



Scottish Natural Heritage

ALVIE
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 53

EAST HIGHLAND AREA

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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.

Description of the site

Alvie SSSI is a large area of native woodland, open water and wetland habitats situated in Strathspey, 3km south of Aviemore. The site lies between the Monadhliath mountains and the River Spey and has been designated for its woodland and wetland habitats, its diverse invertebrate fauna and for breeding goldeneye.

The woodland on Torr Alvie, a hill rising to 358m, is mostly birch over grasses and heather, with areas of mature juniper. Parts of the hill also have Scots pine and oak, with some aspen. Near the wetlands and lochs, alder and willow woodland predominate.

Loch Alvie, a shallow loch formed in glacial deposits, is mesotrophic (middle nutrient status) while Loch Beag and the Bogach are both eutrophic (nutrient rich) in character.

Loch Beag and Loch Alvie are adjacent to wetlands, mires, fen meadows and wet heath, and these drain into the Bogach. The Bogach includes an area of open water and is surrounded by an outstanding range of fen and mire communities which are little disturbed. Over twenty different types of vegetation communities are present with as many sub communities which in a relatively small area makes this wetland site incredibly diverse. The site extends to the banks of the River Spey, with an area of river shingle colonised by heath.

Alvie SSSI is an excellent site for the number and variety of insect species which it supports. These include insect groups such as caddis-flies, butterflies, beetles and moths and many uncommon species which are of national and regional importance



have been recorded. These include the aspen hoverfly, *Hammerschmidtia ferruginea* and the endangered net-winged caddis fly, *Haganella clathrata*. Alvie is the most northerly known location in the UK for this caddis fly which is found in marginal areas of raised bogs and mosses, the larvae being in water between tussocks where there is probably a slight flow. Several species of invertebrates require dead wood with the aspen hoverfly dependant on old aspen trees.

Loch Alvie is important as a nationally important breeding area for goldeneye, a species of duck, whilst the lochs, fen and woodlands support other bird species such as redstart and tree pipit. An average of 6.3 pairs of goldeneye bred on the site in the years between 1999 and 2002 and the population is considered to be in favourable condition.

The upland oak woodland was monitored in 2001 and was found to be in unfavourable condition due to the lack of regeneration and establishment of native tree species. Regeneration of native tree species where it does occur shows signs of high levels of browsing which is thought to be attributable to roe and red deer, rabbits and hares.

The site was monitored for its invertebrate interest in August 2003 and the appropriate habitats were considered to be in good condition for the species of interest.

The River Spey SAC overlaps with Alvie SSSI, which is important for Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, sea lamprey and otter. When monitored in 2004, the sea lamprey and otter populations were in favourable condition. The population of Atlantic salmon and freshwater pearl mussels were considered to be in an unfavourable condition. The Atlantic salmon was unfavourable because of low densities of juvenile fish and a depleted autumn population of adults; management is now in place and this species is considered to be recovering. All appropriate management that could lead to the improvement in condition of the freshwater pearl mussel population is in place and this species is considered to be recovering.

Goldeneye	Aspen hoverfly <i>Hammerschmidtia ferruginea</i>
	

Natural features of Alvie SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable - no change (October 2001)	
Hydromorphological mire range	No monitoring results available	
Invertebrate assemblage	Favourable - maintained (August 2003)	
Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> (breeding)	Favourable - maintained (May 2003)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as natural features of Alvie SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Designation (SAC or SPA or SSSI)
Atlantic salmon	Unfavourable, recovering (October 2004)	River Spey SSSI / SAC
Sea lamprey	Favourable, maintained (September 2002)	River Spey SSSI / SAC
Freshwater pearl mussel	Unfavourable, recovering (October 2000)	River Spey SSSI / SAC
Otter	Favourable, maintained (September 2004)	River Spey SSSI / SAC

Past and present management

Several areas within the SSSI have been grazed by livestock in the past - particularly the wetlands near Loch Alvie, the wooded hill ground at Torr Alvie, the Bogach and the shingle bank adjacent to the Spey. When ground conditions permitted, the wet grasslands and mire vegetation was cut and a herb rich hay crop and more latterly silage, was harvested. Today there is little grazing by domestic livestock on most of the site and the cutting of vegetation for winter forages no longer takes place. This has benefitted the woodland and wetland interests of the SSSI.

There are sporting interests within the SSSI. Torr Alvie is used for roe and red deer stalking and pheasant shooting and salmon fishing occurs on the River Spey.

Lochs Alvie, Beag and the Bogach are fished commercially for pike and brown trout with boats used on Loch Beag and Loch Alvie. The ditch between the Bogach and the River Spey has a redundant eel trap and pike were also trapped here in the past. A fish hatchery discharge runs into Loch Alvie.

Kinrara was designated in 2003 by Historic Scotland as an outstanding example of a late 18th century picturesque landscape design because of the significant contribution it makes to the scenic qualities and nature conservation values in Strathspey. The Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) lies mostly within the Alvie SSSI.

The site lies within an area which is highly valued for its amenity and views from nearby road and footpath networks.

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 and monitor the effectiveness of the management.

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 maintain the extent and improve the condition of the upland oak woodland habitats (by, for example, managing grazing/browsing pressure)**
- 2. To maintain the extent and range of wetland habitats (by, for example, maintaining appropriate hydrological conditions)**
- 3. To maintain conditions necessary to support a significant population of breeding goldeneye.**
- 4. To maintain the appropriate hydrological conditions and habitat features necessary to support important components of the invertebrate assemblage.**
- 5. To ensure that the species of European importance present on the site are in favourable condition.**
- 6. To maintain the relevant features of the overlapping SSSI in favourable condition.**

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Electro fishing surveys undertaken in Loch Beag in 2004/05 confirmed the presence of several non-native fish species - pike, roach, rudd, tench, eels and minnows with fry of roach and rudd present. These may have been introduced over 20 years ago and silt accumulation in the ditch between Loch Beag and Loch Alvie may be preventing the migration of the non-native fish species. It is important that this ditch and another ditch between the Bogach and the River Spey are not dug out to prevent non-native fish colonising Loch Alvie, the Bogach, and ultimately the River Spey.

Date last reviewed: 17 November 2009