SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH SLAWN

SITE CODE: 001443

Lough Slawn is a small lough about 1km from Elfeet Bay, on the shores of Lough Ree, and some 12km south of Lanesborough. The lough, the area around the lough and an extension to the south, have been combined in a rationalisation of two former Areas of Scientific Interest (ASIs) to form a site now designated a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). Much of the western boundary of the NHA is formed by Culnagore Wood, itself a part of the large Lough Ree NHA, and the southern boundary of the site again runs down to the Lough Ree NHA.

The lough is fringed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) which merges into a grassland for the main part dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and willow (*Salix* spp.) are scattered throughout. Old peat cuttings surround the basin, with a few pools and with some peatland vegetation. The underlying geology is of Carboniferous limestone, and the influence of calcium enrichment is quite clear throughout the site with species such as Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) in the marsh and swamp areas, and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) in the peatier areas.

The same base enrichment is evident in the fields to the south where Purple Moor-grass is again frequent along with other grasses such as Tall Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*).

The base enrichment and the continuity of responsible management have combined to make this an important site. Even in a comparatively small area the diversity of habitats of interest is remarkable, and its position in relation to Culnagore Wood and the Lough Ree shoreline make this an exceptional area in a botanical sense.

20.11.2009