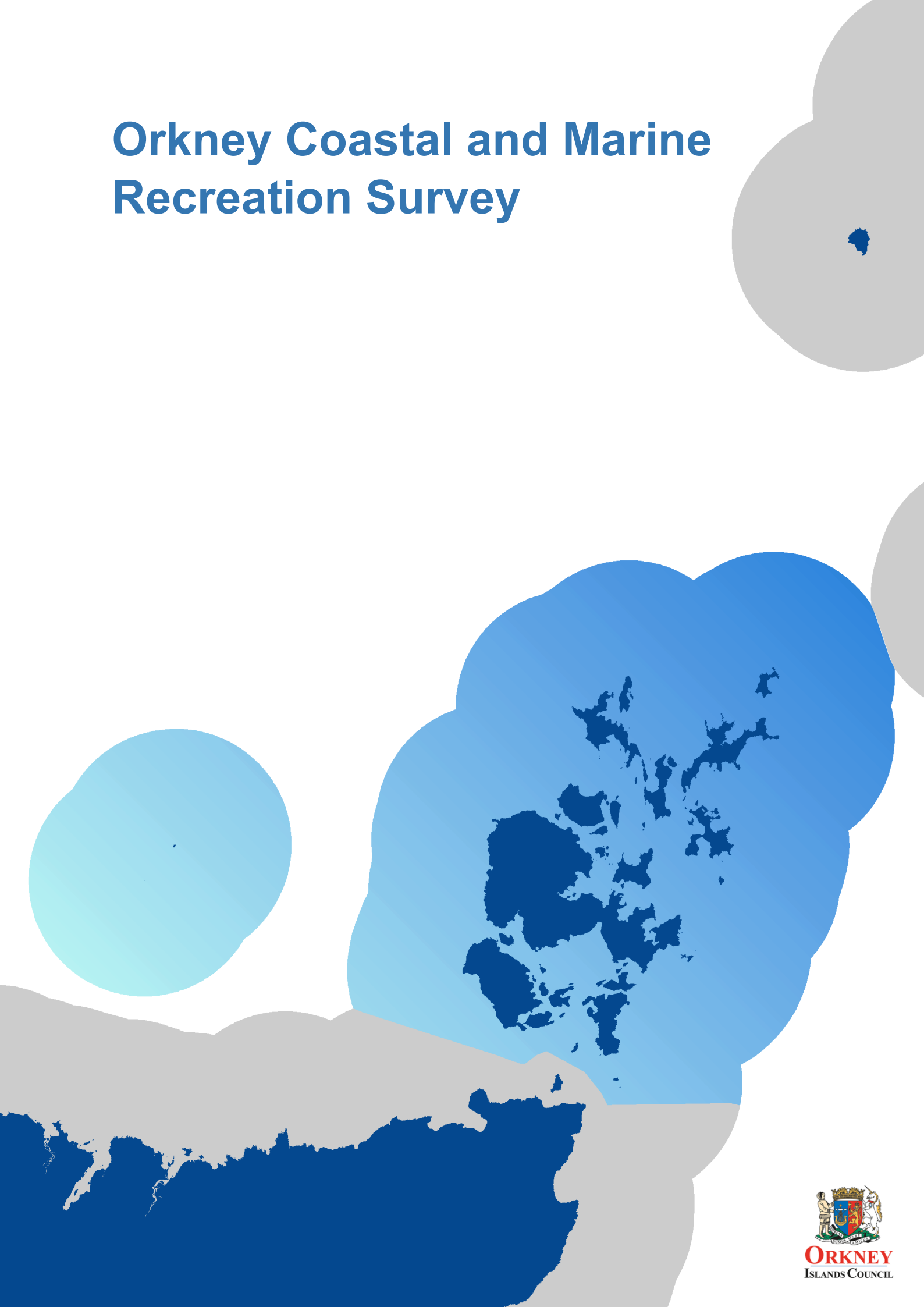


Orkney Coastal and Marine Recreation Survey



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The locations of recreational activities identified in this document were recorded by members of the public. The safety and suitability of these sites has not been verified by Orkney Islands Council and members of the public should ensure the sites are appropriate before accessing an area and engaging in an activity. This document is not an endorsement for suitability of locations.

Section 1

Introduction

Engaging in marine and coastal recreation activities is a cornerstone of life in Orkney. Popular activities such as coastal walking, sailing, paddle sports, surfing, diving, recreational fishing, swimming and wildlife watching are popular pastimes and provide significant wellbeing and quality of life benefits to both local communities and visitors¹.

Orkney's coastal infrastructure and facilities, including the core path network,² anchorages (see Map A1), and the many marine access points including marinas, piers and slips, are key to enabling this diverse range of recreational uses.

Specific details on where these activities are occurring however, and what facilities are being used to enable them, was not well understood. A study in 2015, conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government³ went some way to addressing this data gap. The use of in-person workshops only, however, and the increasing age of the study, make it of limited use for developers and decision makers.

With the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan being adopted in 2026⁴, it is important to have up-to-date information on the recreational activities and the associated facilities being used around Orkney in order to allow the safeguarding, support and enhancement of these activities and support the implementation of Policy 7: Tourism, Recreation, Leisure and Sport.

This survey therefore:

- Provides detailed and up-to-date maps of the most popular marine and coastal recreational activities taking place around Orkney;
- Identifies the most used public facilities for marine and coastal recreation;
- Provides background information on the different activities, such as seasonal changes in popularity and why people choose to go to specific areas;
- Collected information on potential improvements to facilities/infrastructure to support and enhance the future of marine and coastal recreational activities; and
- Aids developers and decision makers in identifying important areas for recreational activities, in line with Policy 7b in the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan (see below).

¹ Evidence Statement: The well-being and human health benefits of exposure to the marine and coastal environment. DEFRA. 2019.

https://www.smmr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SD1712_well-being-and-human-health-benefits.pdf

² The Orkney Core Paths Plan. Outdoor Access - Orkney Islands Council.

<https://oic.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=462f21e42d74428984b868be3a8c57c2>

³ <https://marine.gov.scot/data/marine-and-coastal-tourism-and-recreation-pentland-firth-and-orkney-waters-case-study-report>

⁴ <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/D/marine-planning.htm>

Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan, Policy 7b states:

Method

...

Sector Policy 7b: Safeguarding tourism, recreation, leisure and sport uses

- i. Proposals for development and/or activities should consider options to avoid, minimise or appropriately mitigate significant adverse impacts on tourism, recreation, leisure and sport uses.
- ii. Proposals for development and/or activities should demonstrate engagement and/or consultation with relevant tourism, recreation, leisure and sport bodies and/or users to ensure that the measures proposed to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate adverse impacts on tourism, recreation, sport and leisure uses are appropriate.

Survey Method

The 'Marine and Coastal Recreation Survey' was hosted on the online platform Maptionnaire⁵. This approach combines traditional survey questions with interactive, digital maps, allowing respondents to zoom to areas they use for their activities and mark them directly on the map.

Being wholly online, respondents could fill in the survey from the comfort of their own home and at their own pace. It also allowed a wider audience to be reached than the more traditional in-person workshops.

To assist those who may have difficulty accessing computers or the internet, the opportunity to fill the survey out in-person was made available at the same time as various engagement events for the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan in Spring and Summer 2022.

The survey was initially piloted with a selection of stakeholders from across different recreational interests, before being made available to the public for approximately 12 weeks. Throughout this time, the survey was advertised around Orkney.

Survey Structure

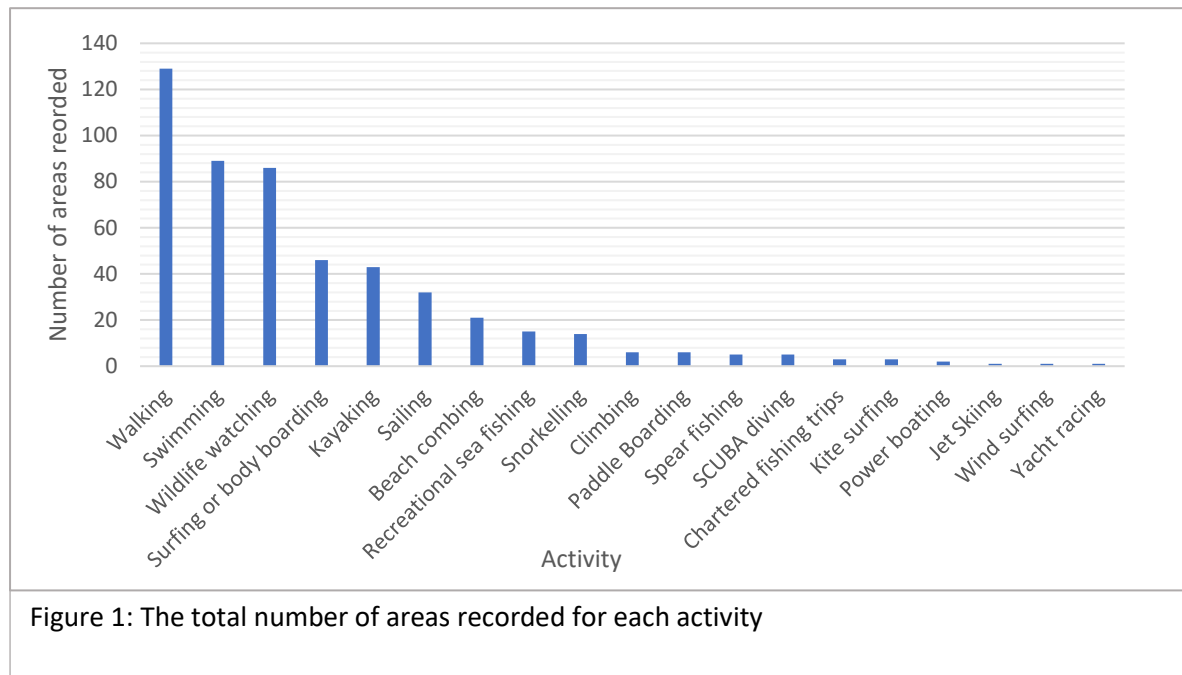
The survey could be filled out on behalf of a club, a business, or as an individual. Whilst the core questions of the survey remained the same, there were differing questions depending on which option was chosen (individual, business, or club). The core survey questions can be found in annex 2.

