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GLENDARUEL WOOD AND CRAGS
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 733

Address: Ballochyle, Sandbank, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8RD Tel: 01369 705377

Email: Argyll_stirling@snh.gov.uk

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.

Natural features of Glendaruel Wood and Craggs SSSI	Condition of feature (date monitored)
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable Declining (February 2002)
Rocky slopes (includes inland cliff, rocky outcrops, chasmophytic vegetation)	Favourable, maintained (August 2002)

Description of the site

Glendaruel Wood and Craggs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a two-part site comprising an area of ancient woodland on the lower valley side and a rocky outcrop below the summits of Creachan Mor and Creachan Beag. The site lies approximately 4 kilometres north-east of the Clachan of Glendaruel on the Cowal peninsula of Argyll.

The woodland part of the site is underlain with bands of schist and limestone that can be seen along the burnsides. The varied drainage and topography within the woodland have resulted in a number of different woodland types developing here. Oak, ash and hazel dominated woodland occurs on the drier slopes whilst alder and ash dominate on the wetter slopes and valley bottom. A willow dominated area occurs on the valley floor at the north end of the site. This willow woodland type is unusual in Argyll and is the largest known example in Cowal.



The woodland at Glendaruel is particularly important for bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and lichens. Greater than 120 species of bryophytes are recorded within the woodland and of these species, 2 are National Rarities, 3 are International Rarities and

32 are Oceanic species. Oceanic bryophytes are a special feature of Cowal woodlands in general; however, Glendaruel woodland is of particular interest because of the influence of the underlying limestone. The communities of bryophytes occurring on the outcropping limestone are uncommon within Argyll. The lichen flora of the woodland is of Regional Importance and an above average number of vascular plant species occur for a woodland of this size.

Site condition monitoring carried out in 2002 found the upland oak woodland feature at Glendaruel Wood to be in unfavourable condition. The volume of standing and fallen deadwood was less than expected and levels of browsing were higher than desirable. Poaching by cattle has led to localised disruption to the ground, field and shrub layers of the wood. Management measures are in place to address herbivore impacts and it is expected that deadwood volumes will increase naturally over time.

The crags are comprised predominantly from serpentine, an unusual rock that is rich in elements such as magnesium and nickel and low in ones such as calcium and phosphorous. Bands of calcareous dolomite run through the serpentine and the soil derived from this combination of rock types has an unusual chemical composition which has led to the development of a unique flora that is tolerant of these conditions. Northern Rock-cress and Mountain Avens, species unusual in Argyll, are located here. Many species which are more commonly found near the coast occur on the crags, including Sea Campion, Thrift and Sea Plantain. The scree and crags are particularly rich in ferns, including many spleenworts such as Maidenhair Spleenwort, Black Spleenwort and Wall Rue. Other ferns present on the scree include Parsley Fern and Beech Fern.

The total extent of rocky slope habitat at Glendaruel was favourably maintained (at August 2002) with minimal disturbance impacts recorded. The characteristic species were all present and the conclusion therefore was that the current management is appropriate for this area of the site.

Upland oak woodland	Rocky slopes (includes inland cliff, rocky outcrops, chasmophytic vegetation)
	

Past and present management

The woodland is listed on the Inventory of Ancient, Long-established and Semi-natural

Woodlands of Argyll & Bute as a long-established woodland of semi-natural origin. The presence of banks within the woodland, multi-stemmed and coppiced trees and the ruined settlement adjacent to the site suggests that the woodland has been more intensively managed in the past. Approximately 50 years ago most of the accessible oak within the wood was felled, the stumps of which are still visible. Mature beech occurs near the burn at the north end of the woodland, suggesting some previous amenity planting here. Prior to and after notification as a SSSI the woodland has been grazed by sheep and cattle.

The SSSI is currently used for rough grazing. The northern part of the woodland is grazed by 25 sheep throughout the year and 5 cattle in summer. The southern part of the woodland is grazed by 30 cattle and a proportion of a flock of 630 ewes that have access to the slopes above. Fertiliser has been applied to some of the pasture areas within the lower part of the site and the bracken sprayed. Pheasants are reared within the woodland for shooting.

The accessible parts of the crags and scree have been and continue to be grazed by sheep as part of a heft running out on to the moorland above.

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 and to monitor the effectiveness of its management.

- 1. To maintain the extent, diversity and humid condition of the woodland habitat with suitable conditions for the lower plant communities present.**
Ensure that native tree species regeneration maintains tree cover on the site to at least its current extent. Ensure grazing levels of both domestic stock and wild animals are sufficiently low to allow regeneration of all tree species that are currently present within the wood.
- 2. To control encroachment by non-native species.**
If non-native tree regeneration of species such as beech and sycamore occurs then it should be controlled.
- 3. To maintain the extent and diversity of the sub-montane vegetation associated with the serpentine outcrop.**
Ensure that the grazing regime maintains the vegetation in good condition where excessive erosion or scrub invasion is not occurring.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

1. Bracken infestation is locally heavy and may be preventing tree regeneration.
2. The woodland provides shelter and early grazing for cattle.
3. The woodland contains a large proportion of young and middle aged trees, rather than senescent ones, many dating from the regeneration following the felling of oaks approximately 50 years ago. The absence of seedlings and saplings is therefore not of an immediate or middle term threat to the woodland.

4. The crags require light grazing to maintain the grass sward and prevent trees and shrubs developing which may shade the crags. Too high a grazing intensity may damage the grassland community and cause erosion on the friable areas of rock.

Date last reviewed: 25 March 2010