

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT WHITE PARK BAY, COUNTY ANTRIM. 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 the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical 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 'White Park Bay area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its geology, coastal physiography and calcareous flora and fauna. The bay comprises a massive land-slipped area backed by high chalk cliffs. Several exposures are well represented, with sea-stacks and natural arches present. In addition, White Park Bay is notable for its diverse plant and animal communities, its largely unmodified nature and the number of rare plants and animals recorded.

Jurassic age material belonging to the Lower Lias, some 200 million years old, outcrops within White Park Bay below chalk landslips and blown sand. The calcareous mudstones and limestones are richly fossiliferous. The Cretaceous rocks, including the distinctive White Limestones, are some 80 million years old. Notable exposures include the thin conglomerate occurring at the base of the chalk and lying unconformably over the Jurassic series. The lowest part of the White Limestone succession is seen in the slipped sections at the eastern end of the Bay and includes the very distinctive Oweynamuck Flint Band. Post glacial marine activity has

produced distinctive coastal landforms including the former seacliffs which form the amphitheatre within which White Park Bay now sits. Associated sea-stacks and natural arches are common, many still subjected to marine activity.

The position of White Park Bay has resulted in the development of one of the finest displays of rhythmic bedforms in Ireland and beyond. These include outstandingly well-developed sets of inner and outer bars, beach cusps and giant cusps within the bay. These features are intimately related to the nature of the beach, particularly in terms of sediment transfers.

The dunes are fronted by a narrow band of colonising Marram *Ammophila arenaria* and Sand Couch *Elytrigia juncea*. More stable foredunes inland support a complex mosaic of different vegetation communities, some of which are very species-rich. Marram *Ammophila arenaria* remains one of the main species, but there is a range of associated species such as Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria*, Portland Spurge *Euphorbia portlandica* and Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, growing through a carpet of the pleurocarpous moss *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*.

Between the chalk cliffs and the frontal dunes, the land-slipped slopes are partly covered by blown sand and support a diverse range of grassland communities. Wet hollows and patches of scrub and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* provide additional habitat diversity. In places, low soil fertility, grazing and exposure have encouraged a relatively species-rich sward, especially where the sand is rich in calcareous shell material. The turf is dominated by fine grasses, such as Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, together with additional species such as Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and the moss *Hypnum cupressiforme*. Other herbs include Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Spring Squill *Scilla verna* and Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*. Locally, the grassland is more acidic in nature, as indicated by the presence of Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Common Sedge *Carex nigra*, together with small quantities of Heather *Calluna vulgaris*.

Wet pockets support a variety of communities ranging from monodominant stands of Yellow Iris Iris pseudacorus to more species-rich marshy grassland, dominated by Meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria and Wild Angelica Angelica sylvestris, with Sharp-flowered Rush Juncus acutiflorus and Soft-rush Juncus effusus. Damp, low-lying hollows have a mixture of Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera, Marsh Foxtail Alopecurus geniculatus, Soft-rush Juncus effusus and Yorkshire-fog Holcus lanatus. In wetter situations, Common Sedge Carex nigra and Silverweed Potentilla anserina become more prominent, forming dune slack communities.

Bracken Pteridium aquilinum encroachment is common, often in association with shade-tolerant herbs such as Ground-ivy Glechoma hederacea, Lesser Celandine Ranunculus ficaria and Bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta. Low scrub is scattered over the area, with Blackthorn Prunus spinosa, Hawthorn Crataegus monogyna and Bramble Rubus fruticosus being the dominant species. Gorse Ulex europaeus is frequent throughout, with Grey Willow Salix cinerea, Hazel Corylus avellana and mature Elder Sambucus nigra abundant under the cliffs. Low-growing Burnet Rose Rosa pimpinellifolia is locally frequent in areas of rank grassland.

