



Scottish Natural Heritage

INVERFARIGAIG
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 813

EAST HIGHLAND AREA
Fodderty Way
Dingwall Business Park
DINGWALL
IV15 9XB

Tel: 01349 865333
Fax: 01349 865609
Email: EAST_HIGHLAND@snh.gov.uk

Purpose



Photo: The Highland Council

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

Inverfarigaig SSSI lies 26 km south west of Inverness, on the eastern shore of Loch Ness. It is one of the best examples of mixed broadleaved woodland in the Inverness area. It has two “arms” of woodland, one, a deep ravine, running south east, cutting through old red sandstone rocks and another running north east, through a wider glen, with a more open habitat. Alder, ash, wych elm and oak dominate with birch being common on the higher slopes and some aspen. Hazel is also present forming a shrub layer in parts of the site.

The woodland habitats are rich in flowering plants, ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens - particularly on the lower ground near streams. These include a nationally scarce lichen *Fuscopannaria ignobilis* found on ash trees.

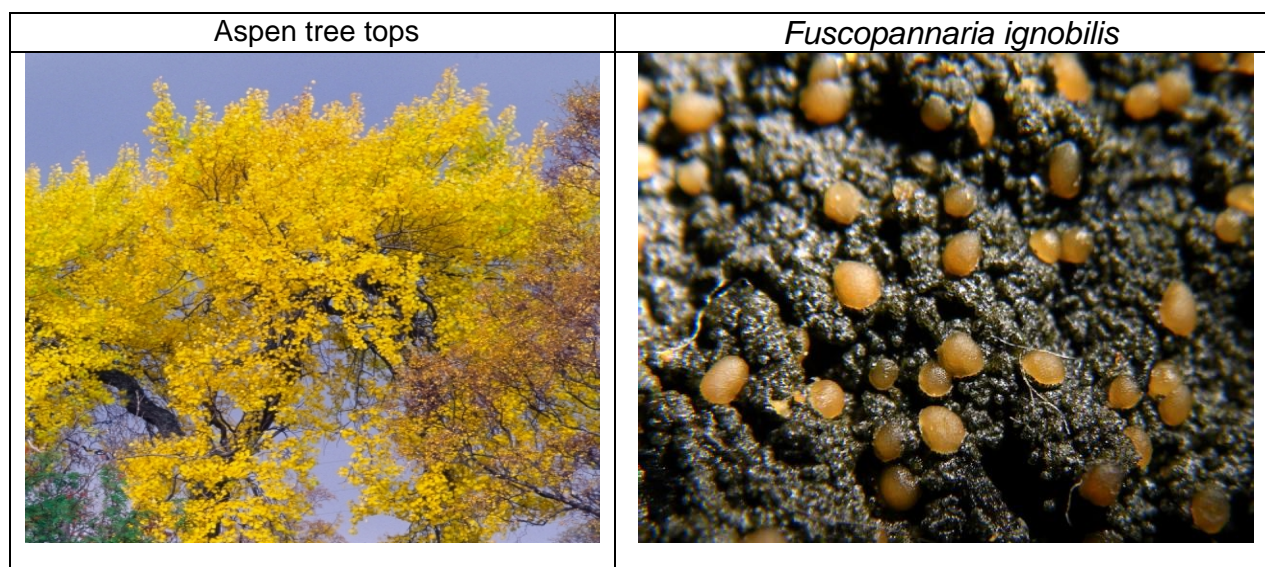
The designated woodland habitats support a high diversity of insects characteristic of ancient woodlands. This includes several beetle and hoverfly species associated with the aspen stands.

The site forms part of the Ness Woods Special Area of Conservation because it supports both habitats and species which are rare or threatened in a European context. These are sessile oak and mixed ravine woodland and otters. Otters have been

recorded in the Farigaig river and the SSSI provides excellent habitat with the rocky ground and tree roots providing ideal sites for holts.

When monitored during 2001, the woodland habitats of Inverfarigaig were found to be in favourable condition. An assessment of the woodland habitats in the wider Ness Woods SAC in 2008 found them to be in unfavourable condition due to grazing pressure preventing sufficient young trees developing, giving the woodlands an unnatural structure and poor canopy cover. However, the condition of the woodland habitats within Inverfarigaig is still considered favourable.

When monitored during 2004, the site was found to be in favourable condition for otters with the population and required habitat maintained.



Natural features of Inverfarigaig SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Upland mixed ash woodland	Favourable, maintained (May 2001)	SAC

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Unfavourable, no change (May 2008)	SAC
Western acidic oak woodland	Unfavourable, no change (May 2008)	SAC
Otter	Favourable, maintained (July 2004)	SAC

Past and present management

There are several known archaeological sites within Inverfarigaig SSSI including two Iron Age forts, a whisky still and a well. The woodlands have probably been used for coppice, charcoal and fuel production in the past but there is little documented evidence of management before the Forestry Commission acquired the majority of the

land in 1946. In 1968 about 50% of the SSSI was under-planted with conifers by the Forestry Commission. A visitor centre and a series of amenity trails were developed nearby in the mid 1970s , including a short woodland walk through part of the SSSI. The site remains a popular visitor attraction due to its dramatic landscape features.

Since 1987, there has been a gradual removal of non-native trees (both planted and self-seeded) and rhododendron with the last large area of conifers felled and left to recycle around 5 years ago. There is likely to be a continuing need for occasional removal of non-native trees which have self seeded from adjacent commercial plantations. Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) now manages their ground for nature conservation and for public access, with potential timber production as a subsidiary objective.

The two iron age forts at Dun Deardail and Dun Garbh require safeguarding against damage from tree regeneration and are maintained as open areas within the woodland.

The whole site is grazed by deer and feral goats. The latter are shot by FCS as the opportunity arises during deer culls and FCS aims to keep deer numbers at less than 5 per hectare. Grazing by deer and goats is not considered to be a significant threat to the SSSI interest at present. Elsewhere within the site, deer are culled for sport. There is some limited grazing of domestic livestock within the northern parts of the site.

Management for recreational use is important in part of the site and the rock faces are occasionally used by climbers.

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

We **wish** to work with the owners and occupiers to protect and maintain the site 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 and monitor the effectiveness of the management.

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 condition and extent of native woodland habitats by, for example:

- managing grazing at a level that allows sufficient regeneration of trees to maintain varied age structure and canopy cover.
- ensuring self seeded non-natives are removed.
- preventing loss of habitat from felling of trees and removal of dead wood.

2. To maintain the population and distribution of otter and its habitat by, for example:

- avoiding damage or alteration to water courses and burn sides.
- preventing discharge or pollution from entering water courses.
- avoiding significant disturbance of otters at holts, resting places and when feeding.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Access to parts of the site is difficult and hazardous affecting management and monitoring activities.

Date last reviewed: 9 December 2009