⁵ <https://maptionnaire.com/>

Results

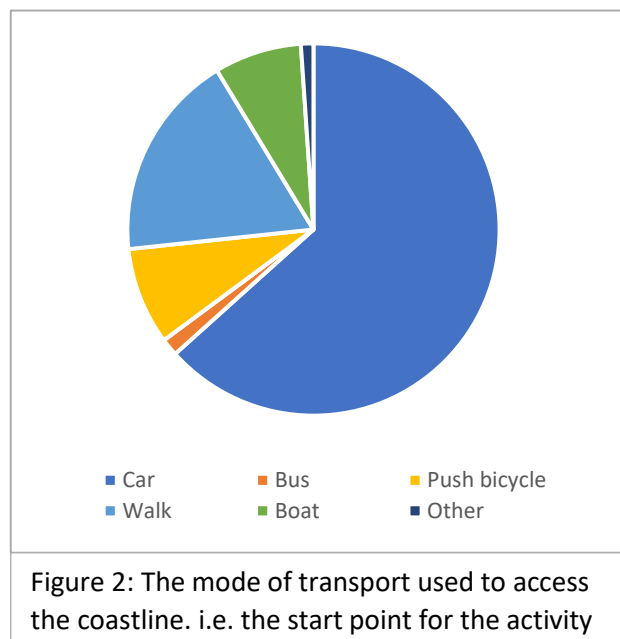
The survey took place between 30th March 2022 and 30th June 2022. During this time, approximately 200 people filled out the survey. The majority (185) of these filled out the survey as an individual, with the rest being clubs and businesses. This resulted in over 550 areas being drawn and mapped for 22 different activities.

The most common activity reported was walking, closely followed by swimming and wildlife watching. Together these three activities accounted for almost two thirds of all recorded areas.



Predictably, Summer was the most popular time for recreational activities to take place, with 96% of respondents marking this as their most or joint-most active season. Not all activities stopped during winter however, with those such as swimming, kite-surfing, and coastal walking continuing year-round.

By far the most common mode of transport for getting to the activity start location was by car (~63% of all journeys). This may be explained by the fact that many of these activities require additional equipment to be transported, such as surfboards and kayaks, or because many of the activities take place in the more remote areas. Only 1.5% of



people used public transport, which was the least used transport option.

The amount of time spent undertaking each activity varied between activities and the season. Figure 3 below demonstrates the average time for each of the main activities throughout the year.

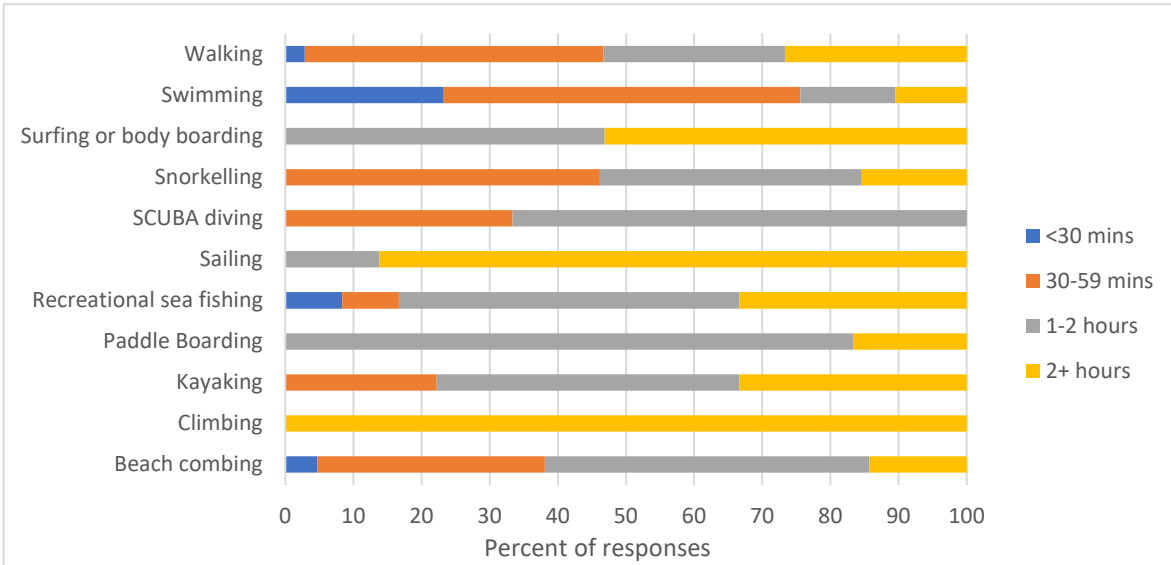


Figure 3: Average time spent undertaking each activity.

Spending time in the coastal and marine environment has been shown to enhance mental wellbeing and physical health, leading to an improved quality of life⁶. It is important therefore to support these activities where possible.

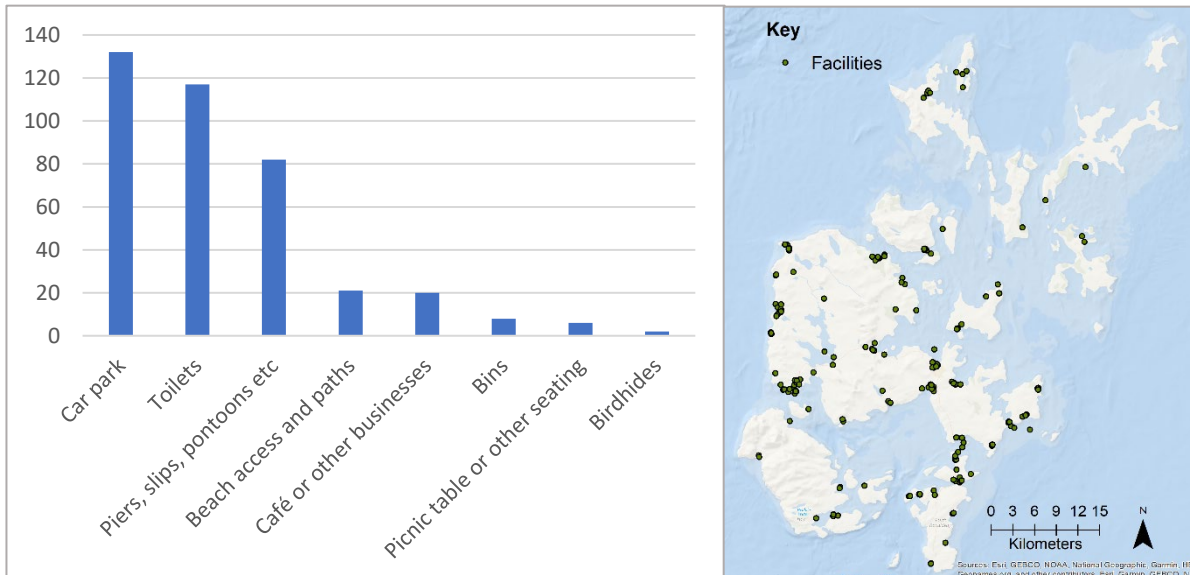


Figure 4: The number of times each facility was marked as being used and the locations of these facilities (right).

⁶ https://www.smmr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SD1712_well-being-and-human-health-benefits.pdf

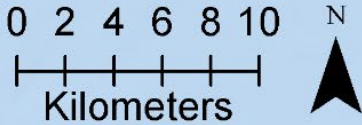
Future Updates

It is the intention for this project to be updated on a rolling basis and this first phase will be reviewed and updated as necessary. If you would like to contribute further information to the maps below then please contact Orkney Islands Council's Marine Planning team at marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk.

