



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CARRICKASTICKAN, CO. ARMAGH. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

The Department of the Environment (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 "Carrickastickan Area of Special Scientific Interest".

This area is of special scientific interest because of its species-rich dry grassland community.

Species-rich 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 dry grasslands, like those found at Carrickastickan, are a particularly scarce resource even in south Armagh, where there is known to be a greater proportion of this habitat type.

Carrickastickan is situated on the southern edge of the Ring-of-Gullion, about 2 km south of Forkhill. Soils are free draining brown rankers, derived from felsite parent material, a basic igneous rock. The two field parcels making up the site slope from north-east to south-west.

The grassland at Carrickastickan is of a species-rich dry type. It is a similar grassland community to that which is considered to be the natural grassland type of traditionally managed pastures on circumneutral soils throughout Great Britain.

The two fields are typically grass dominated with a wide range of associated herbs. The grasses Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris* and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* are constant in the sward with other "grass-like" species such as Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris* also found scattered throughout. Herbs typical of traditionally managed grasslands are frequent throughout the swards and include Oxeye Daisy

*Leucanthemum vulgare*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*. Where soils are thin Lady's Bed-straw *Galium verum* and Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* are locally very abundant with a range of other small herbs including Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* and Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*. These species reflect the slightly base-rich soil conditions.

In addition Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* and Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* occur in one of the fields. Both of these species have a fairly restricted distribution in Northern Ireland with the former usually being more associated with verges than pastures and the latter with only a few known sites in County Armagh.

Carrickastickan 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. A variety of butterflies have been recorded in the area including Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* and Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*.

## 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 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.

The Official Seal of the  
Department of the Environment  
hereunto affixed is authenticated  
by



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**DR J S FAULKNER**  
Senior Officer of the  
Department of the Environment

Dated the 5 of OCTOBER 2001

#### 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.