



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

### DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT GROUND BRIDGE, 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 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 'Ground Bridge Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The Ground Bridge on the Roogagh River at Tullybelcoo is a short active river cave. The passage is approximately 45m long and the Roogagh River flows through an outcrop of the Carboniferous Dartry Limestone. The sink is very close to the contact between the Dartry Limestone and the impermeable Quarry Sandstone Member. The roof of the cave is developed on a bedding plane within the limestone.

The Ground Bridge is the result of the river finding a course through bedding fractures in a small limestone outcrop. It is an example of a karst landform not seen elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

A small area of scrub composed mainly of hazel Corylus avellana holds a large and active sett used by Badger Meles meles.

The downstream cave entrance supports the largest population of the Common Cave Spider Meta menardi found in a recent assessment of karst localities in Northern Ireland. This species is regarded as relatively rare in the caves of Fermanagh.

### 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 reclamation and extraction of minerals, including rock, sand, gravel and peat.
2. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material.

3. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
4. 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.
5. Burning.
6. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
7. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
8. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or stones and grading of rock faces.
9. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including 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) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
10. 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.
11. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage the interest of the area:-
  - (i) educational activities;
  - (ii) research activities;
  - (iii) recreational activities.
12. Sampling of rocks, minerals, fossils or any other material forming a part of the site, undertaken in a manner likely to damage the scientific interest.
13. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage the interest of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the  
Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on 13 November 1996



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**ROBERT C MARTIN**

Chief Executive

*R. Lynchauer Civil Servant  
in Clarence Court Belfast*

#### FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that the 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 (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 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 normally give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.