

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot

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1. Background to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Natura 2000 sites are a network of protected sites of international importance which include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), Special Protection Areas (SPA's) and Ramsar Sites. Under Article 6 (3 & 4) of the European Habitats' Directive any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall undergo an Appropriate Assessment to determine its implications for the site. The competent authority can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned (Article 6.3). In exceptional circumstances, a plan or project may still be allowed to go ahead, in spite of a negative assessment, provided there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project is considered to be of overriding public interest. In such cases the Member State must take appropriate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 Network is protected (Article 6.4).

2. Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot

The Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot ('the Pilot') aimed to foster a more integrated approach to land use change decision making in Aberdeenshire and to feed back its findings to Scottish Government.

2.1 Key messages and suggested actions from the Pilot's work

The Pilot chose to focus its work on a selection of policy areas of relevance to land use. It must be borne in mind that this was a pilot process and that the Pilot was considering if and how a more integrated approach to rural land use planning is possible and desirable.

The key messages and suggestion actions developed by the Pilot are set out in Table 2.1 below. They are derived from one of the Pilot's outputs, the report '*Land Use Change Issues and Opportunities for Aberdeenshire*'. This HRA will assess the consequences of carrying out these suggested actions on Natura 2000 sites. The actions are 'suggested' as the Pilot recognises that they need further discussion and development with a wide range of stakeholders before they could be implemented. The HRA will also assess the potential impact of a web-based, interactive tool the Pilot created as an aid to land use change decision making. Neither output is a set plan for the future nor is in its final form; both are developmental pieces of work.

Table 2.1: Key Messages and Suggested Actions

Policy theme	Key Messages from Pilot's work	Suggested Actions resulting from Pilot's work
Ecosystems approach	Adopt an ecosystems approach to land use change planning	Explore a national assessment of land use opportunities and constraints
		Explore a more integrated and inclusive approach to rural land use planning which has a strong emphasis on the public interest
The Low Carbon Economy	Land-based businesses should include mitigation and adaptation in planning for climate change in Aberdeenshire	Ensure the potential effects of climate change on rural land use are given greater attention
	Further opportunities for large scale onshore wind energy development in Aberdeenshire may be limited; a greater diversity of generation is required	.
	Take a strategic approach to and support for further woodland expansion that delivers multiple benefits	Explore the scope for, and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire
Sustainable water management	An integrated catchment management approach could provide the framework from which to build a more integrated approach to land and water use.	
Sustainable food production	Regimes which support and subsidise agriculture should target overall public benefit and allow for regional/local targeting	
	Better planning in agriculture should include mitigation of and adaption to future climate change.	Ensure the potential effects of climate change on rural land use are given greater attention. There should be a greater focus on the reduction of total carbon dioxide emissions resulting from food production.
Halting Biodiversity Loss	The value of biodiversity should be accounted for in decision making	Continue work to describe and map the natural assets and benefits delivered by Aberdeenshire's environment.
	Direct support and advice to farmers on biodiversity issues is lacking	Explore the provision of direct, local, on-the-ground advice for land managers
	Develop habitat connectivity maps as a potential tool to aid strategic planning	Explore the scope for, and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire
Communities connected to the land	Adopt a strategic approach to the provision of recreation access which is likely to have multiple benefits	Explore the scope for, and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire
Web-based tool	Develop a decision-making tool	Assist in the choice of potential sites for woodland expansion Provide an aid for different scenario modelling

3. Background Information on Sites

3.1 List of European Sites

In Table 3.1 below, we have provided a list of European sites with the potential to be significantly affected by the Pilot. As indicated, the Pilot was a developmental piece of work that makes suggested action and has produced a web-based tool for potential use in decision making. Below is the list of the sites and how the key messages and actions could affect them.

Table 3.1: List of European sites

European sites		Effect on aquatic environment	Effect on mobile species	Vulnerable to recreational pressure	Increased amount of development	Could affect the coast
1	Ballochbuie SAC	✓	✓	✓		
2	Ballochbuie SPA		✓	✓		
3	Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SAC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Caenlochan SAC	✓		✓		
6	Caenlochan SPA		✓	✓		
7	Cairngorms SAC	✓	✓	✓		
8	Cairngorms SPA		✓	✓		
9	Cairngorms Massif SPA		✓	✓		
10	Coyles of Muick SAC		✓	✓		
11	Dinnet Oakwood SAC	✓		✓		
12	Fowlsheugh SPA		✓			
13	Garron Point SAC		✓	✓		✓
14	Green Hill of Strathdon SAC			✓		
15	Glen Tanar SAC			✓		
16	Hill of Towanreef SAC	✓		✓		
17	Ladder Hills SAC			✓		
18	Loch of Skene SPA/RAMSAR	✓	✓	✓		
19	Loch of Strathbeg SPA/RAMSAR	✓	✓			
20	Lochnagar SPA		✓	✓		
21	Morrone Birchwood SAC			✓	✓	
22	Mortlach Moss SAC	✓	✓			
23	Morven and Mullachdubh SAC			✓	✓	

