



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT AUGHNADARRAGH LOUGH, COUNTY DOWN. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (the Department), having consulted the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside and being satisfied that the area described and delineated on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the flora and fauna and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as 'Aughnadarragh Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Aughnadarragh Lough includes a wide variety of habitats, with transitions from lake, through fringing swamp and fen, to wet grassland and cut-over bog. As a result, it contains a very diverse mixture of wetland plants. In addition, the wetland supports a rich invertebrate community.

The open waters of the lough contain a range of aquatic species including Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*, Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, various Pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. and Common Duckweed *Lemna minor*. A narrow band of transitional swamp is dominated by Bulrush *Typha latifolia* and Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* with frequent Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*. This is backed by tall fen vegetation with additional species such as Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*.

Part of the area is cut-over bog, where the growing conditions are directly influenced by the position of the groundwater table and can generally be related to the extent of past peat cutting. The soil waters range from mildly base-rich to markedly acidic. As a result, there is a wide range of plant communities, with fen vegetation occurring beside localised pockets of more acidic wet grassland and bog. Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and the moss *Sphagnum squarrosum* are typical of more base-rich areas. Acid grassland is dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* with Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*. Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* is locally abundant. These communities occur over a dense, mossy layer that includes such species as *Sphagnum palustre*, *Aulacomnium palustre* and *Polytrichum commune*.

Drier, raised areas of peat support relict bog vegetation dominated by the dwarf-shrubs Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*. Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Hare's-tail Cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* and the mosses *Hypnum cupressiforme* and *Dicranum scoparium* are also present. Other mosses such as *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. magellanicum* occur in wetter hollows.

Woodland and scrub occur in parts of the area. Some of the scrub consists of patches of Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* and Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* growing over acid grassland vegetation. More dense scrub of Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* occur behind the fringing swamp around the lough. Other woody species present at Aughnadarragh Lough include Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and occasional Oak *Quercus* spp.

The area contains a number of rare plant species. Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus*, Lesser Bulrush *Typha angustifolia* and Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra* grow in the fen and swamp, with Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* (this being the only known County Down locality for the species) and Yellow-sedge *C. viridula* ssp. *viridula* on the lough-shore. Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* occurs in the cut-over bog.

Because of the variety and quality of the habitats present, Aughnadarragh Lough is also important for insects (invertebrates). A large number of butterfly species have been recorded for the area, including a colony of the Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*. The larvae of this species feed on the leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and colonies require large areas of suitable habitat, as they use different patches of the food plant each year. Other invertebrate groups that are well-represented at Aughnadarragh Lough include Water-beetles (Aquatic Coleoptera) and Hoverflies (Syrphidae). Of particular note is the Hoverfly *Anasimyia transfuga*, which is known from only three sites in Northern Ireland.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora and fauna of the area:

1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, gravel and peat.
2. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity of grazing, including any change in the type of livestock used or in supplementary feeding practice.
3. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
4. The application of manure, slurry or artificial fertiliser.

5. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill any form of wild plant, other than plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
6. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraph 5 above.
7. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
8. The release into the area of any animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice) or plant. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates; 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore.
9. Burning.
10. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
11. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
12. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
13. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including marsh, fen, bog, rivers, streams and open water), e.g.
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification of the structure of any watercourse;
 - (iii) lowering of the water-table, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
14. The killing or taking of any wild animal except where such killing or taking is treated as an exception in Articles 5, 6, 11, 17, 20, 21 and 22 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
15. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area:
 - (i) Educational activities;
 - (ii) Research activities;

- (iii) Recreational activities;
 - (iv) Exercising of animals.
16. Changes in game, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 29 January 1999



ROBERT C MARTIN
Assistant Secretary

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the operations or activities listed in the Schedule does not constitute planning permission. Where required, planning permission must be applied for in the usual manner to the Department under Part IV of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. Operations or activities covered by planning permission are not normally covered in the list of Notifiable Operations.
- (b) Also note that many of the operations and activities listed in the Schedule are capable of being carried out either on a large scale or in a very small way. While it is impossible to define exactly what is large and what is small, the Department would intend to approach each case in a common sense and practical way. It is very unlikely that small scale operations would give rise for concern and if this was the case the Department would normally give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.