

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: MOLERICK BOG**

**SITE CODE: 001582**

Molerick Bog NHA is situated approximately 4 km south-west of Longwood in the townlands of Molerick, Anneville and Blackshade Co. Meath. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded by the Dublin-Sligo railway line to the north and local roads to the east.

The site consists of a small basin bog with a dry surface. Cutover is found all around the site, there is broadleaved woodland located to the south-west, wet woodland is located to the north-west, scrub to the east, humid grassland to the south, a flush/fen area to the west and humid grassland on mineral soil to the north-west.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised Bog including Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and *Sphagnum* spp.. The Midland Raised Bog indicator species Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) is also found on the bog. Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) is found growing in a wet part of the high bog and is also invading the high bog margins from the cutover.

Active cutover bog occurs on the east and west margins of the high bog. Scrub occurs to the north, east and south-east of the site. Dry, broadleaved semi-natural woodland on cutover, comprising Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Downy Birch and Willow (*Salix* spp.) with some Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) is located to the south-west of the site. A small area of wet woodland dominated by Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is located to the north-west. Wet improved grassland occurs to the south of the high bog, supporting Rushes (*Juncus* spp.), bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) and Common Cottongrass. There is also a fen/flush area to the south-east margin of the site on cutover. Species found here include Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), Sedges (*Carex* spp.), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and several orchids, including Common Twayblade (*Listera ovata*).

Current landuse on the site includes extensive active peat-cutting on the east and western margins, with old peat-cuttings all around the site. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes to the south. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage and burning of the high bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Molerick Bog NHA is a site of conservation significance comprising as it does a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. This site is located in Co. Meath at the eastern extreme of raised bogs in Ireland and is one of only four raised bogs in the county. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

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