SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ARKLOW ROCK – ASKINTINNY

SITE CODE: 001745

This coastal site is located just south of Arklow, Co. Wicklow. Arklow Rock is an Ordovician volcanic intrusion which forms a knoll of rhyolite. A large quarry, which is still being worked, has been cut into the rock. The sandy beach and cliffs south of Arklow Head form part of the site.

Heath vegetation extends from Arklow Rock to Arklow Head. This is characterised by Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Scarce Greater Broomrape (*Orobanche rapum-genistae*), a parasitic species that grows on the roots of Gorse and Broom, grows here. A legally protected plant, Birds'-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*) is quite common in the area. It is a species of dry and gravelly places and is confined to the south and east coasts of Ireland. There are some grassy fields within the site but these are not intensively managed and in places are reverting back to heath.

The heath merges into exposed rock and scree at Arklow Rock. An interesting and uncommon lichen community indicative of metal rich siliceous rocks is found here. At the south end of the quarry, the steep rock face supports breeding Fulmars and Raven. The very rare and legally protected fern, Lanceolate Spleenwort (*Asplenium billotii*), grows at the edge of the quarry but has not been recorded here since 1970.

Steep rocky cliffs occur south of Arklow Head. Soil pockets in the rock support coastal cliff plants such as Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), English Stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*) and Wild Garden (*Thymus polytrichus*). Small numbers of Fulmars nest in slopes. A dune system occurred here but has been completely eroded within the last 20 years. Some recent fore dune deposits have accumulated at the base of the clay slopes.

The site also includes a small ravine with Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

The site is of importance as it is a good example of coastal heath. The other habitats within the site provide good diversity within a relatively small area. The presence of two rare and protected plant species adds significantly to the importance of the site.

25.11.2009