SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Moyclare Bog SAC

Site Code: 000581

Moyclare Bog is a small raised bog situated 4 km west of Ferbane in Co. Offaly. Its mean height above sea level is 54 m. On the western edge of the bog, a low peat face with no perimeter drain lies adjacent to wet peaty pasture, which has a spring-line at its junction with mineral soil. The water from this spring disappears under the peat dome of the bog. The site occurs in close proximity to a number of important raised bogs close to the floodplain of the River Shannon.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[7110] Raised Bog (Active)*
[7120] Degraded Raised Bog
[7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation

Active raised bog comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) is high, and where some or all of the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. Degraded raised bog corresponds to those areas of high bog whose hydrology has been adversely affected by peat cutting, drainage and other land use activities, but which are capable of regeneration. The Rhynchosporion habitat occurs in wet depressions, pool edges and erosion channels where the vegetation includes White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and/or Brown Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), and at least some of the following associated species, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), sundews (*Drosera* spp.), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*).

Much of the bog surface is active and very wet, though not quaking, with an almost 100% cover of bog mosses beneath a sparse cover of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and abundant Deergrass. Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxyccocos*) is especially abundant on lawns of the moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*. Rhynchosporion vegetation is best developed in the wettest central area of the high bog where numerous small pools occur. Typical plant species within these pool areas include the bog mosses *S. cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*, Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). There are also a number of small lawn areas on the wet bog surfaces dominated by White Beak-sedge and, locally, the rare Brown Beak-sedge. Active bog moss growth approaches unusually close to the western margin of the bog.

Degraded raised bog is largely confined to the margins of the high bog area where drainage effects are most pronounced. In common with many areas of degraded raised bog the vegetation at this site is dominated by mixtures of Heather, Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*), Deergrass, Bog Asphodel and Carnation Sedge. *Sphagnum* cover is poor, typically <20%, and there are other indicators of degradation such as the presence of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*).

A small flushed hollow on the dome of the bog contains Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. The bog becomes drier towards the northern boundary, especially north of an old track which traverses the dome. In many of the driest areas of the high bog there is invasion of Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) onto the bog surface.

As well as the rare Brown Beak-sedge, other scarce plants known from the site include Fir Clubmoss (*Huperzia selago*) and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*.

Whilst relatively small, Moyclare bog is a site of high conservation value as it is relatively intact and contains examples of the Annex I habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (Rhynchosporion). The uncut peat dome has an unusually high proportion of active raised bog.