

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT
TULLYRATTY, COUNTY DOWN. ARTICLE 28 OF THE ENVIRONMENT
(NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2002.

The Department of the Environment (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 'Tullyratty Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

This area is of special scientific interest because of its species-rich dry grassland. Species-rich grassland tends to occur only where land management is not intensive, in particular where traditional farming practices have been maintained. As a result, it is not a widespread habitat in Northern Ireland and is often fragmented, consisting of individual fields, parts of fields or banks. Species-rich grasslands, like those found at Tullyratty, are a particularly scarce resource in Northern Ireland.

Tullyratty is located within a landscape of rolling drumlin hills, approximately 3km west of Strangford. It is composed of 12 adjoining fields and is situated in a lowland setting on a south-west facing slope. Traditional management practices at Tullyratty have produced a species-rich dry grassland type known as lowland meadow. The variation in topography and related soil hydrology, and the effects of past and present management have resulted in the presence of a wide range of grassland plant species. Further diversity is provided through the presence of scrub which can be a valuable habitat for invertebrates.

The Tullyratty area is underlain by Silurian age sandstones, part of an extensive geological unit covering much of Co. Down and beyond. The soils at Tullyratty are derived from this parent material, resulting in a relatively thin soil known as a brown earth ranker. Such soils are typically shallow and well drained.

The vegetation at Tullyratty is typically grass-dominated with a wide range of associated herbs. The grasses Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris* and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* are common in the sward. Herbs typical of traditionally managed grasslands are frequent throughout the sward and include Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* agg. and Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. Other herbs such as Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* Ssp. *carota*, which is found where the soil becomes more base rich, have a more localised distribution in the sward.



In addition to the plant species mentioned above, Burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* is locally frequent on the site. This species is frequent in south-east Down and the basalt hills around Belfast, but is rare and localised elsewhere.

Tullyratty is an area of semi-natural grassland managed in a traditional way. As such, it provides valuable feeding and roosting sites for a range of animals, including birds and invertebrates.

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, gravel and 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 (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
6. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraph 5 above.
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 (Northern Ireland) Order 1977;
 - (ii) normal cutting or mowing regimes for which consent is not required under paragraph 3 above.
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, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
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 (include marsh, fen, bog, rivers, streams and open water), e.g.
 - (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.
14. The killing or taking of any wild animal except where such killing or taking is treated as an exception in Articles 5, 6, 11, 17, 20, 21 and 22 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, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.
17. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

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.
- (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.

TULLYRATTY

Views About Management

The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2)

A statement of Northern Ireland Environment Agency's views about the management of Tullyratty Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")

This statement represents the views of Northern Ireland Environment Agency 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. Northern Ireland Environment Agency 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 Northern Ireland Environment Agency is still required before carrying out any operation or activity likely to damage the features of special interest (see the Schedule on pages 2 and 3 for a list of these operations and activities). Northern Ireland Environment Agency 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

Lowland meadows are an important habitat for wildlife. Northern Ireland Environment Agency would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland 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, grassland generally needs some management to retain its 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 by cattle is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain open areas and a diverse sward structure, although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. In the absence of grazing, cutting of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Specific objectives include:

Low intensity cattle grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. Northern Ireland Environment Agency would encourage the continuation of this practice.

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. Other methods of control such as cutting may occasionally be required.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland by ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.


Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grassland 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 such as hedgerows and scrub, 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 21st of SEPTEMBER 2009