



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 Carstramon Wood SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Upland oak woodland	Favourable, maintained (September 2000)	SAC

Description of the site

Carstramon Wood SSSI is situated 3km north of Gatehouse of Fleet and is one of a series of woodlands in the lower Fleet area. The main canopy species is oak, much of which is abandoned oak coppice that is now assuming the appearance of high forest. Birch, ash, rowan, wych elm and holly are also present. There are several large mature sycamores, numerous old pollarded beeches and a number of Scots pine and European Larch. Although there are occasional breaks in the tree canopy, regeneration is restricted due to browsing by deer.

Below the tree canopy, hazel is the dominant species with some patches of the non-native invasive species *Rhododendron*. On the ground, bracken dominates in some areas and the site is locally notable for its fine displays of bluebells. The woodland also supports several rare beetle species and a breeding bird community commonly associated with upland oak woodlands, which includes the summer migrants: pied flycatcher, wood warbler and redstart.

Carstramon Wood SSSI forms part of the Galloway Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SAC is designated for its Western acidic oak woodland, essentially the same feature for which the SSSI is notified. Management compatible with maintaining and enhancing the SSSI notified feature will therefore also benefit the Natura feature.

Past and present management

Carstramon Wood has a long history of management with extensive areas of old oak coppice and several large pollards of beech. During the 19th century the woodland provided a sustainable source of timber for local industries, including charcoal for iron, brass and copper smelting and bobbins for the textile industry.

Since 1985 much of the site has been managed as a nature reserve (≈ 74.4ha) by the Scottish

Wildlife Trust (SWT). The reserve passed into SWT ownership in 1994. Reserve management seeks to maintain the old oak woodland, invertebrate and bird communities, whilst accommodating visitors without compromising the reserve's nature conservation value. A reserve management plan is produced every five years.

Current management includes the felling of small sycamore and beech trees and bracken brashing along existing paths. Some coppicing also takes place along the roadside.

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

We wish to work with the owners 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.

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 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, www.snh.org.uk/snhi, through the SNHi - SiteLink facility).

- 1. To maintain and enhance the condition and extent of upland oak woodland habitat so that it contains a range of native tree species that vary in age, size and structure.**
Oak currently occupies approximately 80% of the canopy and, although there are patches of birch, ash, alder, elm, holly and rowan, these species are only present in small amounts. Natural regeneration is restricted by browsing deer.

Management should focus on the slow return of an oak, and its associated native species, woodland through removal of non-native species. Management should periodically exclude deer from small parts of the site and undertake bracken control enabling natural regeneration of either coppice or seedlings to take place.

- 2. To prevent the establishment of non-native trees and shrubs by removing these where they occur within the woodland.**
Sycamore, beech and *Rhododendron* occur in some parts of the wood and these are of lower value to invertebrates than native trees. Sycamore and beech also regenerate more quickly than oak and can become the dominant species. Management should focus on the complete eradication of all non-native species although large, mature sycamore and beech trees should be retained until they become unsafe where these provide good habitat for mosses and lichens and/or are important landscape features.
- 3. To retain a continuous supply of both standing and fallen dead wood that will provide habitat for rare invertebrates and nesting birds.**
Dead wood provides a habitat which is increasingly uncommon in commercial woodlands, which have short rotations between crops. A particularly rare beetle found within the woodland relies on a supply of both standing and fallen dead wood. Enhanced amounts of standing dead wood are also likely to benefit the pied flycatchers.

Date last reviewed: 6 June 2008