



**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
**Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba**  
All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdair air fad airson Alba air fad

**BALQUHIDDEROCK WOOD**  
**Site of Special Scientific Interest**

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Site code: 141**

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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.

<b>Natural Features of Balquhiddelock Wood SSSI</b>	<b>Feature condition</b>
Wet Woodland	Unfavourable recovering (April 2008)

**Description of the site**

Balquhiddelock Wood SSSI is a small area of ancient, wet woodland with a particularly diverse ground-flora. It is mainly alder and oak wood, although the site also has a variety of other smaller habitat 'pockets' (such as spring and flush areas) which add to its ecological interest.

Balquhiddelock Wood is distinct from the surrounding flat carse area as it is located on a steep slope and also has several burns, and wet, marshy areas within it. It is small, at 6.2 hectares, although ancient woodlands are often even smaller than this. Its ancient woodland status means that it has a proven continuity of woodland cover since at least 1750.

Known locally as the Bluebell Wood, it is a wood for all seasons, with glorious colours in autumn and a woodland floor carpeted with bluebells and stitchwort in spring. As well as being a SSSI, it is a popular and well used Local Nature Reserve which is managed by Stirling Council. It has a high amenity value due its proximity to an urban area, its accessibility, and the lack of any similar site with public access in the Bannockburn area.

The woodland is considered to be in unfavourable – recovering condition due to the high proportion of non-native sycamores in the woodland, but also recognising that

current management and funding is in place to help tackle this problem.



Wood anemone, part of the rich ground flora.



The drier eastern end of the site, dominated by oak, 'Bluebell Wood'.

### **Past and present management**

Balquhiddelock Wood has existed in a mature state for over 250 years. Historically the wood has been used for small-scale timber extraction and over-wintering cattle. More recently small-scale tree felling and ground-flora disturbance has occurred during pipe laying. In all cases natural recovery appears to have been generally successful.

Conservation activities have only occurred from the 1970s onwards. These include vegetation surveying, site condition monitoring, work by the Balquhiddelock Wood Conservation Group (BWCG) – including the upgrading of the footpath network - and provision of interpretive boards.

Present use of the site is for recreational, educational or conservation purposes only. An extensive network of paths accommodates current recreation levels, although many 'desire-lines' are also evident at present.

Stirling Council recently secured funding through the Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) Programme which aims at improving access and recreation opportunities for people living in towns and cities. The work at Balquhiddelock Wood includes the upgrading of paths to encourage people to keep on the footpaths rather than spreading off into the main wood. Management also includes removal of non native sycamore trees to encourage natural regeneration of native species and tackling littering and trampling problems. The scheme runs from 2006 to 2011 and a detailed 'Woodland and Access Management Plan' was drawn up for Stirling Council under the funding package.

The woodland vegetation is, on the whole, considered to be in good condition except for the regeneration of non-native sycamore. However, the WIAT programme should help to improve this problem.

The site's proximity to built-up areas means that it is a popular for informal recreation. There are problems with litter, dog fouling, vegetation trampling and damage from

vehicles. The site's LNR status should help to manage these recreational pressures.

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

We wish to work with land managers 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 the effectiveness of management.

1. To improve the condition of the wet woodland by continuing the programme of non-natives species removal, primarily sycamore, and continue to leave fallen and standing deadwood, including dead tree limbs, *wherever it is safe to do so* to maintain the presence of deadwood.
2. To maintain the diverse ground-flora and variety of habitats by striking a balance between recreational use of the site and minimising damage from human activities such as trampling from straying off paths.
3. To maintain the wet conditions in the woodland.

**Other factors affecting the natural features of the site**

The opportunity to use the adjacent buffer strip, which lies immediately outwith the SSSI boundary, to increase the woods ecological and amenity value will also influence future management.

Date last reviewed: 26 February 2010