Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

From mountain to sea

Pennan

Conservation Area Appraisal

February 2026

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1 Introduction

The local authority has a statutory (legal) duty to review existing conservation areas and review settlements that have been identified as potential conservation areas. It is proposed by Aberdeenshire Council to review the Pennan Conservation Area.

This document provides a full review of the settlement, identifying the special characteristics of its history, development, architecture, and appearance. It is then used to assess if the settlement is worthy of conservation area status and to inform planning advice.

This document is designed to be used as part of a public consultation process with the local community. It will form part of the reporting to committee where a final decision on whether to adopt the proposal is made.

1.1 Definition of a Conservation Area

Conservation areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that for a settlement to be designated as a conservation area it must.

‘Be an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

Aberdeenshire currently has 38 conservation areas varying in character from central Stonehaven to the small coastal settlement of Pennan, all of which represent a grouping of buildings and open space which have one, some or all the following characteristics.

- special architectural or historic importance.
- distinct character.
- value as a good example of local or regional architectural style.
- value within the wider context of the village or town
- present condition, and the scope for significant improvement and enhancement.

1.2 Implications of Conservation Area Designation

In a conservation area it is the buildings and the spaces between that contribute to the special character so buildings, structures, memorials, parks, gardens, landscapes, and trees. It is not always large change but small incremental change that can be damaging to our most attractive and sensitive settlements.

Therefore, building and property owners in a conservation area need to apply for planning permission for changes to the external appearance of their properties that would normally be classed as permitted development. Although, to encourage owners to care for their property this does not apply to ‘like for like’ repairs and maintenance.

Trees also often contribute significantly to the character of a conservation areas. It is an offence for any person to cut, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage, or destroy any tree in a conservation area unless six weeks’ notice has been given to the local authority.

Conservation Area Consent will also be needed for the demolition of any unlisted building located within the Pennan Conservation Area, over 115 cubic metres.

There may be other permissions required so please check with the local authority before undertaking works. The benefit of the planning application process is that the local authority can assess if an application preserves or enhances the special character of the settlement. It also gives the community an opportunity to comment on the proposal.

1.3 Purpose of this Document

The Conservation Area Appraisal forms part of a suit of documents including a Conservation Area Management Plan. The purpose and function of these documents are detailed below.

Conservation Area Appraisal - this document provides a full review of the settlement. Identifying the special characteristics of its history, development, architecture, open space, landscape, and appearance. Otherwise known as a Townscape appraisal. It is used to assess if the settlement has a special character and if it is worthy of conservation area status. It is also used to identify any areas of enhancement and the proposed boundary.

Conservation Area Management Plan – this document builds on the information obtained as part of the appraisal process and lays out a detailed plan for the conservation, management, and enhancement of the settlement.

Should the proposal be adopted the appraisal and the management plan become supplementary planning advice to the policies set out in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

1.4 Community consultation

The draft documents are produced to form the basis of a public consultation exercise where those people most directly impacted are consulted on the proposal. This includes the local community, community groups, landowners, tenants, and other interested parties. Their views are sought not only on the proposal but also on how they view the settlement, what they deem to be important and the aspects of the settlement that matter to them. The community’s views are then incorporated into the final drafts which is presented to committee.

1.5 Final approval of proposal

Once the final Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan have been drafted and a full, open and transparent public consultation process has been undertaken. The resulting recommendation is put forward to the relevant area committee for a final decision.

2 Justification for Pennan Conservation Area

The settlement of Pennan is unusual in that it is a good example of a small, traditional fishing village set within a dramatic location. The village is located along the shoreline whilst also nestled below steep, rugged cliffs. The buildings are tightly huddled together, mostly orientated north to south with their gables facing the bay, in the manner of the old traditional dwellings they replace, to provide protection from the elements.

As a result of the storm of 1953, most of the old commercial structures, compounds and stores along the length of the upper shore, between the street and the shoreline, were lost and the upper shore suffered heavy erosion along with many houses damaged. The repair and rehabilitation of these dwellinghouses were carried out using materials and methods available at that time, resulting in the loss of some traditional construction details and materials. Some were rebuilt, however, others were extended or expanded upwards for modern domestic living. At this time, a new concrete sea wall was built and the character of the fisher-toun settlement of Pennan, changed as a result.

A building survey led to a designated Category B group listing on 16th April 1971, providing protection of its buildings by statute of Law. The whole settlement was designated a Conservation Area under the Civic Amenities Act in 1977 to protect the entirety of its character within its setting. No documentation has been created since this time; therefore, this review is aimed at creating up to date documents which identify the key characteristics of this traditional former fishing village and provide guidance for its continued maintenance.

3 Historical Development

3.1 Location

Pennan is a small fisher-toun settlement located on the crescent shaped south shore of Pennan Bay. It lies within the old Auchmedden Estate in the far west of the parish of Aberdour on the north Aberdeenshire coast. The west boundary of the parish ends at the Tore Burn 0.5 miles away, leading on to the parish of Gamrie further west.

3.2 Early History

Although no evidence of early settlement has been noted in Pennan itself, the prehistoric and early medieval promontory fort of Cullykhan stands around 1km to the west. Inland from Pennan there is further evidence of prehistoric activity.

The land on which Pennan is located is mentioned in early texts. The shore and bay of Pennan were once named St. Magnus Haven or St. Magnus Bay, possibly linked to Saint Magnus Erlendsson, Earl of Orkney in the early 12th Century. The lands around Pennan were part of the ancient Mormaerdom of Buchan. The Mormaerdom is recorded in The Book of Deer and is therefore one of Scotland's best documented early provinces. It is the first Mormaerdom to pass to foreign hands by marriage to Comyn sometime before 1214. The land of Buchan and the stronghold of Dundarg, 3 miles east of Pennan, was later attacked by Robert the Bruce's forces having defeated the Third Earl of Buchan, John Comyn at the Battle of Barra in 1308.

