
NWHG Ref. 059 — Quinag (Spidean Coinich, Sail Gharbh, Sail Ghorm)

Location, grid reference and photograph

The three-fingered mountain feature of Quinag lies about 4 km west of the A 894 between Kylesku to the north and Loch Assynt to the south, Grid Ref. [NC 200 290].

(Figure 49) Quinag massif from Kylesku. BGS Photo P 514946 — M Krabbendam.

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

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

Description and geological significance

The mountain of Quinag displays, on a massive scale, the Applecross Formation of the Torridon Group within the Torridonian Sandstone strata which sit on a basement of much older Lewisian Gneisses and are unconformably overlain by a capping of much younger Cambrian Quartzite on the highest parts of the summit ridge at Sail Gharbh and at Spidean Coinich. The mountain also illustrates an excellent example of bedrock control on glacial erosion and landscape development in general.

Accessibility

There are two convenient large car parks, one on the north side of a hairpin bend on the A 894 [NC 240 292] and the other on the east side of the A 894 further south [NC 232 273] from which an excellent view of the east side of the mountain and its key features can be had. The west side of the mountain can be conveniently viewed from the A 837 Inchnadamph to Lochinver road which runs along the shore of Loch Assynt and continues further westwards. The view of the mountain is thus accessible to all abilities. Detailed examination, however, requires a long walk over difficult terrain. There is a formal path from the John Muir Trust car park at [NC 232 273], which covers the more boggy ground before rising steeply onto the mountain slopes.

Conservation

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

Visibility and “clarity”

Depending upon weather conditions, visibility of the main south-east facing slopes of Quinag is excellent from the two car parks and from various other roadside locations on the A 894 over the top of the Skiag Bealach. The mountain presents a most dramatic and inspiring image, making it a “must see” visitor attraction.

Interpretation and interpretation potential

There is a small interpretation panel on the east side at the start of the formal path. However, new interpretation panels are recommended for both the Lochinver (west) and Skiag (east) sides and the feature certainly merits the running of a guided walk on its own. The site is featured as part of a walk in the guidebook “Exploring the landscape of Assynt”. It should also be included in a future Geopark Guide.

Key references

BALLANTYNE, C. 2010. Relic talus slopes on Quinag and Stac Pollaidh. In Lukas, S. & Bradwell, T. (eds) *The Quaternary of Western Sutherland and adjacent areas: Field Guide*, Quaternary Research Association, London, 131–135.

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 49) Quinag massif from Kylesku. BGS Photo P 514946 — M Krabbendam.