



Scottish Natural Heritage

MULL OF GALLOWAY
Site of Special Scientific Interest

Holmpark Industrial Estate
 New Galloway Road
 NEWTON STEWART
 DG8 6BF

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Tel 01671 401075
 Fax 01671 401078

Site code: 1213

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 and does not remove the need to apply for consent for operations requiring consent.

We welcome your views on this statement.

Natural features of Mull of Galloway SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Vascular plant assemblage	Unfavourable, declining (August 2002)	
Maritime cliff	Favourable, maintained (August 2002)	SAC
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Unfavourable, declining (May 2002)	
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Favourable, maintained (May 2002)	
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	Favourable, maintained (May 2002)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Intertidal mudflats and sandflats	Not monitored	SAC
Reefs	Not monitored	SAC
Shallow inlets and bays	Not monitored	SAC

Other SAC qualifying interests on this overlapping site are absent or occur rarely on the Mull of Galloway SSSI.

Description of the site

Mull of Galloway Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) extends over 11km of coast and includes the southernmost point of the Scottish mainland. It comprises maritime cliffs rising to some 85 metres above sea level topped by coastal heath and grassland, rocky shore and shingle beaches with two small sand and shingle bays at East and West Tarbert. The Mull of Galloway Special Area of Conservation (SAC) boundary follows that of the SSSI and is designated for the vegetated sea cliffs.

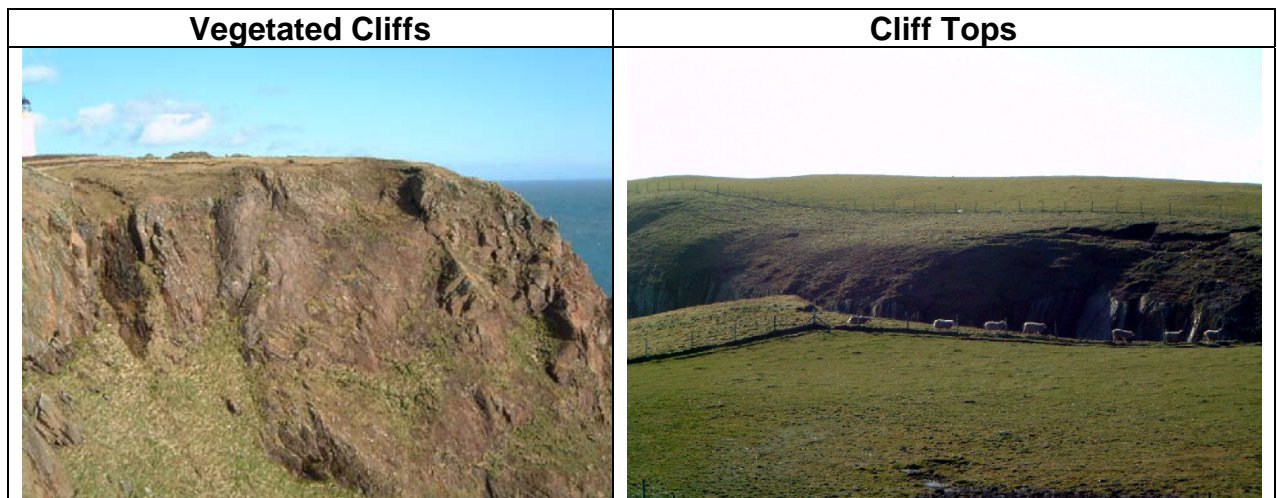
Areas of the eastern shore of the site extending to the southernmost point, specifically the area between Mean High and Low Water Springs also form part of Luce Bay and Sands SAC. The Natura habitats of this site have not yet been mapped but it is anticipated that the area that overlaps the Mull of Galloway SSSI includes small embayments, areas of intertidal sand and tide-swept rocks that extend into the sub-tidal zone, forming part of the reef habitat of the Luce Bay and Sands SAC.

The cliffs support the largest mainland seabird colonies in southwest Scotland, with fulmar, razorbill, kittiwake, shag, guillemot, black guillemot and herring gull all breeding. Peregrine falcon, raven, stonechat, wheatear, linnets and twite are also known to breed within the site. Monitoring undertaken in May 2002 indicated that the breeding populations of fulmar, kittiwake and razorbill all appear to have declined. While only fulmar failed to meet its breeding population target, with a fall of 69%, kittiwake and razorbill numbers both fell in excess of 20% and are barely in favourable condition. The reason for this is unclear.

