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**CENTRAL LOCHS, BUTE**  
Site of Special Scientific Interest

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Site code: 352**

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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.

This Statement is available in Gaelic on request.

<b>Natural features of Central Lochs, Bute SSSI</b>	<b>Condition of feature (date monitored)</b>
Greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i> , non-breeding	Favourable, maintained (March 2003)

**Description of the site**

The Central Lochs, Bute Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) comprises six distinct freshwater bodies located centrally on the Isle of Bute. The six-part site comprises Greenan Loch, Loch Dhu, Kirk Dam, Loch Ascog, Loch Fad and Loch Quien. None of the adjacent land is included within the SSSI.

Together these waterbodies form an internationally-important roosting area for wintering greylag geese as they support a major concentration representing over 1% of the north-west European population. Loch Quien is the most favoured loch of the group where numbers of wintering geese are consistently high. Gatherings on the other lochs are variable, but all five lochs and the Kirk Dam Reservoir form an important winter refuge not only for geese but also for other wildfowl on the island.

Since initial notification of this site in 1972, there has been a significant reduction in the number of geese wintering on the Isle of Bute. This decline is not thought to be linked to factors such as disturbance impacts from recreational activities or changes in the lochs water levels. Instead, it is considered likely that increasing global temperatures are resulting in a gradual shift north each year of the overwintering population of greylag geese.

Although numbers have declined since baseline counts were recorded, this decline has not been in excess of 50%, so the condition of this feature is considered to be favourable maintained (at March 2003).

### Greylag Geese



#### **Past and present management**

The waterbodies comprising the Central Lochs, Bute SSSI host a diverse range of industrial and recreational activities.

Loch Ascog is dammed at the north end and forms part of the public water supply serving the Isle of Bute. Likewise, Dhu Loch forms part of the water treatment works and both lochs contain built infrastructure associated with the treatment plant.

Aquaculture development, in the form of Loch Fad Fisheries, is located at Loch Fad. Six cages in total are located at two stations within the loch. The company concentrates primarily on the rearing of fish for angling rather than for direct market sale. Stock predation by cormorants is a perceived problem at Loch Fad and shooting under licence is carried out annually in an attempt to mitigate further losses.

The recreational sport of angling is practiced on a number of the lochs. Loch Ascog is stocked with brown trout and Greenan Loch is stocked with tench, crucian carp and mirror carp for this purpose. At Loch Quien trout fishing only is permitted with fly rods.

Wildfowling also exists on all the lochs except Dhu loch.

Much of the land surrounding the waterbodies is used for agricultural rough grazing. Ground poaching by livestock around Kirk Dam has created ideal conditions for the growth of populations of violet crystalwort, a small thalloid liverwort. This lower plant is classified as vulnerable in Britain and occurs at Kirk Dam as its only known Scottish location.

**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.

- 1. Maintain suitable conditions for wintering greylag geese on the site.**
- 2. Maintain a viable population of violet crystalwort on the shore of Loch Fad.**

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

Recreation: Popular access trails run by Loch Fad, Kirk Dam and Loch Ascog and bird hides are located on the shores of Loch Ascog and Kirk Dam.

Agriculture: The lochs' catchments are not included within the boundary of the SSSI but agricultural improvement within these areas affects the overall water quality of the lochs.

Water level controls: Dams and sluices control the water levels on a number of the lochs. The intermittent opening and closing of these controls over the years has resulted in changing water levels particularly notable in Greenan Loch and Kirk Dam.

Historic influence: An ancient crannog is located within Loch Ascog and a number of aqueducts, constructed on the Island during the last century and designed to supply the Rothesay cotton industry with water, still carry water to this day. Both these structures influence the water regime of Loch Ascog and Loch Fad.

Date last reviewed: 30 November 2009