



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.

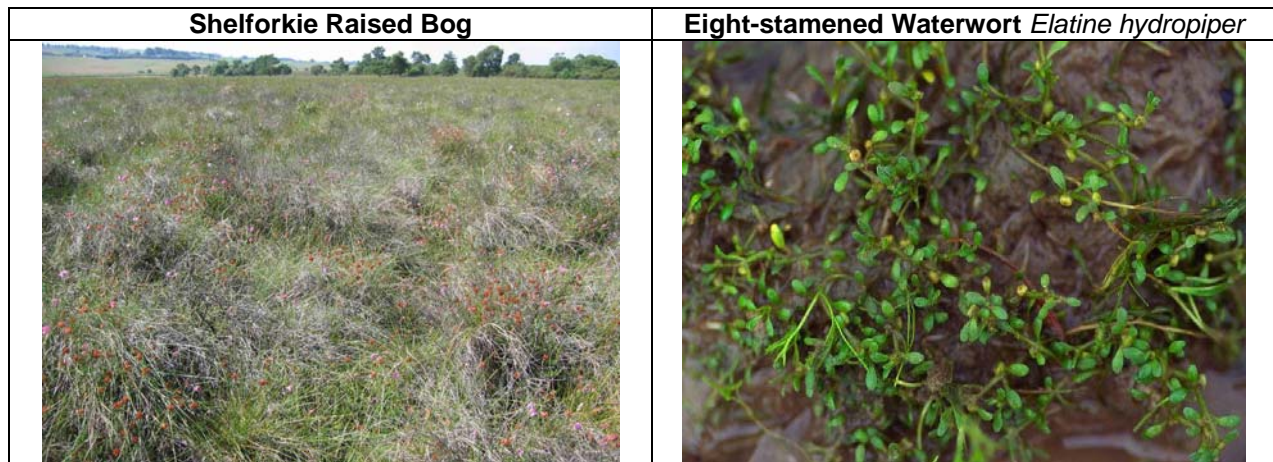
Description of the site

Carsebreck & Rhynd Lochs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies in the bottom of the undulating valley that drains into the Allan Water, which forms part of the southern boundary of the SSSI. The site consists of three shallow reservoirs of open water and the large raised bog of Shelforkie Moss.

The raised bog is still growing (ie. accumulating peat) and is considered of international importance. Part of the bog has been modified, by drainage or peat-cutting, but still retains a thickness of peat to sustain bog communities. It is designated under the European Habitats and Species Directive as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The reservoirs are Upper Rhynd and Lower Rhynd, separated by a weir, and separately Carsebreck Loch. The site is of international importance as a roost for wintering pink-footed, greylag geese and its wintering waterfowl (some of which breed on the site) as part of the South Tayside Goose Roosts Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. Breeding species include wigeon, gadwall, shoveler, snipe, curlew, and redshank. Besides the geese, other wintering species include mute and whooper swans, wigeon, shoveler, tufted duck, goldeneye, and goosander. The geese feed in surrounding areas of agricultural land.

Surrounding the lochs is an extensive area of relatively undisturbed, diverse mires ranging from acid wet heaths and flushes (spring-fed fens), to nutrient-rich flushes and rich-fen communities. This diversity makes the site outstanding, particularly as there is a relative lack of disturbance, despite attempted drainage in places. These wetlands support a high number of plant species, including several of restricted distribution, such as the nationally scarce eight-stamened waterwort, as well as water-purslane, water forget-me-not, lesser Spearwort, and bottle sedge.



Current condition of the natural features

The population of pink-footed geese has increased since the date of SPA designation and, in part, reflects the national increase in the pink-footed goose population. The reduction in the water level in Carsebreck Loch has reduced the amount of open water for the geese to roost.

Greylag geese numbers have fallen and are unfavourable for the site. It is thought that this decline is not as a result of any changes to the site, but more likely as the result of a national re-distribution of the birds to the north-east of Scotland.

The raised bog has been maintained in favourable condition although invasive scrub is starting to encroach.

The wetlands are in unfavourable condition which, whilst being ecologically intact, have increasingly coarse vegetation and a build up of vegetation litter.

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

Natural features of Carsebreck and Rhynd Lochs SSSI	Feature condition (date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Hydromorphological mire range	18/10/2006 - Unfavourable	
Raised Bog	23/11/2004 - Favourable	SAC
Greylag goose	05/03/2002 - Unfavourable	SPA, Ramsar
Pink-footed goose	05/03/2002 - Favourable	SPA, Ramsar
Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Feature condition (date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Wintering waterfowl assemblage	31/03/2002 - Favourable	SPA

Past and present management

The SSSI forms part of the Ardoch Estate and is currently managed for sporting interests including game birds and angling. Grazing by domestic stock is either at a

very low level or absent. Public access is taken along a right of way across the site.

SNH wish to support positive management of the site based on the prescriptions and payments of the Raised Bog and Lowland Grassland Natural Care Schemes. An individually tailored management agreement would be available for this site.

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

1. To maintain the extent of wetland habitats by re-introduction of a grazing regime, and ensuring maintenance of the dam;
2. To maintain the populations of wintering geese and waterfowl to approximately the levels at the time of notification by avoiding significant disturbance;
3. To maintain the area of raised bog and associated rare species by achieving a high water table on the raised bog by removing scrub and blocking ditches;
4. To maintain the water quality at a low nutrient status by ensuring game pens do not pollute water in the catchment.

We wish to work with the owner 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 the management agreement.

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 SiteLink facility).

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Water levels: The Carsebreck Loch dam is in a poor state and has had a period of prolonged lowering of the water level. The lower water level has detrimentally affected breeding waterfowl and, if it remains at its current level, may also affect wintering birds. The feasibility of re-instatement of water levels needs consideration.

Disturbance: There is concern that public access is causing disturbance to birds using the lochs. People accessing the site need to be made aware that there is potential for disturbance, and access should be integrated with estate management, such as sport shooting, to ensure there is no increase in disturbance to the birds.

Last date reviewed: 4 September 2007