



**Scottish Natural Heritage**

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**DUNALASTAIR RESERVOIR**  
**Site of Special Scientific Interest**

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

Site code: 557

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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**

Dunalastair Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest is an extremely shallow hydro-electric reservoir with an average depth of only 1.5 metres. It lies on the Tummel river system, between Loch Rannoch and Loch Tummel, some 20km west of Pitlochry.



The site was selected as an SSSI on account of the fen and reedswamp areas which developed after the valley floor was flooded in the 1930s. These support a range of species characteristic of this type of relatively nutrient-poor open water, for example bottle sedge, bogbean, marsh cinquefoil and the rare aquatic fern, pillwort. There are also areas of tall-herb vegetation around the loch, which is a rare and decreasing habitat type in Britain. The number of plant species recorded at the site is large, including several national and local rarities such as coralroot orchid.

The loch's indented shoreline and numerous alder and willow covered islands particularly favour breeding birds, for which the site is also notified. Wigeon, mallard, tufted duck, teal, and gosander, together with common snipe, redshank and common sandpiper are all recorded as breeding.

Although not notified for this feature, the site is also supports a number of wintering wildfowl populations, including goldeneye, pochard, wigeon and in particular whooper swan.

Part of the SSSI overlaps with part of the River Tay Special Area of Conservation

which is designated for Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*; brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, otter *Lutra lutra* and clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels.

Female goosander	Marsh cinquefoil in fen meadow
	

**Current condition of the natural features**

The fen meadow feature was monitored in 2003 and was found to be in unfavourable condition on account of an undesirable growth of scrub. Subsequently the scrub was removed on both the north and south side of the loch under management agreements with SNH. In the 2008 monitoring an initial assessment of unfavourable condition was made. This assessment was due to inappropriate plant species being found in some areas. However as a result of investigations by SEPA, SNH and information from the Forestry Commission, this assessment will be revised and the feature judged to be in favourable condition.

The open water transition fen feature has not been formally monitored since 2000, however during the 2008 fen meadow monitoring the open water transition fen was found to have increased in area particularly on the south side of the loch. Therefore its condition does not appear to have been adversely affected in the intervening years.

The breeding bird assemblage was last monitored in 2007 and scored very highly, well exceeding the threshold for this type of habitat. The breeding birds recorded included a very strong colony of tufted duck.

A summary of the latest site monitoring information is given below:

Natural features of Dunalastair Reservoir SSSI <sup>1</sup>	Feature condition (date monitored)
Breeding bird assemblage	Favourable, maintained (June 2007)
Fen meadow	Unfavourable, declining <sup>2</sup> (July 2008)
Open water transition fen	Favourable, maintained (August 2000)

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Feature condition (date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>	Favourable maintained (October 2004)	SAC
Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i>	Favourable maintained (November 2007)	SAC
River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	Favourable maintained (November 2007)	SAC
Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>	Favourable maintained (November 2007)	SAC
Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>	Favourable maintained (April 2004)	SAC
Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels	Favourable maintained (September 2004)	SAC

### Past and present management

In order to maintain the ornithological interest of the site, it is important to ensure that the favourable habitat is maintained and that disturbance is minimised. The maintenance of the habitat favourable to birds, in particular the reedy islands, shoreline reedswamp and wet grassland areas, is dependent both on a suitable water level regime and on ensuring that there are no significant land use changes within the shoreline strip and adjacent wet areas, or changes in agricultural practice. The past water regime has been favourable for the development of the habitats present. The current management of water levels is operated by Scottish and Southern Energy and entails a small diurnal and seasonal amount of fluctuation in water levels which appears to be compatible with the conservation interest of the reservoir itself.

During the last 20 years a number of the land managers have entered their land into government agri-environment schemes. This sympathetic management is having a positive influence on the vegetation as confirmed by the favourable Site Condition Monitoring reports.

<sup>1</sup> Wintering Whooper Swan populations were monitored up to March 2003 and judged to be in Favourable condition however this feature has been removed from the list of notified features for this site due to the size of the wintering population of whooper swans not being sufficiently large.

<sup>2</sup> This assessment will be revised to favourable, maintained following a re-assessment of the results.

Fishing and shooting activities take place and there is some boat and canoe use. Excessive disturbance (by boats or visitors) of breeding and wintering birds is potentially damaging to the site's interest. However the existing use is not thought to be causing any problems.

The River Tummel flows into the reservoir and with water level fluctuations, the river is widening as its banks are being eroded, bars are building up within the river, and trees are being undermined and collapsing into the water. The eroded material from upstream is being deposited in Dunalastair Reservoir especially near the inflow, building up into banks and islands. The impact of this on the special interest has not been assessed but could lead to increased nutrients and an expansion of wetland vegetation in the main waterbody.

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

1. To maintain the condition and extent of the fen meadow, open water transition fen, and open water habitats.
2. To maintain the assemblage of breeding waterfowl by maintaining suitable habitat and avoiding significant disturbance.

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, its natural features and the effectiveness of management.

The EU Habitats and Birds Directives oblige Government to avoid, in SACs, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species, as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of these Directives. The objectives above 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).

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

None known.

**Date last reviewed: 11 March 2010**