

# Appendix 5.3 Coastal Character Areas

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# Appendix 5.3 Coastal Character Areas

## ***Introduction***

The Shetland Coastal Character Assessment (CCA) was prepared by the NAFC Marine Centre (NAFC) in 2016 with guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), as part of the development of the Shetland Island's Marine Spatial Plan.

It provides information about the various coastal character types (CCTs) found around Shetland, the experiences the coast currently offers to local people and visitors, and identifies sensitivity to development.

The report identifies and maps different coastal character types, describes the key features and character of each area and identifies any areas around the coast which are considered to be sensitive to onshore and/or offshore development. The report was developed so that it relates to the Shetland Landscape Character Assessment which was prepared by Gillespies in 1998.

The twenty two Coastal Character Areas (CCAs) which fall within the 40km study area are illustrated in Figure 5.1.3 Volume III and listed below:

- 3. Lunna Ness
- 6. West Linga
- 7. East Whalsay Coast
- 11. Skerries
- 12. Bluemull Sound
- 13. Burrafirth
- 14. Colgrave Sound
- 15. East Fetlar
- 16. East Unst
- 17. East Yell
- 18. Gloup-Breckon
- 19. Hermaness
- 20. Skaw
- 21. Whalefirth
- 22. Eshaness
- 23. Hillswick
- 24. North Roe Coast
- 25. Ronas
- 26. Sullom Voe
- 27. Yell Sound
- 34. Scalloway
- 39. Muckle Roe

## ***Coastal Character Areas within 20km***

As with the Landscape Character Areas, in undertaking the preliminary assessment and review of baseline material against the visibility mapping of the Proposed Development, and through subsequent fieldwork, it was considered that beyond a 20km radius, the Proposed Development would be seen as a relatively distant element and that there would be only a limited influence on the characteristics, defining features and/ or special qualities of the CCAs. Although there may be some effects on coastal character beyond a 20km radius from the site, these would not be significant and, in this regard, CCAs beyond 20km of the Proposed Development site have not been assessed further. CCAs within a 20km radius of the Proposed Development have been reviewed in detail, and provide an appropriate basis to describe the coastal character of the area surrounding the Proposed Development.

## ***Coastal Character Area Descriptions***

This section describes Coastal Character Areas that coincide with the 20km radius study area. The descriptions and the assessment of sensitivity of the Landscape Character Areas form the baseline to the assessment of effects on Landscape Character.

There are seven CCAs within the detailed study area all of which would potentially be affected to some degree by the Proposed Development, as identified through analysis of the ZTV plans.

**Table 1 - Landscape Character Areas within 20km Detailed Study Area**

<b>Landscape Character Area</b>
12 Bluemull Sound
14 Colgrave Sound
18 Gloup-Breckon
19 Hermaness
21 Whalefirth
24 North Roe Coast
27 Yell Sound

A description of each of the CCAs which will potentially be affected, explaining the main features, key characteristics and sensitivity of the coastal character area to development of the type proposed is provided in the baseline assessment tables below. The locations of the CCAs within the detailed 20km study area are shown on Figure 5.2.5, overlaid onto the combined Blade Tip and Hub Height ZTV mapping.

**Table 2 - Coastal Character Area 12: Bluemull Sound**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The Bluemull Sound Coastal Character Area is a narrow sound between Yell and Unst. Near the mouth of the sound the inter-island ferry runs between Gutcher and Belmont. There are some aquaculture sites located in the southern half of the sound and the first community marine turbine site in the world and is not far from Cullivoe.</p> <p>The landscape isn't particularly steep around the sound with cliffs found around Blue Mull to the north of the sound.</p> <p>To the south of the sound, Belmont House forms a striking feature set back from the coast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small bays and low rocky shore along both coasts</li> <li>• Heather clad low hills</li> <li>• Belmont House and Gardens</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	<p>Blue Mull Sound is a busy area with a variety of fishing and aquaculture vessels using Culli Voe, as well as the ferry running between Unst and Yell and out to Fetlar and the marine renewable developments.</p> <p>Much of the coast is low lying with cliffs mainly found at the entrances to the sound.</p> <p>Belmont House has a dominant setting in the Wick of Belmont and there are various remains related to the rich fishing history of the Shetland Islands.</p>
Overall Sensitivity	<p>There is quite a high intensity of marine activity in the Blue Mull Sound CCA already and thus the coast has <b>low</b> sensitivity.</p>

**Table 3 - Coastal Character Area 14: Colgrave Sound**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The Colgrave Sound Coastal Character Area (CCA) covers the area of water that sits between Yell, Unst and Fetlar. It runs from the Ness of Queyon up to the coast of Yell to Burra Ness; across to the Point of Burkwell, Unst; along coast to Mu Ness; across to Strandburgh Ness, Fetlar; along the coast to Rams Ness and back across to the Ness of Queyon.</p> <p>There are many aquaculture sites within the CCA making it busy for shipping and various types of fishing occur. The landscape around Colgrave CCA varies with a range of beaches, cliffs and low rocky shore.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Busy aquaculture area</li> <li>• Offshore islands</li> <li>• Nucleated settlements at the head of voes and wicks</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	<p>Most of the Colgrave CCA is quite low lying with stretches of cliffs mainly confined to Fetlar. Basta Voe, Mid Yell and Uyeasound are picturesque settlements with various interesting historic features relating to Shetland's rich maritime past.</p> <p>There are a variety of islands within the Colgrave CCA offering interest from much of the coast. Brough Lodge on Fetlar offers a particularly distinctive landmark and is currently being renovated.</p>
Overall Sensitivity	<p>There are a large number of aquaculture sites within the CCA with the area being less sensitive to offshore development. Onshore development is mainly restricted to nucleated settlements separated by remote undeveloped coast making it sensitive to development.</p>

