
NWHG Ref. 058 — Suilven

Location, grid reference and photograph

The mountain of Suilven lies in a very remote location, roughly midway between the A 837 and Lochinver on the west coast, Grid Ref. [NC 159 180].

(Figure 48) Suilven from Fionn Loch. BGS Photo P512915 — T Bradwell.

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

Suilven is not GCR-listed and does not lie within a SSSI.

Description and geological significance

The mountain of Suilven is undoubtedly the iconic image of Assynt and, quite probably, of the Geopark as well. Its very steep sides and long narrow summit ridge with two distinct summits make it immediately recognisable. It represents one of the best examples of an inselberg within UK and Western Europe and it is therefore important to students of geomorphology, physical geology and landscape development within a glacial context.

Accessibility

Excellent access for distant viewing from a variety of roadside points. However, Suilven's very remote location means that a long walk of approximately 8 km over a mixture of terrain is required in order to reach the base of the mountain. The easiest route is from Lochinver, past Glencanisp Lodge using the stalking track and approaching the northern side of the massif. An alternative route is from Inverkirkaig to the south, following the river track then branching northwards along a less obvious path across some rough and difficult terrain. There is no all abilities access off-road.

Conservation

No conservation requirement due to the scale and location of the feature.

Visibility and “clarity”

The key features of Suilven are easily seen from numerous distant viewpoints. The mountain presents a very dramatic and inspiring image and attracts hill-walkers, photographers/artists and students of physical geography/geomorphology as well as geologists.

Interpretation and interpretation potential

A guided walk to and up Suilven is led once a year by Rangers from the Highland Council Ranger Service. The running of more frequent guided walks for the general public would require careful consideration of the safety implications and the appropriate guide requirements. The site is featured as a walk in the guidebook “Exploring the landscape of Assynt”. There is currently no interpretation panel explaining the geological circumstance of Suilven but it is included at the rock route panel at Elphin. New panels could be located to the west and east of the mountain (at Lochinver and Elphin, respectively) within suitable laybys. There is limited potential for developing the area as a teaching resource for academic courses at school and university levels.

Key references

KRABBENDAM, M. & BRADWELL, T. 2010. The geology and landscape of the Northwest Highlands: an introduction. In Lukas, S. & Bradwell, T. (eds) *The Quaternary of Western Sutherland and adjacent areas: Field Guide*, Quaternary Research Association, London, 3–12.



(Figure 48) Sùilven from Fionn Loch. BGS Photo P512915 — T Bradwell.