



Scottish Natural Heritage

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**GLAS TULAICHEAN
Site of Special Scientific Interest**

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 693

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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

Glas Tulaichean lies 30km north of Blairgowrie and 18 km south of Braemar between Glenshee to the east and the Beinn a' Ghlo massif to the west. It is a rounded summit (1051m above sea level) on the southern limits of the Grampian Mountains. To the north lies Gleann Mor, a wide U-shaped valley, and to the east two steep sided corries draining into Gleann Taitneach. The inner face of Glas Choire Mhor lies directly below the summit. To the west and south are a series of broad ridges leading down into Glen Lochsie.

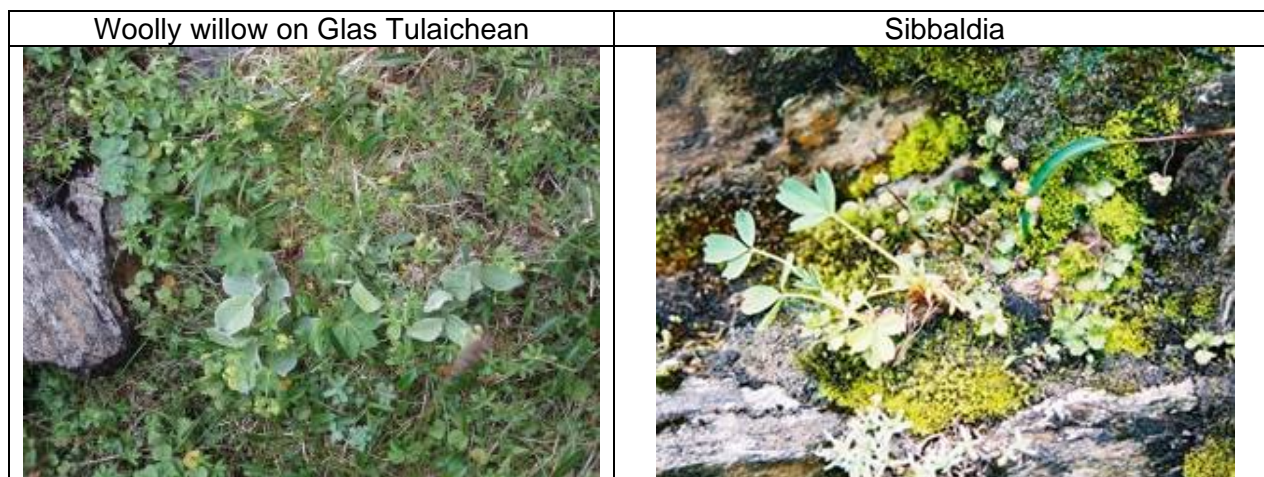
The geology consists of acid rocks with limestone outcropping in the northern most extremity of Glas Choire Bheag, and underlying the southern side of Gleann Mor.

With the exception of the ridges, the SSSI boundary follows the 800m contour in Gleann Mor, the 760m contour in Glas Choire Bheag and Glas Choire Mhor, and the 840m contour on the south and west sides of the site.

The high altitude areas support habitats and species which are particularly well adapted to this hostile environment. The site is notified as an SSSI because of the number of rare arctic-alpine vascular plant species. The outcrops of limestone in Glas Choire Bheag are rich in plants. Until the population was recently increased by planting, there was only a single female bush of the woolly willow, one of only 11 known sites in the UK - the nearest population elsewhere is within Caenlochan Glen. There are a number of other rare plants, including the rare downy willow, as well as mosses and liverworts. These are mostly associated with rock outcrops and limestone soils but springs and flushes where lime-rich and snowbed vegetation occurs also hold more notable species.

Although not part of the notified features, there are extensive montane heaths which support breeding dotterel.

The SSSI lies within the Cairngorms Massif Special Protection Area (SPA) which is designated for its breeding population of golden eagles



Current condition of the natural features

A summary of the latest site monitoring information is given below. The vascular plant assemblage feature was monitored in 2010 and recorded as favourable. Previously, in 2002 the feature was recorded as unfavourable. The recent survey showed that the required species, extent and condition were sufficient to show that the site may be recovering.

Natural features of Glas Tulaichean SSSI	Feature condition (date monitored)
Vascular plant assemblage	Favourable

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (date monitored)	Designation (SAC or SPA)
Golden eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> , breeding	Not yet monitored	SPA

Past and present management

The SSSI is subject to grazing by deer and sheep. Grazing by large herbivores has probably been a natural feature of the area since the ice-age but probably at a lower level than present. Some grazing is desirable, although at high elevations growth rates are slow and there is such a high degree of exposure that it is probably not essential to maintain open habitats such as grasslands and heathlands.

Historically, montane willow scrub would have occurred extensively on limestone areas on the steepest ground, and on areas which were protected by deep snow cover in the vulnerable winter period.

More recently (but probably still over a long time-frame), relatively high grazing pressures have led to grazing sensitive plant species being restricted to the more inaccessible crags. Willow scrub is restricted to the steepest ground, and the so-called 'tall herb vegetation' (consisting of species such as wood crane's-bill, globeflower, meadowsweet), a habitat typical of mountain areas, is absent from the SSSI, probably because there are no ledges which are completely inaccessible for grazing.

Enrichment planting of woolly and downy willows has been carried out on the crags to the north of the site to try to increase plant population sizes and to create a viable population with the

remaining plants on the site. The most recent planting of woolly willow was in 2009. The planted willows are doing well and future plantings would be desirable.

Deer management has multiple benefits - for the natural heritage it is important to maintain deer numbers at desirable levels. Numbers of deer appear to be decreasing with heavier deer control on the site and through the Section 7 deer control agreements on neighbouring land which have reduced the deer population. This may be beginning to have a beneficial effect on some plant species.

The use of vehicles at high elevations to aid this management can be damaging to sensitive montane communities, and can lead to erosion. This has occurred on the track to the west of Glas Tulaichean summit but important plant areas are not being threatened presently and the track is now vegetating over as it is no longer used.

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

- To enhance the populations of threatened rare species on site

On the basis of recent monitoring data, it would be desirable to continue enrichment planting of woolly and downy willows to try to create a sustainable population. Grazing, primarily by deer and sheep, may currently be at a level which would allow such an approach to succeed, and encourage population increases of other rare species.

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.

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).

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Impacts from changes in climate as a possible result of global warming are likely, but none has yet been clearly identified.

Date last reviewed: 26 November 2010