



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT ROSTREVOR WOOD, COUNTY DOWN. 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 described and delineated 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 'Rostrevor Wood Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its mature Oak *Quercus* spp. woodland and its associated flora and fauna, which include a number of notable species. Rostrevor Wood is known to be at least 250 years old and may be a remnant of the original forest which once covered the region. Woodland communities range from markedly acidic in the upper slopes to mildly base-rich and flushed in parts of the lower slopes, resulting in a rich woodland flora. The wood has a diverse structure with a tall mature canopy, well-developed understorey and field layer, and a dense ground flora.

The most prominent woodland type over the freely-draining slopes here is acidic (calcifugous) in nature, with a tall canopy overwhelmingly dominated by Oak *Quercus* spp. This forms a dense cover, along with very occasional Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*. The shrub layer is composed of Hazel *Corylus avellana* with occasional Holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The field layer is dominated by Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., which is generally accompanied by Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and ferns such as Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and Scaly Male-fern *D. affinis*. The herb layer is dominated by extensive carpets of Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, with scattered Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*. The bryophyte layer is frequently impoverished as a result of heavy shading. Where it occurs, it is dominated by *Thuidium tamariscinum* and *Mnium hornum*, along with such typical calcifugous species as *Dicranum scoparium*, *D. majus*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Isoetecium myosuroides* and *Polytrichum formosum*. On the upper slopes, the conditions become more acidic due to greater surface leaching, resulting in a greater prominence of Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* in the understorey and Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* in the field layer.

Locally, flushing produces mildly base-rich (calcareous) conditions, resulting in canopy species such as Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and to a lesser extent, Goat Willow *Salix caprea* and Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra*. Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* occurs in the understorey. The field layer is more diverse, with increased frequency of Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum* and the appearance of Lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina* and Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*. The herb and bryophyte layers show a marked change in both diversity and composition here. Ramsons *Allium ursinum* and Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* are often dominant, accompanied by such species as Ivy *Hedera helix*, False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Wood-sedge *Carex sylvatica*. The bryophyte layer consists of more characteristic calcareous and flush species such as *Eurhynchium striatum*, *E. praelongum*, *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*, *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Rhizomnium punctatum*.

The wood supports a number of scarce plant species such as Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and Wood Fescue *Festuca altissima*. Due to the presence of mature trees and the continuity of woodland cover, epiphytic lichen communities are well developed, with a number of notable species, including *Schismatomma cretaceum* and *Melaspilea granitophila* (the latter at its only known site in Ireland).

Rostrevor Wood has a good range of breeding woodland birds, as well as providing habitat for Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*. Although the invertebrate community within the wood has not been studied in detail, sampling has indicated that the site is important for a number of groups, in particular Diptera (True Flies). Of particular note are the Syrphidae (Hover-flies), with several rare species present, including *Melangyna quadrimaculata*, *Parasyrphus vittiger* (Rostrevor is the only known site in Northern Ireland for these species) and *Megasyrphus annulipes*, at its only known Irish site. The Muscidae (House-flies) *Helina abdominalis* and *H. atricolor* are also notable, as Rostrevor is the only known site in Ireland for these species.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora and fauna 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 ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, shingle, shell, gravel and peat.
2. The introduction of grazing or stock feeding.
3. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill any form of wild plant, other than plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
4. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under (3).
5. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.

6. The release into the area of any animal or plant. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates; 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore.
7. Burning.
8. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
9. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
10. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
11. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including marsh and rivers), eg,
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification of the structure of any watercourse;
 - (iii) lowering of the water-table, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
12. The killing or taking of any wild animal except where such killing or taking is treated as an exception in Articles 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21 and 22 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
13. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area:
 - (i) Educational activities;
 - (ii) Research activities;
 - (iii) Recreational activities;
 - (iv) Exercising of animals.
14. Changes in game, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.
15. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 18 SEPTEMBER 1997



ROBERT C MARTIN
Assistant Secretary

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the operations or activities listed in the Schedule 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 in the Schedule 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.