SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ARKLOW SAND DUNES

SITE CODE: 001746

This coastal site is located just north of Arklow town and comprises mainly a sand dune system. A low ridge of fore dunes, stabilised by Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*), runs parallel to the shore. Sea-holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) and Sea Bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*) are also present.

Behind the low fore dunes are the larger fixed dunes, which have been vegetated for a long time. In addition to Marram, other grasses are common, notably Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is locally abundant, also Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*) and eyebright (*Euphrasia* spp.). Burnet Rose (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*) is found on the more mature dunes.

The western side of the sand dune system is bounded by a fairly steep slope which provides an 'amphitheatre-like' backdrop to the dunes and beach. The clay slopes are covered in a low scrub made up mostly of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

At the southern end of the site is a small, but good example of wet woodland. The main tree is Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and there is a well developed ground flora, which includes Hemlock Water-dropwort (Oenanthe crocata), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*).

There is also a transitional grassy area dominated by False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), which although not of great interest in itself, connects the dune system to the woodland.

Although the site is small and vulnerable to pressures from the adjacent amenity sites, it is important as an example of a sand dune system which is relatively intact and showing the stages of dune development from the early fore dunes to mature fixed dunes.

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