

**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



**Loch Laxford
Special Area of Conservation**

Advice under Regulation 33(2)
of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994
(as amended)

30 March 2006

About this Package:

Section 1 of this document provides a general introduction and Sections 2 and 3 fulfil Scottish Natural Heritage's duties under Regulation 33(2) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (Habitats Regulations) (as amended by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004). This requires that SNH advises other relevant authorities as to the conservation objectives of the site (see Section 2) and any operations which may cause deterioration of natural habitats or the habitats of species, or disturbance of species, in so far as such disturbance could be significant, for which the site has been designated (see Section 3).

Annexes A and B provide supplementary, non-statutory information. Annex A gives information on the sensitivity and vulnerability of the qualifying interests: 'Large shallow inlets and bays' and 'Reefs'. Annex B gives some indication as to the extent, distribution, structure, function and processes that affect the qualifying interests. It should be noted that this is indicative and not definitive, and as more site information is gathered these sections may be updated.

Loch Laxford was designated by Scottish Ministers as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on 17th March 2005. This site is also referred to as a 'European site' (Regulation 10(1)). A 'European marine site' is a 'European site' which is wholly or in part marine (Regulation 2(1)) and is hereafter referred to as a marine SAC.

Although the following statutory information is for the benefit of relevant authorities (see below for explanation of their role), it can also be used by other competent authorities when assessing plans or projects.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004), commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations, transpose the EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) into domestic legislation. Regulation 33(2) gives Scottish Natural Heritage a statutory responsibility to advise other relevant authorities as to the conservation objectives for marine SACs in Scotland, and any operations which may cause deterioration of natural habitats or the habitats of species, or disturbance of species for which the site has been designated.

This document presents the Regulation 33 advice, plus supporting information, for the Loch Laxford SAC to assist relevant and competent authorities, local interest groups and individuals in considering management of the site. This advice, plus supporting information, will also help to determine the scope and nature of any “appropriate assessment”, which the Habitats Directive requires to be undertaken for proposed plans and projects that are not connected to the conservation management of the site and are considered likely to have a significant effect. Where necessary Scottish Natural Heritage will also provide more detailed advice to relevant, and other competent, authorities to inform assessment of the implications of any such plans or projects.

1.2 Relevant and competent authorities

Within the context of a marine SAC, a relevant authority is a body or authority that has a function in relation to land or waters within or adjacent to the site (Regulation 5) and include: a nature conservation body; a local authority; water undertakers; a navigation authority; a harbour authority; a lighthouse authority; a river purification board (SEPA); a district salmon fishery board; and a local fisheries committee. *All relevant authorities are competent authorities.*

A competent authority is defined in Regulation 6 as “any Minister, government department, public or statutory undertaker, public body of any description or person holding a public office”. In the context of a plan or project, the *competent authority* is the authority with the power or duty to determine whether or not the proposal can proceed.

1.3 The role of relevant authorities

The Habitats Regulations require relevant authorities to exercise their functions so as to secure compliance with the Habitats Directive. A management scheme may be drawn up for each marine SAC by the relevant authorities as described under Regulation 34. For marine SACs with overlapping interests, a single management scheme may be developed.

Where a management scheme is in place the relevant authorities must ensure that all plans for the area integrate with it. Such plans may include shoreline

management plans, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) management plans, local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and sustainable development strategies for estuaries. This must occur to ensure that only a single management scheme is produced through which all relevant authorities exercise their duties under the Habitats Regulations.

1.4 Responsibilities under other conservation designations

Other designations within or adjacent to the Loch Laxford marine SAC are: Loch Laxford SSSI and the Loch Laxford Marine Consultation Area. The obligations of relevant, and other competent authorities and organisations under such designations and legislation are not affected by the advice contained in this document.

1.5 Conservation objectives

Section 2 of this document contains the conservation objectives for the Loch Laxford marine SAC, a site which consists entirely of marine qualifying interests. The conservation objectives have been developed to ensure that the obligations of the Habitats Directive are met.

