

3.11 Loch Kirkaig to Lochinver

1. **Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology:** This section of coastline comprises of an exposed headland between Loch Kirkaig and Loch Inver (Kirkaig Point). The coastline is deeply indented by a series of steep sided bays and narrow inlets, characterised by high, rocky hillsides sloping down to narrow rock platforms, offshore reefs and islands. The predominant bedrock throughout the section is Lewisian gneiss seamed with dyke lines, which have eroded out to form valleys with deep inlets. There has only been limited development of coastal cliffs, but frequent rock exposures in the form of low angle, glaciated slabs frequently occur. This type of coastal environment has been termed a 'skerry' coast (Price 1991, 96) (Plate 1), and is typical of a drowned landscape with a resistant bedrock. Frequent cobble and boulder beaches are located in isolated coves and bays, particularly along the south shore of Loch Inver. An extensive foreshore of shingle and sand is exposed at the head of Loch Kirkaig, which has an estuarine character; otherwise fine to medium grade beach sediments are very rare throughout this section. There has been extensive storm beach development in the mouths of small valleys and coves, which probably act to funnel wave action. Isolated raised beach and alluvial deposits are situated at the head of Loch Kirkaig and adjacent to the mouth of the Culag River at Lochinver.

2. **Erosion Class:** This section of coastline has an essentially erosional character, comprising a rocky headland (Kirkaig Point) located in an exposed position at the mouth of Loch Inver, and a series of smaller headlands interspersed with enclosed bays along the south shore of the loch to the River Culag. The rate of regression is negligible and the active processes are probably dominated by sub-aerial weathering, rather than mechanical wave activity. The incidence of wave notch development is very slight, and the underlying form of the glacial landscape is largely unaltered. Fluvial deposition is occurring in the intertidal zone at the head of Loch Kirkaig and the mouth of the Culag River, which has been substantially modified by recently constructed harbour facilities. It is possible. There was no evidence of the coast edge actively prograding at these locations; however it is possible that the extensive shingle and sand banks in Loch Kirkaig represent a raised beach in the process of formation, though tidal and wave action are still eroding soft deposits around the edge of this loch (Plate 10). There is very little low lying land vulnerable to marine inundation in the event of a rise of sea level, with the exception of the mouths of the larger valleys and raised beach deposits at Lochinver and Inverkirkaig.

3. **Built Heritage and Archaeology:** The settlement pattern of the area is characterised by the 18th / 19th century crofting townships of Inverkirkaig, Badnaban, Strathan and fishing port of Lochinver, located in a series of parallel valleys draining into the sea along this section. In the case of Badnaban (NC 02 SE 19) and Strathan (NC 02 SE 18), the majority of the settlement is located inland and only two buildings (NC 2082 9211 & NC 2083 9213), a complex of weirs (NC 2078 9212), occasional boat nausts and field boundaries are located within the coastal zone. Various other 18th / 19th century buildings, associated boat nausts, field systems, enclosures, peat cuttings and lazy bed cultivation are distributed throughout the area, particularly along the north shore of Loch Kirkaig. The township of Inverkirkaig (NC 01 NE 2) has been substantially modified by 20th century developments, and comparatively few older structures are evident in the coastal zone. A 19th century midden has been exposed by wave action on the shore of the loch at Port na Bà (NC 2074 9198; Plate 10). A documented late 20th century shipwreck is approximately located between Kirkaig Point and Soyea Island (Baird 1996, 264-265).

One site of particular note is a possible standing stone near Kirkaig Point, comprising an erratic boulder propped into a vertical position and wedged by smaller stones. Otherwise no conclusive evidence of pre-18th century occupation was identified in the coastal zone, though Inverkirkaig is a very promising candidate for an early medieval settlement, given the clear Norse origin and meaning of the place name (ON *Kirk-* = Church, - *vik* = bay or haven). The precise location of this place is currently unknown.

