SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DONAGHMORE SANDHILLS

SITE CODE: 001737

Donaghmore Sandhills lie between Roney Point and Glasscarrig Point, about 5km south of Courtown. The sandhills form a narrow ridge up to 10m high and 100m wide that separates the beach from the adjoining agricultural and residential land.

The outer and fore dunes are stabilised mostly by Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) but Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris*) and Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*) have also been noted as early colonisers of the dunes. Parts of the outer dunes are eroding.

The fixed dune vegetation is characterised by Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), all interspersed with Marram. Sea-buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) is abundant on top of the sand ridge and in places is encroaching downslope.

A flat area on top of the landward side of the sandhills is becoming overgrown with heathy scrub vegetation. The dominant species include Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Burnet Rose (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Sea-buckthorn. Grassy areas support Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*).

The site extends northwards to include a small ravine with woodland vegetation. The main woody species are Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Blackthorn, Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*).

This site is of scientific importance as it is a good example of sandhill habitat with characteristic vegetation. The spread of Sea-buckthorn may need to be managed to maintain the natural ecological diversity.

25.11.2009