

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT DRUMLOUGH LOUGH, COUNTY ARMAGH. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

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 'Drumlougher Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Drumlougher Lough is a large and diverse area, with particularly rich and varied fen communities. Additional diversity is provided by other semi-natural habitats, such as the open waters of the lough, heath, bog, grassland, scrub and woodland. The area supports a large number of wetland plants, some of which are scarce. In addition, the invertebrate community is important for its overall diversity and includes several rare species.

Drumlougher Lough is situated in an irregular hollow with many rocky outcrops. Over much of the area, past peat cutting has created an uneven surface with open cuttings, flooded and low-lying ground and elevated banks and ramparts. The different habitat and vegetation types occur as part of this intricate mosaic.

The open waters of the lough support a range of aquatic plant species such as Alternate Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* and floating stands of Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*. Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora* is found in shallow waters at the edge of the lake. Swamp vegetation with Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* and Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* occurs in rocky shallows around the edge of the lake and also fringing the peat cuttings.

The fen vegetation is scattered throughout the site, with the largest area associated with old cut-over bog, where the plant communities reflect different levels of peat cutting. These communities range from open pools supporting Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, through floating rafts of Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* with Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, to higher ground with heath vegetation. Within the rich fen communities, the rare Bog-sedge *Carex limosa* is locally dominant. "Poor-fen" vegetation, associated with more acidic water, is also well represented at Drumlougher Lough and is mainly associated with flooded hollows. Within these communities a range of different sedge species such as Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, White Sedge *C. curta* and Common Sedge *C. nigra* occur over a dense carpet of *Sphagnum palustre*, *S. squarrosum*, *S. recurvum* and *S. subnitens*, with frequent Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

The wide range of other semi-natural habitats provides further structural diversity and adds to the conservation interest of the area. Elevated peat banks are covered by dry heath, wet heath and regenerating bog. Frequent species include Purple Moorgrass *Molinia caerulea*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum* and Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. Acid grassland is found on rocky outcrops with thinner soils, together with Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* scrub with Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* is well represented, as is wet woodland with Birch *Betula pubescens* and Willow *Salix* spp.

In addition to some of those listed above, the area contains a number of plant species that are scarce in the British Isles, including Least Bur-reed *Sparganium natans* and Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*.

The fen vegetation at Drumlougher Lough represents one of the most important wetlands in South Armagh for invertebrates. A number of species recorded from the area are notable in Northern Ireland, including the water beetles *Laccornis oblongus*, which is confined to undisturbed wetlands, the relict fen species *Hydaticus seminiger* and *Cercyon ustulatus*. The Slender Groundhopper *Tetrix subulata* is found in short, wetland vegetation and seems to benefit from the light grazing of the fen. *Agyneta decora*, a money spider, occurs amongst moss, whereas the plant bug *Dictyla convergens* is found on Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*. Both the horse fly *Chrysops sepulchralis* and *Bagous collignensis*, a weevil associated with Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, were recorded from Drumlougher Lough and are rare in Ireland. Other notable species from the area include the rare wolf spiders *Arctosa leopardus*, *Pelecopsis mengei*, *Pirata piscatorius* and *Trochosa spinipalpis* that have either very few or no recent records for Northern Ireland.

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 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, 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 on 16 FEBRUARY 2000

Carolyn Finch,
Officer in the
Department of
the Environment



DR J S FAULKNER
Senior Officer of the
Department of the Environment

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.

DRUMLOUGH LOUGH

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 Drumlougher Lough 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 2-4 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. The latter include important invertebrate communities.

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 within fen communities 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 open water, swamp, grassland, scrub and woodland through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats are often very important for wildlife, especially invertebrates.



G R Seymour
Authorised Officer

Dated the 7TH of SEPTEMBER 2007

DRUMLOUGH LOUGH - A SPECIAL PLACE



View of Drumlough Lough

In Northern Ireland, there is a wide range of different wetland types, from lakes, ponds and rivers to bogs, marshes and fens. Many of them have been surveyed by the Environment and Heritage Service and have subsequently been assessed for their scientific interest. The best sites are now being declared as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). In doing so we aim to guarantee the survival of Northern Ireland's wildlife and to protect the range of wetland habitats for the use and enjoyment of future generations.



Bog Bean

HABITAT DIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE

Drumlough Lough ASSI is one of these special places. It is a relatively large, diverse site with a mixture of different habitat and vegetation types. Fen, swamp, heath, bog, grassland, scrub and woodland all occur as a mosaic, with Drumlough Lough to the north west. The main scientific interest is the fen

vegetation. Good quality fen is characterised by an abundance of mosses, sedges and herbs. Here this type of vegetation can be found where past peat cutting has created an uneven surface with open cuttings, low-lying and flooded ground and elevated banks. Floating rafts with Bottle sedge, Marsh Cinquefoil and Bog-bean occur next to banks with Cross-leaved heath, which opens its purple flowers in mid-to late summer. In other areas conditions are more acidic and here a wide range of sedges can be found growing over a dense carpet of bog mosses. Several rare wetland plants have been recorded from the site, including Least bur-reed and Bog-sedge. Drumlough Lough itself represents an important habitat and supports a range of aquatic plants, the most obvious one being Yellow Water-lily. The other habitats present within the ASSI all add to the diversity and



Yellow Water-lily

enhance the value of the area for wildlife. As a result, a very rich invertebrate fauna can be found with numerous rare species such as water beetles, spiders, weevils and ground-

hoppers. Typical birds for the site include Whitethroat, Reed bunting and Sedge Warbler.



