



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT CROSSBANE LOUGH, COUNTY ARMAGH. 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 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 'Crossbane Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. It is a large, diverse wetland, with a wide range of plant communities. There is a gradual transition from the open waters of the lough, through a range of fen communities, to heath. Scrub, acid grassland and small pools derived from past peat cutting provide additional habitat diversity. Several rare plant and invertebrate species are present.

The open waters of the lough hold a range of aquatic plants, the most abundant being Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, Alternate Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* and submerged beds of Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*. Floating Bur-reed *Sparganium angustifolium* is common in deeper waters, with Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora* in shallow areas near the edge. The swamp fringe is dominated by Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

Stands of herb-rich fen vegetation are scattered throughout the area. Around the shore of Crossbane Lough the fen is comprised of floating mats of Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, with the uncommon Bog-sedge *Carex limosa* locally frequent. In contrast, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* and Yellow-sedge *Carex flava/viridula* agg. are the dominant species on relatively firm substrates. Additional herb species including Marsh Violet *Viola palustris* and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* occur locally, growing over a moss layer dominated by *Sphagnum palustre* and *S. recurvum*.

Much of the area to the south and east of the lough is covered by heathland vegetation and cutover bog, dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, with a very wide range of associated species. Of particular interest is the transition from fen to heath, with a steady increase in the abundance of dwarf-shrubs and a corresponding decrease in the abundance and diversity of fen species. Patches of mixed fen are also scattered throughout the heathland vegetation, occupying shallow, peaty basins among rocky outcrops. Frequent species include Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, growing over large mounds of bryophytes with *Sphagnum* spp., *Aulacomnium palustre* and *Polytrichum commune*.

Apart from heath and cutover bog, Crossbane Lough contains other semi-natural habitats. Where the peats are shallow, scrub with Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus* occurs. In places, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* are abundant. Grasslands provide further diversity to the area. Acid grassland occurs on rocky outcrops with thin soil, while wet grassland with Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* is associated with deeper, water-logged soils.

In addition to some of those listed above, a number of scarce plant species occur, including Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans* and the notable bryophytes *Calliergon cordifolium*, *C. stramineum* and *Sphagnum squarrosum*.

Crossbane Lough also provides valuable habitat for a range of wetland animals, including birds and invertebrates. Several notable species have been recorded from the site, such as the water beetle *Cercyon ustulatus*, the rare carrion beetle *Aleochara curtula*, the flea beetle *Phyllotreta exclamationis* and *Velia saulii*, a water cricket found on the edges of lakes.

## 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 paragraph 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), e.g.
  - (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  
Départment of the Environment on 29 DECEMBER 1999



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**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 (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.