Scottish Natural Heritage
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POLLOCHRO WOODS
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1301

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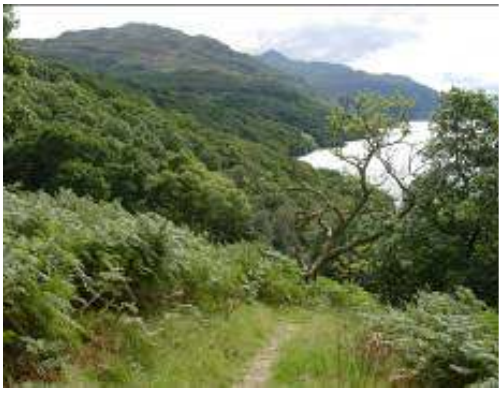
Purpose



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.

Natural features of Pollochro Woods SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Wet woodland	Unfavourable declining (January 2012)	SAC
Wood pasture and parkland	Not yet monitored.	SAC
Bryophyte assemblage	Favourable maintained (June 2003)	None
Lichen assemblage	Favourable declining (October 2010)	None

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Designation (SAC or SPA)
Otter (*Lutra lutra)*	Favourable, maintained (August 2003)	SAC
Western acidic oak woodland	Unfavourable, declining (June 2002)	SAC

Description of the site

Pollochro Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is situated on steep, westerly facing slopes at the north end of Loch Lomond, just to the north of the hamlet of Inversnaid. The SSSI supports an extensive area of semi-natural woodland, most of which is of ancient origin, and represents one of the largest areas of wet woodland in the Stirling Council area. This type of woodland is characteristic of the western highlands and has a canopy dominated by alder with oak, birch, hazel and ash. Shrub

species present include hawthorn and holly. The wet woodland is mostly to be found north of Rob Roys Cave, whilst south of Rob Roy's Cave there is a small area of even-aged oak coppice. A secondary woodland type at Pollochro, which forms an intermittent band above the wet woodland on the lower slopes, is wood pasture and parkland. It has a similar range of component tree species as the wet woodland but is characterised by supporting ash, elm and oak veteran trees, interspersed with hawthorn scrub pasture and open glades.

The ground flora is very rich and contains several woodland species of restricted distribution locally, including smooth-stalked sedge, wood speedwell, slender false-brome grass and green spleenwort.

The moss and lichen flora is rich in species, several of which are typically associated with ancient woodlands. The number of western Atlantic species present is one of the highest of any site in the Stirling Council area. Several species which are nationally restricted in their distribution occur here including many at the eastern limits of their British distribution. Mosses are found on the rocks and exposed tree roots on the shore of Loch Lomond, in large swelling hummocks and on rotten wood amongst the woodland and on rock outcrops and cliffs. The lichens at Pollochro are found on the older, veteran trees within the woodland and on rocks.

The wet woodland feature was monitored in January 2012 and found to be in unfavourable declining condition as regeneration and browsing level targets were not met. There was no or little evidence of seedling regeneration, and vegetative alder regeneration showed evidence of moderate to heavy browsing.

The wood pasture and parkland feature of interest has not yet been monitored as this feature was added in 2012 following a site visit by SNH's woodland specialist.

The lichen assemblage was last monitored in October 2010 and found to be in favourable declining condition. The oak coppice woodland in the south end of the SSSI has a more dense canopy cover than there should be to allow light to penetrate, which lichen require. There is also a lack of tree species (e.g. holly and hazel are rare), which is probably due to past selective felling when the oak woodland was managed for oak timber production. However, as trees die the canopy will open up more, creating new glades and appropriate grazing should allow some regeneration, encouraging new tree species to get away but without allowing too much regeneration that would cause any glades to become too dense.

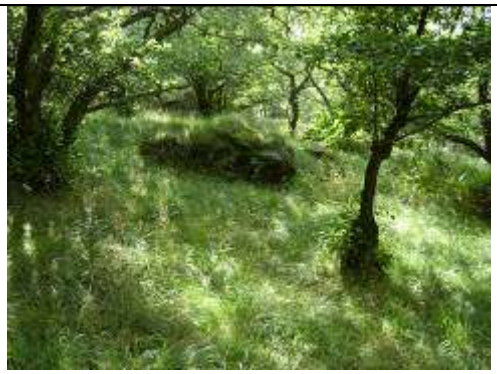
The bryophyte assemblage (mosses and liverworts) was last monitored in June 2003 and found to be in favourable, maintained condition.

