

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
 DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT LOUGHKEELAN, 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 delineated by the solid black line on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the wetland vegetation and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the "Loughkeelan Area of Special Scientific Interest".

The area is of special scientific interest because of the richness of its wetland vegetation: it contains a range of rich plant communities and a number of rare species.

The site consists of a small eutrophic lough, surrounded by an extensive swamp of Common Reed Phragmites australis, with a narrow fringe of calcicolous fen.

The high calcium levels in the water support a rich aquatic plant community which is characterised by extensive growth of Stonewort Chara spp. The presence of abundant Soft Hornwort Ceratophyllum submersum and smaller quantities of Fan-leaved Water Crowfoot Ranunculus circinatus is of particular interest, with the former species occurring here in one of only 3 recorded sites in Ireland.

The calcicolous fen is of especial note, as there are few examples of this vegetation type in Northern Ireland; it being more typical of the limestone areas of central Ireland.

The principal fen community is formed by Lesser Tussock Sedge Carex diandra growing in association with the moss Calliergon giganteum; around the southeast corner of the site there are pockets of a distinctive association in which Black Bog-rush Schoenus nigricans and Blunt-flowered Rush Juncus subnodulosus are prominent. A number of scarce plant species occur in the fen, eg Fen Pondweed Potamogeton coloratus, Marsh Stitchwort Stellaria palustris and Slender Sedge Carex lasiocarpa.

Further habitat variety is provided by areas of semi-natural mesotrophic and calcicolous grasslands. The species rich grasslands form a fragmented band along the margin of the fen within the site.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the wetland vegetation of the area:-

1. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity of grazing, including any change in the type of livestock grazed.
2. Any change in livestock feeding practices.
3. Any change in the annual pattern of application of manure.
4. The application of slurry or artificial fertiliser.

5. The application of any chemicals for control of weeds, insects or diseases.
6. Any change in the established method and frequency of mowing.
7. Any hedge or scrub removal and infilling of ditches, pools or marshes.
8. Field drainage or field boundary drainage.
9. Any tree planting.
10. The dumping or storing of any matter.
11. Cultivation.
12. Complete or partial reseedling.
13. Construction of roads, tracks or buildings.
14. Use of vehicles or machinery likely to damage the vegetation.
15. Changes in game, fish or waterfowl management.

Sealed with the Official
Seal of the Department of the Environment
for Northern Ireland on 18 November, 1991

Rw Rogers
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Phyllis Robinson
Civil Servant,
BOK of Stormont,
Belfast

Y91272/CWB