



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

**DORNOCH FIRTH**  
 Site of Special Scientific Interest

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Site code: 527**

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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 Dornoch Firth SSSI</b>	<b>Condition of feature (and date monitored)</b>	<b>Other relevant designations</b>
Eelgrass beds	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar
Saltmarsh	Favourable, maintained (March 2001)	SAC, Ramsar
Sand dunes	Unfavourable, declining (June 2004)	SAC, Ramsar
Vascular plant assemblage	Unfavourable, recovering (October 2010)	
Bar-tailed godwit (non-breeding)	Favourable, recovered (February 2008)	Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar
Whooper swan (non-breeding)	Favourable, recovered (December 2008)	SPA (as part of the waterfowl assemblage)
Wigeon (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2008)	SPA, Ramsar

See Annex 1 for a list of natural features of overlapping Natura sites, which are not notified features of Dornoch Firth SSSI.

**Description of the site**

Dornoch Firth Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located on the east coast between Dornoch (Sutherland) and Tain (Ross-shire). It is the most northerly of the large Scottish firths and is virtually unaffected by industrial development. The SSSI is notified for its nationally important intertidal and coastal habitats, its populations of scarce plants and its populations of non-breeding bar-tailed godwit, whooper swan and wigeon.

Dornoch Firth SSSI is also a component part of three larger internationally important protected sites, namely: Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC; Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA; and Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar Site. The SSSI also overlaps with the Moray Firth SAC.

## Coastal and intertidal marine habitats (Eelgrass beds, saltmarsh and sand dunes)

The SSSI contains extensive areas of inter-tidal sand/mud flats, saltmarsh and sand dunes.

### Eelgrass beds

Nationally scarce dwarf eelgrass and narrow-leaved eelgrass flourish on the mudflats, where thousands of plants create 'beds' of eelgrass (see figure 1). Narrow-leaved eelgrass is more abundant than the dwarf eelgrass. The latter favours slightly raised flats which are represented over a smaller area of the site. During low tides, the eelgrass beds become exposed and provide food for large numbers of wildfowl, particularly wigeon.

The eelgrass beds were monitored during 2004 and found to be in favourable condition, with visible reproduction of plants and virtually no smothering by surface algae.

