

## HORSE ISLAND

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

#### **A statement of Environment and Heritage Service's views about the management of Cruninish Island Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")**

This statement represents the views of Environment and Heritage Service 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. Environment and Heritage Service 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 Environment and Heritage Service is still required before carrying out any operation or activity likely to damage the features of special interest (see the schedule on pages 1 and 2 of the attached Document B for a list of these operations and activities). Environment and Heritage Service 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**

Areas with important concentrations of breeding waders have become scarce in Northern Ireland. Environment and Heritage Service would seek to ensure appropriate management of the area for breeding waders, taking into account vegetation structure, grazing levels, soil moisture and predators.

Species-rich grasslands are an important habitat for breeding waders and other wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals.

Many of the more sensitive species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, grassland generally needs some management to retain its interest. Although occasional small patches of scrub can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, in the absence of management, coarse grasses can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.



Grazing by cattle is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain open areas and a diverse sward structure. In the absence of grazing, cutting of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Specific objectives include:

Low intensity grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation of this practice.

Prevent the loss of more sensitive grassland species through the control of scrub, bracken and rushes. In general, this can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases, other methods of control such as cutting may be required. Limited rush cover can help provide good habitat for breeding waders. However, heavy infestations can mean shorter areas, useful for feeding, are lost. Thus management is recommended if rush infestations cover more than one third of the area of the field.

Sward height is important in determining which species of wader will make use of the area with longer vegetation attracting snipe and short being suitable for lapwing. Use of fertiliser should be discouraged as this can increase early season grass growth thus reducing the suitability of the site for waders e.g. lapwing which prefer shorter swards. Such use also means livestock could move onto the land early at high stocking rates which would increase the risk of trampling of nests.

Ensure that disturbance to the site and its wildlife is minimised.

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grassland from drying out.

Discourage non-native species, especially those that tend to spread at the expense of native wildlife.

The breeding productivity of ground nesting waders can be reduced by the presence of tall hedges or mature trees in the immediate vicinity of the nest site as they provide lookouts and nest sites for predators e.g. Hooded Crow. Limited scrub and tree management may be required as appropriate.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the grassland, through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife.



**E Diane Stevenson**  
Authorised Officer

Dated the 11<sup>th</sup> of DECEMBER 2007