Auchmedden Castle once stood to the southeast of Pennan, built in the 16th century by the Baird family. It was their family seat from 1534-1750 however, no trace of the castle remains. Rights to build a harbour were granted to the Baird's of Auchmedden in 1699, suggesting that sea landings and fishing were already in practice at the shore of Pennan Bay. Timothy Pont's 1583-1614 map of Buchan, and Robert Gordon's map of Aberdeen, Banff, Moray to Inverness of 1640, both depict a settlement of some kind at Pennan, confirming its existence in the 17th, or possibly 16th century.



Figure 1 – T. Pont; Map of Scotland – Buchan (Pont 10) 1583–1614



Figure 2 – R. Gordon; Aberdeen, Banff, Moray to Inverness 1640

The suggestion that there already was an early settlement at the shore is supported by the Parochial Registers of Aberdour. The register, thought to be the oldest in the Church of Scotland, is said to have lost its earliest parts resulting in the Register of Baptisms beginning in 1698. Some of the first entries for that year are for residents of "Seatown", the first listed on 4th September 1698 for the son of a William Watt. The name Seatown might be used to differentiate between established residences at the shore and those at the farm on the ground above, both in the place of Pennan. There are no discernible features of habitation at the shoreline before the current settlement of Pennan. Any early buildings which may have existed are likely to have been replaced by or incorporated into later dwellings.

3.3 18th Century

Sources suggest Pennan was founded as a fisher-toun in 1780, although a settlement in some form had already been established prior to this. The place name of "Seatown" in early parish birth records exists throughout the 18th century with occasionally the place names "Shore of Auchmedden" and "Pennan" being referred to during this time. An early recorded death in 1714 of a Christian Gatt of Pennan, her age recorded as ninety years old, gives further credibility to Pennan having earlier origins.

A record exists of Gamrie's Mohr Parish Church having a collection for the harbour at Pennan. This resulted in the building of the first harbour at Pennan, completed in 1704. It is thought to have been the only purpose-built harbour between Rosehearty and Banff at this time. Although the normal practice was to drag smaller boats up on to the shore, the ability to harbour the larger vessels from the worst of the winter storms would be of benefit to boat owners in neighbouring parishes.

The harbour was re-built by 1799 and the 1794 Statistical Account describes Pennan as a fishing town with 110 inhabitants. Residents would most likely have been living by the shore in traditional cottages built from locally available materials. The small red sandstone dwelling of No 44, made into a store, may be the last of the earlier dwellings.

It has not been heightened or extended and appears to retain much of its original construction detail.

Sources state William Baird sold the Auchmedden Estate to Gordon, Earl of Aberdeen in 1750, in order to settle debts following the Rebellion of 1745, in which he was a participant.

The Taylor and Skinner Road Map dated 1776 indicates Baird's "Auchmedin" Castle in ruins, but Pennan Lodge, Farm and the settlement on the shore is clearly indicated and to be under ownership of Gordon, Earl of Aberdeen. The road between the main road and the settlement is thought to have been made by Baird. Collaboration between Baird and Garden of Troup allowed the building of the fine Nethermill Bridge over the Tore Burn in 1719 to accommodate a road through the parishes.



Fig 3 - G. Taylor & A. Skinner; The Road from Fraserburgh to Banff 1776 – Extract

Sources inform that smuggling by sea was rife from late 17th to 19th century. The government's blockade of catholic French goods and targeted Acts of Parliament promoted grain distilling, of allied Dutch Gin in particular, in an attempt to drive out popular French brandy. The topography of this coastline with its multitude of caves and coves, offered hidden landing and storage for in demand contraband, however this activity was not confined to the Buchan coastline.

3.4 19th Century

The Statistical Account of 1845 indicates Banff is the principal station for a party of the Coast Guard, the commander's district extending from Pennan to Burghead. Such was the extent of smuggling locally that a Coast Guard station was billeted in a house in Auchmedden with their watch house thought to be on headland by Castle Point. The OS Name Books Aberdeenshire 1865-71 indicates the legacy of the activities on the local coast, with names such as Gin Rock and Brandy House, the latter recorded as, *"A cove in the rocks situated a short distance west of Pennan Head, the entrance is partly built. The name is pretty generally known from it having been a hiding place for smugglers".*



Fig 4 – Scotland Coastal and Admiralty Charts; East Coast Sheet 3 Aberdeen to Banff 1834 – Extract

Throughout the 19th Century, Scotland's fishing stations rapidly expanded. The need for dwellinghouses to accommodate the increase in fishermen and their families, can be seen in the extent of building and rapid expansion of Pennan during the mid-19th century. By 1855, 129 men and boys were employed in herring or line fishing operating from 15 herring drifters and 25 smaller fishing boats. In addition, 3 fish curing businesses supported the industry and a further 111 people were employed in fish processing and coopering.

Other businesses such as a Hauliers, Bakers, Blacksmiths, Chandlers etc. would have all operated from the buildings in the settlement. In addition, 2 licenced "ale and spirit houses" were established at this time. Ancillary structures and yards opposite the houses along the length of the settlement supported this industry, most being timber shed structures although some are of masonry. The shore in front of these structures is braced with deep timber piles and boarding with timber groins limiting the movement of sand.

In order to continue to attract fishermen and provide accommodation for their families, the early dwellings were initially improved or heightened but many were largely replaced with well-constructed formal houses typical of the period, many of 2 storey tenement type. In reference to Auchmedden Estate papers of 1837 the factor reports, *"All the low ground is already built upon, and in consequence of a demand of new houses I have laid off a set of new stances on top of the brae".* These are known as Craigielar Cottages.

The Auchmedden Estate was again under the ownership of a Baird from 1846. Records describe the Laird's Factor, John Sleigh, setting out plots on what little available land there was to address the housing demand. The houses were largely built by the West Brothers from their stone yards in Pennan; the company would later set up business in Peterhead. Sleigh later supported the building of a church at Auchmedden for the community, given the arduous trek to the church at New Aberdour. The estate provided land and materials, skilled labour was provided by carpenters and

masons of the village and the village folk themselves would manually haul tonnes of materials up the hill to the site.



