

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT DRUMCARN,  
COUNTY ARMAGH. 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 'Drumcarn Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. The wetland at Drumcarn straddles the border between Counties Armagh and Monaghan and is a large site with a wide range of habitats. These include rocky outcrops covered in heath, interspersed with blocks of old, flooded peat cuttings and fen. A range of wetland vegetation communities are present including open waters, swamp, fen and wet grassland. Extensive tracts of open water and swamp provide valuable habitat for wetland invertebrates, and several rare species of plants and animals have been recorded.

The open waters contain species such as Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* and Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*. Much of the swamp community is dominated by Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* with Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Bulrush *Typha latifolia* occurs locally.

The fen is dominated by species such as Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. More acidic fen communities are scattered throughout the area. Some are dominated by Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, while others consist of Star Sedge *Carex echinata* growing over *Sphagnum subnitens* and *S. auriculatum*. In places, the fen grades into wet heath, with scattered Heather *Calluna vulgaris* growing alongside such species as Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*.

In places, the fen gives way to wet grassland dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Soft-rush *Juncus effusus*. More species-rich areas are dominated by Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* with Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Yellow-sedge *Carex viridula*, Marsh Violet *Viola palustris* and Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*, growing over a moss layer dominated by *Sphagnum* spp. and *Polytrichum commune*.

Dry heath and scrub are also present and provide additional habitat diversity. The former is dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Scrub communities include stands of wet woodland with Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* and Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, and drier patches dominated by Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

The area contains a number of notable plants, including Floating club-rush *Eleocharis fluitans* and the mosses *Calliergon cordifolium*, *C. giganteum* and *Sphagnum squarrosum*.

Drumcarn is one of the most important wetland sites in Northern Ireland for invertebrates (insects), with rich communities across a wide variety of groups. Several rare species have been recorded. This is because of the large size and undisturbed nature of the area, together with the wide range of habitats and plant communities that are present.

The area is one of the most diverse sites in Ireland for Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies), with 14 out of the total Irish list of 22 species recorded. Drumcarn is also important for Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) with the Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth *Hemaris tityus* and a large colony of the Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia* recorded. The larvae of the latter species feed on the leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and colonies require large areas of suitable habitat, as they use different patches of the food plant each year.

Records for other insect groups indicate similarly rich and notable communities. The Coleoptera (beetles) are well represented with an assemblage of water beetles which includes five species of Gyrinidae (whirligig beetles). There are also records for a number of Carabidae or ground beetles. Notable Arachnida (spiders) include *Allomengea vidua*, *Ceratinella brevis*, *Pirata piscatorius* and *Trochosa spinipalpis*. Within the United Kingdom, three of the invertebrate species recorded from Drumcarn are restricted to Northern Ireland; the Irish Damselfly *Coenagrion lunulatum*, the whirligig beetle *Gyrinus natator* and the ground beetle *Pterostichus aterrimus*.

## 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 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), 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, 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  
Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on *30 June 1998*



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**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.