



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

COYLES OF MUICK

Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 415

Address: 16/17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen
AB10 1XE

Tel: 01224 642863

Email: Grampian@snh.gov.uk



Purpose

This is a public statement prepared by SNH for owners and occupiers of the SSSI. It outlines the reasons it is notified as an SSSI and provides guidance on how its 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

The Coyles of Muick contains the second highest outcrop of serpentine rock in Britain. Serpentine is an ultra-basic igneous rock which supports a distinctive plant community. This site is of national importance and represents the only example of serpentine in south Aberdeenshire.

The rock outcrops, screes and flushes support an interesting flora reflecting the base-rich environment. The flora includes three nationally scarce herbs: northern rock-cress, alpine mouse-ear and alpine cinquefoil. Caledonian pine is also found.

The site also supports a number of rare bryophytes such as *Pterigynandrum filiforme*, *Kiaeria falcate* and two *Grimmia* species.

Natural features of Coyles of Muick SSSI	Feature condition (date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Calaminarian grassland and serpentine heath	Favourable Maintained (August 2006)	SAC*
Subalpine flushes	Favourable Maintained (July 2008)	
Vascular plant assemblage	Not yet assessed	

*The Coyles of Muick SAC includes ground at Craig of Loinmuie, not included within the SSSI.

The habitat features were in favourable condition when monitored in cycles 1 and 2 (1999 and 2006-8), though a few browsed, stunted pines were noted on the slopes of the central hill and a little poaching was recorded in the flushes.

Past and present management

There is little, if any, active management and the site is relatively undisturbed. Livestock are not present, and the site is mainly grazed by deer. Muirburn only takes place around the northern and western margins of the site. The site is bordered on the east side by Allcailleach Forest which was planted by the Forestry Commission in the 1930s and 1940s. A number of forest tracks are present with the forest but these do not extend directly up to the Coyles. There are no tracks within the SSSI.

Objective for management (and key factors influencing the condition of natural features)

We aim to work with the owner of the SSSI and owners of the SAC 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.

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).

To maintain the plant communities associated with the serpentine geology and the rare flora

This site is of high botanical importance. Any operations likely to damage the rare plant communities should be avoided. This would include changes to current management. The site could be vulnerable to regeneration from the adjacent plantations but there are few conifers within the site at present. The site in general and the flushes in particular could be vulnerable to increases in deer numbers through high grazing or trampling.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

The site appears to be moderately popular with local hill walkers.

The Girnock Burn, its headwaters and the adjacent River Muick form part of the River Dee SAC. Any works along or adjacent to the watercourse at the southern end of the SSSI, could affect the River Dee SAC. .

Date last reviewed: 31 March 2010.