



### Location and Context

The *Rocky Hills and Moorland* Landscape Character Type is principally found in the far north-west of Scotland, in a broad coastal band west of Bettyhill to Cape Wrath, and around the Kyle of Tongue and Loch Eriboll. A small area is also present on the western fringes of the *Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness & Sutherland* of Ben More Assynt, where it merges gradually with the similarly rocky but much more complex, and generally lower-lying, *Cnocan – Caithness & Sutherland* Landscape Character Type which lies adjacent to the *Lone Mountains* of Suilven, Canisp and Quinag. The areas comprise a number of well-defined hills generally below 500 metres and extensive lower-lying rocky moorland.

### Key Characteristics

- Rough landcover with an abundance of scattered rocks, boulders and rock outcrops.
- Many lochans sited within rocky-edged cavities contributing to the complexity of the rocky moorland.
- Pockets of broadleaf woodland and scrub accentuating the rough texture of the rocky moorland.
- Particularly distinctive rocky hills lying on the fringes of the Kyle of Tongue and at the head of Loch Eriboll.
- A number of often prominent rocky hills outcropping along the coast, increasing scenic diversity.
- Extensive moorland found in the Cape Wrath area with less exposed bedrock and some large areas of more gently undulating peatland.
- Currently largely uninhabited landscape, although abutting more settled coasts and loch shores.
- Numerous prehistoric and historic environment features, with concentrations around the straths and coasts.
- Highly visible from the coast road around north-west Sutherland.
- Provides the foreground to spectacular views over the coast and sea and also inland to the *Lone Mountains*.
- Feeling of containment and seclusion, increased by small knolls, dips and narrow valleys.

## Landscape Character Description

### *Landform*

The *Rocky Hills and Moorland* Landscape Character Type includes a number of well-defined hills generally lying below 500 metres high and also extensive swathes of lower-lying rocky moorland. The hills differ markedly from the smoother *Sweeping Moorland and Flows* and *Rounded Hills - Caithness and Sutherland* in their irregular form and the consistent presence of exposed rock including crags, boulders, areas of scree, and occasional sheer rock cliff faces against the coast. Outcrops of rock are particularly complex along the coast between Bettyhill and the Kyle of Tongue where numerous rocky knolls are present and where boulder-strewn ravines spill down to the shore. The lower-lying moorland is also patterned with crags and has a rough complex landform with many rocky knolls, dips, lochans and narrow craggy gorges. Many lochans occur within the rocky edged cavities which contribute to the complexity of the rocky moorland. While the terrain is generally less rocky in the Cape Wrath area, steep-sided hills patterned with scree and bare rock ridges, lie at the core of this area.

### *Landcover*

A number of rocky hills outcrop along the coast, contributing to the scenic diversity of high cliffs, islands and sandy beaches characteristic of north-west Sutherland. Coldbackie Hill, with its sheer north-facing rock face, Beinn Ceannabeinne and the solitary Ben Huldig are notably prominent. The rocky hills which lie on the fringes of the Kyle of Tongue and at the head of Loch Eriboll are particularly distinctive, contributing to the scenic views which focus on the *Lone Mountains* of Ben Hope and Ben Loyal and the *Rugged Mountain Massif* of Foinaven, the sea lochs and their diverse settled shores. The string of rocky hills between Ben Arnaboll and Cerag na Faolinn on the eastern side of Loch Eriboll are prominent in views from the A838. The steep-sided and craggy Garbh Chnoc and An Garbh Chnoc, with their extensively wooded lower slopes form the setting to Tongue and an integral part of the dramatic inner Kyle of Tongue.

### *Settlement*

The present landscape is largely uninhabited but abuts pockets of *Coastal Crofts and Small Farms* along more sheltered and fertile sections of coast and on loch shores. The intricate landform of dips, straths, glens and knolls give as strong sense of seclusion, even in areas lying close to roads and settlement. The area is very visible from the A638 coast road around north-west Sutherland.

The area includes a range of prehistoric and historic features. These include a number of prehistoric cairns, duns, brochs and settlement sites such as Dun Dornaigil broch near Ben Hope. At Tongue there is a medieval castle (Caisteal Bharraich) and Tongue House with its associated historic garden and designed landscape. Further west at Kinlochbervie is the historic marine protected area. This is also a concentration of archaeological sites at Inchnadamph, including a number of cairns, and the medieval Ardvreck Castle and Calda House which was built as the castle's successor.

### *Perception*

This landscape provides a distinctive backdrop to the kyles and sea lochs of north-west Sutherland, contributing to the rich scenic diversity of sea, coast and mountains. It also provides the foreground to spectacular views over the coast and sea, and inland to the *Lone Mountains*.



This is one of 390 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Caithness and Sutherland LCA (Stanton, C) published 1998; and Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Review (Carol Anderson Landscape Associates), published 2015.