies will provide useful background when considering coastal character, the boundaries and scales of landscape character types and areas are unlikely to correlate precisely with those defined for coastal character. This is because although the character of the coast is influenced by the immediate hinterland, it is often different in its articulation and scale. This can occur, for instance, where the coastal edge is fragmented and indented but is backed by a relatively simple landscape of moorland or pasture.
- 2.7 More detailed characterisation is often useful for SLVIA of many developments. In such cases there is an opportunity to undertake a more integrated landscape and coastal assessment.
- 2.8 Where the character assessment is to form the baseline for SLVIA, it is necessary to consider the effects of a development proposal on both landscape and coastal character. The nature and scale of a development will influence where impacts need to be considered – whether on the coast and/or landscape character. For example, a coastal power station, or tall near-shore wind turbines, will have a wider landward influence than smaller offshore wave devices.

3. Establishing an appropriate scale of characterisation

The hierarchy of coastal character units

- 3.1 Coastal characterisation can be applied at a number of different scales, from the broad strategic level to finer grained assessments at the local level.
- 3.2 Around Scotland's coast, 13 national coastal character types have been identified – see Figure 1. These were initially defined in the research report [SNH Seascapes Study](#) (Scott *et al*, 2005). This broad classification still holds: it establishes coastal character at a national scale, providing a strategic level of characterisation only. As character types, they are generic and may occur at different places. Outline descriptions of these [National Coastal Character Types](#) are available on the SNH website.
- 3.3 **Regional Coastal Character Areas** form the next tier down, encompassing a geographically specific large coastal area at a regional level. They may comprise a broad bay, sea loch, sound or major part of a firth and are usually identifiable by a common geographic or place name, which forms the basis of the study area (e.g. the Sound of Bute, or Inner Firth of Forth). At this coarse-grained level there will be obvious variation in the physical form of the coast, but it will stop short of the finer detail captured by 'Local Coastal Character'.
- 3.4 **Local Coastal Character Areas** are smaller in size and characterised by a finer level of detail; they further subdivide the Regional Character Area into areas of consistent coastal character with a strong integrity, like a specific bay, section of coast or loch with a similar character. Local Coastal Character Areas will be informed by existing Landscape Character Assessments and are usually mapped at 1:50,000 scale.
- 3.5 The hierarchy of coastal character types and areas is shown in Figure 2. It parallels the landscape character type classification for Scotland which also defines these national, regional and local levels of characterisation (David Tyldesley & Associates 1998).

A scale fit for purpose

- 3.6 The purpose of the coastal characterisation will influence the scale and scope of the assessment. Regional Coastal Character Areas are likely to be more useful for regional marine planning but will also provide a wider context for more detailed assessment of Local Coastal Character Areas.
- 3.7 When a coastal character survey is to provide the baseline for SLVIA, the size of the development proposal being assessed and its distance from shore will influence the appropriate scale of characterisation. The type of development proposed will also determine the extent of the study area and the appropriate scale of characterisation needed, particularly if there are landfall and onshore elements. Near-shore aquaculture or renewable energy devices are more likely to require a detailed level of characterisation in the form of Local Coastal Character Areas; also of relevance is any screening provided by coastal landform, which will limit the extent of the study area.

3.8 In contrast, Regional Coastal Character Areas would be more appropriate for the assessment of offshore wind farm developments located beyond approximately 12nm from shore where visibility from the coast may be more extensive. Examples of different scales of coastal characterisation used for a variety of applications are shown in Section 5 of this document.

Figure 1: National coastal character types (Scott *et al*, 2005)

