



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CORBALLY, 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 'Corbally Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Corbally consists of two inter-drumlin hollows that are linked together by a drain, forming a single hydrological unit. The area is particularly diverse, with a wide range of open water, swamp and fen plant communities. In addition, there are several rare plants and invertebrates.

Pools and drains support an open water flora that is often dominated by Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, with occasional Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris* and Shining Pondweed *Potamogeton lucens*, especially in smaller water-bodies. Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans*, which is rare in County Down, occurs in some of the deep ditches. Swamp communities are dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis* with occasional Common Club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris*.

Fen communities are influenced by factors such as water-table height, water chemistry and substrate. As a result, they are very variable and include a wide range of species. In the centre of the area, Common Reed *Phragmites australis* is dominant, but the fen supports a varied understorey of Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. Other abundant species include Brown Sedge *Carex disticha*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre*, with occasional Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Marsh Ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustre* and Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*.

The wetland to the south-east is particularly notable, with several fen communities present, including a stand of fen-meadow. This is dominated by species such as Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra*, Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and the brown moss *Calliergon cuspidatum*, with Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, scattered Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale* and Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*. This plant community is rare in Northern Ireland.

Adjoining habitats provide additional diversity to the area. To the south, a mosaic of fen and grassland occurs. The latter is dominated by Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*, with Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*. False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* occurs in drier areas. Scattered raised knolls support scrubby stands of Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.

Corbally contains a number of scarce plants including Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra*, Slender Sedge *C. lasiocarpa*, Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, Knotted Pearlwort *Sagina nodosa* and Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans*. Notable bryophytes include *Calliergon giganteum* and *Scorpidium scorpioides*.

In addition, Corbally provides valuable habitat for a range of wetland animals, including birds and invertebrates. Indeed, the area is one of the most species-rich fens in the south Down region for wetland invertebrates. This is due to the variety of habitats present, with well-developed mossy fen and deep pools with clear water. A good range of typical fen water beetles have been recorded, most notably *Cymbiodyta marginellus*, *Hydroporus scalesianus* and *Rhantus grapii*. Open water species such as *Gyrinus minutus*, *Sigara fossarum* and *Sigara semistriata* are characteristic of mesotrophic lakes and large pools and indicate that the water quality is good.

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, rotating, 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 22 December 1997



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.