

MAYO - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Bartragh Island
Other names used for site	Moy Bar, Beartrach
IGH THEME	IGH13 Coastal Geomorphology
TOWNLAND(S)	Bartragh Island
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Killala
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	16, 22
ITM CO-ORDINATES	523960E 830000N (centre of feature)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NO. 23	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 10
GIS Code MO007	

Outline Site Description

Bartragh Island is a long and narrow sandy island that separates the shallow, south-western area of Killala Bay from the open water to the northeast. Oriented northwest-southeast, the island is approximately 4.5km long, and has extensive sand dunes.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The feature has formed during the Holocene period (<12,000 years ago), since the last glaciation. The island comprises mainly unconsolidated sands (in dunes), with grassland pastures on the southern part of the island.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Bartragh Island comprises extensive Marram-dominated shifting sand dunes. The dune complex is relatively undisturbed and is considered to be one of the best in the country in terms of naturalness and the relatively intact state of the dunes. Extensive intertidal sand and mud-flats are exposed in the Moy River estuary and Killala Bay at low tide. The estuary is an area of winding channels, sand banks and powerful currents. The main channel of the River Moy drains into the bay immediately southwest of the island. A second channel drains the wide mudflats between Killala town and Bartragh Island, entering the bay north of the island near Ross Strand.

The island has developed as a result of continued wind erosion and deposition since the end of the Ice Age. Large dunes reach heights of 20m along the northern part of the island. Dune slacks occur in the troughs between the high dunes. Several acres of pasture land surround Bartragh House (19th century home of the Kirkwood Family) at the southwestern part of the island.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

The significance of the geodiversity at the site should be acknowledged in any future conservation and promotion initiatives. Bartragh Island and proximal sand and mudflats are of great importance as a habitat for birds. The site is within the Killala Bay/Moy River SPA (004036). The site is also located within the Killala Bay/Moy River Estuary SAC (00458), designated for the Annex I '*habitats mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, and shifting dunes*'. The dune complex is considered to be one of the best in the country in terms of naturalness and the relatively intact state of the dunes.

Management/promotion issues

The site remains a relatively quiet and largely unspoilt dune site, compared to other coastal dunes systems in Ireland. This is mainly owing to the lack of permanent road/pathway access to the island. The island is the property of internationally renowned golfer Nick Faldo, who purchased Bartragh in 2003. Gorse fires in March 2010 damaged the sand-binding vegetation on the sand dune system. Any development of leisure amenities (such as a golf course, leisure centre) at Bartragh Island would threaten the natural integrity of the site. An information board explaining the significance of the island in terms of coastal landscapes, sand dunes, biodiversity and birdlife could be mounted at Ross Strand car park.



Sand dunes on the northeast, Killala Bay side of Bartragh Island viewed from Ross Strand, looking south.



Sand dunes on the northeast, Killala Bay side of Bartragh Island viewed from Ross Strand, looking south.



Southwestern end of Bartragh Island near the mouth of the Moy River estuary, viewed from Bullockpark, looking east. Bartragh House visible on left



Southwestern end of Bartragh Island near the mouth of the Moy River estuary. Sand dunes visible on left (north).

