



**Ardgour Pinewoods
Site of Special Scientific Interest**

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 72

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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.

This statement is available in Gaelic on request.

Description of the site

The Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI encompasses the principal pinewoods of northern Ardgour and includes Cona Glen, Doire Mór, South Garvan and part of Loch Shiel Woodlands. The SSSI is notified for the following species and habitats.

Natural features of Ardgour Pinewoods SSSI	Condition of Feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Native pinewood	Favourable – maintained (June and August 2002)	SAC
Beetles	Favourable – maintained (July – Sept 2003)	
Chequered skipper	Favourable – maintained (May 1999)	
Reptile assemblage	Favourable – maintained (May 2004)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of Feature (and date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Alder woodland on floodplains	Favourable (June and August 2002)	SAC

The largest continuous stands of woodland occupy the rocky north-facing slopes of Cona Glen. Smaller areas such as An Slochd and Doire Mór are associated with the headwaters and upper reaches of the South Garvan and Callop Rivers. The woods range in altitude from only 10 m above sea level near the mouth of the Callop River to over 370 m in Cona Glen.

The Ardgour pinewoods represent the major component of the south-west group of native pinewoods. They are an internationally important woodland habitat and are also nationally important for their associated insect and reptile fauna.

Scots pine dominates the canopy with downy birch frequent throughout. Holly, rowan and sessile oak occur occasionally, with alder fringing water courses. There is a rich flora of oceanic mosses and liverworts (including several nationally scarce species), which are particularly abundant in rocky ravines where they occur together with a range of ferns and tall herbs such as marsh hawk's-beard. When assessed in 2002, the woods were found to be in favourable condition with positive management being carried out, including the fencing of enclosures to prevent deer browsing of native saplings and the active removal of all non-native coniferous species.

Adjoining the woodlands are extensive areas of heath and blanket bog, often with scattered trees or stumps indicating former woodland. On wetter ground purple moor grass and hummocks or carpets of *Sphagnum* bog moss species are abundant. These more open, often wet areas are suitable habitat for a number of insect species including the nationally scarce chequered skipper butterfly which is primarily a woodland edge species, with purple moor grass the larval food plant. The chequered skipper feature was found to be in favourable condition when assessed in 1999.

A notable beetle assemblage, which had retained its favourable condition status when assessed in 2003, is present within Ardgour pinewoods. The beetle feature includes the nationally rare beetle *Bolitophagus reticulatus*, the larvae of which develop in the birch tree bracket fungus *Fomes formentarium* and the metallic green chafer beetle *Cetonia cuprea*, the larvae of which develop on plant roots in the nests of the northern wood ant, a species which has well developed colonies within the woodlands.

When assessed in 2004 the reptile assemblage was found to have retained its favourable condition too. The reptile assemblage found in the Ardgour pinewoods SSSI is particularly noteworthy for this part of Scotland and includes lizards, slow worms and a particularly abundant adder population.

Past and present management

The majority of the Ardgour pinewoods SSSI falls under Cona Glen Estate ownership, with the remainder owned by the Forestry Commission.

Today the principal land use over much of the site is deer stalking. The Forestry Commission let the sporting rights but have concurrent rights to control deer damaging trees. There is no formal grazing of sheep but some animals do stray from the Achaphubuil/Trislaig area. Cattle are grazed within Cona Glen and limited muirburn is undertaken.

Seven enclosures have been erected in the past to protect and increase the quality and quantity of native pinewood on the Cona Glen Estate.

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

We wish to work with the owner to protect the site and to maintain and where necessary enhance its features of special interest. SNH aims 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, 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).

The specific conservation objectives are:

1. To maintain the favourable condition of the woodland habitat by

- continuing to manage cattle grazing appropriately
- continuing to restrict deer /sheep grazing
- continuing to remove non-native coniferous species and other non-native plants from the woodland
- to safeguard against fire

2. To maintain in favourable condition populations of beetles, reptiles and chequered skipper by

- continuing to maintain open glades within the woodland
- avoiding significant disturbance to the site
- leaving dead trees and fallen timber

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Underplanting of non-native conifers is a threat to the native woodlands in several places. This is being addressed by the Forestry Commission for the land in their ownership, through felling of planted conifers, removal of regeneration of non-native species and deer control under an agreed management plan. Future regeneration of spruce outwith Forestry Commission land may be a threat to the native pinewood.

Date last reviewed: 30 September 2008