

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MALIN HEAD SPA

SITE CODE: 004146

Malin Head SPA comprises areas of agricultural grassland around the village of Ballygorman near Malin Head at the northern end of the Inishowen Peninsula, Co. Donegal. The northern section of the site is very exposed and comprises gently undulating land used mostly for grazing. The southern section of the site, centred along the Coolort River, is low-lying and consists of mixed agricultural land, with meadow and grazing pasture.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Corncrake.

Malin Head SPA supports a breeding population of Corncrake (7 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males). Malin Head SPA is one of a suite of sites along the western seaboard that is regularly utilised by nationally important numbers of breeding Corncrake.

Corncrake winter in southern and eastern Africa, migrating northwards to arrive on their breeding grounds from early April onwards, departing again in August and September. They require the cover of tall vegetation throughout their breeding cycle and are strongly associated with meadows which are harvested annually, where they nest and feed. Annual cutting of these meadows creates a sward which is easy for the birds to move through. Other habitats, which can provide cover for Corncrake in the early and late stages of the breeding season, are also important for this species.

Corncrake is listed on the 2010 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. This is due to population and range declines of more than 50% in the last 25 years across significant parts of its range.

Malin Head SPA is of high ornithological importance as it supports a nationally important population of Corncrake, a globally threatened species. Corncrake is also listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

5.11.2014