



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT GLENARM WOODS, COUNTY ANTRIM. 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, 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 'Glenarm Woods Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its woodland flora and fauna, in addition to the physical features of the river and its associated riverine flora and fauna. Glenarm Woods consists of several distinct woodland blocks that are connected along the Glenarm River valley and two of its main tributaries - the Linford Water to the south-east and the Owencloghy Water to the south-west.

For most of their length, these rivers descend as torrents through well-defined rocky glens. Sections of the Glenarm River and the Linford Water are of particular interest, representing very good examples of fast-flowing, oligo-mesotrophic (low in plant nutrients) rivers. The plant communities are dominated by bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) such as *Cinclidotus fontinaloides*, *Fontinalis antipyretica* and *Hygrohypnum luridum*. These rivers have a natural and complex flow sequence reflecting their physical structure, with a mixture of runs, riffles, glides and pools along some sections, and more dynamic but localised rapids, cascades and waterfalls in others. The channel substrate is composed mainly of boulders and bedrock. In its lower reaches, the Glenarm River flows more slowly within a meandering channel.

Glenarm Woods represents the largest stand of semi-natural woodland remaining in County Antrim. Soil types are very diverse, ranging from leached and strongly acidic, to flushed and base-rich. This variability in environmental conditions influences the composition of the woodland and is reflected in the large number of woodland plant communities present. As a result, the area is one of the richest for woodland plants in Northern Ireland, and includes a large number of rare species.

Environmental influences and woodland management have produced a very variable composition and structure. The character of the woodland ranges from old, mature stands with a tall, well-developed structure, to a low cover of scrub species derived from past coppicing. The canopy is generally dominated by Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* and Oak *Quercus* spp. with Alder *Alnus glutinosa* characteristic of the wettest parts. Other tree species including the non-natives Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* also occur locally.

The shrub layer is dominated by Hazel *Corylus avellana*, which frequently forms a dense, low canopy where mature trees are absent. Other shrub species include Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and in wetter conditions, Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* and Willow *Salix* spp. Where it is present, the field layer consists of a mixture of ferns, thickets of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and in acidic conditions, the dwarf-shrub Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*. The herb layer is typically dominated by Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Ramsons *Allium ursinum*, either in single stands or in combination, with Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* one of the most frequent associates. Other species are locally significant, with Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* prominent in drier locations and Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* characteristic of wet areas.

In addition to the overall species diversity, the area supports one of the richest assemblages of rare woodland plant species in Northern Ireland. Rarities include Bird Cherry *Prunus padus*, Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum*, Intermediate Wintergreen *Pyrola media*, Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, Wood Fescue *Festuca altissima*, Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus*, Shady Horsetail *Equisetum pratense* and Rough Horsetail *Equisetum hyemale*.

Glenarm Woods also supports a diverse community of lower plants, particularly Fungi. Notable species include the Ascomycete *Encoelia furfuracea*, the Bracket Fungus *Inonotus dryadeus* and the Ink Cap *Coprinus cortinatus*.

Some of the adjacent slopes, primarily in the upper end of the Glenarm Valley, are covered by base-rich flushed grassland. This is characterised by a tall sward of Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, Common Sedge *Carex nigra*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Associated herbs include such species as Marsh Hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. *Calliargon cuspidatum* dominates the dense moss carpet beneath the sward.

In addition to its botanical interest, the area provides an important habitat for animals. Bat species recorded include Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*, Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii* and Brown long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*. Breeding birds regularly include the rare Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, in addition to a rich mixture of other passerines and raptors. The invertebrate interest includes the Silver-washed Fritillary butterfly *Argynnis paphia*, which is scarce in eastern counties of Northern Ireland, and two notable Coleoptera species, the Beet Carrion Beetle *Aclypea opaca* and the Rove Beetle *Gnypeta caerulea*.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna and physiographical features 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, shingle, shell, 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 increase 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) and (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), e.g.
 - (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 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.
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 18 March 1999.



R W ROGERS
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.