

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT  
BALLYMACALDRACK, COUNTY ANTRIM. ARTICLE 28 OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2002.

The Department of the Environment (the Department), having consulted the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside and being satisfied that the area delineated and described 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 'Ballymacaldrack Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

This area is of special scientific interest because of its species-rich wet grassland. Species-rich wet grassland tends to occur only where land management is not intensive, in particular where traditional farming practices have been maintained. As a result, it is not a widespread habitat in Northern Ireland and is often fragmented, consisting of individual fields, parts of fields or banks. Species-rich wet grasslands, like those found at Ballymacaldrack, are a scarce resource in Northern Ireland as most of the habitat has been agriculturally improved to some extent.

Ballymacaldrack is situated on the lower slopes of Long Mountain to the east of Lough Naroon approximately 1km south of Dunloy. The soils are freely-draining brown earths, derived from the underlying parent material of basic igneous rock. The area occurs just below the plateau of Long Mountain, an extensive area that has been largely unaffected by intensive agriculture due to its particularly wet climate and its relative inaccessibility. The area slopes upwards towards the base of a rock cliff that is about 3-4 metres in height. The vegetation at Ballymacaldrack is mostly composed of species-rich rush pasture, but there are also some interesting drier grassland communities located at the base of the cliff. Fen meadow is also present at the top of the cliff where water movement through the soils is evident.

The area of rush pasture is dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutifloris* with a high coverage of herbs representative of species-rich rush pasture communities. Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is a constant component of the sward along with Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Sedges are abundant in the sward and include Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea*, Yellow-sedge *C. viridula* and Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana*. Herbs present are typical of traditionally managed rush pasture grasslands and include Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Ragged-Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre*.

Where there is increased water movement through the soil and localised waterlogging around the immediate vicinity of the cliff top, then species reflecting the wetter



conditions predominate. On the upper parts of the area species distinctive of fen meadow are present, with Sharp-flowered Rush *J. acutiflorus* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* abundant amongst extensive patches of Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*. Other species distinctive to this type of vegetation present include Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Tawny Sedge *Carex hostiana*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

Around the cliff where the soils are relatively thin and drier, species-rich lowland meadow occurs. Rushes are very scarce and the vegetation is dominated by grasses, with a high cover of herbs and occasional sedges. Plants distinctive of this type of vegetation include Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*. Plants of note found in this area include Greater Butterfly-orchid *Plantanthera chlorantha*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* and Zigzag Clover *Trifolium medium*.

Ballymacaldrack is an area of semi-natural grassland managed in a traditional way. As such, it provides valuable feeding and roosting sites for a range of animals, including birds and invertebrates.

## 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 (or introduction), 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 paragraph 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 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 (include 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.
- 17. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

## 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.
- (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.