AN LONGFORT CONNECTED Comhairle Chontae An Longfoirt Longford County Council People - Place - Opportunity	**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT AND CONCLUSION STATEMENT**

(A) Project Details	
Planning File Ref	Part 8 preparation – Aughnacliffe Amenity Trail
Applicant name	Longford County Council
Development Location	Aughnacliffe, Co. Longford.
Site size	4.2km long trail, 3m wide
Application accompanied by an EIS (Yes/NO)	No
Distance from nearest Natura 2000 site(s) in km	Approximately 13km

Description of the project/proposed development

Construction of a path c.4.2km in length, approximately 3m wide to enhance existing Heritage and Amenity Trail, including two bridges, fencing and ancillary site works in the village of Aughnacliffe.

(B) Identification of Natura 2000 sites which may be impacted by the proposed development

			Yes/No **If answer is yes, identify list name of Natura 2000 site likely to be impacted.**
1	**Impacts on sites designated for freshwater habitats or species.** Sites to consider (but not limited to): Ardgullion Bog SAC; Lough Oughter and associated Loughs SAC.	*Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include freshwater habitats and/or species, or in the catchment (upstream or downstream) of same?*	The project site is not located within a SAC or in the catchment of same. The project site is approximately 13km from Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA and upstream of the SPA.
2	**Impacts on sites designated for wetland habitats - bogs, fens, marshes and heath.**	*Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include wetland habitats (bog, marsh, fen or*	The project site is not located within a SAC or within 1km of same.

	Sites to consider (but not limited to): Ardagullion Bog SAC; Derragh Bog SAC;	*heath), or within 1 km of same?*	
3	**Impacts on designated terrestrial habitats.** Sites to consider (but not limited to): Lough Kinale and Deragh Lough SPA; Clooneen Bog SAC; Derragh Bog SAC; Lough Forbes Complex SAC; Lough Ree SAC; Mount Jessop Bog SAC.	*Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include woodlands, dunes or grasslands, or within 100m of same?*	The project site is not located within an SAC or 100m of same.
4	**Impacts on birds in SPAs** Sites to consider (but not limited to): Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA; Lough Ree SPA	*Is the development within a Special Protection Area, or within 5 km of same?*	The project site is not located within a SPA or 5km of same.

(C) Identification of Potential Impacts on Habitats and Birds		
1	**Impacts on designated rivers, streams, lakes and freshwater dependant habitats and species** **If 'Yes' is recorded in answer to question 1 in Table B, please answer the following.** Does the development involve any of the following:	
1.1	Works within the boundary of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
1.2	Discharge to surface water or groundwater within 5km of SAC.	
1.3	Abstraction from surface water or groundwater within 5km of SAC	
1.4	Removal of topsoil within 500m of watercourses.	
1.5	Infilling or raising of ground levels within 100m of watercourses.	
1.6	Construction of drainage ditches within 1km of SAC.	
1.7	Installation of wastewater treatment systems; percolation areas; septic tanks within 500m of watercourses.	
1.8	Construction within a floodplain or within an area liable to flood.	
1.9	Crossing or culverting of rivers or streams within 5km of SAC.	
1.10	Storage of chemicals, hydrocarbons or organic wastes within 1km of a watercourse.	
1.11	Development of a large-scale which involves the production of an EIAR.	
1.12	Development of quarries/mines.	
1.13	Development of windfarms.	
1.14	Development of pumped hydro-electric stations.	
1.15	Construction of roads or other infrastructure on peat habitats within 1km of rivers, streams, lakes and freshwater-dependant habitats.	
2	**Impacts on designated wetlands – bogs, fens, marshes and heath** **If 'Yes' is recorded in answer to question 2 in Table B, please answer the following.**	