Fig 5 – J Thomson & W Johnson; Northern Part of Aberdeen and Banff Shires 1832 – Extract

The Thomson & Johnson map of 1832 indicates a variety of industries active in this area in the 19th Century including fishing, milling and stone quarrying. Pennan is formally annotated on the map as a "Fishtown".

Fishermen in pre-1700 maritime communities, had a tradition of cultivating small plots of ground, a practice that was continued into the 19th Century when potatoes were grown on hillside plots in communities such as Pennan. The allotted lands or allotments are annotated on the west slope of Black Hill on the Ordnance Survey map of Aberdour in 1874. The remains of the plots are still visible today, but the 2 cottages built there are gone.

Auchmedden Estate papers of 1889 include a condition survey carried out by factor John Sleigh (Content, Rental and Remarks on the Farms, Crofts and Woods of the Estate of Auchmedden) indicating materials used in their construction. New roofs at the time of the survey, and those renewed 20-25 years previously, were slated, particularly farm offices and dwelling houses. Those in agricultural use were thatched or heathered. Older existing roofs over main buildings were generally covered with clay pantile though many were still thatched or heathered. Of those old, thatched roofs, reference is made to their walls being built of clay or mud, in whole or in part, including principal dwellings and offices. It is unclear whether it is formed into bricks or used as a mortar type material in rubble construction.

It is known that the walls of the earliest shoreside dwellings of nearby Crovie and Gardenstown, were of a deep drystone construction, making use of beach stone on the shore. It is therefore likely that the earliest dwellings in Pennan were built in this way, although other construction methods and materials cannot be ruled out.

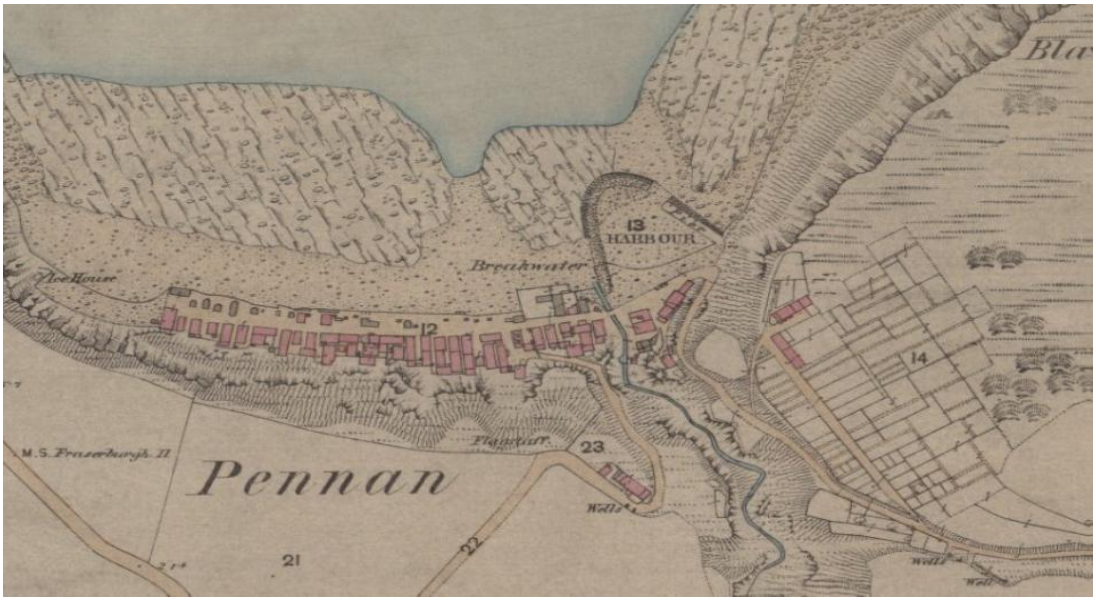

Figure 6 – Ordinance Survey; Aberdeen Sheet 1.7 Aberdour 1874 – Extract

Following the rebuilding of the storm damaged harbour wall in 1799, it was again badly damaged by 1840 and no longer suitable for larger vessels, forcing herring drifters to neighbouring harbours along the coast. The original west pier was again rebuilt in 1845, together with a new heavily engineered east pier enclosing the harbour. The third west pier lasted until an overnight storm in the winter months of 1889. Planning and development of the harbour for exporting millstones coincided with the need for developing fisheries. G Reid's etching of 1875 records a large winch arm on the pier. Heavy storms not only caused much damage to landings but contributed to loss of life as open-decked boats were swamped in heavy seas prompting a boat registration system. The massive loss of life during a storm in 1848 led to a national review by the Government which resulted in harbour development and improvement and a change in boat design to decked drifters. The decked vessels needed to be larger to accommodate the same catch but needed harbours as they could no longer be drawn up the shore, prompting harbour building at landings.

Further loss of life during storms was reasoned to be due to the inability of fishermen to read impending weather. The development of barometers and associated charts resulted in their issue to all harbours and landings – the barometer at Pennan being installed to the gable of No 23 in 1864.

From 1860, the fish curer employed 6 boats. The glut of herring on the market led to an end of the contract between Curer's and fishermen, moving to an auction process in 1887. Less stock due to overfishing, less export due to increased foreign boats, increase in farm production and choice leading to change of diet, all contributed to the decline in the herring fishery and, as a result, the decline of the community into the 20th Century.

3.5 20th Century



Fig 7 – Early Photograph from the West of Pennan Bay, circa 1903.

Figures 7 and 8 illustrates the two principal routes into and out of Pennan: the eastern road up Black Hill towards the Pennan Farm and New Aberdour, and the south road snaking up the steep slopes above, joining with the main road from Fraserburgh to Banff.

