

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MAGHAREE ISLANDS SPA

SITE CODE: 004125

The Magharee Islands lie about 2 km north of the Magharees Peninsula on the north side of the Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry. The site includes the main Magharee Islands (“Seven Hogs”), the islands of Mucklaghmore and Illaunnabarnagh to the east, Illaunnaon and Doonagaun Island to the south and several smaller rocky islets. Illaunimmill and Illauntannig are the largest of the islands included in the site. The islands are most exposed on their west coasts, and there are moderately strong sea currents between them. The bedrock of the islands is Carboniferous limestone; the larger ones have a covering of glacial boulder clay. The islands are low-lying, being mostly less than 15 m above sea level. Illaunimmill and Illauntannig were at one time inhabited and both are still grazed by cattle and sheep. The remains of an early Christian church can be seen on Illauntannig. Areas of the surrounding seas are included around all of the islands.

This site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Barnacle Goose, Storm Petrel, Shag, Common Gull, Common Tern, Arctic Tern and Little Tern.

The Magharee Islands are of national importance for breeding seabirds and also for wintering geese. In winter, the islands are utilised by a Barnacle Goose flock of national importance (85 – four survey mean between 1993 and 2003). The Magharee Islands are also an important site for breeding terns, which have been known from here since the 1850s. In 1995 the following were recorded: Common Tern (58 pairs), Arctic Tern (232 pairs) and Little Tern (36 pairs). The Little Tern population comprised over 20% of the national total. Sandwich Tern has bred in the past, for example in 1978, and a pair of Roseate Tern was also recorded breeding on Illaunnabarnagh in 2006. The site also supports nationally important populations of Storm Petrel (1,272 in 2007), Shag (61 pairs in 2001) and Common Gull (43 pairs in 2001). Other breeding seabirds recorded during a survey in 2001 were as follows: Fulmar (85 pairs), Cormorant (20 pairs), Lesser Black-backed Gull (20 pairs), Herring Gull (7 pairs) and Great Black-backed Gull (21 pairs). A recent survey in 2007 recorded the following breeding seabirds: Fulmar (137 pairs), Cormorant (91 pairs), Shag (223 pairs), Common Gull (178 pairs), Lesser Black-backed Gull (146 pairs), Herring Gull (82 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (74 pairs), Common Tern (128 pairs), Arctic Tern (163) and Little Tern (18 pairs).

A possible breeding pair of Chough was recorded on the islands in 1992 and birds breeding on the mainland are known to forage on some of the islands.

Magharee Islands SPA is of high ornithological importance for breeding seabirds, especially terns, as well as for wintering Barnacle Geese, which are at the most southerly point of their range in Europe. It is of note that six of the species that occur,

i.e. Storm Petrel, Barnacle Goose, Chough, Common Tern, Arctic Tern and Little Tern are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

31.10.2014