	Does the development involve any of the following:	
2.1	Works within the boundary of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
2.2	Construction of roads or other infrastructure on peat habitats within 1km of bog, marsh, fen or heath habitat within a Natura 2000 site.	
2.3	Development of a large scale within 1km of bog, marsh, fen or heath habitat within a Natura 2000 site which involves the production of an EIS.	
3	**Impacts on other designated terrestrial habits (woodland, grasslands)** **If 'Yes' is recorded in answer to question 3 in Table B, please answer the following.** Does the development involve any of the following:	
3.1	Works within the boundary of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).	
3.2	Development within 200m of Natura 2000 site with woodland, grassland or coastal habitats.	
3.3	Development of a large scale within 1km of Natura 2000 site with woodland, grassland or coastal habitats which involves the production of an EIS.	
4	**Impacts on birds in SPAs** **If 'Yes' is recorded in answer to question 4 in Table B, please answer the following.** Does the development involve any of the following:	
4.1	Works within the boundary of a Special Protection Area (SPA) excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
4.2	Erection of wind turbines within 5km of a SPA.	
4.3	Proposed discharges directly to SPA.	
4.4	Development of cycleways or walking routes within 100m of SPA.	

Conclusion:

If the answer to all of the above is **No**, significant impacts on habitats within Natura 2000 sites can be ruled out.
No further assessment is required in relation to habitats.
If the answer is **Yes**, you will require further information, which should be provided in the form of a Natura Impact Statement which should address the particular issues of concern as identified through the above.

Consideration of potential impacts on protected species within SACs

Currently, one of our Special Areas of Conservation is designated for species as well as for habitats, namely Lough Ree SAC, which includes habitat for otters *Lutra lutra*. Activities could have an impact on this protect species. Please tick if you are concerned that the proposed development could have an impact on these species.

Species	Relevant Site(s)	Activities which could have impacts on species	Possible Impacts Identified Yes/No
Otter	Lough Ree	Activities that interfere with river banks.	No

Conclusion:
If the answer to all of the above is **No**, significant impacts on species can be ruled out.
If the answer is **Yes**, then further information is likely to be required in relation to potential for impact on that particular species.

(D) Summary of Impacts	
Natura 2000 Sites within impact zone	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, Ardagullion Bog SAC, Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC and located approximately 13km from project site.
Qualifying features of Natura 2000 Site (attach site synopsis from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS))	See Site Synopsis below

(E) Assessment of Likely Significant Effects (from Tables above)
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) could affect the Natura 2000 site(s).
From the tables above, it is considered the project (alone or in combination) will not affect the Natura 2000 sites.
If there are potential impacts, explain whether you consider if these are likely to be significant.
N/A
(F) Relevant Advice Received
Documentation reviewed for making this statement.
Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2010) Assessment of Plans and Projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (2001) Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive (2018) Relevant Site Synposis.
Persons/Bodies consulted with for the making of this statement.
Longford County Council Planning Department
(G) SCREENING CONCLUSION STATEMENT *Selected relevant category for project assessed by ticking box.*

