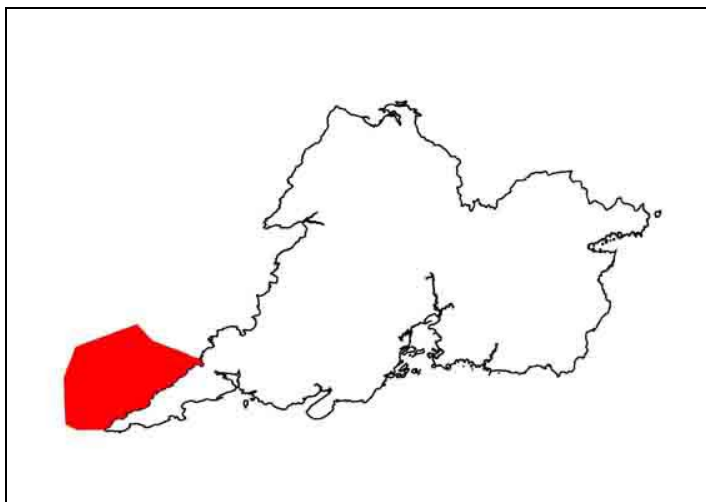


## *AREA 8: NORTH LOOP HEAD PENINSULA*



### *Key Characteristics*

- Coast becomes increasingly dramatic towards Loop Head with high vertical sea cliffs and stacks rising over 60 metres.
- A lighthouse is prominent on the headland.
- Extensive views to Kerry in south.
- Kilkee is a Blue Flag Beach and an established scuba diving site.
- Loop Head cycleway passes round the peninsula.
- Wind swept trees, scattered pebbles and boulders reflect the nature of the sea and prevailing westerly winds, which the landscape is exposed to.
- Fifteen shipwrecks are recorded in the waters off Kilkee.

*Typical Photograph: Loop Head*



*Landscape Character types and habitat types*

LCTs	HLTs	HLT codes	HT	HT codes
Peninsular Farmland	Coastal Intertidal	CI	Improved agricultural grassland	GA1
Coastal Plateau	Enclosed Land 3	EL3	Sea stacks and islets	CS2
	Enclosed Land 4	EL4	Sedimentary sea cliffs	CS3
	Rough Ground 2	RG2	Treelines	WL2
	Rough Ground 3	RG3	Blanket bog	PB2
			Exposed rocky shore	LR1

*Seascape Character Area Extent*

North Loop Head Peninsula extends from Loop Head at the most western tip of Clare to George’s Head less than a Kilometre from Kilkee on the west coast of Clare.

*Geology and Landform*

The folding of the rocks into synclines has created spectacular coastal forms such as The Bridges of Ross and sweeping slabs near Castle Point. The peninsula is largely flat with distinctive long low ridges and hills close to the coastline, e.g. Moveen Hill.

*Coastal Ecology*

The cliffs support a large number of breeding seabirds with a nationally important colony of Guillemots and a regionally important colony of Kittiwakes. Interesting maritime flora is also present above the cliffs.

In addition moorland and blanket bogs are visible to the east of this SCA.

Illaunoneraun Island, situated 500m offshore, 7km south west of Kilkee, is recognised as an important seabird colony. Since 1975 there have been sightings of Cormorants, Great Black Backed Gulls, Fulmars and Barnacle Geese on the Island.

#### *Historic Seascapes and Human Influence*

The area has remained largely remote and unspoilt and has avoided being altered by extensive new development or changes in agriculture, except for holiday home and caravan park developments at Kilkee. Settlement is more prominent on the southern fringe of the peninsula (SCA 9).

Flat peninsular farmland is the main landscape type within this SCA, with distinctive ladder fields (EL3) and linear hills along the coast (Rough Ground 2 and 3 c 700m wide band behind cliffs).

Promontory forts are a noted feature of the coastline, but south of Castle Point they occur within enclosed bays and have limited coastal intervisibility. However, ringforts on the coastal hills are highly intervisible and the ability to see several forts from one, when they are visited, adds to their visual amenity and tourist potential.

Castle Point, however, has views along the coast north to Donegal Point. The twin island forts of Gull Island and Dermot and Grania's Rock add character to the tip of Loop Head and are in exposed positions.

#### *Condition and sensitivity*

The area is in good condition and is increasingly intact as one travels west away from Kilkee. Traditional settlement patterns and the distinctive ladder fields remain largely unaffected by modern development and agricultural change.

Large-scale development would be very evident due to the flat open nature of the area with expansive skies. Traditional small-scale housing development of scattered white painted cottages could be accommodated. The area would be particularly vulnerable to pressures such as windfarms, masts etc

### *Forces for Change*

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- Expansion of Kilkee, i.e. new tourist and housing facilities
  - Insensitive housing development or sporadic housing along the peninsular
  - Windfarm, communication masts or any other form of vertical development
  - Damage to natural vegetation particularly above the cliffs due to agricultural intensification
  - Climatic change and coastal inundation
  - Upgrading of roads
  - Visual impacts of pleasure crafts and fishing vessels and potential sources of pollution (oil spills, wastewater) around Kilkee
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### *Principles for Seascape Management*

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- Careful planning and siting of new tourism facilities is needed to maintain the integrity of the largely unspoilt seascape
  - Careful screening, siting and design for any new developments particularly windfarms, is needed
  - Agricultural intensification should be controlled
  - Continuous monitoring of coastal waters to protect against pollution is warranted
  - Infrastructural developments including road widening along the coastline should consider local landscape character
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