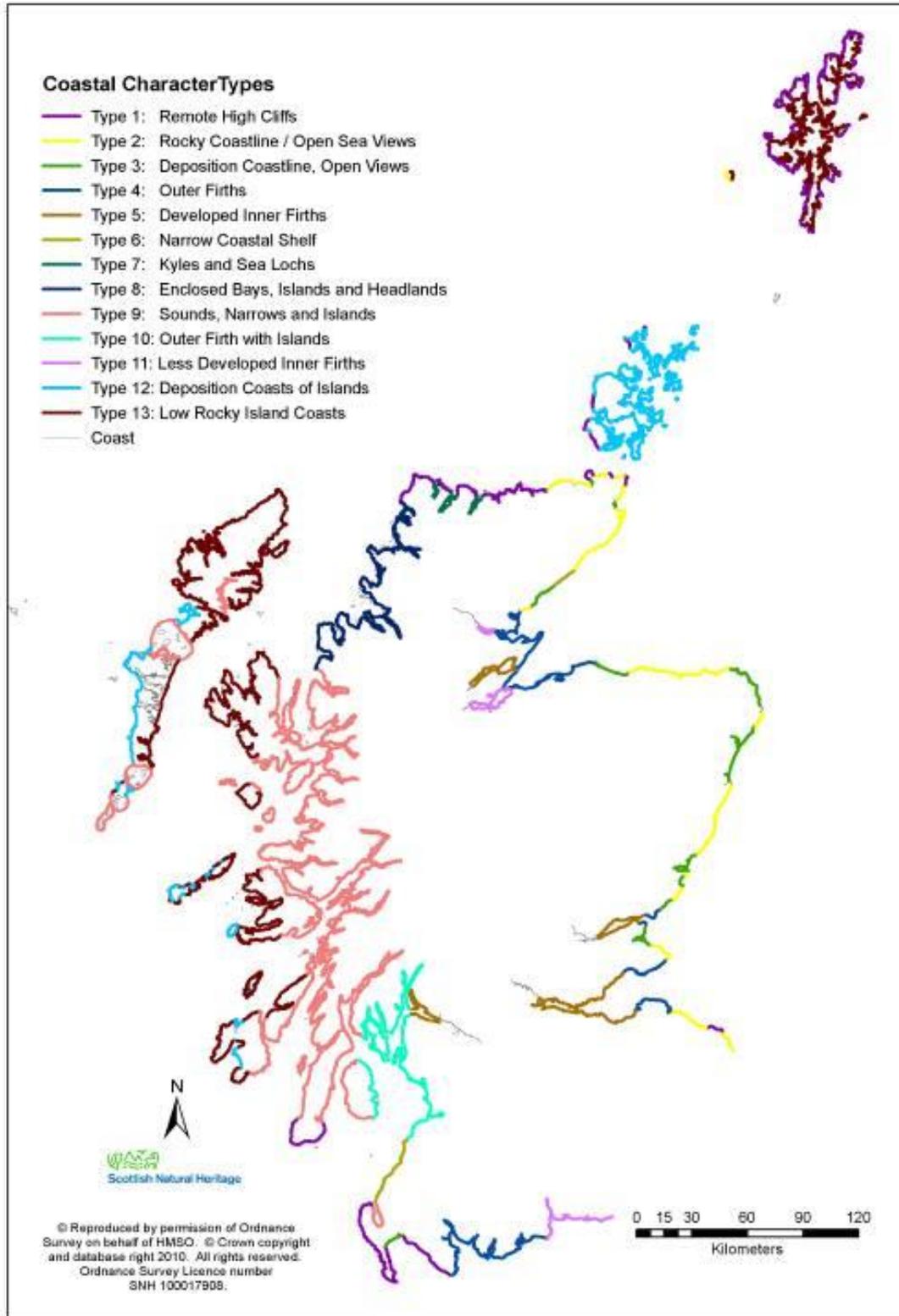
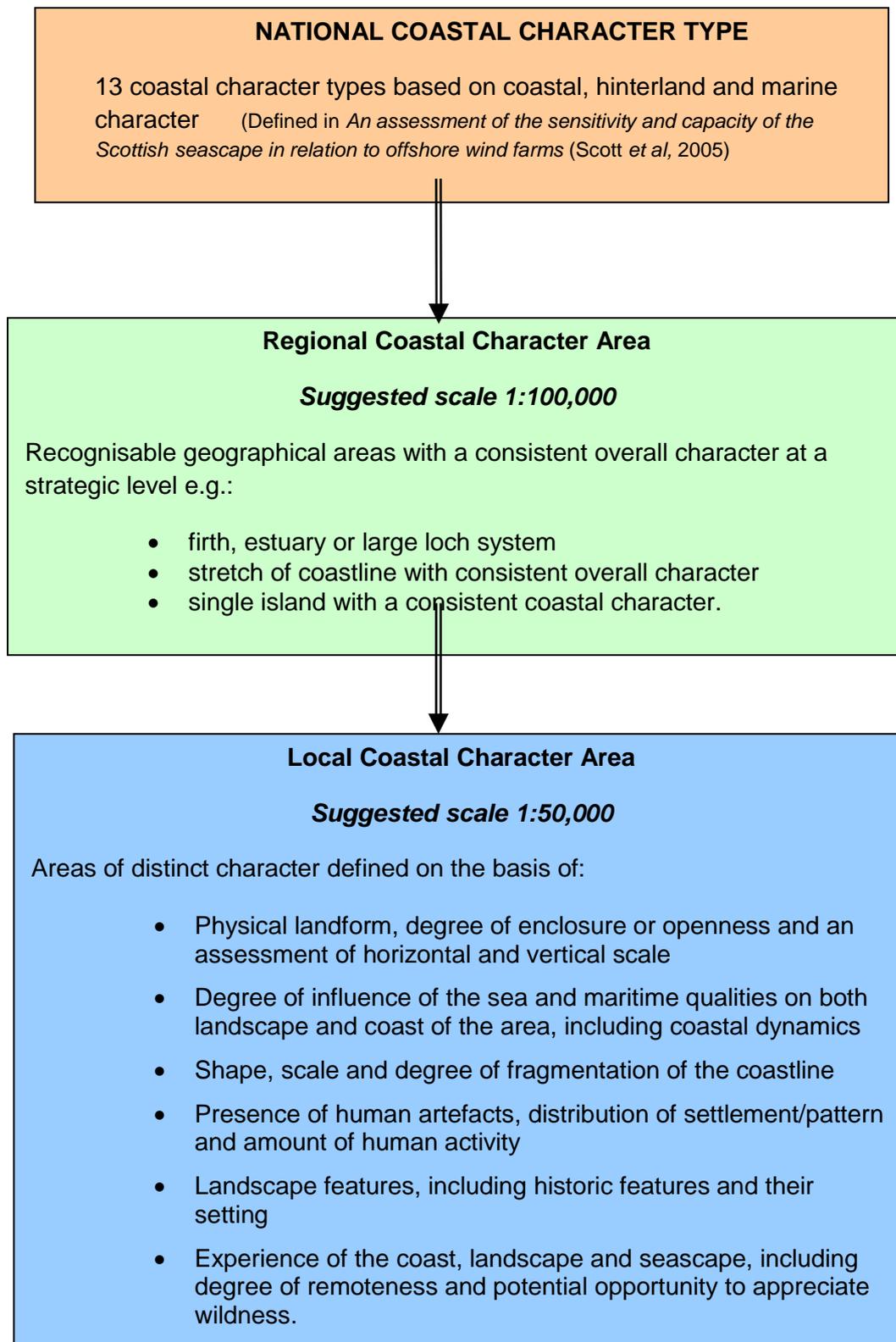