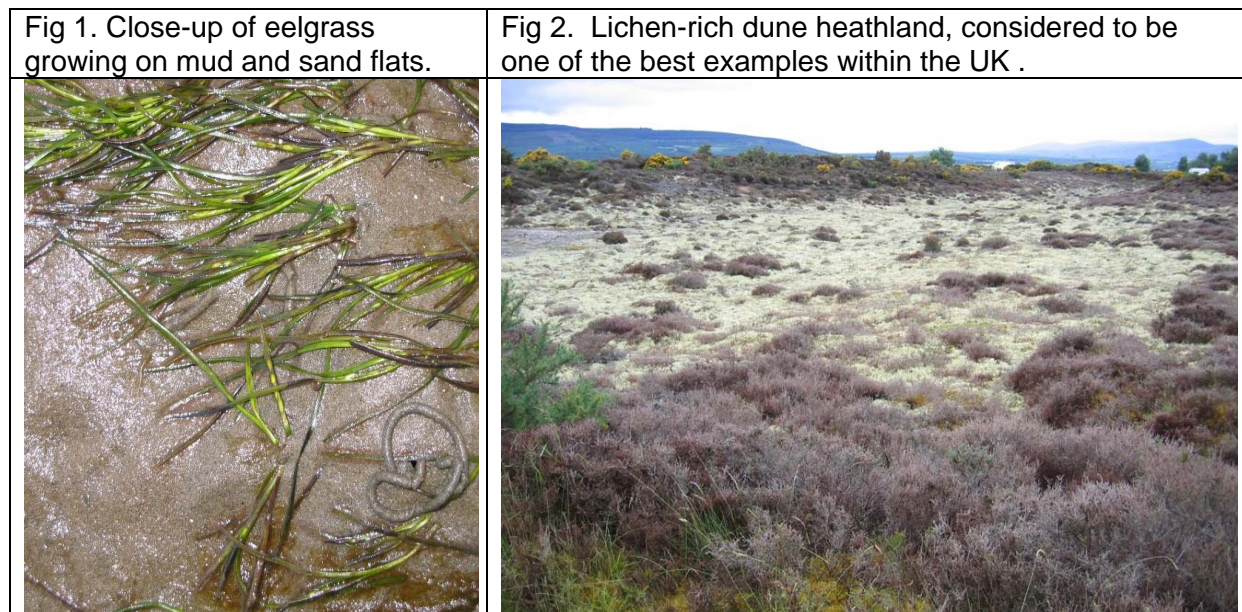
### Saltmarsh

The largest area of saltmarsh within this SSSI is located north west of Dornoch Point, with smaller areas at Edderton and Poll na Caorach. A range of saltmarsh communities, such as open tidal creeks, temporary saline pools, and saltmarsh flats, have been created by the effects of varying levels of exposure to salt water during very high tides. Saltmarsh on sloping ground down to the shore and around the edges of creeks, consists of a mix of grasses and flowering plants such as; sea couch, tall fescue, sea plantain and sea aster. On the expansive flats, saltmarsh communities consist of more salt-tolerant species. These include; common saltmarsh-grass, glasswort, red fescue, thrift and sea pearlwort.

This habitat was monitored in 2001 and was found to be in favourable condition. Saltmarsh is a sensitive habitat and localised damage to the soft surface can take decades to recover. For example, the saltmarsh is showing signs of recovery from activities such as vehicle tracking and turf removal undertaken many years ago. One area of saltmarsh at Edderton Sands has been noted recently as actively eroding, but other saltmarsh habitats appear to be either increasing or stable.

### Sand dunes

The main dune habitats occur along the north shore of the SSSI at Skibo Links, Cuthill Links and Dornoch. Undulating linear dune ridges have formed over a long period of time. The actions of the wind and sea have created a diverse range of dune types, with both exposed and sheltered areas of dune.



A range of active dune processes can be found on the site. In some areas, dune habitat is being lost due to coastal erosion, whilst in other areas, embryonic dunes are forming. These areas are typically dominated by sand couch, sea milkwort, lyme and marram grass. These grasses help to 'fix' blown sand and very slowly help to build new dune systems.

Fixed dune grassland is well-represented on this site, with impressive undulating dune ridges backed by flat dune meadows at Dornoch. These grade into lower saltmarsh and upper dune heath communities. The dune grassland is dominated by marram grass, with flowering herbs such as wild thyme and bird's-foot-trefoil. There are also extensive beds of kidney vetch.

There are excellent examples of coastal heath on stabilised dunes, at Cuthill and Skibo Links. This habitat is very rare within the UK and Europe. The dune heath is dominated by ling and bell heather, with stands of burnet rose, and dense stands of mature gorse. Flowering plants are typically few, but include common dog-violet, bird's-foot-trefoil, lady's bedstraw and wild thyme. Lichen-rich lawns (see fig. 2) flourish on shingle and gravel beds on exposed dune ridges and basins. These lawns support rare lichens usually found at high altitude, and thriving unusually at sea-level.

The sand dunes habitat was last monitored during 2004 and found to be in unfavourable condition for two reasons. Previous agricultural improvements such as 'liming' have caused a reduction in the area of the natural dune grassland habitats. Secondly, scrub and tree encroachment are reducing the area of this habitat. If left unmanaged, the heath will be lost and the site now requires active management to remove the existing dense banks of scrub and prevent further spread. Mechanical flailing on the dense mature gorse banks will assist in keeping the heath open. Mature gorse in close proximity to heath and lichens can be cut with a chainsaw and removed for burning off the SSSI. All cut or flailed stumps should be painted or spot-sprayed with a suppressing herbicide (all control methods are eligible for funding through the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)).

Removal of the scrub needs to be accompanied by the reintroduction of grazing, otherwise gorse will quickly re-establish from the seed bank. As a result, rabbit grazing is welcome at this site, and introducing stock grazing (ideally with ponies) should help to manage further encroachment.

Payments to undertake positive management on this SSSI are available through the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Further reseeding or liming would not be appropriate management for this site. Further advice on management options for this site should be sought from SNH.



### **Vascular plant assemblage**

The site supports six nationally scarce plants; dwarf eelgrass, narrow-leaved eelgrass, Baltic rush, seaside centaury, pyramidal bugle and six-stamened waterwort.

