

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT SLIEVENACLOY, CO 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 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 "Slievenacloy area of special scientific interest".

The area is of special scientific interest because of its grassland, plant and animal communities.

Slievenacloy is an area of marginal agricultural grassland in the Belfast Hills. Soils have developed from glacial tills and are generally surface-leached. However, because of poor drainage in places base-enrichment by springs and surface flushing occurs. This has led to the development of a wide range of grassland types, reflecting the varied soil conditions.

Over much of the area, the vegetation is dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush Juncus acutiflorus and Yorkshire Fog Holcus lanatus, but with a wide variety of associated species, including herbs such as Devil's-bit Scabious, Succisa pratensis, Cuckooflower Cardamine pratensis, Tormentil Potentilla erecta, Marsh Willowherb Epilobium palustre and Meadow Buttercup Ranunculus acris. More pronounced flushing produces localised stands of very species-rich vegetation, with a predominance of sedges such as Glaucous Sedge Carex flacca, Carnation Sedge C. panicea, Tawny Sedge C. hostiana and, more notably, Dioecious Sedge C. dioica.

Drier areas are characterised by a range of different grassland species in which Common Bent Agrostis capillaris is prominent; however, these grasslands are generally very species-rich and include a wide range of herbs, such as White Clover Trifolium repens, Cat's-ear Hypochaeris radicata, Self-heal Prunella vulgaris, Eyebright Euphrasia agg. and Meadow Vetchling Lathyrus pratensis, in addition to a number of other grasses and sedges e.g. Sweet Vernal Grass Anthoxanthum odoratum, Red Fescue Festuca rubra, Yorkshire Fog Holcus lanatus and Carnation Sedge C. panicea.

More elevated ground illustrates transitions to wet heath vegetation, in which acid-tolerant species such as Heather Calluna vulgaris, Purple Moor-grass Molinia caerulea and Sphagnum bog mosses are dominant.

The Belfast Hills in general contain a concentration of unimproved grassland, a resource which is not of widespread occurrence in Northern Ireland, nor indeed in the British Isles. Slievenacloy is particularly notable for the diversity of its grassland communities and the large area which this species-rich vegetation occupies.

At least seven species of Orchid have been recorded from the site and there is a breeding colony of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly Eurodryas aurinia, whose larval foodplant, the Devil's-bit Scabious, is widely distributed over the area.

SCHEDULE

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

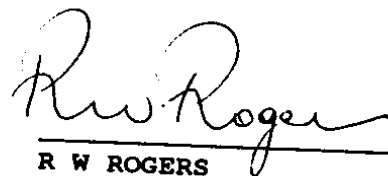
1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing and extraction of minerals, including sand, gravel or peat.
2. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity of grazing, including any change in the type of livestock used or in supplementary feeding practice.
3. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
4. The application of manure, slurry or artificial fertiliser.
5. 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 (NI) Order 1977.
6. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under (5).
7. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for
 - (i) plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (NI) Order 1977;
 - (ii) normal cutting or mowing regimes for which a consent is not required under (3).
8. The release into the area of any animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice) or plant. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates; 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore.
9. Burning.
10. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation and planting.
11. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
12. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
13. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands e.g.
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification in the structure of any watercourse;

- (iii) lowering of the water table, permanently or temporarily;
- (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.

'wetlands' includes marsh, fen, bog, rivers, streams and open waters.

14. The killing or taking of any animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
15. 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.
16. Changes in game management or hunting practices.

SEALED WITH THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND ON 31 March, 1993



R W ROGERS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Joanne Stockman
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FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note the 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 (NI) 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.