Section 2

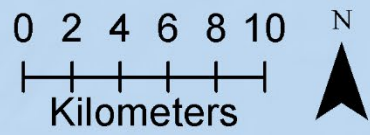
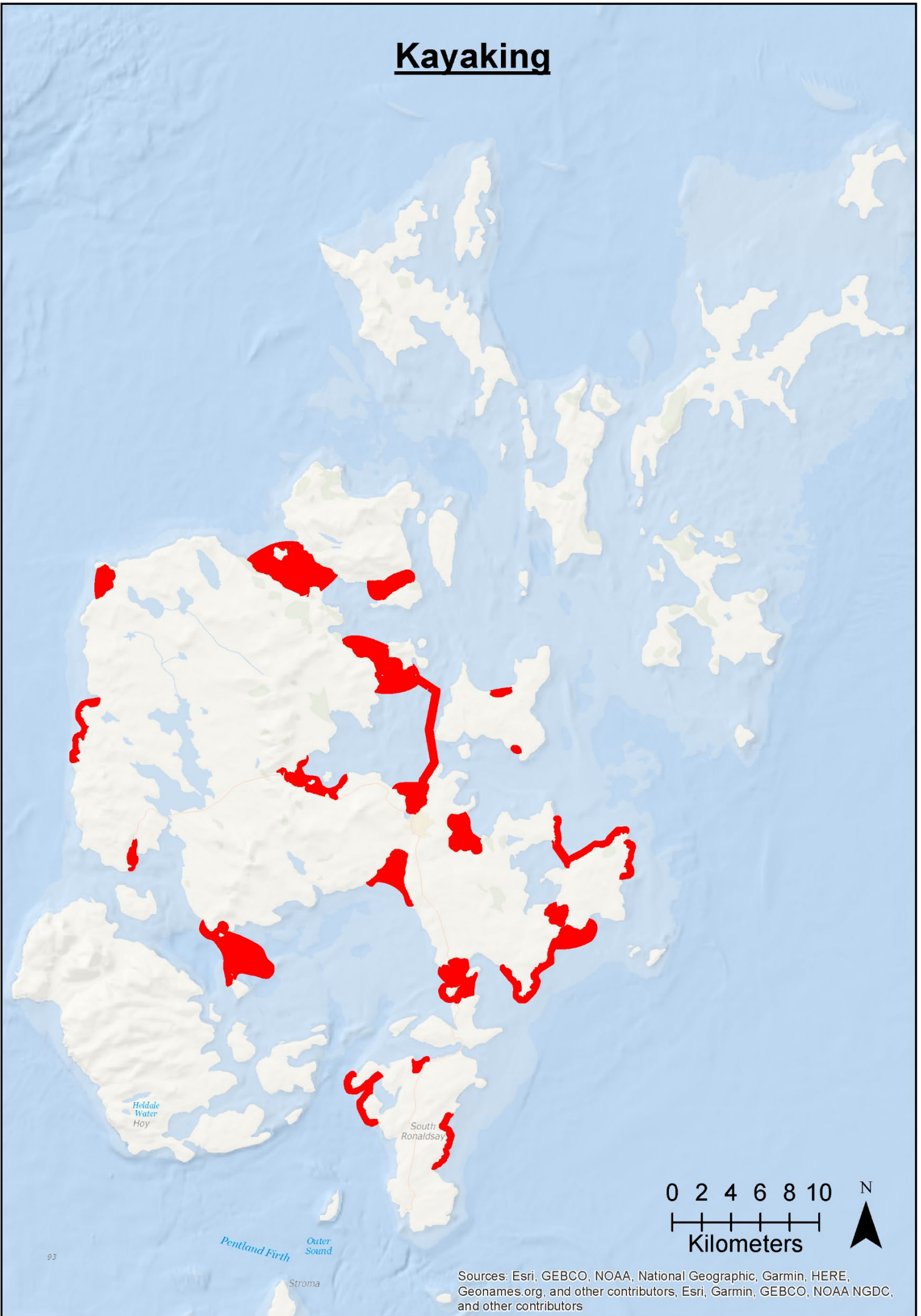
Coastal Activity Maps

Coastal walking



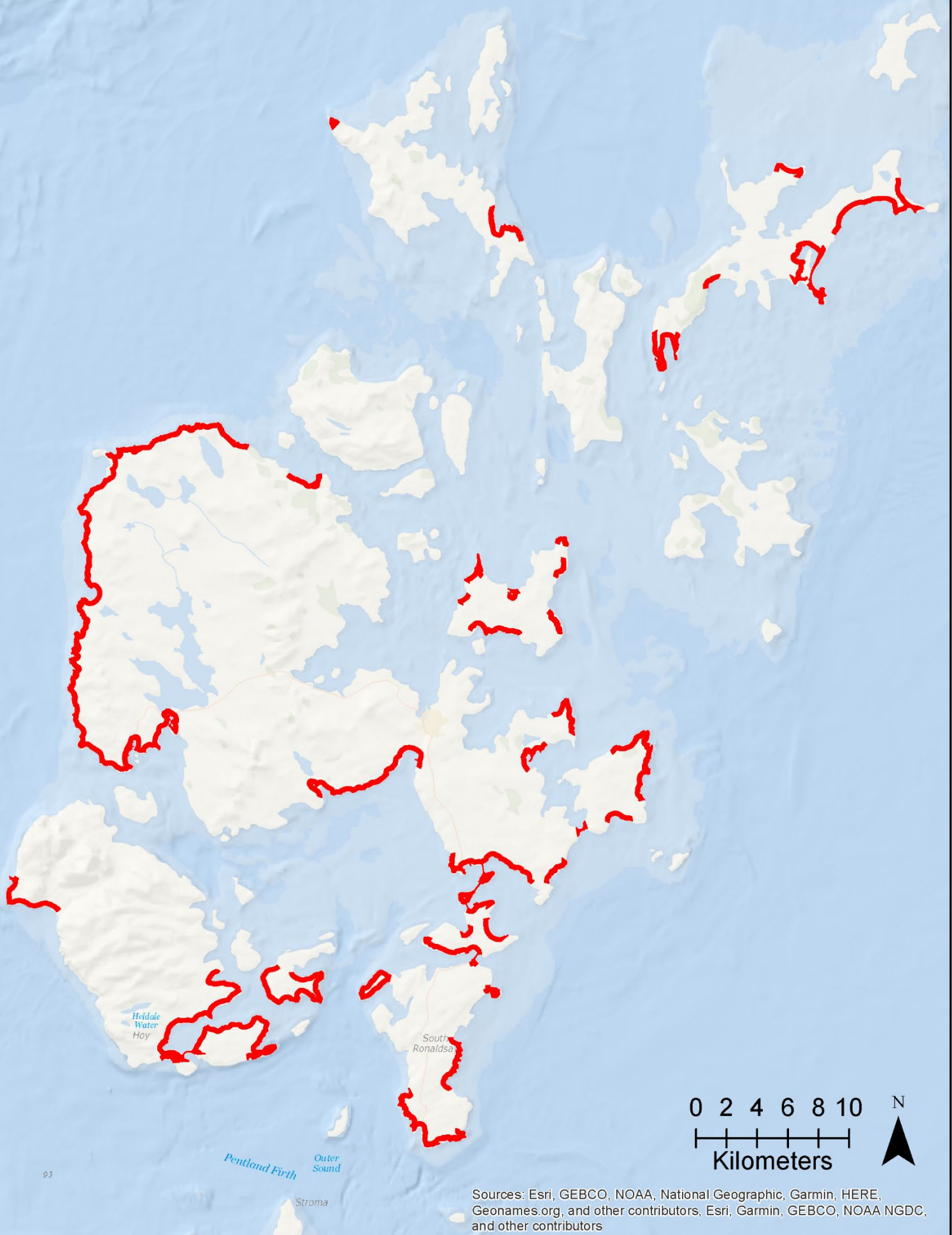
Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Kayaking



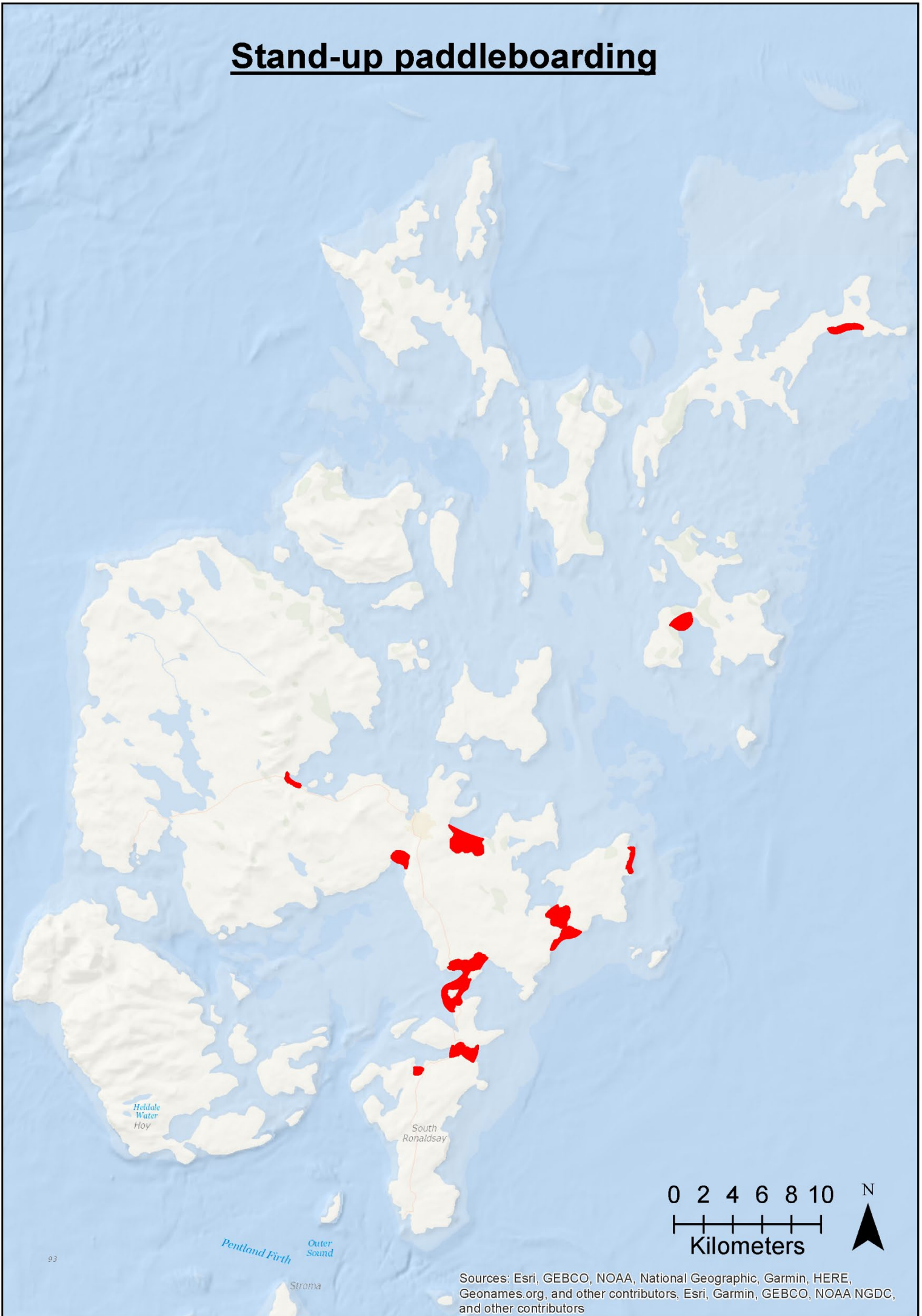
Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Wildlife watching



Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Stand-up paddleboarding

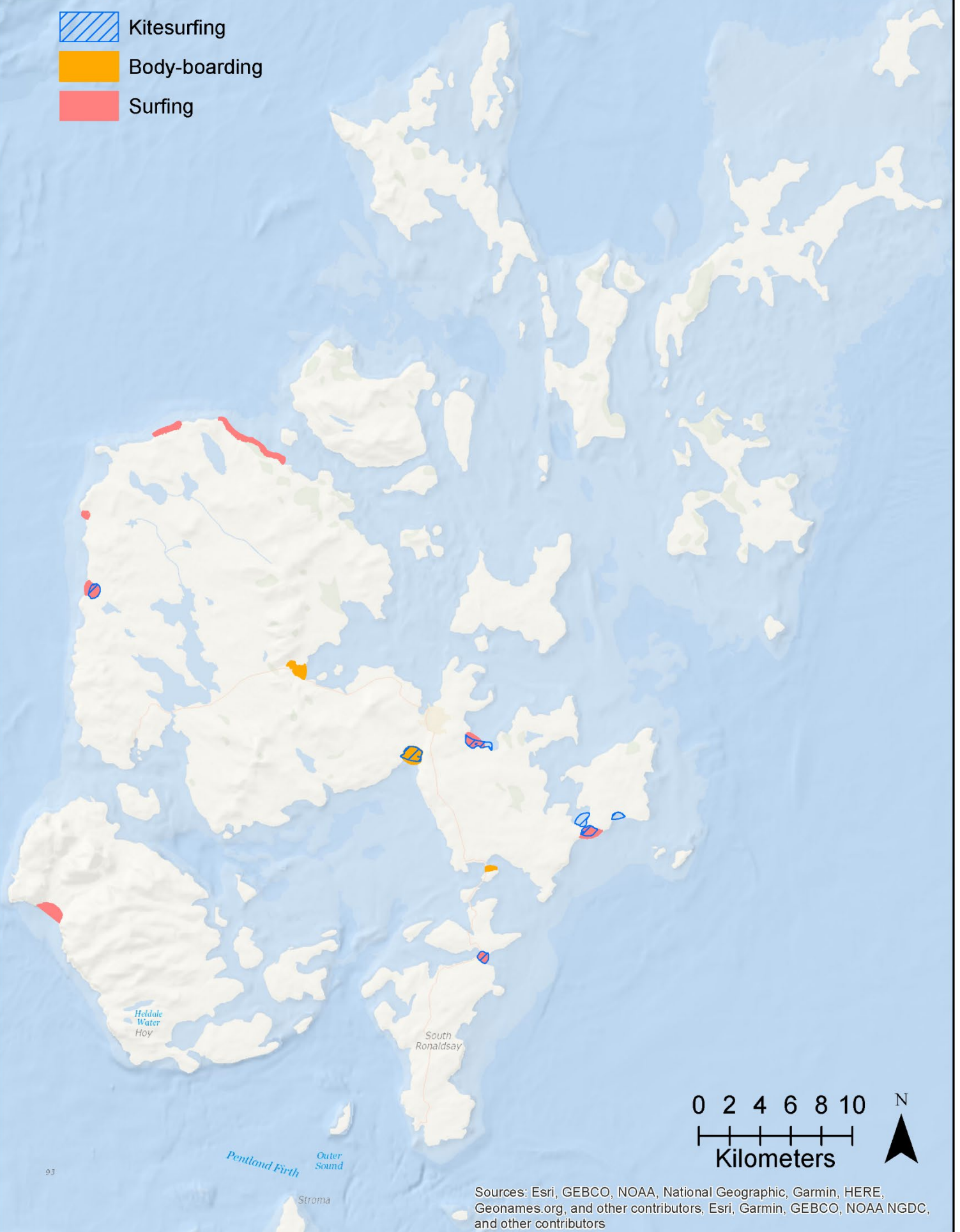


Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Surfing, kitesurfing and body-boarding

Key

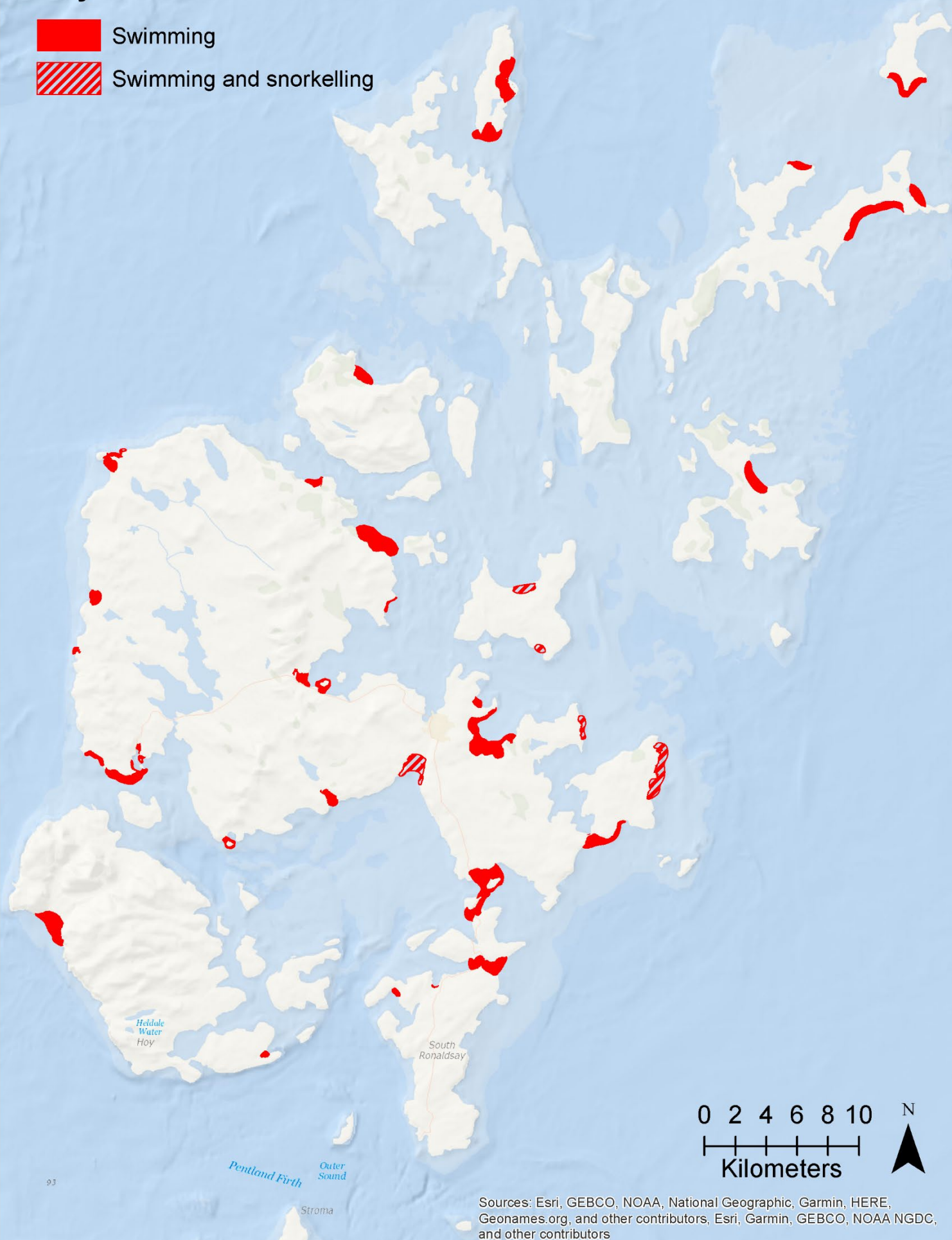
-  Kitesurfing
-  Body-boarding
-  Surfing



