SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BLARNEY BOG

SITE CODE: 001857

Blarney Bog is a small area of Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) fen, situated in the flat valley floor of the River Blarney. It is located 0.5km west of Blarney Town and 4.5km north-west of Cork City. It is bounded on the north side by a new road development and to the south of the river by the fences of the agricultural land abutting the wetland site. This wet area was formed through ponding of the Blarney River by a natural blockage at Gothic Bridge to the west of the site (probably a fault in the underlying bedrock). Sediments brought downstream from the Blarney River and its tributaries have accumulated and the soil is a fine silt with some peat. There was greater peat accumulation on the south side of the river (Inchancomain townland) but this has been cut away in the past, the only evidence of this activity remaining at the field edges. The vegetation on the south side is also of a more acidic nature. The area is damp throughout the year and is flooded in the winter particularly at the western side of the site.

The main habitats of the area are lowland wet grassland, both grazed and ungrazed and freshwater marsh/fen. The dominant species of the wet grassland are Reed Canary-grass, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and grasses such as Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Land to the west is generally wetter with herbs such as Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*), Greater Pond-sedge (*Carex riparia*) and Bladder-sedge (*C. vesicaria*). Commonly occurring herbs are Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), locally distributed in the sward are Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*) and Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). The land nearer the Blarney road is drier with a mixture of grasses and sedges with the ungrazed areas being more tussocky with herbs such as Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). There is considerable disturbance to the area as a new road development is occurring in the north of the site and soil/subsoil has been bulldozed onto some of this grassland.

South of the river the land is wetter with scattered willow (*Salix* spp.) trees, Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Tufted Hair-grass and Soft Rush dominating the vegetation. The wetter areas support the growth of Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Common Yellow-sedge (*Carex demissa*). Towards Horgan's Bridge in the east of the site, is an area dominated by tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*). The water course flora is not particularly rich but contains Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*). Less frequently found are Branched and Unbranched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum* and *S. emersum* respectively) and pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.).

The area as a whole is used by a variety of bird species. Birds noted to be breeding in the site include Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers, Reed Bunting, Stonechaff, Meadow Pipet, Snipe and Mallard. In the water Snipe and Mallard are seen feeding in the area and also Teal. Hen Harriers, a species listed in Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive and also a Red Data Book species whose status is threatened in Ireland, are regularly seen in this area, hunting over the wetter ground and sometimes nesting in the reed-beds.

The area is threatened by the road developments to the north of the site which has disturbed and destroyed some of the grassland, and the closer proximity of the traffic may disturb the birds which breed in the area. It may also alter the hydrology of the site.

27.11.2009