It shows the sloping sandy shore leading up to the sea defences, which were built and maintained by the villagers. These consisted of driven timber posts and heavy-duty timber boards or railway sleepers. Piles of large boulders on the foreshore also served to dissipate the energy of the sea. What is thought to have been the Coast Guard watch house, is on the higher ground of Cullykhan Fort in the foreground. The flagstaff, depicted on the OS Map of 1874, can be seen on top of the hill above Pennan and is likely to have been for Coast Guard use. The large house further up the slope is thought to have been built at the time the image is taken as it is not indicated on OS Maps of 1874 or 1901. It is now 2 houses, Clifftop and Hillcrest. The terraced cottages at the bend, set out in 1837, are hidden behind the slope.



Figure 8 – Early Photograph of Pennan from the West, circa 1903.

Figure 8 provides detail, in conjunction with Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map of 1874, to identify masonry buildings amongst the timber sheds along the top of the shore as well as buildings which once stood but are now lost. The building to the rear of No 48, towards the bottom right-hand corner, is derelict at this time and likely damaged following a land slip. In terms of layout the settlement has seen little change. The image records what may have been a programme of improvement where many of the buildings are painted white, this may be lime wash, perhaps on a rendered finish.

Sources are at odds regarding the population of Pennan by 1900. Up to 300 is suggested, but Slaters Directory of 1911 records a population of 199 in 1901 with many residents supporting the successful fishing industry. Many local villagers invested into 6 or 7 steam drifters between 1906 and 1912 but although they served Pennan they needed to be harboured at other Buchan stations such as Rosehearty and Fraserburgh.

Each of the new class of vessel employed 10 hands with more than twice that for on-shore processing. To meet the demands of industry the west pier of the harbour was renewed in 1903 with further improvements carried out between 1908 and 1909.
Baird ownership of the Auchmedden and Strichen Estates was maintained by the trustees of George Alexander from 1876 but they were sold 25 years after his death in 1926.

The Scottish catch of herring reached 2 million barrels in the early years of the 20th Century. Some people began to look to the main harbours and processing centres, as did the new larger vessels, and landings at Pennan soon ceased which led to a decline in the population. After World War I, demand collapsed and fishing at this level became unsustainable. During the interwar period, fishermen sold their drifters and went back to fishing the line cast method from their small boats. The infrastructure supporting the industry weakened and gradually left.

Such was the decline of the industry that by 1929, there were only a small number of boats working from Pennan although 1 steam drifter was owned locally. By 1949 the number of small boats catching mackerel by line cast method numbered 14.

3.6 1950 to Present Day

Although severe but infrequent storms had previously damaged the harbour at Pennan, the storm over the 31st January and 1st February 1953 was devastating. The combination of a high spring tide, very low pressure over the North Sea and severe gales resulted in sea levels some metres higher than normal. The storm drove waves crashing into and over the timber sea defences and swept away all the buildings and timber stores on the seaward side of the road, causing damage to houses, and changing the nature of the upper shore. The stable of the village bakery was the only building standing.



Figure 9 – Photograph of Pennan from the West, circa 1956.

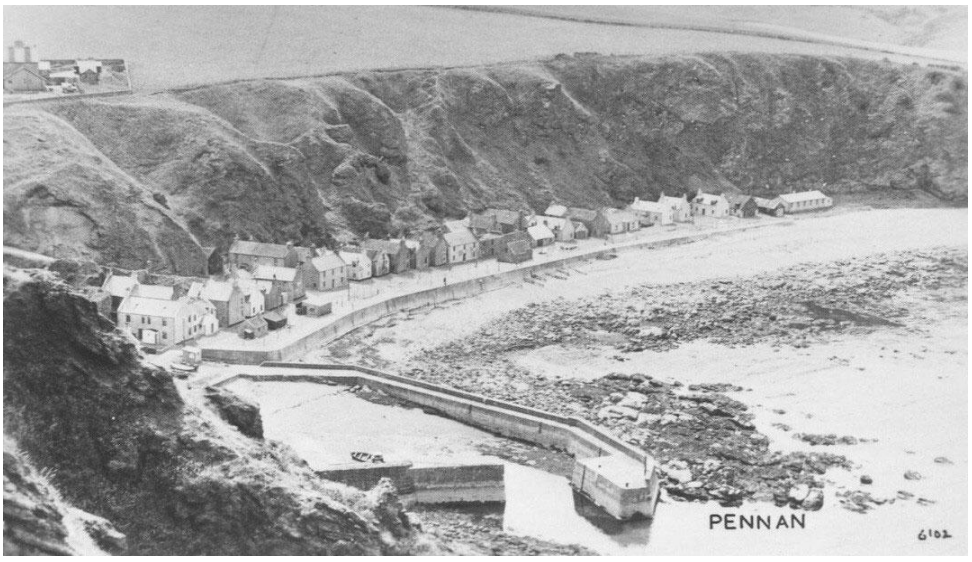

Figure 10 – Photograph of Pennan from the East, circa 1956.

After this storm, Pennan was exposed, and the sea defences were in need of rebuilding. Aberdeen County Council's proposals to build a sea wall and repair Bankhead were agreed with the Laird, David Watt. During work to the Bankhead, it is likely that the engineering works included improved management of the outfall of the burn from Auchmedden Den to the shore. Sources suggest that the sea wall defence had issues: the toe at the base suffered severe erosion and was later extended further seaward. This resulted in restricted waves during northerly gales scouring the sandy beach at the base of the wall, exposing the bedrock and throwing material over the top of the Bankhead.

Figure 10 shows the Community Hall at the far west of the settlement, which is still in use today. This structure was formerly an accommodation hut at the aerodrome of Lenabo near Longside during the Great War. It was rebuilt here on a red sandstone base along its perimeter, with later modern extensions to each end.

The population continued to decrease throughout the second half of the 20th Century. The Auchmedden school roll for 1955 was 15 pupils; the roll of 163 some 70 years previously is an indication of the impact of loss of industry on the community. As a result, the school was closed in 1958.

