



**AGASSIZ ROCK
Site of Special Scientific Interest**

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 20

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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

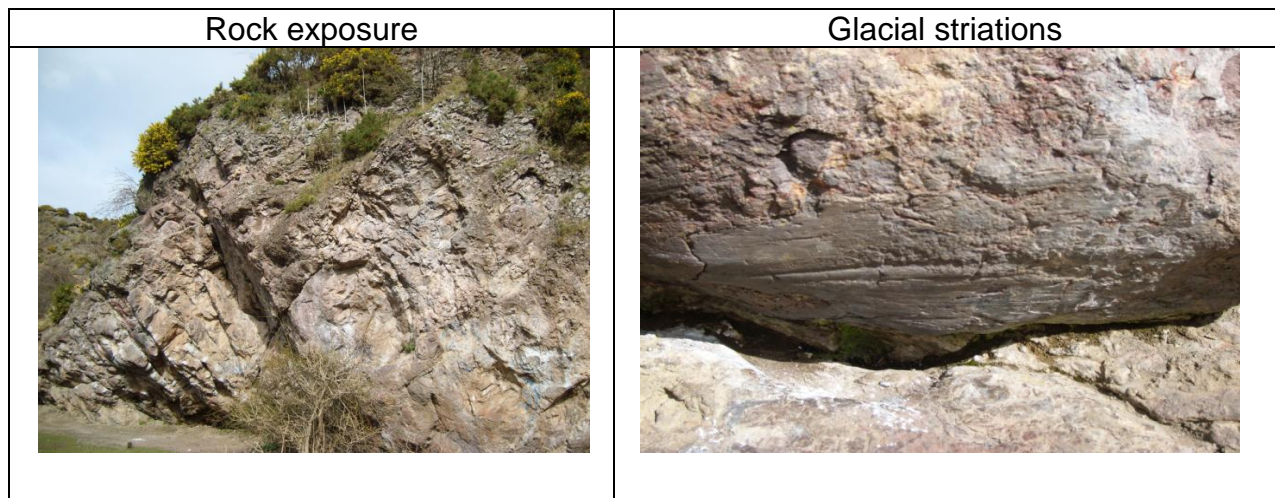
Agassiz Rock Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a nationally important scientific and historical site, located beside the disused Blackford Hill quarry within Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill Local Nature Reserve.

Agassiz rock is a volcanic rock, the surface of which forms an overhang that is smooth and contains grooves known as striations. The grooves and smooth surfaces have formed as a consequence of ice rubbing against the rock surface. The orientation of the grooves can be used to determine the direction of ice movement.

The rock was interpreted by the Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz, in 1840, as having been eroded by glacial ice. This interpretation is of historic importance as it led to the development of glacial theory in Scotland and the interpretation that much of Scotland's present landscape was formed by glacial erosion. Historically it is also an important site for geological conservation, as it was one of the first Quaternary sites to be recognised as requiring active conservation.

During the most recent site condition monitoring (SCM) assessment in 2000, these striations were still visible on the rock and as such the site is considered to be in favourable condition.

Natural features of Agassiz Rock SSSI	Condition of feature (and date monitored)
Quaternary of Scotland	Favourable – maintained (February 2000)



Past and present management

Agassiz rock lies on the edge of the disused Blackford Quarry.

The land is presently part of the Hermitage of Braid & Blackford Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is used as a recreational area. The LNR is managed by the City of Edinburgh Countryside Ranger Service.

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

We wish to work with the owner 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 and its natural features and to monitor the effectiveness of its management.

1. Maintain unobscured rock outcrops

At present, the rock is visible but there is a risk of vegetation on top of the rock becoming overgrown. Consequently there should be a degree of vegetation management within the site to safeguard outcrops.

2. Maintain access to rock outcrops

The rock lies within Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill LNR which has unrestricted access and is well used recreationally.

Other factors affecting the natural features of the site

Climbing

The site is used unofficially for 'bouldering' by local climbers. Although the Rangers discourage this activity, it may still be used on an unofficial basis. The site should be monitored to assess the affects of climbing, particularly in relation to the use of chalk by climbers and erosion of the features of interest on the rock face.

Vandalism

The site has in the past been subject to vandalism, notably the removal of plaques commemorating the interpretation of the rock. The site has also suffered from graffiti. Monitoring of the site to minimise vandalism is recommended.

Natural erosion

The rock has weathered and eroded over the years and there is a risk of loose rock associated with this. This may have an effect on the exposures in future should these areas continue to erode.

Fires

Lighting of fires under the overhang could obscure the striations (through smoke/soot masking the feature) and damage the rock face.

Date last reviewed: 7 April 2010