SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: POWERSCOURT WATERFALL

SITE CODE: 001767

This site is located at the eastern edge of the Wicklow Mountains, about 6km from Enniskerry. The main feature of the site is a steep waterfall, approximately 100m high, and down which the Dargle River cascades. At the base of the waterfall there is a small corrie and associated small moraines.

The waterfall is fringed on both sides by steeply sloping ground covered with heathy vegetation consisting of Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillis*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). This develops into scrub in a few areas comprised of the following species; Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). Wilson's Filmy-fern (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*) occurs in this area. An interesting bryophyte and lichen flora exists on the exposed rocks.

At the base of the waterfall the River Dargle meanders across fairly flat grassland. The banks of the river have a nice belt of Alder trees (*Alnus glutinosa*) and a scarce species of hawkweed (*Hieracium* spp.) occurs.

Part of the grassland area is maintained as parkland for amenity purposes and includes some fine specimen trees. The barks of some of these large trees notably Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) provide a niche for the rare lichen *Lobaria pulmonaria*. The rest of the grassland is used for grazing and is dominated by Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*). In the wetter areas Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerula*) tussocks are common and where it is drier Bracken becomes abundant.

The slopes on the north-western side of the site are covered by mixed woodland with a fairly dense canopy. The main trees are Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sessile Oak. The shrubs and ground flora are generally sparse.

The rare Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) and a rare species of Myxomycete fungus, *Diderma lucidum*, have been recorded from this site but not in the recent past.

This site provided the first Irish breeding record for Redstart, and Ring Ouzel has also bred. However, neither species has been recorded in the recent past. A good variety of other woodland birds breed, as well as Raven.

This site is important because it has one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Ireland and it shows good exposures of schist and granite. The area is important botanically for its rare and scarce flowering plants, ferns, bryophytes and lichens.

25.11.2009