



**Sandness Coast
Site of Special Scientific Interest**

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 1684

Northern Isles Area
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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 Sandness Coast SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)
Rocky shore	Favourable, maintained (August 2003)

Sandness Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) overlaps the following designated areas:

- Melby (SSSI)
- Papa Stour Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Features of overlapping SSSI and Natura sites that are not notified as natural features of Sandness Coast SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Designation (SAC or SPA or SSSI)
Silurian - Devonian Chordata	Favourable, maintained (March 2007)	SSSI
Reefs	Favourable, maintained (August 2003)	SAC

Other qualifying features of Papa Stour SAC are absent or occur rarely on Sandness Coast SSSI.

Description of the site

Sandness Coast SSSI is located along the north-west shore of the West Mainland of Shetland, across from the island of Papa Stour. The site runs from Quivla Taing in the west to Neap of Norby in the east and includes the shore of the Holm of Melby. It comprises the intertidal zone between low and high water marks.

The site is a good example of a moderately wave exposed rocky shore. It is characterised by wide lichen zones, rock pools, barnacles and small mussel crusts, dense red algae, sparse furoid seaweeds and towards low water kelps such as dabberlocks *Alaria esculenta* and oarweed *Laminaria digitata*.

The intertidal habitats and communities within the Sandness Coast SSSI are highly representative of the Shetland environment and this is reflected in the presence of typically northern species such as the northern starfish *Leptasterias muelleri*. The shore communities also show a good range of wave and tidal current exposure gradients. Apart from the coastal defences at the top of the shore around The Crook and Melby beach, the shore habitats and associated communities are considered highly natural.

The intertidal rocky reefs within the site form part of Papa Stour Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Twelve of the intertidal habitats and communities recorded in Sandness Coast SSSI are not found anywhere else within Papa Stour SAC. The section from Humabery to Ness of Melby includes a mixture of moderately exposed rocky shores, with some areas of relative shelter and numerous coralline pools present on the shelving rock of the mid and upper shore. The wave-cut platforms at Norby, Melby and Quivla Taing headlands are made up of moderately exposed bedrock and boulders and support a mix of

characteristic barnacle/limpet mosaics and wrack communities. The Holm of Melby supports particularly diverse shore communities including extensive areas of common mussels, red algae and thongweed together with rich rock pool communities.

Although most of the shoreline within the SSSI is composed of bedrock and boulders, there are two large sandy beaches with areas of boulders and rocky reefs which support specialised and opportunistic species. The mobile boulders at the top of these beaches support sparse animal communities capable of withstanding the harsh conditions, whilst rock outcrops lower down the shore are subject to moderate sand scour. There are transitional communities on the boulders at the edge of the beaches which can withstand the more extreme sand scour conditions. These communities are able to take advantage of periods when the scour is reduced in calm weather. These areas support an interesting assemblage of hardy scour-resistant species with more opportunistic and ephemeral species.

Monitoring of rocky shores in August 2003 found habitats and biological communities in favourable condition and no negative impact of any activity was observed.

Past and present management

Sandness Coast SSSI forms an integral part of the adjoining grazing units that border it. It is presumed to have been used or managed in the historical past in much the same way as at present. Owners/occupiers have traditional rights to the foreshore including allowing sheep to graze, collection of sand and shingle and the gathering of dead seaweed for personal use.

A coastal path within the Shetland Core Path network follows the coastline along the SSSI. Coastal defence work was carried out in 2000 at the Ness of Melby to re-instate the path.

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.

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, where 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. Maintain the extent, diversity, species richness and distribution of the intertidal habitats and their associated communities

The habitats and communities will change naturally over time in response to natural variations in the chemical and physical environment. Threat may however be caused by activities that would have a physical impact on the site including: dumping of spoil or rubbish, vehicle use, laying of cables and pipelines and construction of walls. Shore harvesting may cause some disturbance although only large increases in grazing and winkle-picking would have the potential to adversely affect the site.

Date last reviewed: 17 January 2011