

SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

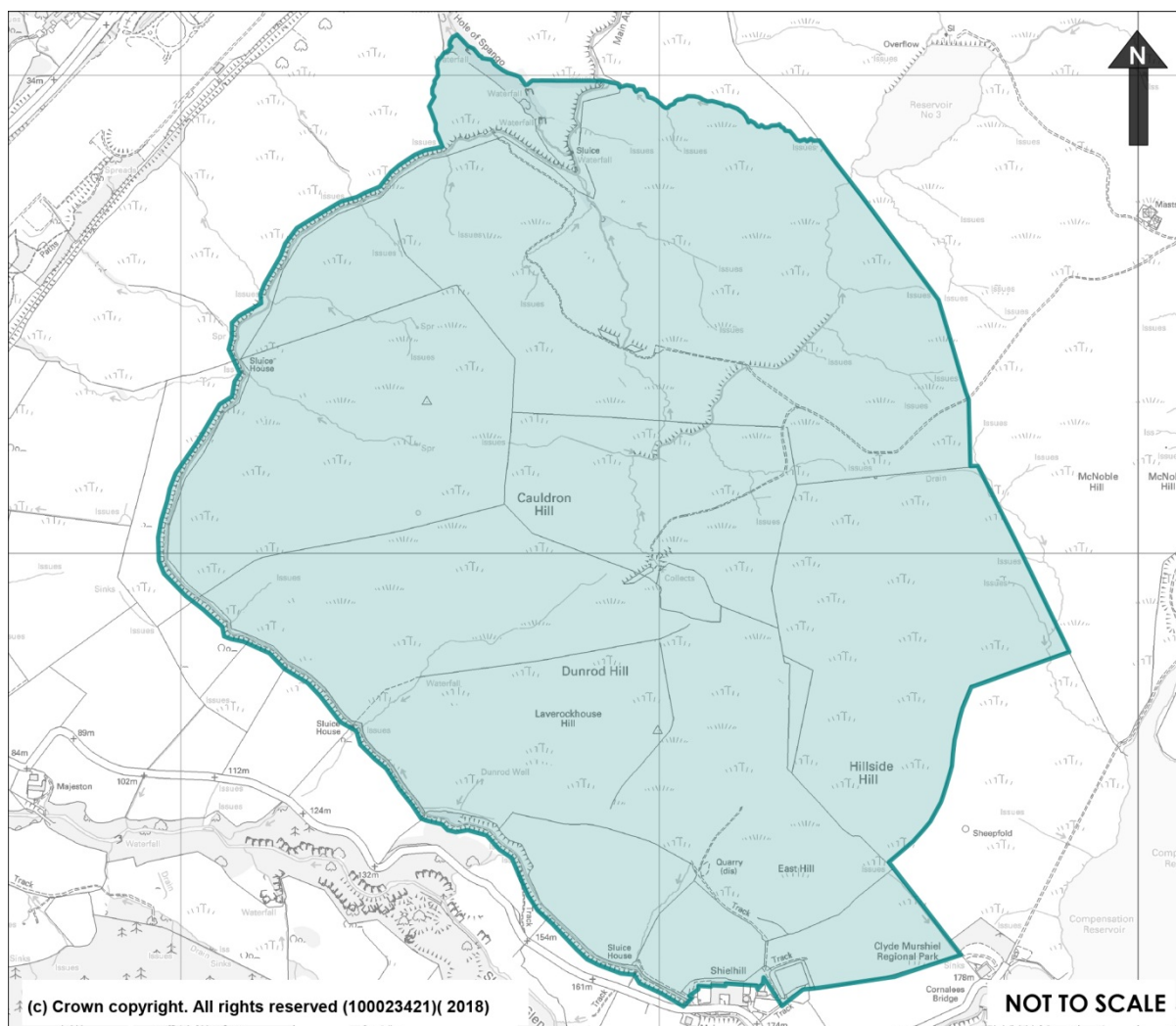


SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST IN INVERCLYDE

LOCATION	SNH* REFERENCE
D	
Dargavel Burn	497
Dunrod Hill	574
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Knocknairs Hill	883
R	
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Shielhill Glen	1425

SNH* - Scottish Natural Heritage

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Dunrod Hill	Area: 238.4 Ha
Grid Reference: NS240730	
Date of Designation: 30 March 1990	SNH Reference: 574