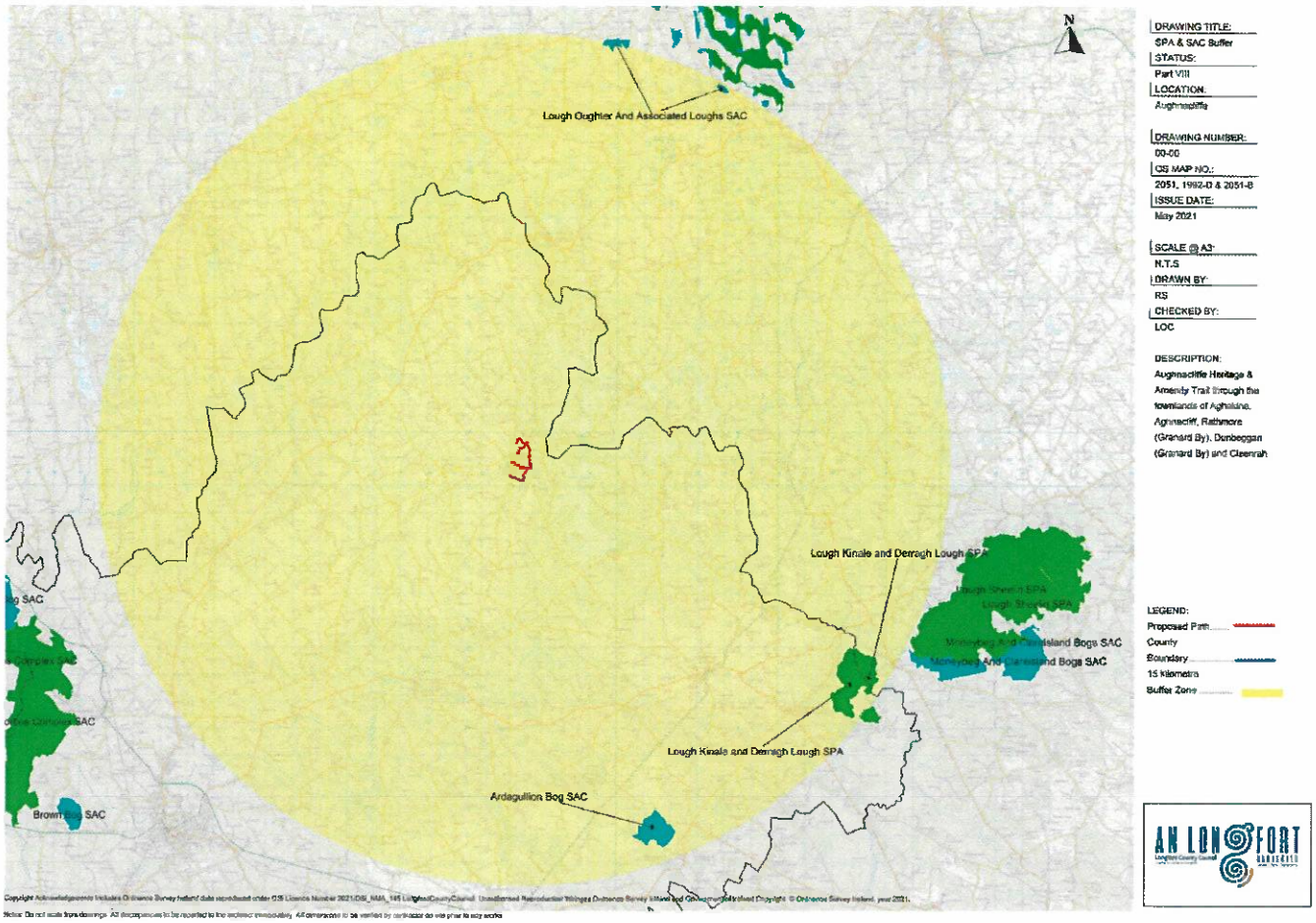
1	AA is not required because the project is directly connected with/necessary to the conservation management of the site	
2	No potential significant affects/AA is not required	**x**
3	Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain. Seek a Natura Impact Statement Reject proposal. (Reject if potentially damaging/inappropriate)	

Justify why it falls into relevant category above (based on information in above tables)

The proposal has no potential significant affects on the Natura 2000 network for the following reasons:

1. The project site is not located within a SAC or in the catchment of same to impact on sites designated for freshwater habitats or species.
2. The project site is not located within a SAC or within 1km of same to impact on sites designated for wetland habitats – bogs, fens, marshes and heath.
3. The project site is not located within an SAC or 100m of same to impact on designated terrestrial habitats.
4. The project site is not located within a SPA or 5km of same to impact on birds in SPAs.

Name:	Lorraine O'Connor
Position:	Regeneration Officer (Executive Planner)
Date:	24/05/2021



Map of proposed trail with 15km buffer zone

SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Ardagullion Bog SAC

Site Code: 002341

Ardaguillion Bog is located 5 km north-east of Edgeworthstown, mainly in the townlands of Cloonshannagh (Coolamber Manor Demesne) and Ardaguillon in Co. Longford. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in the north-east by the local road running to Coolagherty.

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):

[7110] Raised Bog (Active)*
[7120] Degraded Raised Bog
[7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation

Active raised bog comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) is high, and where some or all of the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. 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. The Rhynchosporion habitat occurs in wet depressions, pool edges and erosion channels where the vegetation includes White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and/or Brown Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), and at least some of the following associated species, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), sundews (*Drosera* spp.), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*).

