NESS OF CLOUSTA - THE BRIGS

Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site ref: 1216

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

We welcome your views on this statement.

Ness of Clousta – The Brigs SSSI

Natural features of Ness of Clousta – The Brigs SSSI	Condition of feature
Old Red Sandstone Igneous	Favourable, maintained (August, 2001)

Description of the site

Much of the Walls Peninsula of Shetland is covered by sedimentary rocks known as Old Red Sandstone deposited around 400 million years ago during the Devonian period. At this time Shetland lay on the edge of a broad basin that extended southwards as far as the Moray Firth with a range of high mountains to the north and west. Rivers carried sediments - mainly sands and pebbles – down from the mountains and deposited them in the basin. As a result, much of the area within the Ness of Clousta SSSI is underlain by sandstones and conglomerates (pebble beds). The main interest of the site, however, comes from the presence of volcanic rocks which are inter-layered with the sedimentary rocks described above. Muckle Head is part of an outcrop of *tuff* - volcanic ash formed as a result of an explosive volcanic eruption - and probably represents an ancient volcanic cone. Basalt lava flows from the volcano are also present in the area.

The Ness of Clousta SSSI is important because it provides us with information about the geological history of Shetland in the period after the *Caledonian orogeny* (the major mountain-building event which shaped much of Scotland). The sandstones and conglomerates within the site were deposited by braided rivers - systems of constantly shifting interwoven river channels. Such rivers carry large amounts of sediments and are prone to regular flooding which contributes to the process of channel movement. The rocks visible within the outcrops of the Ness of Clousta SSSI clearly show how the river channels within the site were displaced as a result of volcanic eruptions during this period. The site is therefore of national importance for research into this process.

A site visit in August 2001 found no negative impacts on the features and recorded that appropriate access and views for study had been maintained throughout. The SSSI was recorded as being in favourable condition.

Past and present management

The site comprises an area of moorland, used for rough grazing, with associated coastal sections.

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

We wish to work with the owner 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.

1. To maintain the extent and accessibility of the rock exposures.

Ensure that activities leading to destruction or obscuring of the rock faces do not occur. The coastal sections and craggy moorland of this site seem unlikely to be significantly threatened. However, any developments which obscure rock exposures, such as coastal protection works or waste tipping, would damage the geological interest and should be avoided. Any development which does not affect rock exposures within the site would be acceptable.

Date last reviewed: 26 August 2008