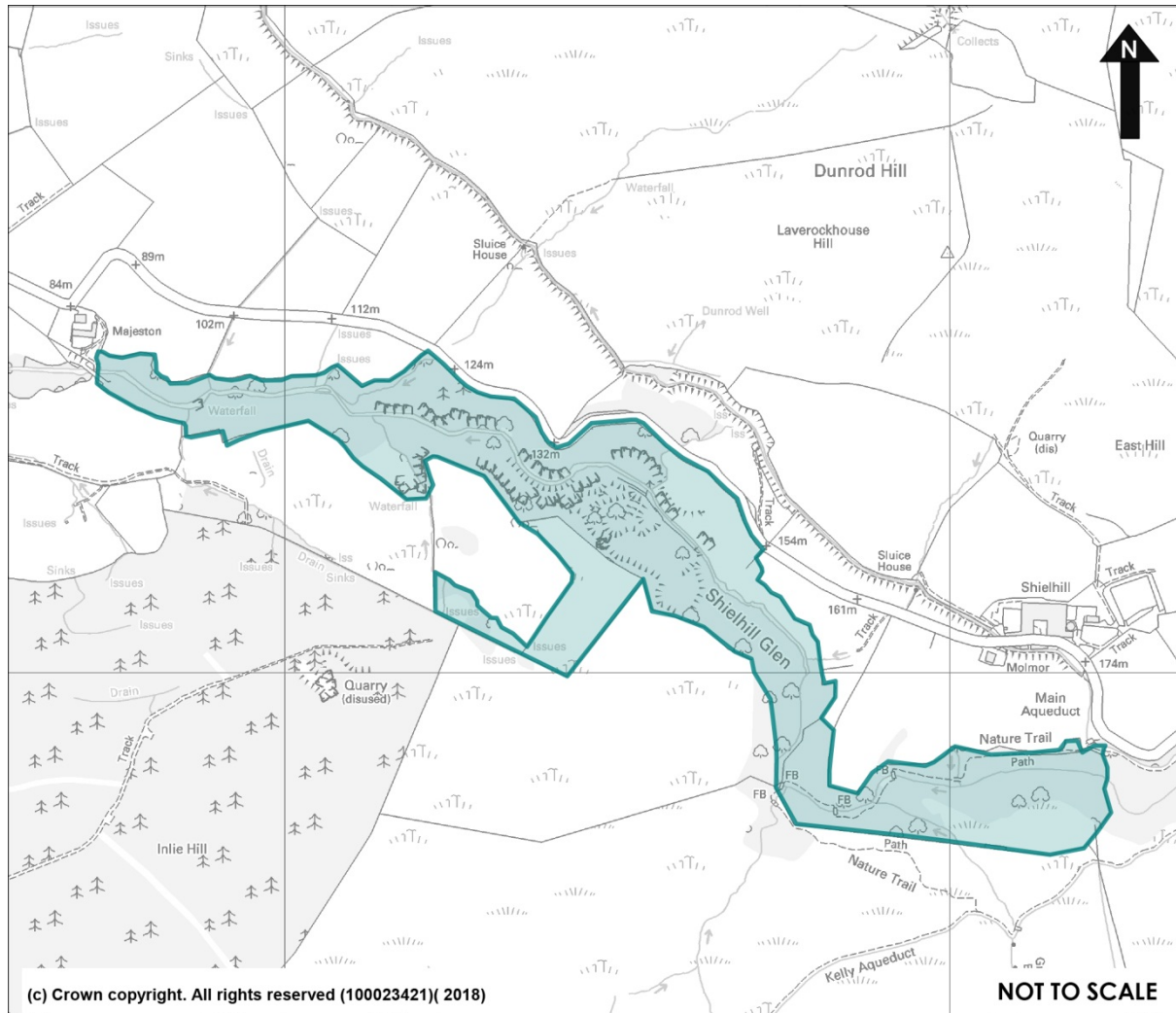
NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Geological: Igneous petrology: Carboniferous-Permian Igneous

DESCRIPTION

Dunrod Hill, located approximately one kilometre to the south west of Greenock, is a nationally important site comprising of lavas which were erupted during the early part of the Carboniferous Period about 340 million years ago. Among the early Carboniferous lavas of central and southern Scotland are several occurrences of composite flows. Each composite flow consists of two different types of lava and their study is of great significance in reaching an understanding of the processes which bring about magmatic evolution. Dunrod Hill provides classic examples which are of high significance for comparison with other composite bodies in the Carboniferous/Permian Province and with examples in other UK 'Provinces' and abroad.

