



**Scottish Natural Heritage**

All of nature for all of Scotland

**CAENLOCHAN**  
**Site of Special Scientific Interest**

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Site code: 282**

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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.

**Description of the site**

Caenlochan SSSI is an impressive and mountainous site with spectacular scenery resulting from the range of glacial landforms which have been carved out of high plateau. The massif comprises mostly exposed and relatively rounded grass or heath-covered summits including Glas Maol (at 1068m the highest point in Angus). There are extensive areas of high plateau ranging from dry and stony to boggy, with a number of crag-lined, steep-sided corries with scree slopes and waterfalls. The only standing waterbodies are extremely high level lochans.

A combination of high altitude, relatively continental climate and differing rock and soil types has led to the development of a wide range of plant communities, several of which are the most extensive and representative of their type in Britain. The SSSI is of European importance as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on the basis of having some of the best examples in the UK of fourteen European habitats, including montane willow scrub for which Corrie Fee National Nature Reserve hosts one of the largest remaining populations in the UK.

The SSSI is renowned as one of the most important upland sites in Britain for alpine plants, including lichens and bryophytes. It is thought to have almost 300 higher plant species, of which almost one third are described as arctic-alpines. The more extreme rarities include alpine sow-thistle *Cicerbita alpina*, purple coltsfoot *Homogyne alpina* and yellow oxytropis *Oxytropis campestris*. There is the most extensive stand of the Red Data Book woolly willow *Salix lanata* in Britain.

There is a characteristic assemblage of upland breeding birds and several uncommon species. The variety of terrain provides a range of habitats - the plateau and high tops have suitable breeding grounds for upland waders such as dotterel, dunlin and golden plover, while the corries are excellent for golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ring ouzel, twite and ptarmigan. Caenlochan SSSI is a part of Caenlochan Special Protection Area (SPA), due to its breeding populations of dotterel and golden eagle.

The wide range of habitats is also reflected in a rich montane invertebrate assemblage with large numbers of species such as moths, flies and spiders with a number of rare species.

Pollen grains preserved in the sediments on the floor of Corrie Fee, supported by radiocarbon dating, provide information on vegetational development during the Holocene (the last 10,000 years). This record is particularly significant for understanding the history of the montane species for which this area is of great botanical significance. The pollen record supports the argument that these species have survived from the end of the last ice-age (from Devensian Lateglacial times). Corrie Fee is one of the few sites in Britain where survival of these species can be demonstrated.

At its western extremity in upper Glen Shee, the SSSI overlaps with a small part of the River Tay SAC which is designated for Atlantic salmon, otter and several other features which do not occur in the section of the SAC in the SSSI.

Woolly willow in Glen Doll	Dotterel
	

### Current condition of the natural features

The most recent Site Condition Monitoring results for Caenlochan SSSI found two features to be in unfavourable condition - the montane assemblage and the vascular plant assemblage. Of the 14 habitat types for which Caenlochan SAC is designated and which make up the montane assemblage, the provisional results state that seven are in unfavourable condition due to either overgrazing or trampling, predominantly by deer. The remaining seven habitat types are less susceptible to the impact of high grazing pressure mainly due to their inaccessibility. The vascular plant assemblage is classified as being in unfavourable condition due to the small or declining population sizes of several constituent species including alpine fleabane *Erigeron borealis* and alpine milk-vetch *Astragalus alpinus*.

A summary of the latest site condition monitoring information is given below:

<b>Natural features of Caenlochan SSSI</b>	<b>Feature condition (date monitored)</b>
Quaternary of Scotland	Not yet monitored
Montane assemblage	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)
Dystrophic loch	Favourable maintained (July 2004)
Vascular plant assemblage	Unfavourable - no change (July 2003)
Bryophyte assemblage	Favourable maintained (December 2005)
Lichen assemblage	Not yet monitored
Invertebrate assemblage	Not yet monitored <sup>1</sup>
Breeding bird assemblage	Favourable maintained (July 2003)

<b>Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features</b>	<b>Feature condition<sup>2</sup> (date monitored)</b>	<b>SPA or SAC</b>
Acidic scree	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC
Alpine and subalpine heaths	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Base-rich fens	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Base-rich scree	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC
Blanket bog	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Dry heaths	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC
High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Montane acid grasslands	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Mountain willow scrub	Unfavourable – no change (July 2006)	SAC
Plants in crevices on acid rocks	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC
Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC
Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC

<sup>1</sup> Spiders and moths were monitored in September 2004 and March 2005 respectively and found to be in favourable condition, but they are not now considered to be separate notified natural features.

