

SUMMERHILL LOUGH

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 Summerhill Lough 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 2-3 of the attached Document B 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

Marl lakes and fens are important habitats for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the lake and fen, through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. The latter include important invertebrate communities, especially the White-clawed Crayfish.

Lakes depend on water quantity and quality to maintain their conservation value and are generally sensitive to disturbance and nutrient enrichment. Similarly, fen vegetation requires water levels to be at, or just below, the surface all year round. In addition, increases in the nutrient status of the water and underlying soils can lead to the dominance of species such as Bulrush at the expense of other valuable plant communities.

Fen communities are also susceptible to successional change and generally need some management to retain their interest. Although occasional small patches of scrub can be



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valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, in the absence of management, coarse grasses such as Common Reed can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant. Over a period of time, these species may shade out valuable plant communities and cause the fen to dry out.

Low intensity summer grazing by cattle (or ponies) that are more adaptable to wet conditions is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain species-rich fen vegetation and a diverse sward structure. 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 for the open water and fens include:

Encourage the maintenance of natural water levels in the lake and fen. Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the blocking of drains.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and artificial enrichment.

Ensure that disturbance to the site and its wildlife is minimised.

Where feasible, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the grazing of fen, although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. Where grazing is not possible, other management practices such as cutting may be used.

In general, the control of scrub can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases, additional scrub management may be required.

Discourage non-native species, especially those that tend to spread at the expense of native wildlife.

Environment and Heritage Service recognises the important economic and social roles of fishing and welcomes sustainable fishery management that is sensitive to the special interests of the lake.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the lake and fen, such as swamp, grassland, and scrub and woodland through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats are often very important for wildlife, especially invertebrates including the White-clawed Crayfish.



Conor McParland
Authorised Officer

Dated the 15th of March 2006