



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CLADAGH (SWANLINBAR) RIVER, COUNTY FERMANAGH. 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, 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 'Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of the physical features of the river and its associated riverine flora and fauna. Although the river has been modified over much of its length in the past, the channel structure has recovered along some stretches, due to the natural dynamics of the river and low levels of human impact in recent years. The Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River is notable for the physical diversity and naturalness of the bank and channel, and the richness and naturalness of its species composition. It is one of the most important rivers for rare aquatic species and includes an important population of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*.

The Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River rises on Cuilcagh Mountain and flows through County Cavan before crossing the border into County Fermanagh, where it widens and then enters Upper Lough Erne. The underlying geology of the catchment is Carboniferous limestone. The river runs through blanket bog before passing into predominantly pasture for the remainder of its length. The quality of the water is generally good throughout its length.

Within County Fermanagh the river has two distinct forms. The upper half is typical of fast-flowing rivers that are oligo-mesotrophic (generally rather poor in plant nutrients). Within these upper reaches of the river, vascular (higher) plants are restricted to a few species, with bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) being the main species found in the channel. The most common bryophytes are the liverworts *Chiloscyphus polyanthos* and *Marchantia polymorpha* and the mosses *Cinclidotus fontinaloides*, *Fontinalis antipyretica* and *Rhynchostegium riparioides*. The main vascular plants are Stream Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus* var. *penicillatus* in the channel, with Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* common along the margins. The flow regime in the

upper reaches is mainly glide (smooth-flowing) with the channel substrate dominated by sands and gravels. Further downstream cobbles and gravels are the main stream substrates.

As it nears Upper Lough Erne, the lower half of the river is slow-flowing, very deep and eutrophic (generally rich in nutrients). Many of the plants which occur in these lower reaches are also found in the main lough. Bryophytes are very scarce in the channel here, with vascular plants dominant. These include stands of Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, Unbranched Bur-reed *Sparganium emersum* and Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea*. Emergent species such as Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* join Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* along the river margins. Tree cover is high along the banks in the mid-reaches of the river. Trees are important features for the ecology of the river because they provide food, shelter and shading for both aquatic and terrestrial animals, in addition to contributing towards bank stability.

The river is of particular importance for its associated fauna. The Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River is one of the few rivers in Northern Ireland that still retains a significant and viable population of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*. The species occurs commonly and in high densities in the upper reaches, where coarse sands are present in the channel. Available information suggests that the river supports a good range of native fish species, including Brook Lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, in addition to the salmonids Salmon *Salmo salar* and Brown Trout *S. trutta*. Other species of interest include Otter *Lutra lutra* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, which are found along the length of the river.

SCHEDULE

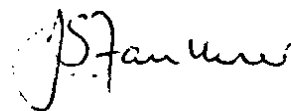
The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna and physiographical features of the area:

1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land and the river bed, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, shingle, shell, gravel and peat.
2. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including marsh, fen, 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 (rivers, streams, springs, ditches, dykes and drains) including their banks and beds, by means such as re-alignment, infilling, damming, regrading, revetment, sheet piling and narrowing;
 - (iii) alterations to the water-table and water-level, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
- 3. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
- 4. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
- 5. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals, whether terrestrial or aquatic, deployed to kill any form of wild plant or animal, except for:
 - (i) plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977;
 - (ii) the correct practice and application of approved pesticides and veterinary products to those channels and pools specifically used for fish rearing and holding.
- 6. 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, 17, 20, 21 and 22 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
- 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 (11).
- 8. The release into the area of any plant, or animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice), except for the established release into the area of Brown Trout *Salmo trutta* and Salmon *Salmo salar*. 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.
- 9. Changes in game, waterfowl, fishing or hunting practices, or fisheries management.

10. 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.
11. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
12. Any change in the annual pattern of application of manure, slurry, lime or artificial fertiliser.
13. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraphs (5) or (12), including the disposal of sheep-dip solution.
14. Burning.
15. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
16. 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, including water sports;
 - (iv) Exercising of animals.
17. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment on 6 MARCH 2000



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

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 (NI) 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 give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.