Scottish Natural Heritage

GLENTROOL OAKWOODS
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 738

Holmpark Industrial Estate
New Galloway Road
NEWTON STEWART
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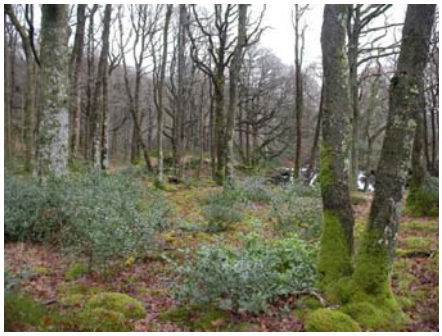
Purpose



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.

Natural features of Glentrool Oakwoods SSSI	**Condition of feature** (and date monitored)	**Other relevant designations**
Upland oak woodland	Favourable, maintained (May 2009)	SAC
Bryophyte assemblage	Favourable, maintained (October 2008)	
Lichen assemblage	Unfavourable, declining) (February 2009)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	**Condition of feature** (and date monitored)	**SPA or SAC**
Western acidic oak woodland	Favourable, maintained (May 2009)	SAC

Description of the site

Glentrool Oakwoods SSSI, comprising a group of three relict sessile oak woods surrounding Loch Trool, lies approximately 12km north of Newton Stewart. These woods also form part of the composite site, the Galloway Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The woods are of importance as a pure gene pool for the sessile oak and other trees and shrubs of the once extensive western upland oak woods in this area. The site shows variation in the tree cover, with some areas dominated by oak, birch and alder. These reflect differences in the underlying soils which are mainly boulder clay or peaty gley soils. Hazel, rowan and holly make up the shrub layer. Open glades, grasslands, gorges, and freshwater marsh add further diversity. The birch woods are particularly rich in lichens such as lungworts, whilst the burn sides and gorges are important for rare oceanic mosses and liverworts.

These shaded, humid areas also hold rare plants including serrated wintergreen and Wilson's filmy fern. The woodland hosts a rich community of breeding birds and a wide range of invertebrates. Red squirrel and pine martin are also recorded on the site, the latter having been re-introduced by the Forestry Commission.

Glentrool Oakwoods SSSI forms part of the Galloway Oakwoods SAC designated for "Western acidic oak woodland". Management compatible with maintaining and enhancing the SSSI notified feature of Upland Oak Woodland will also benefit the Natura feature.

The complex of sites contains good examples of old sessile oak woods, some of which have been coppiced in the past and are typically diverse in mosses, liverworts, lichens and ferns. The lichen assemblage has been noted as Unfavourable, declining, possibly due to rhododendron and conifer encroachment on the site.

Glenhead	Lichen and bryophyte community
	

Past and present management

The area has been used as hunting grounds since the 14th century, presumably for deer. Extensive coppicing began in the 18th century, ceasing around 1900. In 1845 feral goats were noted as a problem to the regeneration of trees. In 1955, 1980 and in the early 1990s, small plots were stock-fenced in an attempt to reduce the impact of grazing and browsing animals, but these efforts appear to have been of limited success.

The site and the adjacent tracts of non-designated broadleaved woodlands form a key component of the Cree Valley Community Woodland Project. Natural regeneration is being encouraged with fencing being maintained to reduce the impact of grazing animals. Recent work has involved removal of internal fences to allow some natural grazing to create open sunlit conditions required to support the lichen and bryophyte communities of the site. Limited tree planting (using stock of local provenance) takes place both within the site and in order to provide a buffer zone around the site. The area is heavily used for informal recreation. The clearance of fallen and overhanging trees and bushes takes place in this area. The loch is stocked with brown and rainbow trout with permit-controlled angling the principal activity.

The eastern end of the SSSI overlaps with the Loch Dee, Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site.

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

We wish to work with the owners 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, 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).

1. **To maintain the extent of woodland habitats by preventing grazing livestock entering the site and encouraging natural regeneration**
   Oak trees dominate the canopy, with smaller areas of birch and alder. These species should be retained as they are favoured by invertebrates. Conifers occur immediately around the site. Whilst they make productive timber trees, they are of a lower value for invertebrates. Recent management has started to increase the structural diversity within the woodland by encouraging young growth, removing conifers and subsequently replanting with local provenance oak. This should be continued. Limited small scale felling and replanting/regeneration would increase the diversity, but at least 20% of the woodland should be retained as mature trees that can grow old. Oak, birch and alder should be retained as they are favoured by invertebrates. All conifers and Rhododendron should be removed in preference to the native species whenever opportunities arise. Large breaks in the canopy should be avoided; therefore any felling of trees should be on a limited scale, particularly around sensitive areas such as gorges and ravines.

2. **To maintain/increase the populations and diversity of the lichens, mosses and liverworts which are a feature of the woodlands, especially in the ravines**
   One of the key requirements for their continued survival is the maintenance of the current humidity regime. Large breaks in the canopy would increase air flow within the wood resulting in dramatic changes in humidity. This could adversely affect the range of mosses, liverworts and lichens present. Limited natural grazing and browsing is preferred to maintain open sunlit areas for the benefit of lichens and bryophytes. This should be countered by ensuring that regeneration of native species of trees and shrubs is encouraged.

3. **To maintain the structural diversity of the woodland**
   One of the most important features in determining the number of bird species within a wood is the structural diversity. The majority of the canopy trees are of a

very similar age, with little mid-height growth of trees. Dead wood provides a habitat which is increasingly uncommon in commercial woodlands, which have short rotations. Many of the unusual invertebrates and other saprophytic organisms found within the woodland rely on a supply of both standing and fallen dead wood. Consideration, however, needs to be given to the public safety implications for standing dead wood. Excessive growth of bracken can reduce the likelihood of tree regeneration through direct competition for light and other resources. The presence of a range of other species of fern suggests that non-chemical methods are likely to be most appropriate. The woodland should be fenced to exclude grazing stock, whilst goats, deer and rabbits should be managed to allow the establishment of any planted stock, regrowth from cut stumps and natural regeneration of trees to take place.

4. To maintain and improve access to and within the site

Maintenance of the existing footpath and the creation of any additional tracks should be planned to avoid botanically rich areas, and should ideally be carried out outwith the bird nesting season. Works should avoid creating large openings in the canopy or forming wind corridors and should be carried out outwith the nesting period. The Southern Upland Way Long Distance Route passes through part of the site following existing paths and tracks.

Date last reviewed: 9 July 2010