

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT PORTBALLINTRAE, COUNTY ANTRIM. 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 and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of its 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 'Portballintrae area of special scientific interest'.

The cliff at Portballintrae consists of a series of sediments and features indicating the pattern of sediment deposition and fluctuations in the relative level of land and sea. They date from the latter stages of ice sheet retreat, some 17,000 years ago. The sequence is unique in north-west Britain. Nationally it is important because of the type of deposits present and the questions they raise about ice sheet reconstruction and its relationship to the recovery of land height following the removal of this ice. Additional issues raised by the site relate to the scale, timing and pattern of land and seabed deformation and rates of environmental change during this deglacial phase.

Three major sediment series have been recognised. The lowest beds are typical of shallow tidewater resedimentation around unstable ice 'aprons' which accumulate near ice sheet margins. The overlying sands and muds contain a wide range of structures described from shallow, wave influenced, marine environments, some of which have not previously been described from ice related sequences in the United Kingdom. Foraminifera, a microscopic marine animal, are present in the muds and mainly belong to two species, Elphidium clavatum and Cassidulina obtusa. These species are typical today of cold water environments. Finally, development of the overlying gravels and sands occurred as lower beach deposits.

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 sand and gravel.
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, coastal developments or other operations.
4. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or stones and grading of outcrop.

5. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage the geological 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. Operations or activities which would affect waterways including streams, e.g.
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification in the structure of any watercourse.
8. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage the geological interest of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal
of the Department of the
Environment for Northern Ireland on 24 July 1995.



J CROWTHER
Assistant Secretary

R. L. L. L. L. L.
Chief Secretary in Charge
Belfast

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 give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.