



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.

We welcome your views on this statement.

This statement is available in Gaelic on request.

Natural features of Coille Dalavil SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable (October 2000)
Blanket bog	Favourable (October 2001)
Floodplain fen	Favourable (August 2001)
Dragonfly assemblage	Favourable (September 2001 – July 2003)
Lichen assemblage	Unfavourable (May 2005)

Description of the site

Coille Dalavil Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) occupies the sides and floor of a glen on the western side of the Sleat peninsula, with native broad-leaved woodland and heath on the slopes, running down to open water and fen, adjacent to a large area of blanket bog. It is of national importance for its woodland, bog and fen habitats, and associated assemblages of dragonflies and lichens.

The site contains a fine example of flood-plain fen, which is a scarce habitat in Skye and Lochalsh. There is an unusually intact example of the transition from flood-plain fen to blanket bog. The flood-plain fen supports a variety of plants, including the uncommon slender sedge. There is no longer grazing on the floodplain fen, and the results of monitoring in August 2001 indicated that it was in favourable condition. In October 2001 the blanket bog was also assessed as being in favourable condition; although there has been extensive peat cutting and drainage works carried out in the past, there was no evidence of any recent activities, and the surface was well vegetated.

The deciduous woodland is of national importance and is dominated by sessile oak and downy birch with a variety of other species including ash, rowan and hazel. The Woodland Inventory suggests that there has been a continuity of woodland cover on the site for at least 230 years and that the woodland is likely to contain modified remnants of Scotland's original forest cover. The canopy is largely complete on the slopes to the north of the loch but to the south, woodland cover is sparse and confined to the gullies. There are stands of mature beech and Scots pine on the north shore of the Loch a'

Ghlinne and beech is seeding throughout the woodland, threatening its naturalness. Monitoring in October 2000 identified the woodland feature as being in unfavourable condition because of widespread beech regeneration.

The woodland has a rich 'Atlantic' flora, particularly of lichens, and sixteen nationally scarce lichens have been recorded on the site. Unfortunately, the targets for lichen cover within the ravine woodland were not met during monitoring in 2004, as some of the target species were not found. The lichen assemblage feature was therefore assessed as being in unfavourable condition.

The wetland as a whole is used by an exceptional variety of dragonflies, and ten species have been recorded, including two unusual species, the keeled skimmer and the beautiful demoiselle agrio. Monitoring of the dragonfly assemblage between 2001 – 2003, located all ten species previously known to be present at the site and there was no overall reduction in the extent of habitat which supports them. The dragonfly assemblage feature was thus assessed as being in favourable condition.

Past and present management

All of the site, except the inter-tidal area, is owned by the Clan Donald Lands Trust (CDLT). A small area on the southern side forms part of a crofting Common Grazings, with an area in the west of the site being subject to a seasonal grazings lease.

Until 1995 the glen and surrounding land was grazed by sheep, cattle and deer. In April 1995 much of the glen was deer-fenced under a 10 year Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) with the primary purpose of encouraging natural regeneration. The WGS Agreement has now expired, but grazing levels within the fenced area have not changed since then. Part of the site lies outwith the new fenceline and is open to grazing by domestic stock. The Trust undertakes annual deer control over the site in accordance with DCS cull targets.

In 1994, SNH entered into a 25 year Management Agreement with CDLT. Under the terms of this and for an annual payment, CLDT agrees to maintain the enclosure for 25 years from the date of agreement.

The woodland contains stands of non-native beech and scots pine, which were planted on the site after the people were cleared, in order to prevent them from returning. The beech is regenerating beyond the mature stand.

There is a path along the north shore of the loch and the area is popular for informal recreation. Vehicular access to the site is controlled by means of a locked gate.

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 features of special interest. SNH will 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.

1. To improve the condition of the upland oak woodland habitat

- Remove existing beech regeneration.

- Remove the existing mature beech trees, as a source of beech seedlings.
- Encourage native woodland regeneration.
- Protect against overgrazing and safeguard against fire damage

2. Maintain the extent and condition of the blanket bog and fen habitats

- Maintain grazing at no more than existing levels, both within and outwith the fenced enclosure.
- Safeguard against fire and enrichment by nutrients.

3. Maintain the habitats necessary to support the important invertebrate populations

- Maintain the condition of the floodplain fen habitat, by avoiding an increase in grazing pressure

4. Improve the condition of the lichen assemblage

- Through increasing the level of woodland cover, particularly on the southern shores of the loch, the variety of lichen species present on the site, should also improve.

Date of review: 28 March 2008