LLA Name: Flotta South Coast and West Hill

Location and Extent: The landscape area extends along the south coast of Flotta from just west of Sutherland Pier to a point south of Quoy Ness and includes the higher land masses of West Hill and Stanger Head.

Overview: The Low Moorland landscape of West Hill provides a contrast to the Low Island Pastures landscape which extends eastward from Scat Wick. Kirk Bay, on the south coast, is an attractive little embayment which is framed by West Hill in the west and Stanger Head in the east. The main land uses in Flotta are agricultural and industrial. The latter is focussed on the Oil Terminal which was developed during the 1970s on the site of a Second World War naval camp. Flotta was of key importance to the defence of Scapa Flow during the 20th century, and during World Wars I and II the island experienced an influx of servicemen along with significant levels of development. The remains of many military structures are clearly visible to this day at locations throughout the island. A large-scale wind turbine which was erected during 2010, close to the summit of West Hill, is a dominant feature in the landscape of this small island.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics:
- The darker moorland colours of West Hill provide a marked contrast to the greener agricultural and settled landscape which extends eastward and inland from Scat Wick.
- Kirk Bay on the south coast is an attractive little embayment which is framed by West Hill in the west and Stanger Head in the east. The land immediately behind Kirk Bay forms a valley between these higher landmasses.
- The summit of West Hill provides an excellent vantage point for viewing the landscapes which surround Scapa Flow and, looking south towards the island of Switha, the Scottish Mainland can be clearly seen in the distance beyond the waters of the Pentland Firth.
- There are clear views from Stanger Head eastward towards Hoxa Head on South Ronaldsay. During World War II this would have been an important factor as together these naval bases provided protection to the Sound of Hoxa, a narrow stretch of water which forms the main southerly entrance to Scapa Flow.

Special Qualities:
- Throughout Flotta evidence can be seen of the island’s strategic importance to the protection of the naval anchorage of Scapa Flow. The most significant sites are those of Buchanan Battery and Stanger Head Battery which are located on the east coast of the island bordering Hoxa Sound. Natural weathering and aging of the concrete and brick materials has softened the appearance of the remaining structures, and colonisation by natural or semi-natural habitat in the surrounding areas has helped heal the scars left by their former usage, allowing these historic features to merge sympathetically into the landscape. Fly tipping, mainly of abandoned cars and domestic appliances, is a problem in a relatively small area at Stanger Head. These waste items detract from the quality of the landscape and their removal is recommended. This would allow further colonisation by natural vegetation as has already occurred elsewhere on
the headland where wildflower species such as knapweed, clovers, and orchids provide colour and texture within the landscape as well as considerable biodiversity value.

- Throughout the landscape area there is a sense of quiet and peacefulness. The remoteness and natural vegetation cover of West Hill and, to a lesser extent Stanger Head, provides contrast to the settled part of the island and its agriculturally managed green fields. At West Hill the sense of isolation and remoteness is an important feature of the enjoyment of this landscape. An abundance of flowering species within the natural vegetation cover provides colour and an attractive scent from spring until autumn and the sound of birdsong further enriches appreciation of the landscape.

- The history and now derelict nature of the military structures at Stanger Head promotes a sense of wonder at the contrast between the levels of activity this area would have witnessed during the years of World War II and how quiet and still it is today.

**Other Designations / Interests**

- West Hill is an extensive area of natural moorland habitat which has been designated as the Western Moors, Flotta Local Nature Conservation Site. This area is almost entirely covered in blanket bog, mostly dried out and with extensive peat cutting and tracks. Heather, bog cotton and crowberry dominate this habitat but other flowering plants can also be seen, e.g. patches of vividly orange bog asphodel. The site supports a variety of breeding birds.

- The Flotta oil terminal site is extensive and its development during the early 1970s involved considerable engineering and landscaping works to enable the huge storage tanks to be accommodated unobtrusively into the surrounding landscape. These works were largely successful and although the terminal is visible from parts of the landscape area, the most outstanding feature is the more recently installed flare stack.

- Flotta is a good location for viewing the marine wildlife of Scapa Flow, e.g. grey and common seals as well as certain cetacean species and the flocks of great northern diver which overwinter in the Flow.

**Sensitivity to Change**

**Low Moorland**

- Potential visual intrusion of mechanical peat cutting and threat to sub-peat archaeology.

**Low Island Pastures**

- Conservation of machair and links grassland areas;
- Sensitivity of flat and open landscape to development;
- Potential flooding / inundation problems;
- Loss of drystone walls may threaten to destabilise sand based pastures;
- Damage by coastal erosion and potential loss of rich archaeological deposits;
- Damage by rabbits to turf cover and monuments.

**Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement**

**Low Moorland**

- Peat cutting by hand should generally be preferred over mechanical cutting in this low and exposed landscape;
• Mechanical peat cutting should be restricted to less visible areas.

**Low Island Pastures**

• Maintain drystone wall boundaries;
• Encourage preservation of existing wetlands and uncultivated areas;
• Strict design control of development on flat headland is required;
• Where development is needed, adopt building styles which respect the vernacular tradition and building forms.

**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. [Scottish Natural Heritage Review](https://www.snh.org.uk) No 100.

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)
LLA Name: Herston and Widewall

Location and Extent: This landscape area is located in South Ronaldsay and extends from Hoxa Head round the coastline of Widewall Bay to Herston, and includes the Dam of Hoxa.

