



Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Swarclett Wind Farm

Technical Appendix 5-4: Inventory Gardens
and Designed Landscapes

Swarclett Wind Energy Limited

wind2

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This technical appendix describes the Castle of Mey Inventoried Garden and Designed Landscape that coincides with the inner 20km radius Study Area for the Proposed Development. The description is based on information held on the Historic Scotland website.

The location of the Inventory Garden and its relationship to the Proposed Development Site are illustrated in Figure 5-1-2a (Volume 3).

Table 5-4-1: Castle of Mey

Castle of Mey
Location and Setting
<p>The Castle of Mey is situated on the north coast of Scotland approximately 5 miles (8km) west of John O'Groats, and 15 miles (24km) east of Thurso. The lands of Mey lie on the flat coastal plain of Caithness and are extremely exposed to the harsh climate and winds which blow off the Pentland Firth. The surrounding landscape is predominantly pasture land and there are few trees. Magnificent views can be gained west to Dunnet Head, the most northerly point of Scotland, and across the Pentland Firth to the Orkney islands. The Castle and its woodlands are significant from the A836 and other minor roads between it and the coast, particularly from the east. The flat nature of the surrounding landscape limits views of the policies which are enclosed within the woodlands to the south and the policy walls to the north.</p> <p>The Castle of Mey commands a magnificent position some 500 yards from the shore of the Pentland Firth. The designed landscape extends south to the lodge, west to the edge of the walled garden and the woodlands flanking the west drive, and east to Barrogill Mains farm. To the north, a road links the Castle with a road running west to the pier at Harrow, approximately 1km to the west of the Castle. To the south, a road runs due south from the lodge flanked by a beech/hawthorn hedge and a stone dyke to the A836. A shelterbelt has been established along the northern edge of the A836, but this is not part of the Castle of Mey property.</p> <p>The designed landscape includes some 100 acres (40.5ha) of parkland, 11.64 acres (4.7ha) of woodland, and 2.68 acres (1.08ha) of formal garden which includes 1.25 acres (.5ha) of walled gardens.</p>
Landscape Components
<p>Parkland</p> <p>The Parkland is situated to the south of the Castle, flanked by the woodlands and enclosed on the southern boundary by a road linking the lodge with Barrogill Mains Farm. This boundary also encloses the parkland to the south of the east drive.</p> <p>In the park directly south of house, two round clumps of trees, mainly sycamore and ash, are enclosed by fencing. There are many trees in the park next to the east drive. Both areas are grazed by the Queen Mother's renowned breeding herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle.</p> <p>Between the Castle and the stable-block to the north is an area of grassland which is important to the setting of the Castle from the Harbour approach. The mill-lade runs through this area, past the Home Farm and the stables, to flow into the sea due north of the Castle. It has been dammed in two places since 1952 and the two resulting ponds are separated by a race.</p>
<p>Woodland</p> <p>The woodlands lie to the south of the Castle. They are indicated on the 1st edition OS map of 1875 but it is difficult to tell the age of the existing trees as windblow has greatly stunted their growth. The shelterbelt along the edge of the A836 was replanted in 1939. Sycamore and ash are the dominant species but horse chestnut, copper beech and gean are being introduced into the more sheltered areas.</p> <p>The west drive approaches the Castle through the woodland. Reference to the 1st & 2nd edition OS maps indicates pathways through the woodlands. In spring, the floors of these woods are carpeted</p>

Castle of Mey

by daffodils, primroses, aconites and celandines.

The Gardens

Formal lawns lead up to the south front of the Castle. Crenelated walls, in a similar style to the Castle additions of the 1950s, flank the entrance to this area from the main drive. Cannons stand on the lawns.

Walled Gardens

There are two walled gardens adjacent to the Castle of Mey. The east walled garden is enclosed on the north and east sides. The 14th Earl of Caithness is thought to have been instrumental in its development. It contained as a central feature a reproduction of the Glasshouse of the 1851 Empire Exhibition. An article written in the early 1850s describes the glasshouse as being well stocked with purple cinerarias and red & white Camellias, with a vine growing over the inner walls. It was derelict by the 1950s and consequently removed. In its place now is a bed of Primulas. An herbaceous border runs along the south face of the wall next to the Castle and is separated from the former glasshouse site by a Fuchsia hedge.

The west walled garden is thought to be the older of the two. It is enclosed on all four sides by walls. It is thought that this was the area which William Lithgow described in 1628 as 'greenfaced gardens'. Another account of 1762 describes 'plenty of apples, strawberries and cherries prospering within its bounds despite the harsh climate'. Thus a garden has existed there for some time although the exact date of the walls is uncertain. The present garden is laid out in a series of eight compartments, as shown on the 2nd edition OS map of c.1910. The compartments are separated by hedges of Berberis, elder, privet and hawthorn. Within the compartments, thus divided for shelter, are grown vegetables, herbs, soft fruit and flowers. At the north end is a rose garden. Two small modern greenhouses are used for propagation and pot plants.

