

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT DERRYLECKAGH, 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 delineated and described 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 'Derryleckagh area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of the flora and fauna associated with the wetland and adjacent semi-natural woodland. The area consists of a large transitional valley mire in the valley floor and a small, base-rich woodland on the eastern slopes. These habitats support a wide range of plant communities and include a number of notable species. In addition, the invertebrate community of the wetland is of national importance for its overall diversity and includes several rare species.

The base-rich woodland is one of the best examples in the region, being notable for its purity, the diversity of its structure and plant communities, and for its overall floristic diversity. The tree cover is largely dominated by Hazel Corylus avellana, with occasional Sessile Oak Quercus petraea as standards. The lush ground flora is generally composed of typical woodland species such as Bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta, Wood Sorrel Oxalis acetosella and Wood Anemone Anemone nemorosa, while the scarce parasitic Toothwort Lathraea squamaria has also been recorded. A rich saxicolous bryophyte community is found on the large number of boulders and rock faces which are scattered through the wood. In addition, the woodland supports a colony of the Silver-washed Fritillary butterfly Argynnis paphia, which is a scarce species in eastern Ireland.

The basin fen, which is in a transitional stage between fen and bog, is characterised by its broad range of surface conditions, ranging from slightly base-rich to markedly acidic. These edaphic conditions are dependent upon the influence of the ground water on the surface peat layer, which in turn can partly be related to the extent of past peat cutting over the site. The main plant community of the wet mire surface is formed by a rather open Bottle Sedge Carex rostrata and brown moss association, with such species as Bogbean Menyanthes trifoliata, Marsh Cinquefoil Potentilla palustris and the mosses Calliergon cuspidatum, C. giganteum and Scorpidium scorpioides forming the bulk of the vegetation. In places, the more base-loving Sphagnum species such as S. squarrosum and the rare S. contortum can replace the brown mosses; the latter species is particularly abundant at this site.

Other, more localised communities include Lesser Tussock-sedge C. diandra mixed sedge swards and Common Reed Phragmites australis beds around old flooded peat cuttings, with soakways through the centre characterised by Marsh St John's-wort Hypericum elodes and Many-stalked Spike-rush Eleocharis multicaulis. The peaty margins support tall herb-rich vegetation which gives way to a low, flushed sedge-rich sward on more mineral soils. Additional habitat diversity is provided by the presence of raised areas of drier, more acidic peat, which support relict bog vegetation, and a number of adjoining fields, in which species-rich dry grassland communities occur.

The diversity of wetland habitats supports a rich invertebrate community. Fifty species of aquatic Coleoptera and eleven species of aquatic water bug Heteroptera have been recorded. The area is one of the most species-rich sites for these groups in Ireland. Records for other insect groups indicate similarly rich and notable communities.

In addition to its overall diversity, the site also contains a number of notable individual species. Species typical of oligotrophic waters are common in the open water pools, including the whirligig beetles Gyrinus natator and G. minutus and the corixid Sigara scotti. Many of the most notable species are associated with the moss carpets, including the water beetles Hydroporus scalesianus, Rhanthus grapii and Chaetarthia seminulum. The rove beetle Schistoglossa aubei is also recorded from the fen; this is its only known Irish site.

Derryleckagh supports a high density of breeding wetland passerine and rail species. During the survey period, five pairs of Grasshopper Warbler Locustella naevia, over 25 pairs of Sedge Warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus, over 20 pairs of Reed Bunting Emberiza schoeniclus and three pairs of Water Rail Rallus aquaticus were found, in addition to 3 pairs of Snipe Gallinago gallinago.

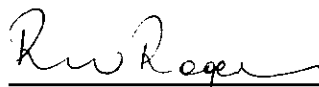
SCHEDULE

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. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
4. Any change in the annual pattern of 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
 - (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 paragraph 3 above.

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, rivers, streams and open water), eg
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification in 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 animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms 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.
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 for
Northern Ireland on 31 October, 1994



R W ROGERS
Assistant Secretary

ASI94144/CWB

M. Cunningham
CIVIL SERVANT OF
CLARENCE COURT, BELFAST.

/LMB

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities 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 above 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.