species included creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), common rush (*Juncus effusus*), silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) along with dock and marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*).

GS3 Dry-humid grassland

Dry-humid grassland was recorded in mosaic with GA1 improved agricultural grassland in a field to the adjacent north of the existing N51, north of the proposed N51/N2 roundabout. This area was noted as being species poor as a result of sheep grazing. Commonly recorded species included: common bent grass (*Agrotis capillaris*), crested dog's tail (*Cynosarus cristatus*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and mat grass (*Nardus stricta*).

GM1 Marsh

The presence of marsh habitat within the study area was limited in extent owing to the nature and management of the surrounding agricultural lands. Elements of marsh were typically found alongside each bank of the River Boyne, particularly along its southern bank, where it occurred in mosaic with rank wet grassland. The river edge grades into marsh with ground conditions reflecting the poorly draining soils or waterlogged conditions coupled with the artesian nature of the groundwater. The ground is poached in places (typically by horses). Unlike wet grassland, where waterlogging is often ephemeral, the marsh flora is indicative of longer-term waterlogged conditions, often found in topographical hollows and ditches. This habitat was also present along the Boyne Navigation Canal where it occurred in a mosaic with FS1 large reed and sedge swamp. Commonly recorded species include tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacaea*), creeping bent, yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), silverweed, meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), creeping buttercup and marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*)

BC1 Arable crops and BC3 Tilled land

Another habitat related to agriculture but not specific to supporting livestock is BC1 arable crop and BC3 tilled land. Across the wider study area and in the northern end of the scheme lands are given over to cereal production (wheat, oats etc.) or other crops (e.g. beans). Some fields were fallow during the summer 2020 survey although based on previous visits, the timing of crop and its rotation was specific to landowners and no large areas of land were left uncultivated for long periods. Floristically, the intensity and frequency of the management regime influences this floristically poor habitat, although species commonly encountered around the field perimeters included chickweed (*Stellaria* spp.), fumitory (*Fumaria* spp.) and speedwell (*Veronica persica*).

Woodland, Hedgerows, Treelines and Scrub

Despite the expansive agricultural patchwork of fields that characterise the Proposed Scheme, there remain areas of woodland, often as linear landscape elements, but elsewhere, such as the northern side of the River Boyne, as discrete woodland units. Across the landscape, semi-mature and mature trees, largely deciduous, are common throughout, reflecting in places the heritage of larger demesnes and estates.

WD1 (Mixed) Broadleaved woodland

A range of native woodland species are located in the surrounding landscape of Slane village. Many of the species observed during site visits included; oak (*Quercus* spp.), ash, sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), beech (*Fagus sylvaticus*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), willows (*Salix* spp.), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.).

WD2 Mixed Broadleaved/Conifer woodland

Along the existing N2 Road there is an area of planted broadleaved/conifer woodland associated with the Boyne Woods pNHA/Slane Castle & Distillery which is bound by a stone wall. Tree species included: birch (*Betula* spp.), hazel, Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), oak, elm (*Ulmus procera*), alder and ash.

Three small, isolated patches of mixed broadleaved/conifer are also present towards the eastern end of the Proposed Scheme, adjacent south to the existing N51/Drogheda road.