SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Tamur Bog SAC

Site Code: 001992

Tamur Bog runs along the border with Northern Ireland and is located on the southern side of the main Pettigo/Laghy road in Co. Donegal, about mid-way between these two locations. The topography is predominantly undulating, over a bedrock of acid gneiss with some basic intrusions. This site consists of separate blocks mainly of blanket bog, wet heath and oligotrophic lakes.

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):

[4010] Wet Heath
[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*
[7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation

Within the areas of blanket bog at this site good micro-topographical variation, as well as variation in the vegetation, is seen, brought about by the occurrence of wet, quaking areas, lawns, inter-connecting pools and flushes. Overall the blanket bog is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), with Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) all being common also. There are low, broad hummocks, often occluded by the herb layer, mostly consisting of the bog moss *Sphagnum capillifolium*, along with *S. tenellum* and lichens. Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) is present in flushes.

Well developed pool and hummock systems occur around parts of Lough Vearty, at the south of the site and along the border, east of Lough Awaddy. Quaking lawns are a feature of these areas, and Rhynchosporion vegetation is very well represented in these wet areas. Species noted in the lawns include the bog moss *Sphagnum pulchrum* and sundews (*Drosera* spp.), and in the pools the bog mosses *S. cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*) and Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*) are found. White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) also occurs on the lawns and in pools. Hummocks consisting mainly of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* with Heather and small amounts of Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) are present, though some hummocks with the mosses *Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum* occur also. Several rare lichen species occur in these wet areas, mainly associated with the hummocks.

At the south of the site is a rare bog type which is intermediate in several respects between blanket and raised bog. Species found in the wet areas are similar to those described above. The islands formed in the pools support small Downy Birch (*Betula*

pubescens) trees, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*).

Wet heath areas are found associated with sloping ground and in areas higher than the blanket bog. The vegetation, especially where the habitat occurs at the south of the site, is dominated by Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Purple Moor-grass, Deergrass, Heather and cottongrasses, with scattered *Sphagnum capillifolium*. Hummocks are small and composed of *Racomitrium lanuginosum* with lichens. At the north of the site, in the vicinity of Tamur Hill, the ground is steeper and drier and the vegetation is dominated by Bilberry, Heather and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

Several streams and oligotrophic lakes occur within the site. Vegetation seen in the lakes includes Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), Perfoliate Pondweed (*Potamogeton perfoliatus*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). There are also quaking areas at the edges of some of the smaller lakes and these support the bog mosses *Sphagnum recurvum*, *S. palustre*, *S. capillifolium*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. papillosum*, the moss *Aulacomnium palustre*, with Bogbean and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*). On the rocky shores of the larger lakes, species seen include Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*) and Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*).

Species present along the streams and at some lake edges include False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Soft Rush, Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) and Heather. Several tree and shrub species, such as Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), willow (*Salix* spp.), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and the invasive alien species Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) also occur.

Other habitats found within the site include fens, flushes and freshwater marshes.

Golden Plover, Hen Harrier and Merlin, bird species which are often associated with bog habitats and which are listed in Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, breed in small numbers on the site. Greenland White-fronted Goose, also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, use the bog for feeding in winter. Red Grouse occur on the site.

The Otter, listed under Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, occurs within the site. Much suitable habitat for this species is present. The Irish Hare, Badger, Common Lizard and Common Frog are also present. The Irish Hare and Badger are listed under the Bern Convention, are all of these species are legally protected under the Wildlife Act, 1976, and are also Red Data Book species.

Land use at the site consists of grazing, by both cattle and sheep, with some areas to the north of the site and east of Belalt being over-grazed. Eutrophication of some of the smaller lakes is evident. Peat cutting around the site is intensive and commercial peat cutting has been extended onto the site. Drainage is associated with this. Much

of the area around the site has been afforested and many owners within the site have applied for forestry grants. The Ballintra/Pettigo road cuts through the site.

This site is of scientific interest as it represents a very good example of lowland blanket bog which is mostly intact. Other associated habitats, especially wet heath and Rhynchosporion vegetation, add to the interest of the site. The site also supports some important bird species.