SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BUNCLODY SLATE QUARRIES

SITE CODE: 000750

Bunclody Slate Quarries are located on the outlying flanks of the Blackstairs Mountains, about 2km south-west of Bunclody in Co. Wexford. The site is a small hill of Ordovician slates bisected by a tributary of the River Clody. The hill was formerly quarried for slate but is now largely disused.

The thin humic soils over these slatey hills carry well developed heath vegetation, particularly rich in species. Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) is prominent with Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and, in places, Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) are locally common with species such as Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), English Stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*) associated with rock outcrop.

The rare plant, Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*) is locally very abundant on the slate spoil in the south-western part of the quarry, where it grows with English Stonecrop, Early Hair-grass (*Aira praecox*), Cat's-ear (*Hypochoeris radicata*) and mosses (*Scleropodium purum*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Thuidium tamariscinum*). Bird's-foot is legally protected in Ireland under the Flora Protection Order 1987.

There are records of two other protected plants from this quarry, Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*) and Pale Dog-violet (*Viola lactea*), neither of which have been seen recently but which may still be present.

The quarry has a long established pair of Peregrine Falcon, which breed annually. There are also breeding pairs of Kestrel and Raven within the site.

In summary, Bunclody Slate Quarry is of interest for its heath habitat, which supports the protected Bird's-foot and possibly two further protected plants.

12.11.2009