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Shielhill Glen	Area: 25.6Ha
Grid Reference: NS235723	
Date of Designation: 1972, 22 February 1985, 11 February 2008	SNH Reference: 1425



NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Woodlands: Lowland mixed broadleaved woodland

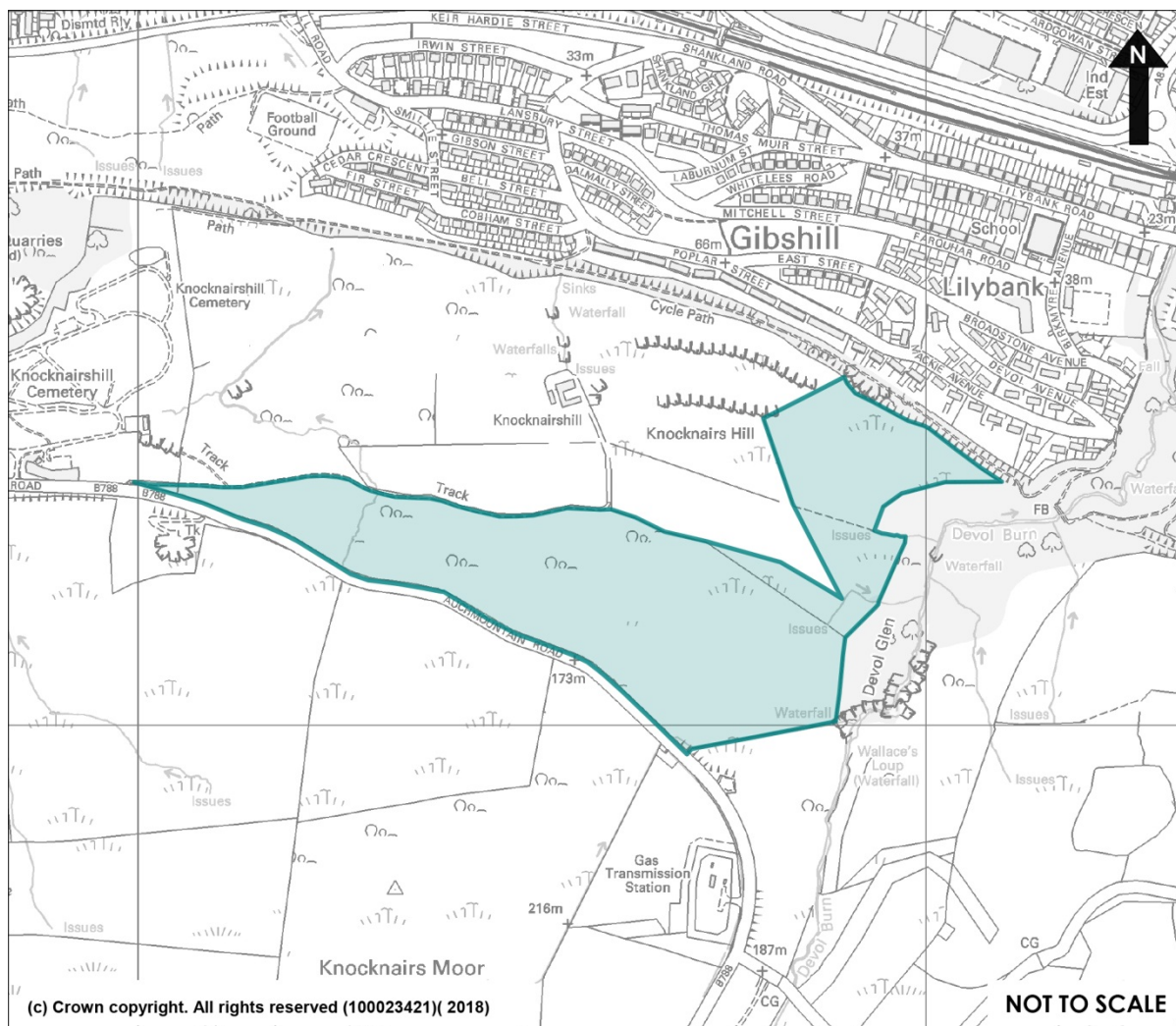
Biological: Fens: Fen meadow

DESCRIPTION

Shielhill Glen, lying just over 1km to the east of Inverkip, is the best example of mixed deciduous woodland in Inverclyde, with oak, ash and wych elm dominant in the lower section grading into birch and rowan in the upper section. The rich ground flora includes species such as pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), alternate-leaved golden saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium alternifolium*) and great horsetail (*Equisetum telmateia*).

The fen meadow area of the site comprises unimproved rush pasture on the southern edge of the glen and is also one of the best examples of the habitat in the area. It is dominated by whorled caraway (*Carum verticillatum*), a species characteristic of western areas, and the locally occurring species grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) can be found both here and in the woodland part of the site.

