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TORRISDALE CLIFF
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1551

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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.

Natural features of Torrisdale Cliff SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)
Upland mixed ash woodland	Favourable recovered (June 2008)

Description of the site

Torrisdale Cliff Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 92 m above sea level, 15.9km northeast of Campbeltown. The site is 1 km long and 0.5 km wide. There are a series of cliffs running north to south through the site, which are very steep at the southern end and provide nesting sites for herons, ravens and peregrine falcon. In the north the cliffs are higher but less steep and support an almost continuous tree cover. At the base of the cliffs there is a narrow band of poorly vegetated shingle beach with occasional patches of saltmarsh.

The site is dominated by locally rare ash and elm semi-natural woodland and is one of the largest remaining blocks of ancient woodland in Kintyre. The woodland flora has a typically west coast character and includes oceanic ferns and an important range of oceanic bryophyte species. There is a diverse ground flora including the locally rare broad-leaved helleborine.

Those inland areas of the site which are not under tree cover generally support wet grassland and marshland communities which merge into scrub on the woodland fringe. There are also two small patches of wet dwarf shrub heath covering exposed knolls in the north west part of the site.

1. Semi natural woodland

1.1 Ash and elm native woodland

The site supports one of the largest remaining fragments of semi-natural ash and elm

woodland in Kintyre. The wood can be classed as being of 'ancient' origin since it has appeared on all of the maps of the area published since 1750. The fact that it has survived may be due to its position, since it covers the steep slopes of the sea cliffs and is therefore unlikely to have been exploited for timber or grazed by stock.

Ash and elm dominate the woodland, although there are a few isolated oak. The understory layer is well developed and includes hazel, birch and rowan. The woodland supports a diverse ground flora, which includes foxglove, dogs mercury, wood sorrel, common cow wheat, cock's foot, enchanters nightshade, creeping soft-grass and various sedge species. Ferns are abundant, and hay scented buckler fern, male fern, hard fern and lemon scented fern are all well represented.

There are a number of small stands of mature *Rhododendron* on the sea cliffs at the southern end of the site.

1.2 Birch and rowan woodland

The majority of the site to the west of the sea cliffs is dominated by birch and rowan semi-natural woodland. Birch is by far the most abundant species although rowan is locally abundant and there are isolated stands of hazel. The understory layer is poorly developed and there are few seedlings or saplings. The ground flora is dominated by grasses, although common woodland herbs such as hairy woodrush, wood sorrel and common violet are well represented.

Dense stands of bracken have colonised most of the glades, although it is largely absent from areas where there is a continuous canopy cover. There are a number of newly established patches of young *Rhododendron* beside the burn which marks the western edge of the site.

1.3 The Allt Ciche ravine

This excellent example of a deeply incised coastal ravine marks the southern boundary of the site. Tree cover is continuous, and is dominated by birch and ash, with occasional stands of hazel and alder. The ravine is damp and well shaded and supports a remarkably diverse community of important oceanic bryophytes including populations of *Frullania microphylla*, *Jubula hutchinsiae*, *Lejeunea patens*, *L. lamacerina*, *Marchesinia Mackaii*, *Metzgeria conjugata* and *M. leptoneura*. There are also various 'oceanic' ferns, including hay scented buckler fern, Wilson's filmy fern and Tunbridge filmy fern.

There are a number of large, mature beech overhanging the steep banks of the ravine, however there does not appear to be any significant beech regeneration.

There are also a number of small stands of mature *Rhododendron* on the seas cliffs at the southern end of the site. It is recommended that this should be eradicated from the site while it remains a manageable problem.



2. Saltmarsh

There is a narrow raised beach at the north end of the site (at approximately NGR NR 799 353 northwards) which supports a thin band of floristically rich saltmarsh.

3. Birds

Peregrine falcon, herons and ravens nest on the cliffs of the SSSI.

The condition of the notified natural feature of Torrisdale cliff SSSI was monitored in June 2008. Overall, the feature was found to be in favourable and recovering condition. On average there were less than 3 age categories of tree within the existing woodland stand which indicates a lack of regeneration. Bracken was also found to be encroaching into open glades thereby shading out any young seedlings which are trying to establish. It was therefore recommended that this should be controlled.

Ferns	Open woodland
	

Past and present management

The site was grazed by cattle and sheep up until c.1980, and by 2 shetland ponies until the early 1990's. From 1994 until September 1999 the site was entered into a Woodland Grant Scheme with the aim of promoting native woodland regeneration across the SSSI. This involved excluding cattle and sheep from the wooded areas using stock fences. These fences are still in place.

Approximately 1 ha of the site (NR 797 350) was sprayed to control bracken in the summer of 1998. The operation however, was unsuccessful due to heavy rain immediately after spraying.

The site was entered into a SNH management agreement in October 2000. This involves non-woodland parts of the SSSI being grazed by cattle and sheep. These are excluded from wooded areas by stock fences. The management agreement expires in September 2015.

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 agreement.

SNH has 4 main objectives for the management of Torrisdale cliff:

1. Eradicate Rhododendron from the site. This will need to be done on a regular basis since there is a permanent seed source to the west of the site.
2. Control beech if monitoring shows it to be causing a problem.
3. Ensure a suitable grazing regime on the non-woodland areas of the site, and continue to exclude grazing stock from wooded areas, within the framework of the existing SNH management agreement.
4. Bracken control

Currently objectives 1 and 2 are not being met. There is no management in place to eradicate Rhododendron or control beech.