

Dumfries and Galloway Council

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2

Local Nature Conservation Sites

TECHNICAL PAPER

JANUARY 2018



TECHNICAL PAPER: LOCAL NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

Introduction

The purpose of this Technical Paper is to describe the process used to identify local nature conservation sites (LNSCs) and to list the sites currently identified as LNSCs.

Local nature conservation sites consist of the following four types:

- Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Local Geodiversity Sites
- Nature reserves of recognised conservation organisations.

Background

The region contains a wide variety of natural and semi natural habitats. These habitats range from remote uplands through moorlands and marginal farmland to a diverse coastline and extensive intertidal estuaries. The region's biodiversity¹ and geodiversity² are critical components of ecosystems and represent an economic asset and a community resource, as well as being of intrinsic importance. It is important to maintain and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, habitats and the wildlife which occurs within them.

Large areas of the region are afforded statutory protection at the international and national level through a number of statutory designations, such as Natura sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ramsar Sites and National Nature Reserves.

Related Policy

The statutory duty placed on the Council by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to further the conservation of biodiversity is not restricted to sites, habitats or species that are subject to statutory national or international protection. A number of local nature conservation sites have therefore been identified. Such sites are known to be of at least local importance for biodiversity or geodiversity.

The Dumfries and Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is a non-statutory document produced by the Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership to encourage the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity across the region. Implementation of the LBAP is supported by the Council. An overall aim of the LBAP is to conserve, enhance and re-create biodiversity at the landscape and seascape scale. In line with the international Convention of Biological Diversity, the LBAP also seeks to conserve and enhance species, habitats and ecosystems that characteristic of local areas.

¹ Biodiversity: Short for biological diversity, it is the variety of organisms (both living e.g. animals, plants and non-living e.g. soil, rocks) found within a specified geographic region, as well as all the relationships between these.

² Geodiversity: Term used to describe a variety of earth materials (e.g. rocks, soil etc.), forms and processes that constitute and shape the landscape.

Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a statutory designation under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended). LNRs are selected, declared and managed by local authorities to give people better opportunities to learn about and enjoy nature close to where they live. They may gain protection through also being Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Natura sites. Designation as a Local Nature Reserve may also support the management of an overlapping SSSI or Natura site. Local authorities may make byelaws to regulate inappropriate behaviour within LNRs.

LNRs must:

- Be at least of local importance.
- Be wholly within the area of the local authority which designates it
- The local authority must, prior to designation, own or lease the land or have the formal agreement of the owner(s).

There are currently two LNRs in Dumfries and Galloway:

- Wigtown Bay LNR
- Castle and Hightae Lochs LNR

Local Wildlife Sites & Local Geodiversity Sites

As part of the implementation of the LBAP the Council, in partnership with the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and landowners, established a process of identifying Local Wildlife Sites. The purpose of such sites is to raise awareness of the habitats and species identified in the LBAP and encourage positive management. They do not in themselves place any additional restrictions on land management. Those sites which have been agreed to date are identified in Appendix 1. This technical paper will be updated should further work identify other sites/areas following a formal ratification process.

The process of identifying Local Wildlife Sites is comprehensively described in *Wildlife Sites Manual: For the Survey Assessment and Processing of Wildlife Sites* (SWT 1996). This process requires the full agreement of the landowner. It involves a site survey (unless such a survey has already been carried out for another purpose), preparation of a survey report and assessment by a panel of local biodiversity experts, including representatives of Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. The assessment is based on the following criteria:

- Species diversity
- Species rarity
- Habitat rarity
- Habitat naturalness
- Habitat extent

Within Dumfries and Galloway, a more detailed assessment than that recommended by the *Wildlife Sites Manual*, is carried out in respect of species diversity and rarity. The amenity and educational value of the site, as well as any known threats, are considered in the assessment only when assessment using the above criteria results in a borderline case.

Local Geodiversity Sites can help to conserve important examples of local geology and geomorphology for the enjoyment and understanding of local people. These sites are identified and assessed, with the additional support of British Geological Survey, using the same process as above but using geodiversity criteria. No such sites are currently identified within Dumfries and Galloway.

Nature reserves of recognised conservation organisations.

A number of wildlife and/or community groups own/lease and manage land as nature reserves. Often these sites are valuable for biodiversity and/or geodiversity, but are especially valuable as a local amenity and educational resource. Some of the land within these nature reserves may already be covered by national or international statutory designations, but where it is not, the nature conservation value is considered to be of at least local importance.

Wider countryside

It should be noted that outside of these identified sites, other features of local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity may also exist, but their importance may never have been surveyed or assessed and therefore they are not specifically identified. As a result, a lack of identification does not necessarily mean a lack of importance.

LDP2 Policy

In considering any development proposals the impact of LNCS will be taken into account through an assessment against criteria d) of policy **OP1: Development Considerations** shown below.

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d) Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Development proposals should respect, protect and/or enhance the region’s rich and distinct biodiversity, geodiversity and sites identified for their contribution to the natural environment at any level including ancient and semi-natural woodland. The guidance contained within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and any subsequent revised or amended document, will be a material consideration in the assessment of proposals.

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Further Information

Guidance on Establishing and Managing Local Nature Conservation Site Systems in Scotland, SNH (and various other bodies), March 2006

Wildlife Sites Manual: For the Survey Assessment and Processing of Wildlife Sites, SWT, October 1996

Dumfries and Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership, April 2009

Appendix 1

The following map indicates the locations of current identified LNCS within the region.

