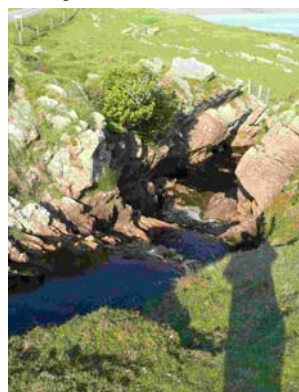




Purpose



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 feature 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

Natural features of Catfirth SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)
Scrub woodland	Unfavourable, recovering (July/Sept 2006)

Catfirth Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is situated on the Burn of Crookadale in South Nesting, Shetland. It includes a small limestone ravine containing remnants of the scrub vegetation that once covered much of Shetland. This has all but vanished partly through deliberate clearance of land for cultivation and partly due to grazing by livestock so that native trees now survive only in locations where sheep cannot reach them.

Catfirth is especially significant because it is one of only two sites in Shetland where hazel can be found, and is the only hazel that produces flowers. It is therefore of great importance in the study and possible re-establishment of Shetland's native woodland. The ravine scrub community also includes rowan and rose.

The ungrazed limestone grassland around the ravine is not one of the legally protected natural features of the SSSI but it is of great local biodiversity interest and does support a wide variety of plants including stone bramble and brittle bladder fern. Also within the site boundary are about 200 plants of a hawkweed that grows only in Shetland, *Hieracium clingerahoullense*.

Monitoring in 2006 recorded the site as unfavourable recovering. It is unfavourable because there is no regeneration of the hazel, rose or rowan. However the scrub is classed as recovering because management has been put in place to address all the factors preventing the feature from returning to favourable condition: native Shetland rose and rowan saplings are being grown off-site for transplanting during 2008 and the hazel appeared to have rooted where branches have been pinned and these will become separate plants when the roots are more established.

Past and present management

The site is primarily managed by excluding stock and rabbit grazing. Tree regeneration (such as collection of seed and onward growing off-site) is undertaken by Shetland Amenity Trust and they have a verbal agreement with the owner/occupier which allows them to maintain a stock-proof fence around the site.

Prior to 1984, the site was grazed by sheep.

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

We wish to work with the owner to protect the site and to maintain and where necessary enhance its feature of special interest. SNH aim to carry out site survey, monitoring and research as appropriate to increase our knowledge and understanding of the site and its natural feature.

- 1. To increase the extent of the scrub and the number of individual scrub trees**
Exclude stock and rabbit grazing and encourage the regeneration of hazel, rose and rowan by active management.

Other factors affecting the natural feature of the site

Recreation – The ravine is an attractive landscape feature and may attract sightseers whose trampling could prevent seedlings establishing. The site is not actively promoted for visitors and visitor pressure is not a significant threat at present.

Roadside developments - As the northern boundary of the site is located directly adjacent to the road side and Catfirth bridge, there is potential for site damage from maintenance work to Catfirth Bridge.

Date last reviewed: 15 July 2008.