SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: EMLAGH EAST SALT MARSHES

SITE CODE: 001961

The sea reaches in to the Short Strand at Emlagh through a narrow channel between the sandstone rocks of Kinard Point and the sandhills of Doonshean. Inside, the bay is surrounded by a low-lying mixture of peat and mineral soil, stretching up to and beyond the Dingle road. Saltmarsh, reed-bed and cutover are the main habitats present along with the sand and mud flats of the bay. This intertidal area is used by Cormorant, Teal, Wigeon, Curlew and Oystercatcher but the numbers involved are small and of only local significance.

The actual shore of the inner bay has a few sloping areas on which terrestrial seaweed (*Fucus spiralis*) is prominent amongst the Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) and Saltmarsh Rush (*Juncus gerardii*). In most places however there is an abrupt step of peat which has been eroded by wave action and is not quite covered by ordinary high tides. Such a shore is overtopped by spring tides when a substantial amount of extra land is inundated.

For this reason upper saltmarsh vegetation prevails throughout the area with abundant Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) is present thinly in many places and becomes dominant as the salt influence falls off. Peaty sections which presumably were formerly covered by wet blanket bog are now generally dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), with either Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) or Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) locally. Some invasion by Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*) and gorse (*Ulex europaeus, U. gallii*) is occurring.

The sand dunes of Doonshean add extra diversity to the site which is otherwise quite uniform. They are of small extent but contain both stabilised and moving ground with flora that includes Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), Biting Stonecrop (*Sedum acre*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) and Sea-holly (*Eryngium maritimum*). Part of this area is suffering from overgrazing.

7.12.2009