SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DROMORE AND BLEACH LOUGHS

SITE CODE: 001030

This site is situated 15km west of Limerick City, 2.5km off the N69 at New Kildimo. It is 3km south of the south Shannon Estuary at Mellon Point. The low-lying lakes and fen are overlooked by undulating terrain which reaches a peak of 200 feet on the west side. The soil is a brown earth with a limestone base. Where exposed, the hills are of fluvo-glacial material leading to well drained soils. Closer to the lakes the soil gives way to fen peat. Any outcrops are of limestone and are largely vegetated.

The open water lakes make up the main habitat in this site. Although occupying the bulk of the site, this open water has not necessarily been examined. Being alkaline, the diversity of flora and fauna, notably invertebrates, can be expected to be high. The lake margins are fringed with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Great fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*). The lakes are fed by drains running through the fen which separates the lakes. While some peripheral drains have been cleared others have been allowed fill with vegetation. Near the reed-beds these drains support a diverse flora including White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*).

The second major habitat in this site is the area of fen between the lakes. This is a varied habitat ranging from wet fen near the lakes to a transitional fen/raised bog near the centre. Old cutaways, probably going back to the last century are now regenerating. Plants of the cutaway banks include Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) which is locally abundant, with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). The former species indicates the dry nature of this peat which lies adjacent to the cutaways. In addition, there is extensive Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and some gorse (*Ulex* spp.) and willow (*Salix* spp.) scrub.

Zoological interest is greatest where scrub provides good cover for foxes and perhaps other fauna. No significant waterfowl have been noted in the site during the breeding season.

Threats to the site are likely to be scrub clearance.

Bleach Lough and Dromore Lough are actively fished and ‘boated’ lakes which do not appear to suffer or be under threat of pollution. The fen between the lakes is variously regenerating, where cutover, and possibly developing a transitional phase to raised bog formation. This is a valuable asset. On the western boundary of Dromore Lough is a large conifer wood. This once supported almost 30ha of oak woodland. This was cut and removed in the 1940s. Currently the ground flora is unexpectedly high in this conifer woodland. If deciduous trees were used when replanting eventually takes place serious consideration ought to be given to including this woodland in the site. Although a lake/fen site with a diversity of sub-habitats even

greater diversity is achieved when surprisingly species-rich scrub habitats are taken into consideration.

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