SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DERRY LOUGH

SITE CODE: 001444

Derry Lough is a relatively small area of wet grassland, fen, fen woodland and open water situated about 7km north-west of Ballymahon, Co. Longford and about 3km from the shore of Lough Ree. It is bounded on the east by sloping farmland and on the west by a bog on which large-scale peat harvesting is on-going by Bord na Mona. The water table is kept high by the Lough Ree levels.

The fen vegetation consists of large abundant tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) with an unusually high density of the uncommon wetland plant Water Dock (*Rumex hydrolapathum*), and common plants such as Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*). In the north-west, Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) has become dominant and this rapidly grades into reeds and open water. The transition between wet grassland and the fen in the central part is 'quaking' indicating a relatively recent succession from open water to 'closed' vegetation. The small areas of open water in the north and south still attract small numbers of winter wildfowl and the reeds and fen support breeding Water Rail.

Although the transition from lake to woodland, which has been occurring for very many years, has been accelerated by a certain amount of drainage, Derry Lough still has many interesting features. Furthermore, the fen woodland resulting from succession in the future will be a relatively large area of wet semi-natural woodland in an area where such woodland is rare. Derry Lough is a valuable complement to habitats on the shores of Lough Ree.

20.11.2009