SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MEENYBRADDAN BOG

SITE CODE: 001177

Meenybraddan Bog is an area of lowland blanket bog located 8.5km south-east of Ardara mostly in the townlands of Meenybraddan, Meenacurrin and Croagh in south-west Co. Donegal. Altitude is 140m. Bedrock geology is quartzite.

This small area of blanket bog was originally part of an extensive system of blanket bogs in this locality, most of which has been degraded through peat cutting activities. The site contains a good diversity of characteristic blanket bog features including bog pools, inter-connecting pools, hummock and hollow systems and a number of wet flushes. Lough Namanfin is included within the site boundary and areas of cutaway are found around the eastern, northern and western margins.

The main habitat type within the site is a small area of lowland blanket bog with flats dominated by Deergrass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and the mosses *Campylopus atrovirens* and *Sphagnum capillifolium*. Hummocks are low and mostly composed of *Racomitrium lanuginosum* with some Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum*, lichens (*Cladonia portentosa* and *C. ciliata var. tenuis*) and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. Inter-connecting pools occur within this area, but are rather small and support Common Cottongrass and bog mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. auriculatum* with *S. compactum*, *S. magellanicum* and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) occurring on their margins.

A small species-rich flush, draining to the west is dominated by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) with abundant Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Other notable species recorded in this area include Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Common Yellow-sedge (*Carex demissa*), Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*), Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*), Many-stalked Spike-rush (*Eleocharis multicaulis*), Pale Butterwort (*Pinguicula lusitanica*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and mosses *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Campylium stellatum* and *Scorpidium scorpioides* (the latter two species indicate calcareous groundwater influence) and liverwort *Calypogeia sphagnicola*. Several small channels draining this flush have abundant Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*). An area of bog between the blanket bog flats and the lake is dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*).

Dominant species on the shores of Lough Namanfin are Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autmnalis*), Common Yellow-sedge, Carnation Sedge, Sharp-flowered Rush, Marsh Ragwort (*Senecio aquaticus*) and Devil's-bit Scabious. Additional species recorded include Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), Marsh Horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula*

ulmaria), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*).

Irish Hare, an Irish Red Data Book species, is recorded on the site.

Current land uses on the site include peat cutting and grazing. Active peat cutting is taking place in the eastern portion of the site. Areas surrounding the bog are being cut and have been reclaimed for agriculture with much of the grassland improved. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and nutrient enrichment of Lough Namanfin. All these activities have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological condition of the site and may pose a continuing threat to its conservation.

Meenybraddan Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation value and, although small in extent, supports a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats including wet flushes, inter-connecting pools and hummock/hollow formations. It contains a good diversity of species characteristic of lowland blanket bog and is one of the few intact bogs in this part of Co. Donegal. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource and is largely confined to coastal regions with cool, wet, oceanic climates at temperate latitudes. North-west Europe contains some of the best developed areas of blanket bog in the world. Lowland blanket bog comprises less than 3% of the world's peatlands. In Europe this type of blanket bog is restricted to Ireland, Britain, Norway and Iceland. The lowland blanket bog that occurs in Ireland is considered to be an extreme hyperoceanic variant of the habitat type, found nowhere else in the world except on the coastal fringes of north-west Scotland.