This site is the remnant of a much larger bog that is now cutover and afforested. There are areas of hummocks and pools in the centre of the high bog and the ground is wet and quaking. There is one flush in the centre of the high bog. There is a small area of coniferous forestry on a section of high bog and cutover in the south-west of the site. Cutover bog is found all around this site.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised Bog, consisting of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), White Beak-sedge, Bog Asphodel and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). The bog mosses *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. magellanicum* are common on the high bog, and *S. imbricatum* is found at the centre of the site. At the centre of the high bog there are frequent pools that all contain the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) is found in all the pools in the

centre of the bog and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) is present in some. The inter-pool areas have a high bog moss cover. Many hummocks have good clumps of the lichens *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis*. On the south-west margins of the high bog there are some young Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) but none are thriving. There is one very wet flush in the centre of the high bog with Common Cottongrass (*E. angustifolium*), extensive lawns of the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and some Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). The cutover in the north-west, east and south-east is dominated by Purple Moor Grass, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Common Cottongrass. There is some Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub in the east of the site and extensive Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) scrub in the south-east.

Current land uses on the site include forestry, peat-cutting and agriculture. The forestry is found on a small section of high bog and adjoining cutover in the south-west of the site. Areas of cutover in the south and west of the site that were previously forested have only recently been clear-felled. Active peat-cutting is taking place in the north-west, east and south-east of the site. Two fields in the north of the site have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. There is also evidence of old burning in the northern part of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Ardagullion Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance as it comprises a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. The site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks and pools. Active raised bog is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH KINALE AND DERRAGH LOUGH SPA

SITE CODE: 0004061

Lough Kinale is a relatively small lake that is situated immediately downstream of Lough Sheelin, both lakes being near the top of the catchment of the Inny River, a main tributary of the River Shannon. Derragh Lough, a much smaller system, is connected to Lough Kinale and the Inny River. This is a typical limestone system and is very shallow (maximum depth of Lough Kinale is *c.* 4 m). As with Lough Sheelin, the trophic status of the lake has varied greatly since the 1970s due to pollution. It was recently (1998-2000) classified as a highly eutrophic system. The lake was formerly an important Trout fishery.

Lough Kinale has two main basins, almost separated by swamp formations. Reed swamp is frequent around the lakes, with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Tufted-sedge (*Carex elata*) occurring commonly. A calcium-rich small sedge marsh occurs along parts of the shoreline. This is characterised by species such as Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Marsh Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Knotted Pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). Areas of bog occur around the margins of the lakes in places but some of these have been planted with conifers.

Despite the very variable water quality in recent decades, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough remain an important site for wintering waterfowl, especially diving duck. The site supports nationally important populations of two species, i.e. Pochard (951) and Tufted Duck (449) - figures are average peaks for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/00. A large population of Mute Swan (120), close to the threshold for national importance, also uses the site. Coot (199), whilst still occurring in substantial numbers, formerly had a population of national importance. A number of other species are found, in relatively low numbers, including Great Crested Grebe (25), Mallard (130) and Goldeneye (22). Marginal grassland areas outside of the site attract feeding wildfowl and waders such as Lapwing and Golden Plover.

The variable water quality over the years, with periods of highly eutrophic conditions, undoubtedly has had adverse impacts on the wintering waterfowl, and especially the diving duck. This would appear to be borne out by very variable numbers of birds recorded over the years. The lake is still vulnerable to pollution and it is considered that there is urgent need to reduce the phosphorus inputs to the system. Afforestation has taken place close to parts of the shoreline and further planting would be undesirable. Angling and wildfowling activities currently cause some disturbance to the birds and any increase in such activities would be of concern.

Whilst relatively small in area and subject to a number of damaging activities, this site retains national importance for two duck species. With an improvement in the

environmental conditions pertaining at the site, higher numbers of some species would undoubtedly occur.

19.8.2004

SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC

Site Code: 000007

Lough Oughter and its associated loughs occupy much of the lowland drumlin belt in north and central Cavan between Upper Lough Erne, Killeshandra and Cavan town. The site is a maze of waterways, islands, small lakes and peninsulas including some 90 inter-drumlin lakes and 14 basins in the course of the Erne River. The area lies on Silurian and Ordovician strata with Carboniferous limestone immediately surrounding.

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):

[3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes
[91D0] Bog Woodland*
[1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

As well as the habitats and species listed above, the site also contains areas of dry woodland, marsh, reedbed and wet pasture.

Drainage within the area is inefficient and the water levels are prone to natural fluctuation as a result. The regularly flooded areas still accommodate a variety of specialist plant species such as Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) and Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), as well as rarer species such as Needle Spike-rush (*Eleocharis acicularis*) and Lesser Marshwort (*Apium inundatum*).