Both eelgrass species grow on the intertidal flats and require no active management. Baltic rush has a very restricted distribution on this site, growing mainly at Dornoch in fixed-dune grassland close to the aerodrome. Seaside centaury (see figure 3) favours saltmarsh habitat where there is a short sward where competition from other tall grassland species is minimal and its small pink flowers can be seen in good numbers along informal paths in the site. Waterwort is a tiny aquatic species which grows in profusion on the shallow sandy substrate of Loch Evelix.

In contrast to all the other species which are in good condition, the pyramidal bugle has declined to just a few individual plants and is in unfavourable condition. Populations of bugle

(>200 plants) once grew over dune habitats at a number of locations but the populations have declined significantly. This is thought to be due to herbicide spraying (spot-spraying weeds) as part of the golf course management and scrub encroachment. The remaining plants now have a small fence erected around them to prevent further spraying. The greenkeeping staff have also cut away gorse from a small area to one side of the current plants where it is hoped that new plants may germinate. During 2010, SNH, in partnership with Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh have planted >150 pyramidal bugle plants of local provenance back into areas of the site where they previously grew. These plants will be monitored by SNH to assess the success of this project.

<p>Fig 3. Seaside centaury prefers a short saltmarsh sward with less competition from surrounding vegetation.</p>	<p>Fig 4. Wigeon and greylag geese feeding in tidal shallows.</p>
	

### Coastal birds

Nationally important wintering populations of bar-tailed godwit, whooper swan and wigeon have been recorded within this site.

#### Bar-tailed godwit

Bar-tailed godwit feed out on exposed mudflats probing for tiny invertebrates. Godwit congregate at traditional high tide roost sites on the water's edge, often in association with other waders (e.g. knot and dunlin). A low level of disturbance is critical for bar-tailed godwit as they are not tolerant of disturbance and are easily displaced to other roosts, which may be some distance away and outwith the SSSI.

When previously monitored in 2004, the numbers of bar-tailed godwit in the UK showed a small decline and those on Dornoch Firth SSSI were fewer than expected. However, more recent monitoring carried out in 2008 shows the population has risen to a peak of 1,017 individuals. This figure now falls within acceptable limits and the bar-tailed godwit population is now considered to be in a favourable, recovered condition.

#### Whooper swan

The whooper swan population in Scotland has increased gradually over recent years and when monitored at this site in 2008, they were considered to be in favourable condition. Whooper swan has historically been monitored as part of monthly waterfowl counts at this site. However, swans sometimes feed on inland fields during these day time counts and therefore may have

not been accurately recorded in the past. Recent counts have focussed on monitoring birds at their dedicated roost site at Loch Evelix, peaking at November of each year surveyed. Both their traditional roost site at Loch Evelix and the early morning feeding site at Ardmore Bay are the best places and times to monitor numbers.

Dredging overgrown riparian vegetation within Loch Evelix has inadvertently improved the swans roost site by providing a small backwater where swans can feed on aquatic rhizomes. Duck feeding practices on Loch Evelix provide additional food for the whooper swans and this may have boosted wintering numbers in the recent past. Wildfowling occurs adjacent to the eastern end of the Loch Evelix close to the whooper swan roost site. This means that whooper swans are periodically disturbed and displaced, along with many other species of wildfowl.

### Wigeon

At their peak, early winter numbers of wigeon (see figure 4) may easily exceed 10,000 individuals. The birds feed on exposed eelgrass beds in the autumn, before many head south for milder estuarine wintering sites. The extensive eelgrass beds and other forage such as saltmarsh seeds, help to retain a proportion of wigeon throughout the non-breeding period. Wigeon numbers at this site currently exceed favourable levels (peaking at 12,407 (2003-2008 data) even though they are periodically disturbed by relatively low levels of recreational activities such as dog walkers and wildfowling. There are currently no disturbance pressures from marine recreation.

### **Other interests**

#### Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area (NSA)

The Dornoch Firth SSSI is also part of the Dornoch Firth NSA which means that the landscape, as well as the wildlife, has been recognised as being particularly valued and is nationally important.

#### Biodiversity

The fixed sand dune habitat at Dornoch, part of which falls within this SSSI, supports a significant proportion of the largest small blue butterfly colony in Caithness and Sutherland. It is dependent on kidney vetch.

### **Past and present management**

#### Agriculture

Coastal grasslands are farmed for livestock. Historically, larger areas of the SSSI would have also been grazed, but there has been a gradual reduction in grazing over many parts of the SSSI. Whilst this has helped to increase biodiversity in some areas, it has contributed to the encroachment of scrub on coastal heathland and the development of “coarse” grass species in some areas of species-rich grasslands. Some agricultural practices, such as liming and reseeded, have led to modification and loss of the natural dune grassland and heath communities.

