



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT PEATLANDS PARK, COUNTY ARMAGH. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

The Department of the Environment (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, fauna and physiographical 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 "Peatlands Park Area of Special Scientific Interest".

The area is of special scientific interest because of its woodland, peatland and wetland flora and fauna. Peatlands Park consists of a number of low, wooded drumlins, interspersed with a series of broad, flat plains covered by acid fen and peatland, and the open waters of Derryadd Lough. The drumlins are composed of glacial drift overlying Lough Neagh Clays. The peatland consists of an extensive lowland raised bog. Although most of this has been cut over, relict areas of intact bog with deep peat still occur. This range of habitats supports a rich flora and fauna, including a number of rare species.

The area represents one of the largest blocks of semi-natural woodland in Northern Ireland. Most of the woods on the mineral soils of the drumlins are of comparatively recent origins, with the land having been farmed at intervals during the 18th and 19th centuries. Only Annagarriff Wood has been continuously covered by trees, although it was managed for timber production in the past. The drumlin woodlands are mildly acidic in type, with a canopy dominated by Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* and occasional Oak *Quercus* spp. The understorey consists of Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, with occasional Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Hazel *Corylus avellana*. In the less mature woodland, the field layer is dominated by dense Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, with occasional ferns. These occur over an extensive bryophyte mat, dominated by *Thuidium tamariscinum* and *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*, with only a few, scattered higher plants. The mature woodland at Annagarriff Wood has a more diverse field and ground cover. Again, thickets of Bramble *R. fruticosus* agg. occur, but there are also carpets of Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, interspersed with a variety of herbs and bryophytes.

Wet, acid woodlands add to the diversity of the area. They are comparatively young in age, having spread out from the margins of the drumlins to cover Annagarriff Lake and other inter-drumlin hollows. Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* is dominant, with Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* one of the main associates. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. is again locally abundant in the ground cover. However, most of the woodland floor is soft and spongy, with occasional quaking areas, dominated by acid fen communities. These are composed of a thick bryophyte carpet of *Polytrichum* spp., *Pseudoscleropodium purum* and a variety of *Sphagnum* species, through which grow a scattering of grasses, sedges and herbs.

In the early 20th century, the peatland was extensively drained and cut for turf, resulting in a mosaic of peat cuttings and remnant intact bog. The largest expanse of intact surface occurs at Mullenakill at the western margin of the area. The bog here is actively growing and is covered by typical raised bog vegetation, dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* with Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale* locally frequent, growing through a mixed *Sphagnum* moss carpet. Other species include Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Hare's-tail Cottongrass *E. vaginatum* and occasional Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus*. These stands are frequently interspersed with lawns of White Beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba* and Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, the former being quite extensive in places. Along the edge of the intact bog where the peat surface has dried, the vegetation becomes ranker and less diverse, with a sward of tall, leggy Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*.

The cutover bog displays considerable variability, with the vegetation reflecting the degree of wetness. Deep, flooded cuttings support extensive beds of the aquatic moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*. Where the water table is at, or close to the surface, the vegetation is similar to that of the intact bog and has an actively growing carpet of *Sphagnum* bog-mosses. As the peat surface gradually dries out with elevation above the present water table, the vegetation becomes progressively impoverished, rank and dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Current management has raised the water table in some of these drier cutover areas, with the aim of re-establishing an actively growing bog surface.

Derryadd Lake lies in a depression to the south-east of the area. The waters are eutrophic (i.e. enriched by nutrients), and the aquatic vegetation is characterised by Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and Canadian Pondweed *Elodea canadensis*. The outer swamp margin is dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with an inner band of Bulrush *Typha latifolia*. Behind this, there are localised stands of more diverse tall-herb fen. This community gradually becomes more acidic in character along the western margin, where there is an adjacent area of cut-over bog with a peaty substrate. To the north and east where the lake is bounded by drumlin slopes, the tall-herb fen merges into an area of mesotrophic marshy grassland. In places, the swamp extends back into carr woodland dominated by Alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

The wide range of habitats at Peatlands Park supports a rich variety of rare and notable plants and animals. Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* is occasional within the old

cuttings, Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus* occurs locally in the wet woodland, Oblong-leaved Sundew *Drosera intermedia* is present in parts of the intact bog, and Cowbane *Cicuta virosa* is common in the tall-herb fen around Derryadd Lake. Marsh Clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata* occurs here at its only known location in Northern Ireland. Notable invertebrates present include the Wood Ant *Formica aquilonia*, and the Large Heath *Coenonympha tullia*, Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia* and Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* Butterflies.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna and physiological features of the area:

1. Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating or re-seeding.
2. Introduction of grazing.
3. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
4. Application of manure, slurry, fertiliser or lime.
5. Application of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill, selectively or non-selectively, any form of animal, plant or other living organism.
6. Dumping, spreading or discharge of any matter.
7. Burning.
8. 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 excludes livestock and animals used in controlling livestock.
9. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, or the disturbance, killing or removal of any wild animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
10. The introduction of tree or woodland management, including afforestation or planting.

11. Drainage, including peat drainage or the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains.
12. Modification of the structure of water courses, including their banks and beds as by realignment, regrading or dredging.
13. Management of aquatic and bank vegetation.
14. The alteration of water levels or water tables or the utilisation of water including storage or extraction, but excluding water used for domestic requirements.
15. Infilling of ditches, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or lakes.
16. Reclamation of land from bog, marsh, river or lake.
17. Extraction of minerals including peat, sand, gravel, topsoil or subsoil.
18. Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hard-standings, banks, ditches and other earth works or the laying or removal of pipelines or cables, above or below ground.
19. Storage of materials.
20. Use of craft or vehicles likely to damage the vegetation.
21. Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of building, engineering or other operations, including drilling.
22. Recreational, educational or research activities likely to damage the vegetation.
23. Changes in game management.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment on 28 SEPTEMBER 2000



DR J S FAULKNER
Senior Officer of the Department
of the Environment

FOOTNOTES

(a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities 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 above 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.

