

Appendix VI: Scree LMP Landscape Assessment

Introduction

The area around Scree Hill is characterised by enclosing uplands of granite hills which rise from the valley floor and coastline. The enclosed estuary is undulating and interspersed with small scale hills and islands merging with an indented and complex coastline.

The west side of Auchencairn Bay is enclosed by a sequence of forested and open hills; ranging from the upland hills of open moorland of Bengairn Hill and Scree Hill, to medium scale hills such as the wooded Potterland Hill and the open ground on Barhastry Hill and the lower smaller scale coastal edge and peninsula hills. These lower coastal hills create small scale diversity and a sequence of wooded/unwooded hills and knolls especially the long wooded ridgelines on the valley floor which protrude into Auchencairn Bay.

Scree hill rises steeply from the flat farmed landscape and is widely visible across the East Stewartry Coast and adjacent Solway Firth. The distinctive rugged granite hill has an open summit with rocky hummocks and scree with conifer plantation to the mid to lower slopes.

The land use pattern adjacent to the Forest blocks upper and mid slopes is of open moorland and rough grazing, conifer plantations and mixed woodland. To lower slopes and valley floor there is a smaller scale pattern of pasture, mixed woodland and scattered settlement. The Forest blocks of Scree, Potterland and The Doach are largely conifer plantation with some historic mixed woodland.

National Scenic Area – East Stewartry Coast

Map 11 shows the extent of the NSA.

Description from Scotland's Scenic Heritage 1978:

Westwards the hills become progressively more wooded in a way which strengthens the feeling of enclosure that they contribute to the inshore waters of Rough Firth, Orchardton Bay and Auchencairn Bay. Within the bays, divided by the wooded promontories of Almerness Point and Torr Point, lie Heston Island and Rough Island which strengthen the character of enclosed intimacy and shelter that these inlets exhibit. Around their shores the land use pattern of mixed farming and forestry and undulating relief underline this small scale intimacy of landscape, which contrasts well with the open character of the sand flats.

The Special Qualities of the East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area:

- A working landscape of great beauty
- A coastline of endless variety
- A landscape of woods, fields, dykes and hedges

- A sense of calm and enclosure at the heart of the NSA
- Both 'Scottish Riviera' and the 'Secret Coast'
- A dynamic coast contrasting with the static inland landscape
- The sense of the sea without seeing the sea
- A rich variety of texture, colour, light and scale
- The sound and sight of many birds
- Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area
- The use of locally distinctive stone
- A wide horizon of the Cumbrian Fells and the open sea

Relevant characteristics (SNH commissioned report 374, special qualities of the National Scenic Area P19-23) to consider for the Screel LMP are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Assessment of potential impact of Scree, Potterland and The Doach LMP on the relevant Special Qualities of the East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area

| Special Quality | Existing | How the special quality is maintained/affected |
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| <p>A working landscape of great beauty – This intimate area of farms and woods possesses an indented and complex coastline. The natural and cultural elements come together to create a gentle, working landscape of great beauty that has been a draw to visitors since Victorian times.</p> | <p>Scree provides a backdrop to the working landscape and contrast between farming and forestry land-use. Scree, Potterland and the Doach are an integral part to the mosaic pattern of land use within the NSA.</p> <p>PAWS located on the lower slopes, LEPO and sites that have been history of management for productive timber.</p> | <p>The design of the future forest seeks to retain the landscape values attributed to Scree, Potterland and The Doach. Whilst still producing high-quality timber products, these forests will be managed mostly under low impact silvicultural systems, maintaining a long history of forestry and woodland management in the area.</p> |
| <p>A landscape of woods, fields, dykes and hedges <i>It is a landscape of farmland and woodland whose appeal lies through the presence of many traditional agricultural features. A network of irregular fields stretch over rolling hills and knolls, bounded by dry-stone dykes, and many fields contain the distinctive Galloway cattle.</i></p> | <p>Are there any traditional field boundaries to consider? Dry stone dykes? Any tree lined boundaries to neighbouring fields?</p> <p>Footprints of Potterland Wood and the Doach largely the same as 1850. The field pattern at Glen of Scree remains as open pasture.</p> | <p>All dykes will be protected during operations. The future species along most boundary dykes will be non-productive native broadleaves to reduce future disturbance and develop habitat corridors along these agricultural features.</p> <p>Long-standing field patterns (both within and adjoining FLS land) continue to be an important part of the overall plan design, with management and species selection respecting this quality.</p> |
| <p>A rich variety of texture, colour, light and scale The land is varied and interesting, with many contrasts in form and texture. Smooth mudflat and merse are present, as are gently shelving beaches</p> | <p>Identify where is it important to have a variety of light and texture. Remember Scree is a backdrop to the bay as a whole and it may be better to focus diversity and texture in the smaller scale areas.</p> | <p>Where Scree, Potterland and The Doach form a backdrop to the coast and estuary the future forest design maintains a range of woodland cover types (e.g. native broadleaves, various rotation conifers, mixed continuous cover woodland) contributing to the large-scale landscape.</p> |

