

# PEATLANDS PARK

## 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 Peatlands Park 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 3 and 4 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

#### Woodland

Peatlands Park incorporates both Oakwood and Wet Woodland which are important habitats for wildlife. They provide food and shelter for a wide variety of mammals, birds and invertebrates.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the woodland through the development of its structure and the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. The latter includes important invertebrate communities.

Specific objectives include:

Encourage the woodland to become more "mature" by avoiding disturbance.  
The structure of the wood will gradually become more diverse, with



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well-developed canopy, shrub and ground layers, and an abundance of species like Ivy, mosses, liverworts and lichens that live on the trees themselves.

Encourage the retention of dead wood both on the woodland floor and still standing in the canopy. Dead wood is a very important habitat for some of the less conspicuous woodland species such as fungi and invertebrates.

Encourage regeneration of woodland and discourage damage to trees and shrubs through the control of grazing. In general, natural regeneration is preferable to planting.

### **Lowland Raised Bog**

Lowland raised bog is a unique habitat for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the bog through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. The former includes plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and the latter includes important invertebrate communities.

Bogs depend on rainwater and maintaining a high water table is vital to the "health" of the bog. In addition, the peat soils and many of the species that grow there are very sensitive to physical disturbance.

Specific objectives include:

Where appropriate, prevent the loss of light-demanding peatland species through the control of scrub and trees.

### **Fen**

Fens are an important habitat for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the fen through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. The latter includes important invertebrate communities.

Fen vegetation requires water levels to be at, or just below, the surface all year round. In addition, increases in the nutrient status of the water and underlying peat soils can lead to the dominance of species, such as Bulrush, at the expense of other valuable plant communities.

Fen communities are susceptible to successional change and generally need some management to retain their 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 such as Common Reed can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant. Over a period of time these species may shade out valuable plant communities and cause the fen to dry out.

Low intensity summer grazing by cattle (or ponies) that are more adaptable to wet conditions is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain species-rich fen vegetation and a diverse sward

structure. In the absence of grazing, cutting and removal of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Specific objectives include:

Where feasible, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the grazing of fen although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. Where grazing is not possible, other management practices, such as cutting, may be used.

In general, the control of scrub within fen communities can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases, additional scrub control may be required.

**Management principles applicable to all habitats throughout the site**

Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the wet woodland, bog and fen from drying out.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and artificial enrichment.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the woodland, bog and fen, such as open water, swamp and scrub, through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife, especially invertebrates.

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

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



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Authorised Officer

Dated the 23<sup>RD</sup> OF JANUARY 2008