DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT GLENBALLYEMON RIVER, COUNTY ANTRIM. 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, 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 'Glenballyemon River area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of the physical features of the river and its associated riverine flora and fauna.

The Glenballyemon River is a short sinuous river, which rises on the Antrim Plateau near Glenariff Forest Park. It has a relatively small but steep catchment most of which is unforested mountainside.

Fast flowing, this spate river is characterised by sequences of riffles, runs and pools where its gradient is shallow and the river beds are composed of cobbles, with scattered boulders and sandy margins. Where the gradient is steep and the bed is composed of bedrock and boulder the flow is more dramatic with rapids, cascades and waterfalls. Towards its headwater on the plateau the river is fast flowing and dynamic with rapids, riffles and several small waterfalls. The channel substrate is composed of bedrock and liverwort species such as Water Earwort *Scapania undulata* and Compressed Flapwort *Nardia compressa* are the dominant aquatic species. The river descends precipitously off the plateau through a series of three very large falls along a steep bedrock gorge. The channel substrate has a mixed geology of basalt and limestone, which has allowed calcareous caverns and caves to be formed at the bottom of falls. Channel macrophytes are restricted to bryophytes, particularly Long-beaked Water Feather-moss Rhynchostegium riparioides. The banks are extremely high, steep and wooded with species such as Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Willow *Salix* spp., Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Downy Birch *Betula pubescens*.

Further downstream the gradient decreases and the predominant land use is semi-improved pasture. In this mid-reach section of the river the channel meanders and the banks are extensively wooded. The channel substrate is composed of basalt and limestone cobble, boulder and bedrock. The flow regime is dynamic and characterised by rapids, falls and deep pools. The river drops in a series of falls and cuts through steep areas of gorge. Bryophyte cover is often limited due to the size and instability of the channel substrate. Calcareous rocks tend to be dominated by the crustosa red alga *Hildenbrandia rivularis* and the blue-green alga *Lyngbya*. The banks and wet margins are vegetated by the liverworts Great Scented Liverwort

Conocephalum conicum, Overleaf Pellia *Pellia epiphylla* and the mosses Fox-tail Feather-moss *Thamnobryum alopecurum* and Rusty Feather-moss *Brachythecium plumosum*. Sandy marginal deposits and cobble side and point bars are common channel features.

The Glenaan River joins the Glenballyemon River upstream of Cushendall to form the Dall. The channel substrate is composed of bedrock and scattered boulders with marginal deposits of sand. The flow morphology is characterised by sequences of riffle and run although there are occasional deep pools. The banks are steep and tree lined and exposed tree roots are common along the margins of the channel. Towards the lower reaches of the river, the channel is dominated by cobble and the flow morphology is composed of long riffles and run.

The river is of importance for its associated fauna. Otter *Lutra lutra* are present while characteristic species of riverine birds such, as the Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* are common. The river habitat is suitable for the spawning activity of Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar*, Brown Trout and Sea Trout *Salmo trutta*. Other species inhabiting the system include the Minnow *Phoxinus phoxinus*, Eels *Anguilla anguilla* and the Three-spined Stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. These species frequent deeper pools and slower flowing regions.

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 and the river bed, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, rock, gravel and peat.

2. 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 of the structure of any watercourse (rivers, streams, springs, ditches, dykes and drains) including their banks and beds, by means such as re-alignment, infilling, damming, regrading, revetment, sheet piling and narrowing;

   (iii) Alterations to the water-table and water-level, permanently or temporarily;

   (iv) Change in the management of bank-side vegetation.

3. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.

4. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.

5. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals, whether terrestrial or aquatic, deployed to kill any form of wild plant or animal, except for plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.

6. The disturbance, 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.

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.

8. The release into the area of any plant or animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice), except for the established practice of releasing Brown Trout *Salmo trutta* and Salmon *Salmo salar* that are native to the area. 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

9. Changes in game, waterfowl or other hunting practices, as well as changes in fishing practices or changes in fisheries management.

10. 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.

11. Any change in the annual pattern of application of manure, slurry, lime or artificial fertiliser.

12. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraphs (5) or (11), including the disposal of sheep-dip solution.

13. Burning.

14. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.

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, including water sports;

(iv) Exercising of animals.

16. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

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.

(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.

GLENBALLYEMON RIVER

Views About Management
The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2)

A statement of the Department's views about the management of the Glenballyemon River Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")

This statement represents the views of the Department about the management of the ASSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the area's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. The Department has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the ASSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the ASSI and there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. It is also very important to recognise that management may need to change with time.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation or activity. The written consent of the Department is still required before carrying out any operation or activity likely to damage the features of special interest (see the Schedule on pages 2-4 for a list of these operations and activities). The Department welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the ASSI to ensure that the management of this area maintains and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

1. The River

The Department would encourage the maintenance of varying flow rates and natural erosion and sedimentation processes by appropriate management of channels and banks. Such management should include avoiding excavation of gravel shoals and bars, minimising in-river and bankside defence works, limiting abstraction during low flow years and avoiding dredging in the channel.

2. Pollution

The Department would encourage a continuing reduction of pollution from industrial or agricultural sources, such as mineral workings and run-off of silt and nutrients from agricultural land. To this end the department will, in partnership with other statutory bodies, strive to improve water quality at both a local and catchment wide scale through the implementation of national and international legislation.

3. Bankside Habitats

The ASSI supports rich and varied river and bankside wildlife habitats. The Department would encourage the conservation and enhancement of the variety of vegetation by careful bank use and maintenance. Marginal woodland is particularly important because it helps to stabilise the riverbank and regulate the local climate, while submerged roots create a refuge for fish. Many of the insects and other invertebrates associated with the woodland provide food for fish.

4. Animals

The ASSI provides a habitat for a wide variety of mammal, bird, fish and invertebrate species. The Department would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of these species and their habitats.

5. Fishing

The Department recognises the important economic and social roles of fishing and welcomes sustainable fishery management that is sensitive to the special interests of the ASSI.

6. Grazing

Low intensity grazing on riverside grasslands and stock feeding away from the banks has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the feature of interest. The Department would encourage the extension of this practice.

7. Water Abstraction

The Department appreciates that water is an important natural renewable resource to be used in a sustainable manner that is sensitive to the special interest of the ASSI.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment
Here unto affixed is authenticated
By

G. R. Seymour.

G R Seymour
Senior Officer of the
Department of the Environment

Dated the 25th of March 2009