SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CORSTOWN LOUGHS

SITE CODE: 000552

Corstown Loughs occupy a scenic valley surrounded by drumlins 6km west of Ardee in Co. Meath. This Natural Heritage Area comprises a variety of habitats including medium and small sized freshwater lakes, wet woodland, cutaway bog and marginal wet grassland. The site is surrounded by rich agricultural land used for cattle grazing.

The lakes are underlain by marl and have an interesting calcicole flora. Several plant species of note occur here including Lesser Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*) which is rare and occurs mainly in the north, Tufted-sedge (*Carex elata*) which is locally frequent in the centre but rare elsewhere, and Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*) which is also listed as rare.

Extensive reed-beds consisting of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) with some Common Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) occur on the fringes of the lakes. There are also areas of carr composed of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and willows (*Salix* spp.).

The lakeshore on southern end of the site has been affected by agricultural improvement, but the lakes have retained a natural character. At the northern end, agricultural improvement has also decreased the area of scientific interest. The raised bog adjacent to the site has been destroyed by turbary but some of the cutaway areas on the margins are recolonising well with small seedlings of Downy Birch and a variety of herbaceous plants and byrophytes creating a sparse cover over bare peat.

This site contains a good diversity of habitats for its size and supports several rare plant species of regional interest. Corstown Lough Greater is also one of the largest lakes in the area and provides a refuge for local wildfowl species.

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