Overview:
There is considerable variation in landscape character across this site. The Clifffed Landscape of the Hoxa Head coast merges inland into Plateau Heaths and Pasture which descends eastward to become the Coastal Sand Landscape of the Sands of Wright and Dam of Hoxa. A short area of Inclined Coastal Pasture along the north-east coast of Widewall Bay meets the Coastal Basin landscape of the southern end of the bay.

Hoxa Head was an important strategic site in the defence of Scapa Flow during both World Wars and the remains of Hoxa and Balfour Batteries can be seen to this day.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics:
- The rugged nature of Hoxa Head and its cliffed coastline contrast sharply with the wide, sandy coastlines of Widewall Bay and the gently sloping agricultural land.
- There are key viewpoints from Hoxa Head to the islands of Switha, Flotta and Hoy in the west and Swona and the Scottish mainland to the south.
- At Herston and Quindry extensive sediment deposition has led to the formation of low shingle ayres which partially enclose the inner parts of Widewall Bay. The ayres are submerged at high tide but at low water a complex pattern of bars and spits can be seen.
- The Dam of Hoxa to the north is an attractive little water body which has been cut off from the sea through the formation of a shingle bank or ayre. The water body is fringed by wetland vegetation.

Special Qualities:
- The remote nature of Hoxa Head, along with the feeling of abandonment engendered by the remains of the wartime buildings, allows the visitor to experience a sense of isolation and remoteness from present day human influence.
- Widewall Bay is a very sheltered and enclosed bay.

Other Designations / Interests:
- The Sands of Wright is an attractive sandy beach with easy access from the road. This is the location for the Boys Ploughing Match and the Festival of the Horse each summer, an event where children dress up in costumes resembling the harnesses of the horses which were once used to plough the land.
- This area includes a number of Local Nature Conservation Sites, e.g. species-rich heather moorland on Hoxa Head, as well as a geological site containing a composite depositional structure; areas of open water, marsh and wetland at the Dam of Hoxa; and during extreme low tides an area of seagrass meadow becomes visible below Kirkhouse of Widewall.
- The little hamlet of Herston originally developed as a fishing village along the shoreline of Widewall Bay where only the road in front of tiny gardens separates the houses from the intertidal below. This closeness promotes the sense of an intimate connection with the sea.

Sensitivity to Change:
Cliff landscape
- Marine erosion
Plateau heaths and pasture
- Open plateau makes built structures highly visible within the landscape.

Coastal Sand
- Sand landscapes are sensitive to erosion;
- Pressure for sand extraction;
- Archaeology is an important consideration in landscape change.

Inclined coastal pasture
- Decline in drystone walls;
- Derelict farm buildings;
- Large farm developments, particularly cluttered ancillary buildings;
- New building developments, including possible demand for housing along main roads, creating linear development;
- Possible impacts on archaeological/architectural heritage.

Coastal basin
- Maintenance of stone walls;
- Visual intrusion of developments into coastal basin;
- Fish farm developments may target this landscape if conditions are suitable.

Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement

Cliffed landscape
- Restrict the development of barriers, signs and other “clutter” along cliff-top footpaths.

Plateau heaths and pasture
- Enhance landscape structure by restoring/extending areas of stone wall field boundaries;
- Maintain the widely dispersed settlement pattern; site and design new buildings with regard to skyline views;
- Encourage woodland planting of small and medium scales and particularly around developments.

Coastal Sand
- Strict control should be applied over large scale mechanical sand extraction;
- Development of fish farms should be controlled and limited to less visible locations;
- Ensure careful siting of onshore structures if fish farm development is permitted;
- Avoid housing or tourism development on the shore line;
- Priority should be given to recording archaeological sites threatened by coastal erosion, quarrying or other development;
- Support low key methods of land stabilisation at the coast, e.g. planting marram grass.

Inclined coastal pasture
- Encourage the restoration and re-use of any traditional structures;
- Examine the potential for native woodland establishment in gullies and valleys;
- Site development carefully with regard to visibility from other landscapes;
- Utilise existing tracks and sites of former development in preference to all new developments in the exposed moorland landscape;
- Maintain and extend stone wall enclosures; where possible extend round new developments; visual emphasis should be placed on those running down to the coast.
- Linear housing development along roadsides should be prevented;
• Large/extending farm developments should use coordinated massing and roof pitch to achieve greater coalescence;
• New building should reflect the surrounding geology and vernacular tradition in building materials and style;
• New building should be sited with respect to the contours and orientation of the underlying land;
• Small scale tree planting should be encouraged around individual residential and farm developments;
• Restoration of old farm buildings should be encouraged;
• Protect archaeological and architectural heritage from obtrusive development which may detract from local views;
• New development in inclined coastal pastures should be oriented in relation to the coast, and should reflect vernacular tradition in distribution and design.

Coastal basin
• Protect uncultivated coastal areas from expansion of cultivation and small scale sand extraction;
• Maintain and restore stone wall enclosures;
• Avoid intrusive developments on coastal basin floor;
• Respect local settlement patterns and cultural history in the placement of new developments on the basin sides.

Landscape Character

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 100.

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at www.snh.org.uk
**LLA Name**  
Hunda and Burray West Coast

**Location and Extent**  
The area consists of the western coast of Burray and the neighbouring island of Hunda.

**Overview**  
This landscape area comprises the *Inclined Coastal Pastures* landscape of the western coast of Burray and the *Holms* landscape of the neighbouring island of Hunda. During World War II a causeway was constructed which linked Hunda to Burray, forming a barrier across Hunda Sound and creating a sheltered anchorage. Evidence seen in the surviving field system indicates that Hunda was occupied during the 19th century. This western end of Burray has a dispersed settlement pattern with occasional houses and relatively small farmsteads.

**Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics**
- Hunda is one of the smaller islands of Scapa Flow and provides a pleasing landscape feature in the wide seascape of the Flow. The barrier linking Hunda to Burray also has the effect of creating an attractive sheltered little embayment on its northern side.
- The heather moorland of Hunda and Klondyke provide contrasting colours and textures against the green pastures of Burray. The road verges along this part of Burray are floristically diverse and are managed by Orkney Islands Council as Conservation Verges in order to maintain their biodiversity interest.

**Special Qualities**
- The island of Hunda is classified as an area of Isolated Coast in the Orkney Local Plan 2004. The limited access means that this is not a widely frequented island.

**Other Designations / Interests**
- Hunda is designated as a Local Nature Conservation Site. Over half the area is moorland dominated by heather and crowberry. The remainder of the island is covered in semi-improved and improved grassland. A range of birds nest on the island.
- The south-eastern point of Burray is part of a larger LNCS known as Klondyke which comprises a large area of heather moorland with smaller areas of peat bog, natural grassland and other habitats. In this part of the site there are small pools just inland from the coast, and these are surrounded by marshy grassland with plants such as marsh marigolds and ragged-robin.
- Hunda Reef Barrier was built during 1940-41 to provide a safe anchorage for the barrage balloon trawlers protecting the Scapa Flow base.
- Attractive views outward from this area across Scapa Flow.

**Sensitivity to Change**

**Holms**
- Holms may be potential sites for new development.

**Inclined coastal pasture**
- Decline in drystone walls;
- Derelict farm buildings;
- Large farm developments, particularly cluttered ancillary buildings;
- New building developments, including possible demand for housing along main roads, creating linear development;
- Possible impacts on archaeological/architectural heritage.
Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement

Holms
- Apply strict standards to siting and design of buildings to minimise visual impact and to establish a sympathetic relationship with other buildings or structures.

Inclined coastal pasture
- Encourage the restoration and re-use of any traditional structures;
- Examine the potential for native woodland establishment in gullies and valleys;
- Site development carefully with regard to visibility from other landscapes;
- Utilise existing tracks and sites of former development in preference to all new developments in the exposed moorland landscape;
- Maintain and extend stone wall enclosures; where possible extend round new developments; visual emphasis should be placed on those running down to the coast;
- Linear housing development along roadsides should be prevented;
- Large/extending farm developments should use coordinated massing and roof pitch to achieve greater coalescence;
- New building should reflect the surrounding geology and vernacular tradition in building materials and style;
- New building should be sited with respect to the contours and orientation of the underlying land;
- Small scale tree planting should be encouraged around individual residential and farm developments;
- Restoration of old farm buildings should be encouraged;
- Protect archaeological and architectural heritage from obtrusive development which may detract from local views;
- New development in inclined coastal pastures should be oriented in relation to the coast, and should reflect vernacular tradition in distribution and design.

Landscape Character

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 100.

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at www.snh.org.uk
LLA Name   Lyrawa and Pegal
Location and Extent  The area is located on the eastern coast of Hoy, bordering Scapa Flow, and extends from Scad Head in the north to the headland below Muckle Rysa in the south.

Overview
This area of Moorland Hill landscape contains a pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts and dramatic elements – from the heather covered rolling moorland hills to the green, tree-clad ravine landscapes of Lyrawa and Pegal Burns. During summer the scent of the vegetation, especially when the heather is in bloom, adds to the sensory qualities of this site.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics
- Over time, the burns of Pegal and Lyrawa have cut deep ravines in the moorland hillsides and these represent attractive features in the landscape;
- The native scrubland which clothes the sides of Pegal Glen adds a diversity of colours and textures to this landscape and forms an attractive backdrop to the tumbling waters of the Burn of Pegal.
- In late summer when the heather moorland is in full flower the hillsides develop a vibrant purple hue.

Special Qualities
- There is no settlement along this coastline and the view inland is towards the remote moorland interior of North Hoy. These factors contribute to a sense of isolation and remoteness from human influence;
- The only obvious forms of contemporary development are the road, power transmission lines and the cages of a coastal salmon farm;
- The combination of visual, sensory, perceptual and experiential qualities contribute to the natural beauty of the landscape of Lyrawa and Pegal.

Other Designations / Interests
- Although this area is located outside the boundary of the Hoy SPA/SAC/SSSI the landscape nonetheless contains a number of areas of natural or semi-natural habitat which are important for biodiversity and the following are designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites: an area of saltmarsh at the head of Lyrawa bay; Lyrawa plantation; the native scrub woodland along the sides of Pegal Glen; and The Pinnacles, an area of native woodland.
- The landscape is rich in features of historic interest and includes a number of sites which are valuable in terms of raising public awareness of Orkney’s strategic importance during World War II. These include the following military remains: a battery, military accommodation and gun emplacement at Scad Head; a pillbox, searchlight battery and two engine houses at Lyrawa Hill; barrage balloon sites; an anti-aircraft battery situated on either side of a track leading to the summit of Lyrawa Hill; brick and concrete huts and an engine house on Shell Hill.
- Another site of historic interest is the grave of Betty Corrigall who, on discovering that she was pregnant, committed suicide in the late 1770s. Her burial on consecrated ground was forbidden and the Lairds of Melsetter and Hoy also refused her burial on their estates. As a result, her body was laid to rest in moorland on the parish border in an unmarked grave which was rediscovered in 1933 by peat cutters. Subsequently, a retired customs officer erected a small memorial to Betty, which was made
of lightweight glass fibre rather than stone to prevent it sinking into the soft peat. The grave is surrounded by a little white fence.

