

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT BALLYQUINTIN POINT, 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 delineated and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of its flora, fauna and physiographical features and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Ballyquintin Point area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its coastal flora and fauna and exceptional raised beach features. Although major raised beach complexes are present elsewhere in Northern Ireland, none exhibit such an extensive area and thickness of cobble grade material. These deposits date from the Flandrian (post 10,000 years B.P.) sea transgression which was driven by rising world sea-levels following the last glaciation. The maximum marine incursion is marked by a stranded cliff-line eroded in glacial till. The regressive phase (post 5500 years B.P.) was due to an apparent fall of sea-level, although this was actually due to rising land levels adjusting to the removal of the great ice mass. During this period a series of cobble grade ridges developed parallel to shore. This simple picture becomes complicated in the immediate area of Ballyquintin Point, which is a zone of changing beach orientation. A raised cusped foreland is present, with the area of raised beach ridges narrowing rapidly to the north-east and north-west. Beach cusps are present at the head of the modern beach and have associated transverse cobble bars, both within the raised and active beach areas.

The northern section contrasts with the raised beach area in that little deposition appears to have taken place here during raised beach times. Deposits, in the form of poorly defined ridges sub-parallel to the stranded cliff-line, are present but limited in extent. This then must have been either a sheltered or sediment starved shore or, more probably, a combination of the two.

Contemporary beach processes are affected by the strike orientation of the country rock. The western side of the site has bedding parallel to wave energy producing a generally narrower beach width than the eastern side. The modern beach is dominated by cobble grade material, although one unusual gravel beach appears to be fed partly by storm erosion of a low lying gravel raised beach. This beach is fronted by a stable cobble beach with rock outcrop which dissipates wave energy, thus protecting the gravels.

The vegetation at Ballyquintin Point illustrates a natural transition from maritime to terrestrial communities. Saltmarsh is developed locally, nestled amongst the mosaic of rocky outcrops and shingle bars, and is more extensively formed over the tidally inundated pasture at the northern end of the site. Strandline communities are extensively developed along its shore. Maritime grassland occurs over the tops of rocky outcrops, with species-rich dry grassland around its coastal rim. The interior is dominated by scrub.

Saltmarsh communities are dominated by Red Fescue Festuca rubra, Saltmarsh Rush Juncus gerardii, Autumn Hawkbit Leontodon autumnalis and Common Saltmarsh-grass Puccinellia maritima. A few small isolated stands of Annual Sea-blite Suaeda maritima are scattered across the site, and a band of Common Couch Elytrigia repens is occasionally found. However, often the mid-marsh zonation inland is either truncated by the presence of cobble banks supporting a richly developed Sea Mayweed Tripleurospermum maritimum and Cleavers Galium aparine strandline vegetation, or shows a smooth gradation into inundation grassland communities, dominated by Red Fescue Festuca rubra, Tall Fescue Festuca arundinacea, Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera and Silverweed Potentilla anserina.

Maritime grassland, primarily developed of Thrift Armeria maritima, Red Fescue Festuca rubra and Yorkshire-fog Holcus lanatus, with occasional Sea Plantain Plantago maritima and Sea Campion Silene uniflora, is confined to the tops of rocky outcrops that lie close to the shore.

Inland grassland communities vary considerably. Over the shallow, skeletal soils that cover parts of the raised cobble beach, species-rich dry grassland is extensively developed. Red Fescue Festuca rubra and Yorkshire-fog Holcus lanatus remain the main species, but there are a range of other grass and grass-like species such as Sweet Vernal Grass Anthoxanthum odoratum, Crested Hair-grass Koeleria macrantha, Glaucous Sedge Carex flacca and Field Wood-rush Luzula campestris. Herbs include Lady's Bedstraw Galium verum, Wild Thyme Thymus polytrichus, Ribwort Plantain Plantago lanceolata, White Clover Trifolium repens, Yarrow Achillea millefolium and Bird's-foot Trefoil Lotus corniculatus. Burnet Rose Rosa pimpinellifolia is also frequent. Throughout these areas of grassland, small pockets of rank grassland with False Oat-grass Arrhenatherum elatius and Sand Sedge Carex arenaria are locally frequent over areas of open shingle.

Scrub encroachment is extensive across the inner portion of the site, where it is dominated by Gorse Ulex europaeus, with an understorey of Bramble Rubus fruticosus, Cock's-foot Dactylis glomerata, Sweet Vernal Grass Anthoxanthum odoratum and Yorkshire-fog Holcus lanatus. Frequently across the raised shingle are patches of low, prostrate Blackthorn Prunus spinosa scrub, with Ivy Hedera helix and Herb-robert Geranium robertianum beneath.

Ballyquintin Point contains a number of scarce plants, including Slender Spike-rush Eleocharis uniglumis.

The rare pill woodlouse Armadillidium pulchellum occurs here at its most northerly site in Ireland.

SCHEDULE

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

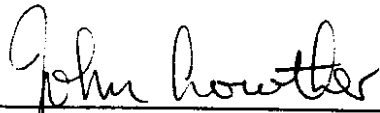
1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, gravel and peat.
2. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity 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. Any change in the annual pattern of 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.
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.
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 to 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 animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms 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 30 May, 1995



J Crowther
Assistant Secretary

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CIVIL SERVANT
BOTH AT CLARENCE COURT
BELFAST

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities 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 above 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 give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.