



Scottish Natural Heritage

WESTWATER RESERVOIR
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1621

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Purpose



Pink-footed goose

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.

Description of the site

Westwater Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 2km west of West Linton on the edge of the Pentland hills. This upland reservoir holds a large roost of pink-footed geese in the winter months. Between September and April (inclusive) over the period 2003/04 to 2007/08, the average peak number was 40,701, representing up to 11% of the British and total world wintering population. These geese form part of the Greenland/Iceland population which breed on these northern Islands and overwinter almost exclusively in the British Isles.



In addition to the above notified feature, the reservoir and adjacent shorelines have a varied breeding wildfowl, gull and wader population including common gull, ringed plover, dunlin, and common tern at numbers or densities outstanding for the Borders region.

The site is also classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive for the roost of pink-footed geese and the greater waterfowl assemblage. This wildfowl assemblage includes barnacle goose, teal, tufted duck and goldeneye.

The 2002 site condition monitoring (SCM) assessment found the feature to be in a favourable-maintained condition. Pink-footed geese numbers have risen steadily over the years; the average peak count at Westwater has risen more than 37% since classification as an SPA in 1993. This reflects the long-term British population trend as a whole, which is one of continued increase.

Natural features of Westwater Reservoir SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Pink-footed goose (<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>), non-breeding	Favourable - maintained (February 2002)	Westwater SPA

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	SPA
Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Favourable - maintained (February 2004)	Westwater SPA

Reservoir from dam	Pink-footed geese approaching roost
	

Past and present management

The reservoir was created in 1965 and has been managed as a public drinking water supply since. Attempts have been made to manage occasional algal blooms and phosphate enrichment by addition of barley straw bales and copper sulphate.

The reservoir is surrounded by the North Slipperfield Estate which manages the land primarily for rough grazing and grouse moor. The North Slipperfield Estate keeps the surrounding ground and shares the fishing rights on the reservoir with Scottish Water. Geese were shot on the site in the past by both landowners. Shooting is now prohibited within the SSSI boundary although consents are in place to allow for legal pest control. Shooting continues to take place outwith the site boundary on flight paths leaving the roost.

There is no significant cultivation above the reservoir. Shelter belts and mixed woodland plantations have been situated so as to minimise any effect on geese flight lines.

The principal recreational activities, apart from angling, are birdwatching, wildfowling and informal recreation, although public access has been discouraged in the past. The Scottish Borders Council Ranger Service arranges occasional guided walks.

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

We wish to work with the owners to protect the site and to maintain and, where necessary, enhance its feature 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 feature and monitor the effectiveness of the management agreement.

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 current levels of use of the site by Pink-footed geese and other waterfowl.

Fishing currently has a closed period over the critical winter months for the bird interests. This should continue in order to minimise disturbance to the roost. Public access has previously been discouraged for understandable reasons. However, the site and its features can be enjoyed if access is taken responsibly in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Information boards, signage and publications may help to promote a greater understanding of the site and prevent unintentional disturbance.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Extreme drought conditions could potentially lead to an abnormal drop in water levels at the reservoir. This could make the site undesirable as a roost for the wintering wildfowl.

Date last reviewed: 9 February 2011