



**RUM  
Site of Special Scientific Interest**

The Governor's House  
The Parade  
FORT WILLIAM  
PH33 6BA

**SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

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Site code: 1396

**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**

Rum is a small mountainous island of national and international importance for its geology, upland and coastal habitats, including heaths, grasslands, rock habitats and mires and its birds. It is located in the Inner Hebrides, 25 kilometres west of Mallaig.

The geological interest includes Tertiary igneous and periglacial features and is of outstanding importance.

A Manx shearwater colony has about one third of the World population at approximately 100,000 pairs. The island also supports internationally and nationally important breeding seabird populations and assemblages, and an internationally important population of red-throated divers.



Manx shearwater

Rum is also of national importance for higher and lower plants and invertebrates.

Natural features of Rum SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)	Other relevant designations
Quaternary of Scotland	<b>Favourable</b> (June 2004)	
Tertiary igneous	<b>Favourable</b> (June 2004)	
Bryophyte assemblage	<b>Favourable</b> (Aug 2004)	
Invertebrate assemblage	<b>Not assessed</b>	
Manx shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	<b>Favourable</b> (May 2003)	SPA
Maritime cliff	<b>Favourable</b> (July 2002)	SAC

Upland assemblage	<b>Favourable</b> (Feb 2004)	SAC
Vascular plant assemblage	<b>Unfavourable</b> (July 2003)	

<b>Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features</b>	<b>Condition of feature (and date monitored)</b>	<b>SPA or SAC</b>
Acid peat–stained lakes and ponds*	<b>Favourable</b> (Sept 2004)	SAC
Acidic scree*	<b>Favourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Alpine and subalpine heaths*	<b>Unfavourable</b> (Nov 2004)	SAC
Blanket bog*	<b>Unfavourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Base-rich scree*	<b>Favourable</b> (Sept 2004)	SAC
Base-rich fens*	<b>Unfavourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels*	<b>Favourable</b> (Aug 2004)	SAC
Depressions on peat substrates*	<b>Unfavourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Dry heaths*	<b>Unfavourable – recovering</b> (Nov 2004)	SAC
Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals*	<b>Favourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Plants in crevices on acid rocks*	<b>Favourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks*	<b>Favourable</b> (Oct 2004)	SAC
Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas*	<b>Unfavourable</b> (Nov 2004)	SAC
Tall herb communities*	<b>Favourable</b> (Sept 2004)	SAC
Vegetated sea cliffs**	<b>Favourable</b> (July 2002)	SAC
Wet heathland with cross leaved heath*	<b>Unfavourable</b> (Nov 2004)	SAC
Otter	<b>Favourable</b> (Sept 2004)	SAC
Breeding seabird assemblage	<b>Favourable</b> (June 2000)	SPA
Guillemot	<b>Unfavourable</b> (June 2000)	SPA
Kittiwake	<b>Unfavourable</b> (June 2006)	SPA
Red-throated diver	<b>Favourable</b> (Aug 2007)	SPA
Golden eagle	<b>Favourable</b> (Aug 2008)	SPA

\* indicates an SAC feature which is a component of the SSSI feature upland assemblage

\*\* indicates an SAC feature which is a component of the SSSI feature maritime cliff

Rum is of outstanding importance for its unique sequences of rocks which demonstrate particularly clearly the features associated with volcanic activity during the Tertiary period (65-62 million years ago). These include lavas, ultra-basic rocks and the best occurrence in Britain of the full suite of acid igneous rocks, together with associated faults, tuffs, tertiary sediments and other features.

The mountains of Sron an t-Saighdeir, Orval and Ard Nev are notable for their close association of relict and active periglacial landforms (i.e. caused by cold climatic conditions), including stone circles and stripes, and boulder moraines.

Although not all geological features could be visited for Site Condition Monitoring (SCM), those visited included the most easily accessible and most likely to be popular with visiting geologists. As they appeared not to be under any immediate threat an assessment of favourable condition was made. It is unlikely that management as a nature reserve will adversely affect the Earth Science features on Rum.

Rum has an extensive rocky coastline with high cliffs to the southwest. The vegetation is diverse, reflecting the varied exposure and rock type. Maritime and sub-maritime heaths, grasslands and tall herb vegetation are all important.

The Upland assemblage on Rum comprises a wide range of predominantly upland habitats which are of international significance: wet, dry and montane heaths, species-rich and montane grasslands, both acidic and base-rich screes, blanket bog, cliffs, flushes, springs and nutrient-poor freshwater lochs and lochans are all present. The favourable condition assessment for the upland assemblage is based on the fact that the habitat areas have not declined below minimum target areas. However, Site Condition Monitoring indicates that some of the component habitats are in an unfavourable condition, typically because they are overgrazed. Further survey work is underway to more accurately determine current condition. Early indications from the recent survey are that the wet and dry heaths are showing signs of recovery.

Although the Manx shearwater colony is currently assessed as favourable, research into the possible impact of rat predation on the productivity of Manx shearwaters and other seabird colonies is being developed. It is possible that a decrease in food at sea is also an important factor affecting the colony and the other seabird species such as guillemot and kittiwake.

The vascular plant assemblage was considered as unfavourable because for some species the target for number of populations present was not met and for others the target for population size was not met. The bryophyte assemblage was considered to be favourable but the surveyor noted a few points of concern, in particular the apparent absence of a couple of species previously recorded.

