



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT BALLYKILBEG, 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 the 'Ballykilbeg Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Ballykilbeg is a large site with a complex mosaic of habitats ranging from swamp, fen and wet grassland, to woodland and scrub. These are influenced by a variety of factors, such as surface topography, underlying soils, the position of the water-table and the chemical content of the water. Plant communities reflect this diversity. In addition, the area supports a colony of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*.

The swamp vegetation is rather species-poor and is dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*. In contrast, the plant communities of the fen are particularly variable. Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* is often the dominant species, with abundant Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. Where the underlying peats are kept moist through the year, a rich fen community has developed with Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra* and Brown Sedge *C. disticha*.

In places, dry grassland on raised ground occurs alongside narrow strips of wetland. The latter includes occasional pockets of open water with such species as Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, Mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and the brown mosses *Calliergon cuspidatum* and *C. giganteum*. Other species include frequent Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, with occasional Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*. Where conditions are more acidic, Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* is often dominant, with abundant Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Bog species such as Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* also occur, growing over a carpet of *Sphagnum* bog-mosses.

Tall herb communities often occur in a mosaic with other habitats, and are generally dominated by grasses such as Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, with abundant wetland species such as Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris*, Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*.

Where the fen grades into wet grassland, Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and Sharp-flowered Rush *J. acutiflorus* are dominant. Occasional patches of dry grassland, with frequent Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* also occur.

Scrub and woodland are scattered over the area. This varies from Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, through scrub with Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, to large Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*.

Ballykilbeg contains a number of scarce plants, including Greater Tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata*, Lesser Tussock-sedge *C. diandra* and Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*. Notable bryophytes include *Calliergon cordifolium*, *C. giganteum*, *Plagiomnium elatum* and *Riccardia multifida*.

Ballykilbeg also provides valuable habitat for a range of wetland animals, including birds and invertebrates. A well-established colony of the Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia* butterfly is found. 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.

## 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. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
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 paragraphs 4 or 5 above.

7. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for
  - (i) plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977;
  - (ii) normal cutting or mowing regimes for which a consent is not required under paragraph 3 above.
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, 12, 16, 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 11 NOVEMBER 1997



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**ROBERT C MARTIN**  
Assistant Secretary

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CIVIL SERVANT  
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#### 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.