



Environmental Impact Assessment Report

# Swarclett Wind Farm

Technical Appendix 5-3: Special Landscape  
Area Citations

Swarclett Wind Energy Limited

**wind2**

June 2024



## Technical Appendix 5-3: Special Landscape Area Citations

### Introduction

This technical appendix sets out a summary description of Special Landscape Area 4, Dunnet Head, that coincides with the inner 20km study area and falls within areas of visibility to the Proposed Development.

### Special Landscape Area Citations

The locations of the SLAs and their relationship to the Proposed Development Site are illustrated in Figure 5-1-2 (Volume 3 of this EAI Report). The descriptions are taken from The Highland Council document, 'The Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas', 2011.

**Table 5-3-1: 4 - Dunnet Head**

4 - Dunnet Head
<b>Overview</b>
<p>This area includes the most northerly point on mainland Britain. The peninsula is characterised by its prominent headland, striking vertical cliffs and expanse of isolated moorland. Dunnet Head juts out into the Pentland Firth, so that experience at its northern tip is one of being more at sea than on land.</p> <p>To the south, settled farmland and a fine sandy beach and dune system provide a contrasting landscape experience. Clear weather allows impressive and extensive views over land and sea to Orkney, Strathy Point, Cape Wrath, Duncansby Head and the distinctive range of hills within the flow country, including the peaks of Morvern, Maiden Pap and Scaraben to the south.</p>
<b>Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A peninsula offering a spectacular panorama both seaward and inland to distant mountain peak.</li> <li>• The headland which is massive in scale and formed from Old Red Sandstone. In detail, the cliffs form a complex cracked, fissured and eroded profile, with prominent and distinctive horizontal strata clearly visible.</li> <li>• Reaching heights of up to 100m, the cliffs form an abrupt and sharply defined vertical edge to the coastline viewed against the open sea from distance. From distant viewpoints, these are seen to rise in stark contrast to the open sea while, from the cliff tops, the sense of exposure can be dramatic and, for some, intimidating.</li> <li>• Low vegetation clings to the cliff tops, ledges, and eroded faces and parts of the rocky shoreline. The rich green hues of algae growing on damp areas of the cliff faces provide further striations of contrast against the red sandstone rock face.</li> <li>• Sea birds including puffins frequent the cliff ledges and steep coastal grasslands. Together with the pounding spray and constant swell, the sounds and activity of these birds contribute to a dynamic experience.</li> <li>• Sweeping moorland, punctuated by lochans, hilltops and the remains of WWII defensive structures, forms a contrasting open interior to the peninsula, where remote qualities can be experienced within a short distance from the busier settled areas.</li> <li>• Elevated views from the peninsula reveal a pattern of pasture and arable fields to the south; these form a distinctive transition between the exposed headland and the settled agricultural lowlands to the south.</li> </ul>

#### 4 - Dunnet Head

##### Special Qualities

##### Panoramic Views from Prominent Headland and Striking Cliffs

- The prominent headland forms a striking large landmark at the northernmost point of the British mainland. High numbers of visitors travel along the single-track road to the viewpoint and lighthouse which occupies a commanding position and is itself a prominent feature in views from land and sea.
- Views to the sheer cliffs of distinctive, horizontally layered Old Red Sandstone are enlivened by the changing light and weather conditions, the crashing waves of the Pentland Firth and the presence of many species of nesting sea birds.
- Distinctive landform features also include ravines such as Red and Chapel Geos, crags and promontories such as The Neback and Easter Head, and by areas of rocky coast where the cliffs have slumped and eroded.
- In clear conditions expansive views are obtained from the cliff tops and from elevated positions, extending across the sea to Orkney, Cape Wrath, Strathy Point, Duncansby Head, and inland to the peaks of Caithness including Morvern, Maiden Pap and Scaraben. These views looking across flat terrain or a low seaward horizon, are so expansive that they can prompt strong emotional responses, including evoking an "edge of world" feeling.

##### Isolated Moorland and Lochans

- Inland from the sea cliffs the headland consist of an outlying area of moorland with scattered lochans, isolated from the landward moors by a farmed and settled coastal strip that extends across the neck of the peninsula.
- The moorland seems extensive, even though it is actually quite small in extent, as its edge are typically not seen from its interior, and there is a lack of comparable size indicators.

##### Contrasting Bay and Cliff Landscapes

- The sweeping curve of fine sandy beach and sheltered agricultural landscape at Dunnet Bay seems to form a secluded haven in sharp contrast to the elevated and dramatic headland which projects beyond.

##### Sensitivity to change

- Development could impinge on either the views towards the headland from the east and west or the expansive panorama seen from Dunnet Head itself.
- Development could disrupt the gentle curve of Dunnet Bay and disturb its qualities of seclusion.
- Large-scale structures on or near to the headland could compromise its perceived large scale and the seeming extensive character of the interior moorland in addition to the peninsula's distinctive landmark qualities.

##### Potential for landscape enhancement

- Reinstate areas of traditional Caithness flagstone 'fences' highlighting landscape pattern.
- Improve the appearance of the existing visitor facilities including car parking, fences and interpretation.