DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT TAMNYRANKIN, COUNTY LONDONDERRY. ARTICLE 28 OF THE ENVIRONMENT (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2002.

The Department of the Environment (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 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 'Tamnyrankin Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

This area is of special scientific interest because of its species-rich wet grassland. Species-rich grassland tends to occur only where land management is not intensive, in particular where traditional farming practices have been maintained. As a result, it is not a widespread habitat in Northern Ireland and is often fragmented, consisting of individual fields, parts of fields or banks. Species-rich grasslands, like those found at Tamnyrankin, are a particularly scarce resource in Northern Ireland.

The area is situated in the eastern foothills of the Sperrin Mountains within the townland of Tamnyrankin, 2.7km north-west of Swatragh. Tamnyrankin is in the marginal uplands with an altitude of approximately 190m above sea level. The underlying geology of Tamnyrankin is dominated by rocks of the Lower Basalt Formation of Palaeogene age (some 60 million years old). This igneous rock occupies large areas of Antrim and north-east Londonderry and is the parent material from which the soils have developed. Depending on factors such as rainfall, altitude, aspect and land gradient, basalt can have a range of soil types associated with it. At Tamnyrankin the soils are generally shallow and are of a type referred to as a Brown Ranker. These are often free draining and in places this has led to the development of heath vegetation but overall the site is wet and even waterlogged. This may reflect the position of the site with surrounding ground delivering runoff while the soil may have a sufficiently high content of organic material and finer grade material to retain water and even impede drainage. This combination of underlying geology, topography and the related soil hydrology has resulted in a complex range of species-rich wet grasslands within a small area.

The vegetation at Tamnyrankin is dominated by wet grassland of the Purple Moor-grass and rush pastures type, with small pockets of flushed grassland throughout. Fen meadow is a particular type of Purple Moor-grass and rush pasture that develops on peaty soils, usually on slopes with moderate through-flow of water. The fen meadow here is characterised by the higher plant species Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea,* Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* which are usually constant and typify this type of vegetation. Species diversity is high within the grassland and additional plants associated with the fen meadow include the grasses Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*, Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Mat-grass *Nardus stricta.* Sedges are integral components of the vegetation, with Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana*, Long-

stalked Yellow-sedge *C. lepidocarpa*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea* and Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris* frequent within the sward. Herb species are common and widespread and include Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris,* Bugle *Ajuga reptans,* Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* agg. and Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*. With increased flushing, the carnivorous Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* can be prolific. Mosses are prominent within the sward and species that thrive in open, light conditions are prevalent with Golden-head Moss *Breutelia chrysocoma* occurring alongside Pointed Spear-moss *Calliergonella cuspidata*, Springy Turf-moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus,* Glittering Wood-moss *Hylocomium splendens* and Neat Feather-moss *Pseudoscleropodium purum*. Where there are transitions to wet heath the ericoid species Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* occur intermittently within the fen meadow.

Waterlogging from the stream to the west and from flushing downslope through the wet grasslands, has led to the development of a small basin fen. The vegetation consists of Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Star Sedge *C. echinata,* Common Sedge *C. nigra* with the grasses Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Herbs include Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre*, Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile.*

Tamnyrankin has been managed in a traditional way and has a high degree of naturalness. As a result, in addition to its grassland interest, the area acts as an important reservoir for species, providing valuable feeding and roosting sites for a range of 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. 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 (or introduction), 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 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 (include 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.

17. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

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 council or the Department under Part 3 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. 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.

TAMNYRANKIN

Views About Management
The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2)

A statement of the Department's views about the management of Tamnyrankin Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")

This statement represents the views of the Department 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. The Department 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 the Department 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 for a list of these operations and activities). The Department 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

Purple Moor-grass and rush pastures are an important habitat for wildlife. The Department would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland, through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals.

Many of the more sensitive species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments, such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, grassland generally needs some management to retain its 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 by cattle is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain open areas and a diverse sward structure, although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. In the absence of grazing, cutting 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 grassland. The Department would encourage the continuation of this practice.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland by ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.

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.

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

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 grassland, such as hedgerows, scrub and fens through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment
hereunto affixed is authenticated
by

Helen Anderson

HELEN ANDERSON
Senior Officer of the
Department of the Environment

Dated the 31st of March 2016

TAMNYRANKIN

A SPECIAL PLACE...

