

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT LOUGH BEG, COUNTIES LONDONDERRY AND 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 Committee for Nature Conservation and being satisfied that the area delineated by the solid black line 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 "Lough Beg area of special scientific interest".

The area is of special scientific interest because of the diversity of habitats and wildlife that it supports. Lough Beg lies on the River Bann at its exit from Lough Neagh. Apart from a navigable deep-water channel, it is very shallow, generally less than 1½ metres deep. As a result, one of the most significant features of the Lough is the profuse development of submerged aquatic vegetation over such a large area. Species include a number of Pondweeds (Potamogeton spp., Elodea canadensis) and Water Milfoil (Myriophyllum spicatum).

Swamp vegetation is represented on the east shore, with stands of Horsetail (Equisetum fluviatile) and Spike-Rush (Eleocharis palustris) forming a discontinuous but extensive belt in shallow water. At its landward edge, the swamp gives way to carr woodland of Alder (Alnus glutinosa) and Willows (Salix spp.) with occasional fen.

The western shores contain some of the most extensive areas of unimproved wet meadows in Northern Ireland. Vegetation varies from a rather species-poor sward co-dominated by Creeping Bent (Agrostis stolonifera) and Soft Rush (Juncus effusus) to much more species-rich communities, with abundant herbs and Sedges (Carex spp.).

A large number of rare or local vascular plant species occur, including Northern Small Reed (Calamagrostis stricta), Water-wort (Elatine hydropiper), Pennyroyal (Mentha pulegium), Irish Lady's Tresses Orchid (Spiranthes romanzoffiana), Awlwort (Subularia aquatica) and Slender-leaved Pondweed (Potamogeton filiformis).

Lough Beg contains internationally important concentrations of wintering wildfowl, with numbers of Pochard (Aythya ferina), Teal (Anas crecca), Shoveler (Anas clypeata) and Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) being of particular significance. It is also a passage site for large numbers of migrant waders - eg Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) and Ruff (Philomachus pugnax).

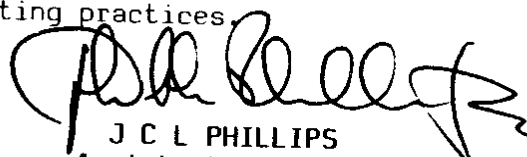
In summer, the grassland on the western shore supports some of the largest populations of breeding Snipe (Gallinago gallinago), Redshank (Tringa totanus) and Curlew (Numenius arquata) in Northern Ireland.

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora and/or fauna of the area:-

- Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing or reseeded.
- Changes in the grazing regime, including changes in type of livestock or significant increase or decrease in livestock population, or changes in the seasonal pattern of grazing or cessation of grazing.
- Changes in livestock feeding practice.
- Changes in the mowing or cutting regime, including changes from hay making to silage cutting, or cessation of mowing.
- Application of manure, slurry, fertilisers or lime.

- Application of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill, selectively or non-selectively, any form of animal, plant or other living organism.
- Dumping, spreading or discharge of any matter.
- Burning.
- The release into the area of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant, or seed. "Animal" includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate but does not include livestock.
- The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant parts, other than: mowing for normal agricultural purposes, selective removal of noxious weeds (as defined in The Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977), hedge maintenance.
- Changes in tree or woodland management (including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning or coppicing).
- Drainage, including peat drainage or the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains.
- Modification of the structure of water courses (for example, rivers, burns, ditches or drains), including their banks and beds, such as by realignment, regrading or dredging.
- Management of aquatic or bank vegetation.
- The alteration of water levels or water tables or utilisation of water (including storage or abstraction).
- Infilling of ditches, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or pits.
- Changes in freshwater fishery production or management (including sporting fishing, angling or the use of traps or fish cages).
- Reclamation of land from marsh, lake or river.
- Extraction of minerals including peat, shingle, sand, gravel, topsoil or sub-soil.
- Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, hard-standings, banks, ditches or other earthworks or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines or cables, above or below ground.
- Storage of materials.
- Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of building, engineering or other operations, including drilling, or the formation of access roads.
- Alteration or modification of natural or man-made features, clearance of boulders, large stones or loose rock.
- Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife.
- Recreational, educational or research activities likely to damage the wildlife.
- Changes in game or waterfowl management or hunting practices.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
 Department of the Environment for
 Northern Ireland on 20 August, 1987


 J C L PHILLIPS
 Assistant Secretary
 Jennifer Douglas