Figure 2: Hierarchy of coastal character assessment



4. Undertaking the assessment

Key principles of coastal character assessment

- 4.1 The process of coastal character assessment is similar to that for landscape character assessment. It requires a specific focus on character of the coastline and also consideration of the contribution of the sea and hinterland to coastal character.
- 4.2 In common with landscape character assessment, there are four key stages involved in the process of coastal character assessment. The first is defining the purpose and scope of the assessment. Guidance on this, including selecting a suitable scale of characterisation, is outlined in Section 3. The other stages are:
- Desk study and review,
 - Field survey,
 - Classification and description of coastal character.
- 4.3 These three stages are outlined below with a focus on particular recommendations for coastal characterisation, although more detailed information on the process is set out within [Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland](#) (2002) which can be found on SNH's website.
- 4.4 The process of coastal character assessment is principally concerned with identifying, recording and describing the baseline landscape and visual conditions. Making judgments, for example on coastal sensitivity or the significance of any change to the baseline is a separate task. It does not constitute SLVIA, (which will gauge the effects of proposed change) but is a necessary preliminary on which a subsequent impact assessment is based.

Research and desk study

- 4.5 An initial desk study will identify a range of draft coastal landscape types/areas, which are then tested and refined through field survey. Coastal characterisation for parts of the Scottish coast already exists at the regional and local scale (see Table 1 and paragraph 1.5). SNH's website provides regularly updated details of coverage and availability. Marine Scotland and SNH are working to make this information available via the MS Interactive data portal.
- 4.6 The Landscape Character Assessments which exist for all parts of Scotland provide useful background information for coastal characterisation. Coverage across Scotland is given on SNH's website with individual volumes readily available. Review of the relevant LCA will help in understanding the physical coastal character, although not all areas are covered in the same detail. In order **to determine local coastal character it is recommended that the relevant LCAs should be examined in conjunction with field survey and assessment.**² The broad scale of coastal character types usually identified in the LCAs will necessitate more detailed assessment of coastal character, particularly if Local Coastal Character Areas are to be defined.

² The terrestrial LCAs are being reviewed, and are due to be made available via interactive mapping in 2017.

- 4.7 Some landscape wind energy capacity studies also provide more detailed assessment of coastal character which may be useful. These include studies undertaken for East Lothian, Argyll & Bute and Scottish Borders. The Dumfries & Galloway capacity study includes descriptions of seven seascape character areas and an assessment of their sensitivity. These are available from the relevant local authority websites.
- 4.8 Historic Landuse Assessment ([HLA](#)) may be a relevant data source given the concentration of historic features and elements that frequently occurs on the coast. Pastmap and SCAPE (Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Erosion) are also likely to prove useful. In some places, a critical appraisal of the relevant sections of [The Beaches of Scotland](#) series may be useful. These regional reports describe many aspects of Scotland's coastline, including associated dunes, links and machair areas. However, as the studies are more than thirty years old and the habitats they surveyed are very dynamic, reliance on habitat descriptions without field work should be noted with caution.

Field survey

- 4.9 In accordance with best practice, field survey is ideally undertaken by experienced landscape professionals with team working to ensure consistency in the classification of coastal character. Survey sheets based on Tables 2 and 3 should be used.
- 4.10 Fieldwork will test the findings of the initial desk study and refine them to identify Regional and/or Local Coastal Character Areas. To achieve this, walk as much of the length of the coast as practicable. For areas difficult to access, vantage points may help with coverage. Where there are narrow sounds, firths or sea lochs, it will be essential to visit the opposite shores to fully assess coastal character.
- 4.11 Viewing the coast from the sea and near-shore islands is valuable for undertaking detailed characterisation and for survey of remote, difficult to access coastline. Views from the sea to land are important, especially for ferry crossings, waterborne visitors and sports. Accordingly, the use of a boat to undertake survey work may be necessary. This will require care in factoring-in coverage and costs to fieldwork at the outset.

Classification and description

- 4.12 The following characteristics should be assessed when considering coastal character:
- Maritime influences and experience from the sea,
 - Character of the coastal edge and its immediate hinterland,
 - Extent of human activity, and
 - Views and visibility (visual assessment).
- 4.13 A detailed checklist of aspects of coastal character which should be considered is set out in Table 2. Assessment should involve analysis of both physical characteristics and of likely experiential qualities. Judgements will need to be made on what the key characteristics are, including aesthetic qualities, and what essentially distinguishes one stretch of coast from another. Values in the form of designations or other recognised interests should also be recorded if considered relevant to the end use of the coastal character assessment. Table 3 lists the key visual characteristics that should be recorded during the characterisation process. Further detail on these topics is provided in Appendix One of [Guidance on Landscape/Seascape Carrying Capacity for Aquaculture](#) (SNH 2008), available on SNH's website.

