



Site Name: Aughrim (Aghrane) Bog SAC

Site Code: 002200

Aughrim (Aghrane) Bog SAC occurs within the larger raised bog system that is designated as Aughrim Bog NHA (001227). It is located 4 km north-west of Ballygar, mainly in the townlands of Monasternallea (Abbeygrey), Knockaunrainy and Aghrane (Castlekelly) in Co. Galway. The site lies 2 km west of the River Suck. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in parts by coniferous forestry to the south and north.

The site is partially divided by an old track and associated drains that run across the high bog. There is an area of hummocks and pools in the middle of the high bog and a section of this area is wet and quaking. In the south of the site the high bog margins have been afforested with conifers in the past.

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 (number in brackets is the Natura 2000 code):

[7120] Degraded Raised Bog

Degraded Raised Bog corresponds to those areas of high bog where the 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 current landuse on the site is for nature conservation and the area is being restored under an EU LIFE project by Coillte. The plantation forestry which used to occupy parts of the high bog and cutover in the south and east of the site has been removed recently and the associated drains have been blocked. In these previously afforested areas the regenerating bog vegetation is dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) with Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), the mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *Hypnum jutlandicum* and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*. The spread of the invasive, non-native shrub *Rhododendron ponticum*, which grew in the previously afforested areas in the south and east of the site, is being controlled as part of the restoration program.

Out on the open bog, which was never afforested, there were old, deep drains along the main track in the centre of the site that had a damaging effect on the hydrology of most of the bog. The vegetation occurring on the high bog is typical of a Western Raised Bog, consisting of Heather, Hare's-tail Cottongrass, Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Cross-leaved Heath, the mosses *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and *Campylopus*

atrovirens and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. The lichen *Cladonia portentosa* is often found in hummocks with heather. The bog mosses *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. capillifolium* are common along with some low hummocks of *S. austinii* and *S. fuscum*. A flush in the centre of the site is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and occasional Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*). Since the blocking of most of the drains along the bog road, the water levels in this area of the bog have risen to the bog surface and are now high enough to support the restoration of approximately 5 ha of active bog. There are already signs of a significant increase in bog moss growth in the rewetted hollows and low lying flat areas in this part of the bog.

Aughrim (Aghrane) 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. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, pools and flushes. 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 nature conservation as part of a Coillte/EU LIFE Project.