1.6 Advice as to operations

The operations, set out in Section 3, are those which SNH advise may cause deterioration of natural habitats for which the site has been designated. This does not necessarily mean that the operations are *presently* ongoing or, if they are, that they are at levels incompatible with the conservation objectives.

1.7 Plans and projects

The Habitats Regulations require that, where an authority concludes that a development proposal is unconnected with the nature conservation management of a Natura site and is likely to have a significant effect on that site, it must undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications for the qualifying interest for which the area has been designated.

1.8 Review of Consents

Competent authorities are required by the Habitats Regulations to undertake a review of all consents and permissions for activities affecting the site as soon as reasonably practicable after it becomes a European site. This will have implications for discharge and other consents, which will need to be reviewed in the light of the conservation objectives.

2 Statutory advice given by SNH under Regulation 33(2) Conservation Objectives

2.1 Introduction

This section provides conservation objectives, which have been developed by SNH in agreement with the Scottish Executive and are to be provided to the relevant authorities in fulfilment of the requirements under Regulation 33(2) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004).

The conservation objectives ensure that the obligations of the Habitats Directive are met; that is, there should not be deterioration or significant disturbance of the qualifying interests. This will also ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes a full contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for its qualifying interests.

The Loch Laxford marine SAC has been designated for the habitats 'Large shallow inlets and bays' and 'Reefs', which are listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

The Loch Laxford SAC consists entirely of marine qualifying interests.

The conservation objectives for the Loch Laxford marine SAC are as follows:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (Large shallow inlets and bays and Reefs) 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 interests.
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

3 Statutory advice given by SNH under Regulation 33(2) Operations

The following advice as to operations to be considered by relevant authorities is provided by SNH with respect to the Loch Laxford marine SAC in fulfilment of the requirements under Regulation 33(2)(b) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004). The advice identifies those operations, either on or affecting the SAC, which may cause deterioration of the marine natural habitats or the habitats of species, or disturbance of species, for which the site has been designated. These include operations that may not be currently affecting the Loch Laxford marine SAC.

Operations (in alphabetical order)

Aquaculture

Finfish farming
Shellfish farming

Coastal Development

Civil engineering

Discharges / Waste Disposal

Discharge of commercial effluent
Discharge of sewage

Fishing

Mobile gear: Dredging
Mobile gear: Trawling
Static gear: Creel / Pot fishing

Gathering / Harvesting

Diver collection of shellfish
Harvesting of seaweed subtidally
Intertidal collection of shellfish

Marine Traffic

Boat maintenance and antifoulant use

Recreational Activities

Boat anchorages
Boat moorings
Charter / recreational vessels
Scuba diving

Scientific Research

Scientific research

Annex A

Non-statutory advice given by SNH Sensitivity and Vulnerability of the Loch Laxford SAC 'Large shallow inlets and bays' and 'Reefs' to activities listed in Section 3

The comments below are general and should not be considered to be definitive. They are made without prejudice to any comments SNH may provide or any assessment that may be required for specific proposals to be considered by a relevant authority. The level of any impact will depend on the location and intensity of the relevant activity. This advice is provided to assist and focus the relevant authorities in their consideration of the management of these operations.

NB. References to deterioration in the comments section below should be taken to mean *deterioration of all the qualifying interests*. If specific qualifying interests are particularly at risk they may be referred to individually where relevant.

Operations	Comments
Aquaculture	
Finfish farming	<p>Finfish farming has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities through changes in water quality, smothering from waste material and physical disturbance from mooring systems. There is potential for accidental introduction of new non-native species and increasing the spread of existing non-native plants and animals (e.g. <i>Caprella mutica</i> Japanese skeleton shrimp), which are already widely distributed in the UK. Invasive species have the potential to cause deterioration of the qualifying interests by altering community structure and quality.</p> <p>The associated environmental effects mentioned above are usually localised but the reduced water exchange within sea lochs may exacerbate these effects and cumulative impacts should be considered.</p>
Shellfish farming	<p>This activity has the potential to cause deterioration of the qualifying habitats and communities through physical damage (e.g. installation of mooring blocks and continued scouring by riser chains) and changes in community structure caused by smothering from pseudo-faeces (undigested waste products) and debris (including dead shells) falling from the farm. There is also potential for accidental introduction of new non-native species and increasing the spread within the UK of existing non-native plants and animals (e.g. <i>Sargassum muticum</i> Wireweed), through importation or translocation of shellfish stocks. Invasive species have the potential to cause deterioration of the qualifying interests by altering community structure and quality.</p> <p>The associated environmental effects mentioned above are usually localised but the reduced water exchange within sea lochs may exacerbate these effects and cumulative impacts should be considered.</p>