Table 2 : Checklist for establishing coastal character

Topic	Analysis of physical characteristics	Analysis of experiential characteristics	Relevant considerations	Recognised values
Maritime influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aspect and orientation • existing marine based activities • maritime processes (e.g. tides/tidal rapids; open/enclosed coast) scale, distance and expansiveness of open sea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of space and light • sense of exposure • sense of containment/open-ness • sounds associated with the sea, smell of the sea • movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unit of landscape character • aesthetic qualities, including characteristics, experiences, and perceptions which create exceptional aesthetic quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • landscapes and seascapes designated because of their scenic, landscape or recreational value
Character of the coastal edge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shape and scale of coastline; degree of indentation and enclosure • presence of offshore islands • fragmentation of edge deposition features, tidal variations • landmarks • shoreline development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of exposure • sense of containment or open-ness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessing importance of physical characteristics • assessing nature and intensity of experiential characteristics • identification of dominant physical or experiential characteristics determining the extent of the relevant setting for distinctive features and landmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • landmarks designated because of their cultural or historic significance • longer distance routes
Character of immediate hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key elements of landscape character • topography and relief • vegetation pattern • existing settlement pattern and land use • landmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of containment or open-ness • presence of maritime influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying relevant cultural associations with place • degree of variability e.g. due to exposure, weather, tidal state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ferry routes • roads designated as scenic or tourist routes
Human activity: presence or absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of natural processes • presence of development/ human activity • actual accessibility • ruggedness of terrain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of activity • sense of naturalness • perceived remoteness • sense of isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degree of human activity, recreation and access • intensity of sense of wildness • degree of ruggedness and perceived accessibility • degree to which natural processes dominate the experience of place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • path network/recognised routes and trails • Identified Wild Land Area

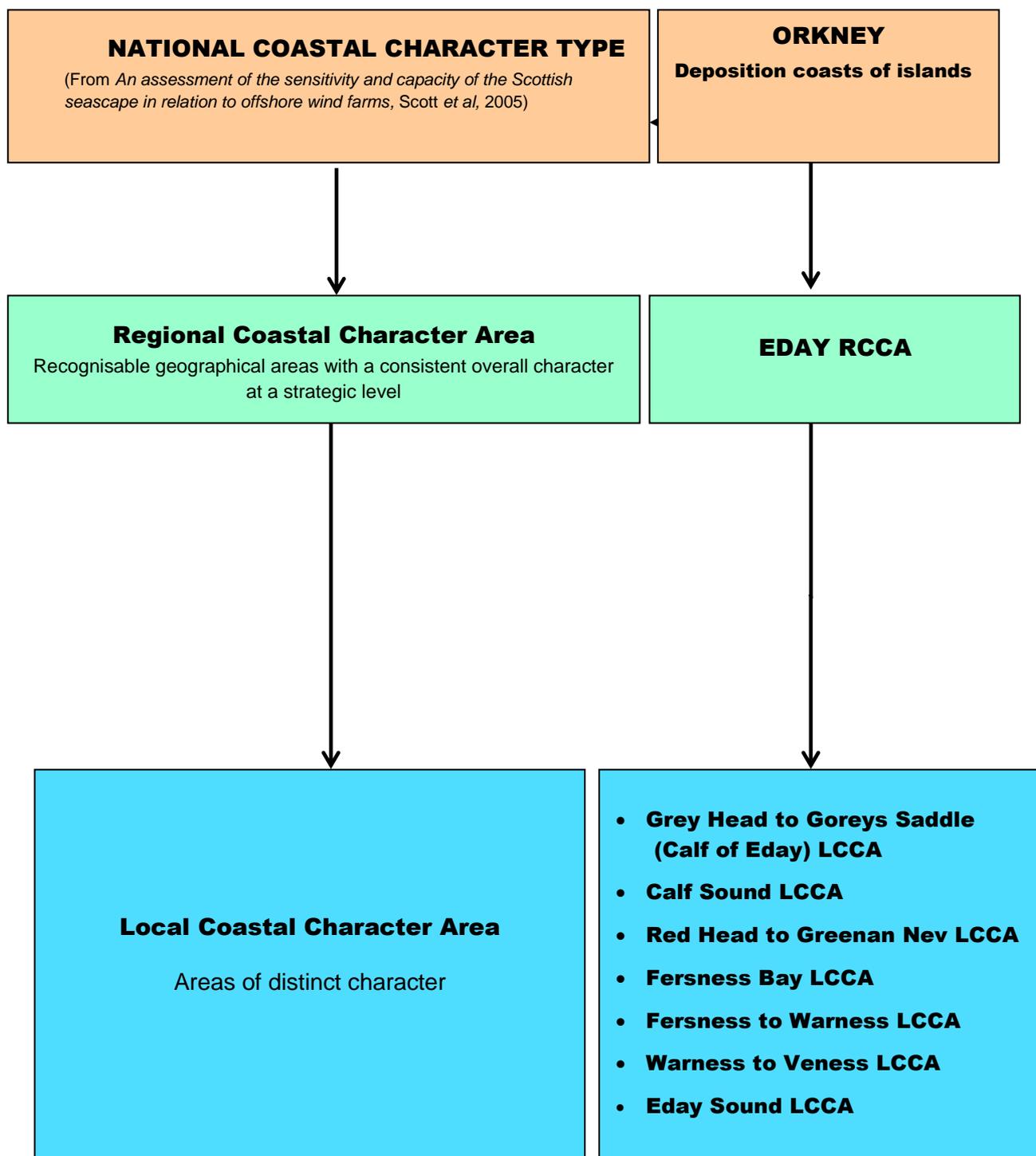
Table 3: Checklist for establishing visual character in coastal areas

