

APPENDIX 4

ECOLOGICAL DOCUMENTATION

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NATURE CONSERVATION DESIGNATION

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SITE SYNOPSES

SITE NAME: SANTRY DEMESNE

SITE CODE: 000178

This site is located immediately north of old Santry village.

The site comprises the remnants of a former demesne woodland. The remaining woods are of generally good quality and include Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Scot's Pine (*Pinus sylvatica*).

A wide range of herbaceous species were recorded, including Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Early Dog-violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*), Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*), Giant Fescue (*Festuca gigantea*) and False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*).

A species legally protected under the Flora Protection Order 1987, Hairy St. John's Wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*), was recorded here in 1991. This downy-leaved perennial of river banks and shady places has been recorded from only five counties in eastern Ireland, concentrated in the River Liffey valley.

The primary importance of this site is that it contains a legally protected plant species. The woodland, however, is of general ecological interest as it occurs in an area where little has survived of the original vegetation.

SITE NAME: ROYAL CANAL

SITE CODE: 002103

The Royal Canal is a man-made waterway linking the River Liffey at Dublin to the River Shannon near Tarmonbarry. There is a branch line from Kiltash to Longford Town. The canal NHA comprises the central channel and the banks on either side of it. The main water supply is from Lough Owel (also an NHA) via a feeder channel into the canal at Mullingar. The Royal Canal was closed to navigation in 1961. The section of canal west of Mullingar was allowed to dry out, and the eastern section silted up and became overgrown. Restoration began in 1988, and is still in progress.

A number of different habitats are found within the canal boundaries - hedgerow, tall herbs, calcareous grassland, reed fringe, open water, scrub and woodland.

The hedgerow, although diverse, is dominated by Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). On the limestone soils of the midlands Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) are present.

The vegetation of the towpath is usually dominated by grass species. Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Quaking Grass (*Briza media*) and Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) are typical species of the calcareous grasslands of the midlands. Where the canal was built through a bog, soil (usually calcareous) was brought in to make the banks. The contrast between the calcicolous species of the towpath and the calcifuge species of the bog is very striking.

Otter spraints are found along the towpath, particularly where the canal passes over a river or stream.

The Rare and legally protected Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*) (Flora Protection Order 1987) is present at one site in Dublin, between Locks 4 and 5. *Tolypella intricata* (a stonewort listed in the Red Data Book as being vulnerable) is also in the Royal Canal in Dublin, the only site in Ireland where it is now found.

The ecological value of the canal lies more in the diversity of species it supports along its linear habitats than in the presence of rare species. It crosses through agricultural land and therefore provides a refuge for species threatened by modern farming methods.

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LOWLAND GRASS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK- TABLE 5.7

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Table 5.7 A guide to stocking levels for lowland grassland (Number of animals per hectare)

No of grazing weeks per year	Calcareous grassland		Neutral grassland		Acidic grassland		Wet/marshy grassland	
	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C
2	60	15	100	25	50	12	50	12
4	30	8	50	12.5	25	6	25	6
6	20	5	33	8	16	4	16	4
8	15	4	25	6	12	3	12	3
10	12	3	20	5	10	2.5	10	2.5
12	10	2.5	17	4	8	2	8	2
14	8.5	2	14	3.5	7	1.5	7	2
16	7.5	2	12.5	3	6	1.5	6	1.5
20	6	1.5	10	2.5	5	1	5	1
24	5	1	8	2	4	1	4	
36	3.5	1	5.5	1.5	3	0.5	3	
52	2.5	0.5	4	0.5	2	0.4	2	
Annual Stocking Rate LU/ha/yr	0.25		0.5		0.2		0.2	

S=sheep (c60kg LW) C=cattle (c250kg LW)

Source: Nature Conservancy Council 1986 and Maurice Massey (pers. comm.)

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