

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: GIRLEY BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 001580**

Girley Bog NHA is located 7 km south-west of Kells, mainly in the townlands Chamberlainstown, Girley, Drewstown Great and Ethelstown in Co. Meath. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog, and is bounded in parts by coniferous forestry to the south and north. The site is partially divided by a large drain that runs across the high bog. There is an area of hummocks and pools in the southern half of the high bog, although parts of the south-west have been afforested. Cutover is found all around this site and in the north-west and south-west the cutover has been utilised for forestry.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised Bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa* are common on areas of the high bog. The bog mosses *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. magellanicum* are common in the centre and south-west of the high bog and the scarce bog moss *S. fuscum* is found at the centre of the site. The bog moss *S. cuspidatum* is found in the pools at the centre of the bog and is also found in the tear pools in the north-west of the site in association with Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*). The bog moss *S. magellanicum* and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) are found growing on the edges of these tear pools. Young Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) are frequently encroaching on the high bog in the north-west and south-east of the site. In the south-west of the high bog there is coniferous forestry plantation. The cutover on the western half of the site is also dominated by coniferous forestry. The remainder of the cutover is dominated by Ling Heather and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) scrub.

Current landuses on the site include forestry, both on the high bog and on the cutover. There has been burning on the north-west of the high bog in the past. There is active peat-cutting in the north-west and south-east of the site. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. There are major drains running through the centre of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in loss of habitat, damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Girley Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks and pools. This site is one of the few remaining raised bogs in County Meath and represents the eastern extreme of the range of raised bogs in the country. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this

habitat type (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

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