**Table 4- Coastal Character Area 18: Gloop - Breckon**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The Gloop-Breckon Coastal Character Area follows the northern coast of Yell from Birrier to Migga Ness. There are a mixture of steep cliffs and small bays, divided by Gloop Voe on a north south axis. The Sands of Breckon have been awarded a seaside award. A memorial at Gloop marks the fishing disaster of 1881.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy beaches</li> <li>• Cliff top walk</li> <li>• Gloop Memorial</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	<p>The Gloop- Breckon CCA is separated by Gloop Voe. To the west of the voe, access is convoluted and the landscape has a more remote, wild and rugged feel. To the east the coast is settled, with easier access and a walking route connecting from Gloop to Breckon. The Sands of Breckon are a popular destination for residents and visitors.</p>
Overall Sensitivity	<p>With low levels of development on and offshore, and areas valued scenically, the Gloop-Breckon CCA is sensitive to large scale development.</p>

**Table 5 - Coastal Character Area 19: Hermaness**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The Hermaness Coastal Character Area CCA runs from Bluemull Sound to Herma Ness encompassing the exposed west coast of Unst. The coastline is remote with limited infrastructure or development. The landscape is mainly heather moorland ending abruptly in steep cliffs at the coast, interspersed with small wicks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cliff scenery</li> <li>• Important seabird habitat</li> <li>• Very low levels of development</li> <li>• Panoramic views across the northern coast of Yell</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	<p>The Hermaness CCA is not offshore development and onshore development is very limited. The coastal landscape is remote and wild.</p>
Overall Sensitivity	<p>The Hermaness CCA is of high sensitivity.</p>

**Table 6 - Coastal Character Area 21: Whalefirth**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The Whalefirth Coastal Character Area encompasses the north west coast of Yell between Fogla Lee to Birrier, including Whale Firth. The coastline is rugged with high cliffs along most of the coastline. There are frequent sea stacks and roack arches. Whale Firth by contrast is sheltered, long, narrow inlet. The area runs along the north eastern edge of Yell Sound and is busy area with shipping accessing Sullom Voe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Cliffs with erosional features</li> <li>• Panoramic views</li> <li>• Undeveloped</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	The coastline is undeveloped and remote. Panoramic views to Yell Sound are important. Strong contrast between the high open cliffs with Atlantic breakers and the narrow, sheltered Whale Firth.
Overall Sensitivity	The Whalefirth CCA is of high sensitivity.

**Table 7 - Coastal Character Area 24: North Roe**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The North Roe Coast Character Area follows the northern coastline of Mainland. The study area extends from the Isle of Uyea in the west to the Point of Fethaland in the east. Once a busy crofting and fishing area with a large fishing station at Fethaland, the coastline is quiet today. A Shetland access route runs between Uyea and Fethaland is now a popular walking route. There is a small cluster of settlement around Sand Voe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented Coast popular with walkers</li> <li>• Historically important sites</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	The scenery along the North Roe coast is spectacular and forms part of the Point of Fethaland NSA. The remote settlements, exhilarating coastline with caves, geos, stacks and skerries. Views to Yell.
Overall Sensitivity	The North Roe Coast CCA is of high sensitivity, forming part of the Point of Fethaland NSA.

**Table 8 - Coastal Character Area 27: Yell Sound**

Key Characteristics	
<p>The Yell Sound CCA extends between Northmavine, Delting and Yell, from the point of Fethaland (Northmavine) to Fogla-lee (Yell) to the North, Longa Tonga (Yell) around Orfasay and Samphrey to Mossbank (Delting) to the south-east and Skaw Taing (Delting) to Trumba (Gluss Isle).</p> <p>Yell Sound is busy with shipping traffic associated with Sullom Voe. The sound is included in the Sullom Voe harbour limits. Various other vessels use the sound including inter-island ferries, commercial fishing boats, scallop dredgers and creel boats. The sound is used recreational fishing, creeling, kayaking and sailing. There is a marina at Collafirth (Northmavine) and various piers and jetties throughout the CCA providing commercial and recreational access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large inter-island sound with a north- south orientation.</li> <li>• North end exposed with views to open water and Ramna Stacks, contrasting with the more enclosed southern extent.</li> <li>• The surrounding landscape is agricultural with industrial uses.</li> <li>• Ronas Hill is the central landscape feature.</li> </ul>	
Coastal Experience	<p>Yell Sound is a vast, over 4 miles wide from the Point of Fethaland (Northmavine) to Fogla-lee (Yell). The north is open to the power of the Atlantic sea with a rugged coastline contrasting with the shelter of the Sound. Within the Sound it feels more sheltered and enclosed. This seclusion is broken by the regular helicopters and planes landing and taking off at Scatsta airport and the passage of oil tankers through the Sound. Numerous navigational aids in the form of lights and buoys are visible across the Sound.</p>
Overall Sensitivity	<p>Yell Sound includes areas of undeveloped coastal landscape with a medium to high sensitivity, contrasting with lower sensitivity in the developed areas around Sullom Voe.</p>

## **References**

Gillespies. (1998). *SNH Commissioned Report: No. 93: A Landscape Assessment of the Shetland Islands*. SNH.

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