View across Tamnyrankin ASSI

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL AND EARTH SCIENCE IMPORTANCE HAVE BEEN SURVEYED BY NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY TO ASSESS THEIR SCIENTIFIC INTEREST. THE BEST SITES ARE NOW BEING DECLARED AS AREAS OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ASSIs). IN DOING SO WE AIM TO SAFEGUARD THESE IMPORTANT SITES FOR THE BENEFIT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

Tamnyrankin has been declared as an ASSI because of its species-rich wet grassland. Species-rich grassland tends to occur only where traditional farming practices have been maintained and is now a scarce habitat in Northern Ireland.

Tamnyrankin is situated in the eastern foothills of the Sperrin Mountains within the townland of Tamnyrankin, 2.7km north-west of Swatragh.

Meadow Thistle

A special type of species-rich wet grassland known as Purple Moor-grass and rush pasture occurs over much of the site. Fen meadow, a particular type of Purple Moor-grass and rush pasture, occurs on the slopes where there is a steady water flow through the soil. This results in the occurrence of plant species adapted to both water movement and wetter conditions.

Plants characteristic of this type of grassland include Sharp-flowered Rush, Purple Moor-grass, Meadow Thistle and Devil's-bit Scabious. Other plants associated with the fen meadow include Flea Sedge, Tawny Sedge, Carnation Sedge, Sneezewort, Eyebright, Lousewort, Lesser Spearwort, Bugle and Tormentil. With increased wetness from flushing on the slopes, the carnivorous Common Butterwort can be prolific.

Many of these plants are only found in grasslands where traditional forms of land management are used. The use of artificial fertilisers, herbicides or the application of manure or slurry would cause a reduction in plant numbers on the site. When soils become more fertile, grasses tend to thrive, growing faster and taller. Smaller plants such as sedges are not able to compete with the tougher grasses and as a result are lost.

Eyebright

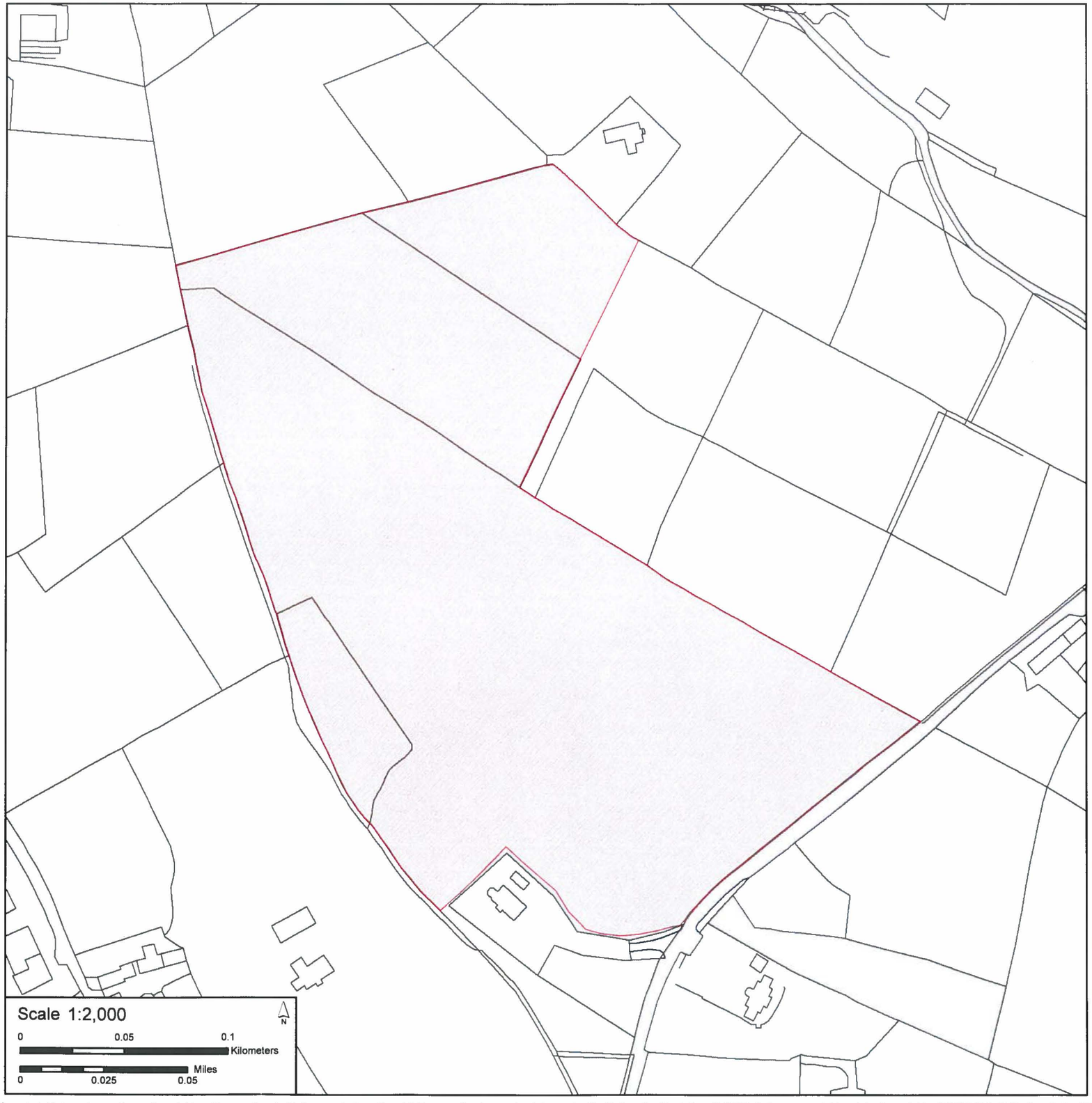
Correct management is essential for special places like Tamnyrankin. If, for example, grazing was to cease, the grassland would quickly become rank and scrub would invade. This would cause a reduction in the numbers of grasses and wildflowers found here. Traditional agricultural practices will ensure the survival of the rich range of plants and animals at Tamnyrankin. Northern Ireland Environment Agency is keen to work closely with landowners to maintain and enhance Tamnyrankin ASSI.