Sundew - an insect-eating bog plant

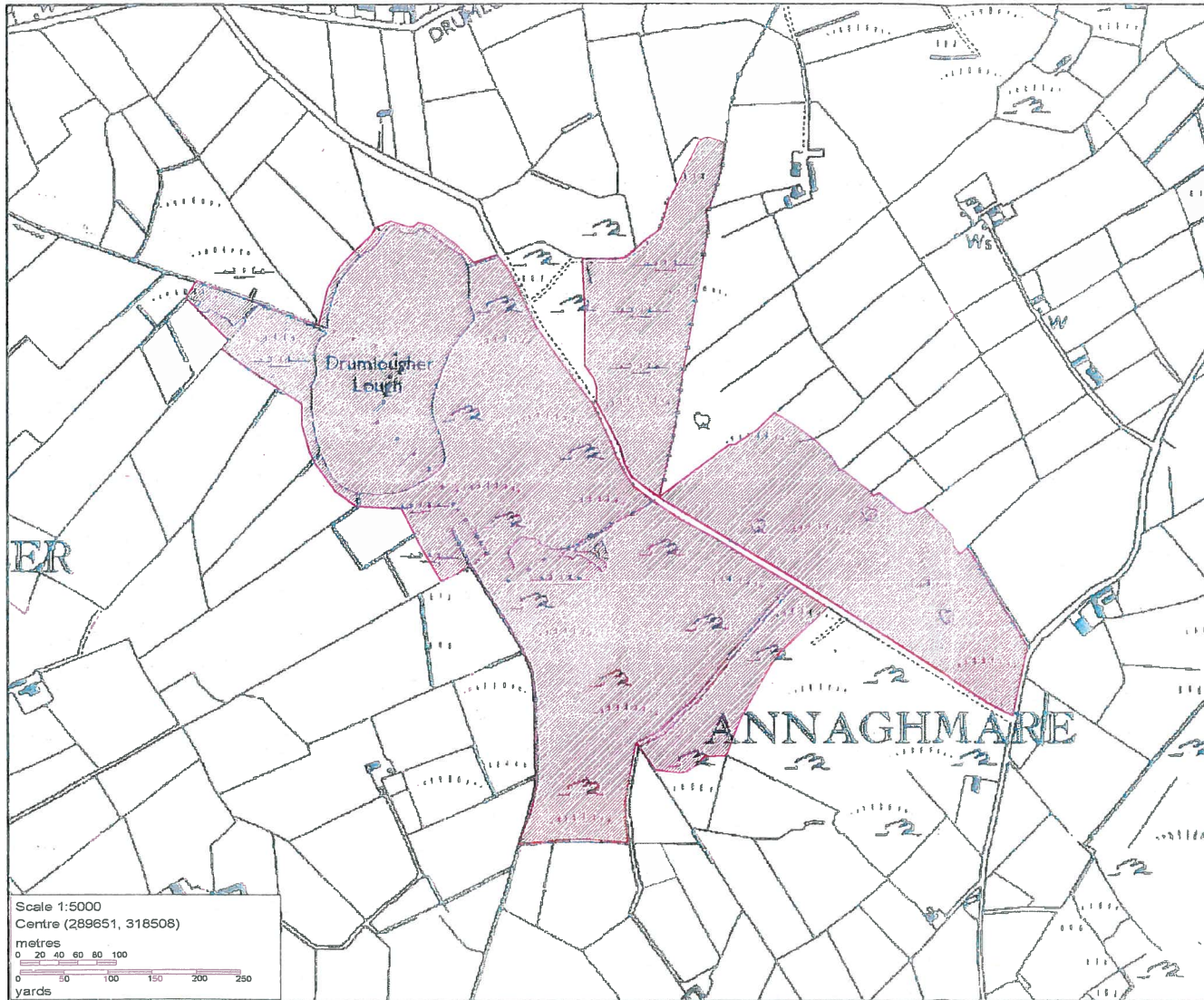
MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING DRUMLOUGH ASSI

All of the plants and animals that make this site such a special one depend upon the ASSI being kept in good condition. We therefore need to protect it from activities such as drainage, heavy grazing, pollution and nutrient enrichment from slurry, fertiliser or manure application in the surrounding area. Environment and Heritage Service is keen to liaise closely with all landowners/occupiers to maintain and enhance Drumlough Lough ASSI, one of the best wetland sites in County Armagh.





DRUMLOUGH LOUGH ASSI



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DRUMLOUGH LOUGH AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Map referred to in the Declaration dated: 16 FEBRUARY 2000

SITE BOUNDARY: The Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) includes all the lands highlighted within the solid coloured lines.

AREA OF SITE: 23.54 hectares

OS MAPS 1:50,000: Sheet No. 28
1:10,000: Sheet No. 274

IRISH GRID REFERENCE: H 896185

COUNCIL AREA: NEWRY & MOURNE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNTY: ARMAGH

J. Faulkner
DR J S FAULKNER
SENIOR OFFICER OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