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Knocknairs Hill	Area: 17.3Ha
Grid Reference: NS305742	
Date of Designation: 25 March 1992, 30 September 2009	SNH Reference: 883



NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Fens: Fen meadow

Biological: Lowland grasslands: Lowland neutral grassland

DESCRIPTION

Knocknairs Hill, located approximately 2km south-east of Greenock, comprises a mosaic of unimproved semi-natural grasslands, which includes fen meadow and neutral grassland. The site provides a particularly good and characteristic example of the type of unimproved semi-natural grasslands that have developed in northern and western Britain, on valley sides where the rocks are hard and the climate wet. These grasslands do not occur as uniform areas of single plant communities, but rather as a complex mosaic of vegetation types on valley slopes, broken up by rock outcrops and flushes. The resultant complete zonation of acid, neutral and base enriched grassland types, together with mire communities, is a very

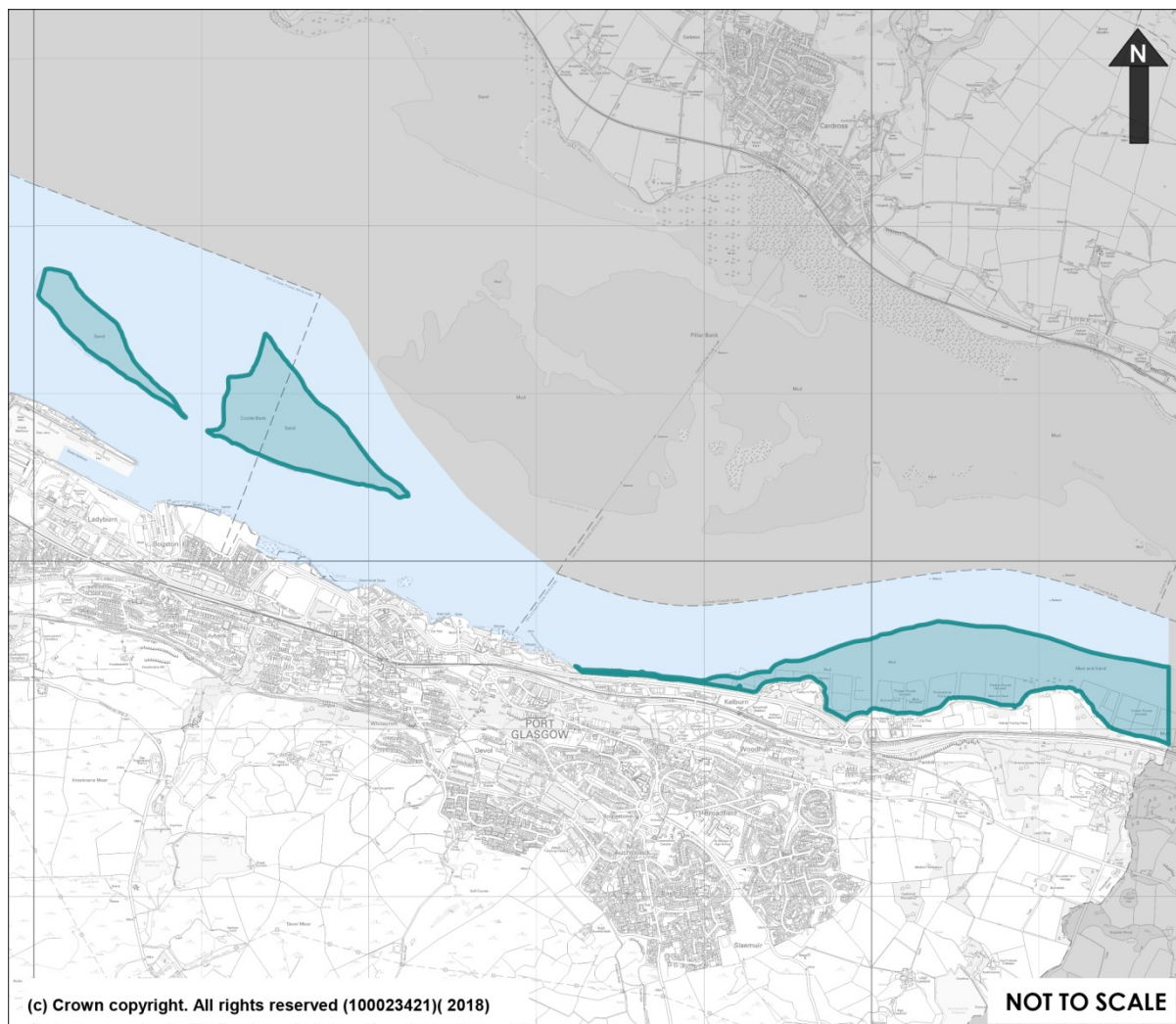
rare occurrence in Britain, making this site of particularly important scientific interest. The site straddles the transition between upland and lowland plant communities.