Coastal Development	
Civil engineering	The construction and maintenance of structures, both within and adjacent to the sea have the potential to cause direct loss of qualifying habitats and deterioration of adjacent habitats and communities (particularly reefs) as tidal currents and therefore coastal processes are affected. For example coastal structures such as linear coastal defences or erosion control measures (e.g. gabions) can affect local sediment suspension and deposition patterns and therefore have the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitat through smothering. Installation, replacement and maintenance of undersea cables have the potential to cause direct loss of qualifying habitats as well as local deterioration of habitats and communities.
Discharges / Waste Disposal	
Discharge of commercial effluent	Commercial effluent has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities. This would be through the effects of pollution and / or nutrient enrichment, which may cause subsequent changes in community structure.
Discharge of sewage	Sewage effluent (whether treated or untreated) has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities. This would be through the effects of pollution and / or nutrient enrichment, which may cause subsequent changes in community structure.
Fishing	
Mobile gear: Dredging	Benthic dredging has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying seabed habitats and communities through direct contact with dredge gear, and sedimentation when dredging occurs close to the reef qualifying interest.
Mobile gear: Trawling	Benthic trawling has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying seabed habitats and communities through direct contact with trawling gear, and sedimentation when trawling occurs close to the reef qualifying interest.
Static gear: Creel / Pot fishing	The use of creels and / or pots in a localised area has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying seabed habitats and communities through direct contact, particularly during their deployment and / or recovery.
Gathering / Harvesting	
Diver collection of shellfish	Collection of shellfish by diving has the potential to cause deterioration of the qualifying habitats and communities where the target species is a key component of that community, or where the collection method involves the use of invasive techniques (e.g. hydraulic equipment). Diving amongst reefs could cause deterioration and physical damage, in particular to erect and fragile species.
Harvesting of seaweed subtidally	Harvesting of seaweed subtidally has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities (particularly reefs) by physical damage or through the loss of target species, which can cause imbalances in community and ecosystem structures.
Intertidal collection of shellfish	Collection of shellfish from intertidal areas has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitat and communities (particularly reefs) through physical damage and disturbance to qualifying habitat (trampling and turning stones), and removal of the target species, which can cause an imbalance of communities and ecosystems.
Marine Traffic	
Boat maintenance and antifoulant use	Most antifoulant products are designed to kill or discourage naturally occurring organisms and, as such, cause damage to the water environment if used carelessly. Under such circumstances use of antifoulant has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities within this site.

Recreational Activities	
Boat anchorages	Anchors and continual scouring by riser chains have the potential to cause deterioration of seabed habitats and communities through direct contact with qualifying interests.
Boat moorings	Moorings and continual scouring by riser chains have the potential to cause deterioration of seabed habitats and communities through direct contact with qualifying interests.
Charter / recreational vessels	Boats have the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats (particularly reefs) and communities through repeated launching and recovery in specific areas, accidental grounding, and accidental fuel spillages.
Scuba diving	Recreational diving in specific areas has the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities, in particular to erect and fragile reef species.
Scientific Research	
Scientific Research	Research activities have the potential to cause deterioration of qualifying habitats and communities through direct alteration, removal or manipulation of these qualifying interests and their associated species.

