



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

### DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT BALLYNAGROSS LOWER, 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 'Ballynagross Lower Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Ballynagross Lower is a diverse site, with a wide range of fen communities, including a number of notable ones. Several rare plant species are found.

The area consists of two small wetland basins which occur around a central core, dominated by tall Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with occasional Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* in more open areas.

The wetland to the south is particularly rich, with several fen communities present. Around the edge there is a band of fen dominated by Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, with scattered *Phragmites australis*. In wetter parts, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* becomes more abundant, with a range of other species such as Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*. These fen communities grade into wet grassland which is species-rich in places and is dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Soft-rush *J. effusus*.

The wetland to the north appears to be more eutrophic (enriched by nutrients) and is rather different in character. Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* occurs in places around the edges, but the central parts are dominated by tall Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*. Other abundant species include Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* and Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*.

Gorse *Ulex europaeus* scrub occurs occasionally on drier patches on higher ground, and there are also small areas of scattered Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* scrub within the wetland. These provide additional habitat diversity.

The fen contains a number of vascular plants with a restricted distribution in the British Isles, including Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra*, Slender Sedge *Carex lasiocarpa*, Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*. Notable bryophytes include *Calliergon giganteum*.

Ballynagross Lower also provides valuable habitat for a range of wetland 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. Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating or re-seeding.
2. Increase in grazing intensity or change either in the type of livestock used or in feeding practices.
3. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
4. Application of manure, slurry, fertiliser or lime.
5. Application of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill, selectively or non-selectively, any form of animal, plant or other living organism.
6. Dumping, spreading or discharge of any matter.
7. Burning.
8. The release into the area of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed. "Animal" includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate, but excludes livestock and animals used in controlling livestock.
9. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, or the disturbance, 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.
10. The introduction of tree or woodland management, including afforestation or planting.

11. Drainage, including peat drainage or the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains.
12. Modification of the structure of water courses, including their banks and beds as by realignment, regrading or dredging.
13. Management of aquatic and bank vegetation.
14. The alteration of water levels or water tables or the utilisation of water including storage or extraction, but excluding water used for domestic requirements.
15. Infilling of ditches, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or lakes.
16. Reclamation of land from bog, marsh, river or lake.
17. Extraction of minerals including peat, sand, gravel, topsoil or subsoil.
18. Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hard-standings, banks, ditches and other earth works or the laying or removal of pipelines or cables, above or below ground.
19. Storage of materials.
20. Use of craft or vehicles likely to damage the vegetation.
21. Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of building, engineering or other operations, including drilling.
22. Recreational, educational or research activities likely to damage the vegetation.
23. Changes in game management.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the  
Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on 2 July 1997

*R. Lynchlaure .  
Civil Servant in  
Clarence Court Belfast*

*Robert C Martin*

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**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.