

# Appendix 9 SNH Site Management Statement – Kinnoull Hill



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## **KINNOULL HILL Site of Special Scientific Interest**

### **SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

Site code: 861

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#### **Purpose**



This is a public statement prepared by SNH for owners and occupiers of the SSSI. It outlines the reasons it is designated as an SSSI and provides guidance on how its special natural features should be conserved or enhanced. This Statement does not affect or form part of the statutory notification and does not remove the need to apply for consent for operations requiring consent.

We welcome your views on this statement.

#### **Description of the site**

Kinnoull Hill lies on the eastern side of Perth, and to the south overlooks the River Tay and inner Tay Estuary. Kinnoull Hill qualifies as an SSSI as it includes an extensive area of upland oak and birch woodland with associated heathland; its cliffs are important for their botanical interest, and its exposure of geological dykes in Corsiehill Quarry help to explain the geological history of central Scotland.

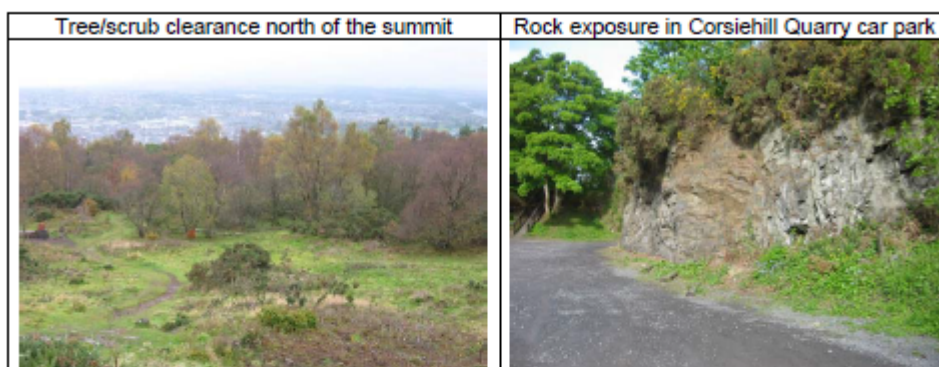
The woodland is mainly birch and oak with some mixed broadleaves and conifers. An open area of heath demonstrates natural woodland succession as it becomes colonised by naturally regenerating scrub (mainly broom, gorse and rose), which in turn is being replaced by trees (mainly birch, oak and rowan). Close to the summit, there are still remnant patches of open heathland, with heather, bell heather and blaeberry which prefer acid soils and sparse tree cover. As a consequence of planting and natural regeneration, there are both native and exotic trees of various ages. The oldest trees are oaks on the cliff-tops and near the Barnhill ruins. More typical woodland species on the richer soils include chickweed wintergreen, common wintergreen and enchanter's nightshade. Broadleaved helleborine and bird's-nest orchid have been recorded.

Kinnoull Hill's south side has spectacular cliffs, and cliff-tops with shallow, dry, calcium-rich soils. It has an exceptionally varied flora, including several species approaching their northern limit in Britain and rare in Perthshire. These include early forget-me-not, teasel, wild onion, little mouse-ear, agrimony and viper's bugloss. There are also several nationally rare or scarce mosses and lichens.

The rock exposures in Corsiehill Quarry are of national importance in representing part of Scotland's geological history. Quarrying has exposed hard, medium-grained igneous rock (formed through the cooling and crystallisation of molten rock or magma). A sheet of magma was intruded through pre-existing rocks close to the Earth's surface. This magma solidified

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and formed a vertical rock feature called a dyke. Millions of years ago, during the Carboniferous period, volcanic activity was widespread in mid and south Scotland, and around 290 million years ago a major group of dykes was formed in the Midland Valley. The dyke in Corsiehill Quarry has been selected as one of the best and most accessible exposures to represent this feature.



### Current condition of the natural features

Both the rocky slopes and Carboniferous - Permian igneous notified features at the last Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) were assessed as in a favourable maintained condition.

Upland oak woodland is a new feature that has not been assessed as part of the SCM process to date, but it is envisaged that encroachment of scrub onto heathland would be a negative factor given that this is an important associate habitat of the woodland.

Natural features of Kinnoull Hill SSSI	Current condition of feature (and date monitored)
Upland Oak Woodland	Not yet monitored
Rocky slopes	Favourable Maintained (July 2004)
Carboniferous - Permian Igneous	Favourable Maintained (May 2006)

### Past and present management

Kinnoull Hill was gifted by Lord Dewar to the people of Perth in 1924. The majority of the SSSI is owned by Perth and Kinross Council (PKC), and the cliffs along the southern edge owned by Forest Commission Scotland (FCS). Management Plans are written by PKC and FCS in consultation with SNH. The whole SSSI lies within the larger Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, which given the location, is a very popular for recreation and educational visits.

The exact origin of the woodland is unclear but it is certainly along-established woodland, possibly of plantation origin. Most of the woodland was felled in the 1914-18 war and heath developed in the open areas. Subsequently, natural regeneration of woodland occurred on some open areas and this process continues today. Trees were also planted in stands of pure conifer and mixed broadleaved woodland. The site is managed with a high priority given to conservation of the woodland and its wildlife, as well as the provision of recreational facilities. There is a programme to remove exotic trees, especially where they threaten native woodland. Tree and scrub removal is undertaken, particularly on the north facing slopes below the summit to help maintain open areas of heather.

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The lower slopes of Kinnoull Hill, above the cliffs and near Barnhill, were previously farmed as hay meadows, sheep grazing and for local market produce. Some of these open areas have been colonised by hawthorn, birch or ash. PKC manage some of the open grassland areas by cutting in early summer, and these provide an interesting contrast to the rest of the site.

The former Corsiehill quarry is now used as a car park with the eastern half wooded and heavily overgrown. The rock face is accessible in some places and of interest to geological study groups.

Members of the Kinnoull Hill Users Group help in undertaking habitat management projects such as non-native tree removal and scrub control.

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

The overall objectives for the habitats on the site are to:-

1. Allow natural expansion of upland oak woodland while maintaining the open areas of lowland dry heath to form part of a habitat mosaic across the site:
  - Continuing the removal of exotic tree and plant species to encourage native woodland expansion;
  - Maintain open heath areas by controlling further colonisation by trees and shrubs;
  - Consider management to help restore and expand open heath areas e.g. heather cutting, ground disturbance, re-seeding or spreading of cut dwarf-shrub shoots with seed capsules.
2. Ensure cliff are kept clear of tree and scrub growth where practical and safe to do so:
  - Remove regenerating conifers/broadleaves from the cliff base, giving priority to the east end (FCS land).
3. Ensure that the valuable rock exposures in Corsiehill Quarry are accessible and visible:
  - Control scrub re-growth to allow access to rock exposures.

We wish to work with the owners and local community to protect the site and to maintain and where necessary enhance its features of special interest. SNH aims to carry out site survey, monitoring and research as appropriate to increase our knowledge and understanding of the site, its natural features and the effectiveness of management.

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

None.

Date last reviewed: 11 February 2011