SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

ACH AN TODHAIR
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site ref: 011

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Purpose

This is a public statement prepared by SNH for owners and occupiers of the SSSI. It outlines the reasons it is designated as an SSSI and provides guidance on how its special natural features should be conserved or enhanced. This Statement does not affect or form part of the statutory notification.

We welcome your views on this statement.

[This statement is available in Gaelic on request.]

Natural protected features of Ach an Todhair SSSI.	**Condition of Feature** (and date monitored)
Upland mixed ash woodland	Favourable, maintained (summer 2002)
Upland assemblage	Favourable, maintained (summer 2002)

Description of the site

Ach an Todhair Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is centred on the hill An Coireag above Loch Linnhe, south of Fort William and is of interest for its broadleaved woodland and upland grassland.

The site includes a substantial area of deciduous woodland and associated grassy heath which is underlain by mica-rich rocks. An Coireag splits the woodland into two sections, which occupy both the north-west and the south-east facing slopes. The woodland area represents over 50% of this woodland type in East Lochaber.

The woodland canopy is composed mainly of birch, with some ash and rowan, and an under-storey of hazel, with occasional hawthorn and eared willow. Hazel forms some very dense stands, particularly on the south east slope. In the flatter, wetter areas, alder is present and is also found fringing many small burns which cross the site. Glades and flushes add to the interest of this species-rich woodland, further increasing the number and range of plants it supports. The ground flora includes plants typical of this woodland type: dog's mercury, wood sorrel and ramsons, as well as uncommon plants such as greater butterfly orchid, grass of Parnassus, yellow mountain saxifrage, broad leaved cotton grass and sanicle. A large number of mosses and liverworts grow on this site with Atlantic coastal species and more common species characteristic of neutral-basic conditions.

The open ground supports acid grassland with habitat and species diversity being augmented by several wet areas and patches of heath. This variety of habitats is reflected by the presence of a diverse range of plants, including nine species of orchids.

Past and Present Management

The SSSI forms part of the Achintore and Druimarbin Common Grazings and has a history of grazing by sheep and cattle. Part of the site is now under two Woodland Grant Schemes, both of which are intended to assist regeneration of the woodland.

The site is on crofting land, with adjacent areas of residential development on former arable land.

There is evidence of past coppicing of hazel, and possibly other species, but there has probably been no systematic cutting for 40-60 years.

Objectives for Management (and key factors influencing the condition of natural features)

We wish to work with the owners to protect the site and to maintain and where necessary, enhance its features of special interest. SNH aims to carry out site survey, monitoring and research as appropriate to increase our knowledge and understanding of the site and its natural features and monitor the effectiveness of management.

1. To maintain the extent of the broadleaved woodland and upland grassland habitats in favourable condition by maintaining controlled grazing which enables some woodland regeneration and maintains a healthy grassland sward.

2. To maintain the populations of characteristic woodland and upland species by reducing any overgrazing and avoiding damaging activities.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Site visits in 2002 indicated that light grazing by sheep and cattle throughout is permitting woodland regeneration and this has been locally enhanced since management under WGS has been implemented. The area of the SSSI which lies outwith the two WGS projects will require monitoring and management of the grazings in the future to ensure that woodland regeneration occurs, but that the open ground natural features are also safeguarded, possibly by grazing.

Date of review: 28 March 2008