



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdair air fad airson Alba air fad

SANDA ISLANDS
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1402

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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.

This Statement is available in Gaelic on request.

| Natural features of Sanda Islands SSSI | Condition of feature (date monitored) |
|--|--|
| Maritime cliff | Favourable, maintained (July 2004) |
| Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>), breeding | Favourable, maintained (June 2001) |
| Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>), breeding | Favourable, maintained (June 2008) |
| Great black-backed gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>), breeding | Unfavourable, declining (June 2008) |
| Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>), breeding | Favourable, maintained (June 2001) |
| Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>), breeding | Unfavourable, recovering (June 2001) |
| Manx shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>), breeding | Favourable, maintained (June 2001) |
| Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>), breeding | Unfavourable, declining (May 2008) |
| Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>), breeding | Favourable, maintained (June 2001) |
| Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>), breeding | Unfavourable, declining (June 2008) |
| Storm petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>), breeding | Favourable, maintained (July 2008) |
| Black guillemot (<i>Cepphus grylle</i>), breeding | Unfavourable declining (May 2008) |

Description of the site

The SSSI includes Sanda Island, Sheep Island, Glunimore Island and associated islets and rocks and is nationally important for its breeding sea bird populations and maritime cliff.

Maritime cliffs extend around much of the island and are mainly former sea cliffs that are slightly set back from the present coastline. Between these sea cliffs and the present coastline are raised beach areas with splash zone communities and coastal grassland and/or bog while the cliff top areas are mainly either coastal grassland or heath. There are also areas of vegetated slopes with maritime grassland communities which lead into boulder fields adjacent to the coast.

The condition of the maritime cliff community was monitored in June 2004. Overall the feature was found to be in **Favourable maintained condition**. The characteristic species were all present and vehicle damage and stock trampling were absent or rare. The current management of this SSSI does therefore not need to be reviewed at present.

The islands are a stop-over point on the bird migration route of the west coast of Britain. The location of Sanda makes it an important southern outlying location for many breeding seabirds in the context of their Scottish distribution. The variety of breeding seabird species that are present form an important and diverse breeding colony. There are internationally important numbers of shag and razorbill. The shag colony is the largest in the Clyde seabird population. The islands also support the largest colonies in Kintyre of fulmar, kittiwake, great black-backed gull, puffin, black guillemot and guillemot. These birds nest on the cliff top areas, cliffs, steep vegetated slopes, rock/boulder and shoreline.

Manx shearwater and storm petrel form the most southerly established breeding colonies for these species in Scotland. They breed mainly in the vegetated slopes of Sanda and Sheep Island, including areas away from the coast. The storm petrel colony is confined to Sanda Island using sea wall and coastal boulder locations. The location of Sanda results in an interchange of pre-breeding birds, between Scottish, Irish, Welsh and English colonies. The islands support a population of around 30 breeding pairs of cormorant. These usually breed in small scattered colonies and Sanda supports the largest colony in Kintyre.

The condition of all eleven species of breeding bird was monitored in June 2001 while a select six were surveyed again between May and July 2008, the results of which supersede the 2001 survey. Overall between the two surveys six species were found to be in **Favourable maintained condition**. These species were considered favourable because there was a population increase compared to the original population numbers from 1990 – 1994. Five of the 11 species were found to be in **Unfavourable condition**. This was due to the fact that there was a population loss of 25% or more compared to the original population numbers from 1990 – 1994. Reasons for this decline are unclear except that these results reflect other results for breeding bird surveys around the UK in the same period, and is not thought to be related to land management activities on the islands.

| Puffin | Manx shearwater |
|---|--|
|  |  |

Past and present management

Sanda island was actively farmed in the past with improved inbye land and extensive sheep and cattle grazing. The farm buildings became derelict after they were abandoned in 1976. The cottages at the lighthouse were also inhabited by the light house keepers prior to automation.

There was a long history of collecting gulls eggs by local people from Campbeltown on the islands, but this has now ceased.

At present the island is used for extensive sheep grazing. The previous owner of the island has also established a self catering holiday business utilising parts of the farm steadings and the former lighthouse cottages.

Some bird watching boat trips from Campbeltown include the islands in their itinerary, but they do not usually put ashore.

Mink were confirmed as having arrived on the island in 1996 so a programme of trapping was then instigated under a SNH management agreement. Only 1 mink was trapped; this may have been the only one present. In 2010 mink were suspected of returning to the island. A new SNH management agreement was therefore proposed in 2011 to continue the mink trapping.

A group of bird ringers visit the islands regularly to monitor the bird population. There is no evidence that disturbance through ringing, at present levels, is detrimental to the breeding bird populations.

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 condition and extent of the maritime cliff habitat

Maintain stocking at a level at which there is no obvious damage to the vegetation from over-grazing or trampling.

2. To avoid significant disturbance of the breeding seabird population.

Excessive disturbance can affect the breeding success of nesting birds. It is important that any development of the tourist potential of the island is carefully planned to safeguard the nesting birds. Access and recreation should also be taken responsibly in accordance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. There are no cats on the island at present, but the introduction of any by future new owners could have a detrimental impact on the ground nesting birds. Dogs are brought to the island by holiday makers. If allowed to run free these could disturb seabird populations.

3. To maintain the population and distribution of the seabird population within the site

Maintain the mink trapping programme and monitor the benefits of trapping.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Sand eels: The breeding seabirds are largely dependent on the sand eel population for feeding. Any significant decline of the sand eel population is likely to have a detrimental effect on the breeding success of the seabird colonies.

Date last reviewed: 18 March 2011