The Rosses Knock & Lochan Islands & Coast Landscape Character Area has a long indented shoreline and the offshore islands of: Inishfree Lower, Owey, Cruit, Inishkeeragh, Rutland, Inishfree Upper and Donegal’s largest inhabited island, Arranmore. The mainland area has a distinctive ‘knock and Lochan’ landscape, and is known locally as ‘The Rosses’. An undulating glacial landscape of bog covered hills and eroded hollows containing small lakes with distinctive rock outcrops, contained and framed by the Derryveagh Mountains to the east. This predominantly bog landscape is interrupted by isolated occurrences of more fertile landscapes dotted near lakes, along rivers and along the coastline, and also by geometric areas of planted forestry.

A low rocky coastal edge extends to sea in parts and is interspersed with soft sandy beaches and large tidal estuaries at Carrickfinn, Kincasslough, Cruit Island, Travenagh Bay and south of Lettermacaward extending into Gweebarra Bay. Excellent connectivity to, from and within this area including Carrickfin Airport and Burtonport harbour, the N56 that bisects the area from north to south, the R259 and R252 that follow the line of the coast in the north of this area connecting to a network of county roads.

**Landscape Character types**
Seascape Character Units

Map/list Seascape units

Seascape Unit 10 is located on the very northern section of the Landscape Character Area overlapping considerably with Seascape Unit 11, Dungloe and Islands, and Seascape Unit 12, Gweebarra Bay.

**Key characteristics uses:** Heavily indented coastal edge to a low-lying glacially scoured landscape of peat and rocky hills, eroded hollows and small lakes and a multitude of off shore islands. Principle uses are fishing, tourism, marine leisure, marine industry, agriculture, quarries and turf cutting.

**Coastal edge:** Indented coast of bays and islands formed by rocky outcrops and stony edges divided by estuaries and intertidal mud flats. Significant dune systems on some of the islands, including Cruit and at Maghery.

**Visibility:** There is good visibility in this area with uninterrupted views to and from the sea and islands.

**Special features significant buildings, landmarks, biodiversity and cultural features:** Off shore islands, intertidal area, fish farm industry, lagoons, light houses, Blue flag beach at Nairn, main port of Burtonport with ferry service, reef communities, lakes, shipwrecks, cultural connection to Scotland.

Landscape Characteristics

**Land Form and Land Cover**

- Underlying geology of granite with small localised quartzite and limestone areas on the southern coast.
- Undulating bog and lake landscape unique to this area sloping east from the Derryveagh Mountain Range to the north.
- Patches of fertile areas within the bog, around lakes and rivers and along the coast.
- Physically and visually strong connection with the offshore islands. The islands are close to the mainland and separated by channels through the wide estuaries set amongst an indented coast. The islands are a continuum of the mainland landcover strengthening the homogeneity of this landscape Character area.
- Arannmore island is the largest inhabited island in County Donegal with a permanent population of 514 recorded in the 2011 census, that rises significantly during the summer months. Most of the population live along the south and east coast, clustered along the county road network and also around the main settlement Leabgarrow. The Island has a quartzite bedrock, with higher peat covered uplands and mountain lakes in the northeast and centre and lower pasture lands along the west, south and east coasts.
- Owey Island has a hard granite bedrock exposed around the coast and most of the north of the island. The island was last inhabited full time in the 1970s and now has a small seasonal population located on the south of the island.
- Inishfree lower is an uninhabited low flat island with a rocky coast.
- Cruit Island is an inhabited island with a granite bedrock connected to the mainland by a bridge at its southern end; the island has a scattering of single rural dwellings, and a golf course covering most of the north.
- Rutland island is flat granite island covered in sand dunes with long beaches along the west coast and a rocky coastline along the east. In the 1700s the island had a street with school, post office, homes and businesses and a fish processing plant.
The population gradually fell and the island was last inhabited full-time in the 1960s although a few seasonal holiday homes remain in use. Inishcoo island north form Rutland across narrow channel has the same landscape type and is closely visually related, part of a chain of other small islands between Aran Island and the mainland.

