SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BELLE LAKE

SITE CODE: 000659

The south-east of Ireland has comparatively few lakes, Belle Lake is one of the larger of them. It is an attractive lake which lies at about 50m above sea level, 7km south east of Waterford city. The water of the lake is clear and quite rich in calcium, which makes the occurrence of two rare aquatic plant species Quillwort, (*Isoetes lacustris*) and Six-stamened Waterwort (*Elatine hexandra*) all the more notable - these are species more normally associated with acidic, calcium deficient lakes.

A wide variety of other aquatic plants also grow in the lake including at least 4 species of pondweed (*Potamogeton* spp.). The north end of the lake is rocky and the shore slopes steeply – here the low growing species Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*) and spike-rush (*Eleocharis* spp.) are the main emergent species. However there are patches of tall emergent swamp on the east shore, and a thick zone of reed-swamp on the less steeply sloping, more sheltered, muddy shore typical of the west of the lake. This is mainly of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), but also includes stands of the rare Lesser Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*). This reed fringe is continuous with a large reed-bed to the south of the lake which has occasional willows (*Salix* spp.) throughout, and an Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willow woodland at its western end. The inclusion of a small Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and oak (*Quercus* spp.) woodland on the north-eastern shore adds to the diversity of habitats represented on site.

As for any substantial lake and reed-bed, this is an important site or birds. In particular the lake is used by regionally important numbers of Whooper Swan. This is one of the few extensive water bodies in south-east Ireland and as such is of great importance within the region. It has a varied aquatic and wetland flora that is of scenic as well as scientific interest.

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