

ROSCOMMON - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE

River Shannon Callows

Other names used for site

IGH THEME

IGH14 Fluvial and Lacustrine Geomorphology

TOWNLAND(S)

Raghrabeg, Cappaleitrim, Cloonburren, Clooniff, Cloonbeggaun, Coolumber, Drumlosh, Curraghnaboll, Cregganabeaka, Callowbeg, Cloonown, Carrickynaghtan, Kilnamanagh, Bunaribba, Doovoge, Bellaugh

NEAREST TOWN

Athlone (North), Shannonbridge (South)

SIX INCH MAP NUMBER

52, 55, 56

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE

203000 232150 (central portion of callows)

1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER

47 1/2 inch Sheet No. 15

Outline Site Description

The Shannon Callows is a long, flat site which includes the Shannon River floodplain, and which extends for approximately 20 km from the town of Athlone to the town of Shannonbridge. The site averages about 0.75 km in width though in places is up to 1.5 km wide.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The floodplain is of Holocene (postglacial) age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The site has extensive areas of callow, or seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, along both sides of the river. The callows are mainly too soft for intensive farming but are used for hay or silage or for summer grazing. Other habitats of smaller area which occur alongside the river include lowland dry grassland, freshwater marshes, reedbeds and wet woodland. Along most of its length the site is bordered by raised bogs, now mostly exploited for peat, with some hummocks and esker ridges, and knolls of limestone bedrock.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

The Shannon Callows has by far the largest area of lowland semi-natural grassland and associated aquatic habitats in Ireland and one in which there is least disturbance of natural wetland processes, which are ongoing. Botanically, it is extremely diverse. In winter the site is internationally important for the total numbers of birds (regularly exceed 20,000) and for Whooper Swan in particular. It also holds nationally important populations of a further five species.

Management/promotion issues

The site has been designated an SAC and proposed NHA (Site Number 000216) and SPA (Site Number 004096). The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. Listing it as a County Geological Site gives recognition to the geomorphological foundation of the biodiversity importance.



River Shannon Callows near Cloonburren, north of Shannonbridge.



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