- Extensive views from Lyrawa Hill over Scapa Flow and the southern coastline of the West Mainland. The viewpoint at Lyrawa Hill is marked and also includes a convenient car parking area for visitors to the site.

**Sensitivity to Change**

**Moorland hills**

- Moorland hills are sensitive to vertical developments such as wind turbines or electricity transmission poles.

**Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement**

**Moorland hills**

- Examine the potential for native woodland establishment in gullies and valleys;
- Site development carefully with regard to visibility from other landscapes;
- Utilise existing tracks and sites of former development in preference to all new developments in the exposed moorland landscape;
- Maintain and extend stone wall enclosures; where possible extend round new developments; visual emphasis should be placed on those running down to the coast.

**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review* No 100.

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Location and Extent
The landscape area is located in the south-east of the island of Hoy, in the area known as Walls. It extends from St John’s Church in the north to The Ayre in the south and includes part of the Hoy SPA/SAC/SSSI.

Overview
North Bay is a fine example of a highly enclosed bay. The narrowness of its entrance which is bounded by North Ness and South Ness, along with the high ground to the west and north, all contribute to its enclosed and sheltered nature. Surrounding the bay is a narrow strip of Inclined Coastal Pasture against which the Moorland Hills landscape of Hoy provides an effective backdrop.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics
- The contrasting landscapes of the dark moorland hills and the low-lying green coastal strip are visually appealing. The very sheltered water of North Bay is itself attractive, in particular during calm conditions when the sea surface develops a glassy appearance.
- A number of the scattered buildings which surround the bay are located close to the shoreline and have a close visual association with the bay.

Special Qualities
- Overall, this landscape promotes a sense of tranquillity.
- The landscape performs a key function to the setting of the settlement pattern which has developed along the shores of North Bay. In particular it provides an attractive setting to the little white St John’s Church.

Other Designations / Interests
- Listed buildings in this area include Melsetter House, gardens and ancillary buildings which were renovated in the Arts and Crafts style; St John’s Church in North Walls and Ness House in South Walls.
- Melsetter Gardens are included in the Inventory of Designed Gardens and Landscapes.
- At Saltness there is a disused flax mill and associated cottage;
- Witter Quarry features a portable stone crusher which is of historic interest;
- The remains of a World War II pillbox are located at the east end of The Ayre;
- Longhope and North Bay provided sheltered anchorage for the royal navy during successive wars throughout history;
- In the west of the area the moorland Hills form part of the Hoy SAC/SPA/SSSI which is designated for its natural habitats and the species they support.

Sensitivity to Change
Inclined coastal pasture
- Decline in drystone walls;
- Derelict farm buildings
- Large farm developments, particularly cluttered ancillary buildings;
- New building developments, including possible demand for housing along main roads, creating linear development;
- Possible impacts on archaeological/architectural heritage.

Moorland hills
- Moorland hills are sensitive to vertical developments such as wind turbines or electricity transmission poles.

**Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement**

**Inclined coastal pasture**
- Encourage the restoration and re-use of any traditional structures;
- Examine the potential for native woodland establishment in gullies and valleys;
- Site development carefully with regard to visibility from other landscapes;
- Utilise existing tracks and sites of former development in preference to all new developments in the exposed moorland landscape;
- Maintain and extend stone wall enclosures; where possible extend round new developments; visual emphasis should be placed on those running down to the coast.
- Linear housing development along roadsides should be prevented;
- Large/extending farm developments should use coordinated massing and roof pitch to achieve greater coalescence;
- New building should reflect the surrounding geology and vernacular tradition in building materials and style;
- New building should be sited with respect to the contours and orientation of the underlying land;
- Small scale tree planting should be encouraged around individual residential and farm developments;
- Restoration of old farm buildings should be encouraged;
- Protect archaeological and architectural heritage from obtrusive development which may detract from local views;
- New development in inclined coastal pastures should be oriented in relation to the coast, and should reflect vernacular tradition in distribution and design.

**Moorland hills**
- Examine the potential for native woodland establishment in gullies and valleys;
- Site development carefully with regard to visibility from other landscapes;
- Utilise existing tracks and sites of former development in preference to all new developments in the exposed moorland landscape;
- Maintain and extend stone wall enclosures; where possible extend round new developments; visual emphasis should be placed on those running down to the coast.

**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. [Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 100](http://www.snh.org.uk).

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)
Location and Extent
The landscape area extends from the Point of Craig-gate in the south, to a deep indentation to the east of the Kame of Hoy in the north.

Overview
This is a landscape which was originally shaped by glaciation and continues to be influenced by the ongoing processes of weathering and erosion. The coastline is characterised by rugged, vertical sandstone cliffs which include one of Orkney’s most notable landmarks, a sea stack known as The Old Man of Hoy. Rackwick is an Enclosed Bay Landscape which is surrounded on three sides by Glaciated Valley and bounded to the south by Cliff Landscape and to the north by Rugged Glaciated Hills. The Glaciated Valley landscape extends inland to the east and north-east.

