

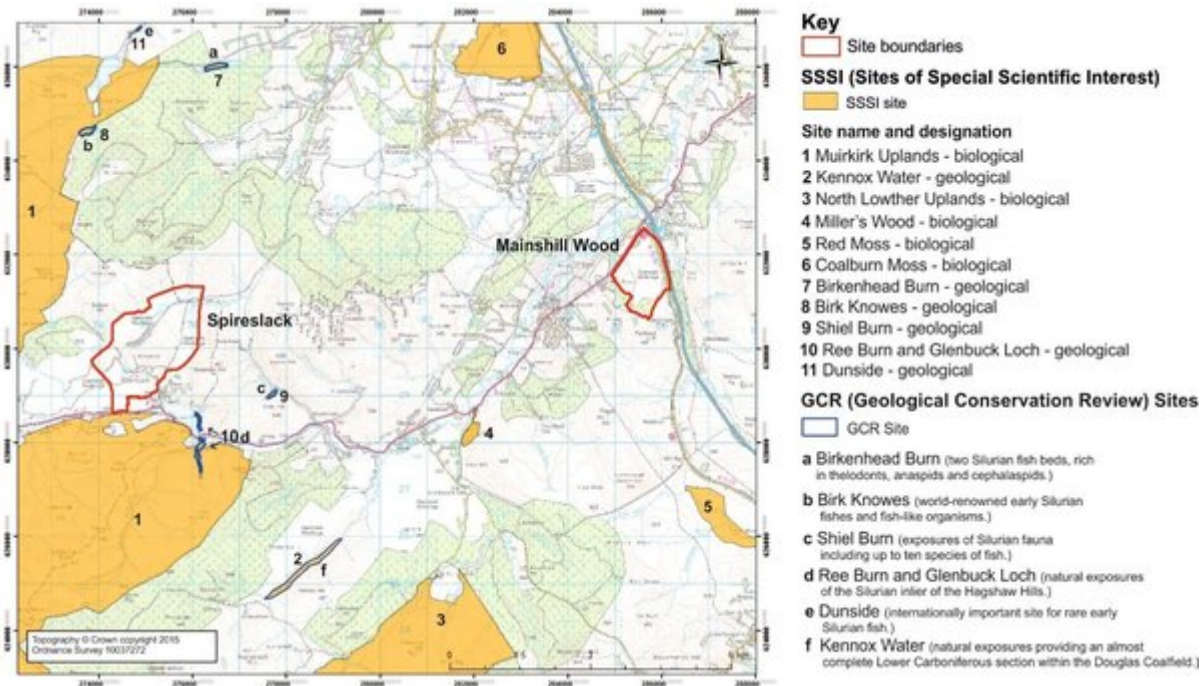
2.1 Geological Conservation Review and SSSI Sites

Spireslack and Mainhill Wood SCMs lie within close proximity to eleven Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and six Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites (see (Figure 5)). There are six geological SSSI's surrounding the two SCMs, with the remainder designated for biodiversity. The geological SSSI's also form the GCR sites.

The GCR was initiated by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1977 to identify and describe the most important geological sites in Great Britain, and these designated sites form the basis of statutory geological and geomorphological site conservation in the UK. The GCR sites near Spireslack (Ree Burn and Glenbuck Loch and Shiel Burn) are of Silurian age, older than the rocks exposed within the SCM. Shiel Burn is globally significant due to its rich and rare fauna of Silurian fish fossils, whilst Ree Burn and Glenbuck Loch are of importance for exposures of Silurian stratigraphy (Aldridge et al., 2000; Cossey et al., 2004; Dineley and Metcalf, 1999).

These designated and recognised natural geological sections show that this area of Scotland is rich in geological heritage, and is of national, and indeed, international geological importance. Combining these protected sites with the spectacular Carboniferous exposures at Spireslack and Mainhill Wood SCM would not only add to the area's strong geological importance and provide a protected rock record spanning over 100 million years' worth of geological history (from the Silurian to the Carboniferous era), but it would also link national industrial heritage to the area's geological heritage: thus strengthening the case for potential future Geopark status in this part of Scotland.

(Figure 5) Map showing locations of nearby SSSI and GCR sites in the areas neighbouring Spireslack and Mainhill Wood SCMs.



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