Topic	Analysis of physical elements	Analysis of type of views	Relevant considerations	Recognised values
<p>Views and visibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of the coastal edge • presence of the open sea • focal points or features within the views • presence of existing marine and coastal developments • aspect and orientation of viewpoint, character of seascape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overlook from settled areas • views experienced as part of a sequence • elevated viewpoints panoramas • sudden revelations • glimpse views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significance of views and viewpoints • significance and dominance of compositional elements • quality of visual composition from viewpoints • significance of aspect and transient qualities such as quality of light and reflectivity • significance of presence of existing marine and coastal developments and influence on existing visual composition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • views which contribute to the experience of a landscape or seascape designated for its scenic quality • views to and from features designated because of their historic significance • views from longer distance routes • views from popular recreational areas or specific facilities

Outputs of the coastal character assessment

- 4.14 The national character type classification provides a high level context. Irrespective of the scale of characterisation to be the focus of the study, the Regional Coastal Character Area level needs to be established (where it does not yet exist). This may encompass a whole sound or kyle, inner sea loch or firth and allows a wider contextual description of character and inter-visibility. An example from the Firth of Clyde study is shown in Section 5 of this document. Where relevant, the overview should additionally list the Local Coastal Character Areas which sit within the broader Regional Coastal Character Area.
- 4.15 If carrying out a more detailed coastal character assessment, description of Local Coastal Character Areas should then follow. The key characteristics can usefully and succinctly be listed in a table or as bullet points.
- 4.16 Regional Coastal Character Areas and Local Coastal Character Areas should be shown as a simple colour line along the coast on a 1:50,000 scale OS map. Photographs or sketches, annotated if required, are very helpful to illustrate the text.
- 4.17 Regional Coastal Character Areas should be named appropriately, using an immediately recognisable geographical name. For Local Coastal Character Area the name should define the start and end point of the relevant length of coast, or a distinct area such as a well-defined bay- again using recognisable geographical locations or features, such as a named point. Figure 3 illustrates the hierarchy of coastal character and naming practice.

Figure 3: Hierarchy of coastal character areas: showing application in Orkney studies



5. Examples of coastal characterisation

Introduction

- 5.1 Two examples of coastal character studies are included here. The first is a regional scale, baseline classification and description of coastal character of the Firth of Clyde, prepared for the Firth of Clyde Forum. The second example shows part of the Orkney coast at a local coastal character scale, from a study of Orkney and the North Caithness Coast commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 5.2 Elsewhere, a regional-scale approach is demonstrated in a series of regional studies for the [Solway Firth](#), and for the [North Channel](#) as part of the Across the Waters Project.

Firth of Clyde

- 5.3 This coastal character study was carried out for the [Firth of Clyde Forum](#) in 2013 by Alison Grant, Landscape Architect. It defines the landscapes and seascapes of the Firth and is key to understanding how they relate to one another, how they are experienced, and the many influences that shape them. The study demonstrates the range of issues examined at the regional and local assessment scale.
- 5.4 The Regional Coastal Character Assessment for Rothesay Sound is reproduced below. Initially, the wider regional context is mapped and described. It shows the 'firth-wide' approach, aiming to manage the coastal and marine environment strategically, looking beyond local authority boundaries. The study goes on to classify and describe Local Coastal Character Areas (LCCA); the individual assessments are not given here. The study report (link above) sets out the key characteristics of each LCCA, together with their inherent sensitivity. Opportunities and guidance for development are then listed.

15 ROTHESAY SOUND

Rothesay Sound links the East Kyle of the Kyles of Bute and Loch Striven to the Upper Firth of Clyde. It extends from the mouth of Loch Striven eastwards to Toward Point on the mainland and from Ardmaleish point to Bogany Point on the Isle of Bute. It includes the deeply indented bays of Kames Bay and Rothesay Bay on Bute.

On shore development includes the busy harbour and town of Rothesay, further settlement at Port Bannatyne and on the mainland at Toward.

There are pontoons at Rothesay harbour and additional temporary anchorages in Rothesay Bay while the Toward Sailing Club operate from Achavoulin Bay where there are also a number of temporary anchorages.

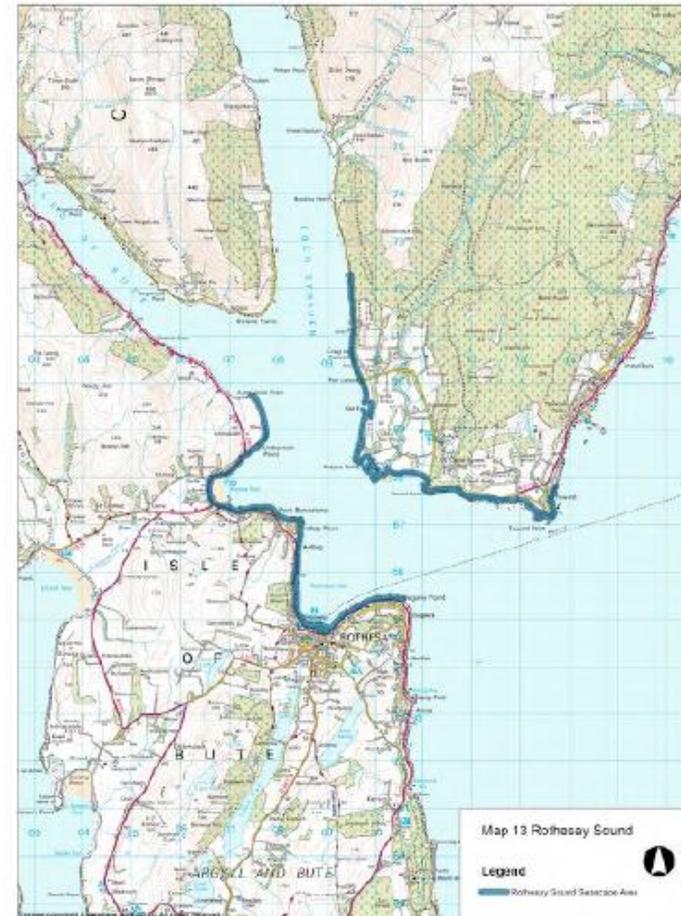
Nearly all of Rothesay Sound lies within an Area of Panoramic Quality.