24	Muir of Dinnet SAC	✓		✓		
25	Muir of Dinnet SPA		✓	✓		
26	Red Moss of Netherley SAC	✓				
27	Reidside Moss SAC	✓		✓		
28	River Dee SAC	✓	✓	✓	✓	
29	Sands of Forvie SAC		✓	✓		✓
30	Turclossie Moss SAC	✓				
31	Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA		✓			
32	The Maim SAC	✓				
33	Troup, Pennan and Lions Head SPA		✓	✓		✓
34	Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA		✓	✓		✓

3.2 Analysis of European sites

In the Table 3.2, we have analysed the European sites, listing their conservation objectives and identifying their qualifying interests. We have also analysed conditions of the sites, factors influencing the sites and their vulnerability to changes

Table 3.2: Information about Sites Selected

Site & Conservation Objectives	Conservation Objectives	Qualifying Interest	Condition of Site	Factors influencing Site	Vulnerability to changes or potential effects of PPS
1. Ballochbuie SAC	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site 	Bog woodland	Unfavourable No change (2/8/11)	Scottish Forestry grant scheme, telecoms, other development activities at a minimal level	The erection of fencing and deer management has encouraged regeneration of the forest. Under a proposed forestry management plan, consideration is being given to the removal of fences whilst maintaining forest regeneration. In the meantime, the fencing has been marked to reduce any impact on capercaillie
		Caledonian forest	Unfavourable No change (2/8/11)		
		Blanket bog	Unfavourable No change (5/5/06)		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • ¾ Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Plants in crevices on acid rocks	Favourable Maintained (1/11/06)		<p>and other birds. Consideration is being given to levels of muirburn on part of the site. In the vicinity of the Lion's Face, woodland regeneration is being managed through deer and rabbit control rather than additional fencing. A large part of the site is subject to a memorandum of understanding, the co-signatories of which are Balmoral Estate, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Authority and the Deer Commission for Scotland.</p> <p>Summary of key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat quality • Fencing mortality
<p>2. Ballochbuie SPA (1882 ha) Designated 12/6/98</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species 	Capercaillie (<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>)	Unfavourable Declining (31/03/2011)	<p>Scottish Forestry grant scheme, telecoms, other development activities at a minimal level</p>	<p>The erection of fencing and deer management has encouraged regeneration of the forest. Under a proposed forestry management plan, consideration is being given to the removal of fences whilst maintaining forest regeneration. In the meantime, the fencing has been marked to reduce any impact on capercaillie and other birds. Consideration is being given to levels of muirburn on part of the site. In the</p>
		Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Unfavourable No change (1/11/06)		
		Dry heaths	Favourable Maintained (30/7/04)		
		Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Favourable Maintained (23/11/04)		
		Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks			
		Scottish crossbill (<i>Loxia scotica</i>)	None available		

					<p>vicinity of the Lion's Face, woodland regeneration is being managed through deer and rabbit control rather than additional fencing. A large part of the site is subject to a memorandum of understanding, the co-signatories of which are Balmoral Estate, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Authority and the Deer Commission for Scotland.</p> <p>Summary of key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat quality • Fencing mortality
<p>3. Buchan Ness to Collieston SAC (208.62 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat (i.e. vegetated sea cliffs) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	<p>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (25/5/10)</p>	<p>Development, telecoms, rural development contracts, dredging, transport infrastructure, renewable energy, recreational use</p>	<p>Parts of the site are managed for grazing; others have not been grazed for some time. The varied vegetation would be vulnerable to changes in the management of these cliff-top grasslands. A coastal path runs along the cliff-top and is in part well used by walkers and naturalists. Parts of the site are also used by climbers. Current levels of recreational activity are compatible with maintenance of the cliff vegetation.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Recreational impact
4. Buchan Ness to Collieston SPA (5,400.94 ha) designated on 30/03/1998	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	Seabird assemblage, breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007)	Applications have been considered for marine dredging, onshore wind farm, offshore wind farm, renewable energy projects and other developments There is a recreational use of the cliffs and rock-climbing.	The management of part of the site by the Scottish Wildlife Trust Longhaven Reserve ensures that there is no significant threats to the interest at present SNH is engaged in a programme of monitoring seabird populations, and is working with the local authority, and owners and occupiers, to agree a programme of path improvements and site interpretation. Summary of Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Disturbance • Recreational impact • Unfavourable and declining qualifying features
		Guillemot (Uria aalge), breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007)		
		Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla), breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007)		
		Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis), breeding	Unfavourable declining (04/07/2007)		
		Guillemot (Uria aalge), breeding	Favourable Declining (04/07/2007)		
		Seabird assemblage, breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007) The low, broken cliffs show many erosion features such as stacks, arches, caves and blowholes. The varied coastal vegetation on the ledges and cliff tops includes maritime heath, grassland and brackish flushes.		
5. Caenlochan SAC	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus	Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks	Favourable Maintained (15/7/06)		The site is used for sport shooting of red deer and grouse, sheep farming,

