



Department of the Environment
for Northern Ireland



ENVIRONMENT
AND HERITAGE
SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CASHEL LOUGHS, COUNTY ARMAGH. 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 'Cashel Loughs Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Cashel Loughs is an extensive area of semi-natural vegetation in an ice-scoured rock basin. It takes in a wide range of habitats, including rocky outcrops of dry heath, acid grassland, scrub and woodland. The wetlands are of particular importance, with a range of communities including the open waters of the three loughs in addition to adjoining fen, areas of cut-over bog, wet heath and rush pasture. A large number of wetland species occur, including several rare and local plant species, and a rich community of aquatic invertebrates (insects).

The open waters hold a range of aquatic plants, including White Water-lily *Nymphaea alba* and Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and submerged beds of Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*. Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* and Floating Bur-reed *S. angustifolium* are also common. More notably, the area supports Translucent Stonewort *Nitella translucens*, which is uncommon in Northern Ireland.

The lake margins are fringed by a narrow band of emergent swamp dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with associated herbs and grasses such as Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. In places, the swamp is backed by a species-rich fen that includes such species as Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*.

Some of the area consists of old peat workings, which now form a complex mosaic of wetland communities due to the differing levels of peat cutting. Much of this is now a floating mat of

acid fen vegetation, with occasional open water pools. Floating mats are characterised by Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Common Sedge *C. nigra*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, growing over a carpet of brown mosses dominated by *Calliergon cuspidatum*. Raised areas of drier peat are dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* with Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale* locally abundant.

Wet grassland is scattered around the area, and is composed of species such as Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, Mat-grass *Nardus stricta*, Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, growing over a moss layer of *Aulacomium palustre* and *Sphagnum recurvum*.

Additional habitat diversity is provided by drier areas on rocky knolls. Lowland heathland occurs locally here, and is dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. Small areas of woodland and scrub occur. The wetland contains scattered areas of scrub dominated by Willow *Salix* spp. Drier woodland is dominated by a Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* canopy with Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Hazel *Corylus avellana*, growing over a ground flora dominated by Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and Ivy *Hedera helix*.

The area contains a number of vascular plants with a restricted distribution in the British Isles, including Marsh St. John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. Notable bryophytes (mosses) include *Calliergon cordifolium*, *C. stramineum*, *Scorpidium scorpioides*, *Sphagnum squarrosum* and *S. fimbriatum*.

The diversity of wetland habitats supports a rich invertebrate community including 30 species of aquatic Coleoptera (water beetles), 15 species of Arachnida (spiders) and 10 species of Carabidae or ground beetles. In addition to its overall diversity, the site contains a number of notable individual species, including the rove beetle *Stenus nitens*. There are also several notable water beetles, especially where the mossy fen is intact and remains wet throughout the year. *Laccornis oblongus* is one such species that is confined to undisturbed wetlands. In addition, four notable species of spider have been recorded. These are *Clubiona stagnatilis*, two wolf spiders *Pardosa agricola* and *Trochosa spinipalpis* and only the second Irish record of the money spider *Walckenaeria kochi*.

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. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
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 plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
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), eg,
 - (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.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 15 December 1998



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.