SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ARDAKILLIN LOUGH

SITE CODE: 001617

Ardakillin Lough is located approximately 3km south-west of Strokestown, Co. Roscommon. The underlying geology of this area is carboniferous limestone.

The main habitat in this site is a fen and flush community. Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) is the most frequent species with Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Plant species commonly associated with this vegetation type include Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Marsh Horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*).

The lake itself is also an important habitat with a band of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) surrounding it. Behind this, Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) gives way to a more complex community including Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*) and Square-stalked St. John's-wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*).

The site is locally important for Wigeon (12), Teal (40), Mallard (26), Tufted Duck (8) and Lapwing (40) (2 counts, 1 season). The Irish Hare has been recorded within this site. This species is listed in the Red Data Book as it is an internationally important species.

Threats to this site include drainage and the modification of water courses, burning and the application of artificial fertilisers. Drainage would damage the present area significantly as it partly depends on a high seasonal water-table. Burning of the vegetation is also an adverse influence and has recently been noted occurring at the site. Burning causes the increase of Purple Moor-grass. Application of fertiliser will bring about a change in the water quality of the site as well as altering the floral composition of the habitats within the site.

Ardakillin Lough shows a rich diversity of wetland communities as well as being important for its bird populations. The lake acts as a refuge when the regional water-table is low and the turloughs are dry. The site is also of archaeological interest with the abundance of crannógs and other remains.

24.11.2009