Annex B

Non-statutory Advice given by SNH Site account

Site description

Loch Laxford SAC is located to the south of Cape Wrath at the north-western tip of mainland Scotland. The site consists of a main loch, Loch Laxford, with its complex fjordic shape and numerous small islands and side branches that include two large subsidiary lochs; Lochs Dùghaill and a'Chadh-Fi, extending from its north shore. The central channel of Loch Laxford is relatively straight, running along the line of a major geological fault, but the coastline is long and convoluted. Loch Laxford has two poorly defined basins and a single sill across the entrance rising to 40 m depth. The smaller outer basin reaches 67 m depth whilst the rest of the loch is relatively shallow (less than 30 m in depth).

The entrance to the loch system faces northwest into the North Minch, and the outermost part of the loch is therefore very exposed. However, the entrance is relatively narrow and the many reefs and islands near it combine to reduce wave action such that most of the loch is sheltered. Extremely sheltered conditions are found in Loch a'Chadh-Fi, in the small lagoon-like Lochan na Fionndalach Bige on the south coast, as well as in Laxford Bay at the head of the loch. Laxford Bay narrows to around 400 m, and from that point inwards is mostly intertidal. The River Laxford drains over the shore here and conditions are brackish. Tràigh Bad na Bàighe is an inlet that opens into the south side of Laxford Bay, connected to the main loch by a channel and series of lagoons with sills. There is one area of shallow tidal rapids at the entrance to Lochan na Fionndalach Bige. The rest of the coastline of Loch Laxford is predominantly steep and rocky with both bedrock and boulder shores dominated by fucoid algae, especially knotted wrack *Ascophyllum nodosum*.

Qualifying marine interests

Annex I Habitats:

Large shallow inlets and bays

Loch Laxford SAC is a large complex shallow inlet and bay, and a system comprising reefs, boulder slopes, coarse gravels and sands as well as muds. The reef habitats are proposed as an Annex I interest in their own right within this system (see below). The habitats and associated communities exhibit a graduation that would be expected to be seen from the exposed mouth of Loch Laxford to the sheltered areas at the head of the loch. Steep and vertical bedrock slopes extend along the whole of the length of Loch Laxford along the southern side of the deep main channel. Steep bedrock and boulder slopes predominate on the northern side of the loch, also at exposed sites around the islands and skerries at the entrance to Loch Dùghaill.

The extent of the rock slopes around Loch Laxford mean that shallow sediments are mostly restricted to sheltered areas on the south side of this

loch. The majority of the seabed consists of deep coarse sediments in the outer reaches and muddy sediments in the middle and inner reaches. There is a small lagoonal inlet, Lochan na Fionndalach Bige, on the southern shore towards its head of Loch Laxford, which joins the main loch via a shallow rapids, Sruth Mór.

The sediment shores at the head of Loch Laxford are typical sheltered shores of muddy gravel, cobble and boulders, which support populations of fucoids including knotted wrack *Ascophyllum nodosum*, along with mussels *Mytilus edulis* and polychaetes, especially lugworm *Arenicola marina*. The sheltered littoral inlet, Tràigh Bad na Bàighe, a little under 1 km² in extent, consists mostly of extensive sediment flats influenced to some extent by freshwater streams. It supports a community dominated by lugworm *A. marina* plus the ragworm *Hediste diversicolor*, the amphipod *Corophium volutator* and the bivalves Baltic tellins *Macoma balthica* and cockles *Cerastoderma edule*. The narrow entrance to this inlet is tide-swept and a dense bed of mussels *M. edulis* dominates the predominantly gravelly mud in the mid-eulittoral.