With most of Pennan's local families having moved away, the houses began to be bought, some of them being in poor or dilapidated condition, and developed for holiday homes. Some of this work led to changes to the historic building fabric and appearance of the houses, prompting a review by Aberdeen County Council's Development Department in 1968, producing a List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. The review confirms, *"Whole village listed Category B for group, an outstandingly picturesque fishing village mainly of early 19th Century with later alterations nestling in base of cliffs. Still very complete and unspoilt, only numbers 26 and 40 seriously altered as yet, but a few with asbestos roofs and other unsuitable modern finishes have lately appeared".* There are 11 buildings which were deemed to be of sufficient quality to merit individual listing within the group, including the harbour (see Appendix 2).

Further development and improvements continued, and a hotel was established in the village during the 1970's. The original Inn was expanded into an adjacent dwelling house, with a new extension matching the dimensions of a dwelling house squeezed into the courtyard between them. The Inn and village were used as the location for the filming of the 1980's film Local Hero. A phone box used in the film is not original to the village and was installed later following demand of the residents. The phone box is now listed.

Due to its location, Pennan is affected by stormy weather, and which can occasionally loosen the softer content of the steep slopes and cliffs above, resulting in landslips of varying severity. Such an event occurred on Monday 6th August 2007, when following a period of exceptionally heavy rainfall, a series of landslides on the slopes and cliffs between No 18 and 53 brought hundreds of tonnes of mud and rock into the village, leading to evacuation of all the residents and major stabilisation works to be carried out.

4 Townscape Appraisal

4.1 Topography

Pennan is located on the south shore of Pennan Bay and occupies the majority of the crescent shaped shoreline between rocky outcrops at the base of the natural coastal slopes and cliffs above. This crescent shape shoreline and its slopes dictate the arrangement of the settlement.

The outlet of the Auchmedden Burn follows the gorge of Auchmedden Den, its banks consolidated by an engineered channel through the Bankhead to the shore. A deep gorge in the mostly red sandstone natural rock accommodates the last stretch of the coastal slopes of the Den of Auchmedden burn from the land above to the bay.

The topography creates an intimate setting for the village, nestling it below the rugged cliffs, screening it from visibility in the wider landscape. This intimacy and separation forms part of the village's special character.

4.2 Gateways

The principal access to Pennan is from the unclassified road off the B9031 which branches north-east at the crossroads situated at the small settlement of Auchmedden. The road continues slowly sloping downwards to a visitor's carpark located on the left-hand side before the gradient of the road increases considerably. The road continues with a hairpin bend in the road above the settlement, falling sharply towards the east end of the settlement. Vehicular access is permitted along the length of the settlement.

A footpath to the east of the settlement, known locally as the "old coffin road", gives access to the former plots/gardens or "yardies" for the dwellings in the settlement, on the cliff side above the village. This was previously the main entrance and exit to the village. The footpath continues on to New Aberdour which is 3 miles to the east.

4.3 Conservation Area Boundary and Edges

All buildings and associated public areas along the shore, including the breakwaters and the harbour are included within the Pennan Conservation Area. The boundary continues along the foreshore both to the east and west to include the entirety of the Bay of Pennan as well as the Nethermill Cottages to the east and Havenlea to the west, both of which are in elevated positions on the cliffs.

Beyond the main settlement of the shoreline, the boundary stretches inland to where the unclassified road reaches the B9031, following the natural slopes of the land back to the shore, incorporating the later built houses on the hill side into the boundary.

4.4 Character Areas

Similar to other small fishing villages in Aberdeenshire, the character of Pennan is a result of its location. The dramatic setting with dwellings erected in the small space between the shoreline and hillside, with their gables facing the bay and their doors facing the wall to the neighbouring property as an aid to shelter from the worst of the weather, constructed by materials found locally, all add to the settlement's character.

The Pennan Inn and the phone box opposite, play a particularly special part, as does the rest of the village, in keeping the popularity of the village alive. In 1983, the film "Local Hero" filmed several scenes in Pennan. This has contributed to a number of visitors to the village in recent times. The phone box here today is not the original one used in the film but has become listed in its own right.

Since the construction of the harbour in 1704, it has played a vital role in the lives of those residing in Pennan for a number of centuries. Without the harbour, the settlement would never have flourished, and still be in existence today. The improvements made throughout the 19th Century to the harbour further allowed industry to form in this small settlement.

4.5 Plot and Street Pattern

The layout of Pennan is what defines its character. The initial neat layout of the settlement, with the dwellings set back from the shore all at a similar distance however, there is no regularity to the layout. A collection of 2 storey dwellings face north towards the bay, whilst others have their gables onto the bay as a form of protection from the sea. Further dwellings have been constructed behind these shore facing properties, hidden towards the cliff face.

Little alterations to dwelling size and position appears to have occurred since the Ordnance Survey First Edition map (1843-1882). Some buildings have been demolished over time with some being replaced. Space between properties is extremely limited due to the proximity in which they have been constructed, with little or no private outdoor areas/gardens. This lack of separation between properties and the shared outside space, refers back to the community concept that would have been prevalent at the height of the fishing industry in Pennan.

The need for more housing in Pennan, saw the construction of the properties above the village. These follow a different style from those along the shore, with larger outside space and differing architecture having been built into the slope of the land. The storm in 1953 had a significant visual impact on the settlement by destroying many of the shelters/sheds on the seaward side, and never rebuilt, leaving only one to remain. This allowed for this area to be landscaped and allow for communal drying greens.

4.6 Architectural Character

The buildings of Pennan today, have their roots in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The settlement flourished and expanded during the 19th century with the increase in the Scottish fishing industry. Most of the buildings positioned along the shore and between the cliffs, were re-built during this time or adapted for modern living, and subsequently have been designated as listed buildings.