(5204.16ha) designated on 17/3/05	ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Dry heaths	Unfavourable No change (16/7/06)		skiing and walking. Part of the site is managed under a Nature Reserve Agreement with SNH and a management plan. The Deer Commission for Scotland and SNH, along with the East Grampian Deer Management Group, are actively considering developing a deer management plan for part of the area. Recreational use is monitored by the Angus Glens Ranger Service. Summary of Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat quality • Grazing • Disturbance
		Base-rich fens	Unfavourable No change (16/7/06)		
		Mountain willow scrub	Unfavourable No change (16/7/06)		
		Blanket bog	Unfavourable No change (16/7/06)		
		Base-rich scree	Favourable Maintained (16/7/06)		
		Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas	Unfavourable No change (16/7/06)		
		Tall herb communities	Favourable Maintained (16/7/06)		
		High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage	Unfavourable No change (16/7/06)		
Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	Favourable Maintained (16/7/06)				
6. Caenlochan SPA (5975.28) Designated 25/9/97	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:	Golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos), breeding	Favourable Maintained (4/12/09)	Development	The impact of grazing by red deer and sheep and of human recreational access over the whole area is currently being assessed and this will inform the development of a management plan for the entire site. The ski company owning the ski

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	Dotterel (Charadrius morinellus), breeding	Favourable Maintained (1/1/99)		<p>centre adjacent to the site has worked with the local planning authority and Scottish Natural Heritage to manage the skiing operations so as to minimise damage to the wildlife on the site. Any proposals for new skiing developments would require approval by the local planning authority. Wider countryside measures are in place which also have a role in maintaining the population levels for which the site was classified.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat quality • Grazing • Disturbance
7. Cairngorms SAC (57685.02ha) Designated in 17/3 2005	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat 	Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels	Favourable Maintained (23/06/2010)	Development, recreation, forestry, transport infrastructure, hill tracks	Forest Enterprise own small parts of the site and have felled non-native trees on and adjacent to some of these areas. Most of the rest of the site is managed primarily for game or forestry. Red deer numbers have been reduced over parts of the site to levels that will allow recovery of Caledonian forest and associated habitats. The management plan will address the issues
		Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds	Favourable Maintained (24/06/2010)		
		Caledonian forest	Unfavourable Declining (27/01/2009)		
		Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes supporting the habitat ¾ Distribution of typical species of the habitat Viability of typical species as components of the habitat No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat <p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species species No significant disturbance of the species 	Blanket bog	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	<p>affecting the management of this multi-interest site and will include a combination of strategies for visitor management.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat quality Grazing Disturbance
	Tall herb communities	Favourable Maintained (03/04/2007)	
	Hard-water springs depositing lime	Favourable Maintained (03/04/2007)	
	Alpine and subalpine heaths	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	
	Dry heaths	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	
	Plants in crevices on acid rocks	Favourable Maintained (03/04/2007)	
	Acidic scree	Favourable Maintained (03/04/2007)	
	Mountain willow scrub	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	
	Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	
	Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	
	Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks	Unfavourable No change (03/04/2007)	
	Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands	Favourable Maintained (03/04/2007)	
Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface	Favourable Maintained (08/04/2007)		