3.11.1 Hinterland Geology and Coastal Geomorphology

1. INVERKIRKAIG

NC 207 919

1.7 km

Mainly shingle beach, with occasional rock platform

Low edge < 5m

Raised beach, with some Peat / soil over visible rock and alluvium

A raised beach and a narrow corridor of alluvial deposits are situated on north side of the River Kirkaig at the head of a long, narrow inlet (Loch Kirkaig). The head of the loch is surrounded by short grassy slopes, an artificial revetment wall and low angle rocky slopes. The extensive foreshore consists of shingle banks and occasional sand deposits.

2. LOCH KIRKAIG

NC 206 919

1.6 km

Mainly rock platform / boulder

Low edge < 5m

Peat / soil over visible rock

The north shore of Loch Kirkaig consists of short grassy slopes and cliffs situated below peat covered shelves and rocky hill slopes. The foreshore consists of narrow rock platforms with occasional boulder and cobble beaches in small inlets.

3. POLL NA CREIGE RUAIDHE

NC 206 920

1.6 km

Mainly rock platform / boulder

Low edge < 5m, with occasional cliffs (10m) and storm beaches

Peat / soil over visible rock

This exposed section consists of short grassy slopes and cliffs situated below peat covered shelves and rocky hill slopes, with storm beaches situated in the deepest inlets. The foreshore consists of narrow rock platforms with occasional boulder and cobble beaches in small coves.

4. KIRKAIG POINT

NC 206 921

1.2 km

Mainly rock platform / boulder

Low edge < 5m, with occasional cliffs(30m)

Peat / soil over visible rock

A headland at the south west edge of Loch Inver, encircled by steep, grassy slopes with frequent small rock outcrops and a narrow rock platform foreshore.

5. POLL NAN GOBHAR

NC 207 921

1.1 km

Mainly rock platform / boulder

Low edge < 5m, with occasional cliffs (< 30m)

Peat / soil over visible rock

This section consists of rocky slopes and low cliffs situated below peat shelves and rocky hill slopes. The foreshore consists of narrow rock platforms with occasional boulder and cobble beaches in small coves.

6. LOCH BAD NAM BAN

NC 207 921

0.2 km

Mainly cobble beach

Storm beach

Peat / soil over visible rock

An enclosed bay at the mouth of a minor valley (Allt an Mhuilinn), containing a small island connected to the mainland at low tide. The bay is backed by a storm beach, and enclosed by steep, wooded slopes. The foreshore is composed of a cobble beach with occasional rock platform exposures.

7. SGEIR BHUIDHE

NC 207 921

0.9 km

Mainly rock platform / boulder

Low edge < 5m

Peat / soil over visible rock

A small promontory on the south shore of Loch Inver, situated between two bays (Loch Bad nam Ban & Bàgh an t-Srathain). The coast edge consists of short grassy slopes below an undulating peat covered shelf with a narrow rock platform foreshore and occasional shingle or boulder beaches in isolated coves.

8. BÀGH AN T-SRATHAIN

NC 208 921

0.9 km

Mainly cobble beach

Mainly low edge < 5m with storm beaches and man made barriers

Peat / soil over visible rock

An enclosed bay at the mouth of a minor valley (Allt an t-Srathain), containing a small island connected to the mainland at low tide. The bay is ringed by storm beaches, steep, rocky slopes, and a man-made revetment around a recently constructed chalet park. The foreshore is composed of a cobble beach with occasional rock platform exposures.

9. RUBHA NAM FIADHAG

NC 208 921

2.3 km

Mainly rock platform / boulder

Mainly low edge < 5m, with occasional cliffs (< 40m), storm beaches and disturbed edge

Peat / soil over visible rock

A wide bay situated on the south shore of Loch Inver near the head of the loch. This section is, indented with smaller bays, and the coast edge consists of steep, wooded slopes and small cliffs with a rock platform foreshore, and occasional shingle or boulder beaches in coves. The northern part of the section has been disturbed by quarrying at the edge of Lochinver harbour.