There are currently 55 buildings in Pennan, with a high number of buildings fronting onto the shore and stretching back towards the cliffs being listed, 32 in total. These are mainly category C with 6 category B listed. There are also a number of un-listed buildings within the conservation area, which also make a valuable contribution to the wider appearance of the streetscape. The buildings detailed below are mainly category C listed and demonstrate particular building styles in the village.

There are two distinct styles of buildings found along the shoreline, those which face the shoreline, and those which have their gable positioned to the shore. These share similarities such as their strong cohesive traditional scales and simple plan forms. They are predominately gabled with chimney stacks, white rendered sandstone walls, with single window and door openings.





Dwellings which are positioned with their gables to the sea, are characteristic of settlements in close proximity to the sea in Aberdeenshire. Traditionally, there would have been no windows positioned on these gables to save them from being damaged in storms, but these have been added in recent years to allow for a pleasant view. These properties have been heightened with the upper floors being converted into living space with the addition of dormer windows.

Clay pantiles would have been the traditional roofing material found in Pennan, and some originals can still be seen on some smaller ancillary buildings. Replacements have been carried out using concrete pantiles on properties, where reclaimed clay pantiles would have been preferred. Welsh slate has been used on the majority of properties within the settlement as an alternative roofing material, which is acceptable as a traditional roofing material found in Aberdeenshire, however, clay





pantile is still preferred in this setting. Clay chimney pots can be seen on many properties.

The properties in Pennan have been constructed using locally quarried red sandstone, which due to the harsh weather conditions these buildings face, many have been given a cement render which has been painted white. A small number of properties with exposed sandstone are noted, predominantly those which are not directly facing the shore. A cement-based render can have a detrimental effect on the soft sandstone below by trapping moisture internally and degrading the stone. A lime based harl is preferable to allow for any excess moisture to be expelled from the structure.

Within Pennan, timber sash and case windows vary considerably in size and design, as well as the design and construction of dormers. There is no one standard design which has been followed throughout the settlement. uPVC windows are seen in some properties in the settlement, as well as oversized box dormers, both of which are not in keeping with the settlement.







Few sheds/non-domestic buildings are in existence in Pennan, as a large number were lost from the shore during the storm in 1953. There are however a small number of original buildings which remain. Some of these are original, and have been little altered, which provide evidence of the material choices and design which are appropriate in this setting. The materials and shape have been used in new designs within the settlement.





4.7 Open Space

The development of a settlement such as Pennan, located between rocks and the sea with some houses above, does not allow for open spaces to naturally form. In Pennan, there would have been very little space available for an open area as space

was limited and was required for the industries within the village. The harbour, constructed after 1699, is the largest open space in Pennan located at the east end of the village.

Following the storm of 1953, open/green space was created by the loss of the small buildings/stores which were located along the shoreline. These were never reinstated, and an area of landscaping was created instead to benefit the owners and provide outside space.

There is little boundary separation between properties in Pennan along the shore and very few are in possession of a garden area, and where so, they are small in size. Many properties have private or shared outdoor space in the form of closes/passageways between the neighbouring buildings, and which are open to the street, to act as access to the properties. There are a few of these which have been gated, which are contrary to their traditional character. This lack of outdoor space has resulted in the acquiring of space along the shore to be used as a drying green. In addition to the above, the agricultural land above the settlement has been included within the conservation area which provides unrestricted views of the bay.

4.8 Buildings at Risk

There are no buildings/properties in Pennan that are on the Buildings at Risk Register or considered to be at risk in terms of their condition.

4.9 Condition

Pennan is an attractive and well-kept village. There are not many negative factors that detract from the general appearance of the village. However, there are areas where improvement could be carried out to ensure the overall character and appearance of the settlement is at its best.

There are a number of ancillary buildings i.e. sheds/garages which have seen less attention given to their maintenance in recent years. On these buildings, missing or damaged rainwater goods are noted and a lack of upkeep in the general appearance of these buildings. Inappropriate materials have also been used on these buildings, such as asbestos, cement harl and uPVC rainwater goods.





The vast majority of dwellings in Pennan are in a good condition and are well cared for, however due to the setting, maintenance is a constant consideration on these buildings and materials can look aged and deteriorate more quickly than they would in a different location. Some properties are showing areas of staining which appears to be caused by rusting on elements on the building. This may be from old fixtures to the buildings from when the cabling was above ground.

Some properties have not been as recently painted as others along the shoreline, and therefore are looking tired in comparison. Due to the cement coating on these buildings, when there is a failure to these, it can be noticeable, and if not fixed can cause the coating to further fail. At times of frost, water can get in behind and expand, causing the cement to come away, exposing the stonework below which is likely to be damp underneath.





Throughout Pennan, there is a large number of uPVC rainwater goods noted on both residential and non-residential buildings. This is not suitable for conservation areas (or indeed listed buildings) and are better replaced with cast iron alternatives in keeping with the character of the historic settlement.





Pennan benefits from the vast majority of properties having timber windows, albeit in a variety of designs and colours. There are a small handful of uPVC windows in Pennan which are not in keeping with the character of the area. The conversion of roof spaces to living accommodation has led to the introduction of a variety of dormers and rooflights to properties. Oversized box dormers and large roof lights are inappropriate within a conservation area therefore, smaller and well-proportioned dormers and conservation rooflights would be more appropriate.





Pennan also benefits from no visible satellite dishes or solar panels within the settlement. External fixtures such as these can have a detrimental effect on the streetscape.

4.10 Townscape Detail

The dwellinghouses of Pennan take up around half of the available space between the shoreline and the slope, whilst the boundary of the conservation area at the top of the cliff is mostly farmland with a small number of dwellings positioned along the single track down to the shore. The road and the available green space along the shoreline, separate the houses from the sea.

