

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

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

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (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 'Killydonnelly Area of Special Scientific Interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its species-rich calcareous 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 dry grasslands like those found at Killydonnelly, have declined significantly across Northern Ireland and are now a particularly scarce resource.

Killydonnelly is located approximately 5km east of the village of Rasharkin. The grassland is situated on a west facing slope, along a low lying ridge which runs north to south. The underlying geology of Killydonnelly is dominated by rocks of the Lower Basalt Formation. 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. The soils in the wider area are of a type referred to as mineral gleys and at Killydonnelly, where the underlying basalt is close to the surface, the soils are generally shallower and support a dry grassland community.

The vegetation at Killydonnelly is typical of conditions found on thin soils overlying basalt rocks. The driest grassland areas at Killydonnelly are characteristically dominated by the grasses Sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris* and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, with frequent Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* and Downy Oat-grass *Avenula pubescens*. Sedges occur frequently and are widely interspersed amongst the grasses and include Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Spring-sedge *C. caryophyllea*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea* and Pill Sedge *C. pilulifera*. Herb species are an integral component of the sward and the most common include Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* agg., Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* are occasionally scattered throughout the sward. The grassland is particularly species-rich with Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, Bitter-vetch *Lathyrus linifolius*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Slender St John's-wort

Hypericum pulchrum and Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile* all frequent within the short sward.

Where the soils are thin and the sward is open, bryophytes are common, with typical species such as Cypress-leaved Plait-moss *Hypnum cupressiforme*, Rough-stalked Feather-moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*, Neat Feather-moss *Pseudoscleropodium purum* and Springy Turf-moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

A number of scarce and notable plants are found at Killydonnelly. Many of the rocky outcrops are floristically rich and some support the uncommon herb Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica*. A range of orchid species also occur at Killydonnelly, including Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Heath Spotted-orchid *D. maculata*, Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and the scarce Chalk Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*. The notable Greater Burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and Creeping Willow *Salix repens* can be found throughout the sward.

Killydonnelly has been managed in a traditional way and has a high degree of naturalness. As a result, in addition to its grassland 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, artificial fertiliser or lime.
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.

KILLYDONNELLY

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

A statement of the Department's views about the management of Killydonnelly 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

Calcareous grassland

Calcareous grassland is 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. The former include notable plants.

Many of the more sensitive species associated with the grassland can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments, therefore the application of pesticides, including herbicides and fungicides, or any fertiliser should therefore be avoided.

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 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, 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 features of interest. The Department would encourage the continuation of this practice.

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 ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry, manure or herbicide to 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 grassland such as hedgerows and scrub, through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
hereunto affixed is authenticated
by

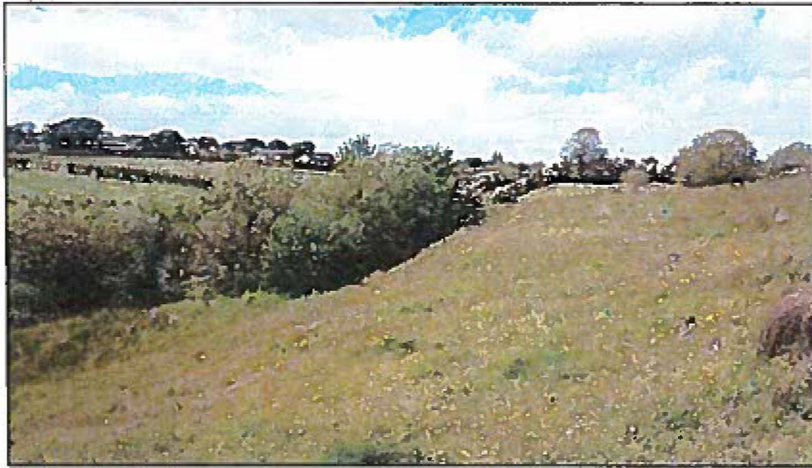


HELEN ANDERSON
Senior Officer of the
Department of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs

Dated the 1st of December 2017

KILLYDONNELLY

A SPECIAL PLACE...



View of Killydonnelly

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

Killydonnelly has been declared as an ASSI because of its species-rich dry grassland. A special type of species-rich grassland known as Calcareous grassland occurs at Killydonnelly. Such grasslands tend to occur 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 dry grasslands like Killydonnelly, have declined significantly across Northern Ireland and are now a particularly scarce resource.

support a dry grassland community. The driest grassland areas are dominated by the grasses Sheep's-fescue, Red Fescue, Common Bent and Sweet Vernal-grass, with frequent Heath-grass and Downy Oat-grass. Sedges are common and are widely interspersed amongst the grasses and include Glaucous Sedge, Spring-sedge, Carnation Sedge and Pill Sedge.

