

**Site Name: Hempton's Turbot Bank SAC**

**Site Code: 002999**

Hempton's Turbot Bank is a sandbank 15 km north-east of Glengad Head, Co. Donegal. The area enclosed within the site boundary covers approximately 4,495 ha.

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):

[1110] Sandbanks
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This bank was surveyed as part of the MESH programme during 2006. Bathymetric mapping of the site showed it was characterised by large wind driven sand-facies along its length. The bank is approximately 15 m below the surface at its shallowest point. Granulometric analysis showed that the bank ranged from gravel to fine sand but was dominated by very coarse and medium sand. Typical offshore sandbanks are generally formed of varying sediment fractions, which through the action of currents and storms, often become rippled and build into sand waves that may measure meters in height and span the entire width of the bank. The action of these mobile sediments results in a dynamic habitat that is most suitable for species adapted to change.

The species recorded from the area are typical of coarse gravely sands in the offshore environment. Species identification of the benthic (bottom-living) infauna (below the surface) across all 14 stations sampled in the Hempton's Turbot Bank survey yielded a total count of 59 species, comprising 955 individuals, ascribed to 10 phyla. Of the 59 species enumerated, 24 were polychaetes (segmented worms) including *Syllis* sp., *Polygordius* sp., *Eusyllis blomstrandii*, *Autolytus alexandri*, *Autolytus inermis* and *Trypanosyllis zebra*, 19 were crustaceans (including the barnacles *Semibalanus balanoides* and *Elminuis modestus*; the amphipods *Parapleustes bicuspis* and *Parapleustes assimilis*; porcelain crab *Pisidia longicornis*, hermit crab *Pagurus prideaux* and squat lobster *Galathea intermedia*), six were molluscs (including *Muculus discors* & *Modiolula phaseolina*), three species were echinoderms (brittlestars, sea cucumbers), one species was a pycnogonid (sea spiders) and one species was a chordate (lesser sand eel or sand lance *Ammodytes tobianus*). Five other phyla were recorded including cnidarians (jellyfish, corals), nemerteans (ribbon worms), nematodes (round worms) and bryozoans (moss animals).

The site is of conservation importance for its submerged sandbanks, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.