For the purposes of this study Rothesay Sound, shown on Map 13, has been further subdivided into five local coastal character areas, each of which have been mapped separately:

- South of Brackley Point to Toward Quay
- Toward Quay to Toward Point
- Toward Point

Isle of Bute

- Bogany Point to Ardbeg Point
- Ardbeg Point to Ardmaleish Point



Firth of Clyde Seascape Assessment: Section 13 Rothesay Sound

3

15.1 Overview of conclusions

Rothesay Sound is characterised by the transition between the more open Upper Firth of Clyde to the south east and the mouths of Loch Striven and the East Kyle of Bute to the north west. It is a 'threshold' stretch of seascape, and is used by recreational yachtsmen travelling to and from the dramatic Kyles of Bute. Experienced from the sea, views unfold as you move through the Sound which curves around the peninsula of Toward and Ardyne Point. From the south, the views up the East Kyle and steep sided Loch Striven are revealed only after passage between the wider reaches of the outer Sound.

A particular feature is the diversity of the coastlines, including the two deeply indented Kames and Rothesay Bay and the angular sweep of Ardyne Point. Overall it is relatively sheltered stretch of sea, with good berthing on pontoons at both Rothesay and Kames Bay, and anchorages associated with the Toward Sailing Club. The Sound is also partially traversed by the Wemyss Bay to Rothesay ferry, which affords good views of Toward point and into the inner Sound from Rothesay.

This modest stretch of Sound is relatively enclosed by higher hills, but these are generally set back from the immediate coast, which backs onto flatter pastureland, narrow coastal plains and more gentle terraces. The exception is the steep wooded slopes and conical summit of prominent Canada Hill, which reinforces the enclosure of Rothesay Bay. Both sides of the Sound are characterised by extensive stretches of policy woodland associated with a number of estates.

In the built up areas, seawalls protect the settlement from the waves and higher tides. Outwith the settlement, the shoreline is rocky alternating with sometimes substantial stretches of shingle beach, often set against policy woodland. Much of the coast is easily accessible from vehicular roads which travel close to the shore. The exception is Ardyne Point, which needs to be accessed on foot, and is partially closed off private land.

This relatively sheltered location has encouraged development, including the substantial town of Rothesay, smaller settlements at Toward and Port Bannatyne, and scattered farms set back from the coast. There are a number of landmark buildings, including Toward lighthouse and Toward Castle, and on Bute, the Glenburn Hotel and the Rothesay Pavilion.

But this area is in part characterised by its diversity of development, which includes the boatyard at Ardmaleish Point, the fine townscape and promenade of Rothesay, the abandoned construction yards at Ardyne Point and MOD development north of Port Lamont. As a result this is often a modified coastline, but not always appropriately designed, and a key consideration for future management is likely to be upgrading the existing built structures and redevelopment of Ardyne Point, which is supported by the Local Plan for this area.

There is a fin fish farm off shore close to Ardyne Point, but it sits low in the water, and, like the abandoned construction yards which are low along the shoreline, are less visible from the central channel of the Sound, from where they are also visible within a wider seascape panorama.

Key issues which should be considered when assessing the landscape and visual implications of development on or in Rothesay Sound include:

- Take into account the experience from the sea, where the Sound is experienced as a marked threshold linking the inner, narrower Kyles of Bute and steep-sided Loch Striven with the wider, more expansive seascape of the Upper Firth of Clyde. This sense of transition, the associated sequence of views and the change in relief and scale are important seascape characteristics which should be taken into account when siting and designing any new development.
- Identify views from the sea. Views from the centre of the Sound are likely to focus on the upland hinterland and occasional prominent hills set back from the coast. However, this stretch of coast is heavily used by yachts which tack across the Sound, sail into several berthing and anchorage opportunities and can sail close to the shore, so that views of the coast close up from the sea are also important. A key viewpoint for any development will be the elevated deck of the Rothesay/Wemyss Bay ferry.
- Take into account the relatively small scale and enclosure of both Kames and Rothesay Bay, which limit opportunities for large scale or extensive development on these stretches of sea, as such development is likely to 'fill up' the expanse of the water.
- Maintain the quality and characteristic style of built development where it is already well designed and coherent, such as in Rothesay¹, especially towards Bogany Point, and upgrading the remaining coastal infrastructure and edge treatments to meet this standard when opportunities allow
- Understand and cultivate the powerful sense of 'seaside resort' which characterises Rothesay and Port Bannatyne and could become the key characteristic of any new development, for example at Ardyne
- Focussing on the redevelopment of gap sites and neglected buildings in Rothesay and Toward and the development of other brown field sites, such as the abandoned construction yards at Ardyne Point, rather than extending built development onto greenfield sites if possible. The presence of abandoned and neglected sites undermines the areas of higher quality built development along these much modified stretches of coast.
- Respect the existing settlement pattern, an issue particularly highlighted in relation to Toward, where the settlement pattern is becoming increasingly ad hoc
- Respect the way settlement in Rothesay and Port Bannatyne are tucked along the coast, avoiding steeper enclosing hinterland slopes.
- Managing and wherever possible, reinforcing the longevity and reinstatement of policy woodlands, which is a key characteristic on both sides of this Sound, contributing to its identity. Policies have been associated with a number of estates, including Knockdow and Toward Castle on the mainland and Kames Castle on Bute.
- Taking care to build structures which are in scale with existing characteristic buildings styles and located and orientated to reflect existing built patterns.
- Avoiding, wherever possible, building tall or large structures between the road and the coast, where they are likely to be more visually intrusive than on the landward side of the road.
- Resisting development on key skylines, especially prominent peninsulas and key hills