- **Inishkeeragh** is a flat grassy island just south of Aran with a distinctive rectilinear field pattern surrounded by stone walls. The remains of a terrace of buildings are located along the northern shore, where the last residents of the island lived before moving to the mainland in the 1950s. The island has a seasonal tourist use.
- **Inishfree upper and Inishmeane**, in common with the other islands have a granite bedrock, relatively flat, poor ground and a number of abandoned cottages. There is one remaining permanent resident on Inishfree upper, and a number of holiday homes in seasonal use.

### Settlements

- **Burtonport**: Burtonport is a fishing village, active port and harbour and one time terminus of the Londonderry and Lough Swilly railway line. Functioning as a service, community and civic centre for the surrounding hinterland and an employment centre for the marine industry. Key landmarks include the Coast guard station, port buildings and the Arranmore Ferry terminal.
  - **Dungloe**: Dungloe is strategically positioned in the north-western sub region of the county functioning as a key service centre to the surrounding area. The town has a strong number, range and level of services and facilities concentrated primarily along Main Street. In addition, the town provides for higher level activities including Dungloe Community Hospital, Garda Station, Donegal County Council Public Service Centre and secondary level education, demonstrating the role of the town as serving not only its own population but that of the rural towns and surrounding countryside. The settlement can be identified as a strategic support town which serves as a key service centre for the North West of the county. It is the largest town in the Gaeltacht region and also provides focus for the strong local tourism industry owing to location and distinctive character. Historically, the town had a traditional linear form, and today the town has a clear core and structure.
  - **Kincasslagh, Lettermacaward and Maghery** are small rural clusters of development that act as local service foci for their rural environs.

### History, Culture and Heritage

- Sparse scattering of archaeological structures and sites mainly located on peninsula heads, including a number of Recorded Monuments.
- This Gaeltacht area is colloquially known as ‘The Rosses’ with a unique and strong Gaeltacht culture.
• Londonderry and Lough Swilly railway connected Burtonport with Crolly and the east of the County 1903 until 1940.
• Strong, unique island heritage and culture.
• Important vernacular and imposed built heritage including 6 RPS structures.
• Historic Landscape characterisation identifies patchworks of ‘sinuous-bounded and irregular fields’ surrounding nucleated settlements and surrounded by ‘open lowland commonage’ and/or ‘semi-open rough ground’ at Maghery and Crohy, that have all the hallmarks of an evolved landscape of some antiquity, with field boundaries that developed around settlements, rather than imposed, and common “outfield” extensive grazing.

Access and Recreation
• Close visual connection to the islands with Burtonport providing a ferry access to Arranmore Island and Tory.
• Strong Tourism and leisure industry focused on the landscape, seascape, islands and in particular the Irish language and culture of the Gaeltacht.
• Wild Atlantic Way runs along the coast and has three discovery points at Carrickfinn, Burtonport harbour and Inishfree Upper Island.
• Hill walking and hiking are popular outdoor pursuits in this area.
• Cruit Island Golf Club.
• Fly Fishing and sea fishing within this area.

Biodiversity
• Ecologically important landscape containing 7,649ha of Natura 2000 sites (SAC & SPA) and 5,858ha of pNHA sites along the coastline as well as the important biodiversity links of the riverine corridors.
• Islands are especially important ornithologically.
• Small intermittent patches of fields with mainly stone field boundaries.
• Geometric conifer plantations on bogland within the east.

Forces for change
• Linear development along the rural road network.
• Tourism related holiday home developments particularly along the coast and on the offshore islands.
• Potential for further development of sailing and water based tourism activities.
• Afforestation on higher ground within the east of the landscape unit.
• Telecommunications and infrastructural development.
• Coastal erosion.
• Balanced development of Gaeltacht.