



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT DRUMLOUGH 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 'Drumlough Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Drumlough Lough is a large and diverse area, with particularly rich and varied fen communities. Additional diversity is provided by other semi-natural habitats, such as the open waters of the lough, heath, bog, grassland, scrub and woodland. The area supports a large number of wetland plants, some of which are scarce. In addition, the invertebrate community is important for its overall diversity and includes several rare species.

Drumlough Lough is situated in an irregular hollow with many rocky outcrops. Over much of the area, past peat cutting has created an uneven surface with open cuttings, flooded and low-lying ground and elevated banks and ramparts. The different habitat and vegetation types occur as part of this intricate mosaic.

The open waters of the lough support a range of aquatic plant species such as Alternate Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* and floating stands of Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*. Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora* is found in shallow waters at the edge of the lake. Swamp vegetation with Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* and Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* occurs in rocky shallows around the edge of the lake and also fringing the peat cuttings.

The fen vegetation is scattered throughout the site, with the largest area associated with old cut-over bog, where the plant communities reflect different levels of peat cutting. These communities range from open pools supporting Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, through floating rafts of Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* with Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, to higher ground with heath vegetation. Within the rich fen communities, the rare Bog-sedge *Carex limosa* is locally dominant. "Poor-fen" vegetation, associated with more acidic water, is also well represented at Drumlough Lough and is mainly associated with flooded hollows. Within these communities a range of different sedge species such as Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, White Sedge *C. curta* and Common Sedge *C. nigra* occur over a dense carpet of *Sphagnum palustre*, *S. squarrosum*, *S. recurvum* and *S. subnitens*, with frequent Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

The wide range of other semi-natural habitats provides further structural diversity and adds to the conservation interest of the area. Elevated peat banks are covered by dry heath, wet heath and regenerating bog. Frequent species include Purple Moorgrass *Molinia caerulea*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum* and Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. Acid grassland is found on rocky outcrops with thinner soils, together with Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* scrub with Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* is well represented, as is wet woodland with Birch *Betula pubescens* and Willow *Salix* spp.

In addition to some of those listed above, the area contains a number of plant species that are scarce in the British Isles, including Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans* and Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*.

The fen vegetation at Drumlougher Lough represents one of the most important wetlands in South Armagh for invertebrates. A number of species recorded from the area are notable in Northern Ireland, including the water beetles *Laccornis oblongus*, which is confined to undisturbed wetlands, the relict fen species *Hydaticus seminiger* and *Cercyon ustulatus*. The Slender Groundhopper *Tetrix subulata* is found in short, wetland vegetation and seems to benefit from the light grazing of the fen. *Agyneta decora*, a money spider, occurs amongst moss, whereas the plant bug *Dictyla convergens* is found on Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*. Both the horse fly *Chrysops sepulchralis* and *Bagous collignensis*, a weevil associated with Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, were recorded from Drumlougher Lough and are rare in Ireland. Other notable species from the area include the rare wolf spiders *Arctosa leopardus*, *Pelecopsis mengei*, *Pirata piscatorius* and *Trochosa spinipalpis* that have either very few or no recent records for Northern Ireland.

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. 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:
 - (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, 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^l 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 on 16 FEBRUARY 2000



DR J S FAULKNER
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.