

SHEEPLAND COAST

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 Sheepland Coast 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 - 5 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

Maritime cliff and slopes, Lowland meadows and Fens are important habitats for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland, heathland, saltmarsh, strandline and fen through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals.

Many of the more sensitive species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments, such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, coastal habitats and fen vegetation generally benefit from 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 can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.

Grazing is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species, helping to maintain a diverse sward structure which continues to support species-rich grassland, heath and fen. 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:

Low intensity grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the

continuation of this practice where feasible. Where grazing is not feasible, other management practices such as cutting may be used.

Prevent the loss of more sensitive grassland species through the control of scrub, bracken and rushes. In general, this can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases, other methods of control such as cutting, may be required.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland and fen by encouraging the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.

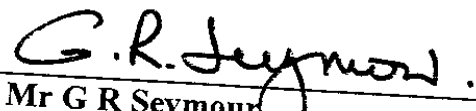
Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grasslands and fen from drying out.

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.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the grassland, heath and fen, including boundary features such as hedgerows and walls, through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment
hereunto affixed is authenticated
by



Mr G R Seymour
Senior Officer of the
Department of the Environment

Dated the 27th of JUNE 2007