The landscape of this part of Hoy is one of Orkney’s most valued natural assets and its importance for amenity use cannot be overstated. It is an area where the walker can enjoy the wide open space, and appreciate its wildlife and its stunning scenery.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics
- The underlying geology of the island of Hoy, which is quite different to that of the rest of Orkney, has resulted in landscapes which are unique in an Orkney context. The landscape of Hoy clearly shows features of glacial erosion as well as deposition with examples of glacial troughs and corries in the northern hills.
- From the pathway to the Old Man round to the Toe of the Head there are exceptional views south to the Rackwick valley with its settlement of low, traditional cottages, as well as the wide sweep of boulder and sand shoreline which curves around Rack Wick. The high ground of Mel Fea rises on the southern side of the valley and the full height of this hill can be appreciated by the clear views of its cliffed coastline.
- The tranquil, unspoiled, undulating landscape of the Rackwick valley has significant scenic value in its own right. However, when considered as part of the wider landscape of this part of north Hoy the combination of landscape features is all the more arresting. The towering cliffs to the south and the rugged glaciated hills to the north provide a powerful and dramatic backdrop to the gentler landscape of Rackwick and the glaciated valley landscape which stretches inland.
- The shoreline of Rackwick Bay is one of Orkney’s most dramatic storm beaches. However, as well as the coarse cobbles and boulders thrown up by the powerful Atlantic waves, the southern end of the shoreline includes a sandy beach which stretches to the base of the vertical cliffs of Craig Gate.
- Northward, the path offers views down over the extensive plateau area of Rora Head with the Loch of Stourdale before rising towards the Old Man of Hoy where this renowned coastal stack can be viewed from a number of vantage points.
- This part of Hoy lies within the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area.

Special Qualities
- The visual and sensory qualities of Rackwick and its surrounding landscape vary greatly from season to season and are heavily influenced by the weather conditions. Whether the surrounding hills are shrouded in mist,
dusted by snow or bathed in bright sunshine, the contrasting visual features and naturalness of this area along with its exposure to the energetic conditions of the Atlantic Ocean lend it strong visual, sensory, perceptual and experiential qualities which come together to make Rackwick a location which is unique within Orkney.

- Although the Rackwick area is settled, the surrounding glaciated and cliffed landscape arguably represents some of the most ‘wild’ remaining land in Orkney and, as such, is much valued. The area is visited all year round though it is most popular during the spring and summer months.
- The exceptional visual qualities of this part of Hoy are enhanced by other sensory qualities such as the scent of wildflowers and the sound of bird calls. During the breeding season walkers along the pathway to the Old Man may even experience swooping attacks by great skuas as they seek to protect their chicks.
- The sense of remoteness and isolation, along with the vast emptiness of these areas of moorland and heathland, give the area perceptual and experiential qualities which contribute significantly to the overall natural beauty and appreciation of the landscape.

**Other Designations / Interests**

- The landscape of this area consists almost entirely of natural or semi-natural habitat and its importance for biodiversity is recognised through its designation at both the national and international level due to its wide range of natural habitats, and the plant, mammal and bird species that these habitats support. The glaciated uplands of Hoy feature predominantly montane vegetation, ranging from sub-Arctic fell field on the highest ground to heathland at lower levels. Much of this area is managed by the RSPB as a wildlife reserve.
- The underlying geology of Hoy is unique in an Orkney context in that it consists principally of Hoy Sandstones from the Upper Old Red Sandstone series. These rocks are harder and more resistant to erosion than the Middle Old Red Sandstone series which is widespread in the rest of Orkney. For this reason, the hills of Hoy form the highest land masses in Orkney.
- The Hoy sandstones also form the impressively high, sheer cliffs along the island’s western coast including St John’s Head which, at 348 metres, is amongst the highest sea cliffs in Britain.
- The Old Man of Hoy sea stack presents a popular challenge to rock climbers and attracts many visitors each year.
- The Burn of Rackwick which is Orkney’s largest burn flows through areas of heather moorland before entering the sea.
- Bre Brough is a mass of rock which is detached from the west side of Sui Fea. It features a length of drystone wall and may have served as an occasional retreat, either defensive or spiritual.
- The landscape of Rackwick is rich in features of traditional crofting built heritage. Previously abandoned cottages have been sensitively restored and renovated, many as holiday homes, and this has allowed the traditional pattern of settlement to be maintained. Each dwelling is surrounded by its own area of land and there are no clusters of buildings. The restored cottages tend to be relatively small, with low pitched roofs and they are generally of stone construction. Their form, scale and colours are sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and they tend to be oriented parallel to dominant landforms in order to gain maximum shelter from the prevailing weather.
- Listed buildings include Muckle House and an ancillary structure; Burnmouth, an early 19th century dwelling with a heather thatch and flagstone roof which has been restored by the Hoy Trust as a Bothy; and
• From the sea this coastline provides the initial views of Orkney to travellers who are arriving on the Northlink Ferry Hamnavoe, and The Old Man of Hoy is probably one of Orkney’s most photographed landmarks.

**Sensitivity to Change**

**Cliff landscape**

• Marine erosion.

**Enclosed Bay landscape**

• Visitor pressure;
• Intrusive development which would detract from landscape character and quality;
• Potential for extraction of sand/gravel;
• Potential sites for fish farm developments.

**Glaciated valley**

• Visitor pressure (walkers and cars) in scenic area.

**Rugged glaciated hills**

• Possible intrusion of built development into physically sculpted landscape.

**Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement**

**Cliff landscape**

• Restrict the development of barriers, signs and other “clutter” along cliff-top footpaths.

**Enclosed Bay landscape**

• Monitor effects of visitor pressure on coastal paths etc.;
• Protect/manage archaeological sites and make thorough archaeological surveys a requirement of development proposals;
• Protect high amenity bay landscapes from fish farming;
• Provision of visitor facilities should be designed and located sensitively;
• Require substantial reinstatement measures for any aggregates extraction proposals to ensure sand stability and re-establishment of semi-natural habitats.

**Glaciated valley**

• Avoid mechanical peat cutting;
• Avoid over-expansion of visitor amenity;
• Monitor environmental impact of visitor use, particularly erosion, and adopt informal visitor management where necessary;
• General presumption against intrusive development
• Enhance interpretation function.

**Rugged glaciated hills**

• Investigate potential for small scale tree planting;
• There should be a general presumption against introduction of overt human influence.
**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. [Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 100.](https://www.snh.org.uk)

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)
Location and Extent
The landscape area is located on the west coast of South Ronaldsay and extends from the northern coast of Sandwick in the north to The Wing in the south.

Overview
This area consists largely of Cliff Landscape which in the south is backed by Coastal Hills and Heath and in the mid section by Plateau Heaths and Pasture. In the north the little bay and valley of Sandwick form part of a Coastal Basin landscape. The west coast of South Ronaldsay is a landscape which is fairly typical of Orkney’s more exposed stretches of coastline. It includes sections of high, dramatic cliffs interspersed with more sheltered embayments. This part of the South Ronaldsay coast has a pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts and dramatic elements ranging from the little sheltered bay of Sand Wick with its cluster of traditional houses to the many high and exposed headlands, e.g. Barth Head and Hoston Head.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics
- The cliff landscape contains some interesting geological and geomorphological features, including sea stacks, caves, faulting, rock deformation and sedimentary strata which dip steeply seaward.
- At Barswick the cliffs to the west of Greenvale show a small volcanic vent filled by angular blocks of sandstone and flagstone set in a finely crushed sediment rich in carbonate. Although smaller vents occur on the west coast of South Ronaldsay, the Barwick Vent is the most easily recognised and is a valuable and interesting example of past volcanic activity.
- The Kist at the south end of Hoston Bay, a narrow, twisted bedrock promontory, is an unusual physical feature.
- In the south of the site, swirling eddies on an otherwise calm sea surface bear testament to the powerful tidal currents of this area and allow an appreciation of the immensely energetic marine environment of the Pentland Firth and the approaches to Scapa Flow.

Special Qualities
- The landscape is rich in features of archaeology, built heritage and other features of historical association, which include: a ruined chapel and burial ground at Mucklehouse, Sandwick; Weems Castle or The Cairns overlooking Sandwick; earthen banks and a rectangular stone-walled enclosure on The Kist; earthen mounds at Greenvale and Barswick; burnt mounds on the coast of Hune bay; enclosures at Lower Barswick and North Barth Clivie and a post medieval boathouse at Barswick;
- The Castle of Burwick, a promontory fort with secondary buildings which was probably an early monastic settlement also has evidence of prehistoric associations.

Other Designations / Interests
- This coastline has high natural heritage value and includes two areas which are designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites. Barth Head and Green Head LNCS include areas of coastal maritime heath. At Hoston Head LNCS there is an area of heathland with juniper.
- All along the coastal Core Path there are abundant wildflowers and in the south of the site, between Green Head and Barth Head, many common blue butterflies can be seen, often in association with bird’s foot trefoil.
- The eroded sandstone ledges of the vertical cliffs provide nesting sites for seabirds and it is possible to view chicks in their nests at close proximity.
Shags can often be seen perched on the rocky platforms closer to sea level.

- Cetaceans, especially porpoise or minke whale, may be seen offshore, and sightings of basking shark are also possible.
- In the south of the site, seals are commonly seen offshore and grey seals are known to pup along this coast.
- There are attractive views of the islands of southern Scapa Flow, with Switha in the foreground and Hoy and Walls in the background. Southward the island of Swona can be seen, along with the turbulent waters of the Pentland Firth and the Scottish mainland.
- There are views into this site from the ferry *Pentalina* which sails between St Margaret’s Hope, South Ronaldsay and Gills Bay, Caithness

**Sensitivity to Change**

**Cliff landscape**

- Marine erosion

**Coastal Heaths and pasture**

- Decline of remaining drystone walls;
- Deterioration and potential loss of ruined crofts and farmsteads;
- Potential sites for radio masts or wind turbines with consequential visual intrusion and potential scarring by access tracks;
- Housing development on lower slopes to obtain good but remote vantage points.

**Plateau heaths and pasture**

- Open plateau makes built structures highly visible for within the landscape.

**Coastal basin**

- Maintenance of stone walls;
- Visual intrusion of developments into coastal basin;
- Fish farm developments may target this landscape if conditions are suitable.

**Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement**

**Cliff landscape**

- Restrict the development of barriers, signs and other “clutter” along cliff-top footpaths

**Coastal Heaths and pasture**

- Maintain and restore remaining drystone walls;
- Strict limitations to new development should be applied, only accessible lower slopes should be considered;
- Support the restoration and re-use of abandoned crofts/farmstead buildings.

