Scottish Natural Heritage
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GLEN CRERAN WOODS
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 8619

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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.

Natural features of Glen Creran Woods SSSI	**Condition of feature (date monitored)**	**Other relevant designations**
Upland oak woodland	Unfavourable, declining (June 2008)	SAC
Bryophyte assemblage	Favourable, maintained (June 2003)	
Lichen assemblage	Unfavourable, no change (September 2004)	
Chequered skipper (Carterocephalus palaemon)	Unfavourable, declining (June 2009)	
Pearl-bordered fritillary (Boloria euphrosyne)	Unfavourable, declining (June 2009)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	**Condition of feature (date monitored)**	**Designation (SAC or SPA)**
Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Unfavourable, declining (June 2008)	SAC
Otter (Lutra lutra)	Favourable, maintained (June 2004)	SAC

Description of the site

Glen Creran Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest is divided into three main areas (with five separate areas in total) situated in the vicinity of Glen Creran. On the north side of Loch Creran the site begins approximately 5 km east of Appin and extends 7 km up the glen before being interrupted by commercial forestry, for approximately 500m, after which the site recommences and continues for an additional 2 km up the Glen. On the south side of Loch Creran the site begins approximately 1.5 km northeast of Barcaldine and extends

north/northeast for about 3 km along Loch Creran.

The SSSI encompasses an area of hanging ash woodland overlying calcareous rocks grading into sessile oak with birch, on more acidic soils, as height is gained. Alder occurs on some of the many flushed areas. The woodland extends from just above sea level to a height of over 330 metres. The site itself has an altitudinal range from just above sea level to over 500 metres. Above the woodland there is an area comprising herb rich grassland which grades into upland heath on the higher part of the site. The woodland features many glades and open areas which are extremely important for maintaining the sites rich biological diversity.

There are considered to be at least 6 different woodland types across the site. Upland Oak Woodland is a notified feature of the SSSI and forms an important component of the rich woodland habitat mosaic. The underlying Glen Creran Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has 2 woodland features: Western acidic oak woodland and Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes. The woodland features of both the SSSI and SAC were found to be in unfavourable declining condition (2008) on account of the abundant tree regeneration reducing the extent and frequency of glades across the site. Glades are an important component of woodland habitats that are vital for maintaining the diversity of these habitats. The maintenance of woodland glades is essential for many woodland species including butterfly and some very important species of lichen.

The woodland is considered as one of the richest areas of its kind in Britain. It is believed to support around 300 species of lichens and over 200 species of bryophytes. The woodland is considered to be one of the most important sites in Europe for its Lichen interest. Site condition monitoring (2004) assessed the lichen assemblage as being in unfavourable condition. This was due to abundant tree regeneration across the site reducing the extent and frequency of glades and resulting in an increased risk that some important light dependent lichen species could be adversely affected due to subsequent over shading. The site is extremely important due to its rich and internationally important oceanic bryophyte flora. The bryophyte interest on the site was found to be in a favourable condition during site condition monitoring (2003).

Glen Creran Woods supports a significant invertebrate fauna including outstanding butterfly populations which include many of the Scottish species. These include the chequered skipper, pearl bordered fritillary (both notified features of the SSSI), small pearl bordered fritillary, large heath, scotch argus, meadow brown and orange tip. Marsh fritillary has been recorded on the site in the past but none have been recorded in recent years, most probably due to the limited availability of suitable habitat. The upland part of the site also supports a population of mountain ringlet butterflies. The notified features of chequered skipper and pearl bordered fritillary were found to be in unfavourable declining condition (2009) on account of abundant tree regeneration reducing the frequency and extent of glades.

Although not notified features of the SSSI the site also supports pine marten, red and roe deer and badgers. Many species of woodland birds are present including woodcock, woodpigeon, redstarts and wood warblers. Golden eagles and sparrowhawks are often seen hunting around the site.

The central portion of the SSSI (Glasdrum) has been designated a National Nature Reserve while the entire site is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on account of its Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes and Western acidic oak woodland. The area forms ideal Otter habitat and is frequently used by the species, and therefore Otter is also a feature of the SAC. During site condition monitoring, carried out in 2004, the otter feature was found to be in favourable maintained condition.

Upland Oak/Birch Woodland	Bryophyte Interest
	

Past and present management

Past Land Use

Much of the oak wood was coppiced to provide bark for tanning, timber and charcoal for the iron furnace at Bonawe. Coppicing ceased when the furnace closed in 1876 but the remains of charcoal hearths can be found on the site.

A disused lime kiln and small quarry are located on the site, close to the shore. Little is known about the operation of this kiln, but is thought that the lime was transported via the sea loch.

Most of the site was grazed by sheep and the woodlands were used for the wintering of cattle. The demise of cattle grazing has contributed to the spread of bracken throughout the site. Sheep still grazed the western section prior to it being entered into a Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) in 1997.

A block of conifers in the NNR section were removed in 1992/93. A deer proof enclosure was erected around part of the clear felled area and the remaining area left unfenced. This will allow comparison of regeneration between areas grazed by deer and ungrazed areas.