10. LOCHINVER

NC 209 922

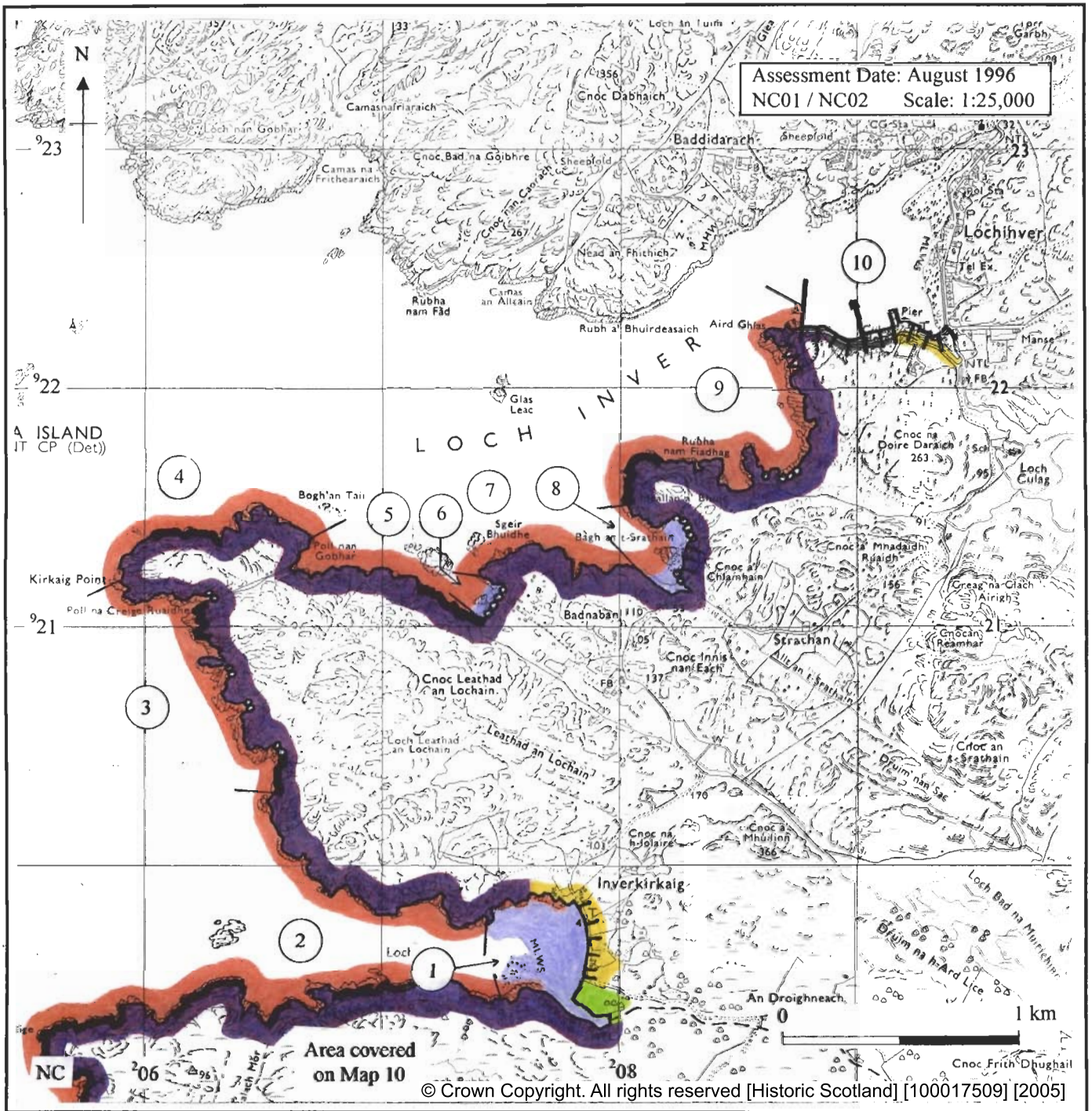
0.7 km

No foreshore

Man made barrier

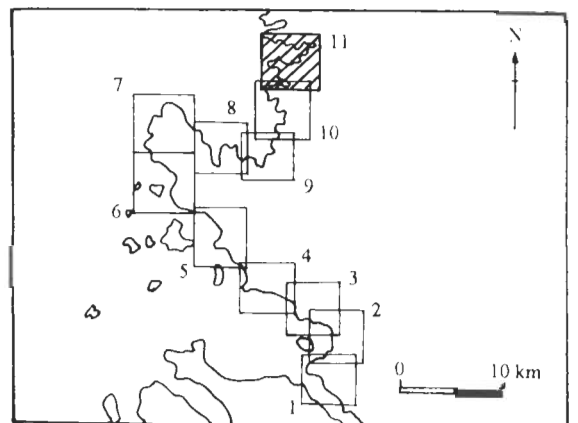
Raised beach and Peat / soil over visible rock

The south shore of Loch Inver at the head of the loch west of, and including the tidal mouth of the Culag River. This section has recently been developed as a major extension to Lochinver harbour complex. The harbour consists of three piers, a massive harbour wall, asphalt surfaces and sheds. A series of quarries contribute to the shoreline disturbance.



Key:

Hinterland Geology	
Peat / soil over visible bedrock	[Blue box]
Raised beach and marine deposits	[Yellow box]
Blown sand	[Orange box]
Alluvial deposits	[Green box]
Coast Edge	
Low edge (<5m)	[White box with thin black lines]
Cliff (>5m)	[White box with thick black lines]
Man made barrier	[White box with vertical black lines]
Storm beach	[White box with wavy black lines]
Human disturbance	[White box with zigzag black lines]
Coastal Geomorphology	
Mainly rock platform/boulders	[Red box]
Mainly shingle/cobbles/boulders	[Purple box]
Mainly sand	[Light blue box]
Marsh	[Green box]



3.11.2 Erosion Class

1. INVERKIRKAIG

NC 207 919

1.7 km

Both accreting and eroding

An extensive area of intertidal shingle and mud banks exposed at the head of Loch Kirkaig. Though it is clear that considerable fluvial deposition is occurring below HWM, there is little evidence of the coast edge actively prograding. Tidal and wave action is eroding soft deposits around the edge of the loch, exposing 19th century midden deposits (NC 2074 9198).