		Green shield-moss (Buxbaumia viridis)	Favourable Maintained (02/05/2006)		
		Montane acid grasslands	Unfavourable Recovering (14/07/2006)		
		High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage	Unfavourable No change (15/10/2006)		
		Otter (Lutra lutra)	Favourable Maintained (08/09/2004)		
		Bog woodland	Favourable Maintained (05/09/2002)		
8. Cairngorms SPA (50903.74 ha) Designated 25/09/1997	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the 	Capercaillie (Tetrao urogallus), breeding	Favourable Maintained (25/04/2011)	Development, recreation, forestry, transport infrastructure, hill tracks	Locally high deer numbers have previously prevented tree regeneration but initiatives are now in hand to remedy this. This is a popular area for a number of outdoor pursuits including hill walking, skiing, mountain biking and bird watching. The large number of visitors can cause damage to the more vulnerable areas and a combination of strategies for visitor management and ongoing repair and maintenance to footpaths is being used to address this issue. Wider countryside measures are in place which also have a role in maintaining the
		Golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos), breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/07/2009)		
		Osprey (Pandion haliaetus), breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/06/2006)		
		Peregrine (Falco peregrinus), breeding	Favourable Maintained (30/06/2002)		
		Dotterel (Charadrius morinellus), breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/08/1999)		
		Scottish crossbill (Loxia scotica), breeding	None		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> species No significant disturbance of the species 	Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>), breeding	None		<p>population levels for which the site was classified.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat quality Grazing Disturbance
<p>9. Cairngorms Massif SPA (187504.06 ha) Designated 28/10/2010</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species species No significant disturbance of the species 	Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), breeding	None	Development, recreation, forestry, wildlife crime	Golden eagle survival overwinter is influenced by carrion availability whilst availability of live prey has an influence on breeding success. Traditional grouse moor management has maintained suitable habitats for golden eagle for many years. However management can also result in reduction in the populations of live prey such as mountain hares, loss of nesting trees, or reduce habitat diversity e.g. through drainage of bogs or other wetlands. Locally, high deer numbers have previously prevented tree regeneration and damaged upland and moorland habitat, but initiatives including Section 7 Agreements; Joint Working Programme Sites; voluntary population reduction by a number of estates; Scotland Rural Development Programme funding for woodland management are underway. Other potential

					<p>threats include inappropriate afforestation of more open hill areas, creation of new hill tracks and wind farm construction. This is a popular area for a number of outdoor pursuits including hill walking, skiing, mountain biking and bird watching, which can cause unintentional disturbance to golden eagles. Visitors can cause damage to the more vulnerable areas and a combination of strategies for visitor management and ongoing repair and maintenance to footpaths is being used to address this issue</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat quality • Prey availability • Grazing • Disturbance
<p>10. Coyles of Muick SAC (135.16 ha) Designated 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site 	<p>Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (03/08/2006)</p>		<p>Muirburn is practised towards the northern and western margins of the site and at current levels is compatible with maintenance of the site's interests. Colonisation by Scots pine and the establishment of scrub associated with the adjacent forest is being monitored by SNH and any</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 				<p>necessary management options will be considered as appropriate.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat disturbance • Woodland regeneration
<p>11. Dinnet Oakwood SAC (19.73 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Western acidic oak woodland	Favourable Maintained (12/07/2002)	Non-native plantings and invasive shrubs (Rhododendron) have been successfully cleared since creating the reserve in 1966.	<p>Vulnerable to colonisation by non-native species</p> <p>There is general public access to the site but the current low levels of use are not thought to be damaging to the woodland.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Habitat loss • Spreading or introduction of non-native species
<p>12. Fowlsheugh SPA (1303.54 ha) designated on 31/08/1992</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for</p>	Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>), breeding	Favourable Maintained (11/06/1999)	<p>Applications have been considered for off-shore Wind, and tourism / leisure Developments</p>	<p>There are no significant threats to the interest at present. The site is managed as a nature reserve by the present owners, the RSPB, who</p>
		Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>), breeding	Favourable Maintained (11/06/1999)		

	<p>the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	<p>Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>), breeding</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (11/06/1999)</p>		<p>have upgraded the public footpath which runs along the clifftop for the benefit of visitors to the colony, and provided information boards.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential tourism impacts
		<p>Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>), breeding</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (18/06/1999)</p>		
		<p>Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>), breeding</p>	<p>Unfavourable Declining (18/16/1999)</p>		
		<p>Seabird assemblage, breeding</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (18/06/1999)</p>		
<p>13. Garron Point SAC (15.58 ha) designated on 16/9/2008</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (Narrow-mouthed whorl snail) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	<p>Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>)</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (20/09/2011)</p>	<p>Recreation use and geological interest on site at Skatie Shore. Introduction of livestock to the site.</p> <p>Disturbance from burning of driftwood and disposable barbecues away from the snail colonies.</p>	<p>Vulnerability of snail colonies recreational, wood burning and grazing activities. Potential site erosion from livestock activity. Vulnerability to site to marine oil pollution and long term rising sea level.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Disturbance • Risk from fire • Coastal squeeze • Oil pollution • Erosion • Recreational impact