The changing exposure gradient along the length of Loch Laxford, together with the numerous bays and inlets, means that a wide variety of sediments grade into one another along the length of the loch. In the outer more exposed reaches, clean coarse sand plains with shelly gravel predominate. These sediments typically support the sea cucumbers, *Neopentadactyla mixta* and *Thyone* sp., the hydroid *Corymorpha nutans*, the heart urchins, *Echinocardium flavescens* and *Spatangus purpureus* and bivalves including scallops *Pecten maximus*. In the area between the head of Ardmore Point and Glas Leac, a group of small islands and rocks just to the west, maerl *Phymatolithon calcareum* occurs in the troughs of duned shell-gravel. Similar maerl beds occur on the other side of the loch off the north side of Sgeir Iosal. Further into the loch, maerl is found mixed with fine sand and pebbles in the central channel to the south of Eilean an Eireannaich. Coarse sand and gravel sediments also occur in the middle reaches of the loch off headlands such as Eilean a' Mhadaidh and further west between Eilean an t-Sithein and Sgeir Iosal. These sediments also occur at the mouth of the loch and within the middle and outer reaches of Loch Dùghall and around the small island of Glas Leac. These are mostly in shallower water between about 5-10 m depth and sugar kelp *L. saccharina* grows attached to stones and shells when these are present, along with a variety of filamentous brown and red algae. The razor clam *Ensis arcuatus* is characteristic of the infauna in these sediments.

Further into the loch to the north of Bagh na Fionndalach Moire and spanning the width of Loch Laxford medium-depth sediments (from around 10-30 m depth) tend to be predominantly mixed muddy sand and silt. A range of species commonly found in muddy sediments are present in this area, which include the turret shell *Turritella communis*, the burrowing anemone *Cerianthus lloydii*, scallops *P. maximus* and brittlestars such as *Amphiura* spp. and *Ophiura* sp..

Soft muds are found in the extremely sheltered areas, such as in Loch a'Chadh-Fi, which is often covered by a thin diatom film. An interesting

feature of this area is the presence of particularly dense beds of the anemone *Sagartiogeton laceratus* in a narrow band between 17-20 m depth. The snake blenny *Lumpenus lumpretaeformis*, which usually occurs in burrows in deeper water, is also common. Inhabitants of this mud include the sea-pens *Virgularia mirabilis* and *Pennatula phosphorea*, the anemone, *C. lloydii* and bivalves including *P. maximus*, *Mya arenaria* and *Arctica islandica*. In shallow water at the head of Loch Laxford and to the south-east of Eilean a' Mhadaidh the main sediment is soft but well-worked mud with lugworm casts (*Arenicola*) and the sea slug-like, mud dweller *Philine aperta*.

The head of the loch, Laxford Bay, consists of mixed substrata of bedrock, boulders and cobble with gravelly, muddy sediments on the lower shore. The considerable freshwater influence and extreme shelter have resulted in the development of areas of the variant free-floating form of knotted wrack, *Ascophyllum nodosum* ecad *mackaii*.

Lochan na Fionndalach Bige is a shallow very sheltered lagoonal inlet on the south side of Loch Laxford. It has a sandy bottom and is dotted with small islands and is drained by two channels of which Sruth Mór is the largest. The shores on either side of the channel are tide-swept especially from mid-shore level downwards. The fucoid zones are similar to those on other sheltered shores described above, but rich growths of serrated wrack *F. serratus* and oarweed *L. digitata* dominate the low tide areas. Rich growths of species characteristic of tide-swept habitats dominate these channels. Sponges especially *Halichondria panicea*, a variety of hydroids, the barnacle *Balanus crenatus*, bryozoans including *Alcyonidium* sp. and sea squirts, especially *Botryllus schlosseri* and *Botrylloides leachi*, grow on ledges, in crevices, on the sides of boulders and on kelp stipes in this zone.

Reefs

The reefs are a component of the habitat Large Shallow Inlet & Bay. However, within this site they also qualify as an Annex I feature in their own right. The majority of the shoreline throughout this complex loch consists of fairly uniform sheltered to very sheltered bedrock and boulder slopes. These are fucoid-dominated and characterised by dense blankets of knotted wrack *Ascophyllum nodosum* in the mid-shore zones. Zonation patterns are similar to those seen in many other lochs on the north-west mainland coast. Lichens, particularly *Verrucaria maura*, dominate the splash zone and upper shore. Below this are zones of channelled wrack *Pelvetia canaliculata* and spiral wrack *Fucus spiralis*. The mid-shore knotted wrack *Ascophyllum* belt is often fringed by bladder wrack *Fucus vesiculosus* in the upper parts and serrated wrack *Fucus serratus* in the lower parts. Beneath the fucoids, there are often barnacles *Semibalanus balanoides* and sometimes a turf of red algae. There are often bands or patches of mussels, *Mytilus edulis*, for example along the steep bedrock shores in Laxford Bay at the head of the loch.