Many of the plants and animals within Killydonnelly are only found in habitats where traditional forms of land management are used. The use of artificial fertilizers, 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 orchids are not able to compete with the tougher grasses and as a result are lost.



Eyebright

Killydonnelly is located approximately 5km east of the village of Rasharkin. The grassland is situated on a west facing slope, along a low lying ridge. The underlying geology is dominated by rocks of the Lower Basalt Formation and the soils are of a type referred to as mineral gleys. Where the underlying basalt is close to the surface, the soils are thin and



Mountain Everlasting

Herb species are an integral component of the sward and the commonest include Eyebright, Lady's Bedstraw, Mouse-ear-hawkweed and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil. The grassland is particularly species-rich with Devil's-bit Scabious, Tormentil, Heath Milkwort, Bitter-vetch, Cat's-ear, Slender St John's-wort and Heath Bedstraw all frequent within the short sward.

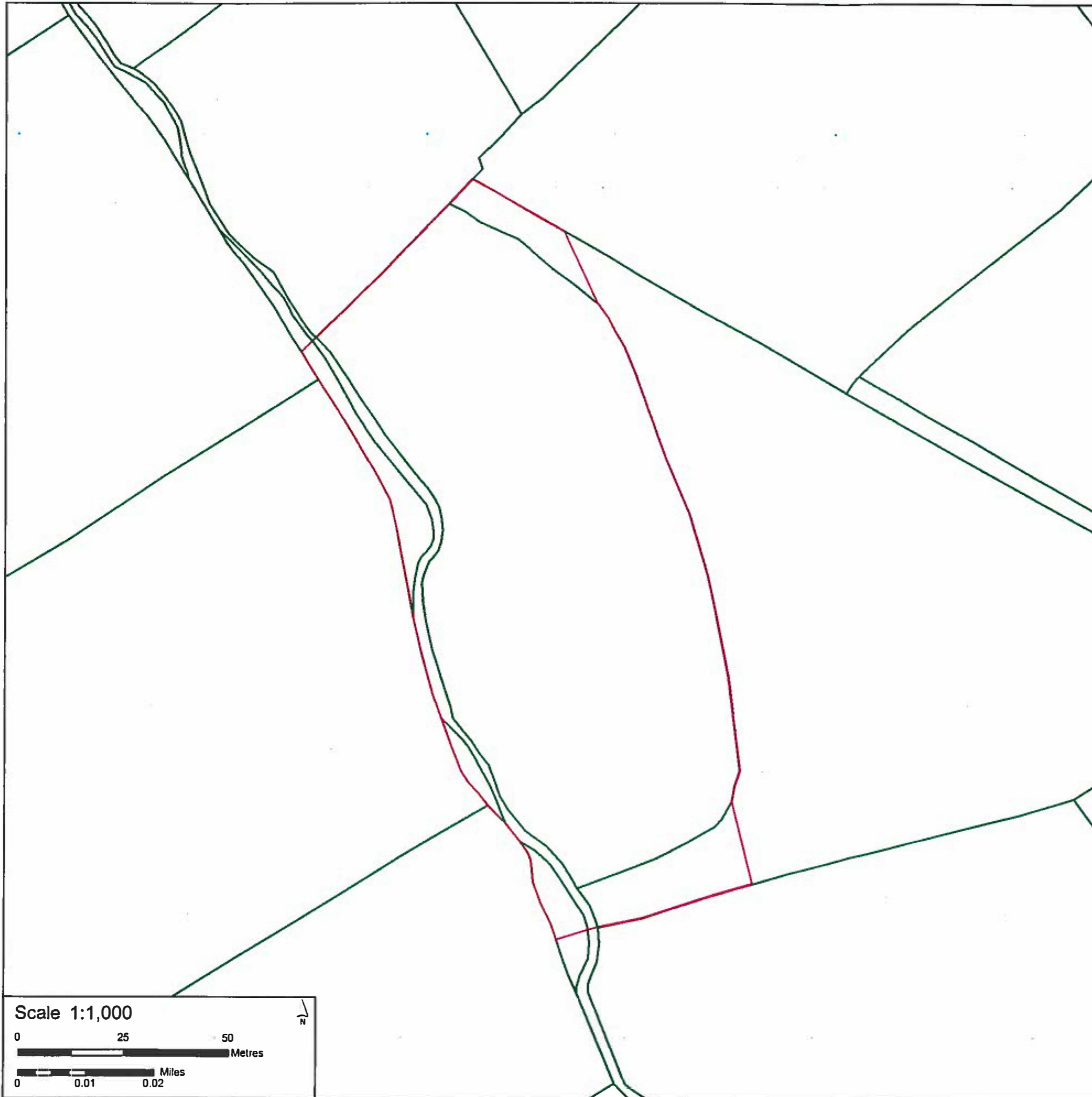
A number of notable plants are found at Killydonnelly. Many of the rocky outcrops are floristically rich and some support the uncommon herb Mountain Everlasting. A range of orchid species also occur, including Greater Butterfly-orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, Heath Spotted-orchid and the scarce Chalk Fragrant-orchid.