Swimming and snorkelling

Key

- Swimming
- Swimming and snorkelling

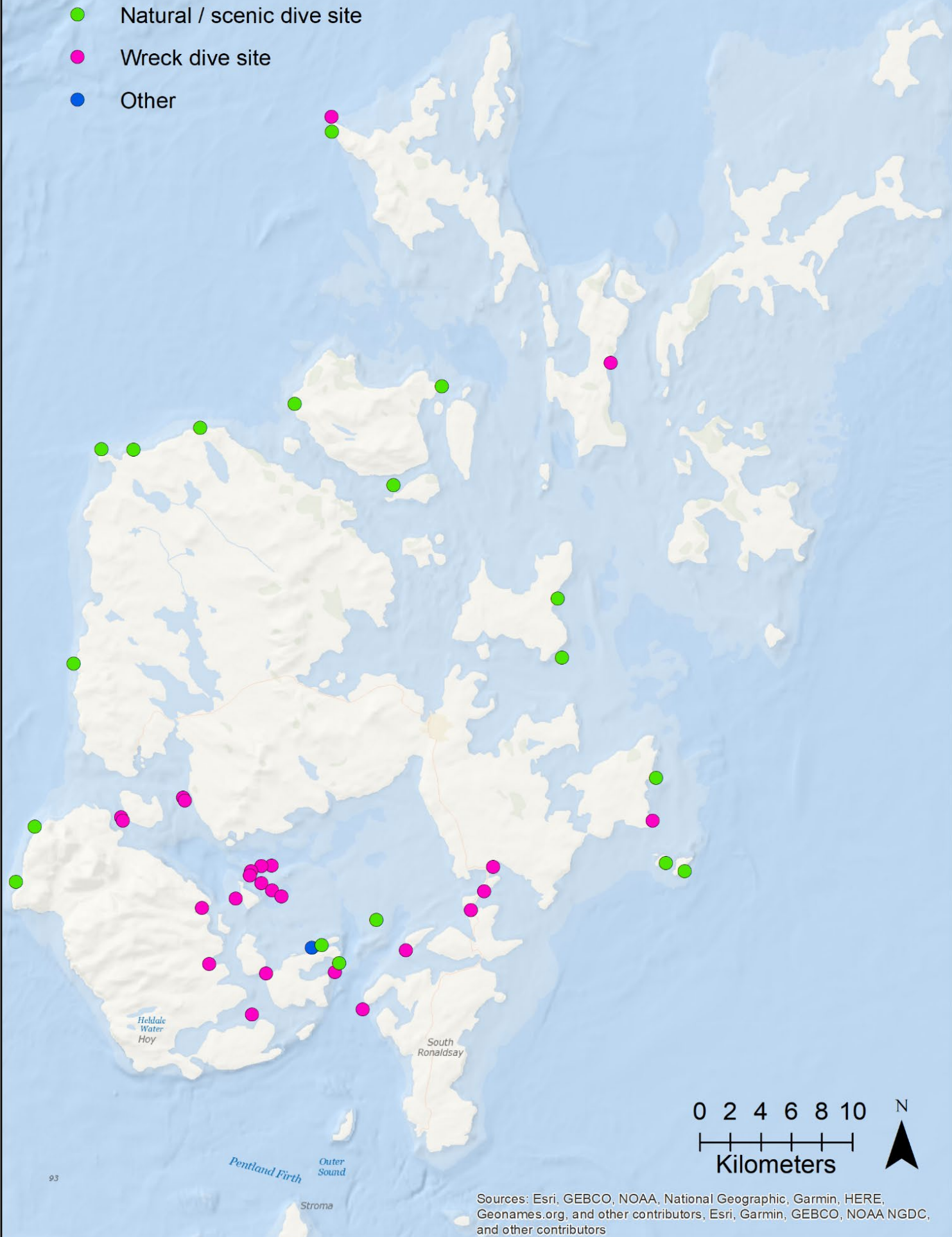


Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

SCUBA Diving

Key

- Natural / scenic dive site
- Wreck dive site
- Other



Jetskiing and powerboating

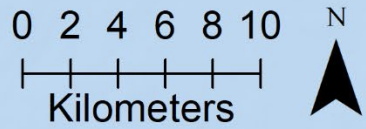
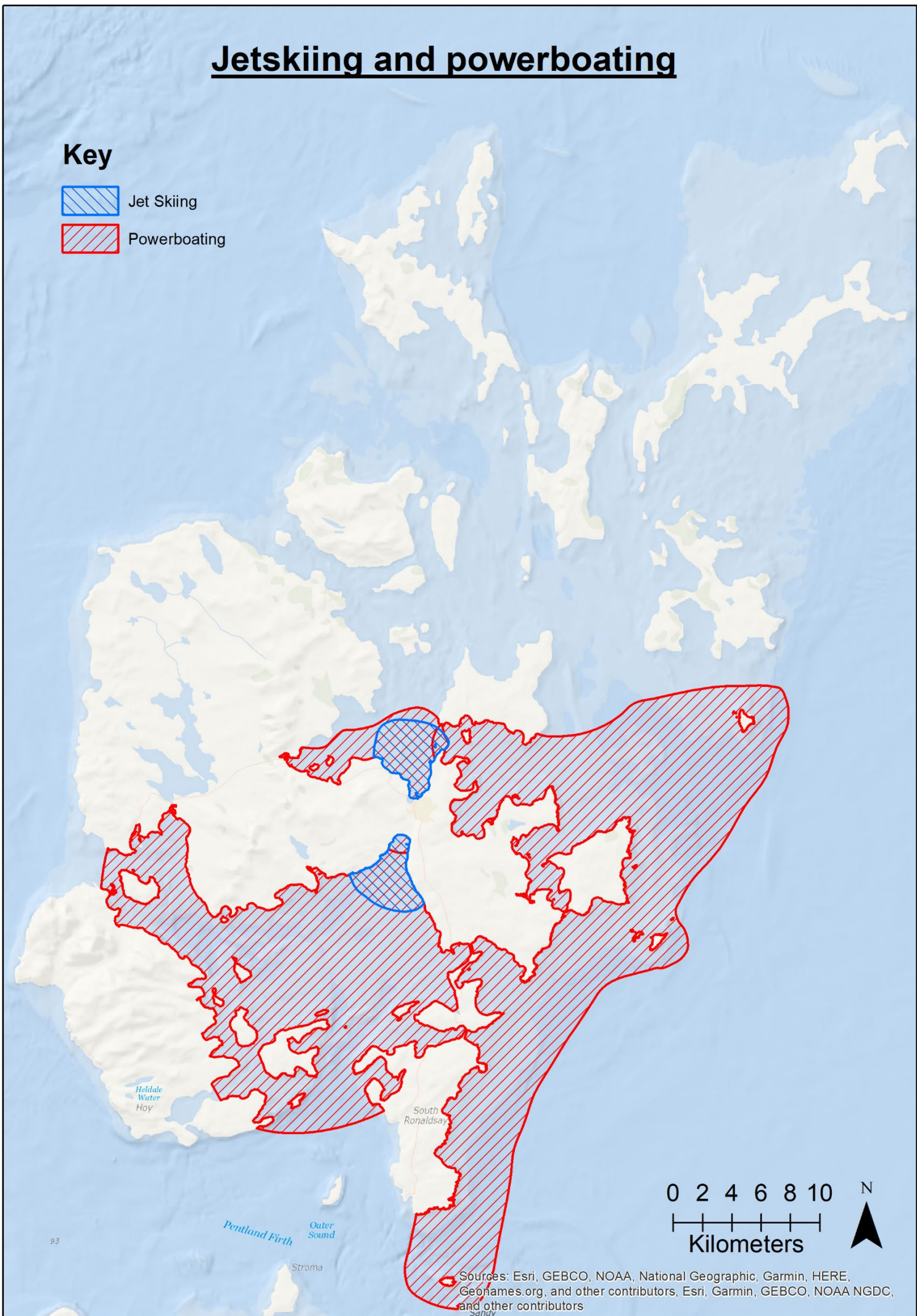
Key