¹ The Rothesay Conservation Area stretches from Port Bannatyne to Ascog

Orkney

- 5.2 The [Orkney and North Caithness Coastal Character Study](#) was carried out by LUC in 2016. This extract illustrates the local coastal character assessment for the north-east coast of Eday and the Calf of Eday, and the enclosed Calf Sound.

RCCA 5 Eday

LCCA 5a Grey Head to Goreys Saddle (Calf of Eday)

Location and extent

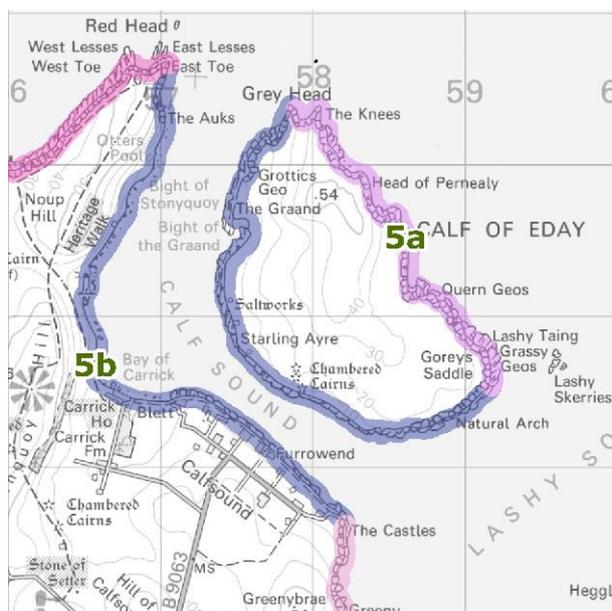
The north-east facing coast of the Calf of Eday, a small islet located off the north-east coast of Eday. This LCCA includes the sea cliff coast between Grey Head in the north and Goreys Saddle in the south.

Maritime influence

Facing north-east to the open North Sea, the coast is exposed to a dynamic marine environment, often with large swells and breaking against the cliffs. There is little offshore activity in this open sea, with only occasional fishing boats passing between the islands. The forces of coastal erosion are evident, with wind and waves battering this exposed side of the island. The sound of numerous sea-bird populations contribute to maritime character of the coastal edge as well as waves crashing against the cliffs and the booming in the numerous sea caves. The smell of the sea water spray is also present.

Character of coastal edge

An indented coastline which is lower lying in the south rising to sheer 45m sea cliffs at Grey Head in the north. To the south the coastline comprises low sea cliffs Rousay Flags extend beyond the shoreline as wave-cut platforms and reefs and skerries. The cliffs around Grey Head, on the north northern tip of the islet, are higher and more dramatic than those further south, comprise marls and flags of layered Eday sandstones. The coastline is highly indented with frequent geos and caves and sea arches. In winter the north-facing cliffs see little sunshine.



Character of immediate hinterland

From the steep cliff edges the immediate hinterland comprises of dark moorland with maritime sedge-heath and rough grassland that rises to a high point of approximately 54 m AOD in north of the islet. Landform of the islet is smooth, but the coastal cliffs are rugged, particularly to the north. The interior of the islet open and exposed with unenclosed and

semi-natural character. The whole area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA) due to the assemblage of seabirds which breed on the island.

Extent of human influence

This is an entirely undeveloped coast, with no habitation, roads or tracks and accessible only by small boat. The coastline has a strong sense of remoteness and isolation with little to no signs of human influence. This highly exposed stretch of coastline facing the North Sea gives a wild, elemental quality.

Views

The sea dominates views from elevated coastal edge, from the boiling waves at the cliff foot to the open expanse of the North Sea. The sea extends all the way to the horizon across view to the north, though the coast of Sanday is seen to the north-east and east. These views are generally only available from an informal coastal path, since there is very little access through the moorland slopes further inland.

LCCA 5b Calf Sound

Location and extent

The north-east facing coast of the Eday and south-west coast of Calf of Eday which enclose the narrow Sound of Eday. This LCCA includes the coastline on along north-eastern tip of Eday from low-lying The Castles in the south to high sea cliffs of Noup Hill on the north, as well as the coast from Goreys Saddle on the south of the Calf of Eday to Grey Head in the north.

Key Characteristics

- Opposing coastlines along the Calf Sound, a narrow channel between 0.4 km and 1 km across.
- Enclosed, sheltered and calm.
- A lighthouse east of Noup Hill.
- Of varied character comprising low cliffs below Calfsound and sand and shingle shores at Bay of Carrick, rising abruptly to cliffs of up to 60 m in height on the eastern side of Red Head. Echoed by Calf Sound to the east.
- Hinterland on Eday comprises pasture around Calfsound, with moorland on the rising slopes of Noup Hill and on the Calf of Eday.
- High cliffs of Red Head have a strong sense of remoteness, isolation and exposure, and panoramic views are available to open seas and neighbouring islands.