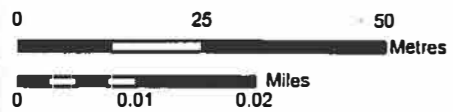
Chalk Fragrant-orchid

Correct management is essential for special places like Killydonnelly. 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 Killydonnelly. Northern Ireland Environment Agency is keen to work closely with landowners to maintain and enhance Killydonnelly ASSI.

KILLYDONNELLY ASSI



Scale 1:1,000



KILLYDONNELLY AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Map referred to in the Declaration dated: 1st December 2017

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

AREA OF SITE: 1.07 hectares

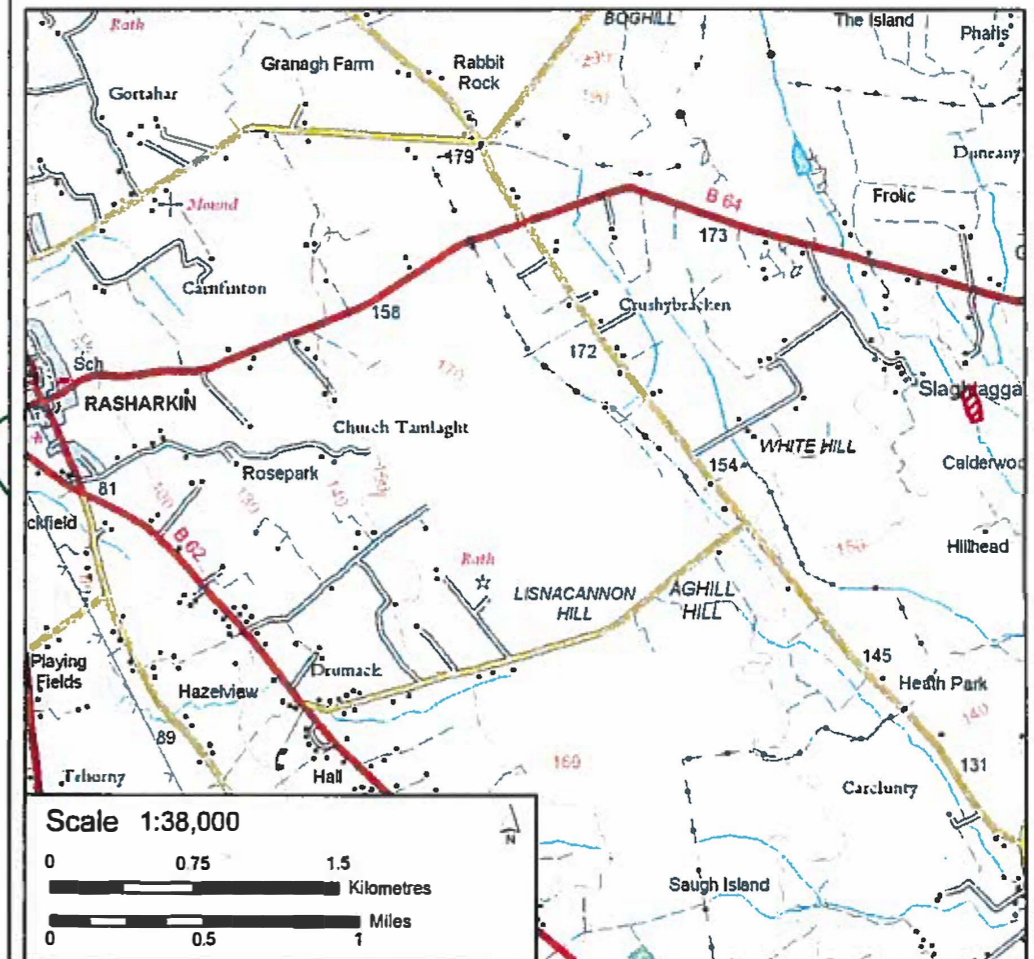
OS MAPS 1:50,000: Sheet No. 8
1:10,000: Sheet No. 42

IRISH GRID REFERENCE: ID 022 128

COUNCIL AREA: MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNTY: ANTRIM

HELEN ANDERSON
SENIOR OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS



Scale 1:38,000

