



**Site Name: Derrinlough (Cloonkeenleananode) Bog SAC**

**Site Code: 002197**

Derrinlough (Cloonkeenleananode) Bog SAC occurs within the larger raised bog system that is designated as Derrinlough Bog NHA (001254). It is situated 5 km north-west of Moylough, Co. Galway. It lies within the townlands of Derrinlough, Ballinphuill, Cloonkeen Oughter, Cuilmore and Cloonkeenleananode. The site is part of a raised bog system that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site occurs as three blocks of previously afforested raised bog which are mostly bordered by open, uncut high bog and agricultural land. The underlying geology of the site is carboniferous limestone.

The site is dominated by high bog surface which was previously completely afforested with the coniferous species Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). Much of this forestry was removed in 2005 with the remaining areas of conifer plantation clear-felled and removed during 2012. This removal of conifers has resulted in the presence of regenerating bog vegetation at varying stages of development. Small areas of previously afforested cutover bog also occur within the site and these are generally undergoing colonization by scrub dominated by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*).

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):

[7120] Degraded Raised Bog
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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 to Active Raised Bog (7110) within 30 years.

The majority of the regenerating bog vegetation within the site is dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) with Hare's tail Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) also locally frequent. Other common species in the vegetation include Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Common Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), the mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *Hypnum jutlandicum* and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*. In the south-east of the site an area of previously afforested bog which is very wet and quaking occurs. The vegetation in this area is dominated by Hare's tail Cotton-grass and the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*. The uncommon bog moss *Sphagnum pulchrum* has also been recently recorded from this area. In some of the previously afforested cutover and

marginal high bog areas, Downy Birch scrub has colonized and will continue to develop.

Current landuse within the site consists of conservation management with the removal of conifer plantations and the blocking of drains both on the high bog and on the cutover. A large area of coniferous forestry has been clear-felled and drain-blocked as part of the Coillte E.U. Life Project *Demonstrating Best Practice in Raised Bog Restoration in Ireland*. The restoration of these previously afforested areas will, in the longer term, improve the ecological connectivity of the adjoining bog areas and will also help to maintain or improve the hydrology of the adjoining areas. The colonization of Downy Birch and conifers poses an ongoing threat to the drier high bog areas which have been recently cleared of conifers and will require some ongoing management to avoid impacts to sensitive areas.

Derrinlough (Cloonkeenleananode) Bog SAC is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of raised bog (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level. The site is being actively managed for conservation as part of the Coillte E.U. LIFE Project.