

BALLYCASTLE COALFIELD

Views About Management The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2)

A statement of Environment and Heritage Service's views about the management of the Ballycastle Coalfield Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")

This statement represents the views of Environment and Heritage Service about the management of the ASSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the area's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. Environment and Heritage Service has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the ASSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the ASSI and there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. It is also very important to recognise that management may need to change with time.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation or activity. The written consent of Environment and Heritage Service is still required before carrying out any operation or activity likely to damage the features of special interest (see the schedule on pages 3 and 4 of the attached Document B for a list of these operations and activities). Environment and Heritage Service welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the ASSI to ensure that the management of this area maintains and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The geological series

Earth science features provide information about a region's geological history and can also aid interpretation of geological processes in the past and present.

The earth science interest at Ballycastle Coalfields occurs as cliff and foreshore exposures extending east from Ballycastle Bay to Farragandoo at the base of Fair Head. Environment and Heritage Service would like to encourage the maintenance of the ASSI and its earth science interest.

Provided no damaging activities, as set out in the Schedule (pages 3 and 4), are undertaken without consent, the needs of owners, occupiers and the Department can be met.



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Earth science features such as those at Ballycastle Coalfields may require occasional management intervention in order to maintain access to, and exposure of, the geology. This could include, for example, selective removal of vegetation or any major build up of loose rock. Sites such as Ballycastle Coalfield are particularly vulnerable to damage through coastal defence works.

Specific objectives include:

Maintain the geological series in an undamaged state.

Maintain access to the geological series.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Maritime cliff and slope

Maritime cliff and slopes are important habitats for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland and heathland through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals.

Many of the more sensitive species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, coastal habitats generally benefit from some management to retain their interest. Although occasional small patches of scrub can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, in the absence of management, coarse grasses can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.

Grazing is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species, helping to maintain a diverse sward structure which continues to support species-rich grassland and heath. In the absence of grazing, cutting and removal of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Specific objectives include:

Low intensity grazing would contribute to the conservation and enhancement of this feature of interest. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the re-introduction of this practice where feasible. Where grazing is not feasible other management practices, such as cutting, may be used.

Prevent the loss of more sensitive grassland species through the control of scrub, bracken and rushes. In general, this can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases other methods of control, such as cutting, may be required.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland by encouraging the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grasslands from drying out.

Ensure that disturbance to the site and its wildlife is minimised.

Discourage non-native species, especially those that tend to spread at the expense of native wildlife.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the coastal habitats including saltmarsh and boundary features such as hedgerows and walls, through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife.

E. Diane Stevenson

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Authorised Officer

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