#### Mussel fishery

This mussel fishery, which is now managed by Highland Fresh Mussels for the community of Tain, has been operating in the Dornoch Firth for over 500 years and is a significant local employer<sup>1</sup>. King James VI of Scotland bequeathed the ownership of the mussel scalps and the right to fish them to the Royal Burgh of Tain in 1612. The fishery relies on natural mussel

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<sup>1</sup> Highland Fresh Mussels Ltd was set up in 1998 in order to run the Tain Mussel Fishery. The Tain Mussel Fishery is a Common Good Asset of the Royal Burgh of Tain. Highland Council is responsible, as a trustee of the Common Good, for the responsible management of the asset for the benefit of the community living within the Royal Burgh.

settlement and uses no artificial feeds, chemicals or pharmaceuticals.

In 2003, a statement of intent to protect the marine environment of the Dornoch Firth and maintain a sustainable harvest of mussels was signed by Highland Fresh Mussels Ltd and Scottish Natural Heritage. In the statement, the two parties agreed to work together to protect both the interests of the area's marine life and the fishery.

#### Nature Conservation Orders

The mudflats support good populations of cockles and other marine invertebrates. These were the subject of uncontrolled commercial exploitation which led to disturbance of waterfowl and wildfowl. Since 1995 harvesting of marine invertebrates is prevented under three Nature Conservation Orders. Loch Fleet and Dornoch and Cuthill Sands Nature Conservation Order 1995 prevents the collecting of marine invertebrates on the intertidal habitats of Cuthill and Dornoch Sands area. The Morrich More and Dornoch Firth Nature Conservation Order 1995 and its Amendment Order 1996 prevent the collecting of marine invertebrates by mechanical means (excluding blue mussel) on intertidal habitats from Edderton Sands east to the outflow of the River Tain.

#### Access and recreation

Dornoch Point and adjoining beaches are owned by the people of Dornoch (Dornoch Common Good Fund – administered by Highland Council) and are used for informal recreation, particularly dog walking. Access and recreation within the terms of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code would appear to be largely compatible with protecting the nature conservation interests of the site. Disturbance to wildfowl and waders remains a potential issue, particularly with respect to dog walking, where dogs are not kept under proper control.

In the past, there have been concerns regarding the unauthorised use of motor vehicles over the stabilised sand dunes and saltmarsh. Although the Dornoch Point area is now physically protected against habitat damage from 4-wheel drive vehicles through the installation of bollards, this area is still subject to occasional damage by off-road motor bikes.

Horse riders occasionally use the Dornoch beach and surrounding coast. Most of the time, this raises no concerns, but horse hoof prints leave a deep imprint on soft saltmarsh habitats. If these sensitive routes are used regularly, horse riding has the potential to cause extensive trampling damage to saltmarsh which could take decades to recover.

Tain and Edderton Bays are regularly shot over, as well as some other coastal areas. Wildfowling regularly visit the estuary and a punt-gun operates occasionally during October/November, to coincide with peak widgeon numbers at the site.

Parts of Skibo Estate have been developed into a golf course, a small part of which falls within the boundary of this SSSI. It is important to ensure that golf course management being undertaken, or proposed, meets the objectives for management for this SSSI. In the last few years, Skibo Estate greenkeeping staff have put welcomed resources (staff time and funding contracts) into scrub control which has benefitted the sand dune interest of the site. Skibo Estate has also supported the project lead by SNH and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh to reintroduce pyramidal bugle to the site. Planting works were completed during September 2010.

#### Management Agreements

There is a management agreement between Skibo Estate and SNH which facilitates positive nature conservation works. Scrub control works are currently being funded through the Scottish Rural Development Scheme (SRDP) Rural Priorities scheme.

There is also a short-term agreement (ending 2011) between the owner of Cuthill Estate and SNH which allows SNH access to fund and contract removal of encroaching light-medium scrub which has threatened dune heath and grassland habitats. This work has been completed, but dense mature gorse now poses a prominent land management issue (see sand dunes above for more information).

### Bird Conservation

There is a small RSPB reserve at Edderton Sands where the objectives of management are to safeguard undisturbed saltmarsh, sandflat and mudflat habitats for wintering waterfowl. The objectives of this site and any associated projects are implemented by RSPB through a Management Plan in consultation with SNH. There are no formal facilities for visitors.

