SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: GARRYRICKIN NATURE RESERVE

SITE CODE: 000403

Garryrickin Nature Reserve is a National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) conservation area which consists of two small tracts of deciduous forest, 5km south of Callan in Co. Kilkenny. Due to the rarity of deciduous woodland habitats throughout the rest of the country, these woodlands are of national importance. Besides this, these woodlands harbour a diverse range of species, some of which are threatened.

The reserve consists of two separate parts which lie adjacent to commercial Coillte-owned conifer plantation. The upper part of the woodland is on a ridge formed of Old Red Sandstone bedrock. The canopy is dominated by oak (*Quercus* spp.) and there is good regeneration of birch (*Betula* spp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquilinum*) in the understorey.

Further down slope, a second area of woodland lies on poorly drained clays and comprised of young oak and elm (*Ulmus* spp.) with a rich ground flora characteristic of wet soils. This area used to contain one of the largest stands of elm in the country but many of them have died due to Dutch Elm disease. This species is now in decline on an international scale and healthy specimens are very rare.

Parts of the Garryrickin Nature Reserve have now been underplanted with conifers but it is still a valuable example of deciduous woodland on fertile soils. Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) is invading both areas to the detriment of natural tree and shrub growth, but work is on-going to try and eliminate this introduced species.

6.11.2009