



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

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KENTRA BAY AND MOSS
Site of Special Scientific Interest

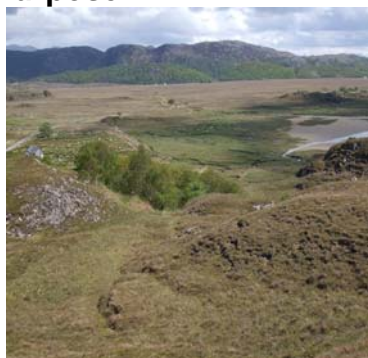
SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 836

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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.

This statement is available in Gaelic on request.

Description of the site:

Kentra Bay and Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is situated in west Lochaber about 1km to the west of Acharacle. The site includes the extensive peatland of Kentra Moss, the tidal sand/mud-flats and saltmarsh of Kentra Bay to the west and adjacent areas of woodland and maritime heath.

Natural features of Kentra Bay and Moss SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Blanket bog	Unfavourable - declining (June 2006)	SAC
Bryophyte assemblage	Unfavourable - declining (September 2005)	
Lichen assemblage	Favourable - maintained (November 2002)	
Maritime cliff	Favourable - maintained (June 2006)	
Mudflat	Favourable - maintained (August 2003)	
Saltmarsh	Favourable - maintained (July 2002)	
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable - declining (February 2008)	
Vascular plant assemblage	Favourable - maintained (August 2005)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	SPA or SAC
Depressions on peat substrates*	Favourable – maintained (October 2008)	SAC
Subtidal sandbanks	Favourable – maintained (September 2003)	SAC

* indicates an SAC feature which is a component of the SSSI feature Blanket bog.

Kentra Moss consists of a large area of a type of active blanket bog which is very rare in Britain. It has a well developed structure of hummocks, hollows and pools with a rich flora of bog mosses and several scarce or uncommon species of plants, insects and spiders. It is also used by a small wintering flock of Greenland white-fronted geese. There are important natural transitions between the bog and the adjacent saltmarsh, mires and coastal heath. However, when last monitored the bog was considered to be in an unfavourable condition because of grazing pressure and ground disturbance relating to trampling.

Kentra Bay is a shallow inlet with extensive tidal flats of sand and mud. Within the bay a range of estuary and marine habitats support a characteristic flora and fauna including small populations of wintering waders and wildfowl. Kentra Bay and the nearby Loch Moidart hold the largest extent of sheltered intertidal flats on the mainland coast of northwest Scotland. Kentra Bay also contains one of the largest expanses of saltmarsh in Lochaber, with a wide range of vegetation types and scarce species. In several places there are uninterrupted transitions from saltmarsh to bog, a feature scarce in Scotland on this scale. The bay is fringed by rock outcrops and small islands which supports maritime cliff habitat (maritime heath), which adds to the diversity of the site. When last monitored the coastal habitats were all found to be in a favourable condition.

There are extensive woodlands on the south side of Kentra Bay with smaller areas on the north shore and on one of the islands. A range of tree species are present and include downy birch, sessile oak, ash, rowan and hazel. The woods have a rich 'Atlantic' flora, particularly of mosses and liverworts, as well as lichens and ferns. Following monitoring in 2005 the bryophyte assemblage was classed as unfavourable and declining primarily due to the encroachment of rhododendron over the blanket bog habitat which supports significant numbers of sphagnum mosses.

The diverse vegetation of the site includes an assemblage of two nationally scarce, one nationally rare, and one locally scarce plants. This feature was classed as being in favourable condition when monitored in August 2005.

Past and present management:

The site has been subject to grazing with sheep and cattle for many years, as it is part of several crofting common grazings and other tenancies, and stock have unrestricted access to almost the entire site. In parts, overgrazing and trampling by deer and stock is having a deleterious effect on the bog vegetation.

Muirburn was probably a frequent management practice in the past and the vegetation structure and composition in parts of the bog shows signs of the influence of fire. However muirburn has not been practised over most of the SSSI in recent years, but accidental fires have occasionally affected the bog's fringes. A resumption of muirburning or increase in accidental fires could cause long-term damage to the bog surface by killing the bog moss component.

The fringes of Kentra Moss have been used as a source of peat for domestic use, modifying the bog margins in places, but the practice has now ceased.

Various attempts to drain and make agricultural improvements to the moss have been made over the centuries, most recently in the 1930s. Although many of the older drains appear to be filling in through natural processes. Maintenance of roadside and other drains may affect the bog hydrology with consequent changes to the vegetation.

There is low level recreational activity around the margins of the bay, with a popular walking route along the south side of the bay. The adjacent hill ground is used for deer stalking. Roads and tracks across and adjacent to the bog are used for local access.

Fishing and shellfish collection have been traditional low-intensity uses of the bay, but incidents of cockle harvesting by tractor and dredge have taken place on the north side. This has been illegal since an amendment of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act in 1995. Such harvesting could disrupt the sediment structure and faunal richness of the sand and mudflats, if resumed in an unsustainable manner.

The saltmarsh turf is very heavily grazed by sheep and a few cattle and whilst it is currently in favourable condition a reduction in grazing pressure would be beneficial to the vegetation. There has been localised damage to the saltmarsh from vehicles gaining access to the shore and turf removal and preventing such damage in the future would be desirable.

Regeneration of trees and shrubs within the woodlands is necessary for maintaining the conservation interest, including the moss and liverwort flora, but regeneration is being suppressed by the density of deer and stock. Grazing may also be adversely affecting the abundance of tall herbs and ferns. Reduction of grazing or rotational exclusion is needed to allow natural regeneration. Invasion by spruce from an adjacent plantation and the spread of rhododendron and bracken pose a threat.

There are several small settlements within or adjacent to the site, although buildings and enclosed land are mostly excluded from the SSSI. Domestic waste treatment for these settlements is by private septic tanks, which discharge directly or indirectly to the bay. There have been several house proposals within the site in recent years.

Bracken is becoming more widespread over the maritime cliff habitat which could result in a loss of species diversity and soil erosion.

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

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

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 improve the condition of the blanket bog by:

- reducing the impacts of grazing and trampling;
- safeguarding against damage from fires.

2. To improve the condition of the bryophyte assemblage by:

- eradicating rhododendron from the blanket bog;
- reducing grazing pressure in the upper parts of the woodlands.

3. To improve the condition of the upland oak woodland by:

- reducing grazing pressure within the woods, in particular in the Creag nan Sgarbh area.
- controlling invasive non-native plants such as spruce and rhododendron

4. To maintain the favourable condition of the lichen assemblage by:

- promoting tree regeneration in the upper woodland;
- maintaining tree regeneration elsewhere in the woodlands.

5. To maintain the favourable condition of the maritime cliff vegetation by:

- controlling the presence and spread of bracken (with due care given to the presence of ferns).

6. To maintain the favourable condition of the mudflats by:

- maintaining the status quo regarding their usage;
- avoiding impacts from adjacent forestry, fish-farming or agricultural activities.

7. To maintain the favourable condition of the saltmarsh by:

- ensuring a low sward height and avoiding trampling damage through appropriate levels of grazing;
- preventing damage to the saltmarsh from vehicle use and turf removal.

8. To maintain the favourable condition of the vascular plant assemblage by:

- safeguarding against trampling by cattle, turf cutting and vehicle use on the saltmarsh;
- ensuring the correct level of grazing of saltmarsh to maintain rare flowering plants.

Date last reviewed: 17 September 2010