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

We wish to work with land managers and the general public 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, 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).

The list of Operations Requiring Consent and the discussions on land management involved in the issuing of formal consents are intended to minimise the threat of any damage to the natural features.

#### **1. To maintain the condition, extent and distribution of eelgrass beds and saltmarsh habitats by avoiding erosion and disturbance caused by vehicles, trampling or grazing.**

Vehicle use has caused sporadic damage to sensitive habitats (e.g. saltmarsh), particularly at Dornoch Links. Close liaison with the Police and vigilance by members of the public have helped to contain off-road motorbike damage to very small areas. Horse riding should avoid saltmarsh habitats. We can be contacted for further help in this regard (i.e. to agree a non-damaging riding route).

#### **2. To maintain the condition and extent of the sand dunes.**

The spread of gorse and broom scrub is an ongoing management problem over much of this site, especially at Cuthill and Skibo Links. Young and encroaching gorse should be physically removed by cutting and treating cut stumps with an approved herbicide. Mature dense gorse (away from sensitive lichen and heath areas) can be mechanically flailed and stumps treated to help achieve large scale control.

Large areas of impenetrable mature gorse along with the non-native red-berried elder on Skibo Links could be mechanically grubbed out and burned off-site. This area could be restored to dune/heath by spreading locally cut dune seed-bearing plants.

A scrub control plan is required to identify which control methods should occur in different parts of the site, and identify a planned phasing of works. Not all gorse should be eradicated on the site. It is desirable to retain dense gorse at the coastal edge where it helps to prevent erosion

and provides valuable cover for otters.

At other heathland sites ponies have been used successfully as a grazing tool to help control scrub encroachment and introduce grazing management which benefits the dune sward. Ponies are likely to cause less trampling pressure than other stock on sensitive lichen dune heath habitats. Grazing stock is identified as a more sustainable long-term management option for the site and ultimately preferable over continued cutting of scrub which can be expensive and time consuming.

### **3. To maintain non-breeding populations of waterfowl and to avoid significant disturbance.**

Disturbance can reduce the time available that wildfowl and waders (i.e. waterfowl) spend feeding in the cold winter months and during migration. It is important that activities on the site are carefully planned to avoid disturbance to roosting and feeding birds. The most likely cause of regular disturbance is through recreation. Most disturbance is likely to be accidental and most of the time this disturbance is identified as of low consequence, but cumulatively this disturbance has the potential to alter bird distribution if sustained. This can be controlled by raising awareness of the problem should it occur. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides guidance on how both recreational users of the countryside and land managers of the countryside are expected to behave responsibly to ensure that people can continue to enjoy Scotland's outdoors.

Current levels of wildfowling are difficult to quantify, but are not thought to be damaging. The British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC) provides a code for flight pond use and coastal wildfowling. Adherence to this code will help to reduce disturbance to roosting and feeding waterfowl (i.e. roosting whooper swans on Loch Evelix). It is not known what disturbance to coastal birds is caused by the use of a punt gun, but numbers of wigeon are healthy on the site.

### **4. To maintain the population of breeding osprey and to avoid significant disturbance.**

A few ospreys nest within the SSSI, but most SPA ospreys which feed in the Dornoch Firth nest some distance away (often up to 8km). Local observations show that nest trees are used year after year, therefore it is important to retain these for future use around the Dornoch Firth.

Additionally, any proposal within or close to the marine habitats on a protracted basis (during the osprey breeding season (April to mid August) can displace ospreys from their preferred fishing sites. It is therefore important that activities on the site are carefully planned to safeguard the osprey interest.

**5. To maintain the assemblage of nationally scarce plants by protecting the habitats that support these species.** A joint project has been undertaken with the assistance of the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh to re-establish pyramidal bugle plants (using local provenance seed) back onto the site. The other rare plants recorded on Dornoch Firth SSSI are located on areas which are subject to less intensive management. The greatest threats to these species could be changes in water quality to Loch Evelix, coastal erosion and perhaps in the long term, climate change.

**6. To maintain the distribution and extent of suitable otter habitats within and adjacent to the Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC and to avoid significant disturbance.** Woodland habitat adjacent to parts of the shoreline of the Dornoch Firth support otter holts, lie-ups and otter wash pools, as well as routes that link these areas to the Dornoch Firth where the otters feed. Any mesh fencing that is likely to cross otter routes should take this into consideration (large fence mesh or mini-pivoting water gates could be utilised to maintain otter access).

