



Scottish Natural Heritage

**CARTLAND CRAIGS
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**

30 Hope Street
Lanark
ML11 7NE

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

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Site code: 341

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

Cartland Craigs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), lying approximately half a kilometre north west of Lanark, is an outstanding example of an ancient, semi-natural mixed broad-leaved gorge woodland. It occupies a steep-sided gorge on the Mouse Water, a tributary of the River Clyde, which cuts through areas of Old Red Sandstone lying under later glacial deposits.

The woodland is predominantly a mix of ash, elm and oak with an open canopy on the steep, unstable slopes with abundant dead elm. However, avenues of non-native tree species, mainly beech, have been planted along the gorge margins and beech and sycamore saplings are becoming established in some areas. Rhododendron is also spreading down the slopes in some areas and at the southern end of the site there is a conifer plantation which includes species such as spruce, larch and Norway maple.

The ground flora includes the regionally rare species mountain melick, alternate-leaved golden saxifrage, shining crane's-bill, wood stitchwort and the Atlantic liverwort *Nowellia curvifolia*.

The woodland is considered to be in an unfavourable condition due to the levels of non-native trees present, particularly young sycamore and beech saplings within the shrub layer. However, it should be noted that the structure of the woodland is good

with an understorey present throughout the site, occasional clearings and areas of more open canopy, and a good amount of standing and fallen dead wood.

Although not a notified feature of the site, the invertebrate interest is wide and includes saproxylic species that depend on dead or decaying material associated with wood. There is a Nationally Scarce fly, *Brachyopa insensilis* and two scarce species of tiny moth, *Phyllonorycter tristrigella* and *Stigmella prunetorum*. This is the only known site in Scotland for *Stigmella prunetorum*. There is also an extensive area of grassland and scrub at the northern end of the site.

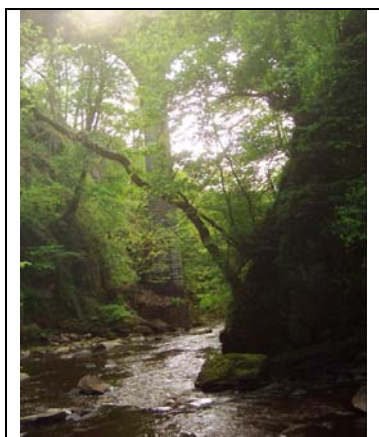
Natural features of Cartland Craigs SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Upland mixed ash woodland	Unfavourable, no change (September 2009)	SAC

The site is also an important component of the Clyde Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which has the following qualifying feature:

- Mixed Woodland on Base-rich Soils Associated with Rocky Slopes

The Clyde Valley Woods SAC is comprised of eleven individual woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest, lying in the often steep sided gorges around several of the tributary rivers to the Clyde in Lanarkshire. This SAC contains the most extensive areas of ash-elm woodland in Scotland.

The condition of this qualifying feature, considered across the whole SAC, has been assessed as favourable, despite the high number of non-native trees present. The favourable condition is as much a result of non-intervention as of any activities or events that are taking place. Though some of the flatter areas have historically been felled, coppiced or otherwise managed, the steep sided nature of the gorges on which these woodlands grow has made it difficult for much interference to have taken place since their original development following the last ice-age.



Steep woodland at Cartland Bridge

Past and present management

Use of the woodland has been restricted due to the steepness of the slopes which are often in excess of 60° with near vertical drops to the Mouse Water. Historically, coppicing of oak and hazel has taken place along the woodland perimeter while conifers have been planted within the site boundary, to the east of the river, near Cartland Bridge. The northern part of the site has gentler slopes and was lightly grazed in the past but no part of the site is grazed at present.

Approximately 13 hectares of the SSSI is designated as part of the Clyde Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and around 10 hectares forms part of the Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve (NNR). Within the NNR, SNH carried out some selective felling of non-native trees, especially sycamore, in 2003/4. Positive management, including further thinning of non-native trees, fence repairs and shrub control are due to continue under the Clyde Valley Woodlands Management Scheme which will run until November 2014.

There is a well-used footpath on the northern side of the gorge which generally follows the northern boundary but much of the gorge woodland is not suitable for general recreation due to the steepness of the slopes. This path forms part of a 4 mile walk through the NNR and SNH plans to carry out necessary maintenance of the path under the Clyde Valley Woodlands Management Scheme.

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 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 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 and enhance, where possible, the natural species composition of the mixed ash woodland** by the selective felling or ring-barking if appropriate of non-native trees, removing non-native regeneration and controlling invasive species.

Non-native tree species such as beech and sycamore are present throughout the SSSI and they tend to out-compete native species and beech leaf litter will also smother native ground flora. However the removal of mature trees is not possible throughout most of the site as felling within such a steep sided gorge is dangerous, potentially damaging to ground flora and may give rise to unstable slopes. It is therefore recommended that, where possible, non-native trees that cannot be felled/removed are ring-barked. Any regeneration, both seedlings and saplings, of non-native tree species should be removed.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Invertebrates: Dead wood (saproxylic) invertebrate populations require specific woodland conditions so that they can be maintained in a stable condition. Dead or decaying wood, either fallen or standing, should be left to decay naturally (except with regard to public health), thereby maintaining a variety of habitats suitable for a range of invertebrate species. Positive management works such as ring-barking of non-native trees will add to the variety and availability of these habitats.

Badgers: There is evidence of badger activity on this site. Any non-native trees that cannot be felled, especially those in close proximity to badger setts, should be ring-barked and left as standing deadwood to avoid any damage to badger setts. Any management works required must be carried out in compliance with a valid badger license so as to minimise disturbance to badgers.

Access: Future maintenance work on the footpath needs to be carried out sensitively so as to have minimal impact on the conservation interests of the site. Access to the site should follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).

Front page photograph: .Rich ground flora in Cartland Craigs

Date last reviewed: 1 February 2010