SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LIFFEY VALLEY

SITE CODE: 000128

The Liffey Valley site is situated along the River Liffey between Leixlip Bridge on the Kildare-Dublin border and downstream of the weir at Glenaulin, Palmerstown, Co. Dublin. The river meanders through low hills for much of its course through the site and forms the focus for the site itself. The Mill Race between Palmerstown and the weir at the Wren's Nest Public House is also included in the site.

The river is a Salmon river and there are a series of weirs along the river between Palmerstown and Leixlip. The water level in the Mill Race has dropped and the channel has been filled with vegetation in a number of areas as a result.

The main terrestrial habitat included within the site is mixed deciduous woodland on fertile, limey alluvium and boulder clay, in which Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is dominant in some areas. Elsewhere Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and willow species (*Salix* spp.) are common and there are also some stands of larch (*Larix* spp.) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*) has been recorded on a number of tree species.

The ground flora commonly includes Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), voilet species (*Viola* spp.), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*) and Hart's-tongue (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*). These woodlands occur on both sides of the river and normally consist of old estate woodlands.

A wet marsh occurs on the strip of land between the Mill Race and the river east of the metal bridge and west of the paint factory. This marsh is fed by seepage from the Mill Race and plant species such as Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and sweet-grass (*Glyceria* spp.) occur here. This strip of land also contains rough grassland which is not regularly grazed. Much of the river bank and the banks of the Mill Race are fringed with willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).

The threatened Green Figwort (*Scrophularia umbrosa*), a species listed in the Irish Red Data Book, is recorded from a number of stations along the river within the site. This stretch of the river Liffey has the greatest number of recently recorded populations of this species in Ireland. The rare and legally protected Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*) (Flora Protection Order 1987) has been recorded from the woodlands in this site. This species has only been recorded in Kildare and Dublin, at sites on the river Liffey, since 1970. The threatened Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*), listed in the Irish Red Data Book, is also recorded from these woodlands.

The section of river within the site is used by canoeists. The West Link Bridge spans the valley west of Palmerstown. Recent management of woodlands at Brooklawn and

Quarryvale has cleared a lot of Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and undergrowth. Some mature Beech have been removed from this area.

This site is part of the Liffey Valley Special Amenity Areas Order 1990. The site is important because of the diversity of the habitats within the site, ranging from aquatic to terrestrial. A number of rare and threatened plant species have been recorded from the site.

5.11.2009