



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CRAIGANTLET WOODS, 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 'Craigantlet Woods Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of the woodland flora and fauna. Craigantlet Woods consist of three small, calcicolous (base-rich) valley-woods on the southern flank of the Craigantlet Hills. Although separate, the three woods occur in close proximity. Together they represent the largest block of semi-natural woodland remaining in the north Down region. Each individual wood is rich in both plant communities and species, and several rare species occur. Associated streams and rock faces enhance the variety by providing additional microhabitats. The woods have retained a well-developed structure and a high degree of naturalness because of their inaccessibility.

The woods are composed of a mature Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* canopy with frequent Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*. The dense understorey is formed predominantly by Hazel *Corylus avellana* with Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* the most frequent associates.

The ground flora is typical of flushed, base-rich woods and is characterised by the lush growth of a rich variety of herbs and ferns with frequent, extensive carpets of Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*. Other common species include Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and the ferns Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, Scaly Male-fern *D. affinis* and Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*. The moss layer is generally rather sparse, with the most abundant species being *Thuidium tamariscinum*. *Mnium hornum*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Eurhynchium striatum*, *E. praelongum* and *Hookeria lucens* are also frequent.

Other species, notably Woodruff *Galium odoratum* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, become more dominant on slopes with more pronounced flushing. The wet valley floor tends to support a taller vegetation, with such species as Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*.

Wet rock faces are frequent along the rivers and streams. Here, the humid microclimate results in a rich growth of bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and ferns. Additional species present include Hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum*, and the bryophytes *Thamnobryum alopecurum*, *Cratoneuron commutatum*, *Plagiochila porelloides* and *Pellia* spp.

The woodland flora includes a number of rare plants such as Wood Millet *Milium effusum*, Wood Fescue *Festuca altissima* and Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*. In addition, Craigantlet Woods provide an extensive area of semi-natural habitat for woodland animals, including Badger *Meles meles* and a range of breeding birds.

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, shingle, shell, 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. 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.
4. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraph (3) above.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Burning.
8. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.

9. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
10. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
11. 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 to the structure of any watercourse;
 - (iii) lowering of the water-table, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. Changes in game, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.
15. 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 for
Northern Ireland on 25 JUNE 1997



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FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note the 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.