

Special protection status for Fife quarry expansion site being considered

Campaigners say the intervention by NatureScot is a significant step forward in their fight against the quarry plans.

By [Claire Warrender](#)

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Campaigners have been fighting against the Balmullo Quarry extension for two years.

Image: Mhairi Edwards/D Thomson

Land earmarked for a Fife quarry extension could be granted protected status, thanks to a local campaign group.

Balmullo residents have persuaded NatureScot to investigate the proposed Breedon Quarry site.

And the environment body has confirmed it may have the potential to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

An SSSI protects rare and important natural features, including animals and plants.

And it is a criminal offence to damage a designated area.



Land around Balmullo Quarry could be given protected status. Image: Supplied

The fact NatureScot is considering the area around Balmullo Quarry does not prevent the planning application from proceeding.

However, the Fife planning authority must take it into consideration when it makes a decision.

It also means the deadline for commenting on [the application](#) has been extended until April 30.

The Save Lucklawhill campaign group has hailed the move as a significant step forward.

Spokesperson Sally Northcott said: “If the site is SSSI designated before the application is determined, it could put an end to the whole thing.”

Balmullo quarry campaigners fighting for protected status

Breedon Quarry’s controversial plan for [Balmullo](#) was unveiled two years ago.

The company wants to increase the size of the site to extract a further 3.2 million tonnes of aggregate.

This would also extend the quarry’s lifespan by 20 years.

However, many locals fear it would lead to an increase in dust, noise and vibrations as well as change the skyline by removing part of Lucklawhill.



A closer look at Balmullo Quarry. Image: Finn Nixon/DC Thomson.

Sally told The Courier: “We have fought so hard to get NatureScot involved.

“They are coming to do field work over the spring and summer.



Green hairstreak butterflies are among the species found. Supplied by Gillian Fyfe

“It’s the same kind of habitat as the neighbouring north heath site, which already has SSSI protection.

“We have some very rare winter visiting birds, including short-eared owls and merlin, who will be at risk if we get rid of their resting place.

“We really don’t want to lose them.”

Quarry campaign a daunting task

Sally says the protected status push is just one aspect of the fight against the Balmullo Quarry expansion.

The group is also investigating the health effects of silica dust, which can be released during the quarrying process.

“It’s daunting trying to take something like this on,” she said.

“We’re trying to stop something that’s very hard to stop.

“But we’ve certainly been [encouraged by the refusal of similar plans elsewhere](#).”

A NatureScot spokesperson confirmed: “We have been advised that Lucklawhill, Balmullo, may have the potential to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

“We are currently considering this in line with [the guidelines for selection of SSSIs](#).”