On the lower slopes that are better drained and subject to nutrient enrichment, black knapweed *Centaurea nigra* - crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus* - neutral grassland has developed. The heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* sub-community, typical of upland margins, is also common, however; the very local abundance of lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* suggests small areas have an affinity with a more base enriched sub-community. Base enrichment is also demonstrated in small patches within the bent-fescue grassland by the presence of thyme *Thymus polytrichus* and fairy flax *Linum catharticum*.

The mire vegetation type is largely comprised of fen meadows, dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* or sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*. The former tends to occupy the more water-logged areas, below the zone of neutral grassland or in areas of low nutrient status. The latter occurs along flush lines and where there is some nutrient enrichment. Further mire interest is provided by the dioecious sedge *Carex dioica* - common butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* mire community, characterised by more short sedges, bog-mosses and common butterwort. This mire type also supports the nationally scarce hairy stonecrop *Sedum villosum*.

Although not part of the notified interests the upland acidic grassland within the site consists of an *Agrostis* - *Festuca* community present on the dry upper slopes. The site is of further interest as a western example of this type of toposequence grassland, its floristic composition influenced by the oceanic climate. The western nature of the area is emphasised by the remarkable abundance of whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum* and the site is notable for the presence of both greater and lesser butterfly-orchids *Platanthera chlorantha* and *P. bifolia*.

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Inner Clyde	Area: 1826.02Ha
Grid Reference: NS312811 - NS494698, NS300766 - 492696	
Date of Designation:	SNH Reference: 1701



NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Coastlands: Saltmarsh

Biological: Birds: Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (non-breeding)

Biological: Birds: Eider *Somateria mollissima* (non-breeding)

Biological: Birds: Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (non-breeding)

Biological: Birds: Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (non-breeding)

Biological: Birds: Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* (non-breeding)

Biological: Birds: Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata* (non-breeding)

Biological: Birds: Redshank *Tringa totanus* (non-breeding)

DESCRIPTION

The Inner Clyde Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) contains the intertidal zone of the Clyde estuary from Clydebank in the east to a line between Helensburgh on the north shore

and Greenock on the south shore. The seaward boundary of the site extends as far as Mean Low Water Springs. The site is the most northerly of Britain's large west coast estuaries used by migrating birds, and is of national importance for its populations of wintering wildfowl and waders and of European importance for its wintering population of redshank. The site also supports a variety of typical estuarine plant communities with good examples of transitions from saltmarshes to brackish swamps and grassland periodically inundated with sea water.

