

## CITATION

### KENTRA BAY AND MOSS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Lochaber)

Site code: 836

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NM 648685

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 40  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 390

AREA: 992.85 hectares

#### NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES:

<b>Biological</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Bogs</b>	<b>Blanket bog</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Coastlands</b>	<b>Maritime cliff</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Intertidal marine habitats</b>	<b>Mudflat</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Coastlands</b>	<b>Saltmarsh</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Woodlands</b>	<b>Upland oak woodland</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Non-vascular plants</b>	<b>Bryophyte assemblage</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Non-vascular plants</b>	<b>Lichen assemblage</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Vascular plants</b>	<b>Vascular plant assemblage</b>

#### DESCRIPTION:

Kentra Bay and Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies on the north eastern end of the Ardnamurchan peninsula, in West Lochaber about 1 km to the west of Acharacle. Kentra Bay is a shallow inlet with extensive tidal flats and saltmarsh and is the only one of its kind in the district.

Kentra Moss consists of an area of blanket bog which has developed on a glacial outwash plain between Kentra Bay and the nearby River Shiel. Notable upland oak woodland to the south of Kentra Bay supports nationally important assemblages of bryophytes and lichens. Several rare plant species comprise a significant vascular plant assemblage and areas of maritime heath are also nationally important.

The blanket bog of Kentra Moss is of a type which is very rare in Britain and differs fundamentally from the nearby Claish Moss in that it has formed in a slight depression, bounded by rocky knolls, with a gentle slope from east to west. There is a pronounced surface pattern of linear pools and ridges associated with this gradient.

Where the surface is almost level a pool system, rich in sphagnum mosses and with drier hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, has developed. The variety of sphagnum mosses reflects the subtle variation in conditions found between the water filled hollows and drier ridges. The blanket bog supports part of the site's nationally important bryophyte assemblage. Bog plants such as intermediate sundew, bog-sedge and brown beaked-sedge are found amongst the pools whilst deergrass, purple moor-grass, bog asphodel and white beaked-sedge are present on the drier ridges. In a number of places there are natural transitions between the raised mires and adjacent habitats.

The extensive tidal flats of Kentra Bay comprise the single largest such area in the district and encompass a range of estuarine and marine sedimentary habitats. These support a characteristic flora and fauna including small populations of wintering waders and wildfowl.

Kentra Bay contains the second largest expanse of saltmarsh in Lochaber. The vegetation is well developed and illustrates the range of saltmarsh plant communities characteristic of the west coast of Scotland, from pioneering swards of glasswort to upper marsh with saltmarsh rush. Sea-rush and saltmarsh flat-sedge are amongst the plant species which add to the significance of the saltmarsh. In several places there are uninterrupted transitions between saltmarsh and mire habitats, a feature that is scarce in Scotland on this scale.

Maritime cliff habitat (maritime heath), with species such as crowberry, bird's-foot trefoil, sheep's-fescue and tormentil, occurs on the islands and on the rock outcrops fringing the bay.

The site includes extensive, though discontinuous areas of woodland, principally round the south side of Kentra Bay, with smaller areas on the north shore and on one of the islands. Oak and birch are the dominant tree species with smaller amounts of rowan, holly, hazel and ash. The ground flora varies depending on the underlying geology and topography with dog's mercury, globeflower and wood avens in the more base rich areas and tutsan in shaded, sheltered situations. Ferns are well represented, and an abundance of the 'Atlantic' species Wilson's filmy-fern and hay-scented buckler-fern add to the woodlands' significance.

The woodlands support nationally important assemblages of lichens and bryophytes which include the nationally scarce lichen species: *Ochrolechia szatalaensis*, *Psuedocyphellaria norvegica* and *Potusaria ophthalmiza*; and the nationally scarce bryophytes: *Bryum pallescens*, *Plagiochila atlantica* and *Lophozia longidens*. The diversity and abundance of lichens and bryophytes is an outstanding feature and the woods of Bruach na' Maorach and Creag Dubh are amongst the most important in Lochaber for both 'Atlantic' lichens and bryophytes.

An assemblage of vascular plants includes two species considered nationally scarce: seaside centaury *Centaureum littorale* and brown beak-sedge *Rhynchospora fusca*; one species, eyebright *Euphrasia* sp. *heslop-harrisonii*, currently classed as nationally rare, and one species, juniper *Juniperus communis* locally scarce.

#### **NOTIFICATION HISTORY:**

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1971, 1981

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 30 March 1990 with a 177 ha. increase in area.

(At confirmation on 17 December 1990 there was a 1.9 ha. decrease in area).

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 17 September 2010

#### **REMARKS:**

Measured area of site corrected (from 997.3 ha)

Part of Kentra Bay and Moss SSSI overlaps part of Claish Moss and Kentra Moss Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitats listed below:

Blanket bog

Depressions on peat substrates

A small part of Kentra Bay and Moss SSSI overlaps part of the Sound of Arisaig (Loch Ailort to Loch Ceann Traigh) SAC designated for the European habitat:

Subtidal sandbanks