

CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES

1.9 CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE SITE

See Section 1.12.1 for details.

1.10 CURRENT HUMAN USE : WITHIN SITE

1.10.1 : Nature Conservation

The major landuse of the site is nature conservation as approximately 60% of the site is a Nature Reserve. This primarily involves the preservation of the ecological value of the fen. The site is counted for wildfowl and waders as part of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS), by the District Wildlife Officer. No active management of the site is currently being carried out, other than the regular monitoring of the site generally by the District Wildlife Officer.

As a condition of the planning permission for the Kildare Town By-pass, a monitoring committee was set up to examine, amongst other things, the impact of the proposed By-pass on the fen. As a part of this work an additional vegetation survey was carried out in 1997. This involved the survey team attempting to relocate the vegetation sampling points of the original FWS survey (FWS, 1980) and to record to current vegetation. This data was used to examine whether the fen was wetter or drier than in 1980. The results of this analysis are shown on Map 3a : Wetland Ranking Score Map.

1.10.2 : Water Extraction

Water extraction is another major landuse of the fen. The site contains the summit level feeders for both the main Grand Canal Line and the Barrow Line. As has already been stated, the importance of maintaining the continuity of water supply from the site to the Grand Canal was one of the factors which makes it a very important site. This is still a factor at present, although the maintenance of the Grand Canal and canal feeders has passed from CIE to Dúchas - Waterways who have a legal responsibility to maintain the quantity of water flowing to the summit level of the canal via the Milltown Feeder. This involves annual weed cutting on the Milltown Feeder on a regular basis from May - September. The weed is mechanically cut and harvested, with the cut vegetation being deposited on the banks. This cutting is carried out as far east as the confluence of the Milltown and Seven Springs feeders at what is known as the 'Point of Gib'. The smaller feeder channels and some of the springs are excavated approximately every 3 years by mechanical excavator (pers. comm., Mr. T. Beglin, Dúchas - Waterways, January, 1999).

1.10.3 : Agriculture

Agricultural activities within the site are limited to the grazing of cattle. Since the drainage of the fen was prevented by its designation as a Nature Reserve in 1986, agricultural activities within the site have been limited to extensive activities, i.e. rough grazing of cattle on privately owned land on the fringes of the fen. The fen