SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Cloonshanville Bog SAC

Site Code: 000614

Cloonshanville Bog is located approximately 2 km east of Frenchpark in Co. Roscommon. The eastern boundary of the site is the Breedoge River, while the southern is the Frenchpark/Elphin road. The bog developed in a shallow basin in a groundwater discharge zone and is underlain by low-permeability, clayey limestones. The regional water table has been lowered, but evidence of groundwater inputs are seen on and around the high bog.

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
[91D0] Bog Woodland*

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*).

At this site the majority of the uncut high bog is dominated by degraded raised bog. However, a significant area of active bog occurs in the central and northern part of the bog. In the wettest areas hummock/pool systems have developed and it is here that Rhynchosporion vegetation is best represented. The pools and/or quaking lawns are dominated by the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and White Beak-sedge. Other species which have been noted from this area include Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Bog Asphodel and the bog mosses *S. papillosum* and *S. pulchrum*. Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) is a common species of the hummocks, occurring with such species as Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Bog-rosemary

(*Andromeda polifolia*) and the bog mosses *S. fuscum* and *S. pulchrum*. The cover of lichens is generally good.

A large flush area occurs in the centre of the bog dome. The main body of the flush supports an extensive area of bog woodland, an extremely rare Irish woodland type. The woodland is well-developed structurally and contains a diverse range of plant species. It is dominated by birch (*Betula* sp.), with some willow (*Salix* sp.) occurring also, and with an understorey of tussocky Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) occurs in places.

Much of the degraded bog still retains a raised bog flora and the main species are Heather, Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel and Deergrass, along with scarcer species such as Cranberry and Bog-rosemary. *Sphagnum* cover is variable, but is generally below 30% within these degraded areas. The nationally rare *Sphagnum pulchrum* is common throughout areas of degraded bog within the site.

There are three areas of conifer plantation on the peat along the margins of the site. These were planted within the past 25 years. In places the trees have not grown well, and in these areas there is still a significant understorey of typical raised bog plants. It is likely that bog vegetation would regenerate well in these areas following tree removal and the implementation of some restoration measures such as drain blocking.

The high bog is surrounded by cutover areas, some of which have been converted to improved grassland. The Breedoge River, which marks the eastern boundary of the site, adds habitat diversity and is of some importance for waterfowl, including Mallard and Snipe.

Much of the uncut high bog is in a degraded state as a result of drainage associated with peat cutting. Afforestation has also affected the integrity of the bog. Additionally, it is possible that dredging of the adjacent river may, indirectly, have had a deleterious effect on the hydrology of the habitat. Further drying out of the surface of the bog remains a threat.

Cloonshanville Bog is a site of high conservation importance as it contains good examples of the Annex I habitats bog woodland, active raised bog, degraded raised bog and Rhynchosporion depressions on peat substrates, with the first two habitats being listed with priority status. The area of bog woodland ranks as one of the most extensive and well-preserved examples of wet bog woodland in the country. The bog also supports a large population of the uncommon bog moss, *Sphagnum pulchrum*.