SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FARRIHY LOUGH

SITE CODE: 000200

Farrihy Lough is situated approx. 5km north of Kilkee on the coast of west Clare. This is a small brackish lake surrounded by a continuous reed-bed of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). A large marshy floodplain dominates the majority of the site. The bulk of the site is made up of a variety of wet grasslands which vary in the species diversity in accordance with the degree of flooding. The more species rich areas support a diverse flora with Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and many more species typically associated with this habitat. The main interest of the site lies in its importance as a bird habitat. During harsh weather when other similar lake sites are frozen over, large flocks of waders find shelter and feeding ground at Farrihy Lough. Recent drainage schemes implemented by the local farming community will have serious effects on both the botanical but particularly the ornithological interests of this site. Already a significant drop in the water level was noted by a local observer over the last year. This may affect the number of birds using the site in the future. Continuous monitoring is required to ascertain the exact numbers of waders and duck using the site.

Due to the brackish nature of this lake complete freezing over is prevented during the winter months. This feature is of great importance to large numbers of waders and duck who flock to Farrihy Lough during these harsh weather conditions. Significant counts of waders using the lake have been recorded over the last few years. Up to 500+ Golden Plover and 300 Lapwing along with 40-50 Whooper Swans are known to use this site. For a small site there is a good range of habitats supporting a variety of floral species. The influence of the sea is reflected in the vegetation with many maritime species recorded from the area which include Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Buck's-horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*) and Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*).

5.11.2009