SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: STRADBALLY HILL

SITE CODE: 001800

This site lies about 2km south-east of Stradbally in a chain of limestone hills, which are occasionally indented by caves.

The site comprises three separate woodland areas. Ballykilcavan Wood is dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and sections of coniferous plantations interspersed. The understorey flora includes Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), ferns, Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*). The woodland at Kylebeg is also Pedunculate Oak-dominated, with scattered Ash and Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*). Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Spindle-tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) occur in the understorey. A small conifer plantation lies in the northern part of the site. The most southerly section of the site, near Ballintlea is, in contrast, a mixed wood of Hazel, Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and planted conifers.

Ballykilcavan Wood encloses a small lake which adds habitat diversity to the site, as do the small areas of scrubland scattered throughout the site.

The most serious damaging operation occurring within the woodlands is the clearance of mature deciduous trees, especially Pedunculate Oaks. Frequently coupled with this activity is the replanting of such areas with coniferous trees. This serves to reduce the site quality by replacing native, wildlife-rich trees with exotic species. Another threat is infestation of these woodlands with Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) which has already occurred in places in Kylebeg Wood.

Stradbally Hill is an important woodland site containing many mature oaks and Hazel. Extensive stands of mature oak on mineral soil are unusual in the county and the country as a whole.

26.11.2009