



FEARNAN COWPARK
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 628

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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

Fearnan Cowpark Site of Special Scientific Interest is located on the lower slopes of Drummond Hill just north of Fearnan on the northside of Loch Tay. It was selected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as it forms an unusually extensive area of orchid-rich flushed meadow (where mineral-enriched groundwater moves through, or over the soil surface), a rare and decreasing habitat type in Perthshire.

The grassland areas consist of a mosaic of three vegetation types: lowland neutral grassland, lowland acid grassland and spring fens. The area is important because of its diversity of habitats and higher plant species, and it contains a number of plants of local distribution in Perth and Kinross, including globeflower and spignel. When the site was designated, 132 species of flowering plant were thought to be present, including fragrant orchid small white orchid, lesser butterfly-orchid and early purple orchid.

<p>Calcareous grassland with thyme and small sedges</p>	<p>Wetland area with common and heath spotted orchid</p>
	

Current condition of the natural features

The site was monitored in July 2007 and was found to be in unfavourable, recovering condition. The south park exhibited an increase in scrub coverage and evidence of nutrient enrichment. This is converting neutral grassland to improved grassland with an associated reduction in species diversity. The orchid rich areas (e.g. greater butterfly orchid and fragrant orchid pasture) seem to have disappeared. The extent of the grassland and the composition of the sward have not declined in recent years. The north park is generally in good condition.

Grazing is essential to keep the feature in favourable condition and providing poaching and nutrient enrichment does not take place current grazing appears to be appropriate.

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

Natural features of Fearnan Cowpark SSSI	Feature condition (date monitored)
Lowland calcareous grassland	Unfavourable, recovering (July 2007)
Lowland neutral grassland	Not yet monitored
Spring fens	Not yet monitored

Past and present management

Fearnan Cowpark was formerly in a crofting area, originally owned by the Earl of Breadalbane. In 1922, the land was bought by the crofters as a common grazing for the 25 villagers who had the right to graze one cow each. Following legal dispute over the ownership for many years, the common grazing was eliminated in 1990 with ownership then being vested with several of the previous graziers – the Fearnan Partnership. The land above the SSSI is all coniferous plantation, owned and maintained as commercial woodland by Forest Enterprise.

Meadows like this one would have been traditionally managed by grazing. The Cowpark has been divided into two grazing parks for many decades by a stock-proof dyke. The lower section of the more northerly of the cow parks outside the SSSI was agriculturally improved a number of years ago and this has resulted in ‘cross-dunging’ (when nutrients are transferred from more improved areas by stock) onto the SSSI. Both parks have had herbicide application in the past and this and the cross-dunging will have caused undesirable floristic changes. Fluctuations in grazing have led to invasion of the Cowpark locally by coarse grasses, agricultural weeds, rose scrub and hawthorn trees.

Management of the site began in 1999 under an Environmentally Sensitive Area plan and included cutting of scrub and stump treatment, and bracken and agricultural weed control. Grazing by sheep takes place throughout the year although some restrictions on grazing in the north park were part of the ESA plan. Some cattle grazing also takes place.

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

- To maintain and enhance the condition and extent of the lowland neutral, lowland calcareous grassland and spring fen habitats. This can be achieved by carrying out the habitat management as described below:

1. Grazing - the maintenance of grazing by cattle and sheep at appropriate levels.

The numbers of stock, and season should be based on the principle of the removal of annual growth by grazing, with no or low levels of grazing in the summer to allow

flowering and fruiting of plants. It is important that levels are flexible and the effects of each level are monitored and if necessary modified by agreement with the owner/occupier.

2. Control of bracken.

Large-scale bracken invasion of the herb and orchid rich grassland should be controlled either by agreed mechanical means or spot treatment by asulox followed by appropriate grazing.

3. Control of scrub regeneration.

Large scale and rapid invasion of grassland habitats by scrub (hawthorn, blackthorn and briars) with consequent increased shading took place prior to the ESA scheme. Scrub is under control in the north park but further control may be required in the south park. Scrub should continue to be felled and stump treated in the winter months to prevent further re-growth.

Herbicides should only be used selectively and in a very targeted way (e.g. for bracken or agricultural weeds as per the Weed Act 1959).

We wish to work with the owners 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.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

None noted.

Date last reviewed: #####