Jet Skiing

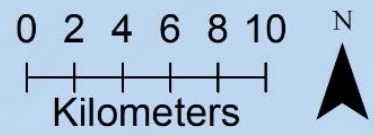
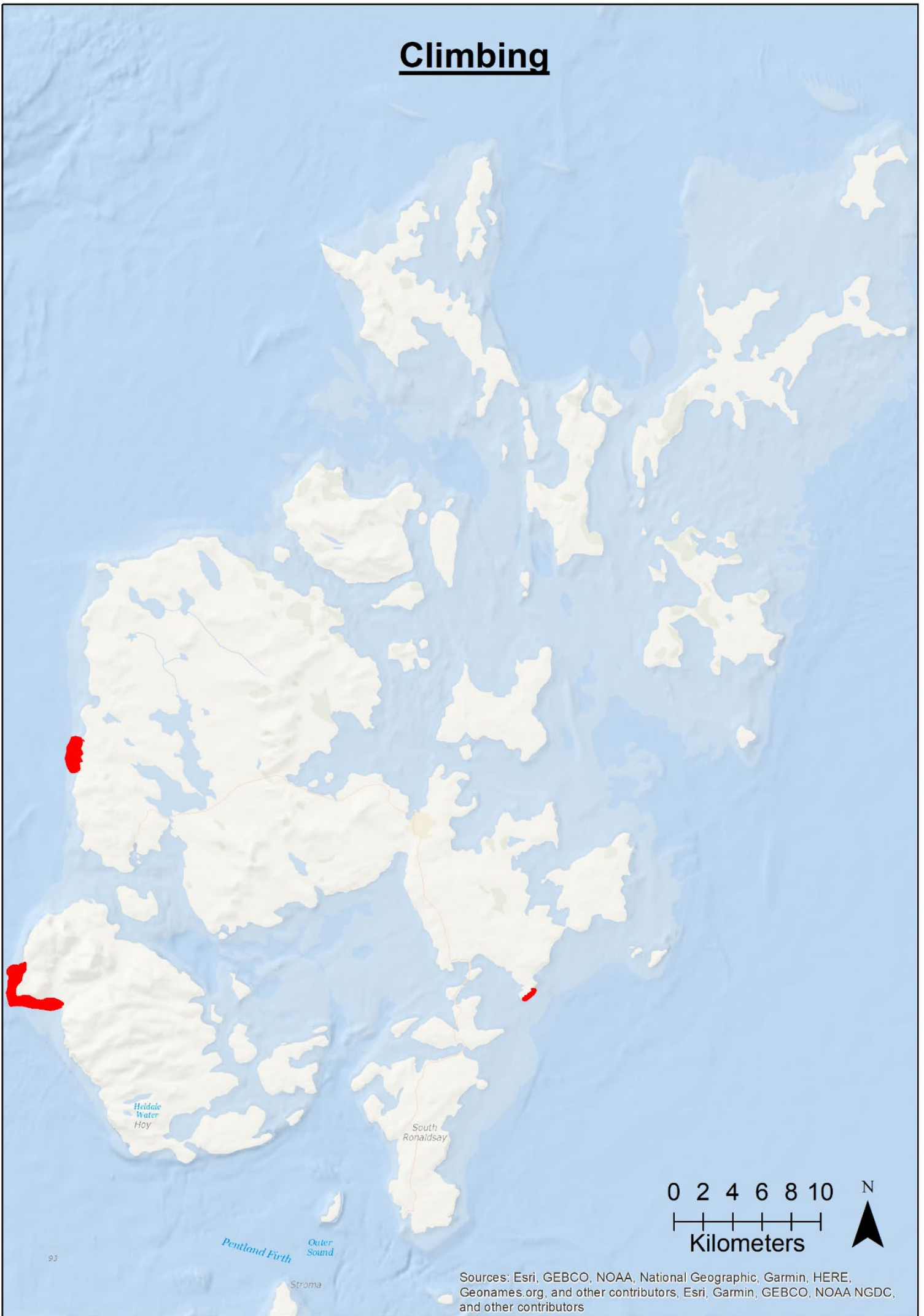


Powerboating



Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Climbing

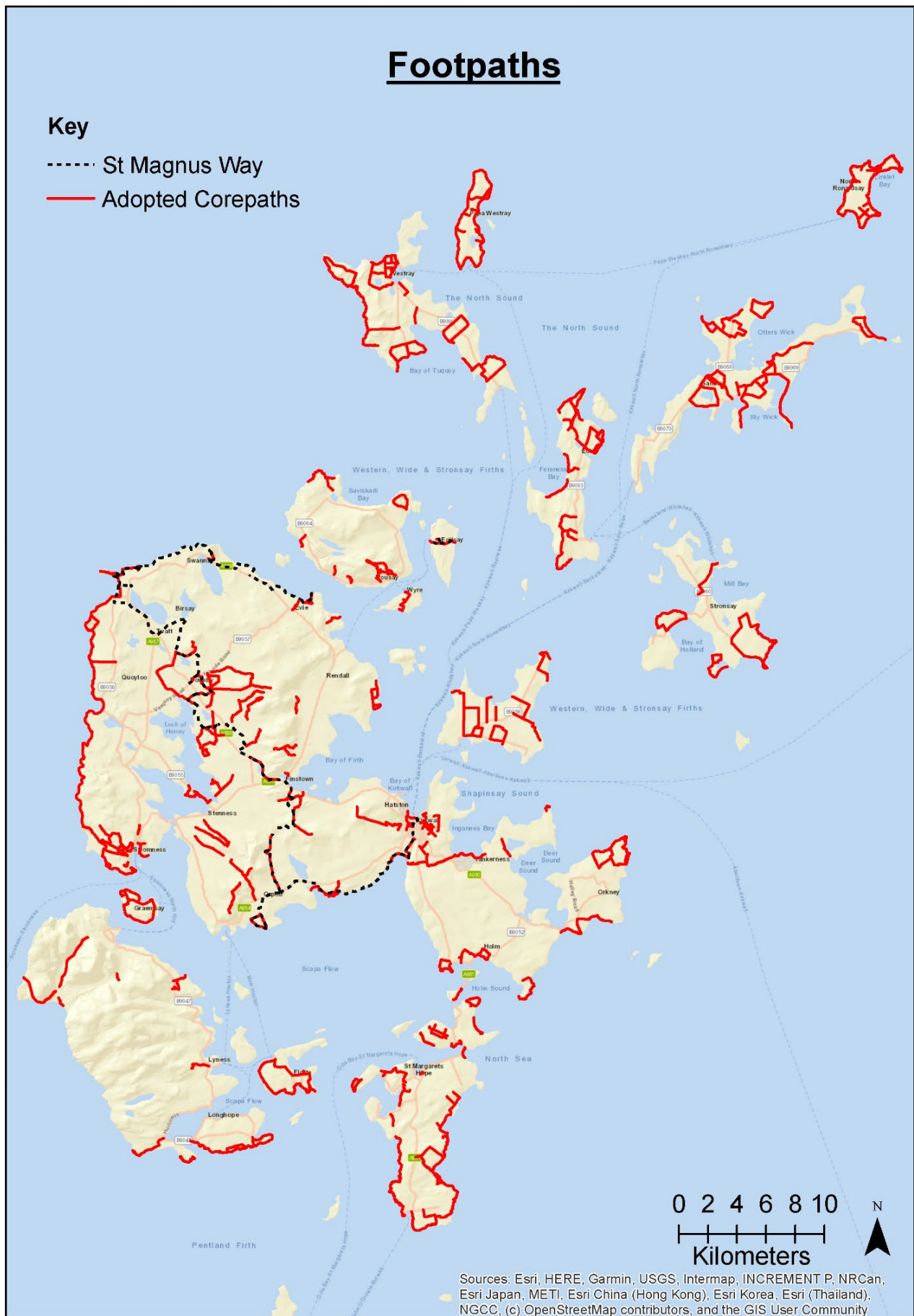


Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors, Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Section 3

Supporting Maps

Many of the activities mapped above utilise facilities or rely on particular attractions. The following maps have been included to provide supporting contextual information to the coastal and marine recreational activities recorded in the survey. Where possible, information on where to view the data in more detail is provided in the text below each map.



Map A: Adopted core paths and St Magnus Way. The survey demonstrated that these are used heavily for coastal walking and wildlife watching. To view an interactive version of this data, visit: <https://oic.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=462f21e42d74428984b868be3a8c57>