The invertebrate assemblage has not yet been monitored.

## **Past and Present Management**

### *Historical*

The island has been inhabited on a small scale for many centuries, but with a marked increase in the 18th century to a peak of 3-400 people in the early 19th century. Natural woodland and scrub, thought to have been fairly widespread around 7000 BP, declined over subsequent millennia through human activity and climatic change, leaving only a few scattered remnants by the time of the Clearances. Following the Clearances sheep were introduced to Rum on a large scale and red deer were re-established following their earlier extinction. Rum was managed as a stalking estate until the 1950s. During this period burning for game management and grazing was apparently frequent and widespread. Policy woodlands were also established, principally at Kinloch. Since 1957 Rum has been in public ownership and managed as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) by SNH and its predecessor bodies.

### *Grazing*

Deer management on the NNR has varied in relation to the needs of research and woodland establishment. Large exclosures to the north and later the south of Kinloch Glen have been erected to promote the establishment of woodland, with small plots elsewhere. There has been no cull in the Kilmory area since 1972 as part of continuing research into red deer behaviour and ecology. Sheep grazing on Rum ceased in 1957 but Highland cattle are used by SNH at Harris to manage the species diversity of grasslands. A population of feral goats remains, restricted largely to the west coast.

### *Research*

Rum has been, and continues to be, heavily used for research, survey and monitoring. Research of international importance has been carried out in the fields of geology and mammalian biology, notably of red deer. There have been other detailed studies of the flora, vegetation, insect fauna and breeding birds, in particular Manx shearwater and the impacts of grazing by deer and cattle. A wide range of monitoring work relevant to the NNR is carried out by SNH staff. Work to reintroduce two species, namely white-tailed eagle and pillwort has been undertaken or is in progress.

### *Education, recreation and visitor facilities*

Rum has long been used for tertiary education, with frequent residential groups and individual students from universities and colleges visiting for a wide range of studies. School parties and other groups and a large number of individuals also visit Rum, for informal recreation or education. There is a network of tracks and hill paths, the Rum Cuillin being particularly popular for hill walking. Other activities include rock climbing and angling, both subject to some seasonal restrictions to protect breeding birds. Talks, guided walks and interpretative displays and publications are provided by SNH. Tours of Kinloch Castle are a major attraction. Hostel accommodation is available at the castle, with bothy accommodation and camping elsewhere. Kinloch is the main settlement, with a community hall, post office and other facilities.

### **Objectives for management** (and key factors influencing the condition of natural features)

We wish to work with the other occupiers of the site to protect the site and to maintain and where possible 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 the 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).

#### **1. Keep the Earth science exposures clearly visible**

The features of geological and geomorphological interest are mostly robust. Hammering and specimen collection are problems at certain key localities and should be controlled by permit. Visibility and access to features should be ensured as part of any management.

#### **2. Maintain the extent and functioning of the habitats of the site**

The principal factor influencing the habitats in unfavourable condition is grazing and trampling. Some grazing is necessary to maintain floristic diversity, by impacting on more vigorous species such as purple moor grass or dense heather. The species-rich *Nardus* grassland can tolerate higher grazing pressure than the wet and dry heaths and blanket bog, but overgrazing may prevent flowering of herbs and reduce the cover of indicator species, as well as cause loss of the structural diversity required by many invertebrates typical of these habitats. An imbalance in grazing pressure may result in a change in the extent of one or more of the habitats.

A habitat survey in 2008 indicates that the unfavourable habitats are recovering. There are still localised areas where herbivore impacts are too high, and more targeted management in these areas is necessary. However, grazing over the site as a whole should not be decreased further to avoid undergrazing the species-rich *Nardus* grassland.

Human trampling on the summit ridges may have a localised negative impact on montane heaths, which recover only very slowly. Such damage should be monitored and remedial action taken if necessary.

The regeneration of non-native species, including conifers and rhododendron, would be a threat to various habitat interests and should be controlled. Fire is no longer used as a management tool but accidental fire poses a major risk to heaths.

### **3. Maintain the populations of important plant and invertebrate species**

For many of the plant and invertebrate species of interest there is little knowledge of their ecological requirements. It is assumed that management appropriate to the habitat will ensure the survival of the constituent species. Where species monitoring indicates concern, research may be needed to determine if specific management is needed. Where the needs of a species are known e.g. cattle trampling for pillwort, appropriate management should be carried out.

### **4. Maintain the important bird populations**

Predation by rats is a possible concern for the shearwater colony and other species, which should be monitored and action taken if needed. For breeding birds disturbance should be minimised by provision of information, and seasonal management of recreation activities. Red-throated divers are especially prone to disturbance and fishing should be restricted during the breeding season, including the period when the birds prospect for nesting sites.

### **5. Manage the site as a National Nature Reserve in accordance with the management objectives in the Rum NNR management plan**

The operational strategy and detailed prescriptions on how the above objectives will be met are contained in the management plan.

#### **Other factors affecting the natural features of the site**

Natural and cultural landscape: Rum forms a key element of the Small Isles National Scenic Area. It also hosts important archaeological and historical features. These should all be taken into account in the future management of the SSSI.

Sand eels: Certain species of breeding seabird are largely dependent on the sand eel population for feeding. Any significant decline of the sand eel population is likely to have a detrimental effect on the breeding success of the seabird colonies.

Date last reviewed: 23 September 2009