14. Green Hill of Strathdon SAC (640.77 ha) Designated 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Dry heaths	Favourable Maintained (15/08/2008)		The site has traditionally been used for a combination of rough grazing (mainly sheep) and to a lesser extent, grouse moor. The latter is managed by muirburn. Overgrazing was a concern in the past but in recent years grazing levels have been reduced on one part of the site to allow heather to recover. Scots pine is locally regenerating in the south-east of the site and any necessary management options will be considered as appropriate.
		Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	Favourable Maintained (15/08/2008)		
		Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands	Favourable Maintained (02/08/2002)		
15. Glen Tanar SAC/RAMSAR (4180.09 ha) Designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat 	Caledonian forest	Favourable Maintained (08/04/2010)	Site has been subject to felling activities Positively strict management without intervention and low-intensity silvicultural methods and education has affected the favourability of the site	The main issues controlled include grazing, strikes by woodland grouse and risk of accidental fire.
		Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Favourable Maintained (21/11/2009)		
		Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Favourable Maintained (30/09/2004)		
		Dry heaths	Favourable Maintained (23/10/2003)		
		Blanket bog	Favourable Maintained (31/10/2003)		
				Summary of Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat disturbance • Woodland regeneration 	
				Summary of Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Injury • Accidental fire 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 				
		Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Pink-footed goose (Anser brachyrhynchus), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Wigeon (Anas penelope), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding	Unfavourable No change (31/03/2008)		
		Knot (Calidris canutus), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Redshank (Tringa totanus), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Eider (Somateria mollissima), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
		Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (31/03/2008)		
16. Hill of Towanreef SAC (1885.92 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:	Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	Favourable Maintained (12/09/2007)	Past peat cutting. Extension of Muirburn onto blanket bog, resulting in loss of Sphagnum cover. Land privately owned. Recreational use by walkers and use	Loss of Sphagnum cover; One part of the site is frequently visited by walkers but this is not damaging to the site's interests Summary of Key Issues • Habitat loss (blanket bog and dry heaths)
		Blanket bog	Unfavourable Declining (12/08/2013)		
		Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands	Favourable Maintained (12/09/2007)		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of the habitat on site Distribution of the habitat within site Structure and function of the habitat Processes supporting the habitat Distribution of typical species of the habitat Viability of typical species as components of the habitat No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 			for grouse moor and rough grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance Potential depletion of carbon sink Recreational impact
		Marsh saxifrage (Saxifraga hirculus)	Favourable Maintained (27/08/2008)		
		Dry heaths	Unfavourable Declining (12/09/2007)		
		Alpine and subalpine heaths	Favourable Maintained (12/09/2007)		
17. Ladder Hills SAC (4357.94 ha) Designated 17/03/2005	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of the habitat on site Distribution of the habitat within site Structure and function of the habitat Processes supporting the habitat Distribution of typical species of the habitat Viability of typical species as components of the habitat No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Dry heaths	Unfavourable Declining (09/04/2007)	Renewable energy, hill tracks, water environment engineering, forestry, telecoms development	<p>The site is managed for a combination of grouse moor and rough grazing. Large parts of the site continue to be managed as grouse moor by rotational muirburn. Small-scale peat-cutting still takes place at one locality, but the current level of activity is not considered to have a significant impact on the site's interests. A decline in shepherding in some parts of the site may have resulted in localised overgrazing.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat loss
		Blanket bog	Favourable Maintained (03/09/1999)		
		Alpine and subalpine heaths	Favourable Maintained (03/09/1999)		
18. Loch of Skene SPA/RAMSAR (120.89 ha)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species,	Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding	Unfavourable Declining (01/11/2008)	The site has been subject of onshore wind and housing	SPA is vulnerable as hypertrophication increase algal bloom which in turn

<p>designated on 01/10/1986</p>	<p>thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 			<p>development applications. Lock subject to sailing activities, sports fishing and wildfowling. Hypertrophication from sewerage and agriculture</p>	<p>affects aquatic flora and fauna and reduces food availability to the SPA interest.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypertrophical & pollution • Potential disturbance from site activities
<p>19. Loch of Strathbeg SPA/RAMSAR (615.94 ha) designated on 27/11/1995</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	<p>Sandwich tern (Sterna sandvicensis), breeding</p> <p>Pink-footed goose (Anser brachyrhynchus), non-breeding</p> <p>Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding</p> <p>Whooper swan (Cygnus cygnus), non-breeding</p> <p>Teal (Anas crecca), non-breeding</p> <p>Svalbard Barnacle goose (Branta leucopsis), non-breeding</p> <p>Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding</p>	<p>Unfavourable Declining (31/07/2004)</p> <p>Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)</p> <p>Favourable Maintained (01/04/2008)</p> <p>Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)</p> <p>Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)</p> <p>Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)</p> <p>Unfavourable No change (01/04/2009)</p>	<p>Conflict between the geese which roost on the loch and the surrounding farms where they feed. Shooting from adjacent land of birds leaves the roost in disturbance.</p>	<p>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is managing to reduce conflicts and vulnerabilities. For example disturbance is being regulated by RSPB's purchase of some of the shooting rights and by licensing. SNH have piloted a Loch of Strathbeg Goose Management Scheme to alleviate the conflict between the geese farming</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Conflict between roosting activities and farming

