

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: KILRONAN MOUNTAIN BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 000617**

Kilronan Mountain Bog NHA consists primarily of upland blanket bog habitat located on the plateau of Kilronan Mountain, Co. Roscommon. It lies between altitudes of 240 m and 370 m and overlooks Lough Allen and the former coal-mining town of Arigna. It covers the townlands of Crosshill, Aghabehy, Kilronan Mountain, Tullytawen and Derreenavoggy.

The northern slopes of the mountain drain into the Arigna River while the southern slopes drain into the Feorish River, partly via Lough Meelagh. The site is largely surrounded by agricultural fields on the lower slopes largely, with some plantation forestry on the western and southern margins. A wind power installation and associated infrastructure, located on the summit east of Loughanboy, is excluded from the site.

The vegetation consists of a relatively intact assemblage of characteristic blanket bog species including Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), with swards of Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) on the flats. There is a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow areas with intact hummocks of bog moss (*Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum* and *S. subnitens*). *Sphagnum fuscum*, a locally occurring hummock species, is also recorded. Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), a species more typical of raised bogs, occurs within the site.

Small areas of open water support Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) and submerged bog moss (*Sphagnum cuspidatum*), with quaking lawns of *S. papillosum* and *S. capillifolium*. A small lake to the west of the wind power installation supports some emergent Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and floating Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*). A number of streams are present on the site. Associated flushes support such species as *Sphagnum palustre*, *S. recurvum*, Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*), Bog-sedge (*C. limosa*) and Bottle Sedge.

Burning on the west side of the site has resulted in a predominance of Purple Moor-grass while further eastwards the vegetation cover and species diversity improves as the effects of burning diminish.

Red Grouse and Irish Hare, both Irish Red Data Book species, are recorded on the site.

The original blanket bog resource on this mountain was significantly depleted by afforestation as seen along the western and southern boundaries of the site. Further habitat loss was incurred through the installation of a wind power facility and

associated roads. Current land uses on the site include peat cutting and heavy grazing by sheep. Damaging operations associated with these land uses include drainage and burning of blanket bog and heath vegetation. These activities have caused habitat damage and altered local hydrology. They pose a continuing threat to the conservation of the site.

Kilronan Mountain Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising a large area of relatively intact upland blanket bog. This site supports a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes and flushes. Lakes and streams add to the habitat diversity of the site. The site also supports the locally occurring bog moss *Sphagnum fuscum* and a species more typical of raised bogs (Cranberry). It also supports Irish Red Data Book species Red Grouse and Irish Hare. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.