APPENDIX No. 12

A Survey of Salt Marsh Vegetation at Renmore, Co Galway
September 2017

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1. Introduction to the existing salt-marsh habitat at Renmore

The majority of the salt marsh vegetation to the north of the railway bridge at Lough Atalia, Renmore is dominated by sea rush (*Juncus maritimus*) with red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) also frequent. This vegetation corresponds to the EU Annex I habitat Mediterranean salt meadow (Habitat Code 1410). Much of the salt marsh habitat occurs on a relatively deep peat along the very sheltered south-eastern shore of Lough Atalia.

Photograph 1. General view of the tall salt marsh vegetation, dominated by sea rush, at Renmore.

2. Vegetation composition

At Renmore most of the saltmarsh vegetation occurs on deep peat (>1m) which is a relatively unsual occurrence in Galway Bay. As noted previously the vegetation is dominated by a tall, ungrazed sward of *Juncus maritimus*, which is generally between 40 and 70cm, with *Festuca rubra* also very common throughout. There are small areas of low-growing, grassy, saltmarsh vegetation dominated by *Plantago maritima, Glaux maritima, Juncus gerardii* and *Aster tripolium* however, in general, the cover of this saltmarsh vegetation is less than 10%.

There are also areas of taller vegetation dominated by common reed (*Phragmites australis*) along the landward margins of the saltmarsh. In general the vegetation occurring at Renmore is much less diverse, both in terms of vegetation structure and species composition, than that encountered at

Tawin. The reasons for this are not clear however the lack of grazing and sheltered location at Lough Atalia/Renmore are clearly important factors.

Table 1. Species list for salt marsh vegetation at Renmore.

Agrostis stolonifera
Armeria maritima
Aster tripolium
Bolboschoenus maritimus
Carex extensa
Carex flacca
Cochlearia officinalis
Festuca rubra
Glaux maritima
Juncus gerardii
Juncus maritimus
Leontodon autumnalis
Phagmites australis
Plantago coronopus
Plantago lanceolata
Plantago maritima
Samolus valerandii
Trifolium repens
Triglochin maritimum

3. Discussion and conclusion

At this point in time it is not possible to say with certainty what type of saltmarsh vegetation occurred to the south of the railway line at Renmore prior to construction of the Galway Port facility during the the 1990s. It is likely however that the salt marsh to the south of the railway line was dominated by low-growing Atlantic salt marsh vegetation which is more typical of exposed locations along the Atlantic coast. It is of interest to note that any small areas of nearby salt marsh habitat in Galway bay, e.g. at Ballyloughane beach c. 1 km to the east, comprise low-growing Atlantic type saltmarsh vegetation dominated by *Plantago maritima, Armeria maritima* and *Glaux maritima* inter alia.