<p>20. Lochnagar SPA (1431.28 ha) Designated 12/06/1998</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	<p>Dotterel (Charadrius morinellus), breeding</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (31/05/1999)</p>	<p>Hill tracks</p>	<p>There are no threats to the site at present. Dotterel habitat can be eroded by deer overgrazing or by large numbers of hill walkers and Scottish Natural Heritage will continue to monitor the condition of the dotterel habitat to determine if these activities become a threat to the interest.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Grazing
<p>21. Morrone Birkwood SAC (318.4 ha) Designated 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site 	<p>Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands</p>	<p>Unfavourable No change (11/10/2009)</p>	<p>Development</p>	<p>In the past, Morrone Birkwood was subject to high levels of deer grazing and browsing. Since its declaration as a National Nature Reserve, some natural regeneration of the woodland has been achieved by fencing to exclude the deer. The site is well-used by walkers, and natural history groups and the visiting public are educated about the</p>
<p>Alpine and subalpine heaths</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (01/07/2008)</p>				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat <p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	Base-rich fens	Favourable Maintained (03/08/2007)		<p>potential damaging effects of accidental fire.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Grazing
		Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone	Favourable Maintained (27/07/2006)		
		Hard-water springs depositing lime	Favourable Maintained (27/08/2003)		
		High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage	Favourable Maintained (27/08/2003)		
		Geyer's whorl snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>)	Favourable Maintained (13/08/1998)		
22. Mortlach Moss SAC (12.02 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat (Base-rich fens) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate	Base-rich fens	Favourable Maintained (01/09/2005)	Site contains self-sown pine and other conifers. No	Forest Enterprise (FE) work to an agreed management plan when undertaking forestry

	<p>contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 		<p>For Alkaline fens, this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p>	<p>damage to the habitat</p>	<p>operations in the catchment. Felling Licence has been granted.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues now
<p>23. Morven and Mullachdubh SAC (916.76 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	<p>Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (25/01/2005)</p>	<p>Morven, an outlying summit of the eastern Highlands, has extensive juniper scrub on the middle and lower slopes. The use of the land for summer grazing by sheep and cattle and by a large number of mountain hares is compatible with the site interest, as demonstrated by gradual expansion of the juniper scrub.</p>	<p>No known vulnerability</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issue

24. Muir of Dinnet SAC/RAMSAR (415.81 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Favourable Declining (13/07/2010)	Applications had been received for electricity (exc. renewable energy cases) and other developments.	The moorland is vulnerable to colonisation from adjacent woodland. Peat growth can be impeded by open ditch and drains Loch Davan is vulnerable to eutrophication. Summary of Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential recreational impacts • Eutrophication • Colonisation by other plants
		Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface	Unfavourable Declining (30/08/2008)		
		Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels	Favourable Maintained (25/06/2004)		
		Dry heaths	Favourable Declining (16/02/2001)		
		Degraded raised bog	Favourable Maintained (30/06/2000)		
25. Muir of Dinnet SPA (157.6 ha) Designated 10/05/1999	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site 	Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>), non-breeding	Unfavourable Declining (05/11/2010)	Renewable energy, water quality, development	There are no threats to the interest at present.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Unfavourable Declining (05/11/2010)		
26. Red Moss of Netherley (92.52 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat(s) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Degraded raised bog	Unfavourable No change (22/10/2008)	<p>Extensive drainage and cutting over of the bog</p> <p>Lowered water table</p> <p>Local loss of bog vegetation and encroachment of open mire by scrub. Damage from muirburn, grazing and prospecting for minerals (diatomite)</p>	<p>Abandonment of past activities are no longer a threat. A few major drains remain along the site's margins and in a more central part of it, and although these are no longer maintained, they are still active. An ongoing problem on parts of the site is scrub encroachment.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on hydrology • Low water table • Erosion • Habitat loss (bog)
		Active raised bog	Unfavourable No change (29/10/2008)		
			<p>Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (80%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (10%)</p> <p>Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (10%)</p>		

