

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT HERON  
AND CARRIGULLIAN LOUGHS, COUNTY DOWN. 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 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 'Heron and Carrigullian Loughs Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

Heron and Carrigullian Loughs are of special scientific interest because of their wetland flora and fauna. The area includes the open waters of the loughs in addition to adjoining fen, scrub, woodland and unimproved grassland, and represents an extensive area of semi-natural habitat. In addition, there are several rare and local plant species, and a very rich community of aquatic insects (invertebrates).

The open waters hold a range of aquatic plants, including Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis* and submerged beds of Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans* and Small Pondweed *Potamogeton berchtoldii*. Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and Duckweeds *Lemna* spp. are also common, often with an abundance of the aquatic moss *Fontinalis antipyretica*. Notably, the rare Rigid Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum* also occurs.

The lake margins consist of a narrow fringe of emergent swamp. This is dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with associated herbs and grasses such as Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. The swamp is often backed by species-rich fen in which Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra* is prominent. Associated species include Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*. Other, more localised communities are characterised by floating mats of Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Common Sedge *C. nigra*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, growing over a carpet of brown mosses dominated by *Calliergon cuspidatum*.

Wet woodland, dominated by Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, is widespread. Ground cover is variable, ranging from stands of Common Reed *Phragmites australis* with mats of *Calliergon cuspidatum*, to more species-rich areas. The latter typically include Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, with Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* and Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* in wetter sections.

Additional habitat diversity is provided by areas of unimproved neutral grassland on raised mineral soils. Drier soils are typically dominated by Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. More diverse areas also contain species such as Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, with a high cover of sedges including Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca* and Carnation Sedge *C. panicea*. Wetter sections support a grass and rush dominated community with Soft-rush *Juncus effusus*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*. Acid grassland, dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, also occurs in places.

Drier stands of woodland are dominated by Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium* occur in the shrub layer, with Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and ferns in the field layer. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* and Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*. Where the soils are more acidic Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* is the dominant canopy tree, with Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* in the ground flora.

The area contains a number of rare plants, including Rigid Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*, Cyperus Sedge *Carex pseudocyperus*, Lesser Tussock-sedge *C. diandra*, Bladder-sedge *C. vesicaria*, Greater Spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*, Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus* and Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans*. Notable mosses include *Calliergon cordifolium*.

Heron and Carrigullian Loughs also provide valuable habitat for a range of wetland animals. Fifty-four species of aquatic Coleoptera (Water Beetles) have been recorded, making it the second richest site in Northern Ireland for this group. Several notable species occur. These include *Cymbiodyta marginella*, *Hydroporus scalesianus*, *Hydaticus seminiger* and *Rhantus grapii*, which are characteristic of mossy carpets in the fen. The open waters are also important, with records for *Acilius canaliculatus*, *Rhantus frontalis* and *Gyrinus natator*.

## 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 paragraphs 4 or 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), eg,
  - (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, 12, 16, 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.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the  
Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on 20 March 1998

*R. Hynckleaux.*  
*Civil Servant in*  
*Clarence House Belfast.*

  

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**ROBERT C MARTIN**  
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.