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| <p>and rolling farmland; also steep cliffs, rocky islands, gorse knolls and rough moorland. The variety of colour and light adds further beauty to the area. The sea and the firth continually change with the weather and tides, and the mosaic of houses, water, woodland, fields and hills results in a tapestry of different colours that changes with the season. There are changes of scale, views varying from a small intimate bay to a vast coastal seascape, from an enclosed field to a wide vista of coast and shore. Together, this variety of texture, colour, light and scale is aesthetically pleasing, and has drawn many visitors and artists over the years.</p> | <p>The interlocking views of woodland groups visible across Auchencairn Bay and Rough Firth give the impression of a wooded landscape with a range of woodland cover types. Pasture to the lower areas of the valley, closer views of Screel, Potterland and The Doach include improved pasture to the valley floor.</p> <p>Screel, Potterland and The Doach are important features and a backdrop enclosing the coast and estuary landscape. The forest blocks are visible in views around the bay and are part of the contrast between sinuous coastal mudflats, rocky shorelines and undulating wooded/pasture peninsulas. At this scale the forests are background features. VP04 demonstrates Screel, Potterland and the Doach forming an important backdrop in the context of small scale bays with sinuous rivers and coast lines, alternating medium scale hills and hummocks of mixed woodland and pasture and larger scale hills alternating between woodland cover and open moorland and further to the open expansive views of the Solways Firth.</p> <p>Just to note – the colour mentioned in the special qualities include the diversity between all land in the NSA. Shades of green, the contrast of BL and evergreen but also heather,</p> | <p>VP04 illustrates this with the predicted habitats and species in 2031 showing standard rotation Sitka Spruce over Mid Hill, merging downslope into continuous cover Douglas Fir, and beyond to native and mixed woodland around the Screel car park area and Potterland. The removal of the mature conifers along the upper planting edge of Screel, and replacement with a Scots Pine and native broadleaves fringe will soften this slope and highlight the hill profile.</p> <p>Careful consideration was given to the visitor experience during the plan design, both for those using the land for recreation and also for travelers passing close by on the public roads. VP01 shows how the future forest will develop into a varied structure up Screel Hill itself, with walkers experiencing different spaces and forest types as they ascend – from existing big trees and establishing native woodland around the car park, through areas of Douglas fir and Norway Spruce, and in to a Scots Pine and native broadleaved fringe, before emerging onto the open hill top.</p> <p>The diverse range of tree species, woodland types and silvicultural systems will all contribute to the 'texture, colour, light and scale' particularly in the smaller scale areas such as Doach and the eastern slopes of Screel.</p> |
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| | <p>moorland and coastal landscapes. Have a think about the contrast created within and adjacent to the forest blocks. You might want to create contrast, or a more subtle effect, different approaches can both be valid here. Just check with what is happening on neighboring land as well.</p> | |
| <p>Landmarks, contributing to the identity of the area There are several focal points which reinforce the identity of the area. These include Rough Island and Hestan Island, and the cultural landmarks of Orchardton Tower and the Mote of Mark.</p> | <p>The rocky upper slopes of Screel Hill and the rocky dome of Potterland are also distinctive landmarks.</p> | <p>Screel Hill will remain as open ground and continue to be a significant landmark in the landscape. Potterland Hill is becoming cloaked in natural regenerating trees and it is impractical to remove this. Indeed, it has been decided that there is merit in creating a large 'natural reserve' here to encourage natural processes in perpetuity for ecological value. The previous plan highlighted Potterland Hill to be kept open, but the new approach is not thought to compromise the landscape value significantly – much of the south eastern slopes are too steep for woodland establishment and will continue to remain as transient rocky open habitats.</p> <p>The proposed variety of 'openness' from Screel's open top, through Potterland Hill's semi open nature, and Doach's complete woodland cover fits well with a similar alternating pattern seen in the medium scale hills and hummocks of the area.</p> |

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| <p>A wide horizon of the Cumbrian Fells and the open sea</p> | <p>The view from the top of Screel Hill over the Rough Firth and south over the Solway and to Cumbria. The walk up Screel Hill is rewarded with these views and make it an important part of the visitor experience.</p> | <p>The visitor 'journey' up Screel Hill through different types of woodland will culminate in emerging from the trees into open ground at high elevation giving a 'wow' factor as the views towards Cumbria and the Solway unfold.</p> |
| <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the size and scale of new planting and make sure you're making a good landscape fit. • Consider the wider context and the change in scale of the forests when viewed from different areas. Retain larger scale simple coupe structure to upper slopes visible when viewed from a distance and smaller scale enclosing woodland structure when viewed from the adjacent valley floor. • Highlight rocky outcrops where possible, especially on Potterland and upper slopes of Screel. | | |

Regional Scenic Area (Local Landscape Area)

Screel, Potterland and The Doach sit within the Dumfries and Galloway Regional Scenic Area 'Solway Coast' (see **Map 11**).

