



Scottish Natural Heritage

WOODHALL LOCH
Site of Special Scientific Interest

Holmpark Industrial Estate
New Galloway Road
NEWTON STEWART
DG8 6BF

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Tel 01671 401075
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Site code: 1647

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 Woodhall Loch SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)
Fen meadow	Unfavourable, no change (July 2014)
Oligotrophic loch	Unfavourable, declining (July 2009)
Open water transition fen	Favourable, maintained (August 2010)
Beetles	Favourable, maintained (July 2010)
Caddisfly (<i>Anabolia brevipennis</i>)	Favourable, maintained (May 2013)

Description of the site

Woodhall Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a narrow stretch of water some 4.5km long but less than 400 m wide, lying in a narrow valley between Laurieston to the south and Mossdale to the north.

The Loch is transitional between a peaty upland and a richer lowland loch. There are a wide range of habitats, with good examples of both fen and mire. The fen areas are dominated by reed canary grass with areas of purple moor grass, bog myrtle, hare's tail cotton grass and cross-leaved heath. In localised areas, base enrichment encourages the growth of sedges, with unusual species including white, pale and tawny sedges. In addition, whorled caraway, globe flower and marsh pennywort are abundant. Wet willow, birch and alder woodland provides additional habitat. The water beetle fauna is unusually rich, with over 50 species known to be present, including many on the edge of their range. Other uncommon invertebrates, including butterflies and damselflies, add further interest. Of some concern is the water quality reported from the site condition monitoring programme which suggested an increased nutrient level beyond

the oligotrophic loch status resulting in its unfavourable condition. Further investigation into the nutrient inputs and water quality is required.

The fen meadow feature is unfavourable due to under grazing which is encouraging rank growth impenetrable to livestock. The spread of native species such as bracken and bog myrtle is also restricting access for livestock and leading to a loss of fen meadow species through shading and competition.

The Loch and surrounding wetland and woodland habitats support a varied breeding bird population, which, while not a notified feature, includes nightjar, curlew, snipe, common sandpiper, great crested grebe grasshopper warbler and wood warbler.



Past and present management

The grassland within the SSSI is currently used for grazing. There is some recreational angling and non-motorised water-based recreation.

Loch water levels have remained unchanged during the recent past. The western shore has been planted as a commercial conifer woodland, while the east is a mix of improved and semi-improved pastures, wetland and broadleaved woodland. The site has a long history of angling and game and wildfowl shooting.

Woodland management takes place, principally on the western shore. The area continues to be used for angling and shooting, with pest control taking place. Some boating takes place on the loch. A number of drains and ditches leading water from adjacent fields are maintained.

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.

1. To maintain the extent of grassland and fens wetland and transition habitats by management of grazing

In order to prevent succession to coarser and more common vegetation types, grazing of the grassland should continue. Cutting of fen vegetation and the control of scrub and trees invading the fen should be considered to maintain the extent of each key habitat. Reed cutting and scrub control on fen areas slows down the rate of change to wet woodland.

2. To maintain the open water habitats through water level management

High water levels during the winter encourage the use of the area by waterfowl. Stable levels during the nesting season benefit breeding birds, and grassland management, whilst occasional flooding and subsequent drying out of pools may be of benefit to some aquatic invertebrate such as dragonflies and damselflies. Although limited opportunities are available to influence water levels, allowing a typical annual fluctuation of water levels provides optimal conditions for overwintering wildfowl and the survival of plants and animals, notably the beetle and caddisfly features of the site, dependent on the natural seasonal lowering in water levels.

3. To maintain the diversity and abundance of key water beetle and other invertebrate populations by maintenance of water quality of the site

The water within the site should not be enriched with nutrients which would otherwise favour more vigorous but less interesting plants. This could also affect the oxygen levels in the water, resulting in adverse effects on the aquatic invertebrates. Management of run-off from fertiliser, slurry and manure applications, road side surface water and leachate from forestry activities should be managed to maintain the water quality of the site and the species this in turn supports.

Date last reviewed: 29 October 2010

Revised 11 February 2011

Revised 18 February 2015