



Scottish Natural Heritage

EAST MIRES AND LUMBISTER

Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 587

Ground Floor
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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.

Natural features of East Mires and Lumbister SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Blanket bog	Favourable, maintained (July 2001)	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Breeding bird assemblage	Favourable, maintained (July 2009) ¹	

Description of the site

East Mires and Lumbister Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is an area of blanket bog north of Mid Yell, on Yell in Shetland. The site is nationally and internationally important for its blanket bog, which contains significant areas that are actively producing peat. Active blanket bog is relatively unusual in Shetland and is also listed as a European Union priority habitat as it is globally scarce. In turn this environment provides nesting habitat for a nationally important range of moorland birds.



Blanket bog occurs in areas where the climate is cool and soils tend to be waterlogged. In these conditions, dead plant material does not fully decay, leading to a build up of peat. The blanket bogs that have developed in the north and west of Britain are amongst the best anywhere in the world. East Mires and Lumbister contain a rich variety of mostly intact types of bogs, such as watershed, saddle, valley side and spur bogs. The site's high quality and near naturalness is indicated by the extensive areas of sphagnum-rich ridges, the presence of hummocks of *Sphagnum imbricatum*, sphagnum hollows and peat mounds. There are also pools and extensive areas, known as sphagnum lawns, which are dominated by sphagnum moss species.

¹ Provisional site condition monitoring report to be approved

This habitat provides an important breeding site for a variety of moorland breeding birds. This nationally important assemblage of breeding birds includes: dunlin, golden plover, redshank, curlew, snipe, whimbrel, wheatear, great skua, Arctic skua and red-throated diver. Merlin and raven also regularly use the site for feeding.

Site condition monitoring is undertaken regularly and both features are currently in a favourable condition. The breeding bird assemblage was last surveyed in 2009 and a good range of species were found to be breeding on the site. Monitoring of the blanket bog was last carried out in 2001 and the extent and composition of the habitat was in a favourable condition.

East Mires and Lumbister SSSI is also designated as East Mires and Lumbister SAC which qualifies for its priority habitat of blanket bog.

Warnstorf's Bog-moss (<i>Sphagnum warnstorfii</i>)	Red-throated diver
	

Past and present management

East Mires and Lumbister SSSI is owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and is managed as part of Lumbister nature reserve. The site is also part of a crofting tenancy, used for grazing by sheep and is stocked with 0.5-0.6 ewes per hectare.

The site was also used for rough grazing in the past and grazing impact appears to be low. Localised areas of current high and moderate grazing impact occur around areas of preferred grazing, such as acid and improved grassland. Trampling appears to be the main impact of the sheep on the bog areas and this is causing localised erosion. The lack of significant drainage on the site has contributed to the intact nature of the existing blanket bog habitat.

As a matter of policy the RSPB reserves on Yell which comprise Lumbister, Black Park and Kirkabister are not publicised as they are not well suited to visitor access. As such there are no interpretive or access points provided by the RSPB.

There are no management agreements on this site.

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

We wish to work with the owner and occupier 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 its

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, in so far as 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, or enhance, the extent and composition of the blanket bog communities

To ensure that the quality of the full range of blanket bog communities remain on the site. Grazing impact appears to be low but any further reduction in grazing pressure is likely to enhance the quality of the blanket bog communities.

2. To maintain the distribution and visibility of typical species within the habitat

Current management is compatible with the conservation interests of the site. Agricultural activities, such as drainage, fertiliser application, stock feeding and vehicle use, would have an adverse impact on the habitat.

3. To ensure that no significant disturbance occurs to typical species within the habitat

Current site management and access issues mean that visitor numbers to the site are low. This ensures that disturbance to flora and fauna is kept to a minimum.

4. To maintain, or enhance, the populations of the key components of the breeding bird assemblage, notably red-throated divers, dunlin and snipe

Ensure that the habitat is suitable for the breeding bird assemblage and that disturbance to these species is kept to a minimum.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Climate change: An increase in the Earth's temperature will lead to changing weather patterns which may change the natural processes at work on the site.

Date last reviewed: 19 October 2010