2. KIRKAIG POINT

NC 205 921

5.5 km

Eroding or stable

An exposed headland defining the southern side of the entrance to a major inlet (Loch Inver). This section is characterised by low cliffs and cobble or boulder filled inlets occasionally containing small storm beaches. The rate of regression is probably very slow.

3. LOCH BAD NAM BAN

NC 207 921

0.2 km

Stable

A sheltered bay on the south side of Loch Inver containing a pebble foreshore and storm beach. There are no current indications of either active erosion or accretion.

4. SGEIR BHUIDHE

NC 207 921

0.9 km

Eroding or stable

A broad headland on the south side of Loch Inver, featuring short cliffs, rock platforms and occasional narrow inlets. The rate of regression is probably very slow.

5. BÀGH AN T-SRATHAIN

NC 208 921

0.7 km

Stable

A sheltered bay on the south side of Loch Inver containing a pebble foreshore and storm beach. There are no current indications of either active erosion or accretion.

6. RUBHA NAM FIADHAG

NC 208 921

2.5 km

Eroding or stable

A sheltered section of coast consisting of small bays and headlands on the south side of Loch Inver, featuring short cliffs, rock platforms and boulder filled coves containing small storm beaches. A series of large quarries have been recently opened at the northern end of the section adjacent to Lochinver harbour, which have substantially modified this section. Otherwise the rate of regression is probably very slow.

