SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DUNANY POINT

SITE CODE: 001856

Dunany Point is a coastal headland comprised of loosely consolidated glacial deposits at the southern end of Dundalk Bay halfway between Annagassan and Clogher Head.

These prominent low sea cliffs comprise large to medium sized rock fragments in a clay matrix. Parts of the cliffs are covered in vegetation communities which show a maritime influence. Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) and Buck's-horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*) are quite common. However, many of the cliff faces are experiencing rapid erosion and are devoid of vegetation. The slopes are very unstable with recent mudslides and several large collapse features.

Below the cliffs, the full transition from terrestrial to marine habitats can be seen. On the southern end, the beach is comprised of sandy sediment with occasional rocky patches, while on the northern end the beach is comprised of rocky mudflats with a tall bank of shingle between the high and low water mark.

The foreshore consists of small pebble to boulder sized rock fragments of siltstone, limestone and occasional sandstone. Further offshore, the extensive low tide sandflats and mudflats are frequented by waterfowl such as Curlew, Shelduck, Cormorant, Great Crested Grebes, Mallard, Redbreasted Merganser, Knot, Redshank and Oystercatchers. A number of Light-bellied Brent Geese were also recorded here while feeding on eelgrass (*Zostera* spp.) on the foreshore during an O.P.W. survey in 1994.

According to an An Foras Forbatha report (1972), this headland is part of a moraine which was deposited during the Pleistocene period. This deposit represents a re-advance of the ice which occurred after the glacial ice had covered the Carlingford and Mourne Mountains. Stratification in these glacial deposits can be clearly seen, showing the transition from well sorted, coarse grained units to fine grained, clay-rich till.

In addition to its educational value, this site also provides a good example of the variety of coastal habitats on the Irish east coast. The occurrence of shingle beach, (listed for conservation in the E.U. Habitats Directive) and the presence of Light-bellied Brent Geese, an internationally important species (listed as Annex II in the E.U. Birds Directive and legally protected in Ireland) add to the scientific importance of this site.

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