Present Management

Within the NNR section there is an ongoing programme of conservation management work. This includes the construction of enclosures and erection of tubes to protect young trees from grazing. Bracken has been cut in some of the glades to enhance the habitat for invertebrates. Various surveys and research projects occur periodically on the reserve. A butterfly transect has been established through the woodland within the NNR and this is monitored on a weekly basis during the appropriate months.

Forest Enterprise rangers carry out a regular deer cull in the eastern section. Some of the conifer plantation within this section of the SSSI has been felled, the remaining plantation areas are due to be felled over the next 10 years, and this will allow the native woodland to expand. Furthermore, the section of conifer plantation between and above these SSSI blocks is planned to be felled in phases over the next 20 years, with the long term objective of allowing these 2 sections of SSSI to become linked with native woodland.

The western section was entered into a WGS in 1997. Positive management has resulted in sheep being removed, bracken being sprayed and the area stock fenced.

These management activities were very successful in achieving the desired pulse of natural tree regeneration across this section of the site. However, in certain areas the density of

regeneration was so great that it was considered to be threatening other features of the site. As a result surveys were commissioned in 2006 to assess the condition and management of the site for the bryophyte and lichen interests. In 2009 a survey was commissioned to assess the site for the chequered skipper and pearl bordered fritillary butterfly features. These surveys confirmed concerns that the dense regeneration was, in places, threatening the other features, especially the lichen and butterfly features.

Despite these concerns the site remains one of the most important in Scotland for its lichen interest and chequered skipper and pearl bordered fritillary butterfly. Management to benefit these features has been ongoing in certain areas of the site such as the manual clearance of scrub from within the wayleave at Glasdrum NNR.

Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage undertake an annual transect monitoring programme to assess the abundance and distribution of key butterfly species across the site.

Forestry Commission Scotland undertakes an ongoing programme of removing non-native species from their land. This has largely focused on the eradication of Rhododendron but has also targeted conifer and azalea across their section of the site. This programme has to date proved extremely successful and is undoubtedly contributing significantly to maintaining the long term integrity of the site, as such the continuation of this programme is strongly recommended.

In March 2010 the wayleave in the Cregan section of the site, along with a large glade identified as a priority area in the 2009 butterfly survey, were targeted to clear the scrub and benefit the butterfly interest. The lichen interest also benefited from this work.

There are plans to introduce controlled grazing of cattle in some areas across the site. This should benefit the lichen, bryophyte and butterfly interests on the site.

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

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 and its natural features and to monitor the effectiveness of any management arrangements.

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, where 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. Maintain and enhance the extent and distribution of upland oak woodland habitat

1.1 Maintain woodland glades as important components of a fully functioning woodland eco-system

1.1.1 Introduce/maintain appropriate grazing/browsing levels to prevent excessive encroachment of dense regeneration of native trees and shrubs within woodland glades/open areas

1.1.2 Consider manual control of tree regeneration in woodland glades/open areas

1.2 Remove non-native trees and shrubs from the site and prevent the further establishment of these non-native species

1.3 Where appropriate encourage the regeneration of a healthy understory and promote the development of veteran oaks to improve age structure and diversity
1.4 Revert remaining areas of commercial conifer within and adjacent to the site to native woodland through the natural regeneration process

2. Maintain and enhance the diversity and distribution of the bryophyte assemblage

2.1 Introduce/maintain appropriate grazing/browsing levels to prevent excessive shading by dense growth of young, regenerating native trees and shrubs
2.2 Introduce/maintain appropriate grazing/browsing levels to ensure that important bryophyte habitats such as low rocks and tree bases are kept free from smothering by tall ground vegetation
2.3 Maintain deadwood habitat
2.4 Remove non-native trees and shrubs from the site and prevent the further establishment of these non-native species

3. Maintain and enhance the diversity and distribution of the lichen assemblage

3.1 Introduce/maintain appropriate grazing/browsing levels to prevent excessive shading by dense growth of young, regenerating native trees and shrubs
3.2 Maintain woodland glades/edge habitats
3.3 Remove regeneration enclosures in area identified as being of high priority/importance for lichen communities
3.4 Maintain deadwood habitat
3.5 Remove non-native trees and shrubs from the site and prevent the further establishment of these non-native species

4. Maintain and enhance the distribution and frequency of notified butterfly species

4.1 Introduce/maintain appropriate grazing/browsing levels to prevent excessive encroachment of dense regenerating native trees and shrubs within open areas identified as important habitat for notified butterfly species
4.2 Consider manual control of tree regeneration in open areas identified as important habitat for notified butterfly species
4.3 Remove non-native trees and shrubs from the site and prevent the further establishment of these non-native species

Other Factors Influencing the Management of the Site

Glasdrum National Nature Reserve constitutes part of the site. This section of the site attracts large numbers of visitors, many of which come to see the butterfly interest of the site. This area includes a circular walk open to the public.

Date last reviewed: 12 August 2010