In the wood pasture and parkland areas, lichens are doing well as excessive grazing has led to open, well-lit areas which they need. However, in the longer term, excessive browsing by goats and deer means there is no replacement of trees as they die and so browsing levels need to be reduced. In contrast, in the old RSPB deer fenced exclosures, there is excessive regeneration, as they are not being grazed at all, and this is not good for the lichen interest either as they need lots of light.

The site also forms part of the Loch Lomond Woods Special Area of Conservation

(SAC) which is of European interest for its Atlantic oak woodland and otter population. The deciduous woodlands are of largely ancient origin with oak dominating on the drier acidic soils and slope alder wood, with ash on the wetter flushed soils. Upland oak woodland and wet woodlands such as these have a restricted distribution nationally, with the wet woodland found at Pollochro being amongst the best example of its type within the Stirling Council area.

Otters were monitored in August 2003 and found to be in favourable maintained condition. The oak woodland SAC feature, of which the woodlands at Pollochro are a relatively small part, was last monitored in June 2002 and found to be in unfavourable, declining condition. Across the whole SAC, targets were not met for structural diversity, standing deadwood, browsing impact, recent regeneration and the presence of non-native species.

Bryophytes on rock outcrop	Wet alder woodland
	

Past and present management

Historically, the small area of oak woodland at the south end of the site was managed as a rotational oak coppice with standards to supply timber, charcoal and oak bark for tannin. Past woodland management has tended to result in a canopy composition that is of uniform age and impoverished tree species composition. Much of the remainder of the site has been managed as wood pasture. The Pollochro Woods are therefore very much grazed woodlands and probably have been for centuries. Currently, all of the sheep have been removed (apart from a few that have escaped), and it is only deer and an increasing feral goat population that remain.

The Inversnaid RSPB Reserve covers a substantial central part of the SSSI (and also extends to take in a large adjacent area of open moorland to the east). Key bird species using the woodlands within the Reserve include pied flycatcher, redstart, wood warbler and tree pipit.

RSPB has recently prepared an updated Management Plan for the period 2009 -14. Key actions relating to the SSSI are:

- Review and implement deer and goat management plan
- Carry out annual deer and goat culls as required by the above
- Create deadwood, if required, to meet Site Condition Monitoring targets
- Relocate or remove exclosure fencing where regeneration is above 1.5m

The Reserve is also managed as a key component of a large scale forest habitat network project - the Great Trossachs Forest - linking native woodlands on Loch

Lomondside with those of Loch Katrine and Glen Finglas. RSPB Scotland, Woodland Trust Scotland and Forestry Commission Scotland are all working together as part of this initiative, which seeks to manage and extend native woodlands across the area.

RSPB also seek to provide enhanced opportunities for visitors to the Reserve, as well as promoting volunteer involvement and educational use.

Pollochro woods lie within the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the Loch Lomond National Scenic Area. The area is very popular for recreation, particularly for walks through the east Loch Lomondside woods along the West Highland Way, which passes along the western side of the site.

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

We wish to work with the owners and occupiers 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 to monitor the effectiveness of the management plan.

The EU Habitats and Birds Directives oblige Government to avoid, in SACs and SPAs, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species, as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, where 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. **Set up on-going herbivore impact monitoring.**
   On-going monitoring should be used to inform appropriate levels of browsing by feral goats and deer to maintain the woodland, lichen and bryophyte interest features. Carry out goat and deer control as required.

2. **Maintain the condition and extent of the woodland features of interest.**
   Reduce browsing impacts to appropriate levels such that woodland structure and processes, including natural regeneration, are enhanced but not to the detriment of the lichen interest.

3. **Maintain the lichen and bryophyte features of interest.**
   Maintain the woodland features on which the key species of lichens and bryophytes depend through appropriate grazing levels to be determined by on-going herbivore impact monitoring.

4. **Maintain otter populations.**
   Ensure otters are able to continue to thrive in woodland areas by maintaining and enhancing riparian woodland to ensure resting and breeding sites are available.

Date last reviewed: 26 March 2012