Works carried out through the Pennan Village Improvement Scheme in 1988/89, saw considerable improvements to the appearance of the village. Overhead cables were removed and replaced underground, resulting in the removal of the associated modern light fittings, and telegraph poles which had been a recent addition to the village giving it a cluttered appearance. Works to the drying green were carried out which saw the replacement of the timber drying poles, which had been introduced after the storm of 1953 which saw the buildings from this area destroyed. The introduction of the timber clad seawall, sympathetically painted to imitate an old, blackened fish smoke house, would reduce the amount of debris and water from the sea coming up onto the road.

The street lighting, within public areas along the shore, is in a “heritage” lantern style, which is in keeping with the conservation area. The single-track road which meanders down the slopes from above, has modern style fixings which are not as sympathetic to the area as the lantern style. It is possible that these were not included for replacement at the time of the Pennan Village Improvement Scheme. Wall mounted lighting is attached to some dwellings along the shore. Permission for their removal should be sought from the relevant department of Aberdeenshire Council prior to any works as they may still be connected and live. Damage can be caused when trying to remove these from buildings, and therefore they are better left in-situ although unsightly, until further works are carried out to the harl of the property.

The street furniture along the shore compliments the small village well. The introduction of cast iron bins, benches, letter box and road sign are all appropriate in a setting such as this and are encouraged. There have been newer additions to the street furniture with plastic waste bins positioned along the shore, which are inappropriate in this setting. The access road to Pennan is adorned by the standard

yellow grit bins, which are also not complementary to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

4.11 Building Materials

Traditional materials to be found in the conservation are:

- Cast Iron rainwater goods
- Vertical Sawn Timber Boarding
- Machined Welsh Slate (to replace storm-damaged roofs, prelisting)
- Clay Pantiles & Ridges (all traditional dwelling houses including slate easings)
- Timber Framed Windows and Doors
- Field/Beach Stone
- Clay Chimney Pots
- Lime Mortar Pointing
- Lime Based Harl and Wash (painted white)
- Natural Welsh Slate (single sized natural hand cut slate)
- Concrete Pour (local hard-standings and public areas for task only)

Modern Materials are also found in the conservation area and are associated with the later repair and improvement works. They are not a direct replacement of existing traditional materials, and many are found not to be sympathetic to the character of Pennan, including:

- Profiled/Corrugated Cement Sheet (Asbestos entrained)
- Mineral Roofing Felt
- Concrete Block
- Extruded Plastics
- PVC
- Cement Mortar, Harl & Render
- Pre-Cast Concrete Elements
- Acrylic Paints

4.12 Landscape and Trees

The local landscape of Pennan is dramatic where it has been settled at the base of a plunging coastline on what little available land there is between shore and steep slopes. Due to the landscape and the prevailing harsh conditions, there are no trees either on the raised shoreline, or on the steep slopes behind the development.

The coastline at Pennan is within the Gamrie and Pennan Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest, which has been designated due to its geological importance as well as for its coastal habitats and seabird colonies. It is also within the Troup, Pennan and Lion's Heads Special Protection Area as the cliff support large colonies of seabirds.

4.13 Aspects of the settlement vulnerable to climate change

Due to the dramatic coastal location of Pennan, the most prevalent is severe weather and the impact this can have on traditionally constructed properties from warmer winters, frequent intense rainfall and high winds and storms, resulting in a wider issue of flooding and landslips. Regular maintenance and carefully designed alterations to a property can ensure that a building is protected from the worst of these. More information can be found in Historic Environment Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation for Traditional Buildings:

https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=a0138f5b-c173-4e09-818f-a7ac00ad04fb

4.14 Aspects of the built heritage that would benefit from a holistic approach to energy efficiency

Buildings that already exist are a huge past investment in carbon spent during the building's construction including extraction of materials, manufacture, transport, installation, and waste generated during construction. By retaining an existing building, you are not wasting the embodied carbon in its original construction, and you are not adding to its carbon cost through the process of demolition.

Retrofitting a traditional building in a material that has a high carbon cost in production or not compatible with traditional construction could be counter intuitive Historic Environment Scotland (HES) promote a holistic approach to emissions reduction.

1) Reduce your heat loss – this covers aspects such as ensuring your external fabric is in well maintained to avoid damp. Ensuring windows and doors are in good condition or improved in a sustainable manner. Ensuring the property is well insulated.

2) Improve space and water heating – this can include looking at more efficient heat sources i.e., using your fireplaces, biomass, ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps or even just a more efficient boiler.

3) Electricity generation – this should always be carried out last, there is no point installing solar panels, wind power or hydro power until you have first undertaken steps 1 and 2.

4.15 Buildings, structures, and spaces identified by the community as important

During earlier consultation exercises, there were buildings and spaces identified as important by the community.

The harbour is one of the most important areas identified in Pennan as being the reason for the settlement, but also as remaining as a working part of the settlement and brings visitors to the area. The village hall was also identified by many as a building where many private and public celebrations have been held by locals over the years and is a place where the community can come together. Finally, the Pennan Inn, although having changed hands recently, is a building in Pennan which locals identify as important as not only bringing investment and tourism to the village, but also due to the social aspect it brings.

5 Appendices

5.1 Appendix I – List of listed buildings within the conservation area

HES Reference	Statutory Title	
LB2750	Pennan Harbour, East and West Piers	B
LB2752	1 Pennan	C
LB2753	2 Pennan	C
LB2754	3 Pennan	C
LB2755	5 Pennan	C
LB2756	6,7 Pennan	C
LB2757	10 Pennan, The Shed	C
LB2758	11 Pennan	C
LB2759	14 Pennan	C
LB2760	Pennan, Telephone Kiosk, Opposite Pennan Inn	C
LB2761	18,19 Pennan	C
LB2762	20 Pennan	B
LB2763	21 Pennan	C
LB2764	22 Pennan	C
LB2765	23 Pennan	C
LB2766	24 Pennan	C
LB2767	26 Pennan	C
LB2718	28 Pennan	B

