

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

### DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT BALLYCAM, 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 'Ballycam Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Although small, Ballycam contains a number of fen communities, including the only known example in Northern Ireland of one that is generally only found locally in lowland England and Wales. It is characterised by the dominance of Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans* and Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*. Other vegetation-types include swamp dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, and fen dominated by Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. These communities grade into mesotrophic grassland (often containing fen species) around the edge of the site.

The most species-rich fen consists of tussocks of Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans* with scattered Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Common Reed *Phragmites australis*. Smaller herbs and mosses including *Campyllum stellatum*, *Calliergon cuspidatum*, *Calliergon giganteum* and *Cratoneuron filicinum* grow between the tussocks. Higher plants scattered throughout the fen include Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*. Where the cover of *Juncus subnodulosus* is less dense, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* becomes more abundant and such species as Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta* and Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* increase. Common Reed *Phragmites australis* occupies the centre of the site, with a number of other species such as Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre*. The bryophyte layer here is variable, with the brown moss *Calliergon cuspidatum* the most prominent species present.

In addition to the species listed above, the fen contains a number of vascular plants with a restricted distribution in the British Isles, including Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* and Fen Pondweed *Potamogeton coloratus*. Notable bryophytes include *Calliergon giganteum*, *Plagiomnium elatum*, *Riccardia multifida* and *Scorpidium scorpioides*.

Ballycam also provides valuable habitat for a range of wetland 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. Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating or re-seeding.
2. Increase in grazing intensity or change either in the type of livestock used or in feeding practices.
3. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
4. Application of manure, slurry, fertiliser or lime.
5. Application of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill, selectively or non-selectively, any form of animal, plant or other living organism.
6. Dumping, spreading or discharge of any matter.
7. Burning.
8. The release into the area of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed. "Animal" includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate, but excludes livestock and animals used in controlling livestock.
9. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, or the disturbance, killing or removal of any wild animal.
10. The introduction of tree or woodland management, including afforestation or planting.
11. Drainage, including peat drainage or the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains.
12. Modification of the structure of water courses, including their banks and beds as by realignment, regrading or dredging.
13. Management of aquatic and bank vegetation.
14. The alteration of water levels or water tables or the utilisation of water including storage or extraction, but excluding water used for domestic requirements.
15. Infilling of ditches, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or lakes.

16. Reclamation of land from bog, marsh, river or lake.
17. Extraction of minerals including peat, sand, gravel, topsoil or subsoil.
18. Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hard-standings, banks, ditches and other earth works or the laying or removal of pipelines or cables, above or below ground.
19. Storage of materials.
20. Use of craft or vehicles likely to damage the vegetation.
21. Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of building, engineering or other operations, including drilling.
22. Recreational, educational or research activities likely to damage the vegetation.
23. Changes in game management.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the  
Department of the Environment for  
Northern Ireland on 4 JUNE 1997

*R. Lynchaur.*  
*Civil Servant in Charge*  
*North Belfast*

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**ROBERT C MARTIN**  
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.

# BALLYCAM

## 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 Ballycam 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

Fens are an important habitat for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the fen, through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals.

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 susceptible to successional change and generally need some management to retain their 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 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 include:

Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the fen from drying out.

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.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the fen, such as swamp and grassland through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats are often very important for wildlife.



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**Conor McParland**  
Authorised Officer

Dated the 1st of March 2006

