
NWHG Ref. 006 — Faraid Head

Location, grid reference and photograph

The Faraidh Head forms a narrow 3 km-long peninsula to the north-west of Durness on the north coast, Grid Ref. [NC 378 715]–[NC 406 687].

(Figure 11) Cliffs with east-dipping Moine mylonites of the Moine thrust zone, Balnakeil Bay beach, Faraid Head Peninsula. BGS Photo P 524858 — M Krabbendam.

GCR site reference, block, volume and notified feature of SSSI?

GCR Ref. 1310, Moine Block, Vol. 34. Notified feature of Durness SSSI.

Description and geological significance

Representative of mylonitic rocks from the uppermost part of the Moine Thrust Belt and the lowermost part of the Moine thrust Sheet, including the 'Oystershell Rock'. Exceptional example of a klippe of the Moine Thrust Sheet. The site is internationally important as one of the first localities where the kilometre-scale displacement of a major thrust sheet was recognised.

Accessibility

The site is not accessible by car, requiring a 3 km walk from the nearest car park at Balnakeil across Balnakeil beach and the undulating sand dunes at Faraid Head. No all abilities access.

Conservation

Low conservation requirement due to scale and location of site.

Visibility and “clarity”

Most of the Faraid Head peninsula is covered by sand dunes whereas the perimeter coastline comprises rocky cliffs with good exposures. Visibility is therefore not good until the coastal exposures along the north shore are reached.

Interpretation and interpretation potential

The site is visited by geology students and researchers because of the Earth Science interest whereas visitors from the general public come mainly because of the birdlife. The important geological features require to be interpreted by a specialist for the lay- public. There is currently no interpretation panel at the coastal cliffs or back at the car park at Balnakeil. Due to the popularity of this area, however, a new interpretation panel could be erected at the car park, outlining the significance of the area in general terms. The site could be incorporated within a general walk and should be included in a future Geopark guide. An important educational resource for geology students and researchers.

Key references

HOLDSWORTH, R.E., ALSOP, G.I. & STRACHAN, R.A. 2007. Tectonic stratigraphy and structural continuity of the northernmost Moine thrust zone and Moine Nappe, Scottish Caledonides. In Ries, A. C., Butler, R. W. H. & Graham, R. H. (eds) Deformation of the continental crust; the legacy of Mike Coward. Geological Society Special Publications, 272,

HOLDSWORTH, R.E. 2009. Faraid Head. In Mendum, J. R., Barber, A. J., Butler, R. W. H., Flinn, D., Goodenough, K. M., Krabbendam, M., Park, R. G. & Stewart, A. D. (eds) Lewisian, Torridonian and Moine rocks of Scotland. Geological Conservation Review Series, 34, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, 253–257.



(Figure 11) Cliffs with east-dipping Moine mylonites of the Moine thrust zone, , Balnakeil Bay beach, Faraid Head Peninsula. BGS Photo P 524858 - M Krabbendam.