

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

## DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT FINN FLOODS, COUNTY FERMANAGH. 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 its flora, fauna and physiographical features and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the "Finn Floods area of special scientific interest".

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna and river physiography. It is a natural river flood-plain and is important for the quality and diversity of the wetland vegetation, including a number of rare species. The area is also important for overwintering Whooper Swans Cygnus cygnus and for aquatic Coleoptera (Water Beetles).

The site contains an unmodified stretch of the Finn River which meanders naturally through the interdrumlin landscape. It includes an extensive marginal alluvial flood plain, a flooded peat-filled basin, and Farmhill Lough, a small interdrumlin lough to the north.

The aquatic and emergent vegetation associated with the river is natural. Other wetland plant communities have developed gradually under low-intensity grazing and hay-making, coupled with extensive seasonal flooding. The river margin and associated flooded hollows support a diverse range of swamp types, including stands of Great Fen-sedge Cladium mariscus and Lesser Pond-sedge Carex acutiformis; the latter is located around Farmhill Lough and represents one of the best examples of this vegetation type in Northern Ireland. The alluvial flood plain is covered by a mosaic of inundation grasslands and fen, depending on local wetness. Although some of the vegetation types are fairly common, they are noteworthy for the extent and continuity of their cover. The inundation grasslands are characterised by a dense sward of Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera and associated species such as Water-pepper Persicaria hydropiper, Floating Sweet-grass Glyceria fluitans and Marsh Foxtail Alopecurus geniculatus. The fen is comprised of two distinct community types, one being characterised by a cover of tall sedges including Bladder-sedge Carex vesicaria, Bottle Sedge C. rostrata and Brown Sedge C. disticha, and a wide range of associates, among which are Water Horsetail Equisetum fluviatile, Common Marsh-bedstraw Galium palustre, Bogbean Menyanthes trifoliata and Water Mint Mentha aquatica. The other is characterised by a tall, dense sward of Reed Canary-grass Phalaris arundinacea, and is less species-rich.

Several vascular plants which are rare in Northern Ireland or the British Isles occur here; these include Whorled Water-milfoil Myriophyllum verticillatum, Buckthorn Rhamnus cathartica, Marsh Fern Thelypteris palustris, Cowbane Cicuta virosa, Marsh Stitchwort Stellaria palustris, Flowering-rush Butomus umbellatus and Greater Waterparsnip Sium latifolium.

The area is important as part of the network of sites used by Whooper Swans Cygnus cygnus which overwinter in the Upper Lough Erne basin in internationally important numbers. It regularly supports 10% of this population. Other waterfowl also use the site: for example, 13% of the wigeon Anas penelope which winter on Upper Lough Erne were recorded there between 1992/93 and 1994/95.

In addition, the site contains a rich assemblage of aquatic Coleoptera (Water Beetles). Several rare species associated with moss carpets have been recorded here, including the relict species Hydroporus glabriusculus and H. scalesianus. The former occurs at its only known Northern Ireland site.


#### SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna and physiographical interest 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 (4) or (5).
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 (3).
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 to 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 29 FEBRUARY 1996



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## 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 (NI) 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.