

## CITATION

**BEINN AN LOCHAIN**  
**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**  
Argyll and Bute

Site code: 163

PLANNING AUTHORITY: Argyll and Bute Council  
Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NN 204080

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 56  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 364

AREA: 1369.23 hectares

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

**Biological: Upland habitats : Siliceous scree (includes boulder fields)**  
**: Tall herb ledge**  
**: Upland assemblage**

## DESCRIPTION

Beinn an Lochain Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located near the head of Loch Fyne, approximately 7 km north-west of the village of Arrochar. The site supports an extensive boulder field, which represents one of the best examples of this habitat type in the district. The rock type and geographical position of the SSSI in the southern Highlands also results in a rich variety of vegetation types.

The range of vegetation types this site supports is in part a reflection of the area's varied topography. Of particular interest is the boulder field to the north of Beinn an Lochain summit, which has enormous boulders amongst which grow a great diversity of Atlantic bryophytes and an abundance of ferns including *Dryopteris borreari*, *D. filix-mas* and *Athyrium filix-femina*. The boulder field within Beinn an Lochain SSSI represents one of the best examples of this habitat type in the Cowal area.

The extent of little-grazed vegetation on the massif is exceptional in this part of Scotland and has allowed the extensive development of a number of important and distinctive communities. Particularly notable are the tall herb and fern communities, which are not only confined to inaccessible ledges but occur widely across the site. These include carpets of acidophilous great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, blaeberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* grassland in the sub-montane zone and a luxuriant, calcicolous cliff ledge assemblage comprising flowering plants such as great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, water avens *Geum rivale*, wood crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum*, alpine saw-wort *Saussurea alpina*, smooth lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glabra* and angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, as well as ferns such as lemon-scented fern *Oreopteris limbosperma* and hard fern *Blechnum spicant*.

Beinn an Lochain provides one of the best representations of upland habitats in Scotland and is therefore notified as a SSSI for its upland habitat assemblage. In addition to the boulder scree and tall herb communities described above, the components of this assemblage are acid grassland, alpine summit communities, blanket bog, calcareous

grassland, mire grassland and rush pasture, subalpine dry dwarf-shrub heath, spring-head, rill and flush.

The alpine summit communities occur in the montane zone with good examples of stiff sedge *Carex bigelowii*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* moss heath, and the arctic-alpine species three-leaved rush *Juncus trifidus* and spiked wood-rush *Luzula spicata* near their southern British geographical limit.

In the sub-montane zone the site supports a wide range of grassland, heath, fen and fen meadow communities, reflecting varied topography and soil status. Particularly abundant are fen meadows characterised by sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* or purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, and sharp-flowered rush-*Sphagnum recurvum* mire. Acidic bent – fescue *Agrostis* – *Festuca* and heath rush *Juncus squarrosus* grasslands cover large areas of the drier slopes. Heather *Calluna vulgaris*-rich heath is represented but is not extensive. The blaeberry – wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* community forms the major heath component and extends into the montane zone, where the cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* becomes more frequent.

On more gentle slopes and lower altitude plateaux ombrotrophic mires have developed. Northern bilberry *Vaccinium uliginosum* becomes a feature of the small areas of bog vegetation occurring at higher altitudes. In contrast, flushed or weathered ground can support rich calcicolous vegetation. Stony, yellow sedge *Carex demissa* – yellow mountain saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides* mires occur below the main crags, while the calcicolous bent fescue – wild thyme *Thymus praecox* or alpine lady's mantle *Alchemilla alpina* grasslands form local species rich areas.

## **NOTIFICATION HISTORY**

First notified under the 1981 Act: 09 November 1995  
Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 24 March 2011

## **REMARKS**

Measured area of site corrected (from 1369 ha)