



**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
All of nature for all of Scotland

## **FAFERNIE**

**Site of Special Scientific Interest**

### **SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Site code: 1696**

**Address:** 16/17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB10 1XE.  
**Tel:** 01224 642863. **Email:** Grampian@snh.gov.uk.

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#### **Purpose**

This is a public statement prepared by SNH for the owner and occupier 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 document.

#### **Description of the site**

Fafernie (1000 m) is situated to the west Lochnagar, about 10 kilometres south-east of Braemar. The site comprises the high ground between Glens Muick and Glen Callater to the summits of Fafernie, Carn an t-Sagairt Beag and Cairn Bannoch (1012 m), and lies adjacent to the high level plateau of Caenlochan.

Fafernie SSSI, entirely within Invercauld Estate, is part of Lochnagar SPA and links the other two parts of Lochnagar SPA, which are within Balmoral estate, and the adjacent Caenlochan SPA.

Collectively, the high level areas of Lochnagar and Caenlochan form a large massif above 900m. The massif is thus comparable with, but less extensive than, the nearby Cairngorms, with low winter temperatures and prolonged snow cover.

Fafernie is dominated by alpine and subalpine plant communities that are characteristic of the eastern Highlands, including dwarf-shrub, grass- and moss-heaths, and blanket bog. These habitats support an important assemblage of montane birds, forming, in combination with the adjacent parts of Lochnagar and the Caenlochan plateau, one of the best examples of a sub-arctic bird community in Britain. This includes nationally important populations of dotterel and snow bunting.

<b>Natural features of Fafernie SSSI</b>	<b>Feature condition (date monitored)</b>	<b>Other relevant designations</b>
Breeding bird assemblage	Favourable Maintained (April 2002 and April 2003)	Lochnagar SPA
Dotterel	Favourable Maintained (May 1999)	Lochnagar SPA

The Fafernie and Lochnagar area supports approximately 3% of the British breeding population of dotterel, which is listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive. The density of dotterel on Fafernie, and on the wider Lochnagar, compares favourably with other sites in Scotland. Other montane birds on Lochnagar and Fafernie, which form part of the special interest, include ptarmigan. Among the high level mires in the area, Coire Allt an Aitinn is a favoured site for golden plover and dunlin. Golden eagles, a qualifying feature of the adjacent Caenlochan SPA, forage across these hills.

Survey work carried out in 1999 recorded 23 breeding dotterel males within the SPA (2.7% GB). Survey work carried out in the SSSI in April 2002 and April 2003 showed that the assemblage of breeding birds is being maintained in favourable condition, and indicated no apparent change in habitat areas.

### **Past and present management**

Fafernie is a montane site on the margins of land traditionally managed for a combination of summer grazing (sheep), and sport shooting (red grouse, ptarmigan and red deer). Small numbers of sheep wander-in from the Glen Callater side of the site, under a sheep-grazing tenancy.

Fafernie SSSI is also used by red deer, which are culled as part of the overall deer management plan by Invercauld estate. It is not subject to muirburn or other forms of heather management associated with grouse or deer.

Fafernie SSSI and the adjacent parts of Glen Callater SSSI are used for sport shooting of ptarmigan, with less than five shot in most years but exceptionally up to 40 birds. Mountain hare are also shot.

Fafernie SSSI is crossed by the path which links the summit ridge of Lochnagar with Carn an t-Sagairt (Beag and Mor) and Glen Callater. This path is used by walkers to gain access to the summits of Carn an t-Sagairt, Fafernie, Cairn Bannoch and Broad Cairn, via Glens Callater or Muick.

### **Objectives for management** (and key factors influencing the condition of natural features)

We wish to work with the owner and occupier 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 and monitor the effectiveness of any management.

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. To maintain the populations of Annex 1 species, particularly dotterel.**
- 2. To maintain populations of other montane birds, including ptarmigan and dunlin.**
- 3. To maintain, and where possible enhance, the condition of the aforementioned alpine and subalpine plant habitats.**
- 4. To avoid significant disturbance to the birds and their habitats.**

The breeding birds could be affected by grazing animals and by walkers. Grazing levels may impact on the bird populations by affecting the structure of the vegetation, and possibly also, more directly, by trampling. Deer are kept on the move by walkers in the area but the breeding birds are vulnerable to disturbance associated with access through the site by walkers, and their dogs. But there is no real evidence of any significant damage at present levels of use. Any damage to the site (e.g. erosion or overgrazing), would have to be addressed through agreement with the relevant parties.

**Date last reviewed: 29 May 2009.**