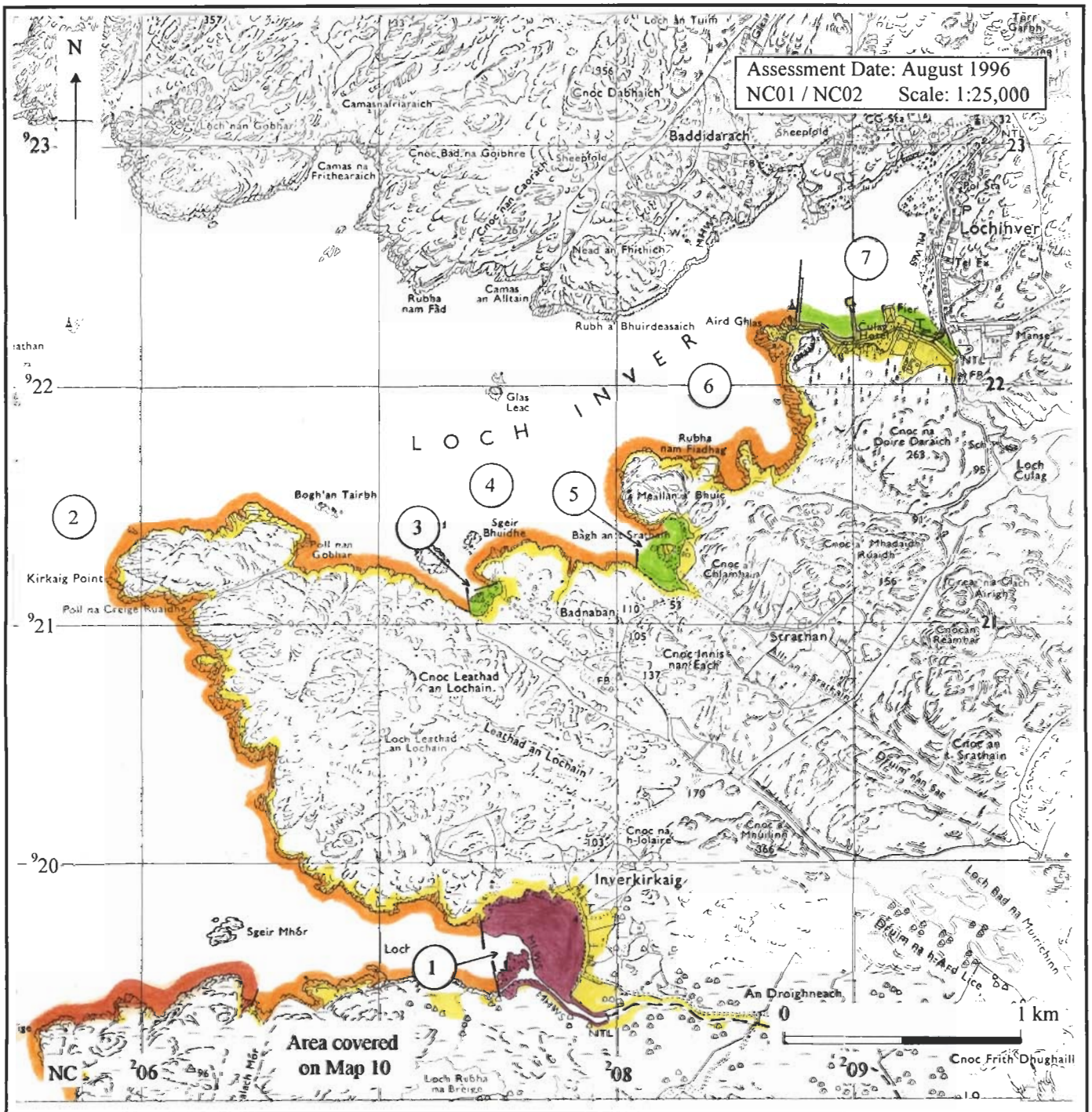
7. LOCHINVER

NC 209 922

0.7 km

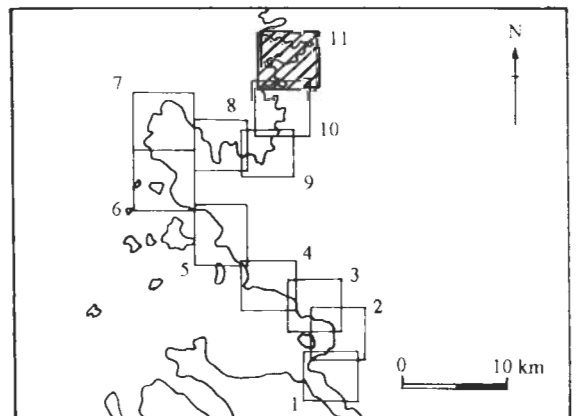
Stable

Lochinver harbour has recently been extended and modernised with the