

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT WOODGRANGE, 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 delineated and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of its flora and geological features and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Woodgrange area of special scientific interest'.

Woodgrange has been selected as the type locality containing evidence for the late-glacial climatic warming following ice sheet melting in Ireland, some 13,000-11,000 years before present (B.P.). Detailed cores document the evidence for these changes from buried plant pollen and sediment. Although many of the late-glacial sites in Ireland record similar events, Woodgrange records the very first plant colonisation following ice melting, possibly around 13,000 years B.P. The succeeding grass phase dates from 11,800-10,900 years B.P. and is best represented at Woodgrange; this is the Woodgrange Interstadial. Post-glacial estuarine clays were deposited after about 7500 years B.P. and this is one of the few sites in Ireland where elements of the post-glacial marine transgression have been subjected to carbon-14 dating.

The lowest clays of interest show evidence of herbaceous species, indicating unwooded and cold land conditions. A gradual climatic improvement is indicated by the presence of Great Reedmace Typha latifolia. Further warming, the Woodgrange Interstadial, is indicated by a decline in 'cold loving' species such as Juniper Juniperus sp. and the rise in grass and sedge species. Further evidence of warming is given by the occurrence of small amounts of Saw Sedge Cladium mariscus. This phase was followed by a return to colder conditions with the decline of grasses and the development, once again, of tundra-like vegetation. The end of the late-glacial period is marked by an uninterrupted return to warmer conditions.

The post-glacial sequence primarily consists of over 5m of estuarine clays, the marine influence revealed by the occurrence of Cockle Cardium edule shells. The general rise in sea-level resulted in a marine incursion here, dating from between 7400 and 6500 B.P. Direct marine influence continued until around 2710 B.P.

Woodgrange supports an extensive fen with a variety of community types. Reedbed is dominated by Common Reed Phragmites communis with a high ground cover of Bogbean Menyanthes trifoliata while wetter, more open areas are typified by Bottle Sedge Carex rostrata, Marsh Bedstraw Galium palustre and Water Dock Rumex hydrolapathum. The latter species, localised in north-east Ireland, is widespread throughout the entire site. A particularly species-rich part of the area is dominated by Devil's-bit Scabious Succisa pratensis, Lesser Tussock-sedge Carex diandra, Brown Sedge C. disticha, Bottle Sedge C. rostrata, Yorkshire-fog Holcus lanatus, Water Horsetail Equisetum fluviatile and the brown mosses Calliergon cuspidatum and C. cordifolium. The area also includes a substantial stand of wet carr woodland, dominated by Alder Alnus glutinosa and Grey Willow Salix cinerea.


SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora and geological interest 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, shingle, shell, 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. Any change in the annual pattern of 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 paragraphs 4 or 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 a 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 (including marsh, fen, rivers, streams and open water), eg
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;

- (ii) modification to 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 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.
15. Sampling of rocks, minerals, fossils or any other material forming a part of the site, undertaken in a manner likely to damage the scientific interest.
16. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 29 September, 1995



J CROWTHER
Assistant Secretary


CIVIL SERVANT
CLARENCE COURT
BELFAST

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that 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 (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 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.