



Scottish Natural Heritage

**HABBIES HOWE – LOGAN BURN
Site of Special Scientific Interest**

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 757

Lothian Area Office
Silvan House
3rd Floor East
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

Tel: 0131 316 2600
Fax: 0131 316 2690
e-mail: lothians@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.

Description of the site

Habbies Howe – Logan Burn Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located in the Pentland Hills Regional Park, close to Loganlea Reservoir and below Scald Law.

The SSSI comprises an upland cleuch where the Logan Burn cuts through lime-rich rocks in a steep-sided valley. The cleugh itself has a series of waterfalls, numerous rock outcrops and many unstable slopes with intermittent landslips. This combination of geology and geomorphology has resulted in a complex site with a variety of important bryophyte and lichen habitats. The site is of great regional importance as the only known Lothian locality for a number of species.

The Howe has a long history of bryophyte recording, with an exceptionally large number of species recorded for such a small area in the east of Scotland (288 species). Of these, fourteen species are nationally scarce in the UK. These include montane, base-loving species such as the fringed extinguisher-moss *Encalypta ciliate*.

One hundred and fifty lichen species have been recorded, including fifteen that are nationally scarce in the UK. This is the only known Lothian locality for five species including the distinctive green *Peltigera britannica* and bushy *Sphaerophorus globosus*.



A species-rich plant community has developed due to lime enrichment from the rocks and also the damp conditions found on-site. This community includes several lime-loving species which are uncommon in Scotland: - burnet rose, rock rose, hairy rock-cress, mossy saxifrage and limestone bedstraw. Other plant species found on the site

include wood sorrel and greater woodrush; and there are some small gully areas close to the Logan Burn waterfalls where water avens, woodruff, meadowsweet and valerian can be found.

Relict scrub remains on the steep slopes of the site where grazing is limited. This scrubland comprises juniper, birch, rowan and aspen, and is an important relict with species typical of formerly extensive woodland.

Although small, the site encompasses a habitat which is rare in the Lothian area. Its distinctive vegetation harbours some interesting insect species including locally rare money spiders and a running foliage spider.

Natural features of Habbies Howe – Logan Burn SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)
Bryophyte assemblage	No current assessment
Lichen assemblage	No current assessment

The bryophyte <i>Tortula subulata</i> var. <i>graeffii</i>	The lichen <i>Peltigera britannica</i>
	

Past and present management

In the past, sheep grazing occurred in accessible areas of the site, which resulted in vegetation damage and also prevented the natural regeneration of trees and shrubs. There was also heavy visitor usage which eventually led to the formation of a wide, eroded “path” - in some areas devoid of vegetation.

Due to these problems, it was deemed necessary to protect the damaged area by means of a fence which was installed around the majority of the SSSI in 1992. This fence excludes sheep and human visitors from the area, giving the vegetation time to recover while also allowing relict scrub to regenerate. In recent years, aspen seedlings have established within the enclosure as a result of this management.

Much day-to-day management of the site is carried out by the Pentland Hills Ranger Service as the SSSI is located within this Regional Park. Vegetation surveys have been carried out on the site in 1976, 1993 and 2002, giving information about vegetation development (or degradation) over time. Surveys such as these will be carried out in the future so that vegetation recovery and the fence’s usefulness can be assessed.

The land is in private ownership and so any proactive management for nature conservation requires the agreement and support of the landowner.

In 2009, the Ranger Service planted a grouping of 30 juniper seedlings within the site.

The fenced area of the site is currently managed under an SNH Management Agreement which covers loss of grazing and maintenance of the fenced enclosure. The current agreement is due to expire in 2013.

In the future, the site could benefit from a light grazing regime aimed at maintaining a suitable level of natural scrub regeneration while preventing excessive poaching and scrub development.

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 to carry out site survey, monitoring and research as appropriate to increase our knowledge and understanding of the site and its natural features and monitor the effectiveness of the management agreement.

1. To maintain the existing fence in order to prevent overgrazing and excessive poaching by sheep and erosion by human visitors.

This will allow vegetation time to recover while encouraging relict scrub regeneration.

2. To implement a light grazing regime within the fenced area in order to maintain scrub regeneration at acceptable levels.

This will prevent excessive scrub encroachment within the site in order to meet the habitat requirements of both lichen and bryophyte assemblages.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

The area is very popular with hill-walkers who enjoy the landscape found in the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Their enjoyment and recreational usage of the area must be balanced with the management necessary for nature conservation. Therefore any actions taken to protect the site's special scientific interest must be explained and justified to the general public. In the case of the fence, this necessitates maintaining the informative sign which explains to walkers why the fence is in place and what management is being carried out on-site.

Date last reviewed: 12 April 2011