The area is backed by high chalk cliffs. On the shady, damp, north-facing cliff slopes deeper, brown-earth soils have developed. These areas are characterised by a wide range of constant species such as Red Fescue Festuca rubra, Yorkshire-fog Holcus lanatus, Primrose Primula vulgaris, Devil's-bit Scabious Succisa pratensis, Common Dog-violet Viola riviniana and Tormentil Potentilla erecta. Other associated species include Lady's-mantle Alchemilla glabra, Slender St John's-wort Hypericum pulchrum, Wood Anemone Anemone nemorosa, Common Sedge Carex nigra, Carnation Sedge Carex panicea, Flea Sedge Carex pulicaris and a variety of bryophytes such as Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus and Thuidium tamariscinum.

White Park Bay is notable for its orchids. Eight species have been recorded, including Frog Orchid Coeloglossum viride, Pyramidal Orchid Anacamptis pyramidalis, Fragrant Orchid Gymnadenia conopsea, Bee Orchid Ophrys apifera and Small-white Orchid Pseudorchis albida. Additional species of note include Adder's-tongue Ophioglossum vulgatum and Moonwort Botrychium lunaria (two fern species), Meadow Crane's-bill Geranium pratense, Wood Vetch Vicia sylvatica, Fragrant Agrimony Agrimonia procera, Smooth Cat's-ear Hypochoeris glabra

and Thyme Broomrape Orobanche alba. The moss Rhodobryum roseum, which is rare in Ireland, is also of interest.

Invertebrate records for White Park Bay date back over a century. A number of characteristic coastal invertebrates have been recorded, including some specialist dune species. In addition to the dunes themselves, the streams and flushes flowing through the area are also of high nature conservation interest for various invertebrates.

Shells of the very rare Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail Vertigo angustior have been found amongst the dunes, indicating that a population has been present in recent years. This species is listed under the 'endangered' category of the British Red Data Book. Populations of a related species, Striated Whorl Snail Vertigo substriata, are known to occur. A further species Vertigo pusilla, which is extremely rare in Ireland, has been recorded in the past.

Species diversity amongst the Lepidoptera is high with several rare or uncommon species. Thirteen butterfly species have been recorded, including the Dark Green Fritillary Argynnis aglaja, which is a typical duneland species in Northern Ireland but very local elsewhere, the Common Blue Polyommatus icarus and Small Heath Coenonympha pamphilus. The Wood White Leptidea sinapis butterfly, which is rare in Britain but locally frequent in Ireland, is also present. Amongst the moths, the Six-spot Burnet Zygaena filipendula and Mother Shipton Callistege mi have been recorded. Solitary Hymenoptera have also been studied, with Halictus rubicundus, Lasioglossum rufitarse (first record for Ireland) and Nomada bicolor among the species recorded.

SCHEDULE

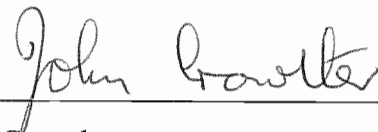
The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features of the area:

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. 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.
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.
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 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 killing or taking of any animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms 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 22 July 1996



J Crowther

Assistant Secretary

R. Lyndelaur.
Chief Assistant in Charge Land
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 normally give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.

WHITE PARK BAY

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 White Park Bay 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 4-6 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

Geological and physiographical series

Earth science features provide information about a region's geological history and can also aid interpretation of geological processes in the past and present

The earth science interest at White Park Bay occurs as cliff exposures of Cretaceous age rocks and also as the beach, associated dunes and the offshore sediments within the adjoining bay. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of the ASSI and its Earth Science interest.

Provided no damaging activities, as set out in the Schedule (pages 4-6), are undertaken without consent, the needs of owners, occupiers and the Department can be met.



Earth science features such as those at White Park Bay may require occasional management intervention, in order to maintain access to, and exposure of, the geology and to allow continued operation of the contemporary sedimentary processes on which the beach and dunes depend. This could include, for example, selective removal of vegetation or any major build up of debris or loose rock. Environment and Heritage Service would seek to maintain the coastline in as natural a state as possible. Sites such as White Park Bay are particularly susceptible to damage through extraction of sediment (sand, gravel or other grade material) from anywhere within the site or the offshore area and to any alteration of the coastline.

