Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

GLEN CALLATER
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 702

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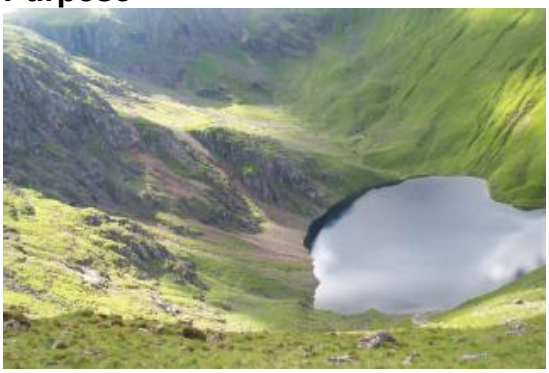
Purpose



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

Glen Callater SSSI is one of the richest and most diverse upland sites in north-east Scotland. Geologically, the site is a complex of Dalradian lime-rich and acid schists, which outcrop in Coire Kander and at the head of Glen Callater. Part of Coire Kander and a nearby section of the Carn of Claise plateau hold a rare mineral.

Mineralogy

In the vicinity of Loch Kander a layer of rocks contains the first-recorded occurrence in the United Kingdom of the rare mineral armenite (a barium-calcium aluminosilicate). Minerals deposited around 600-700 million years ago on a seafloor are thought to have been later modified by large-scale movements of the earth's crust and, uniquely, by more localised intrusions of igneous rocks, leading to the growth of the armentite. Similar deposits are found on the plateau by the Allt an Loch.

Biology

The underlying geology contributes to the diversity of upland habitats present, including dwarf-shrub heath, montane grassland, rocks and cliffs with ledges and crevices, blanket bog, springs and flushes, and lochs. Rare habitats include the extensive high-level blanket bog on the plateau of Cairn of Claise, calcareous flushes, caused by the locally lime-rich drainage system, and ledges with tall-herbs.

Some of Britain's rarest arctic-alpine plants are found on the cliff ledges, including alpine sow-thistle, woolly willow, alpine sedge and the alpine copper moss.

Loch Callater is an interesting example of a rare type of loch, intermediate between the very base-poor lochs of the eastern Highlands and the more base-rich of the Highland fringe. A mixed loch flora reflects this status, including species such as awlwort and the long-stalked pondweed, which is classed as nationally scarce.

The diverse assemblage of upland and montane breeding birds on this site includes a number of rare species such as dotterel, snow bunting and golden eagle, with nationally important numbers of these species in the wider area. The site also supports ptarmigan, golden plover and dunlin.

Invertebrate interest is under recorded but the nationally rare Highland slender moth which feeds on willows and the locally rare yellow-ringed carpet have been recorded.

Natural Features of Glen Callater SSSI	**Feature Condition (date monitored)**	**Other relevant designations**
Mineralogy of Scotland	Not yet assessed	
Upland assemblage	Not yet assessed	
Blanket bog	Favourable, maintained (August 2002)	
Breeding bird assemblage	Favourable, maintained (August 2004)	SPA
Bryophyte assemblage	Favourable, maintained (October 2004)	
Oligotrophic loch	Favourable, maintained (June 2004)	SAC
Spring-head rill and flush	Favourable, maintained* (September 2001)	
Tall-herb ledge	Favourable, maintained (July 2002)	
Vascular plant assemblage	Unfavourable, no change (August 2006)	
Alpine sow-thistle *Cicerbita alpina*	Not yet assessed	

*****Monitored as Springs (including flushes)

The loch and individual upland habitats were assessed as being in favourable condition for cycle 1 of SNH's Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) programme. The tall-herb ledge plant community feature was in favourable condition with grazing almost absent from the ledges. Erosion gullies seen in the blanket bog on a monitoring visit in 2002 were thought to be a result of natural processes and the feature was considered to be in favourable condition. Whereas the breeding bird and bryophyte assemblage features were each found to be in favourable condition, the vascular plant assemblage was found to be in unfavourable condition, due to overgrazing and trampling by deer and sheep.

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Feature Condition (date monitored)	Designation (SAC or SPA)
Golden eagle[#]	Favourable, maintained (December 2009)	SPA
Dotterel	Favourable, maintained (January 1999)	SPA
Atlantic salmon	Favourable, maintained (September 2004)	SAC
Otter *Lutra lutra*	Favourable, maintained (September 2004)	SAC

[#]Natural feature of Cairngorms Massif SPA as well as Caenlochan SPA. Not yet assessed for Cairngorms Massif SPA

Past and present management

Management over the last 100 years is likely to have been relatively unchanged, with the main activities being deer stalking, grouse shooting and sheep grazing.

All stalking and shooting rights are held by the owner on a long lease. Muirburn continues to carried out on the north-west slopes between Allt a' Bhealaich Bhuidhe and Loch Callater.

A rough vehicle track runs from Loch Callater Lodge to Carn an Tuirc. Land rovers occasionally go off these tracks, primarily for access to grouse butts, but avoiding sensitive areas which were identified at the time of notification.

The occupier's sheep graze freely over the whole site from May to November of each year. There are a number of old sheilings and stock enclosures to the north which are of archaeological interest.

The site is frequently used by hillwalkers and cross-country skiers. The RAF hold an exercise lease over the upper part of the glen for 'survival training' and lease the Auchallater bothy.

Occasional pike, eel and salmon fishing occurs at Loch Callater.

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.

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).

1. **To ensure that rock outcrops in Coire Kander and by the Allt an Loch are maintained in excellent and accessible condition**

    - It is important that the rock exposure in Coire Kander and by the Allt an Loch is maintained. Realistically, this is highly unlikely to be threatened in any way.

    - The minerals deposits in Coire Kander could be damaged by irresponsible mineral collecting.

2. **To maintain the diversity of upland and montane habitats, and their associated fauna and flora**

    - Changes in the pattern or intensity of the current land use pattern which would damage the upland habitats should be avoided. Tall herbs and willows limited to inaccessible ledges and crags in Coire Kander may spread more widely if grazing pressure were lower. Spring, flush and blanket bog habitats would probably benefit from a reduction in grazing pressure.

    - The presence of rare breeding birds must be taken into account for the timing of some operations or site management.

3. **To maintain the plant communities of Loch Callater and Loch Kander and water quality in Glen Callater**

    - Loch Callater and the Water of Callater and the lower reaches of its headwaters, the Allt Loch Kander, form part of the River Dee SAC. Works along or adjacent to these watercourses, for example along the Jocks Road or other tracks and paths along the glen, could affect these lochs and the River Dee SAC. SNH will work with the landowner to ensure that these lochs and the SAC are not affected by any such works.

Date last reviewed: 4 August 2011.