

NATURE CONSERVATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2004

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Part 2 – Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Features

Chapter 1 – Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Notification of sites of special scientific interest

Schedule 1

Notifications relating to sites of special scientific interest: procedure

Extension of period during which notification is to be confirmed or withdrawn

80. Paragraphs 12 and 13 provide for the extension of the period within which a notification must be formally confirmed or withdrawn. An extension may be made in the event of a referral to ACSSSI, but the extension can be for no more than an additional 6 month period. Thus the notification is required, in most situations, to be confirmed or withdrawn within no more than 18 months of the date on which it was originally given. If this does not happen it will be deemed (by virtue of paragraph 5) to have been withdrawn.
81. Where no objections have been received which are required under section 21 to be referred to ACSSSI, paragraph 13 does however allow for the period for confirmation or withdrawal to be extended for an unspecified period where this is by mutual agreement between SNH and all owners and occupiers of land within the SSSI in question. In such circumstances confirmation could take longer than 18 months. Such an agreement may, for example, be reached where SNH is engaged in constructive but very detailed negotiations with owners and occupiers and they are content with the progress of those negotiations.
82. Paragraph 14 specifies the manner in which agreement to an extension of the period for confirmation or withdrawal is to be obtained by SNH. Agreement is given either where every owner and occupier explicitly consents or where no reasonable objection is received within 28 days of SNH making a proposal for extension. The concept of reasonableness is applied here in order to prevent one individual from blocking an extension for petty reasons and thereby thwarting the wishes of the overwhelming majority of owners and occupiers of the site. A similar principle applies elsewhere in the Act, for example in relation to the review of ORC lists (see section 6(3)(b)).
83. Paragraph 15 requires SNH to inform the interested parties of any extension to the period for confirmation or withdrawal. This is particularly relevant to the situation foreseen in paragraph 14(b) where no reasonable objection is received.