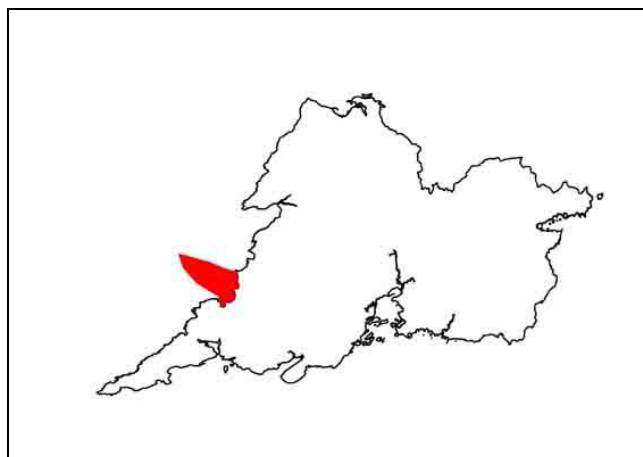


## AREA 6: MUTTON ISLAND AND WHITE STRAND



### *Key Characteristics*

- Sandy beaches including Doonbeg, White Strand and Carricknola.
- Direct views to offshore islands and land across water.
- Lough Donnell, a sandy shallow lagoon (Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive).
- Strong sea currents at White Strand.
- White Strand is a Blue Flag Beach and also classified as a visually vulnerable and visually sensitive area.
- A prominent rath is situated adjacent to Carrowmore dune system.

*Typical Photograph: White Strand*



*Landscape Character types and habitat types*

LCTs	HLTs	HLT codes	HT	HT codes
Coastal Farmland and Islands	Coastal Intertidal	CI	Sand shores	LS2
Coastal Plain and Dunes	Enclosed Land 2	EL2	Marsh	GM1
	Enclosed Land 4	EL4	Sea walls, piers and jetties	CC1
	Dunes	D	Tree lines	WL2
	Rough Ground 2	RG2	Rocky sea cliffs	CS1
	Devotional and Ritual	DR	Embryonic dunes	CD1
	Recreational	R	Marram dunes	CD2
			Fixed dunes	CD3

*Seascape Character Area Extent*

This SCA is situated along the south western coast of County Clare, halfway between Miltown Malbay and Kilkee. The SCA extends from Mutton Island through Carrowmore Point to Rinnamyrall. This seascape is part of a candidate SAC extending from Spanish Point to Doonbeg and includes the neighbouring Islands.

*Geology and Landform*

The SCA consists of a low lying exposed coastline of flat rocky headlands and bays with long broad beaches of bright yellow sand, with shingle berms. Clay and rocky sea cliffs are also evident along the coastline of this SCA.

### *Coastal Ecology*

A range of coastal habitats is present throughout this SCA, including an extensive area of mudflats (CI). Carrowmore Dunes (cSAC) are recognised internationally for their flora and fauna and the dune system (D) comprises embryonic dunes, marram dunes and fixed dunes. Fixed dunes are a Priority Habitat and are dominated by the grass species Red Fescue, with Marram Grass, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Bulbous Buttercup and Ribwort Plantain. Carrowmore dunes (cSAC) are also considered important for their population is of the rare Narrow-mouthed Whorl-snail (*Vertigo angustior*) and the Otter (*Lutra lutra*). There is also a freshwater marsh present to the south of Carrowmore dune system

Eroded sea walls and wind swept trees are also present throughout the area, reflecting the exposed nature of this stretch of coastline. Grey Seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) are found around Mutton Island.

### *Historic Seascapes and Human Influence*

Flat and rolling coastal farmlands with mixed curvilinear and straight-sided fields of assorted sizes (EL2 and EL4) are evident throughout the SCA. Mutton Island is rough ground (RG2) and formerly provided seasonal grazing. The devotional and ritual aspects of the island are discussed in SCA5. Frequent promontory forts divided by wide sweeping bays allow good views one-from-another, adding to their visual amenity.

The memory of the wrecks of two Armada vessels – San Esteban (246 men) off White Strand and San Marcos (409 men) on the reef off Lurga Point – has helped to name and characterise this coast. A panel or door from one of these vessels is a popular exhibit at the county museum.

Killard Church, with a notable graveyard and adjacent holy well, forms a distinct devotional and ritual group on a small scale, and is prominent enough to be viewed across Doughmore. It was a landmark at least as early as 1685 from when it was recorded on maps. In addition to the twenty-five wrecks mentioned in SCA5, a further three shipwrecks are recorded for the waters off Doonbeg.

### *Condition and Sensitivity*

White Strand is heavily eroded. Coastal farmland is in moderate condition but quite windswept. Immediate coastal fringe would be sensitive to large-scale development including wind farms. The SCA would also be sensitive to further holiday home development, particularly around White Strand.

### *Forces for Change*

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- Erosion of beach material and boulders
  - Deliberate removal of beach material
  - Further intensification of agriculture, application of fertilizer reduces the biodiversity of dune swards
  - Potential of over grazing of dunes near White Strand
  - Existing golf course at Doonbeg
  - Cattle grazing on Carrowmore sand dunes
  - Potential arising from tourism development, holiday homes and golf clubs at White Strand and Carrowmore dune system
  - Potential use of the area for visitor daytrips and educational and research purposes
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### *Principles for Seascape Management*

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- Protection of the coast from erosion and deliberate removal of material should be pursued through stricter controls and monitoring
  - Maintain ecological and seascape diversity of coastal farmlands and dunes through increased uptake of REPS
  - Careful siting and design is needed for any new developments away from highly visible/exposed areas, with guidance provided on appropriate styles, boundary treatments and siting options
  - Dune system at Carrowmore should be strictly protected
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