A Technical Paper By Dumfries and Galloway Council (Dumfries and Galloway Council Local Development Plan 2 (to be adopted) Regional Scenic Areas Technical Paper (January 2018)) identifies the RSAs, gives a description for each and describes the extent of the RSA designation in the context Landscape Character. Below is an extract from the technical paper describing the Solway Coast RSA

*The area exhibits a diverse and attractive mixture of coastal landscape types. In the west the Peninsulas and Peninsulas with Gorse Knolls create rocky coastlines of cliffs, raised beaches and isolated coves, backed by smooth undulating open landscapes of improved pastures interspersed with knolly, gorse areas. These coastlines show similarities to the northern Rhins and the Machars RSAs, but are dissected by the major inlets of Kirkcudbright Bay, Auchencairn Bay and Rough Firth. The **Coastal Granite Uplands** of Criffel and Bengairn are characterised by steep sided, rocky granite hills with heather moorland, bracken and gorse on the higher and more rugged areas, contrasting with areas of smoother topography and improved pastures, plus considerable, **generally sympathetically designed forestry**. These uplands are dramatically juxtaposed with the flat, exposed landscapes of the Coastal Flats around the Nith estuary. These lowland landscapes include the gently undulating pasture and arable lands of the Coastal Plain, the more **intimate, wooded landscape** of the Coastal Parkland around New Abbey, plus the flat pastures, saltmarsh and mudflats of the Estuarine Flats and Merse along the shore. **Views across the Solway to the Cumbrian Mountains and the Isle of Man contribute to the scenic quality of this area.***

Relevant characteristics to consider for the Screel LMP are presented in **Table**

Table 2: Assessment of potential impact of Screel, Potterland and The Doach LMP on the relevant Special Qualities of the Solway Coast Local Landscape Area

| Special Quality | Existing | How the special quality is maintained/affected |
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| <p>The Coastal Granite Uplands of Criffel and Bengairn are characterised by steep sided, rocky granite hills with heather moorland, bracken and gorse on the higher and more rugged areas, contrasting with areas of smoother topography and improved pastures, plus considerable, generally sympathetically designed forestry.</p> | <p>The forested slopes of Potterland and the Doach (and adjacent Barhill wood) have been part of the working landscape for 150yrs+ (see 1850s OS maps) Screel lower slopes and footprint is also part of the working forested and landscape for 80+yrs. These forest boundaries that meet the regular pattern of improved pasture on the valley floor.</p> <p>Felling and recent restock of the coupes on the eastern flank of Screel combined with recent Larch felling has left Screel Hill looking very different and has left a large coupe 'hanging' on the upper slopes of Screel. How will replanting and forest design address these issues and how will the forest management change so that there is less chance of leaving bands isolated on the upper slopes or to reduce the impact of this in the future.</p> <p>There is a difference between the smooth large scale undulations of Mid Hill and adjacent large scale Screel Hill with rugged outcrops on the upper slopes. Mid Hill forest design is simple with larger scale coupes. There is a redesign of the upper margins Screel</p> | <p>The 'hanging' coupe on the eastern flank of Screel will be felled in one operation to avoid leaving incongruent parts (and to minimise access disruption to one event). It is envisaged that the coupe below will have established to >2m height by the planned fell date of 2027 (UPDATE: Storm Arwen caused extensive damage here and the coupe will now be cleared in 2023/24. 2m separation is unachievable). As there is no woodland above the 'hanging' coupe it is hoped that after its removal the overall appearance will only look like the upper woodland edge has been lowered. VP02 illustrates this nicely.</p> <p>To avoid a similar situation, the future forest design develops a permanent native woodland fringe at higher elevation moving down through mostly continuous cover conifers into areas of restored PAWS and other native broadleaf woodland.</p> <p>There is a difference between the smooth large scale undulations of Mid Hill and adjacent large scale Screel Hill with rugged outcrops on the upper slopes. Mid Hill forest design is simple with larger scale coupes.</p> |

