

# PETTIGOE PLATEAU

## 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 Pettigoe Plateau 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 1-3 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

### Blanket Bog

Blanket 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 latter include important breeding bird and 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:

Ensure that the blanket bog is not burnt in order to prevent the loss of more specialised plants and animals and to avoid damage to peat soils which could lead to erosion.



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Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the bog from drying out.

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

Where the surface is not too wet blanket bogs can sustain very light levels of grazing by sheep. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage a regime that avoids overgrazing or poaching.

Where the habitat has been subjected to heavy grazing, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage a reduction in stocking density to allow the bog to recover.

### **Wet and Dry Heath**

Wet and dry heaths are also important habitats for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the heath through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals.

Most heathland communities need some management to retain their interest. Small patches of scrub within heathland are valuable in providing additional habitat niches, but in the absence of management, woody species can quickly take over. On the other hand, too much grazing, especially through the winter, can cause heathers to be replaced by coarse grasses. Shepherding can help to spread grazing pressure over a wider area while fencing may also be useful in some cases to control stock numbers and movement.

Specific objectives include:

Low intensity grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the heathland. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation and extension of this practice.

Where the habitat has been subjected to heavy grazing, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage a reduction in stocking density to allow the heath to recover. Shepherding and fencing to control the movement of stock may also be beneficial in some situations.

Where burning is considered appropriate, it should only be undertaken after close consultation with, and the agreement of, Environment and Heritage Service. Burning can cause the loss of more specialised plants and animals, and may damage the peat soils, leading to erosion.

Prevent the loss of light-demanding heathland species through the control of scrub and bracken. In general, this can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases, other methods of control such as cutting, may be required.

## **Lakes and Pools**

Upland nutrient-poor (Oligotrophic and Dystrophic) lakes and pools are again important habitats for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of these lakes and pools through the conservation of their associated native plants and animals. The latter include important invertebrate communities.

Lakes and pools depend on water quantity and quality to maintain their conservation value. They are generally sensitive to disturbance and nutrient enrichment. These features of interest can be maintained by sympathetic management practices and sensitive recreation.

Specific objectives include:

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

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of natural water levels.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of sympathetic management practices to ensure that disturbance to the waters, bed and shore of the lakes and pools and their wildlife is minimised.

Environment and Heritage Service recognises the important economic and social roles of fishing and welcomes sustainable fishery management that is sensitive to the special interests of the lakes and pools.

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

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

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

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent vegetation from drying out.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the main habitats, such as fens, grassland and scrub through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats are often very important for wildlife, especially breeding birds and invertebrates.

## **Golden Plover**


Pettigoe Plateau ASSI supports numbers of Golden Plover that are important in an all-Ireland context. The Golden Plover is a wading bird of the uplands that nests on relatively flat or gently sloping areas. Vegetation structure is important to Golden Plover. The species prefers shorter swards that are typically found on ridges, areas of old cut-over bog and recovering burnt areas. Low vegetation allows ease of movement for foraging and lets nesting birds detect approaching predators easily. Flushes and

other wet areas are important to Golden Plover as feeding areas for chicks because these hold large numbers of invertebrates.

Specific objectives include:

Environment and Heritage Service would wish to see diversity in the vegetation structure of the bog and heath across the site as a whole. This should include small areas of short vegetation suitable for nesting activities. Where this structure cannot be achieved naturally or by light grazing, Environment and Heritage Service may consider alternative management treatments for specific, localised areas. These treatments could include activities such as heavier grazing or Heather flailing when undertaken in a highly controlled way. Such actions should only be considered after close consultation with, and the agreement of, Environment and Heritage Service.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage actions which maintain or enhance soil wetness and wetland features, such as pools and flushes, as feeding areas for Golden Plovers - this can be achieved by blocking drains across peatland habitat.

  
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E Diane Stevenson  
Authorised Officer

Dated the 1<sup>st</sup> of FEBRUARY 2008