construction of substantial piers and a harbour wall. These facilities have created a stable marine environment, which may lead to harbour siltation.



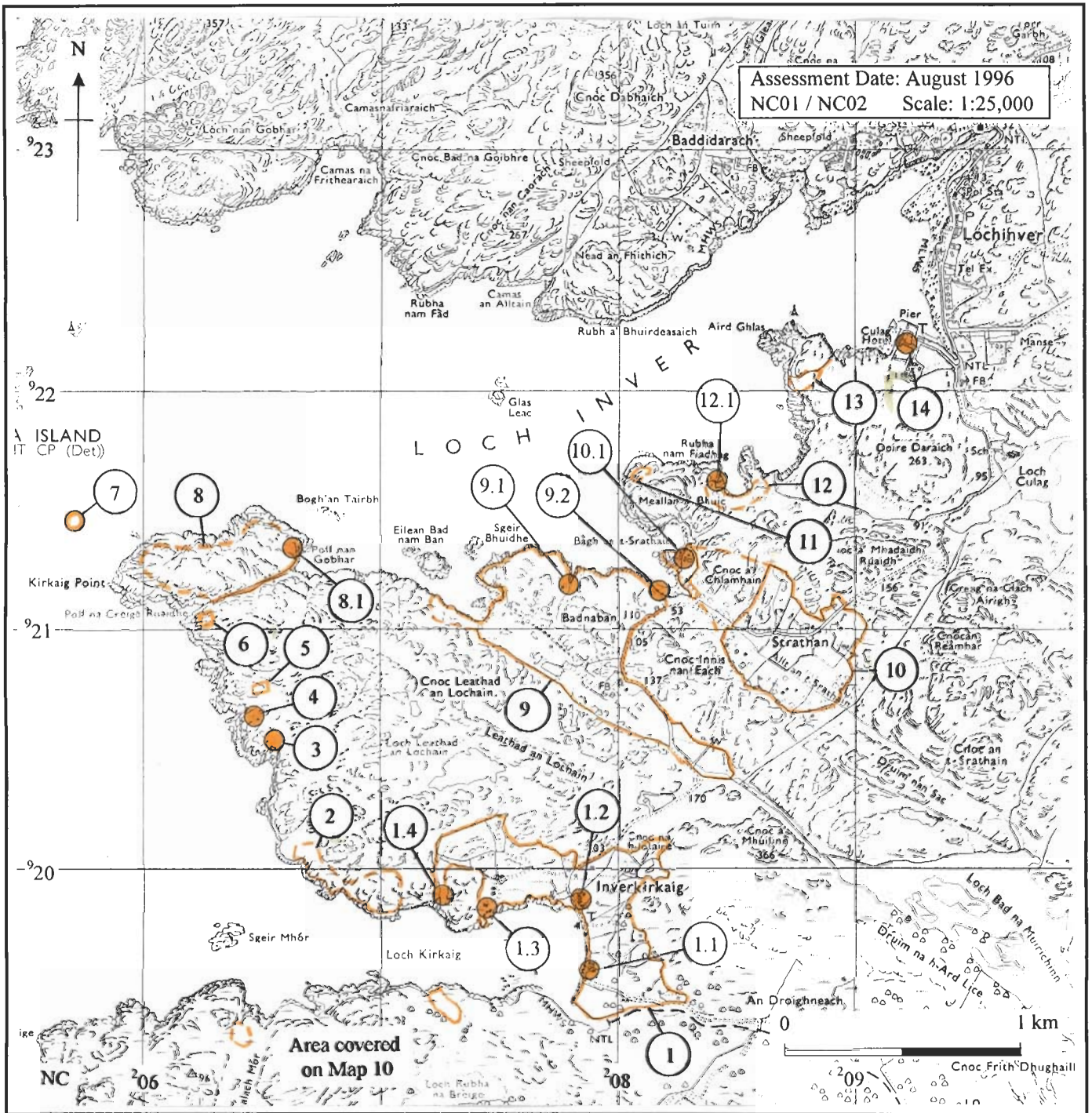
Key:

