Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

LOCH AN DUIN
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 956

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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 Loch an Duin SSSI	**Condition of feature** (and date monitored)	**Other relevant designations**
Coastal Geomorphology of Scotland	New feature, monitoring still to be carried out	
Saline lagoons	Favourable maintained (May 2004)	SAC
Tidal rapids	Favourable maintained (August 2004)	
Otter	Favourable maintained (March 2008)	SAC
Breeding bird assemblage	Favourable maintained (June 2003)	
Brackish water cockle *(Cerastoderma glaucum)*	Favourable maintained (May 2004)	

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	**Condition of feature (date monitored)**	**SPA or SAC**
Intertidal mudflats and sand flats	Favourable maintained (July 2004)	SAC
Reefs	Favourable maintained (August 2004)	SAC
Shallow inlets and bays	Favourable maintained (August 2004)	SAC
Subtidal sandbanks	Favourable maintained (August 2004)	SAC

Description of the site

The SSSI is a complex site extending far beyond Loch an Duin itself. It contains both diverse and exceptional coastal landforms; including low cliffs, discontinuous shore platforms, sheltered sea-loch environments, intertidal sandflats, low rocky islands, reefs, skerries, isolated rock outcrops, rock pinnacles, intertidal rock and boulder pools. Almost all of these features are related to the submergence of previously glacially scoured rock surfaces, which are presently close to sea level. The coastal landscape produced is on a scale reminiscent of the Norwegian skjaergard or strandflat which is not found elsewhere in Britain. This complex, partially drowned landscape is subject to varying levels of wave exposure. The scientific importance of this extensive coastal area is primarily due to the totality of its diverse and low, irregular, rocky coastline. Although some of the landforms are static, the ongoing and accelerating sea level rise produces a dynamic collection of interests which will continue to adjust with changes in sea level and storminess along with other key processes.

The site also contains saline lagoons, tidal rapids and lochs of biological significance. The lagoons of the northern and central basin of the site contain widespread populations of unique algal plants called Charophytes, although overall species diversity is highest in the more saline southern basin. Recent records of the brackish water cockle, *Cerastoderma glaucum* have been confined to the southern basin, where it was common amongst the algal turf. The tidal rapids at the small island of Cliasay Beg are particularly species-rich.

Otters use the entire site for breeding, feeding and resting. The presence of nearby freshwater is important for otters to maintain their fur condition.

Twenty one species of bird have been recorded breeding, including greylag goose, wigeon, teal, buzzard, dunlin, snipe, short-eared owl and raven.

Past and present management

Historically, most of the inland areas of the site have been used for rough grazing of sheep, as well as for deer shooting for sport. More recently some moor burning has occurred to improve stock grazing. Angling for trout from the shore and from small boats takes place. Domestic peat cutting has occurred at the banks adjacent to the main road and there has been some small scale forestry planting. There are six crofting townships within the site. Shareholders manage sheep on the common grazings all year round.

SNH encourages applications to relevant schemes such as Rural Development Contracts - Rural Priorities that aim to deliver positive management consistent with site objectives.

Part of the Loch an Duin SSSI covers the lagoon and intertidal areas of the Loch nam Madadh marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC), overseen by a Loch nam Madadh European Marine Site Management Group. The Group is made up of a wide range of different statutory, voluntary and community bodies and offers a partnership approach to site management. It has agreed a Management Scheme for the site which seeks to integrate maintenance of biodiversity with sustainable development of the site’s living marine resources.

Objectives for Management (and key factors influencing condition of natural features)
We wish to work with the owner and occupiers to protect the site and to maintain and where necessary enhance its natural features of special interest. SNH aims to carry out 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 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, 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 integrity of the geomorphological interest
Ensure site activities do not adversely affect natural coastal processes or significantly reduce the visibility of the landforms of interest

2. To maintain the condition and extent of the saline lagoons and tidal rapids, and the population of the brackish water cockle *(Cerastoderma glaucum)*
Ensure that there is no physical infilling of the lagoons or adverse impacts on the lagoon water quality and that the inlets/outlets of the lagoons are maintained in their current state.
Ensure that management activities do not adversely affect the lagoons and rapids, including the presence and distribution of important species.

3. To maintain the population and distribution of otters and avoid significant disturbance
Ensure that activities do not adversely affect otter distribution, abundance or resting sites, including availability of prey items and freshwater lochs and burns.

4. To maintain the population and distribution of the important birds and avoid significant disturbance
Ensure activities do not adversely affect the habitats used by breeding birds or cause significant disturbance, especially on the machair, loch edges and islands.
Maintain stocking on the SSSI habitats at a level that supports the diverse range of bird species.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

<u>Introduced mammals</u>
The presence of non-native mammals such as feral ferrets, cats, mink and, mink can adversely affect populations of ground nesting birds. The Uist Wader Project has removed hedgehogs from North Uist and the Hebridean Mink Project has removed mink, though recolonisation from Harris remains possible until eradication complete.

<u>Climate change:</u>
Global climate change is predicted to lead to increased storminess and sea-level rise and habitats may be modified in response to climate change.