

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: HELVICK HEAD TO BALLYQUIN SPA

SITE CODE: 004192

Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA is a linear site situated on the south-west coast of Co. Waterford. It includes the sea cliffs and land adjacent to the cliff edge between Helvick Head in the east and Ballyquin townland in the south-west. The high water mark forms the seaward boundary, except around Helvick Head where the adjacent sea area to a distance of 500 m from the cliff base is included.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Chough, Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake.

The site supports a nationally important population of breeding Chough, a Red Data Book species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive; 11 breeding pairs were recorded from the site in the 1992 survey and 11 pairs in the 2002/03 survey. The low heath and agricultural farmland on the cliff tops provides good foraging habitat for this species. The site is also of importance for its Peregrine population (5 pairs in 2002).

In addition, the site has important breeding seabird populations, centered around Helvick Head. Nationally important populations of Cormorant (65 pairs), Herring Gull (117 pairs) and Kittiwake (1,037 pairs) occur, as well as smaller populations of other breeding seabirds: Razorbill (28 pairs), Fulmar (135 pairs), Shag (6 pairs), Guillemot (664 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (8 pairs) and Black Guillemot (10 individuals) – all seabird data from 1999. Raven breed on the cliffs and there is a cliff-nesting colony of House Martins. Other species which breed within the site include Rock Pipit and Stonechat. The seabird colony at Helvick Head has been monitored at intervals since the Operation Seafarer project in 1969/70. In addition, more detailed population studies have been carried out on the Kittiwake colony.

The Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA is an important site for Chough and Peregrine, both species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. It also supports a range of breeding seabirds, including populations of Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake of national importance.

20.1.2015