Erosion Class	
Definitely accreting	
Accreting or stable	
Stable	
Eroding or stable	
Definitely eroding	
Both accreting and eroding	
Land below 10m	



3.11.3 Built Heritage and Archaeology

1. INVERKIRKAIG Township, field systems, boat nausts (?), cultivation NC 01 NE 2	19th - 20th Century Fair Nil	10. STRATHAN Township, field systems, cultivation, peat cuttings NC 02 SE 18
1.1 Building complex (occupied), boat naust (?) NC 2079 9196	6. POLL NA CREIGE RU AidHE Cultivation NC 2063 9210	10.1 Buildings (occupied) NC 2083 9213
1.2 Building complex (occupied) NC 2078 9199	16th - 19th Century Fair Nil	16th - 20th Century Fair Nil
1.3 Building (occupied), boat naust, enclosures, historic midden NC 2074 9198	7. "LOCH ERISORT" Shipwreck Decca lat. 5808.20 N, Decca long. 0518.00 W 1981 Not inspected Nil	11. MEALLAN A' BHUIC Peat cuttings NC 2081 9217 19th - 20th Century Fair Nil
1.4 Enclosures, track NC 2073 9199 16th - 20th Century Fair / poor Monitor	8. KIRKAIG POINT Enclosed peninsula, building, peat cuttings NC 2061 9213	12. RUBHA NAM FIADHAG Fishing complex, field systems NC 2086 9216
2. LOCH KIRKAIG Cultivation, peat cuttings NC 2068 9199 16th - 20th Century Fair Nil	8.1 Building, quarry (?) NC 2067 9213 18th - 20th Century Fair Nil	12.1 Structure, boat nausts, slipway NC 2084 9216 19th - 20th Century Fair Nil
3. LOCH KIRKAIG Enclosure NC 2065 9205 19th - 20th Century Fair Nil	9. BADNABAN Township, field systems, cultivation, weirs, boat naust (?), slipway, trackway NC 02 SE 19	13. AIRD GHLAS Enclosed peninsula NC 2090 9222 19th - 20th Century Poor Nil
4. LOCH KIRKAIG Standing stone (?) NC 2065 9206 Pre-modern Fair Nil	9.1 Weirs NC 2078 9212	14. CULAG HOTEL Building complex, gardens NC 02 SE 3 18th - 20th Century Fair / poor Nil
5. LOCH KIRKAIG Peat cuttings NC 2065 9207	9.2 Building (occupied), boat naust (?), slipway NC 2082 9211 16th - 20th Century Fair Nil	



Key:

<i>Protected Ancient Monument</i>	
<i>Listed Historic Building</i>	
<i>Other known Ancient Monument</i>	
<i>Undesignated wreck</i>	
<i>Site complex</i>	
<i>Undetermined boundary</i>	