<p>27. Reidside Moss SAC (87.17 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat(s) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Active raised bog	Unfavourable Recovering (3/8/2010)	<p>Factors that influence the site include existing drains, woodland encroachment, grazing, cultivation and afforestation</p>	<p>Existing management agreement covering part of the site that controls afforestation, grazing and cultivation will address key issues</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on hydrology • Disturbance
		Degraded raised bog	Unfavourable Recovering (3/8/2010)		
			Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (65%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (25%) Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (10%)		
<p>28. River Dee SAC (2446.82 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species, including range of genetic types for salmon, as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species 	Atlantic salmon (Salmo salar) (10/09/2004)	Favourable Maintained (10/09/2004)	<p>Site is affected by housing developments, water abstraction and river engineering. The site is subject to recreational use</p>	<p>River Dee Integrated Catchment Management Plan is in place; There is guidance on best practice for river engineering works.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Disturbance • Potential Recreational impact • Coastal squeeze
		Otter (Lutra lutra) (10/09/2004)	Favourable Maintained (30/09/2004)		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species No significant disturbance of the species Distribution and viability of freshwater pearl mussel host species Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting freshwater pearl mussel host species 	Freshwater pearl mussel (Margaritifera margaritifera) (07/08/2003)	Unfavourable No change (07/08/2003)		
29. Sands of Forvie SAC (734.02 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of the habitat on site Distribution of the habitat within site Structure and function of the habitat Processes supporting the habitat Distribution of typical species of the habitat Viability of typical species as components of the habitat No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 	Shifting dunes	Favourable Maintained (11/08/2011)	Factors that influence the site include trunk roads and other developments	<p>This is highly active and mobile along the fringe but the older dunes have stabilised and largely support heathland and grassland. Very little active management is required to maintain the habitats of interest.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No serious issue
		Lime-deficient dune heathland with crowberry	Favourable Maintained (19/05/2010)		
		Shifting dunes with marram	Favourable Maintained (12/08/2011)		
		Humid dune slacks	Favourable Maintained (11/08/2011)		
30. Turclossie Moss SAC (62.77 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying	Degraded raised bog	Unfavourable No Change (19/10/2010)	Factors that influence the site include past cut-over bog resulting in lowered water table. Turclossie	At present there are no damaging activities being carried out on the site. A hydrological study will
		Active raised bog	Unfavourable No Change (19/10/2010)		

	<p>features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 		<p>Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (92%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (5%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (3%)</p>	<p>Moss is a remnant of a much larger peatland. Soil and geology is acidic, nutrient-poor, peat</p>	<p>inform the restoration management of this site.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrological effects (lowered water table) • Potential diminishing carbon sink from loss of peatland
<p>31. Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA (83.71 ha) designated on 15/12/2000</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	<p>Common gull (Larus canus), breeding</p>	<p>Unfavourable No Change (22/05/2008)</p>	<p>Applications have been considered for off-shore Wind, and housing Developments The site is managed as a grouse moor and as rough grazing for sheep.</p>	<p>Common gulls are vulnerability to predation from crows and foxes as well as from rotational muirburn</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predation • Disturbance
<p>32. The Maim SAC (484.58 ha) Designated 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat (listed below) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p>	<p>Dry heaths</p>	<p>Unfavourable No change (12/06/2006)</p>	<p>Farm grazing</p>	<p>The Maim is an area of heather moorland near Crathie, on Deeside. It is managed as a grouse moor by rotational muirburn and is also used to graze sheep. Current levels of both muirburn and</p>

	<p>To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat 				grazing appear to be favourable for the qualifying interest of the site. Localised tree regeneration is controlled by muirburn and cutting.
33. Troup, Pennan and Lion's Heads SPA (3367.21 ha) designated on 14/03/1997	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>), breeding	Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)	Applications have been considered off-shore Wind on-shore wind, marine activities, electricity (exc. renewable energy cases) and other developments and water abstraction	<p>There are no significant threats to the interest at present. SNH is engaged in a programme of monitoring seabird populations, and is working with the local authority, and owners and occupiers, to agree an access policy for the site.</p> <p>Summary of Key Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential disturbance from access and recreation
		Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)		
		Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>), breeding	Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)		
		Seabird assemblage, breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)		
		Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)		
		Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)		
34. Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species,</p>	Little tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>), breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/08/2012)	Factors that influence the site include tourism /	Burning will damage sensitive habitats and species. Tern colonies are

and Meikle Loch SPA (1016.24 ha) designated on 30/03/1998	thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species 	Sandwich tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>), breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/08/2012)	leisure Developments, Onshore Wind, Microrenewables, Other developments	vulnerable to out damaging activities and disturbance. Tern breeding is vulnerable to predation and the periodic overtopping of the favoured shingle beds by sand. Shooting of geese is not though as an issue. Effects of eutrophication on the estuary and its flora and fauna. Invertebrates, which are the prey of waterfowl, are vulnerable to build up of algal mats Fox control measures and bye laws are thought to be helping. Summary of Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance • Predation • recreational impacts • eutrophication
		Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (18/08/2012)		
		Eider (<i>Somateria mollissima</i>), non-breeding	Favourable Declining (21/08/2012)		
		Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (19/10/2012)		
		Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>), breeding	Unfavourable No Change (01/08/2012)		
		Pink-footed goose (<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (06/11/2012)		
		Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (19/10/2012)		

4. Screening

The purpose of this screening is to determine whether any part of the Pilot, either individually or in combination with other policies, plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 sites listed in Table 3.2 above. In doing so, we have identified all aspects of the Pilot which would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European sites, either alone or in combination with other aspects of the same or other plans so that they can be eliminated from further consideration.

