



Scottish Natural Heritage

TORRIDON FOREST
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1550

Anancaun
Kinlochewe
Achnasheen
Ross-shire
IV22 2PA

Tel. 01445 760254
Fax. 01445 760301 Email:
EAST_HIGHLAND@snh.gov.uk

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.

Description of the site

Torridon Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a large upland site encompassing a range of mountains including Beinn Alligin, Liathach and Ruadh-stac Mòr to the north of the village of Torridon and Sgurr Dhubh and Coire a'Cheud Chnoic 8 km to the east. These support a range of western upland communities including dry heaths, scree, crags, summit heaths and areas of calcareous grassland. Several of the plant communities are restricted to the NW Highlands and associated with oceanic conditions. The predominantly north-facing aspect of the site includes superb corries with dramatic cliffs. The geology of the site has played an integral part in the range of plant communities found as well as being a feature of the SSSI itself.

Quaternary landforms (those associated with the Ice Age) include lateral, median, fluted and hummocky moraines (in the form of Coire a' Cheud Chnoic, *the Valley of a hundred hills*) and the mass movement feature found at Coire Toll a'Mhadaidh Mor is the largest and finest example of a rock avalanche in Scotland. The underlying geology of the area is formed of bands of Torridonian sandstone, Lewisian gneiss and Moine schists. This range of features makes the site of national importance for its geomorphology and of local geological importance.

Torridon Forest is also of national importance for its diverse assemblage of upland vascular plants including tufted saxifrage *Saxifraga cespitosa*, curved woodrush *Luzula arcuata* and arctic mouse ear *Cerastium arcticum*, as well as its communities of mosses, liverworts and lichens associated with oceanic conditions (including nationally scarce species). Insects associated with the important habitats on the site are also features of national importance and include sawflies, wasps and ants, spiders and

beetles.

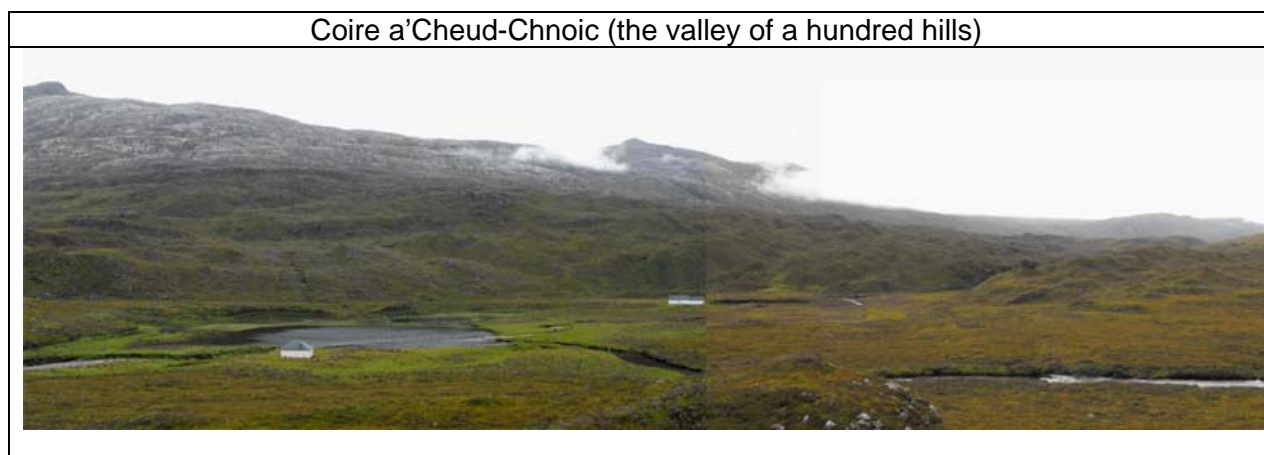
Torridon Forest is part of the Loch Maree Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and many of the habitats are of European importance. Not all the features of the SAC are found within the Torridon Forest SSSI but the site contains extensive areas of the important upland heath, bog, grassland and scree habitats.

Recent monitoring has shown that most of the protected natural features of the SSSI are in favourable condition. However, when monitored in 2006 the subalpine calcareous grassland and subalpine dry heath were found to be in an unfavourable condition. Browsing pressure by deer is affecting these habitats and in some fenced areas the calcareous grasslands are also becoming rank.

There are currently no monitoring results available for the invertebrate features 'Sawflies, wasps and ants' or 'spiders'.

Most of the SAC features found within the SSSI are also considered to be in favourable condition. However, when monitored during 2006 the dry and wet heath habitats were considered to be in an unfavourable condition across the SAC as a whole with evidence of high levels of grazing and trampling by deer recorded at several locations within the SSSI. There was also evidence of localised damage to the montane grassland and alpine heath communities due to grazing, trampling and manuring by deer.