Specific objectives include:

Maintain the geological and physiographical series in an undamaged state.

Maintain access to the geological and physiographical series.

Sand dunes

Sand dunes are an important habitat for wildlife. They develop where sand is blown landwards from the beach and is deposited above the high water mark. A process of succession takes place as vegetation colonises the bare sand, creating a diverse range of communities, each with their own characteristic species. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the dunes through the conservation of all stages in the succession and their associated native plants and animals. The former includes plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and the latter includes important invertebrate communities.

Coastal processes are complex and the management of sand dunes should take into account the need to maintain or restore where necessary, the natural processes and dynamics of dune development and succession.

Many of the more sensitive sand dune species can be lost through intensive management treatments, such as fertiliser and herbicide application. Although sand dunes generally need some management to retain their interest, occasional patches of scrub and Bracken can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates. However in the absence of management, Bracken and coarse grasses can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.

Grazing is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain open areas and a diverse sward structure. In the absence of grazing, other methods, such as cutting or mowing to create open areas and reduce the dominance of Bracken, coarse grasses and woody species, may be desirable.

Many of the vegetation types on sand dunes are fragile, and heavy disturbance can lead to loss of cover and soil erosion. However, where recreational and other pressures are not severe, the impact of activities such as light trampling can be beneficial. For example, tracks through dunes may open up areas where vegetation cover has become rank and provide small areas of bare sand, thus increasing the diversity of habitats available.

Specific objectives include:

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage low intensity grazing to conserve and enhance the features of interest. The effects of non-domestic grazing animals, such as rabbits, should also be taken into account as these can contribute greatly to the maintenance of a short, species-rich sward.

In general, the control of scrub and Bracken within sand dune communities can be achieved most effectively through the appropriate grazing regime. However, where there has been a prolonged absence of grazing, additional scrub and Bracken control may be required using mechanical cutting and/or the careful application of herbicides as agreed with Environment and Heritage Service.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the sand dunes by ensuring that there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide.

Management of amenity beaches can affect the early stages of dune formation by removing the strandline that helps to trap blown sand and to develop new dune ridges. Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage management practices which allow the development of a natural strandline.

Where recreational pressures are significant enough to result in the loss of vegetation cover and prevent recovery, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the restoration of the vegetation through the sensitive management of access.

Maritime Cliff and Slopes

Maritime grasslands and heaths are important habitats for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland and heathland through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. The former include plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and the latter include important invertebrate communities.

Many of the more sensitive species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments, such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, coastal habitats generally benefit from 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 can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.

Grazing is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species, helping to maintain a diverse sward structure which continues to support species-rich grassland and heath. 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:

Low intensity grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation of this practice where feasible. Where grazing is not feasible, other management practices such as cutting may be used.

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. In some cases other methods of control, such as cutting, may be required.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland by encouraging the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grasslands from drying out.

Management principles applicable to all habitats throughout the site

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.

