Scottish Natural Heritage

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# CHANLOCKFOOT
# Site of Special Scientific Interest

## SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

**Site code: 355**

### 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

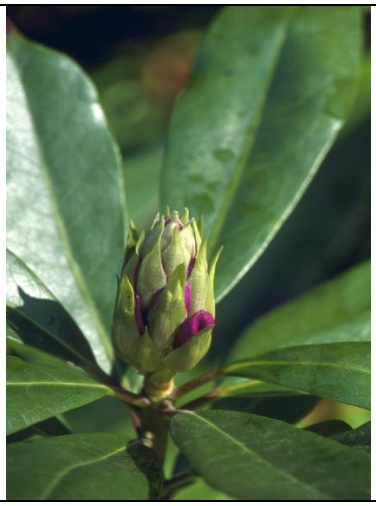
Chanlockfoot Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located 6 km northwest of Penpont village and is designated for its upland mixed ash woodland. It is the best example of this type of woodland in Nithsdale.

The site is on a steep southwest facing slope adjacent to the Scar Water, lying between 150 and 230 metres altitude. The underlying geology is sandstone and shales with a thin soil above this. Ash and hazel regeneration dominates the understorey. The wood is un-grazed and supports a rich ground flora dominated by dogs mercury, ramsons, wild hyacinth, greater woodrush, and fern species notably beech fern and oak fern. Mosses and lichens are also of interest with tree lungwort present on older trees.

The wood supports a range of breeding birds notably pied flycatcher, wood warbler and redstart, and the scotch argus butterfly has been recorded from the open woodland edge. These species are not notified features of the site.

Chanlockfoot SSSI forms part of the Upper Nithsdale Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SAC is designated for its mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes, essentially the same feature for which the SSSI is designated. Management compatible with maintaining and enhancing the SSSI notified feature will therefore also enhance the Natura site.

| **Natural features of Chanlockfoot SSSI** | **Condition of feature** (and date monitored) | **Other relevant designations** |
|---|---|---|
| Upland mixed ash woodland | Favourable, maintained (February 2001) | SAC |

| Rhododendron | Chanlockfoot |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

**Past and present management**
The SSSI forms part of The Buccleuch Estates and is managed for gamebirds, with pheasant release pens and blocks of cover in the form of Norway spruce and Rhododendron. Predator control is carried out to benefit gamebirds. Recent Rhododendron control has been carried out by the owners.

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

We wish to work with the owner 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 SiteLink facility).

1. **To maintain the area as a mixed ash woodland**
   Ash and oak dominate the canopy. These species should be retained as they are favoured by invertebrates. Small areas have been planted with Norway Spruce and Rhododendron for pheasant cover. Mature beech trees and beech seedlings are also present. Whilst spruce and beech are productive timber trees, all are of a lower value for invertebrates and can regenerate more quickly, therefore having the potential to become dominant in areas. When opportunities arise, they should be removed/felled and not replanted giving preference to native species.

**2. To maintain the structural diversity of the woodland.**

One of the most important features in determining the value of a wood for the natural heritage is the structural diversity. The steep slope over much of the site has resulted in breaks in the tree canopy, with young natural growth becoming established within these areas. A hazel understorey within the wood also adds structural diversity. Breaks in the canopy and around the edges of the wood are favoured by the Scotch Argus butterfly.

**3. To retain a continuous supply of both standing and fallen dead wood to provide the habitat for invertebrates.**

Dead wood provides a habitat which is increasingly uncommon in commercial woodlands, which have short rotations. Rare invertebrates found within the woodland rely on a supply of dead wood it should therefore be retained.

**4. To remove non-native tree species such as spruce, beech and *Rhododendron* as opportunities arise.**

The woodland is managed for gamebirds. Management to optimise the natural heritage interest will have benefits for game. Control of grazing and browsing within the woodland would allow more natural cover to develop. This may allow the removal of spruce and *Rhododendron* to be carried out without adversely affecting the woods capacity to hold pheasants.

A few beech trees of various ages and occasional saplings are now scattered in the wood on lower slopes. Growth of beech trees can be detrimental to native ground flora and therefore their removal would be beneficial to the site.

**5. To manage grazing/browsing.**

The natural regeneration of trees can be reduced or eliminated by grazing and browsing of domestic stock, deer and rabbits. Fencing should be maintained in order to exclude grazing stock. Deer and rabbits should be managed through a combination of fencing and culling, at a level that allows regrowth from stumps and natural regeneration of trees to take place. Scotch Argus butterflies will take advantage of breaks in the canopy and other open edge habitats.

**Other factors affecting the natural features on the site.**

None known.

Date last reviewed: 29 January 2010