Although the 'western acidic oak wood' and 'Caledonian forest' features are considered to be in an unfavourable condition within the wider Loch Maree Complex SAC the condition of the relatively small areas of these habitats within Torridon Forest SSSI have not been monitored. Alder woodland does not occur within this SSSI.





Natural features of Torridon Forest SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations (and equivalent SAC feature name)
Quaternary of Scotland	Favourable, maintained (February 2002)	
Mass movement	Not yet monitored	

Subalpine calcareous grassland	Unfavourable, declining (June 2006)	
Subalpine dry heath	Unfavourable, no change (June 2006)	SAC (Dry heath)
Siliceous scree (includes boulder fields)	Favourable, maintained (June 2006)	SAC (Acidic scree)
Alpine heath	Favourable, maintained (June 2006)	SAC (Alpine and subalpine heaths)
Alpine moss heath and associated vegetation	Favourable, maintained (June 2006)	SAC (Montane acid grasslands)
Vascular plant assemblage	Favourable, maintained (September 2003)	
Sawflies, wasps and ants	Not yet assessed	
Spiders	Not yet assessed	
Beetles	Favourable, maintained (September 2003)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Acidic scree	Favourable, maintained (November 2006)	SAC
Alder woodland on floodplains	Unfavourable, no change (July 2004)	SAC
Alpine and subalpine heaths	Favourable, maintained (November 2006)	SAC
Blanket bog	Favourable, maintained (November 2006)	SAC
Bog woodland	Favourable, maintained (August 2008)	SAC
Caledonian forest	Unfavourable, no change (August 2003)	SAC
Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	SAC
Depressions on peat substrate	Favourable, maintained (November 2006)	SAC
Dry heath	Unfavourable, no change (November 2006)	SAC
Montaine acid grasslands	Favourable, maintained (November 2006)	SAC
Otter	Favourable, maintained (July 2004)	SAC
Plants in crevices on acid rock	Favourable, maintained (November 2006)	SAC
Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks	Favourable, maintained (August 2008)	SAC
Tall herb communities	Favourable, maintained	SAC

	(November 2006)	
Western acidic oak wood	Unfavourable, no change (July 2004)	SAC
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Unfavourable, no change (November 2006)	SAC

Beinn Alligin and Sgorr a' Chadail in the foreground (with Beinn Dearg in the background - outwith SSSI)	Hepatic Mat, Liathach
	

Past and present management

In the area around Torridon there is evidence of human settlement dating back to the early Bronze age. Evidence of a larger population on the shores of Loch Torridon is found in the high number of shieling sites scattered above the road. Much of this lower ground is assumed to have been originally wooded but it is thought that a combination of timber extraction, muirburn and sheep grazing led to a gradual reduction in tree cover.

The largest proportion of the site was established as a deer forest around 1875, with some areas of croft land being fenced against deer and to graze cattle. In 1967 this estate passed to the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) whose primary purpose of ownership is to protect the unspoilt natural and cultural landscape character, habitats and species of the area whilst encouraging responsible use of the estate by visitors.

Deer management continues on the site which forms part of the Gairloch Conservation Unit.

Torridon Forest lies within an area which is renowned for its hill walking and climbing and includes a number of popular summits. In the past this has led to serious erosion problems on a number of walking routes and footpath repair work has been undertaken since 1991 as part of a programme of work to reduce the impact of walkers on sensitive habitats. Most of the lower level paths have been successfully upgraded and work is currently underway or planned for higher level sections where access and terrain are more difficult.

The NTS has been developing woodland management proposals for the property with the long term aim of restoring the climax woodland community within suitable areas of

their property. This is in accord with the management aims of the adjacent and ecologically similar Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve. The spread of non-native rhododendron is being managed by clearance and spraying and further work is being considered.

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.

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 SiteLink facility).

1. To maintain the important glacial and mass movement landforms in favourable condition so that relict features are undamaged and available for study for example by
 - Maintaining footpaths and managing access
 - Management of *Rhododendron ponticum* and other non-native trees and shrubs

2. To maintain the function, structure and extent of important upland communities of the SSSI and SAC for example by
 - Maintaining footpaths and managing access
 - Management of *Rhododendron ponticum* and other non-native trees and shrubs
 - Encouraging the expansion of native woodland where it will not adversely affect the integrity of other important habitats

3. To improve the condition of subalpine calcareous grassland, subalpine dry heath and wet heath by for example
 - appropriate management of grazing and trampling by deer

4. To maintain appropriate site conditions for the vascular plant and invertebrate assemblages through appropriate management of associated habitats

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Climate change is likely to have an influence on the natural features.

Date last reviewed: 28 April 2010