



**Purpose**



Photo

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.]

<b>Natural features of Cuilvona &amp; Craigmore SSSI</b>	<b>Condition of feature (date monitored)</b>	<b>Other relevant designations</b>
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable, recovering (September 2001)	SAC

**Description of the site**

Cuilvona and Craigmore Woods are ancient upland oak woodlands on the western outskirts of Aberfoyle. They lie on relatively steep ground on the northern slopes of Loch Ard, within The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The woodland canopy is dominated by sessile oak, with occasional downy birch and rowan scattered on the higher ground, and alder dominant on the lower wetter areas.

Although dominated by oak woodland, with a typically species-poor ground flora, the site is notable for the mosaic of habitats present. In places, the ground flora is dominated by mosses and liverworts, some of which are indicative of the western nature of the site. The woods support an abundance of burns and species-rich wet flushes which are wooded mainly with alder and ash, and a ground flora which varies from stands of ramsons and dog's mercury to assemblages which include plants such as smooth sedge, yellow pimpernel and tutsan. Areas of heath, grassland, scrub, bracken and rocky outcrops are also present, adding to the overall diversity of species within the site.

These well structured and relatively unmodified woods together form the largest example of slope flush oak woodland in the area.

The woodland was found to meet the targets for canopy cover, presence of deadwood, age structure, regeneration and maintenance of woodland types (at September 2001). However, overall the site was found to be in **unfavourable condition** as targets for woodland layers, browsing impact and non-native species invasion (notably

rhododendron) were not met. Some management issues thus need to be addressed.

Cuilvona and Craigmore Woods SSSI is part of The Trossachs Woods Special area of Conservation (SAC) designated under the EC Habitats Directive. These sites together support internationally important areas of western acidic oak woodland.

### **Past and present management**

Historically the oak woods within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs area were managed under an organised coppice system from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Traditionally, coppicing would take place every twenty years or so, yielding considerable quantities of oak to be used in a variety of ways. In addition to timber, bark (for tanning and textile dyes) and charcoal (for iron smelting and gunpowder) were produced from these woods during this period.

In Craigmore woods, part of the site is a disused whinstone quarry. The now disused tramway which was used to transport slate to Aberfoyle is still evident, in addition to charcoal burning sites and recessed platforms.

Much of Cuilvona and Craigmore woods is owned by the Forestry Commission, and has been actively managed by them since the early 1990s. This has addressed issues such as rhododendron and bracken control, establishment of exclosures to allow natural regeneration, and deer control. However a high density of bracken around the woodland edges currently reduces regeneration and expansion of the woods.

In the early 1990s part of Cuilvona woods was used as a wild boar rearing project by Drumlean estate.

Power lines cross the site, and this requires management of the wayleaves by the appropriate bodies. Parts of the site are extremely steep and prone to rock falls, other areas are formed upon rock spoil-tips.

Currently, no livestock use the wood, but high numbers of both red and roe deer seasonally graze the entire area. Two small areas have been cleared to aid natural regeneration and these areas have been fenced to reduce deer browsing.

Public access is encouraged in part of the woods, therefore public safety must be considered if undertaking any management works.

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

We **aim** 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.

The EU Habitats Directive obliges Government to avoid deterioration of the habitat which occurs within Cuilvona and Craigmore Woods SSSI. SNH is required to submit reports on the site condition every six years to Scottish Executive and the European

Commission.

**1. To maintain and enhance the condition and extent of the upland oak woodland habitat through:**

- Maintaining the extent of upland oak woodland habitat in a favourable condition by controlling rhododendron invasion of the site through a continued programme of removal. This may include the need to consider options for the removal of rhododendron growing in gardens outwith, but adjacent to, the woods.
- Enhancing woodland regeneration and expansion by maintaining deer populations at suitable levels and by controlling bracken.
- Monitoring the condition of the woodland as part of SNH's site condition monitoring programme.

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

- Encourage interpretation of the woodland at David Marshall Lodge and associated access initiatives.

Date last reviewed: 29 April 2008