SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ESKER PITS

SITE CODE: 000832

Esker Pits proposed Natural Heritage Area, near Gragara, County Kilkenny, is a lightly worked gravel quarry supporting a range of vegetation types, most notably areas of species-rich calcareous grassland. Of particular significance is the presence of a large population of a rare Red Data Book plant species.

The site comprises a mosaic of different habitats including patches of species-rich calcareous grassland, dry gravel banks, small ponds, scrub woodland and marsh areas which are flooded in the winter.

The grassland areas contain an excellent diversity of species including a substantial population of the rare, Red Data Book species, Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*). Other characteristic calcareous grassland species which occur here include Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Common Centaury (*Centaurum erythraea*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), amongst others. The site supports a good range of ruderal plant species of interest.

12.11.2009