LB2719	30 Pennan	C
LB2720	31,32 Pennan	C
LB2721	33 Pennan	B
LB2722	35 Pennan	B
LB2723	36 Pennan	B
LB2724	The Shed (Opposite No 36 Pennan)	C
LB2725	37 Pennan, Janrew	C
LB2726	38 Pennan	C
LB2727	41,42 Pennan	C
LB2728	43 Pennan	C
LB2729	45,46,47 Pennan, Anchor Close	C
LB2730	48 Pennan	C
LB2731	51 Pennan	C
LB2751	Pennan, Craigielar Cottages, Seaview and Denview	C

5.2 Appendix II – List of addresses within the conservation area

1 Shore Street Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
1A Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
1B Shore Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
2 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
3 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
4 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
The Harbour House, 5 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Burnside, 6-7 Shore Street, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
9 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Ellenlea, 10 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh AB43 6JB
11 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Dhustrath, 13 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
14 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Pennan Inn, 16 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
18 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
20 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
21 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
22 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
23 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

24 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

26 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

28 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

30 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

The Honey Pot, 32 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

33 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

35 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

36 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

37 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

Ship Cottage, 38 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

Driftwood, 39 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

41 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

42 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

43 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

47 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

48 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

Coral Haven, 50 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

51 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

53 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

54 Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

The Bothy, Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB

Havenlea, Shore Street Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
The Haven Studio, Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Pennan Hall, Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Scottish Water, Waste Water Treatment Works, Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Aberdeenshire Council, Public Convenience, Pennan Hall, Shore Street, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JB
Pennan Harbour, Shore Street, Pennan
Pennan Beach, Shore Street, Pennan
Nethermill Cottage, Pennan
1 Nethermill Cottage, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JA
Millshore Lodge, 2 Nethermill Cottage, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JA
Pennan Lodge, 2 Nethermill Cottage, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6JA
Hillcrest, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6HY
The Bend, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6HY
Clifftop, Pennan, Fraserburgh, AB43 6HY

5.3 Bibliography

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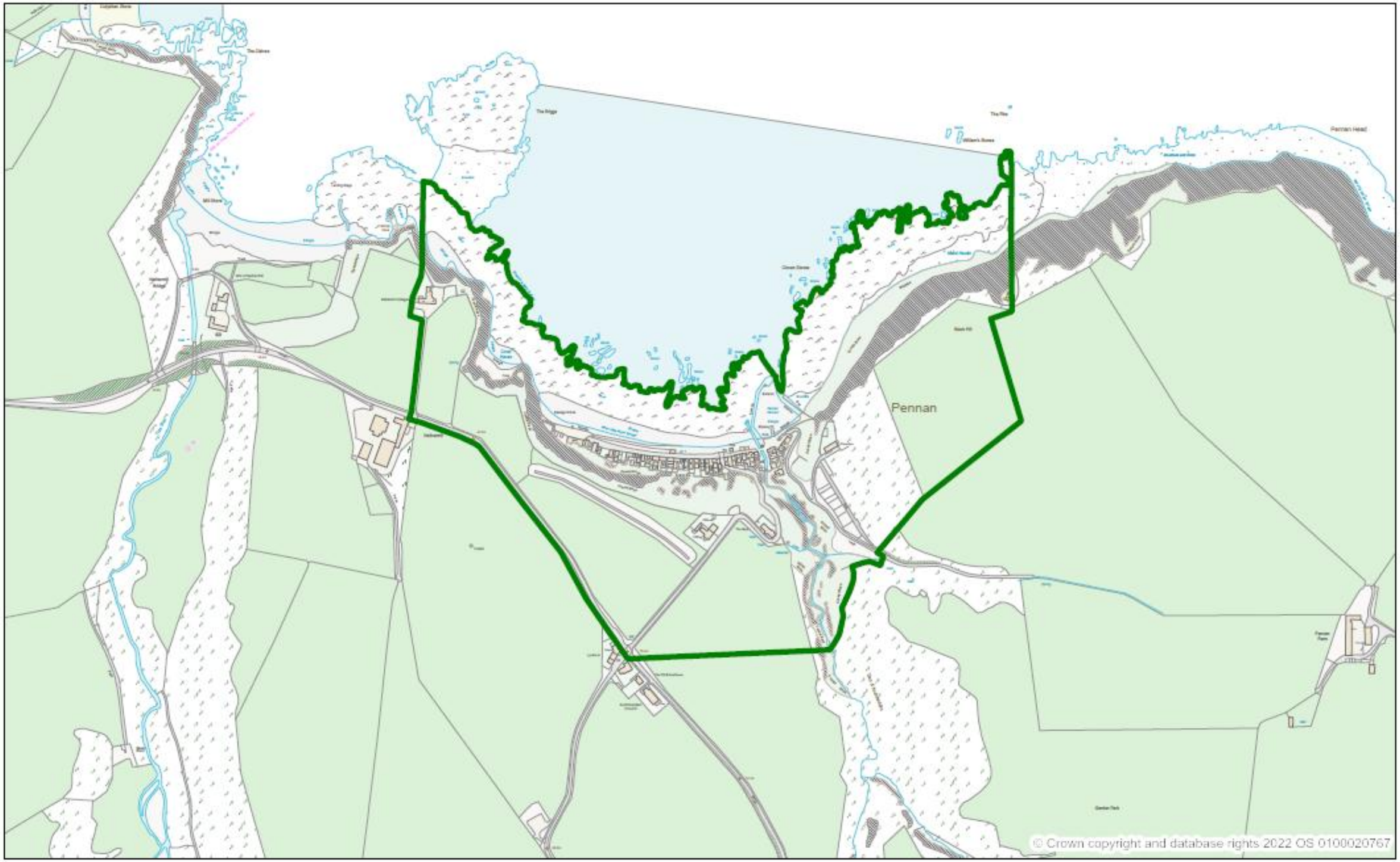

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24th May 2022

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

For further information concerning the contents of this document, contributions for its improvement or any matters concerning conservation areas or listed buildings, contact the Historic Environment Team.

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