The SSSI also has large areas of coastal heath and grassland, with extensive areas of spring squill, bloody crane's-bill, thrift and sea campion. Base-rich flushes and ledge vegetation, including purple milk vetch, indicate a calcareous influence within the rocks. The most noteworthy plant is small restharrow, a Mediterranean species recorded at only three other sites within the UK, this location being the most northerly and the only recorded site in Scotland. Currently it is not known if this plant is still present on the site. It is susceptible to marked population fluctuations and to competition from more vigorous plants. Given the nature and the scale of the site, it may well still exist in some of the more inaccessible parts of the sea cliffs. Similarly, the inaccessibility of parts of the site means that many of the target species in the plant assemblage may still be present, but not recorded, leading to the apparent unfavourable status. In addition, there is some scrub encroachment in these inaccessible parts of the site.

Semi-prostrate juniper fringes parts of the cliff top. The lichen flora is also of interest. The site supports a range of butterflies including the wall brown and the grayling.

The southern tip of the site is popular with fishermen, birdwatchers and sightseers.



Past and present management

The Mull of Galloway coast has a history of settlement back to the Bronze Age, with burial cairns and fortified dykes in evidence. The present lighthouse was built in 1828, first lit in 1830 and became automated in 1990. Enclosure of parts of the cliff tops in the 1720s by erection of dykes allowed the development of today's pattern of semi-intensive grass farming and also allowed the areas of coastal heath and maritime grassland to flourish.

Parts of the site are grazed during the winter by cattle and sheep. Some limited reseeding of grassland takes place adjacent to the SSSI. Fences and dykes are maintained in order to prevent stock straying onto the steep cliffs. Car parking, interpretation and toilet facilities are provided for visitors on the Mull of Galloway RSPB reserve and, during the summer, an RSPB warden is also present. A new visitor facility, Gallie Craig Coffee House, and extended car parking facilities have been installed adjacent to the entrance to the RSPB reserve.

SNH Natural Care and other schemes are available to support positive management.

Part of the SSSI is under an SNH management agreement, which supports an agreed grazing regime.

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 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 the management agreement.

The EU Habitats and Birds Directives oblige Government to avoid, in SACs, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species, as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of these Directives. The objectives below have been assessed against these requirements. All authorities proposing to

carry out or permit to be carried out operations likely to have a significant effect on the European interests of this SSSI must assess those operations against the relevant Natura conservation objectives (which are listed on our website through the SNHi-SiteLink facility).

1. To maintain the condition and extent of coastal habitats including vegetated sea cliffs, intertidal mudflats and sandflats, shallow inlets and bays and reefs

Appropriate management of the unimproved grassland and heathland is important in maintaining the existing diversity of plants. Complete removal of grazing would allow the sward to become dominated by a smaller number of vigorous plant species, rendering it less habitable for low growing specialist plants although localised grazing by rabbits does maintain a mosaic of short and longer swards.

However, too close grazing by domestic stock can also result in the disappearance of some plant species and also reduces the establishment of scrub and bracken which could shade out interesting plant communities. Conversely, some low scrub would naturally develop along the cliffs and would be maintained in a dwarf state by wind and salt spray. Carefully managed and regularly monitored light grazing should be employed in areas of unimproved grassland and heathland to maintain a mix of plant communities. Care should be taken to prevent poaching of the thin soils and excessive disturbance by burrowing rabbits.

Where grazing is not possible, some areas of scrub such as the dwarf juniper should be encouraged. Only where scrub and bracken encroach on important populations of rare plants would control measures be necessary.

The entire shoreline retains a natural seaward edge. This has allowed the retention of the natural progression from bare shingle, through coastal grassland and heath, to scrub and enclosed grasslands and allowed erosion and accretion processes to take place naturally. The addition or removal of material could disrupt these natural patterns.

2. To maintain populations of fulmar, razorbill and kittiwake by avoiding significant disturbance

Although there is currently no evidence that there is undue disturbance to breeding birds, an increase in the intensity of activities such as rock climbing, sea angling or general public access may have impacts on sensitive species. Changes in the intensity and impact of such activities, particularly during the breeding season, should be monitored and if required, a management strategy should be developed and implemented.

Date last reviewed: 3 July 2009.