Areas of mature dense gorse and juniper scrub, as well as boulder piles and natural rock caverns are valuable habitats and are often used for otter holts or lie-ups. In the parts of the site closest to the edge of the Dornoch Firth, gorse should only be controlled if otter surveys show that this would not have adverse impacts on otters.

Woodland habitats, often of high natural quality, adjacent to the estuary have been shown to be very valuable to otters. Woodland operations should therefore take otters into account prior to works being planned and proposed. A Guidance Note (FCS 35c): '*Forest Operations and Otters in Scotland*' can be found on the FCS website - [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/EPSOtter.pdf/\\$FILE/EPSOtter.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/EPSOtter.pdf/$FILE/EPSOtter.pdf).

Recreational disturbance to otters and their resting places can arise from new coastal activities (e.g. a proposed coastal path route in an undisturbed coastal location, or a new location identified for angling and wildlife watching). New recreational proposals should consider otter presence in the area. '*Best practice for watching marine wildlife*', provides advice to ensure otters are not disturbed, see <http://www.marinecode.org/guide-g.asp>.

#### **7. To maintain the distribution and extent of estuarine/marine habitats and species linked to Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC and Moray Firth SAC**

Vehicle use over the sand and mudflats at low tide could cause tracking damage to plants and invertebrates. Coastal developments such as aquaculture, housing and small scale industry could also impact on marine habitats through direct and indirect impacts depending on scale and location of development.

Common seals use traditional low-tide haul-out sites at key locations, both mid-channel islands (e.g. Gallrope Bank) and extensive sand flats on the mainland (e.g. Cuthill Sands, Dornoch Point, Gizzen Briggs and Whiteness Sands). Seals socialise, rest and pup at these sites, and use them throughout the year. Human disturbance (e.g. dog walking and unauthorised off-road motorbike use) is the main problem for seals in this area. Persistent disturbance could cause the distribution of animals to shift to less favoured areas outwith the protected site. Bottlenosed dolphins are very occasionally present within the outer Dornoch Firth, but they seldom enter the Dornoch Firth estuary.

More detailed information on the SAC marine features for the Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC can be found on our website – Regulation 33 Guidance Document <http://snhwebsite:8090/docs/B16626.pdf>. This document advises relevant authorities on the marine conservation objectives of the site.

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

- Changes in climate or sea level: Since much of the land next to the Dornoch Firth SSSI is low-lying, an increase in sea level and the number of high tide storm events will alter the balance between coastal erosion and sand dune development.
- Heather beetle: Heather has been affected by large outbreaks of heather beetle in the recent past. This has led to some mature heather stands being killed. Heather is expected to recover from such outbreaks through natural regeneration although this can admittedly be slow.
- Egg collecting: The ospreys that breed on Dornoch Firth SSSI are potential targets for illegal egg collecting. Any suspicious activity, including details of cars and their number plates, should be reported to the Police.

Date last reviewed: 16 December 2010

**Appendix 1 Natural features of overlapping Natura and Ramsar sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features**

<b>Natural features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features</b>	<b>Feature Condition (date monitored)</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Estuaries	Not assessed	SAC
Glasswort and other annuals colonising mud and sand	Favourable, maintained (August 2001)	SAC
Intertidal mudflats and sandflats	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	SAC, Ramsar
Reefs	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	SAC, Ramsar
Subtidal sandbanks	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	SAC
Curlew, (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2001)	SPA
Dunlin, (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2001)	SPA
Greylag goose, (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2008)	SPA, Ramsar
Osprey, breeding	Favourable, maintained (July 2003)	SPA
Oystercatcher, (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2001)	SPA
Teal, (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2008)	SPA
Waterfowl assemblage (non-breeding)	Favourable, maintained (February 2008)	SPA, Ramsar
Bottlenose dolphin	Unfavourable, recovering (March 2005)	SAC
Common seal	Unfavourable, recovering (August 2004)	SAC
Otter	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	SAC

Notes

The list of features of overlapping Natura and Ramsar sites includes habitats and species found in the whole of the Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC, Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar site, and Moray Firth SAC. Some of these features may not be present on Dornoch Firth SSSI and the presence of some species may vary from year to year.