Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

HARE MYRE, MONK MYRE AND STORMONT LOCH
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 765

Battleby,
Redgorton,
Perth
PH1 3EW

Tel: 01738 444177

Email:
Tayside_clackmannanshire
@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

Hare Myre, Monk Myre and Stormont Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 3km south east of Blairgowrie and 4km north west of Coupar Angus. It is a composite site of two parts with Hare Myre and Stormont Loch (the largest of the three lochs at 15 ha) to the west of the A923 and Monk Myre to the east of the A923. The SSSI lies in the fertile agricultural landscape of Strathmore. The site was selected as an SSSI for its fen vegetation, rare vascular plants, wintering greylag geese as well as its geomorphological interest.

The site consists of three partially silted up shallow kettlehole lochs (formed by melting isolated blocks of ice) lying on extensive fluvioglacial outwash sands deposited by glacial melt water that drained Glenshee and Strathardle along the valley of the River Ericht. Stormont Loch and Hare Myre are fed by ground water spring, rainwater and land drainage, while Monk Myre is also fed by a small spring. Lying in different catchments, Stormont Loch has an artificial outflow to the Lunan Burn and Monk Myre has a natural outflow draining to the Ericht.

The site is notified for its open water transition fens. This feature consists of the fen habitats which form in succession from open water through emergent vegetation of different types to willow carr and fen woodland. All three lochs have a fringe of emergent vegetation, grading into wet woodland.

The western end of Stormont Loch displays an impressive example of natural succession from open water to floating bog moss with relict open water and developing willow carr; it forms one of the most extensive areas of bottle-sedge – bog moss poor-fen in Perth & Kinross. Hare Myre and Monk Myre have areas of wet grassland, fen and swamp.

From the 1960's to the 80's the population of greylag geese wintering in the Tay-Isla Valley was one of the largest in the UK, with geese roosting on lochs and on the River Tay. Stormont Loch and Monk Myre were used as alternative roosting sites for greylags and some pink-footed geese, with birds usually feeding close by on arable crops or grassland. Numbers of geese can fluctuate for a number of reasons and the site is currently much less important. It is not thought that the condition of the site as a roost has deteriorated but rather the greylag geese migrating from Iceland have tended to stay in Orkney and northern Scotland.

Although not part of the notified interest of the site, other species of wetland birds that make use of the site include great crested grebe, shoveler, mallard, teal, wigeon, pochard, tufted duck, goldeneye and smew. Black-necked grebes have bred in the past. Other rarities include ospreys which regularly fish but do not breed on the site. Islands in Hare Myre have been used by nesting black headed gulls.

The wetland habitats not only provide important areas for breeding birds but also for a number of locally rare and uncommon plants species. These include: Scandinavian small-reed *Calamagrostis purpurea* which is a very rare plant outside of north eastern continental Europe, and is found in the poor-fen at the western end of Stormont Loch, where it is locally abundant; tufted loosestrife *Lysimachia thrysiflora* a nationally scarce species that is also rare elsewhere in Perthshire; greater spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*, found in the emergent wetland zone around Stormont Loch; nodding bur marigold *Bidens cernua* at the water's edge in both parts of the site, together with trifid bur-marigold *Bidens tripartita* at Stormont Loch. Plant species diversity is high with over 170 species having been recorded within the SSSI to which the range of habitats is a contributing factor.

The old growth pine woodland surrounding Stormont Loch and Hare Myre provides habitat for two uncommon plant species: the nationally scarce twinflower *Linnaea borealis* and creeping lady's-tresses *Goodyera repens*.

Deep deposits of silt have accumulated in Stormont Loch and have been undisturbed for thousands of years. They provide a complete pollen record from the last ice age supported by radiocarbon dating. The record is unusual in detailing a brief but separate period of climatic deterioration before the onset of the Loch Lomond Stadial cold period (11 000 -10 000 Before Present). Stormont Loch is considered a nationally important reference site for studies of the vegetation succession and palaeoenvironmental history of eastern Scotland for the Late Glacial (13 000 -10 000 years BP) and Holocene periods (the last 10 000 years).

Both red squirrel (in the surrounding pine woodland) and otter make use of the site. Roe deer occur frequently and are important browsers in the surrounding woodland. The still, eutrophic waters of the lochs are unsuitable for game fish, but provide excellent conditions for pike, perch and possibly eels, conditions which have attracted a large heronry on the shore of Stormont Loch.

