



### 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.

<b>Natural features of South Laggan Fen SSSI</b>	<b>Condition of feature (and date monitored)</b>
Fen, Marsh, Swamp – Transitional Fen	Favourable – maintained (July 2000)

### Description of the Site

South Laggan Fen lies at the southern end of Loch Oich in the Great Glen, 13 km southwest of Fort Augustus and 22 km northeast of Fort William, on land at or around the high water level of the loch.

The majority of the site supports fen and swamp vegetation with associated open water, grassland and woodland. It is one of a very small number of species rich, lowland fens with moderate nutrient levels found within Lochaber and is notable for its size, naturalness, diversity of vegetation types and range of plant species.

The condition of the transitional fen was assessed as favourable in July 2000. However in July 2003 it was noted that there had been a change in management with no seasonal cattle grazing. It is not known at present what effect this will have on the condition of the site.

The permanently wet reed bed lies between the southern tip of Loch Oich and the Great Glen Water Park access road. The reed bed is dominated by one of the few extensive stands of common reed swamp in the north of Lochaber along with water horsetail, bogbean, several pondweeds and a stand of locally notable bladder sedge.

The drier fen meadow, found to the south and east of the access road, is subject to seasonal flooding and water seepage from adjacent areas. Sharp-flowered rush dominates this vegetation, with abundant tall herb species such as meadowsweet and common valerian, together with a number of species typical of semi-swamp conditions such as bottle sedge, and water horse-tail. Where the water flow is impeded, this vegetation grades into areas of wet heath dominated by *Sphagnum* mosses and heathers.

A number of birds breed on the site, including sedge warbler, reed bunting, snipe, mallard, mute swan and moorhen. Additionally, the area gives shelter to small numbers of wildfowl in the winter.

There are a number of base-rich (alkaline) springs, and these are a very distinctive feature of this site. Runnels and hummocks are associated with these springs and support species rich fen vegetation. Eleven sedge species have been recorded in the runnels, including dioecious sedge and tawny sedge. Several of the springs, which feed the fen, are located within the ash-hazel woodland flanking the eastern boundary of the site. Small pockets of alder are present on the fen. The transition from woodland to fen forms part of the interest of this site. The suite of vegetation communities at South Laggan Fen reflects subtle changes in both water flow and water chemistry, and it is the diversity of communities, which makes the site so important.

### **Past and Present Management**

Most of the SSSI is owned by Forest Enterprise and used for agricultural grazing with the remaining SSSI land owned by several companies and individuals. The site at present is used for a wide range of activities, including, farming, recreation, and sporting activities. Other activities or projects include ongoing maintenance of the way-leaves and road and rhododendron control.

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

We wish to work with the owners and 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.

1. **To maintain the extent and condition of the transitional fen** by: retaining the existing hydrological regime, with high water table and periodic flooding of the fen meadow, by maintaining the culverts under the causeway;  
Continuation of Rhododendron control;  
Ensuring that paths are well maintained and defined in areas of high popularity.
2. **To improve the condition and extend the areas of transitional fen** by: re-establishing levels of sheep and cattle grazing which maintain a balance between an open, short sward free from thatch and overgrazing, which prevents flowering and seed setting.

Last updated: 28 March 2008