

THE CLIFFS OF MAGHO

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 The Cliffs of Magho 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 4 and 5 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

Woodland

Woodland is an important habitat for wildlife, and the Cliffs of Magho includes both mixed ashwoods and wet woodland. Woodland provides food and shelter for a wide variety of mammals, birds and invertebrates.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the woodland through the development of its structure and the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. These include higher plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and important invertebrate communities.

Specific objectives include:

Encourage the woodland to become more "mature" by avoiding disturbance. The structure of the wood will gradually become more diverse, with well-developed canopy, shrub and ground layers, and an abundance of species like Ivy, mosses, liverworts and lichens that live on the trees themselves.



Encourage the retention of dead wood both on the woodland floor and still standing in the canopy. Dead wood is a very important habitat for some of the less conspicuous woodland species such as fungi and invertebrates.

Encourage regeneration of woodland and discourage damage to trees and shrubs through the control of grazing. In general, natural regeneration is preferable to planting.

Inland rock

Inland cliffs and screes often support specialised communities of plants and animals that are not found elsewhere and consequently tend to have restricted distributions. Many species use the scree, crevices and cliff ledges as a shelter from extremes of climate and from competition with more dominant plants, or as a refuge from grazing. A number of birds of conservation importance, such as peregrine falcon, also use rock ledges as safe nesting sites.

Cliffs and screes often need little or no management. Low levels of grazing can be beneficial in some circumstances, by preventing more vigorous species from shading out smaller, more delicate plants. Where heavy grazing has restricted particular species and communities to cliffs and scree slopes, controlling stock levels on the surrounding land could allow some of these species to spread more widely.

Screes are often unstable and their fragile plant communities are vulnerable to physical disturbance such as trampling. As a result some screes and cliffs may require protection from damage caused by heavy grazing and recreation such as walking and rock climbing.

Specific objectives for inland rock include:

Light grazing can prevent less vigorous plants from being shaded out. Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation of this practice.

Where the habitat is subject to heavy grazing or where grazing on surrounding land has isolated the vegetation communities of cliffs and screes, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage a reduction in stocking density to allow grazing-sensitive species to disperse more widely.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage sensitive recreational management. For example, where possible new footpaths should generally be routed around scree rather than through it. Where rare plants or cliff-nesting birds are known to be present, careful management of climbing routes and the timing of the activity may be required.

Blanket Bog and Heath

Blanket bog and heath are important habitats for wildlife. Much of the Cliffs of Magho contains a mosaic of Heather-dominated habitats such as wet heath, dry heath and blanket bog. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of this mosaic through the conservation of its associated native plants and

animals. These include higher plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and important invertebrate communities.

Bogs and wet heaths depend on rainwater and maintaining a high water table is vital to their "health". In addition, the peat soils and many of the species that grow there are very sensitive to physical disturbance. However, most heathland communities need some management to retain their interest. Small patches of scrub within heathland are valuable in providing additional habitat niches but, in the absence of management, woody species can quickly take over. On the other hand, too much grazing, especially through the winter, can cause heathers to be replaced by coarse grasses. Shepherding can help to spread grazing pressure over a wider area while fencing may also be useful in some cases to control stock numbers and movement.

Specific objectives include:

Low intensity grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the bog and heath. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage a regime that avoids overgrazing or poaching.

Where the habitat has been subjected to heavy grazing, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage a reduction in stocking density to allow the bog and heath to recover. Shepherding and fencing to control the movement of stock may also be beneficial in some situations.

Where appropriate, prevent the loss of light-demanding species through the control of scrub and bracken. In general, this can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases other methods of control, such as cutting, may be required.

Where burning is considered appropriate, it should only be undertaken after close consultation with, and the agreement of, Environment and Heritage Service. Burning can cause the loss of more specialised plants and animals, and may damage the peat soils, leading to erosion. The burning of blanket bog should be avoided as the habitat is particularly sensitive to it.

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the vegetation from drying out.

Management principles applicable to all habitats throughout the site

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

Maintain the diversity and quality of the habitats by ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry, herbicide or fungicide to the site.

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

Maintain the diversity and quality of other associated habitats such as lake, swamp, fen and flushed vegetation, through sensitive management such as light grazing. These adjoining habitats are particularly important for wildlife, especially invertebrates such as the rare Geyer's whorl snail.



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Authorised Officer

Dated the *1st* of *FEBRUARY* 2008