4.1 Screening of the Pilot

We have screened out aspects of the plan on the basis of the following considerations:

- they are general policy statements;
- an inability to identify effects on any particular European site because the proposal is too general;
- they are aspect from other PPS referred to, but not proposed by the LUS
- they parts of the Pilot that are intended to protect the natural environment,
- the parts of the Pilot which will not in themselves lead to development or other changes;
- they are parts of the LUS which make provision for change but which could have no conceivable effect because of the absence of a link or pathway between the plan and European sites;
- they are parts of the LUS which make provision for change but could have no significant effect as their effects are likely to minimal and
- they are parts of a plan that could have no likely significant effect on a site, alone or in combination with other aspects of the same plan, or with other plans or projects

4.2 Screening of policy areas, key messages and actions

Table 4.1 below shows how we have screened the policy areas, key messages and suggested actions of the Pilot (Table 2.1). We have indicated which elements either been screened in or out of the assessment and the criteria used.

Table 4.1 Screening of policy areas, key messages and suggested actions

Policies, objectives, actions and projects	PPS likely to have significant effects	General policy statements	Projects not generated by this PPS	Protective, enhancement and conservation policies	Does not generate development and change	Provision of change with no link or pathway to qualifying features	Provision of changed with no or minimal effects	Too general in nature PPS with no information on where, how, or when of implementation	Screen in / Screen out
POLICY AREAS									
Ecosystems approach			X					X	out
The Low Carbon Economy			X					X	out
Sustainable water management			X					X	out
Sustainable food production			X					X	out
Halting Biodiversity Loss			X					X	out
Communities connected to the land			X					X	out
Web-based tool						X			out
KEY MESSAGES									
An integrated catchment management approach could provide the framework from which to build a more integrated approach to land and water use.				X					out

Regimes which support and subsidise agriculture should target overall public benefit and allow for regional/local targeting								X	out
Better planning in agriculture should include mitigation of and adaption to future climate change.				X					out
The value of biodiversity should be accounted for in decision making				X				X	out
Direct support and advice to farmers on biodiversity issues is lacking							X		out
Develop habitat connectivity maps as a potential tool to aid strategic planning							X		out
Adopt a strategic approach to the provision of recreation access which is likely to have multiple benefits								X	out
Develop a decision-making tool								X	out
SUGGESTED ACTIONS									
Explore a national assessment of land use opportunities and constraints								X	out
Explore a more integrated and inclusive approach to rural land use planning which has a strong emphasis on the public interest								X	out
Ensure the potential effects of climate change on rural land use are given greater attention				X					out
Explore the scope for, and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire								X	out
Ensure the potential effects of climate change on rural land use are given greater attention.				X					out
There should be a greater focus on the reduction of total carbon dioxide emissions resulting from food production.				X					out
Continue work to describe and map the natural assets and benefits delivered by Aberdeenshire's environment.							X	X	out
Explore the provision of direct, local, on-the-ground advice for land managers							X		out
Explore the scope for, and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire								X	out
Assist in the choice of potential sites for woodland expansion								X	out

4.3 Summary of screening & assessment of in-combination effects

We have screened out all elements of the Pilot as there are unlikely to be any direct, significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. This project was a pilot process which aimed to explore a more holistic and integrated approach to the planning of rural land use change. It has produced a number of draft, developmental outputs and highlighted suggested actions. It is not a set plan or programme for the future. As such it will not have any direct effects on protected sites. We also consider there to be no likely in-combination effects between elements of the Pilot or with other PPS.

We have carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Pilot. In the SEA we have taken the approach of exploring what implementation of the suggested actions of the Pilot could mean for the environment. Given the explorative, developmental nature of the Pilot, it is unclear whether any of the suggested actions will be furthered and thus if any of the identified effects will be realised. This was felt to be an inappropriate approach for the HRA where more specific, site based effects need to be identified.

4.4 Conclusion on likely significant effects

Following the screening and assessment of in-combination effects, we can conclude that the Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot is unlikely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 sites listed in this assessment, either alone or in combination with other aspects of the plan or other plans. No further appropriate assessment will be undertaken.