In the exposed outer loch the subtidal bedrock is dominated by cuvie, *Laminaria hyperborea* kelp forest extending to around 12 m depth and as kelp park to between 15-20 m depth. Beneath this there is a rich undergrowth of foliose algae and the kelp stipes support dense growths of epiphytic red algae

such as *Phycodrys rubens*, *Cryptopleura ramosa* and *Heterosiphonia plumosa*. At very exposed sites, and moderately exposed sites where vertical surfaces predominate, the hydroid *Tubularia indivisa*, the jewel anemone *Corynactis viridis* and various sea squirts extend up from the deep-water well into the kelp forests. Cuvie, *L. hyperborea* remains the dominant kelp on bedrock and large boulders throughout the main body of the loch but at the majority of sites the rock surfaces beneath the kelp forest and park are heavily grazed by the sea urchin *Echinus esculentus*. Foliose algae are restricted to crevices and inaccessible gullies, and only robust species such as encrusting coralline algae and the keel worm *Pomatoceros triqueter* survive. A few sheltered sites seem to escape urchin grazing and a diverse algal understorey and stipe flora are recorded from, for example, Rubh na h-Airde Bige. Steep and vertical kelp-dominated bedrock at some sheltered sites may also support dense patches of sea squirts, mainly *Ciona intestinalis*, below the kelp forests and extending down into deep-water areas. At sheltered sites within the inner half of the loch the 'cape variety' of cuvie, *L. hyperborea* is often found. *L. hyperborea* kelp forest is present on steep rock along the main channel even within the inner part of the loch. However, in very sheltered areas such as Loch a'Chadh-Fi, and behind Eilean a'Mhadaidh, it is replaced by a dense forest of sugar kelp *Laminaria saccharina*.

At the entrance of the bay most of the exposed sides of the islands and skerries in the mouth of Loch Dùghaill have steep or vertical bedrock cliffs extending below the kelp zone into deep-water. Jewel anemones *Corynactis viridis* and plumose anemones *Metridium senile*, feather stars *Antedon* sp. and foliose algae may all cover different parts of the deep-water rock faces. At the mouth of the loch rich deep-water assemblages of animals, more characteristic of open coast areas, include the bryozoans *Flustra foliacea* and *Securiflustra securifrons*, sponges especially *Cliona celata* and *Axinella infundibuliformis*, cup corals *C. viridis* and featherstars *Antedon* sp.. In contrast to the rich growths found inside the entrance, the moderately exposed deep-water communities experience heavy grazing, mainly by *Echinus*, and the rock surfaces appear rather bare apart from a pink covering of encrusting algae, *P. triqueter* and sometimes sea squirts *C. intestinalis*. Sheltered, deep-water, steep and stepped bedrock is found down to around 30 m depth in the middle reaches of the loch. These are silty and in general support rather impoverished communities consisting of a few species such as the brachiopod *Neocrania anomala* (which may be abundant), the encrusting bryozoan *Parasmittina trispinosa*, sea squirts *C. intestinalis*, featherstars *Antedon* sp. and algal crusts.

The most exposed sites are on the north side of Eileanan Dubha in Loch Dùghaill. The cliffs extend down to depths of between 25-45 m and are spectacular, but do not support the rich faunal turfs seen in the mouth of Loch Laxford. The rock surfaces are either grazed or scoured and tend to be dominated by either featherstars *Antedon* sp., the brittlestar *Ophiocomina nigra* or Jewel anemones *C. viridis* with underlying coralline algal crusts, keelworms *P. triqueter* and sometimes the cup-coral *Caryophyllia smithii*.