The lakes and basins are shallow, and the water well mixed and nutrient rich (eutrophic). The aquatic flora is varied with several pondweed species such as Blunt-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton obtusifolius*), Shining Pondweed (*Potamogeton lucens*), Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), Reddish Pondweed (*Potamogeton alpinus*) and Various-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton gramineus*). Typical in the zone of aquatic plants are Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), Canadian Pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*), Mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*), Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Water-dropwort species (*Oenanthe* spp.) and Water-starwort (*Callitriche* sp.). The aquatic community includes species of limited distribution in Ireland such as the Duckweed species *Lemna gibba* and *Spirodela polyrhiza*.

Around much of the shoreline there are well developed swamp and marsh communities, typically with a zone of Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) in front of a zone of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) which is in turn backed by a more

species-rich zone of sedges, grasses and herbs, particularly Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Rough Horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) and Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*). Less widespread species also occur on the wet lake margins; species such as Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Water Dock (*Rumex hydrolapathum*), Greater Water-parsnip (*Sium latifolium*), Cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*), Tufted-sedge (*Carex elata*), Water Soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*), Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) and Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*) may be locally prominent.

There are many variations on this typical zonation of sheltered shores with species such as Bulrush (*Typha* sp.), Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) gaining local prominence. More exposed shores lack the extensive swamp zones; here smaller species such as Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) can be found.

Level, wet pastures tend to be dominated by Creeping Bent and rushes (*Juncus* spp.) with a scattering of marshland and wet grassland plants such as Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) is most abundant with frequent Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), and less widespread Conglomerate Rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) also occurring.

Where a general lack of grazing pressure or a particular slope has allowed it, deciduous woodland has re-established itself behind the reedbeds. Two species of Willow (*Salix caprea* and *S. cinerea*) are common constituents, along with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). Along submerged margins Alder and Willow are most commonly found with a flooded understorey typically containing Reed Canary-grass, Meadow Sweet, Yellow Iris and in places Tufted-sedge and Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*). Downy Birch occurs along lake edges and also forms stands of wet woodland on cutover bog with varying degrees of wet and dry peat. Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) occur in areas with pools and dry areas. Where there is dry peat, Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and gorse (*Ulex* sp.) occur under the birch canopy. Birch dominated wood is also found in association with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) bog.

In areas of wet bog with good *Sphagnum* cover, bog woodland has developed. Downy Birch characterises this habitat; other typical species include Purple Moor-grass and Bottle Sedge.

Dry broadleaved woodland is characterised by Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hazel, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Oak (*Quercus* spp.), while shrubs include Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*). The Red Data Book species Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) has also been recorded from the site.

The clayey soils have a characteristic flora, including Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*).

The site supports a substantial population of water birds including internationally important numbers of Whooper Swan (average peak 231) and nationally important numbers of Tufted Duck (average peak 247) and Cormorant (average peak 130), as well as important numbers of species such as Greenland White-fronted Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Wigeon, Teal and Pochard. Lapwing, Snipe and Golden Plover also utilise the wet grassland areas. Wildfowl Sanctuaries exist at Inchin Lough, Derrygid Lough, Farnham Lough, Derrybrick Lough, Derrinishbeg Lough and Annagh Lough. Part of the site is designated a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive.

Otter, a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, occurs at the site. Irish Hare has also been recorded. Both of these species are listed in the Irish Red Data Book and are legally protected under the Wildlife Act, 1976.

The main threats to the quality of the site are water polluting activities (such as run-off from fertiliser and slurry application, and sewage discharge) which have raised the nutrient status of some lakes to hypertrophic. Housing and boating developments are on the increase, both adjacent to and within the site. There is also significant fishing and shooting pressure on and around the lakes. Increased afforestation has resulted in some loss of wetland habitat and also loss of feeding ground for wintering birds such as Greenland White-fronted Goose.

The Lough Oughter area contains important examples of two habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and supports a population of the Annex II species, Otter. The site as a whole is the best inland example of a flooded drumlin landscape in Ireland and has many rich and varied biological communities. Nowhere else in the country does such an intimate mixture of land and water occur over a comparable area, and many of the species of wetland plants, some considered quite commonplace in Lough Oughter and its associated loughs, are infrequent elsewhere.