SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CROAGH PATRICK

SITE CODE: 000483

Croagh Patrick is located approximately 10km west of Westport, on the southern shore of Clew Bay, Co. Mayo. This well known mountain is formed of a cone of quartzite, surrounded on its steeper slopes of quartzite scree. Croagh Patrick itself is the highest peak (c. 840m) of an east-west ridge, which also includes Ben Goram.

The higher slopes (c. 500m) of the north-facing side of Croagh Patrick support alpine plant communities, from which the following have been reported: Dwarf Willow (*Salix herbacea*), Mountain Sorrel (*Oxyria digyna*), Roseroot (*Rhodiola rosea*), Green Spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*), Alpine Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum alpinum*) and Alpine Saw-wort (*Saussurea alpina*). The lower, unenclosed hillsides support extensive heath vegetation, dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), and patches of wetter, blanket bog peat, characterised by *Sphagnum* mosses.

The Mountain Ringlet butterfly (*Erebia epiphron*) has one of its few recorded stations in Ireland on Croagh Patrick. This species is rarely found at elevations below 300m. The caterpillar feeds on Mat-grass which is widespread amongst the heath vegetation here. Although not sighted at this location for more than 100 years, the habitat at Croagh Patrick still appears to be suitable.

6.11.2009