**Plateau heaths and pasture**

- Enhance landscape structure by restoring/extending areas of stone wall field boundaries;
- Maintain the widely dispersed settlement pattern; site and design new buildings with regard to skyline views;
- Encourage woodland planting of small and medium scales and particularly around developments.

**Coastal basin**

- Protect uncultivated coastal areas from expansion of cultivation and small scale sand extraction;
• Maintain and restore stone wall enclosures;
• Avoid intrusive developments on coastal basin floor;
• Respect local settlement patterns and cultural history in the placement of new developments on the basin sides.

**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review* No 100.

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)
Location and Extent
The landscape area extends from Banks on the south coast of South Ronaldsay to Manse Bay on the east coast.

Overview
Along the south coast the landscape consists of Low Island Pastures. On the east coast, between Old Head and Stews there is Cliff Landscape backed by Plateau Heaths and Pasture, apart from at Windwick where the land drops to form Coastal Basin. North of Stews there is Plateau Heaths and Pasture, apart from a small area of Coastal Sand Landscape behind Newark Bay and Pool of Cletts. The south and east coast of South Ronaldsay is fairly typical of Orkney’s more exposed stretches of coastline. In the east it includes sections of high, dramatic cliffs interspersed by geos and narrow inlets along with the embayments of Wind Wick, Newark Bay and the Pool of Cletts. Along the south coast the cliffs are rather lower. As with much of Orkney’s coastline, abundant archaeological sites provide evidence of past human activity and settlement. There is a pleasing combination of features and visual contrasts throughout this area, e.g. the gentle valley landscape of Windwick which is framed by the rugged cliffs of Halcro Head in the south and Bigore Head in the north.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics
- The cliff landscape contains some interesting geological and geomorphological features, including sea stacks, caves, faulting, rock deformation and sedimentary strata which dip steeply seaward.
- The cliffed coastline between Old Head and Halcro Head is designated as a Local Nature Conservation Site. The site illustrates how coastal morphology relates to geological structure. The cliffs are cut in Rousay Flags which dip northward at moderate angles; the dip in a direction parallel to the coastline has produced asymmetrical geos whose north-facing sides are sheet and whose south-facing sides are stepped. These cliffs are generally less than 30m in height and are broken by several large geos and inlets.
- There are also a number of blowholes at Halcro Head.

Special Qualities
- Halcro Head and the Ward Hill cliffs have qualities of isolation and remoteness from human influence.
- This landscape is rich in archaeology and features of built heritage and includes sites which are valuable in raising public awareness of Orkney’s cultural heritage. Scheduled Ancient Monuments include the chambered cairn of Isbister, better known as the Tomb of the Eagles; Liddel Farm cairn; the Brough of Windwick; Hesta Head Cairns and Mound; Windwick Township and Halcro Castle.
- The presence of the Tomb of the Eagles on the eastern coast as well as a number of cairns along the southern coast is indicative of the considerable social and religious significance of this area for earlier communities.
- The Cairns o’ Flaws above Windwick is an Iron Age or Pictish settlement, possibly a Broch or Earth House, and is currently under excavation.
- A Neolithic tomb containing human remains has recently been unearthed at Banks on the south coast.
- Other sites include a cist at Blomuir; a Neolithic or Bronze Age burial cist at Banks Head; A group of six cairns close to the southern coast; a cairn at Old Head and a hollow earthen mound at Halcro Head;
Close to Kirkhouse Point stands the Millennium Stone, a standing stone which was carved by local residents in 2000 to mark the turn of the century.

Other Designations / Interests

- The cliffed landscape contains extensive natural habitat and a diverse range of plant species was recorded during the landscape assessment. These included red and white clover, bird’s foot trefoil, lady’s bedstraw, tufted vetch, orchids, tormentil, cat’s ear and angelica which provide excellent habitat for a range of invertebrates including meadow brown and common blue butterflies.
- The rocky cliffs, in particular the cliff tops of the southern coast, provide substrate for a number of brightly-coloured species of lichen.
- Where the sides of cliffs are eroded to produce ledges these provide good nesting habitat for breeding seabirds.
- In contrast, Halcro Head in the south features vegetated sea cliffs, a UK priority BAP habitat.
- Ward Hill Cliffs SSSI is a floristically rich cliff top site. The rocky platforms below are an important grey seal breeding site.
- The Ward Hill Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS) is an area of upland and maritime heath, important for breeding seabirds as well as moorland and wetland birds.
- Liddel Loch LNCS is a loch with wet rough grassland which is important for wintering wildfowl.
- Blows Moss, an area of wetland to the SW of the current Windwick site boundary is an important hunting area for raptors.
- The views out from this area towards the east feature a wide expanse of open sea (the North Sea) and this is a particularly good place to experience exceptional sunrises. Views from the south coast take in the Pentland Skerries and the turbulent waters of the Pentland Firth.
- From Windwick the views across the valley, including Blown Moss, are attractive and generally uninterrupted by built development.
- This is a popular area for local residents and visitors alike and the coastal path is well frequented by walkers. It is possible to walk from Banks on the south coast to Manse Bay in the NE.
- Ham Geo is a sheltered inlet and in summer is a popular recreational site, even for swimming.
- The turbulence and tidal power of the Pentland Firth can be appreciated when viewing the many tidal eddies and races that are clearly visible from the southern coastline as well as off Old Head.

