

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND  
 DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT RATHLIN ISLAND - COAST,  
 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 by the solid black line on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the flora and fauna and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Rathlin Island - Coast area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of the wide variety of habitats and associated flora and fauna it contains. These habitats include very high sea cliffs, sea stacks, maritime grassland, saltmarsh and an equally wide range of inter-tidal conditions eg vertical cliff, boulder and shingle shores and wave cut platforms on both chalk and basalt. The geological exposures and rock formations associated with such coastal conditions are also of importance.

Some uncommon and rare plant species occur in this coastal strip eg Scots Lovage Ligusticum scoticum, Juniper Juniperus communis, Roseroot Rhodolia rosea and Oyster Plant Mertensia maritima. Towards the south and east the coastline is more gentle giving rise to areas of maritime grassland and flushes. Small developing saltmarshes are widespread. The uncommon Saltmarsh Flat-sedge Blysmus rufus is found in this area.

In summer, the sea cliffs and sea stacks provide nesting sites for a variety of seabirds including nationally important colonies of Guillemot Uria aalge, Razorbill Alca torda, and Kittiwake Rissa tridactyla. Northern Ireland's largest population of Puffin Fratercula arctica breed among the grassy slopes of the cliff ledges. There is also a small colony of Manx Shearwater Puffinus puffinus. An unusually high density of raptors use the cliffs as nesting sites eg Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus and Buzzard Buteo buteo. The very rare Chough Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax also breeds on the cliffs around Rathlin Island.

The caves and rocks around the shore are used by Grey Seals Halichoerus grypus for calving and hauling-out.

#### SCHEDULE

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

1. Any activity which involves the damage or disturbance, by mechanical means or otherwise, of the surface or sub-surface of the land, or of any wild vegetation growing on that land.
2. Any change in the grazing regime, including any change in stock feeding practice.
3. Any application to the surface, sub-surface, or vegetation, of any manure, fertiliser, lime, pesticide, herbicide, fungicide or other chemical.
4. Any change in the practice of burning.

5. Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials or objects.
6. Killing, destruction, damage, displacement or removal of any wild animal or wild plant, save for:-
  - i. any birds which are listed in Schedule 2 Part II of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985;
  - ii. any mammals not listed in Schedule 5 of the same Order; and
  - iii. plants listed as noxious weeds in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.
7. The introduction or release into the area of any wild, feral or domestic animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice and control of grazing animals), plant or seed.
8. Use of vehicles or craft (but excluding farm vehicles and machinery being used in normal farming practices) in a manner likely to damage the vegetation.
9. Recreational, educational or research activities other than those which have been regularly undertaken in the past.
10. Collection of shellfish or seaweed other than on a small scale for non-commercial purposes.

Sealed with the Official Seal of  
The Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on 16 September, 1991



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