SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH BANNOW

SITE CODE: 000449

Lough Bannow proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is located some 2km east of Lanesborough in Co. Longford, just to the south of the Longford Road (N63). The outline of water of Lough Bannow, as surveyed in 1907, is marked on the 6" Ordnance Survey map. However swamp symbols are drawn across the entire surface, which indicates that the lake was drying out and/or infilling with vegetation at that time.

There is indeed very little open water left. The location of the lake is marked by a large reed-bed dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). To the east Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) are colonising areas. Outside the site of the old lake, marshes and wet, sometimes inundated grasslands are included in the NHA area. A low hill to the east of the site of the old lough separates the two main wetland areas.

Even given the proximity of Lough Ree (which itself an NHA), this represents one of the largest terrestrial wetland complexes in the area. Transitions from swamps to grasslands are interesting, if somewhat understudied.

Little is known about the use of the area by waterbirds, but it presents ideal nesting habitat for some species.

The site is traversed by deep drains. It is clear that management of water levels is important for land use in this area. Summer grazing is an important factor influencing marsh and grassland vegetation on the site. However, drainage and land reclamation can potentially threaten the ecological value of this site. The site is also vulnerable to nutrient enrichment, which can lead to a change in species composition of the vegetation. With ongoing eutrophication, wetland species may be replaced with plants with higher nutrient demands such as Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), and willowherbs (*Epilobium* spp.).

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