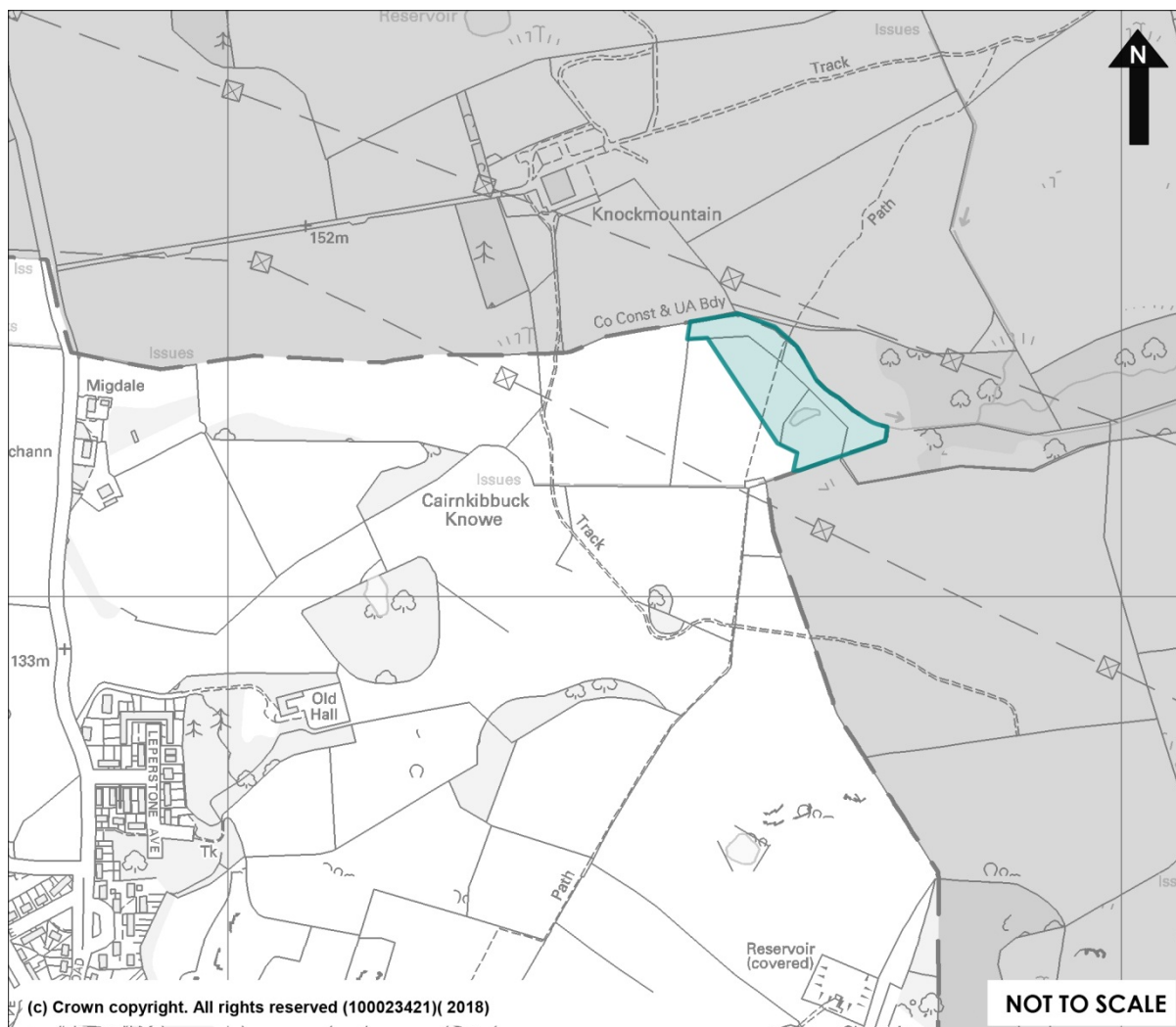
The site provides the largest example in west central Scotland of grazed and ungrazed upper saltmarsh with relatively uninterrupted transitions to swamp and grassland vegetation. These transitions are absent from many of the major British estuaries where historical land-claim has led to their disappearance. The most extensive areas of saltmarsh, covering approximately 76 hectares, are found on the north shore between Milton Island and Dumbarton, and on the south shore at Newshot Island and Longhaugh Point. There is also a small area at Ardmore Point. In these areas the low marsh (seaward) vegetation, which is covered at almost every tide, contains large areas of the nationally scarce dwarf eelgrass *Zostera noltii*.

The Inner Clyde regularly supports nationally important wintering populations of several species of waterfowl, including redshank, red-throated diver, cormorant, eider, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser and oystercatcher. Principal roosting sites are at Ardmore, Dumbarton, Cardross, Milton Island, Longhaugh Point to West Ferry, and Newshot Island.

Inner Clyde SSSI is designated as the Inner Clyde Special Protection Area (SPA) for the birds listed below:

Birds: redshank *Tringa totanus* (non-breeding)

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Dargavel Burn	Area: 12.1 Ha
Grid Reference: NS371712	
Date of Designation: 12 February 2009	SNH Reference: 497



