

## National Scenic Areas

Explore the beautiful East Stewartry Coast, and experience its diverse scenery and wonderful rocky coast.

From rugged hilltops to ancient hill forts, from sea cliffs to sand dunes, and from butterflies to barnacles – there is lots to discover and enjoy!

The area, recognised as one of the most scenic parts of Scotland, has some superb views like this one from the old ruins near Gutcher's Isle, a viewpoint on the Sandyhills to Rockcliffe coastal path.

The intricate coastline of secluded bays, wooded promontories and rocky headlands is loved by locals and visitors alike, and has inspired many writers and painters. We hope it will inspire you to come and enjoy it too!



## East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area

Trees line the course of the River Urr as it meanders across the patchwork of fields on its way out to Rough Firth. Its channel cuts through the merse (saltmarsh) and mudflats of the estuary, before joining the Solway Firth.

The ebb tide slowly uncovers the sandy bays and reveals the causeway to Rough Island, a sanctuary for birds.

Outcrops of granite on the surrounding hills, dramatic cliffs with their colonies of cormorants, and the contorted, rippling layers of coastal rock tell the story of how this landscape was shaped.

The stone dykes that divide and pattern the farmland reflect many thousands of years of human activity, and farming continues to shape the landscape today.

Picturesque villages remind us of the shipping trade now long past. Traditional methods of fishing, like the tidal stake nets and tramping of flounders in the tidal creeks are, however, still practised today.



## Gutcher's Isle Viewpoint

Screel Hill, with its granite summit and carpet of heather, dominates the western edge of the National Scenic Area. Forests cover the slopes of the hills enclosing the coast and ancient oak woods clothe the sea cliffs at Southwick.

The views across the Solway to the Lake District and the Isle of Man were important for the occupants of the Iron Age promontory forts at Castle Point and Mote of Mark, once the centre of the ancient kingdom of Reghed.

The isolated ruins overlooking Gutcher's Isle no doubt played their part in the smuggling trade during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Small bays and secret caves provided excellent hiding places for smuggled goods. Salt, tobacco and spirits were landed along the coast en route from the Isle of Man, and then distributed by pack horse.

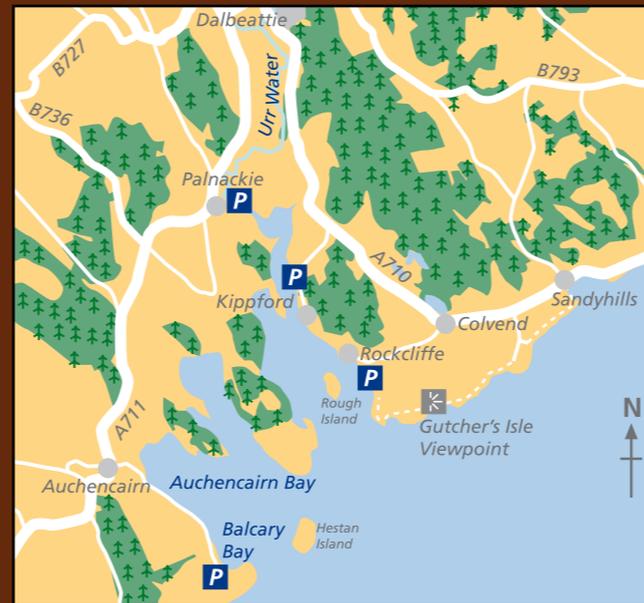
Constantly changing sandbanks, racing tides and rock shores have always proved dangerous for sailors on this coast. Seabirds, waders and wintering waterfowl make this place their home, with Mersehead Sands forming one of the main goose roosting sites in the Solway.

Explore the Secret Coast Visitor Centre at Colvend, gives more information about what you can see and do.

Remember that the viewpoint is on private farmland so please act responsibly, respect the interest of others and care for the environment.

## How to get there

The viewpoint is located 1.5 miles from Rockcliffe village. From the main car park follow the coastal path along the shore. Gutcher's Isle is around ½ mile east of Castle Point. You can retrace your steps or continue along the coast to Sandyhills (6 miles in total). Parts of the path are steep - walking boots are the best footwear.



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Gutcher's Isle viewpoint is part of a developing network of viewpoints that are being created across the three National Scenic Areas in the region.

## The natural place

Photo © Allan Devlin; Illustration © Hugh Bryden



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## Dumfries and Galloway

## National Scenic Areas



## Gutcher's Isle Viewpoint