Sensitivity to Change

Cliff landscape

- Marine erosion

Low Island Pastures

- Conservation of machair and links grassland areas;
- Sensitivity of flat and open landscape to development;
- Potential flooding / inundation problems;
- Loss of drystone walls may threaten to destabilise sand based pastures;
- Damage by coastal erosion and potential loss of rich archaeological deposits;
- Damage by rabbits to turf cover and monuments.

Plateau heaths and pasture

- Open plateau makes built structures highly visible within the landscape.

Coastal basin

- Maintenance of stone walls;
• Visual intrusion of developments into coastal basin;
• Fish farm developments may target this landscape if conditions are suitable.

**Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement**

**Cliff landscape**
• Restrict the development of barriers, signs and other “clutter” along cliff-top footpaths.

**Low Island Pastures**
• Maintain drystone wall boundaries;
• Encourage preservation of existing wetlands and uncultivated areas;
• Strict design control of development on flat headland is required;
• Where development is needed, adopt building styles which respect the vernacular tradition and building forms.

**Plateau heaths and pasture**
• Enhance landscape structure by restoring/extending areas of stone wall field boundaries;
• Maintain the widely dispersed settlement pattern; site and design new buildings with regard to skyline views;
• Encourage woodland planting of small and medium scales and particularly around developments.

**Coastal basin**
• Protect uncultivated coastal areas from expansion of cultivation and small scale sand extraction;
• Maintain and restore stone wall enclosures;
• Avoid intrusive developments on coastal basin floor;
• Respect local settlement patterns and cultural history in the placement of new developments on the basin sides.

**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 100.

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)
Location and Extent
The landscape area extends along the south coast of South Walls from Cantick Head in the east to the western boundary of the Hill of White Hamars in the west.

Overview
The entire landscape area is described as a Whaleback Island landscape and for most of its length consists of heathland or species-rich grassland behind a cliffed and indented coastline. The Hill of White Hamars which occupies much of the area is managed as a Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve but is also operated as a working sheep farm.

Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics
- The diversity of the cliff top scenery, e.g. its many geos, rock stacks, caves and blow holes, contributes dramatic elements to the landscape of this site.
- Vantage points all along this coastline allow an appreciation of the considerable tidal energy of the Pentland Firth. In particular off Cantick Head the pattern of turbulence at the sea surface, even in calm weather, indicates the strength of the underlying tidal currents.

Special Qualities
- The heathland vegetation of the Hill of White Hamars Reserve includes an abundance and diversity of flowering plants, which in turn provide habitat for many species including a rich invertebrate fauna. At the time of the assessment devil’s bit scabious, cat’s ear, eyebright, grass of Parnassus and tormentil were still in flower and many bumblebees, butterflies and other pollinating species were observed. The many narrow inlets provide good opportunities for short-range viewing of cliff-nesting seabirds. This was also the first SWT reserve established to protect the endangered Scottish primrose.
- To the west and adjoining the reserve, Aith Head Local Nature Conservation Site comprises a strip of coastal heath and grassland along the cliffs. The heath is dominated by heather and crowberry, but varies according to the amount of exposure to sea spray. In more exposed places plants such sea plantain and spring squill grow among shorter heather. Likewise, the grassland on cliff edges and growing down steep slopes is varied: at the western end the grass is tall and flowery, and a rare hawkweed grows here at its only known site in Orkney. Habitats can be expected to attract at least skylark and meadow pipit. Breeding birds of prey have been recorded here.
- The coastal landscape contains some interesting geomorphological features, e.g. cliffs with caves, natural arches, stacks and two large blow-holes.
- Although it is not far from the settlements of South Walls the location of the cliffed landscape on the shores of the Pentland Firth gives it a sense of “wildness” and remoteness from human influence.

Other Designations / Interests
- Although the glaciated landscape of North Hoy is probably better recognised as a visitor destination, the Hill of White Hamars provides a valuable natural heritage resource and visitor attraction in South Walls.
• The area contains a number of cultural heritage features including the Green Hill of Hestigeo Broch and nearby mound 19m long and 8m wide set with many erect slabs, suggesting a pair of conjoined houses of Bronze Age type; the Candle of Snelsetter, a sea stack with a substantial drystone wall around its summit; cliff sites previously used for the quarrying of stone at Garth Head and Misbister; a Treb dyke and various earthwork dykes; Remains of a mill at The Loft; a number of cairns and a well; a possible kelp working site; Snelsetter, a former barn which has been converted to a dwelling and is Category B listed.
• Cantick Head lighthouse, including the lighthouse keepers’ cottages, shed, perimeter wall and sundial are Category B listed.
• This is one of the best locations in Orkney for sightings of passing cetaceans. In particular minke whale and harbour porpoise are regular visitors to the offshore area.

Sensitivity to Change

Whaleback Island
• Depopulation and the potential abandonment of property / decline in agricultural management;
• Lack of maintenance of drystone walls;
• Sensitivity of smooth island topography to large and poorly sited development;
• Potential sensitivity to agricultural diversification projects, particularly tourism/recreation related.

Potential for Landscape Conservation / Enhancement

Whaleback Island
• Encourage the maintenance and extension of stone wall enclosures;
• Careful control of building siting and design, particularly with regard to skyline/silhouette impacts should be encouraged;
• New building should be oriented in relation to the coast, and should reflect the scale and colouring of traditional buildings;
• Encourage restoration and redevelopment of abandoned crofts / farmsteads where feasible.

Landscape Character

The Landscape Character Types found in this area are described in Land Use Consultants 1998 Orkney Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 100.

All Landscape Character Assessments can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at www.snh.org.uk