SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYNBARNY FEN

SITE CODE: 001573

This fen lies in a small, deep, artificially-created valley between the embankments of the Royal Canal and the nearby railway, and is situated about 3km west-north-west of Longwood in Co. Meath.

In 1972 An Foras Forbartha described the core fen area as rich in sedges (such as *Carex diandra, C. lepidocarpa, C. disticha, C. panicea, C. flacca* and *C. rostrata*). Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Few-flowered Spike-rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*) and Variegated Horsetail (*Equisetum variegatum*) were also observed. The latter species is relatively rare in Ireland.

In June 1993 an ecologist's visit confirmed the continued presence of the fen. The margins are dominated by scrub mainly composed of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). At the southern end of the site Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees are colonising.

The level of human activities within the site is low. There is some evidence of littering and rubbish dumping. The use of the canal for navigational purposes should have little impact on the site quality. However, dredging of the canal is a threat if the spoil is dumped onto the site. Also, the water level within the canal may impact on the wetness of adjoining lands and hence the quality of the fen site.

Ballynabarny Fen contains a good floral representation of a fen community. This habitat is relatively uncommon and the presence of Variegated Horsetail is a bonus. The adjacent canal adds habitat diversity to the site.

23.11.2009