SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ST. SENAN'S LOUGH

SITE CODE: 001025

This is an acidic lake is situated approximately 7km east of Kilrush in Co. Clare. The lake has a significant marsh habitat. The site runs in an east to west direction and is approximately 1km long. The immediate area of lake and marsh is 11ha. To the north a steeply sloping hill mould reaches in excess of 60m while to the south the slope and elevation are less marked. The road adjacent to the northern boundary runs alongside the ancient Church of St. Senan. Closer to the lake the Well of St. Senan lies on the site boundary. This well and Church are places of pilgrimage in summer when the periphery of the lake is regularly walked by pilgrims.

Broadly speaking there are three important habitats here. Although the most obvious, the lake itself is less valuable than the surrounding marsh. The food for wildfowl produced in the lake is not as great as in a limestone lake due to its acidic nature, so wildfowl numbers may not be large. However, the lake margins are colonised by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) in places. A little way back Lesser Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*) is very common. This is associated with a number of other plants notably some mosses including the peat-forming Sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum* spp). As these plants have thrived here they have gradually filled in much of what once was open water. Peat is being formed here in this very wet moss-rich marsh. As such this is a thriving habitat and is going through a long term process which was once very common in this Country. Elsewhere in the site there is abundant evidence of cutaway bog, some still being cut. This is peat which was formed long ago indicating that St. Senan's Lough once stretched over almost the entire area. Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) are common in this cutaway bog.

The presence of open water marsh including Sphagnum mosses, and cutaway bog indicate that this is a valuable site. Its small size does not take away from its value, on the contrary, it allows for a measure of control not practicable on larger sites. Strict control on drainage and possible fertiliser run-off are required to ensure this small site continues to develop naturally as it has done to date.

16.11.2009