Twinflower	*Greylag goose Anser anser*
	

Current condition of the natural features

Hare Myre, Monk Myre and Stormont Loch SSSI has been surveyed as part of SNH's 6-year programme of Site Condition Monitoring.

At the time of condition monitoring in 2003 the **greylag goose population** recorded a status of unfavourable declining due to a 92% decline in numbers since 1985.

The **open water transition fen** was surveyed in 2006 and recorded a status of favourable maintained.

A summary of the latest site monitoring information is given below:

Natural features of Hare Myre, Monk Myre, and Stormont Loch SSSI	**Feature condition** (date monitored)
Greylag goose *Anser anser*, non-breeding	Unfavourable Declining (October 2003)
Open water transition fen	Favourable Maintained (August 2006)
Vascular plant assemblage	Not yet monitored
Quaternary of Scotland (geomorphology)	Not yet monitored

Past and present management

Stormont Loch is shown on Roy's Map (1747-55) as "Loch Bogg", and there are a number of archaeological remains and stories from Stormont Loch. A Castle shown on the 1864 1st edition OS map, is now only visible is a rubble mound, and there is a Crannog on the loch too. Monk Myre is not shown on Roy's Map, although the Monkmyre Burn is shown but not named. It is possible that the loch could be man-made perhaps for marl extraction.

Stormont Loch is partly surrounded by a Scots pine plantation which is thought to have been planted prior to 1864. The south side of the site is separated from arable farmland by a track and narrow strip of ground. Hare Myre is completely surrounded by a plantation of old Scots pine. The paths through the mature pine and wet woodland of the Hare Myre/Stormont Loch part of the site are well used for recreation and dog walking.

Thinning of woodland to the north of Hare Myre and Stormont Loch was carried out in 2003, with advice from SNH to protect the ground flora that includes rare plants. A deer fence was erected in the woodland at Hare Myre by the Estate as part of the Woodland Grant Scheme.

Monk Myre by contrast is entirely surrounded by arable fields or permanent pasture. The lochside fringe is open to grazing by cattle except where fenced enclosures have been erected with grant assistance from SNH to protect ground from poaching and enhance the fen and emergent vegetation. Some of these areas are completely ungrazed, others are grazed for part of the year. The loch is used for trout fishing for much of the year.

Open water and fen habitats are fragile and vulnerable to many types of disturbance, including pollution and nutrient enrichment. Water quality at all lochs but especially Monk Myre and Stormont Loch appears to have been affected by nutrient enrichment from agricultural run-off (Monk Myre especially), effluent discharge from storm drains in Rosemount (Stormont Loch especially), domestic septic tanks in Rosemount, as well as from birds using the lochs. Woodland management could be another potential source.

There are derelict boathouses on the south-west shores of both Stormont and Hare Myre, which are no longer in use due to the silting up of the lochs. Stormont Loch is regularly

fished from the bankside without legal right or permit from the Estate.

In 2008 upgrade of the track at Stormont Loch resulted in damage to fen habitats but subsequent restoration has sought to ensure that there is no habitat loss or nutrient enrichment as a result.

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

The long term goal for the site is to maintain Hare Myre, Monk Myre and Stormont Loch as a fully functioning and unpolluted wetland ecosystem accommodating all the existing habitats and species especially wintering greylag geese and other wildfowl, fen vegetation and rare plants.

1. To maintain conditions suitable for the wintering wildfowl populations, in particular the greylag geese through:
    - maintenance of suitable habitat;
    - avoidance of disturbance.

2. To maintain the extent and condition of fen, emergent and other wetland vegetation though;
    - maintenance of stock fences;
    - avoidance of point source pollution (e.g. stockfeeding, manure piles, etc) adjacent to the lochs.

3. To maintain silt and peat deposits in Stormont Loch;
    - Avoidance of disturbance eg changes to water levels.

4. To maintain and enhance populations of rare and uncommon woodland plant species (especially twin-flower *Linnaea borealis* and creeping ladies tresses orchid *Goodyera repens*) through;
    - maintenance of the woodland habitat; and
    - removal of non-native species.

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, its natural features and the effectiveness of management.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

None known

Date last reviewed: 11 February 2011