



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.

We welcome your views on this statement.

Description of the site

The West Coast of Jura SSSI is nationally important for its Quaternary and coastal geomorphology interest. The Quaternary period of geological time spans the last 2.6 million years of Earth history and is commonly known as the Ice Age. During this time, Scotland experienced a periodic build up and decay of glaciers. The most recent glacial event occurred between about 30,000 and 11,500 years ago, a time period termed the 'Late Devensian'.

The West Coast of Jura is an outstanding site of international importance for its assemblage of raised coastal landforms, including raised beach deposits, rock platforms and cliffs. The range of features and the extent and degree of their development are exceptional. The interest includes examples of the three rock platforms which occur variously along the west coast of Scotland and in the Inner Hebrides (the high, main and low rock platforms) and extensive staircases and spreads of unvegetated late glacial and postglacial gravel beach ridges. These raised beach landforms span approximately the last 15,000 years and are unparalleled elsewhere in Scotland for the length and continuity of their records of sea-level change. Several small areas of beach, dune and machair form additional and integral parts of the coastal system. Despite their small scale, they show remarkably diverse and dynamic forms. Corpach Bay, in particular, is of considerable geomorphological interest for an example of the comparatively rare type of confined cliff-foot machair.

The site also incorporates a medial moraine and a fine sequence of outwash terraces in Glenbatrick, which formed during the retreat of the Late Devensian ice sheet.

Name of natural feature
Coastal Geomorphology of Scotland
Quaternary of Scotland

Current condition of the natural features

Coastal Geomorphology of Scotland (results of monitoring in August 2002 and July 2004)

A site documentation report was prepared by the Earth Science Group in 1997, with additional site visits carried out by the Area Officer in 2002 and 2004 for site condition monitoring. Fixed point photography used in the site documentation report was repeated and the feature assessed against targets. The key physical elements of the feature, the beach, dune, machair and salt marsh landforms were assessed against the targets, process/dynamics, physical attributes, visibility, access, safety, and negative indicators. The feature was in favourable condition as all targets were met.

Quaternary of Scotland (results of monitoring in August 2002)

The feature was monitored in 2002 following the site documentation report in 1997. The feature includes raised marine landforms, high, main and low rock platforms, late glacial and postglacial raised gravel beach ridges and terraces. The morphology, extent, composition and structure of this feature remain intact and the fixed point photography showed little had changed since the site documentation report in 1997. The Quaternary of Scotland interest was therefore considered to be in favourable condition.

Past and present management

Ownership of the SSSI is divided between five owners, Tarbert Estate, Inver Estate, Ruantallain Estate, Ardlussa Estate and Barnhill Estate and the Crown Estate Commissioners.

The caves in the cliff at the back of the Main Rock Platform were used by funeral parties in transit to Iona several hundred years ago. The area may have been used for rough sheep and cattle grazing in the past at some of the now uninhabited bays. Extensive lazy bed systems within some of the west coast embayments, for example Glengarrisdale and Bagh Gleann nam Muc, provide evidence of former cultivation.

The site is managed for a variety of activities, namely; deer stalking, game shooting, traditional hill farming and walking. Cattle, wild goats and deer graze the SSSI and the adjacent vegetated hillsides. The SSSI is uninhabited with the exception of two bothies at Ruantallain and Glengarrisdale and a summer lodge at Glenpatrick.

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.

Continuity of landform assemblages and deposits

The SSSI contains outstanding examples of certain types of landforms. The objective of management is to maintain the integrity of the individual features and the landscape as a whole. The factors affecting the condition of the natural features are activities which damage the physical integrity of the landforms or impair their visibility, such as afforestation, bracken infestation or mineral extraction from the raised shingle ridges should be resisted.

- Bracken control on site would be endorsed as it would maintain access to the natural features