SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CUSROE, WHIDDY ISLAND

SITE CODE: 000110

This spit consists of an accreting, gravel site on the south-east part of Whiddy Island, 3km west of Bantry in Bantry Bay, Cork.

A colony of Arctic Terns has been known from here since 1834, the fortunes of which have fluctuated over the years. In 1984, 56 pairs were present, this constituted 28% of the Cork population at that time, and the second largest Arctic Tern colony in the region. In 1986 the colony had reached levels of national importance, with 120 pairs present, but in 1993 only 7 or 8 pairs occurred, with larger numbers then being found on Sheelane Island, (another proposed NHA) some 6km west.

In 1986 Whiddy Island was recorded as having 10 breeding pairs of Cormorants, 10 pairs of Shags and 65 pairs of Herring Gulls in addition to the Arctic Terns, although these figures would apply to Whiddy Island as a whole and not just to the shingle spit. The Arctic Tern is listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, and so this proposed NHA makes an important contribution to the species' conservation, even if numbers are at times quite low.

5.11.2009