SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LEHID HARBOUR

SITE CODE: 001364

Lehid Harbour is situated 4km north of Lauragh on the Beara peninsula. The following description of the site is derived mainly from the one provided by An Foras Forbatha in 1972.

The main habitat of interest is mixed woodland containing both native and exotic tree species. There are two main woodland types within the site.

Young stands of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) occur, below which a dense growth of bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) grows. Also occurring in abundance are Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and sedges (*Carex sylvatica*, *C. remota*). Irish Spurge (*Euphorbia hyberna*) occurs throughout.

Mature oak (*Quercus* spp.) woodland also occurs, some parts of which have an understorey of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) while other parts are barer and dominated by Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtilus*). Pines (*Pinus* spp.) and fir (*Abies* spp.) are scattered through the oak but do not significantly alter the vegetation.

A separate area of mature Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) occurs at Ardea Wood. Here the ground flora has been modified by long-term grazing and there is little understorey and no regeneration. The ground flora is dominated by Bilberry, Velvet Bent (*Agrostis canina*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxantum odoratum*) and Wood-sorrel, with several mosses (*Leucobryum glaucum*, *Dicranum majus*, *Hylocomium brevirostre*, *Pleurozium schreberi* and *Polytrichum formosum*) also present.

Secondary habitats, which add to the diversity of the site, include a sheltered tidal inlet and heath. The inlet is partly fringed by oak which supports salt marsh species such as Common scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*) and Thift (*Armeria maritima*) on drier bases. The heath is scrubby with Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bramble (*Rubus fructicosus* agg.) present, along with Irish Spurge.

The main land use within the site is grazing, and the recent NHA survey reports that this is causing serious damage to the woodland. However, there are areas around the woodland margins where young oak, Downy Birch and Holly are colonising open ground.

The site is of interest because it is a diverse area illustrating many facets of ecology. The abrupt marine/ woodland boundary is of interest as is the variety of active plant successions. The presence of Irish Spurge in a wide spectrum of communities is also of note.

19.11.2009