Calf Sound seen from Furrowend on the north-east coast of Eday, Calf of Eday can be viewed across the sound with the high sea cliffs of Noup Hill seen in the distance (358015, 1037824).

Maritime influence

Both coastline faces towards Calf Sound, the narrow channel that separates Eday and Calf of Eday. The sound is between 0.4 km and 1 km across and as a result it has a very enclosed, sheltered character, with calm waters lapping the coastal edge. There is a small jetty of the coast of Furrowend and small pier associated with Carrick House, both located off the north-east coast of Eday. Though there is little in the way of marine based activity in the sound apart from the occasional small fishing boat sheltering in the sound. The character has as much in common with a sea loch as with an open sound. To the east the sound opens out into the Lashy Sound, a wider highly tidal channel that separates Eday from Sanday. However the coastal edge retains a degree of containment and shelter with the coast of Sanday being a mere 2 km away. To the north the Calf Sound opens out into the North Sound, a wide expanse of the North Sea which has a much lesser degree of enclosure. The smell of seaweed strewn on the rocks at low tide is present. A lighthouse (Calfsound Light) is located within the sound on the eastern coast of Noup Hill.

Character of coastal edge

The north-east coast of Eday varies in character comprising relatively low indented sandstone cliffs interspersed by secluded little sandy geos below Calfsound that give way northwards to predominantly sand and shingle shores before rising abruptly to a height 60m to form the impressive sea cliffs of the eastern side of Red Head. The south-west coast of Calf of Eday echoes that of its larger neighbour with low indented sandstone cliffs to the south merging into narrow shingle and sandy shore before rising to higher cliffs of Eday sandstone around Grey Head.

Character of immediate hinterland

The hinterland of the north-east coast of Eday contrasts between the isolated and exposed moorland hills of Red Head and Noup Hill extends southward, surrounding a basin of coastal pasture within the Bay of Carrick, to areas of low-lying coastal farmland around the settlement of Calfsound to the east. The immediate hinterland of the Calf of Eday comprises of dark moorland with maritime sedge-heath and rough grassland that extends right to the coastal edge. The area having an unenclosed and semi-natural character.

Extent of human influence

The high cliffs of Red Head have a strong sense of remoteness, isolation and exposure. The tip of the headland is accessed only by promoted footpaths with no contemporary settlement and the only indications of human influence being the scars of former peat workings and the occasional fence line. The area has a wild elemental quality. In contrast the low-lying coastal basin around the prominent 17th century Carrick House and settlement Calfsound is relatively settled with the area sheltered from the open sea by the high cliffs to the north-west and Calf of Eday to north-east. The south-west coast of the Calf of Eday faces away from the open sea and has a sense of containment and shelter. There are no roads or settlement in the islet, the only buildings being the ruins of archaeological buildings including a former salt works and chambered cairns. The islet is accessible only by small boat.

Views

There are panoramic views to open sea to the north from the Red Head which contains the OS promoted viewpoint on the top of Vinguoy Hill. The high cliffs of Red Head from a landmark within views from the neighbouring islands of Sanday, Westray and Papa Westray, as well as in views enjoyed by travellers on the ferries which serve the North Isles. Across the more sheltered coastal basin of the north-east of Eday and south-west coast of the Calf of Eday views contained, terminated by Red Head to the north-west and inland moorland sloped to the south.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This guidance has been produced to aid the production of coastal character assessments. It has been published at a time of change in the legislative regime of marine planning as well as ongoing development around Scotland's coasts. It will be periodically reviewed to take account of any significant changes.

Appendix A: Glossary of common terms

Coastal Character Area	A Coastal Character Area is a distinct, recognisable, geographical area which has a consistent overall character. Coastal character can be identified at different scales: Regional CCA at a strategic level (e.g. a loch within a larger system, a stretch of coastline or a whole island) or Local (shorter stretches of coast or shore).
Coastal zone	The space in which land-based activities and terrestrial environments influence the marine environment and vice versa (Hiscock, 1996) but there is no universally recognized definition for the coastal zone. Pragmatically, the seaward boundary to the coastal zone is usually set by the limits of enabling legislation. For the purposes of assessing offshore renewables the coastal zone is taken to be the area confined to Scottish Territorial Waters i.e. 12 nautical miles (22.22 km) offshore.
Intertidal	The foreshore or area of seabed between high water mark and low water mark which is exposed each day as the tide rises and falls.
Landscape capacity	‘The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.’ (Swanwick <i>et al</i> , 2002)
Landscape character	‘A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another (Swanwick <i>et al</i> , 2002, p 8).
Coastal character types	A distinct type of landscape, relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature and may occur and reoccur in different places. In Scotland, only the national level of coastal characterisation consists of character types (based on GLVIA 3)
LCA	Landscape character assessment, a documented process which describes and categorises the landscape, highlighting key landscape characteristics. This process may include analysis of potential for change to occur to landscapes and their sensitivity to these changes.
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – a standard process for examining the likely landscape and visual effects of a development.
Seascape	An area, as perceived by people, from land, sea or air, where the sea is a key element of the physical environment (European Landscape Convention). It comprises the visual and physical conjunction of land and sea which combines maritime, coast and hinterland character (Grant, 2005)
SLVIA	Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The accepted methodology underpinning SLVIA is that of LVIA (see LVIA)

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