



Scottish Natural Heritage

**COBBINSHAW RESERVOIR**  
Site of Special Scientific Interest

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

Site code: 374

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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 a 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 Cobbinshaw Reservoir SSSI</b>	<b>Condition of feature (and date monitored)</b>
Open water transition fen	Favourable, maintained (September 2004)

**Description of the site**

Cobbinshaw Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) has been notified for its botanical interests. It lies a few hundred metres to the east of the village of Woolfords Cottages and about 10km south of Livingston.

Cobbinshaw Reservoir contains the largest area of fen in West Lothian and South Lanarkshire. Fen is defined as vegetation over peat that has water moving vertically and horizontally through it. The site contains representative examples of marshland and emergent plant communities with raised bog, open water and willow scrub adding to the habitat diversity. These plant communities contain a number of species uncommon to the Lothian area including northern sedge, bladder sedge, water horsetail and marsh cinquefoil. The raised bog area has a good covering of bog moss (accounting for greater than 25% of the moss layer) and contains cranberry and bog asphodel.

Cobbinshaw Reservoir is of regional significance for the birds which use it as an overwintering and breeding site. Wintering pink-footed geese can be found there, as well as breeding populations of lapwing, curlew, redshank and common gull.

The 2004 site condition monitoring assessment found the fen habitat to be in favourable condition. This has been achieved through an appropriate grazing regime keeping in check dominant plant species and maintaining plant diversity.

Fen and swamp along an inlet channel	Fen, swamp and scrub alongside water margin
	

### Past and present management

Cobbinshaw Reservoir SSSI is a small sub-section of the main Cobbinshaw Reservoir which is a supply reservoir for the Union Canal and controlled by British Waterways. Its hydrological integrity therefore depends upon that of the reservoir as a whole and is subject to changes in water level, albeit limited.

Farmland presently surrounds the SSSI, which is predominantly rough pasture where a small amount of grazing occurs. Wildfowling takes place on the site, which is regulated and was introduced to curb illegal poaching. Angling is another recreational activity for which the reservoir is used. It occurs predominantly on the main reservoir area, but some anglers do use the SSSI area, although infrequently. There is consent for the Cobbinshaw Angling Association to release brown trout into the reservoir each year - goosanders and cormorants prey upon these fish to some extent and so occasional licences are granted for their culling (only if scaring methods do not work).

The water quality of Cobbinshaw Reservoir is dependent upon run-off from the surrounding land and the various inputs that this may carry, as well as the angling operation on the reservoir. As yet the water quality classification of the loch is good and although there are large coniferous plantations nearby they do not seem to have caused any acidification of the reservoir.

Cobbinshaw Moss SSSI, a larger peatland site, lies to the east of the reservoir.

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

We **wish** to work with the owners 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. To maintain the extent and composition of fen habitats.**

This can be achieved by working with the landowners to continue the existing levels of grazing, which is helping to maintain the extent and composition of fen habitats, and to ensure that water quality is maintained through sensitive agricultural practice. Also required is continued cooperation with British Waterways to maintain preferred water levels in the reservoir.

**2. To maintain the existing population levels of the wintering and breeding birds.**

This can be achieved firstly by carrying out survey work to determine the base-line data on numbers and distribution of the wintering pink-footed geese and breeding common gull populations. Secondly, by working with the landowners and the Cobbinshaw Angling Association to carry out their activities to maintain the existing population levels of wintering and breeding birds.

Date last reviewed: 02 November 2009