



Scottish Natural Heritage

ESHANESS COAST
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 615

Northern Isles 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.

Natural features of Eshaness Coast SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)
Old Red Sandstone Igneous	Favourable, maintained (August 2000)

Description of the site

Eshaness Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located along the western coast of the Esha Ness peninsula in the north Mainland of Shetland. It comprises the cliffs and coastal rock exposures from The Burr in the north to Stenness in the south. The cliffs of Eshaness expose rocks that were produced by volcanic eruptions during the Old Red Sandstone (ORS) period around 400 million years ago.

The lowest rocks in the volcanic sequence form the headland of the Grind of the Navir in the north of the site. They are ignimbrites - rocks that formed from a dense and extremely hot cloud of semi-molten volcanic ash particles which fused together when they settled. These rocks are pinkish rhyolite - a fine-grained rock with the same mineral composition as granite.

Between the Grind of the Navir and Drid Geo, the cliffs are made up of several thick sheets of andesite, a type of lava intermediate in chemical composition between the acidic rhyolite and basic basalt lavas. Many of the lava sheets can be identified in the cliffs. They contain bubble-shaped cavities called vesicles, formed by gas escaping from the lava as it solidified. In some cases these have filled with crystals to form agates.

Around the lighthouse, agglomerates are exposed. They are composed of coarse fragments of volcanic rock bound together in a finer-grained matrix. This material would have been blown into the air by explosive eruptions then fallen back to earth in jumbled layers a short distance from the volcanic crater. Lumps up to fist size can be seen weathering out of the rock. The volcanic sequence continues with andesite lava exposed at The Bruddans and agglomerates at Stenness.

The Grind of the Navir is also important for rock coast geomorphology, showing some of the best examples of the power of storm waves in Britain. Full exposure to the north-west, west and south-west causes differential marine erosion of the layered rocks producing superb

stepped cliff formations and huge boulders perched high above sea level bears witness to the forces of the sea. The cliffs along this part of the coast drop sharply into deep water and therefore the high energy storm waves impact directly onto the cliffs. The wave-eroded slabs and blocks of bedrock, associated high level scour features and stepped cliff profiles are of outstanding importance in a national context.

When last assessed for site condition monitoring in August 2000, the extent, structure and composition of the exposures were found to be in favourable condition. They were clearly visible and accessible.

Past and present management

Several ruined buildings and old boundary walls are visible along the cliffs suggesting that the area has been occupied in the past. The coastal edge is part of grazing units that border it and is used for rough grazing. The rock exposures are unmanaged.

A coastal path within the Shetland Core Path network follows the coastline along the SSSI and is popular with locals and tourists. Eshaness Lighthouse is just outside the site boundary. The light is under the control of the Northern Lighthouse Board and the keeper's accommodation is rented as self-catering holiday accommodation.

The west coast of Eshaness is designated as part of the Shetland National Scenic Area for its landscape qualities, in particular the remarkable cliffs, skerries, stacks and storm beach.

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.

1. To maintain the physical and visual integrity of the landforms

The interests of the site are the rock exposures along the coast. Ensure natural processes are not disturbed. Avoid any development which would impede natural processes or obscure the site's geological features, such as waste tipping, coastal protection works, quarrying of the cliff-line or baffling of offshore wave energies.

Date last reviewed: 22 February 2011