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| | Hill especially in areas of rough topography. | |
| Uplands are dramatically juxtaposed with the flat, exposed landscapes of the Coastal Flats | How does the contrast between forested slopes, smaller scale farmed woodlands/fields and intricate coastline adjacent relate to the design of Scree?l? | VP04 from Auchencairn Bay shows the forest as a backdrop against coastal flats and shows the difference in landscape scale between where the forest meets the farmed landscape and the uplands. This dramatic contrast remains with the delivery of the new land management plan for Scree, Potterland and The Doach. |
| Views across the Solway to the Cumbrian Mountains and the Isle of Man contribute to the scenic quality of this area | The summit of Scree has expansive views across the Solway Firth and beyond. | There is no perceived risk to the existing panoramic views from the summit of Scree. |
| Conclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dramatic contrast of flat landscape vs forested hill slopes will remain. • Views to and from the Solway Firth will be unaffected. | | |

Landscape Character

Map 11 shows the extent of the Coastal Granite Uplands NatureScot Landscape Character Type relevant to Scree, Potterland and The Doach:

Coastal Granite Uplands LCT 179

This is a landscape of coast and hills and the contrast between coastal flats rising steeply in places to the rugged granite uplands. Variation within this LCT mix of improved pasture and small scale woodland to lower undulating area to rough pasture, heathland and larger scale forestry to the slopes and summits.

The key characteristics relevant to this section of Scree, Potterland and the Doach blocks are:

Key Characteristics

- Rugged granite hills, rising steeply from coast combined with rough, hummocky areas of 'till plain'.
- Gorse, rocky outcrops and boulders interspersed in field of rough grassland in rougher, rockier areas.
- Forested hill slopes, including Mabie and Dalbeattie Forests.
- Visitor facilities such as waymarked forest trails and picnic areas.

Relevant characteristics to consider for the Scree LMP are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Assessment of potential impact of Scree, Potterland and The Doach LMP on the relevant Key Characteristics of the Coastal Granite Uplands LCT 179

| Special Quality | Existing Contribution | How the special quality is maintained/affected |
|--|--|---|
| Rugged granite hills, rising steeply from coast combined with rough, hummocky areas of 'till plain'. | Large scale simple coupe design on upper slopes with local variations for rocky areas. Design for Potterland and The Doach reflect topography by ... | Scree's striking ridge line and the sudden 'protrusion' of Potterland Hill were considered in the future forest design to make sure coupe shape and size, and the management approach are appropriate. The use of low impact silvicultural systems on the lower slopes aims to retain permanent woodland cover, whilst the size of clearfell coupes reflects the local sense of scale. For example, coupe sizes around Mid Hill are relatively larger to those at lower elevations. |
| Gorse, rocky outcrops and boulders interspersed in field of rough grassland in rougher, rockier areas. | Are there any rocky outcrops and does the design change around any ones of significance? | Lowering the upper edge of productive conifers on Scree Hill and replacing with lower density woodland fringe will open up and frame more of the rocky topography, contributing to this landscape quality. |
| Forested hill slopes, including Mabie and Dalbeattie Forests. | Recognise the variation of landcover at both the lower levels and to the summits. The smaller scale more intimate landscapes around the valley floor to larger scale summits. Forested Hill slopes and summits are a key contribution to the existing landscape character. | VP03 demonstrates how Scree, Potterland and The Doach contribute significantly to the landscape character. Forested slopes and summits will remain with the slight exception of a lower woodland edge on the rocky front edge of Scree Hill. |

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| <p>Visitor facilities such as waymarked forest trails and picnic areas</p> | <p>This includes Screel hill path, unofficial links around Screel Hill, routes within Potterland and the Doach.</p> | <p>As one of the plan's main objectives, the visitor experience has been a main driver when considering design options.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the early clearance of larch (due to larch dieback disease) has left areas of unplanned open ground, which (when combined with mature unstable crops needing to be felled) presents a challenge for re-establishing woodland cover as quickly and sensitively as possible. However, it is hoped that the planned management interventions will successfully deliver the desired outcome.</p> <p>All formal and known popular informal trails are recorded and will be protected during operations. A variety of woodland types will be established along trails to create a diversity of experiences for visitors.</p> |
| <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowering of the tree line on Screel Hill will highlight any rocky outcrops here. • Visitor experience considered and remains a priority. | | |

Key Landscape Issues

Key Landscape issues to consider:

- Design of the eastern flank of Scree and management choice especially in the context of recent and proposed Larch felling.
- Block of Western Hemlock on the east side of Potterland, coupes should relate to form and scale of the landscape.
- Take account of the different scales of the forest. Viewed from the wider NSA area the forests provide a simple backdrop to a diverse lowlands. Viewed closer from nearby coastal plains and farmland, the forests sit within a medium scale pattern of layered and interlocking wooded hills. The forests also provide intimate small scale diverse experience for visitors to the forest.
- How does the change of mature conifers around the car park and PAWs area to Broadleaf woodland change character and views? Consider views in the context of species choice and management in the forest adjacent and above this area.