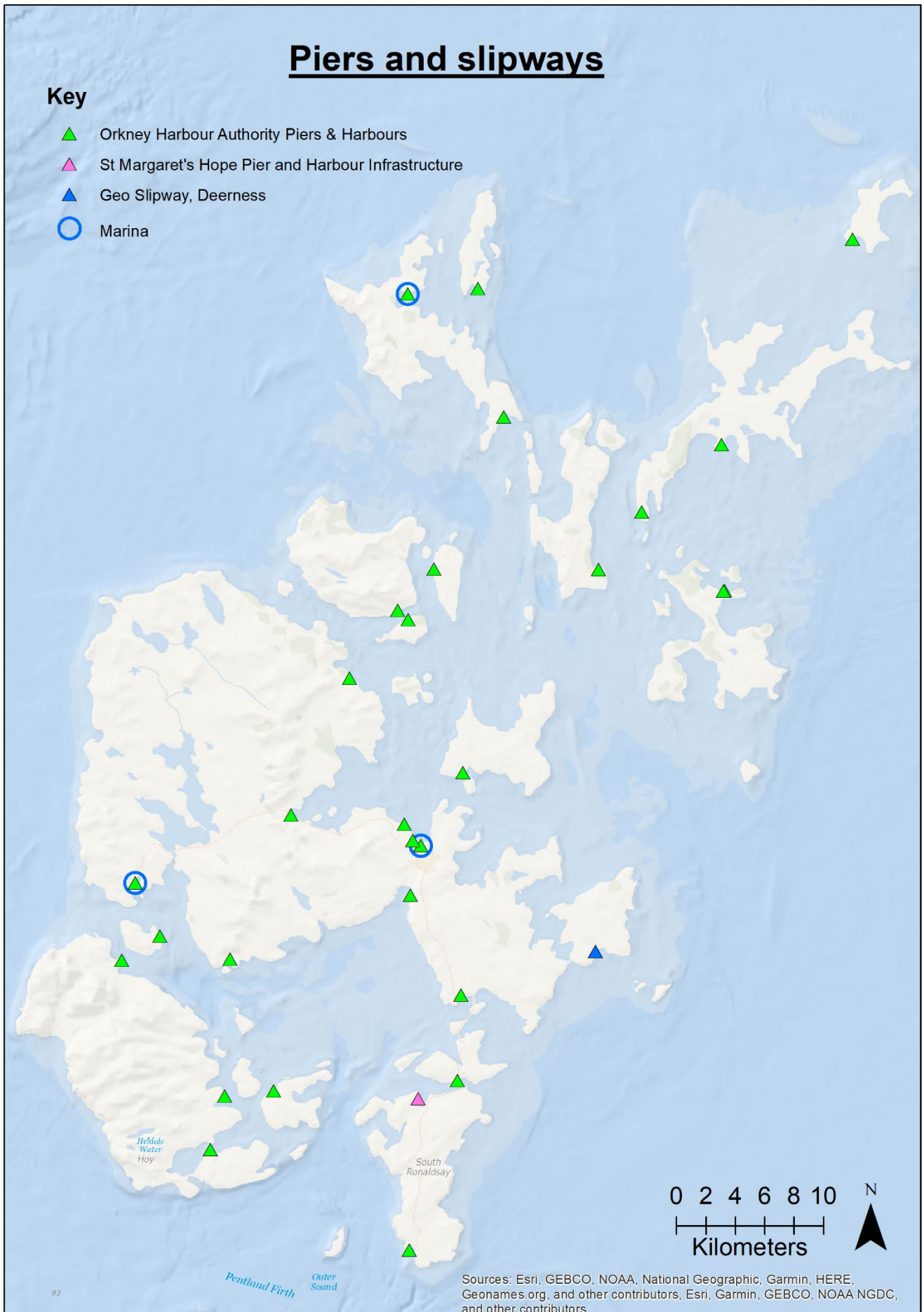
Recreational Anchorages

Key

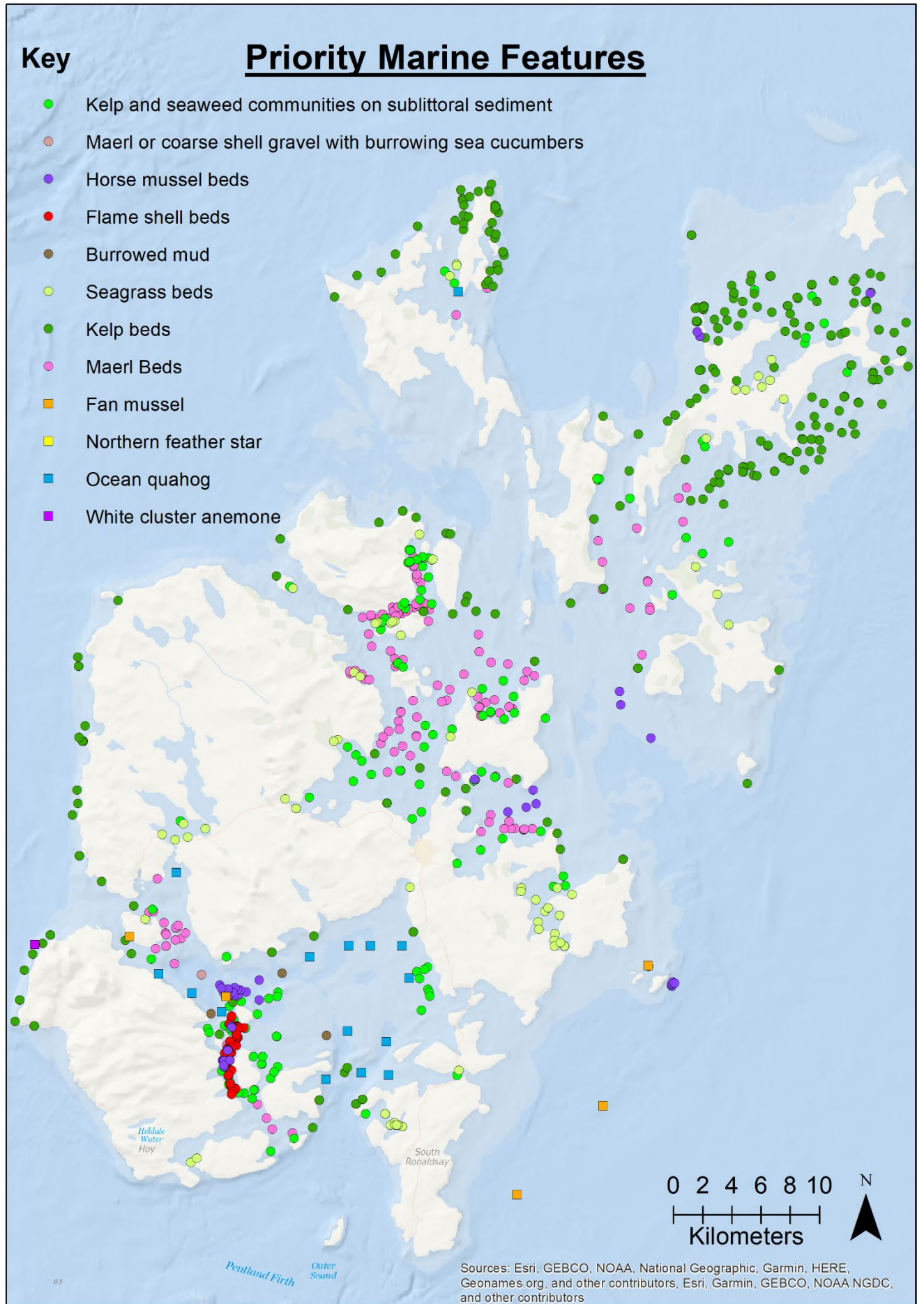
- Visiting Yacht Moorings (VYM)*
- Anchorages listed in the Clyde Cruising Club (CCC) Sailing Directions and Anchorages publication



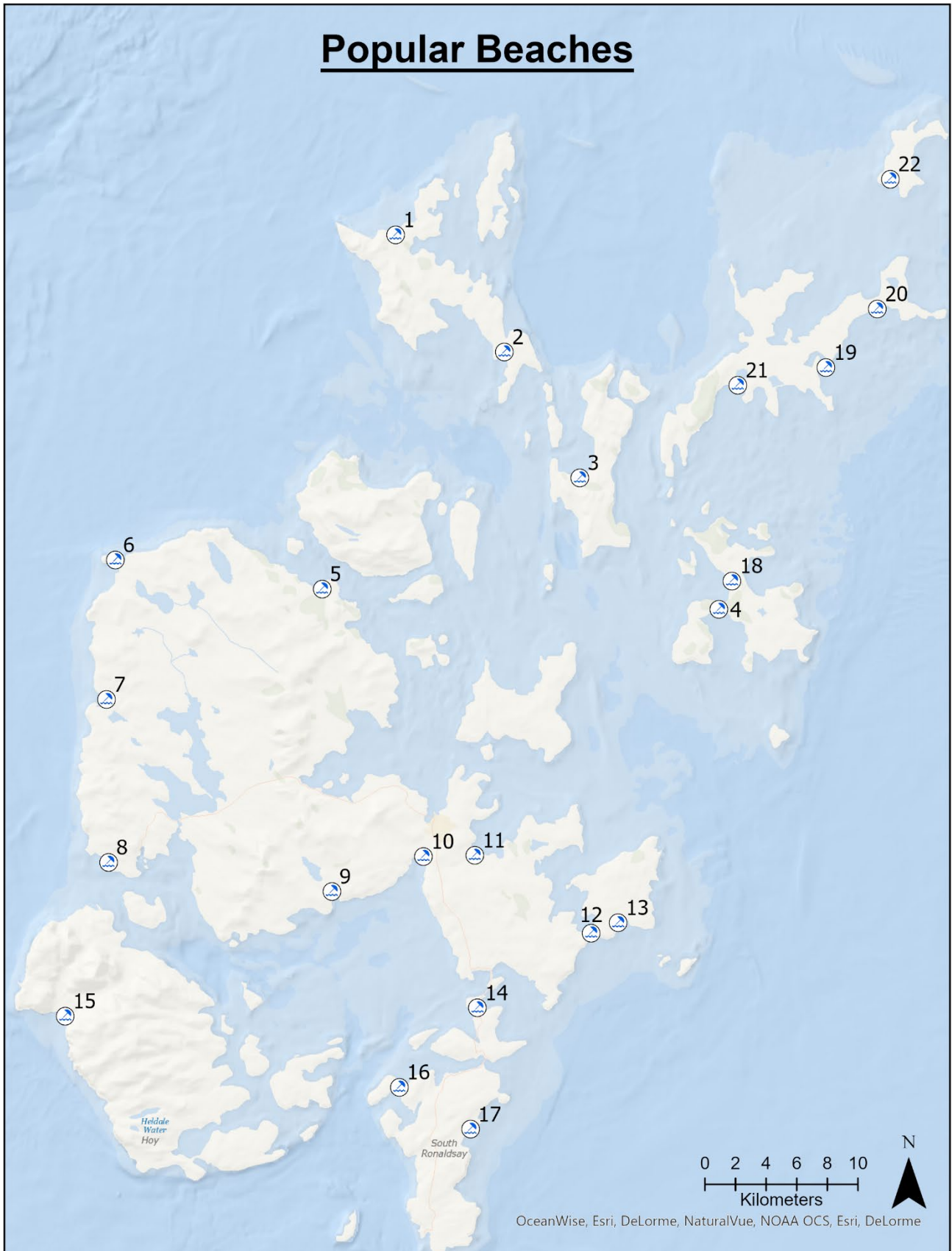
Map B: Recreational/Leisure Anchorages. Many of the anchorages above are routinely used for recreational purposes. Further information on the Clyde Cruising Club anchorages can be found in the [CCC Sailing Directions and Anchorages Publication for Orkney and Shetland](#).