An Agency within the Department of the Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

NIEA Northern Ireland Environment Agency
www.doeni.gov.uk/niea

TAMNYRANKIN ASSI



TAMNYRANKIN
AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Map referred to in the Declaration dated: 31st March 2016

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

AREA OF SITE: 6.7 hectares

OS MAPS 1:50,000: Sheet No. 8
1:10,000: Sheet No. 52

IRISH GRID REFERENCE: IC 836 095

COUNCIL AREA: CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNTY: LONDONDERRY

Helen Anderson

HELEN ANDERSON
SENIOR OFFICER OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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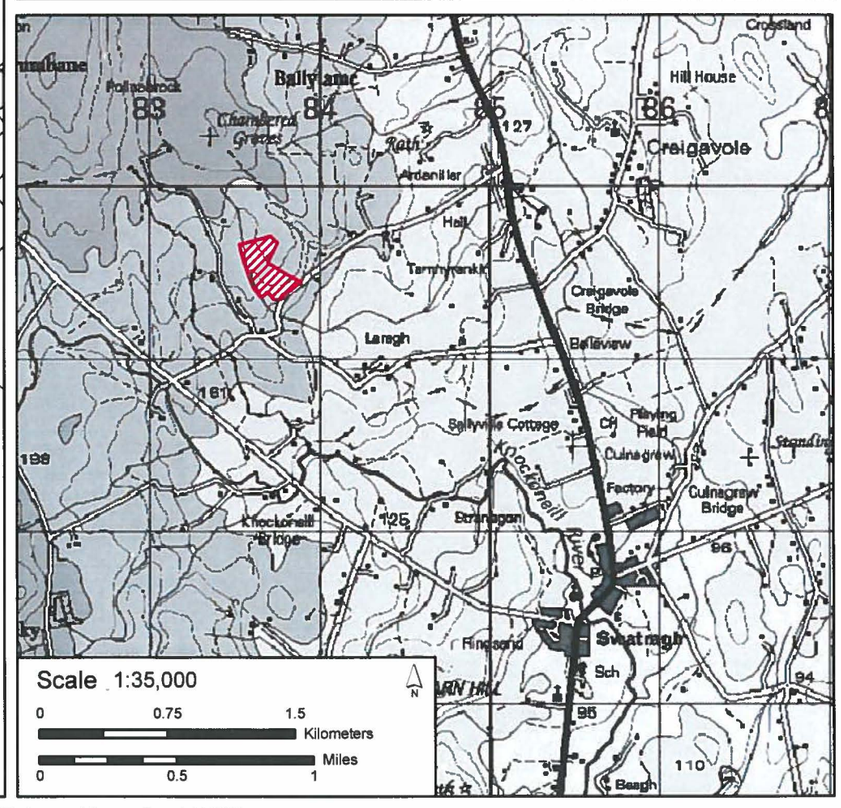

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