SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LAFFANSBRIDGE

SITE CODE: 000965

This site, which comprises five separate areas, is situated close to the village of Laffansbridge which lies *c*. 3km west of Killenaule and 13km east-north-east of Cashel. The site is underlain by Carboniferous limestone rocks and shallow calcium-rich soils.

The main vegetation type present at the site is calcareous grassland; this includes such plant species as Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), Downy Oat-grass (*Helictotrichon pubescens*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*).

While this herb-rich sward is of conservation interest itself, being a threatened habitat throughout Europe, Laffansbridge is of particular significance for the large population of Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*), a nationally scarce species, that it supports. In places the population at this site is substantial, such as west of the railway at Manserghshill where some 6000 flowering spikes of this species have been recorded.

Limestone outcrops have prevented machinery access and preserved these unimproved grassland fragments from intensive fertilisation. However, they remain vulnerable to other developments such as quarrying and housing, which have damaged similar areas outside of the site. They are also sensitive to grazing management; low levels of grazing in some areas has allowed the establishment and spread of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), to the detriment of the herb-rich grassland.

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