



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT MULLYNASKEAGH, COUNTY FERMANAGH. ARTICLE 28 OF THE ENVIRONMENT (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2002.

The Department of the Environment (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 geological 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 'Mullynaskeagh Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

A disused clay pit at Mullynaskeagh exposes the thickest development of the Sheena Shale Member of the Lower Carboniferous Leitrim Group (some 330 million years old). Its rich and diverse fossil assemblage, particularly of goniatites, is unmatched by any other site of similar age in Northern Ireland.

Exposure of the Doagh series, of which Mullynaskeagh forms a part, is generally poor on account of the prevalence, in this part of the succession, of easily weathered mudstones, the presence of a variable thickness of glacial drift, and the widespread planting of conifers over a substantial area of the outlier. Mullynaskeagh represents an important and easily accessible exposure of part of this rock series.

The Mullynaskeagh clay pit exposes one of the clearest sections through any part of the Leitrim Group in this area. About 18.3 metres of shales are exposed in the quarry, dipping gently to the south, assigned to the Sheena Shale Member. The shales in the quarry are rather weathered but typically are grey to dark blue-grey in colour.

The site has yielded a diverse fossil fauna. The goniatites together with gastropods and the bivalves *Nucula* and *Nuculopsis* occur in some abundance while corals and brachiopods occur patchily.

The Sheena Shale is presumed to have been deposited on top of a drowned delta represented by the underlying Glenade Sandstone. The composition of the fauna at Mullynaskeagh indicates a sea floor within a sheltered basin, oxygen poor conditions and a water depth probably greater than 100 metres. The limited occurrence of small corals and brachiopods at this site lends further support to this setting. It suggests that only occasionally did the sea floor become sufficiently well-oxygenated for groups such as

corals and brachiopods to become established. Preservation of the mineral aragonite from which the shells are comprised together with the internal moulds of the goniatites also indicates a poorly oxygenated benthic environment. That even the smallest specimens are preserved in exquisite detail, indicates negligible post-mortem transport, further supporting the idea of these rocks forming in a sheltered basin setting.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the geological 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, clay and peat.
2. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material.
3. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
4. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or stones and grading of rock faces.
5. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage the interest of the area:
 - i) educational activities;
 - ii) research activities
 - iii) recreational activities.
6. 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.
7. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage the geological features of the area.

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.
- (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.