SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: GLENEALY WOODS

SITE CODE: 001756

Glenealy Woods are located about 8km west-southwest of Wicklow town. They comprise four separate areas of woodland, with an area of over 400ha. They are situated on the south-eastern slopes of Carrick Mountain at an altitude of up to 300m, on the northern spur of Deputy's Pass and a block to the north-east of it.

The underlying rock is a mixture of Cambrian (sandstones, slate and bands of quartzite) and lower Silurian (slates and grits) deposits. Soils are acid brown earths to podzolics. The topography of the area is hilly. The main Wicklow-Rathdrum road divides the site.

The best example of broadleaf woodland on this site is the oak wood at Deputy's Pass - now protected as a Nature Reserve. The main tree is Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*), which forms a good canopy. In the shrub layer, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) is abundant, with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) also present. Generally, there is a good field layer cover of Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) and Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) as dominant species. In some areas, Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Male-fern (Dryopteris filix-mas) and Hay-scented Buckler-fern (*D. aemula*) are common. Much of this oak wood is rather uniform and there is very little grazing.

The remaining woodlands on the site are very mixed, and consist of areas with a high proportion of deciduous trees and other areas with a large number of conifers. Sessile Oak is the dominant native tree, with some Rowan, Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and occasional Yew (*Taxus baccata*). Introduced species such as Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), and to a lesser extent Spanish Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) occur also.

Other areas have been underplanted with conifers. The main species are Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and European Larch (*Larix decidua*) and more recently spruce (*Picea* spp.) and fir (*Abies* spp.) species. The shrub layer and field layer flora under the Scots Pine or European Larch is fairly similar to that of the deciduous woods. Where other conifers predominate, the field layer flora becomes less species rich and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) become abundant.

These woods are important because they are almost certainly natural in origin and still retain much of their original character and species content. Scientifically they rank quite highly as being of 'national importance' even though their original extent has been diminished through underplanting with conifers. However, future management allowing the regeneration of native species could be encouraged by fencing to remove grazing animals in the wood (mostly deer) and the removal of certain alien species.

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