<sup>2</sup> The results for SAC features are provisional.

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Feature condition <sup>2</sup> (date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Tall herb communities	Favourable maintained (July 2006)	SAC
Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Favourable maintained (January 1999)	SPA
Golden eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Favourable maintained (December 2009)	SPA
Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>	Favourable, maintained (October 2004)	SAC
Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>	Favourable, maintained (April 2004)	SAC

### Past and present management

Most of the site, together with the surrounding area, is managed for deer stalking, with some grouse shooting and sheep grazing. The site has been grazed by deer and sheep for a long period of time, with deer numbers having increased substantially over the last 200 years. Sheep numbers have generally reduced in recent years with most of the site not now carrying sheep except for incursions from neighbouring land.

Through the effects of trampling and grazing there is some evidence of damage to the important European vegetation communities. These impacts include the restriction of sensitive plants and tall herb communities to inaccessible ledges, the lack of flowering generally and lack of regeneration of scrub in particular, and the dominance of vegetation communities which can withstand heavy grazing such as upland grassland and blaeberry heath. Burning, particularly on the higher and steeper ground, has locally caused heather loss and impacts on soil and vegetation.

To help reduce grazing, a deer enclosure was erected within the area owned by SNH and managed as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in Corrie Fee in 1991 to allow for the regeneration of alpine willow scrub and tall herbs. In 2003, several landowners within Caenlochan SSSI (including SNH) also signed up to a Section 7 Agreement under the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996. This is a voluntary agreement to reduce impacts from deer in Caenlochan Glen by reducing deer numbers to levels that will not impact seriously on the special features of the area. Habitat monitoring has confirmed that the impacts from grazing throughout the SSSI have been reducing in line with decreasing deer density although some features are still in unfavourable condition.

Part of the site, centred on the A93 at Glenshee, has been developed for skiing (with access via poma and T-bar uplift tows over Meall Odhar to Coire Fionn and the shoulder of Glas Maol and the erection of chestnut paling fences to hold the snow) and is used when snow levels permit. The use of Coire Fionn is regulated by detailed planning conditions. Coire Fionn is part of the water catchment that supplies Aberdeen and lower Deeside.

Glenshee and Glen Doll are popular starting points for hillwalkers many of whom will visit the higher summits within the SSSI boundary. Ornithologists, botanists, geologists, runners, cross country skiers and mountain bikers account for only a small proportion of users. School and youth groups also use the hills and passes for expeditions and field studies. Angus Glens Ranger Service is based in Glen Doll and often uses Corrie Fee NNR for educational and other activities.

Between the 1950s and 1970s the Forestry Commission planted conifers right up to the SSSI boundary in Glen Doll, Corrie Fee and Corrie Kilbo. The fencing is thought likely to have affected the grazing patterns of both sheep and deer accustomed to using Glen Doll. A long-term forest plan is currently being prepared for the area with the aim of reducing tree density, increasing the proportion of native tree species and restoring some of the open ground habitats.

In 2009 the Woolly Willow Steering Group began planting out woolly, downy and some whortle-leaved willows in the enclosure in Corrie Fee. When grazing levels are appropriate it is hoped to remove the fence and restore grazing to this area. Further planting of these species may also be possible on cliffs and outcrops in other parts of the SSSI where grazing animals cannot reach.

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

1. To maintain the breeding bird populations at levels around those at notification, by avoiding significant disturbance.
2. To maintain the wide range of habitats and plant and invertebrate communities through appropriate grazing and burning management.
3. To continue re-introduction of arctic willows where possible.
4. To safeguard the pollen record within the wetlands in Corrie Fee.

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, its natural features and the effectiveness of 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, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of these Directives. The objectives above 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).

#### **Other factors affecting the natural features of the site**

Impacts from changes in climate as a possible result of global warming are likely, but none has yet been clearly identified.

**Date last reviewed:** 19 March 2010