SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

Caspian House
Clydebank Business
Park Clydebank
G81 2NR

Tel: 0141 951 4488
Fax: 0141 951 8948

POSSIL MARSH
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1310

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.

Description of the site

Possil Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located to the north of Lambhill, immediately adjacent to the Forth and Clyde canal. It comprises an area of shallow, standing water surrounded by a diverse range of habitats. This loch is mesotrophic, meaning that it contains an intermediate level of nutrients. The loch is surrounded by extensive fen/swamp communities, which include limited areas of locally rare species-rich lesser tussock sedge fen and at the southern end of the site an extensive fen with large stands of greater reedmace, bottle sedge, water sedge and marsh cinquefoil.

The loch contains a central mire ‘island’ that could be regarded as a precursor stage of raised bog formation as it supports an area of vegetation that is capable of forming peat. Possil Marsh is one of only three remaining natural water bodies within the Glasgow City Council area, and the fen/swamp communities are the largest of their type within the area.

The condition of the natural feature is favourable, as the extent of the standing waterbody and the nutrient levels have been maintained. However, the favourable condition was considered to be at risk due to concerns that run-off from the road and surrounding area may be having an adverse impact and causing gradual enrichment of the loch.

Of additional interest, although not part of the notified feature, are a range of habitats and species. Habitats within the site include dry grassland, wet meadow and willow/birch scrub woodland. The site provides nesting cover and wintering grounds for a wide diversity of bird species: a total of 145 species of birds have been recorded with up to 22 species breeding, notably reed bunting. The site also provides suitable habitat for a wide range of invertebrates, with two nationally scarce species and a number of locally scarce species. Possil Marsh is the most north westerly known location for the swan mussel (*Anodonta cygnea*), which has been recorded at only five sites in Scotland during the last century. The site also holds tufted loosestrife, which is listed in the Scarce Plant Atlas.

Natural feature of Possil Marsh SSSI	Feature condition (date monitored)
Mesotrophic loch	Favourable, maintained (June 2004)

Swan mussel	Tufted loosestrife
	

Past and present management

The site forms part of a Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) reserve that they have managed for nature conservation since they were gifted the site in 1982. Their management has involved path construction, ditch digging, pond digging, hedge planting, clearance of vegetation, fencing and construction of reserve signs. Various attempts have been made to control the water level but have been unsuccessful. The SWT currently have a ten-year management plan ending in 2014.

In the 1990s both the Council and the Inland Waterways Board dug drainage ditches on the west and east sides respectively to alleviate flooding on the A879. The Council have also dug a ditch from the cemetery outlets towards the loch to remove silt blocking the pipes, and regular drainage work occurs at the water inlet. The marsh now acts as a sump, taking drainage water from the cemetery and surface water run-off from the road. Additional ditches were cut by SWT with the aim of preventing public access to sensitive parts of the site and to provide a firebreak. However these ditches have since become heavily vegetated by reed sweet grass.

Historically, Possil Marsh was part of a much larger wetland located to the south east. In the late eighteenth century the construction of the Forth and Clyde Canal severely affected the site hydrology and by the mid nineteenth century the loch was reported to be dry during the summer months. It is thought that mining subsidence resulted in the formation of a permanent water body. There is evidence that the site was used for agriculture, however by the 1960s the fields had reverted to rank grasslands. Some grassland species, such as grass of parnassus and adder's-tongue fern, have been lost due to the subsequent vigorous growth of grasses smothering these and other species. Species such as sundew, bog asphodel, bladderwort, marshwort and creeping willow were previously recorded at the site but have now disappeared.

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.

1. **To maintain the water quality and the composition and structure of the macrophyte (aquatic plant) community** by preventing further nutrient enrichment from run-off from the road and surrounding areas. This may be achieved by creating waterside buffer strips to intercept run-off or through a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS).

2. **To maintain the extent and water level of the loch** by discouraging unnatural water level fluctuations and preventing the encroachment of reed sweet grass and scrub onto the lochside.

Other factors affecting the natural feature of the site

Invasive species: The encroachment of reed sweet grass throughout the site has become particularly marked and may cause suppression of less vigorous and more notable species of flora. The increase in nutrients entering the loch may be responsible for the spread of this species.

Human induced factors: Vandalism at the site is of concern. In the past it has taken the form of burning, shooting, egg collecting, littering and general damage to site property.

Date last reviewed: 8 November 2007