



Subject:	Belvoir Forest Area of Scientific Interest (ASSI)
Date:	13 October 2015
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Orla Maguire, Bio Diversity Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	To inform Members of the declaration of Belvoir Forest as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).
2.0	Recommendations
	The Committee is requested to note the designation of Belvoir as an ASSI and promote its importance and usage.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u> The Department of the Environment has confirmed the declaration of Belvoir as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) for its parkland and wood pasture habitat and associated species. The full citation is presented in Appendix 1 . The ASSI largely lies within the original Belvoir Estate and is now owned and managed by Forest Service as a commercial forest and recreational park, and by Belvoir Golf Club as a golf course. The Council owns and manages Moreland's Meadow which is within the ASSI. The entire ASSI is within the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

With the exception of Moreland's Meadow, the ASSI lies within the former Belvoir estate which was founded in the 18th century. Historic parklands and wood pastures are characterised by old, open-grown trees with significant amounts of standing and fallen deadwood.

Belvoir supports one of the largest concentrations of ancient and veteran trees in Northern Ireland. The scientific interest of the site relates to specialist biological communities which are associated with veteran and ancient trees and deadwood. These include invertebrates, fungi and lichens. It also contains the oldest known tree in Ireland.

Many rare and threatened species of invertebrates and fungi occur on the site. One such species is a cup fungi *Cheilymenia fraudans*, recorded in Moreland's Meadow the first record of this species in Britain and Ireland.

The site also supports an important wide range of plants and animal, including birds and mammals such as bats. The continued sensitive management of the site is required to maintain the rich assemblages of species on this nationally important site.

There is a requirement for the Council to maintain the scientific value of the site. Council staff will liaise with Departmental Officials to ensure the area within Council ownership is managed appropriately.

Financial & Resource Implications

There are no financial implications.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are currently no equality or good relations implications.

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Citation Document.