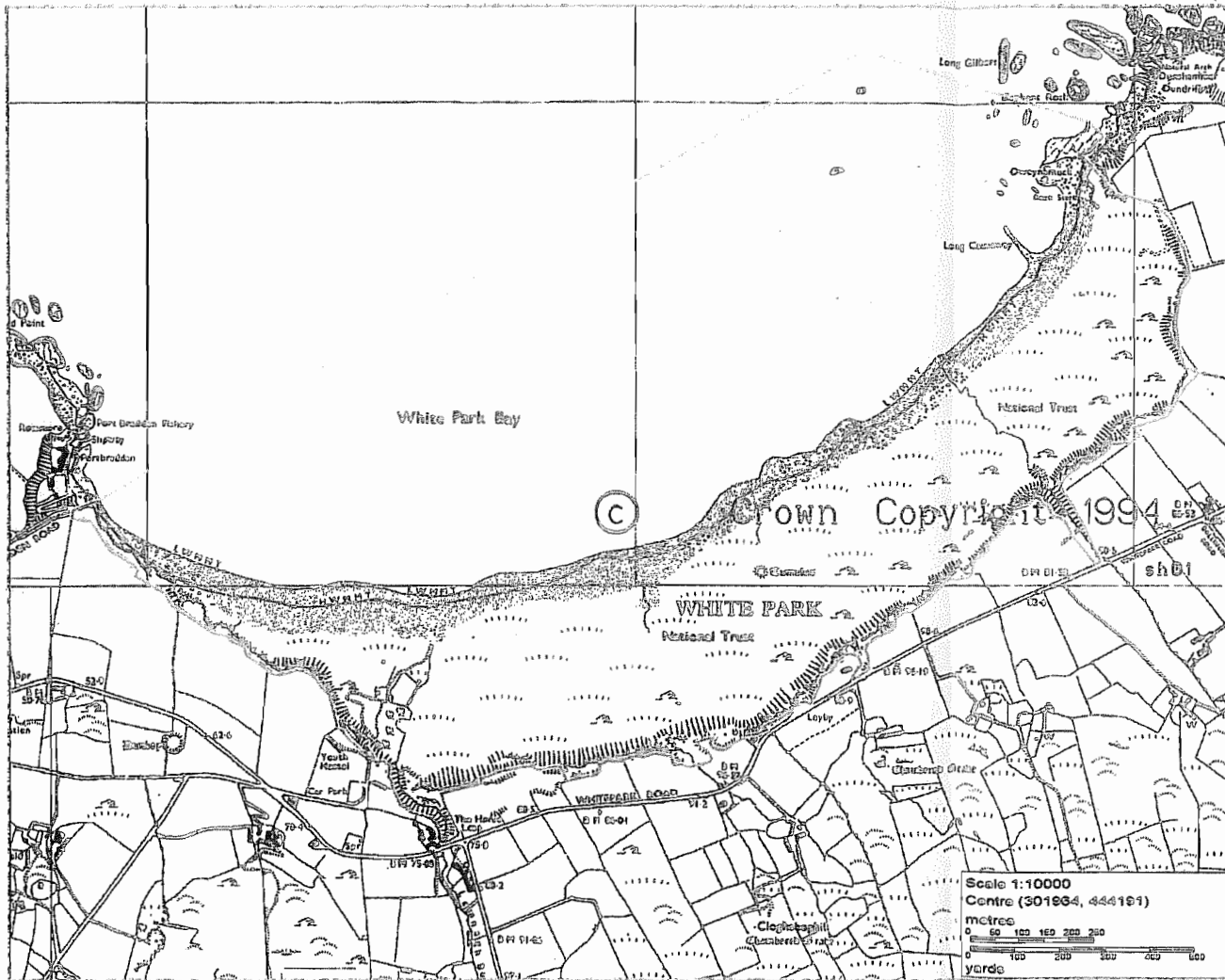
Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the main habitats, such as fen, scrub and woodland through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife, especially invertebrates and rare plants.



E Diane Stevenson
Authorised Officer

Dated the 16TH of JANUARY 2008

WHITE PARK BAY ASSI



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
 WHITE PARK BAY AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Map referred to in the
 Declaration dated:- 22 July 1996

SITE BOUNDARY:- The Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) includes
 all the lands and islands to the seaward side of the
 solid coloured line to the low water mark and
 enclosed by the dashed line.

AREA OF SITE:- 67.74 ha

SHEET No:- 1, 7

IRISH GRID REFERENCE:- D 026462

COUNCIL AREA:- MOYLE

COUNTY:- ANTRIM

John Crowther
 J Crowther
 Assistant Secretary

