SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LIFFEY BANK ABOVE ATHGARVAN

SITE CODE: 001396

This site is located on the River Liffey about 3km north-west of Kilcullen in Co. Kildare.

On one of the meanders above Athgarvan, the Liffey has cut into a very sandy patch of boulder clay, steepening its banks beyond the point where continuous vegetation can exist. The resulting unstable sandy slope faces south and is colonised by an interesting flora characteristic of unstable soil. Beds of harder rock boulder clay make small cliffs in places and the grassland above these is of Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) with Wild Garden (*Thymus polytrichus*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*) and Spring-sedge (*Carex caryophyllea*).

The open grassland community lower down and towards the river have the following species – Field Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*), Weld (*Reseda luteola*), Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), Parsley-piert (*Aphanes arvensis*), Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Common Fumitory (*Fumaria officinalis*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Smooth Sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), Hairy Bitter-cress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Water Avens (*Geum rivale*). The scarce Common Calamint (*Clinopodium menthifolium*) has been recorded from this site.

Patches of scrub occur on the slope, mostly of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

The scientific interest of this site lies in the occurrence of an assemblage of plants typical of disturbed and unstable habitats. Such areas of natural habitats are rare in Co Kildare.

20.11.2009