

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CASTLE ENIGAN, 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 'Castle Enigan Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Castle Enigan is an extensive inter-drumlin basin with a wide range of wetland communities. Over much of the area, these include species-rich communities developed on fairly base-rich waters (known as rich fen), but there are also stands of more acidic poor-fen characterised by *Sphagnum* bog-mosses. Ridges of higher ground provide additional habitat diversity.

To the north, the fen has developed on old cut-over bog, and some deep pools still remain. Small areas of open, clear water with a marginal cover of aquatic and emergent vegetation also occur in the north-west. In the centre of the area, the vegetation is characterised by Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, growing over a well-developed and hummocky layer of mosses (bryophytes) dominated by *Calliergon cuspidatum* and *C. cordifolium*. This community often includes species such as Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Cowbane *Cicuta virosa* and in the wetter areas, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*. In places, the vegetation is characterised by a tall and dense growth of Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Bulrush *Typha latifolia*, with abundant Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*.

Small areas of wet heath and bog remain. The vegetation is dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* growing over a deep carpet of *Sphagnum* mosses. Other species that are frequent here include Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and lichens *Cladonia* spp.

Around the edge of the wetland and on slightly higher ground, the vegetation often merges into grassland or scrub. Small pockets of woodland occur on the central ridge, with Oak *Quercus*

spp. growing over a mixed understorey that includes Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*. Rocky areas support thickets of Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, while species such as Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* occur around the edge. A mosaic of grassland types also occurs. Grazed stands are often dominated by tussocks of Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and Sharp-flowered Rush *J. acutiflorus*. Where ungrazed, the vegetation tends to become taller and ranker, with plants such as Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*. Damp acid grassland is characterised by Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and sedges such as Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* and Pale Sedge *C. pallescens*. These habitats add considerably to the extent and diversity of the area.

Castle Enigan contains a number of vascular plants with a restricted distribution in the British Isles, including Cowbane *Cicuta virosa*, Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*. Notable bryophytes include *Calliergon cordifolium*, *Sphagnum fimbriatum* and *S. squarrosum*.

Castle Enigan also provides valuable habitat for a range of wetland animals, including birds and invertebrates. Records of ground and water beetles are generally characteristic of base-poor fens and suggest that the area is in a relatively natural state. A range of beetle species typical of lowland fens has been recorded, including the ground beetle *Pterostichus minor* and the water beetles *Ilybius guttiger* and *Suphrodytes dorsalis*. *Pterostichus aterrimus* has also been found, which occurs at only four known sites in Northern Ireland; these are the only extant sites for the species in the United Kingdom. Other species present include the water beetle *Laccornis oblongus*, a relict fen species that is locally common in mossy fens in central Armagh and Down (one of the centres of its distribution in the British Isles), and *Hebrus ruficeps*, a bug found in mossy fens with few Irish records.

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, 12, 16, 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 16 February 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.