



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

### DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT TURMENNAN, COUNTY DOWN. 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 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 'Turmennan Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Turmennan consists of a transitional valley mire and associated habitats that support a wide range of plant communities and include a number of notable plant species. In addition, the invertebrate community of the wetland is important for its overall diversity and includes several rare species.

The valley mire, which is in a transitional stage between fen and bog, is characterised by a broad range of surface conditions, ranging from slightly base-rich to markedly acidic. These edaphic conditions are influenced by the position of the ground water table in the surface peat layer, which is partly related to the extent of past peat cutting over the site. The main plant community of the mire surface is formed by an extensive mixed sedge sward dominated by Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and including species such as Common Sedge *Carex nigra*, Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, Ragged-Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*. These species grow over a carpet of brown mosses dominated by *Calliergon cuspidatum* and *C. cordifolium*. In places where the water is more acidic, *Sphagnum* bog-mosses such as *S. squarrosum* and *S. subnitens* replace the brown mosses.

The central area at Turmennan consists of swamp dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with associated plants such as Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Bulrush *Typha latifolia* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*. Other, more localised fen communities within the area include a mixed sedge sward dominated by Lesser Tussock-sedge *Carex diandra*, floating mats of Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and "soakways" with the notable Marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* prominent.

Turmennan also includes a range of other habitats that provide additional diversity. Wet heath is associated with areas of more acidic peat and is dominated by Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, with Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* also present. Scattered pockets of species-rich wet grassland are dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Soft-rush *Juncus effusus*. Areas of species-rich dry grassland occur on thinner soils over rocky outcrops. The vegetation here is grass dominated with frequent herbs including Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, growing over a moss layer dominated by *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. Small pockets of woodland and scrub are also present.

In addition to some of those listed above, Turmennan contains a number of rare plants, including Floating Club-rush *Eleogiton fluitans* and Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans*.

The diversity of wetland habitats supports a rich invertebrate community, and includes a number of locally distributed species of Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies), especially around the small pools. The most characteristic species are the Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*, Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula*, Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* and Variable Damselfly *C. pulchellum*. Turmennan is also a rich site for aquatic Coleoptera with 39 species recorded. This includes many of the uncommon and rare fen species which have been found to be characteristic of the best fen sites in Down and Armagh. Notable water beetles include *Acilius canaliculatus*, *Gyrinus natator*, *Rhantus suturellus*, *R. grapii*, *Hydaticus seminiger* and *Cymbiodyta marginellus*. An uncommon species of pondskater *Gerris lateralis* has also been recorded.

## 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. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
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 plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
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 (including 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.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the  
Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on 19 MAY 1999



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**DR J S FAULKNER**  
Assistant Secretary

#### **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. 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 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.