



**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
**Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba**  
All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdair air fad airson Alba air fad

**CRAIG ROYSTON WOODS**  
**Site of Special Scientific Interest**

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Site code: 444**

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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 Craig Royston Woods SSSI</b>	<b>Condition of feature (date monitored)</b>	<b>Other relevant designations</b>
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable, recovering (August 2008)	SAC
Moth assemblage	Favourable, maintained (July 2001)	

<b>Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features</b>	<b>Condition of feature (date monitored)</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>	Favourable, maintained (August 2003)	SAC

**Description of the site**

The Craig Royston Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located along the north-east side of Loch Lomond on steep west facing slopes south of Inversnaid. Craig Royston Woods are part of the extensive oak woodlands found throughout Loch Lomondside. The diversity of the understory vegetation and the age of the woodlands support a wide variety of moths.

Craig Royston Woods are made up of ancient natural woodland with mostly sessile oak as well as long established woodland plantations derived from non-locally sourced pedunculate oaks, and their hybrid. The oaks often have a multi-stemmed structure suggesting that they were coppiced, as with many of the native woodlands on Loch Lomondside in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The removal of the wood from the



managed coppice created an open glade environment with relatively little understory shrub growth and a high continuous canopy. Areas of mixed canopy comprised of birch, alder, ash, hawthorn and wych elm occur on the flushed shoreline, stream sides, inaccessible crags and localised areas of nutrient-rich soil. Hazel is common in open areas.

The steep terrain with many rock outcrops and wooded ravines supports species-rich bryophyte and flowering plant communities that are characteristic of western sessile oak woods. The occurrence of the nationally-uncommon Tunbridge filmy fern, Wilson's filmy fern and *Hageniella micans*, which is a nationally very restricted moss, indicates the "Atlantic" nature of these woods. Localised outcrops of nutrient-rich rocks support species such as the green spleenwort and the purple saxifrage that are characteristic of this habitat and very sparsely distributed within the area.

The upland oak woodland is in unfavourable, recovering condition. The shrub layer was assessed at less than would be expected, which is why the condition of the site fell short of favourable status. In oak woodlands with a history of coppice management it is expected that there will be a reduced shrub layer. Tree regeneration was also suppressed by heavy sheep grazing on this site until 1970s. Oak, holly and rowan are regenerating in good numbers throughout the wood but they are being grazed and not attaining any height to get beyond grazed stumps. Now it appears that deer grazing is limiting regeneration within and outside the enclosed fenced areas.

The site is notified for its moths because it has the Red Data Book species vulnerable moth *Acleris abietana*, five nationally-scarce species *Atemelia torquatella*, *Eupithecia plumbeolata*, *Olethreutes arcuella*, *Pammene albuginana*, *Scoparia ancipitella* and a long list of more common species. The moth population is in favourable, maintained condition using an indirect woodland assessment survey.

The other fauna includes the largest breeding populations of pied flycatcher within the Loch Lomond deciduous woodland. The woods support characteristic invertebrate populations including several colonies of the wood ant and a number of notable beetles.

Oak and bracken communities	Mixed canopy at Tigh na Stuichd
	

## **Past and present management**

A thorough account of the management of the natural history of Craig Royston Wood is presented in 'History of The Loch Lomond Oakwoods' by R. M. Tittensor from the University of Edinburgh. The SSSI was managed as oak coppice-with-standards from 1735 to 1920 and was regularly felled every 24 years on a rotational production for timber, charcoal and oak bark for tanning leather. Those trees removed as crop wood were replaced with sessile oak sourced from the south of England. Some areas were felled in the 1900s and replaced with conifers. 'Barren timber' species of trees of no value were removed. This left the wood with little aspen, blackthorn, crab apple and willow. Fencing was used to keep out sheep to allow the forests to regenerate, but when the coppice-with-standard forests were abandoned the fences were not maintained and then the wood was heavily grazed. Heavy grazing continued for 20 or so years.

Craig Royston Woods is currently managed to maintain and enhance the nature conservation interests. Part of the SSSI has been fenced to exclude livestock. The integrity of the deer fence will directly affect the rate of regeneration. There does appear to be enough grazing by deer within the enclosure to prevent the numerous seedlings from growing on. Most of the grazing appears to take place in the winter. Outside this enclosure the vegetation is grazed by sheep, goats, red and roe deer that continue to inhibit natural regeneration within the SSSI.

In the past there have been various management plans under several grant schemes. The northern portion of the SSSI used funds from the Millennium Forest for Scotland Grant to build a deer fence. Funds also came from the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme to delineate boundaries. In 1999 the Life Project Woodland Grant Scheme funded the building of deer fencing on upper slopes and the southern part of the SSSI. Funding also was provided as part of an Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme (ESA) Management Agreement to build livestock enclosure fencing.

The SSSI is part of the Loch Lomond Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Otters are a feature of the SAC and their presence was noted on a site visit in June 2010 by the spraints at most streams. The SSSI is also a part of the Loch Lomond Environmentally Sensitive Area and Loch Lomond National Scenic Area. The site is entirely within the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park where it forms continuous woodland with Rowardennan Woodlands SSSI and Ben Lomond SSSI. The West Highland Way passes along the extreme west side of the site and suffers from heavy foot traffic. The southern part of the SSSI is owned and managed by Forest Enterprise/Forestry Commission and is part of the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.

### **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.

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, where 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 SNHi – SiteLink facility).

**1. To reduce grazing pressure through management of stocking levels, fencing and deer control.** Maintenance of the fence integrity and increasing the fence height in accessible sites will prevent deer entering the exclosures. In 2010 there are a number of trees down on top of the fencing which is allowing the deer in and out. Deer are grazing excessively, especially when in these lower sites in winter. Although there is deer culling in place, the numbers culled should be increased.

**2. To encourage natural regeneration and extension of the woodland habitats where appropriate.** Many seedlings and plants less than 10 years old are held back due to heavy deer grazing inside and out of the exclosures. The tree and shrub species are reproducing in adequate numbers for regeneration. Some areas of bracken have a healthy understory but others on sites which were recently felled of conifers are dominated by bracken. These areas would benefit from strimming of the bracken rather than herbicide use, where the terrain will allow.

**3. To conserve the habitat that supports the moth population.** Moths are dependant upon their food source, so retaining and expanding the native woodland vegetation will support a healthy population.

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

1. The condition, repair or amendment of the West Highland Way and archaeological sites must not compromise the conservation interests of the site.

2. Heavy foot traffic is causing erosion. Considerable amounts of rubbish in scenic areas distracts from the quality of the site.

Date last reviewed: 17 September 2010