Scottish Natural Heritage

# THREAVE AND CARLINGWARK LOCH
# Site of Special Scientific Interest

## SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

**Site code: 1535**

**Holmpark Industrial Estate**
**New Galloway Road**
**NEWTON STEWART**
**DG8 6BF**

**Tel 01671 401075**
**Fax 01671 401078**

### 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 Threave and Carlingwark Loch SSSI | Condition of feature (and date monitored) | Other relevant designations |
|---|---|---|
| Fen meadow | Unfavourable, no change (September 2004) | |
| Breeding bird assemblage | Favourable, maintained (July 2008) | |
| Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding | Not monitored | SPA |

### Description of the site

Threave and Carlingwark Loch SSSI is situated within and to the south and west of Castle Douglas and comprises Carlingwark Loch, Carlingwark Lane, a 3km section of the River Dee and their surrounding wetland habitats. The SSSI is a complex and diverse wetland system with large areas of open water surrounded by fen meadow.

Fens are complex habitats and include wet marshy grassland dominated by rushes, flood plain, scrub, woodland and areas of open water dominated by tall vegetation such as common reed

and reed canary-grass. Such diversity provides outstanding opportunities for rare and local plant species; Threave and Carlingwark Loch SSSI supports several species, including cowbane and mudwort, that occur at their northern or southern limit within Britain or are present here in one of a few Scottish localities. The unfavourable status of the fen meadow feature is due to the presence of large/rank grasses, in particular Reed sweet-grass, mainly along drains where it frequently out-competes all other species and fills the channels.

The SSSI is an important ornithological site supporting wintering populations of greylag geese which are part of the internationally important populations of the Loch Ken and River Dee Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA) designated under the EC Birds Directive. The other qualifying feature of the SPA is Greenland white-fronted goose, which occurs rarely on the SSSI. The SSSI is part of the SPA together with a 7km stretch of the Loch Ken reservoir and Kenmure Holms SSSI at the north end of Loch Ken. The SSSI supports an average of around 1% of the total Icelandic population that winters in Great Britain. The SSSI also supports an outstanding assemblage of breeding birds including little grebe, great crested grebe, water rail, shoveler and mute swan. Carlingwark Loch is also one of the top sites in the Stewartry for wintering waterfowl, particularly pochard, tufted duck, wigeon and goldeneye.

**Past and present management**

Carlingwark Loch was originally a much larger loch and covered an area of about 72ha, until, in 1765, an Act of Parliament was passed to enable a 2km stretch of canal, Carlingwark Lane, to be dug between the loch and River Dee. This resulted in partial drainage of the loch for the purpose of procuring marl. The loch now measures around 40ha and is used in part for recreational activities managed by an advisory committee that includes environmental shore-based studies and limited boating.

The Loch is popular with walkers and birdwatchers and a footpath from the town goes out along the south shore of the loch to an area of marsh and a bird hide. Angling is also popular for pike and perch.

Over half of the SSSI, which includes a section of the River Dee, Carlingwark Lane and surrounding habitats, is under the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) who manage part of the SSSI as a wildfowl sanctuary.

Part of the SSSI is under an SNH management agreement, which supports land management activities including stock grazing, fencing, improved public access, provision of a bird hide, game management and the removal of pest species such as crows, foxes and mink.

Carlingwark Loch has historically suffered from high nutrient input and this has resulted in blooms of blue-green algae, which have affected the loch during summer months for several decades. In March 2006, barley straw was introduced to the loch in four 200m long floating sections in an attempt to inhibit the algal growth.

**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 monitor the effectiveness of the management agreements.

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, in so far as 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. **To maintain the condition and extent of the wetland habitats including the fen meadow so that the SSSI continues to support rare and interesting plant species**
   Maintain grazing and mowing at a level that provides a varied sward and avoids damage caused by over-grazing, trampling or poaching. This will help to prevent scrub encroachment and maintain habitat diversity.

2. **To maintain the diversity of habitats and species through continued water level and water quality management**
   High water levels during the winter encourage the use of the area by waterfowl. Stable levels during the nesting season benefit breeding birds and grassland management, whilst occasional flooding and subsequent drying out of pools is required for invertebrate management. The water within the site should not be too rich in nutrients, otherwise this would favour more vigorous and commoner plants. This could also affect the oxygen levels in the water, resulting in adverse effects on the aquatic invertebrates.

3. **To maintain the numbers of greylag geese at internationally important levels**
   Ensure disturbance to feeding and roosting birds does not increase beyond the current level and maintain the wetland habitat diversity and quality.

Date last reviewed: 19 March 2010.