Map C: Piers and Slipways. These are the piers and slips operated by the Orkney Harbour Authority, as well as Geo Slipway Deerness and St Margaret's Hope Pier. Inclusion in this map is not an endorsement for recreational use.

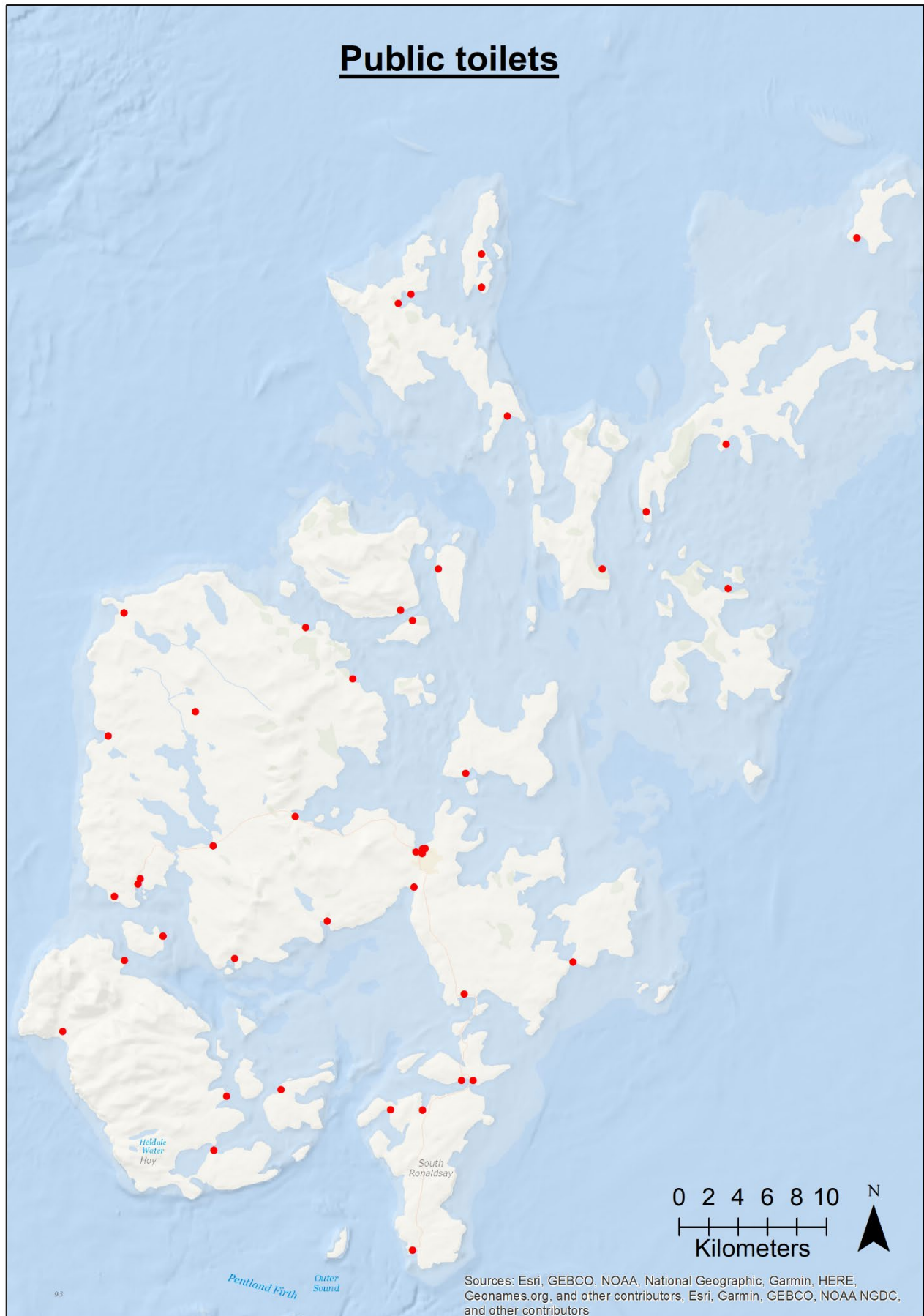


Map D: Priority Marine Features (PMFs). PMFs are habitats and species that the Scottish Government has identified to be marine nature conservation priorities in Scottish waters. This survey revealed that these are often sought out by recreational divers and snorkellers. They can be viewed [here](#).



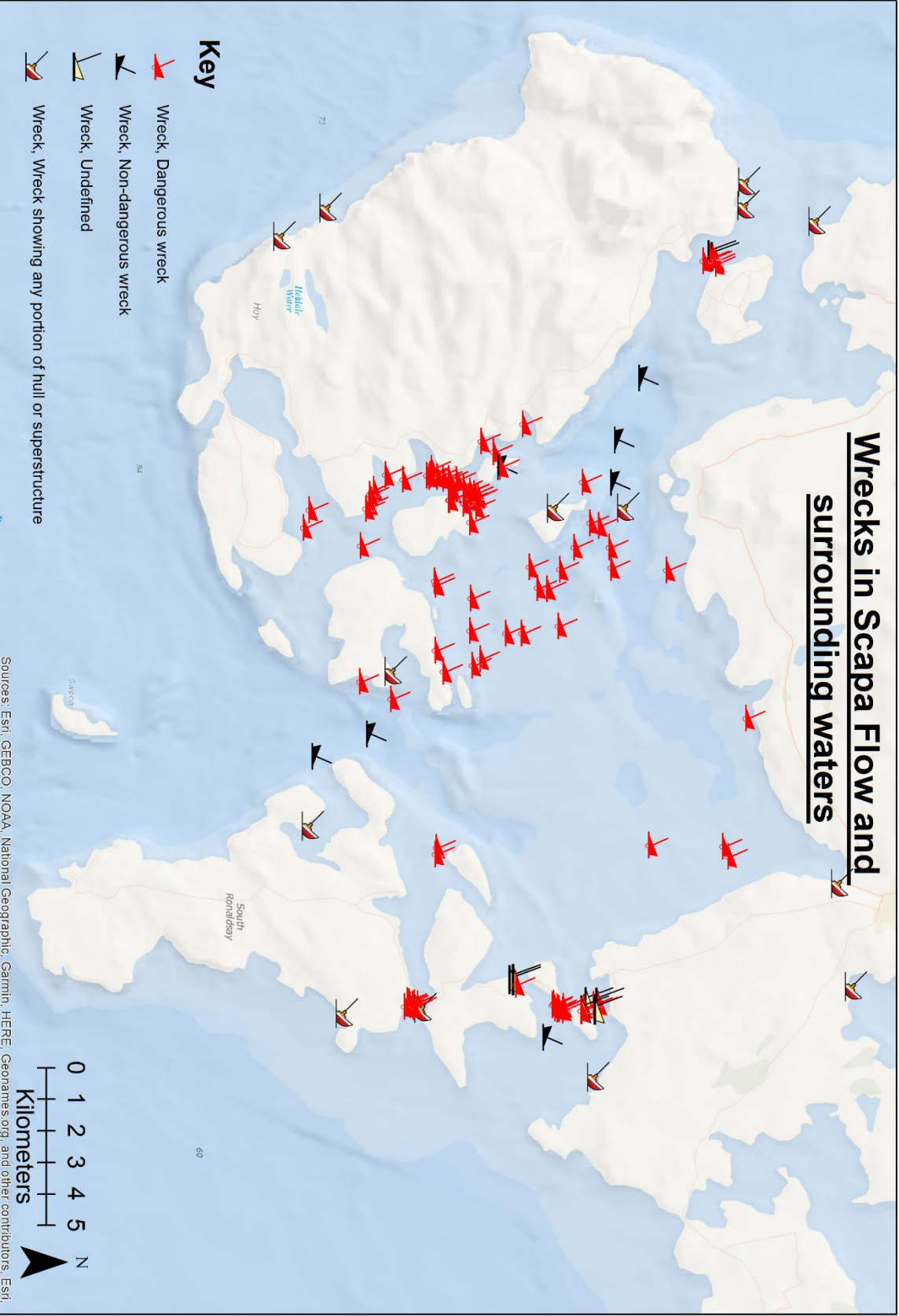
- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Grobust | 17. Bay of Skail | 11. Newark Bay | 7. Tresness |
| 2. Bay of Tafts | 18. Warebeth | 12. Glimps Holm | 8. Bay of Lopness |
| 3. Mussetter | 19. Waulkmill | 13. Rackwick | 9. Backaskail |
| 4. Rothiesholm | 20. Scapa | 14. Sands o'Wright | 10. South Bay Beach |
| 5. Aikerness | 21. Inganess | 15. Eastside | |
| 6. Brough of Birsay | 22. Dingieshowe | 16. St Catherine's Bav | |

Map E: Locations of beaches highlighted in the survey



Map F: Public toilet locations. For more information visit: <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/S/public-toilets.htm>

Wrecks in Scapa Flow and surrounding waters



Map G: Wrecks of Scapa Flow. These wrecks often act as tourist attractions, with the German High Seas Fleet in particular attracting much interest from divers. Many wrecks are also visible by snorkelling and coastal walking. More information on the Scapa Flow wrecks can be found at <http://www.scapaflowwrecks.com/>

Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, Garmin, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors. Esri.

This project will be updated on a rolling basis. If you would like to contribute further information to any of the maps, or would like to suggest other maps for inclusion, then please contact Orkney Islands Council's Marine Planning team at marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk.

Section 4, focusing on facilities, will be added to this document in due course.