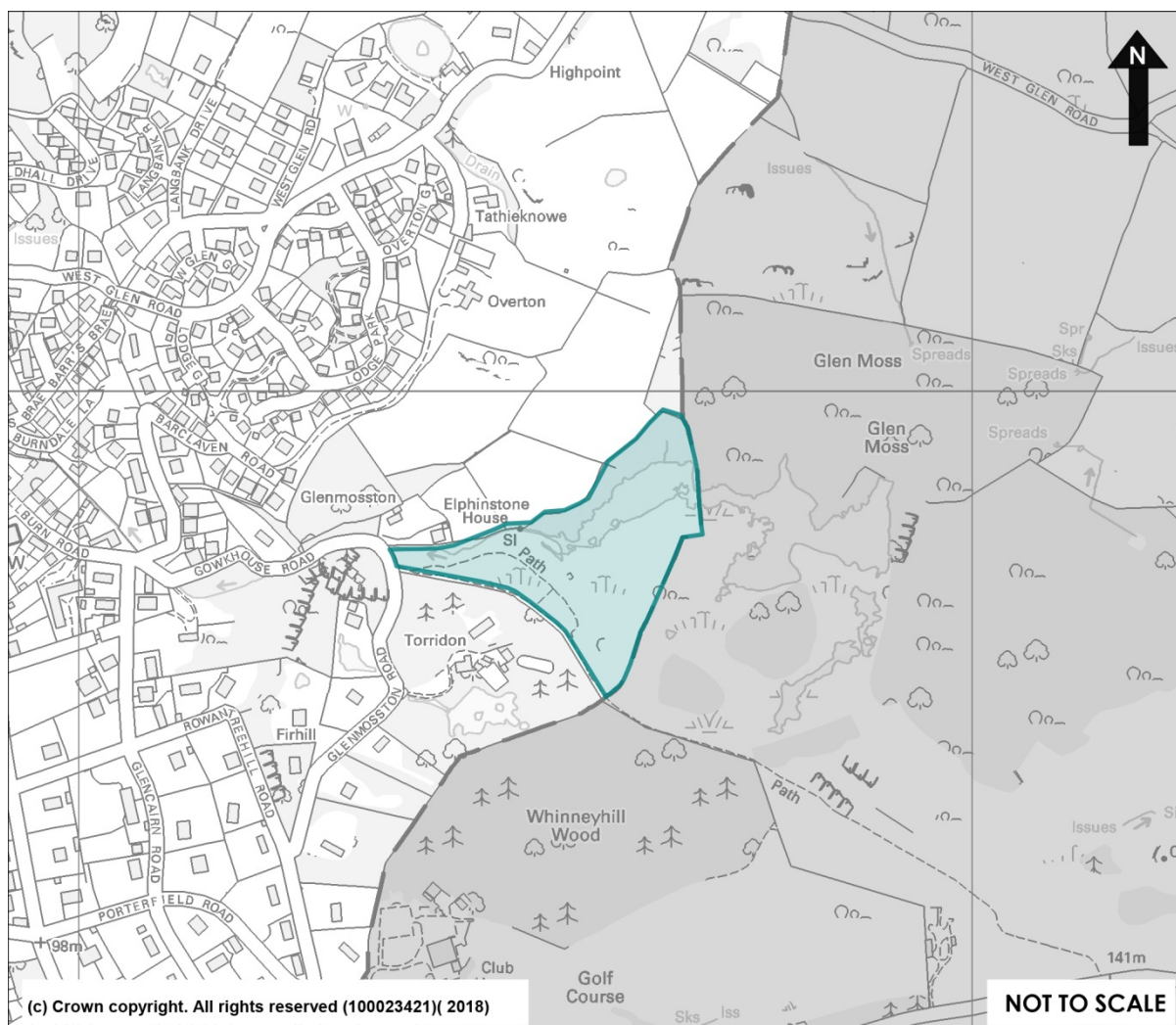
NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Fens: Valley fen

DESCRIPTION

Dargavel Burn, located approximately one kilometre north east of Kilmacolm, is one of the best examples of active valley fen in west central Scotland. The valley fen is a complex mosaic of communities comprising sedge-dominated mire, wet willow woodland, wet grassland and swamp (and it supports lesser tussock sedge *Carex diandra* and lesser butterfly orchid *Plantanthera bifolia*).

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Glen Moss, Kilmacolm	Area: 19.5 Ha
Grid Reference: NS368699	
Date of Designation: 14 October 2008	SNH Reference: 715



NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Fens: Basin fen

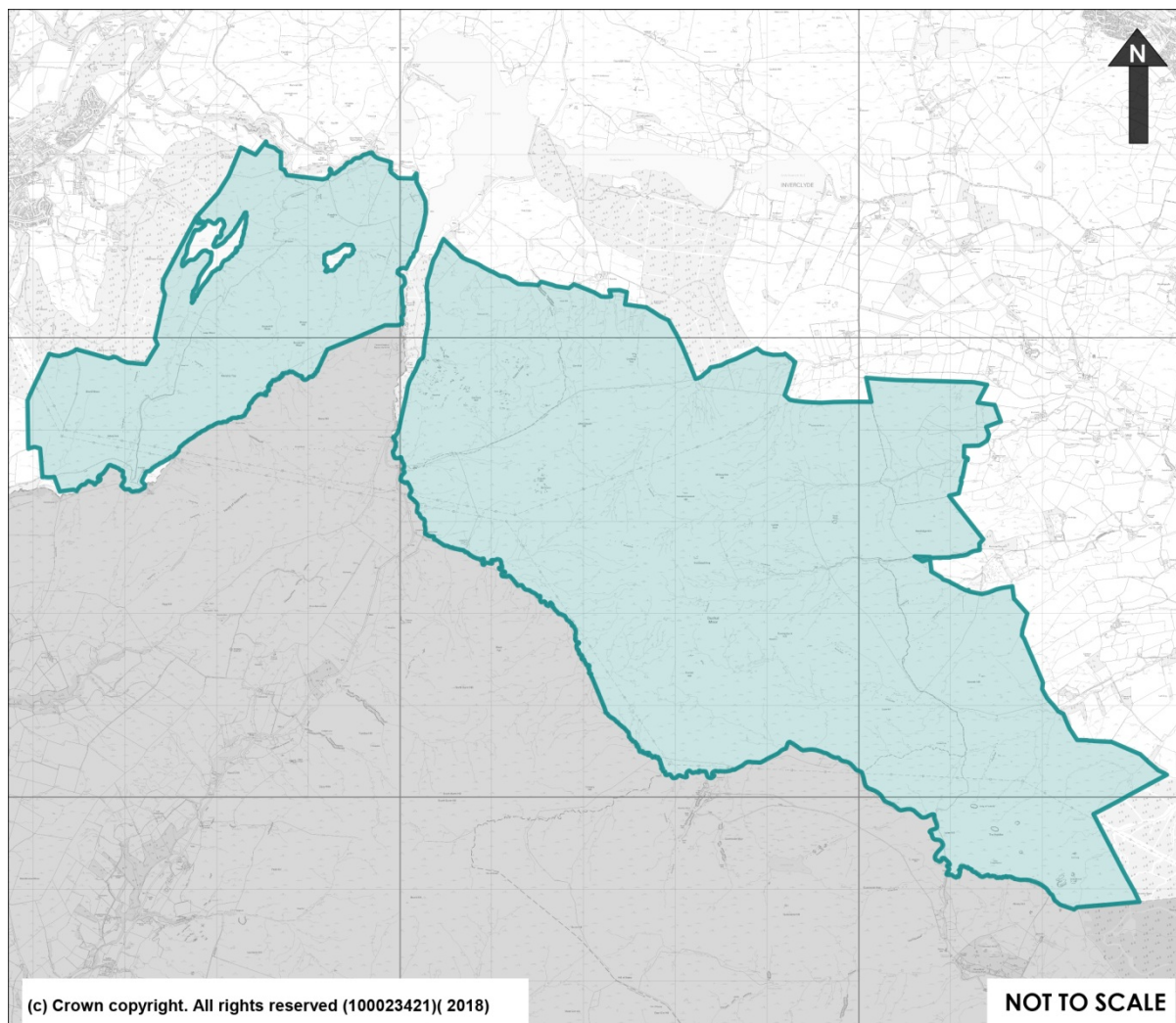
Biological: Dragonflies: Dragonfly assemblage

DESCRIPTION

Glen Moss, lying approximately half a kilometre north east of Kilmacolm, is a mixed basin and valley mire with an area of shallow open water surrounded by sedge-dominated plant communities. The site is one of only four basin fens in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde and it supports an outstanding assemblage of dragonflies and damselflies of which there are 9 species breeding on the site including the azure dragonfly *Coenagrion puella*, the four-spotted chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* and the emerald damselfly *Lestes sponsa*.

Bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* fringes the open water and there are also large stands of mud sedge *Carex limosa* throughout the valley mire. The Nationally Scarce aquatic plant greater bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris* is also present.

Site of Special Scientific Interest	
Site Name: Renfrewshire Heights	Area: 8943 Ha
Grid Reference: NS280660	
Date of Designation: 27 October 2005	SNH Reference: 8666



NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Aggregations of breeding birds: hen harrier

DESCRIPTION

Renfrewshire Heights SSSI comprises a large upland area south of Greenock and east of Wemyss Bay and occupies much of the Renfrewshire Heights geological massif. The site is divided in two towards the north-west by the minor public road between Greenock and Largs.

Renfrewshire Heights is of national and international importance due to its population of breeding hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*. Records of hen harrier in this area date back to the 1960s. More recent surveys, between 1998 and 2004, indicate an average of 10 breeding pairs (females) occupying this site annually, representing approximately 2% of the British breeding population. Due to the numbers of hen harrier breeding in the area, the site also

qualifies as a Special Protection Area under Article 4 of Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive).

The area supports a diverse mosaic of habitats suitable for nesting and foraging hen harriers. These habitats include blanket bog, acid grassland, wet and dry heath, rough grassland and small sedge mires/flushes. Blanket bog communities predominate, accounting for approximately 70% of the upland vegetation.

The site is located within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.