WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	**Calliaghstown-Milltown Esker**
Other names used for site	Ballymahon Esker
IGH THEME	**IGH7 Quaternary**
TOWNLAND(S)	**Calliaghstown, Carricknagower, Milltown, Harrystown, Dungolman, Mullenmeehan**
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	**Ballymore**
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	**16, 23**
ITM CO-ORDINATES	**618900E 750555N (centre of feature)**
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	**41, 48 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 12**

Outline Site Description
The Calliaghstown-Milltown Esker comprises a long, linear series of esker sand and gravel segments deposited under the ice sheet as the ice withdrew northwards across north Westmeath at the end of the last Ice Age.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type
The Calliaghstown-Milltown Esker is formed within an area dominated by bedrock of Lower Carboniferous limestone. The esker itself is Quaternary in age, having been deposited under the northward-retreating ice sheet during deglaciation, approximately 14,000 years ago.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest
The esker between Calliaghstown and Milltown, and extending northwards into Longford as far almost as Ballymahon, is one of a series of north-south oriented eskers that lie just north of the east-west oriented central Irish Midlands esker network. Including the portion in Longford, this esker comprises 12 kilometres of ridge segments (beads); each a narrow, sharp-crested ridge of coarse-grained sediments which trends south-southeast (in the down-ice direction) from Ballymahon town, and gently uphill, terminating in a wide, flat-topped, fan-shaped area. The esker runs east of and parallel to the Dungolman River.

The esker ridge is a striking feature, standing proud of the flat landscape of till (boulder clay) upon which it was deposited. A road follows much of the length of the crest of the feature. Intact portions crossing the main R390 road at Milltown, and within Calliaghstown Townland, are especially impressive. In both localities the esker is comprised of a raised, elevated ridge of sands and gravels. The sands and gravels within the esker feature are comprised chiefly of limestone clasts.

The esker feature is important in that it records faithfully the ice movement across this portion of north Westmeath which was along its orientation, *i.e*. effectively north to south. Associated sands and gravels along the extent of the esker feature, especially around Calliaghstown and Dungolman, flanking the ridge, are probably part of associated ice marginal fans.

Site Importance – County Geological Site
The feature is a high, striking example of a dry sand and gravel ridge, and stands proud of the surrounding landscape. This esker and the associated sands and gravels in the locality seem to be a good example of a deglacial, meltwater-deposited complex, with portions deposited under the ice (esker), and portions at the ice margin (fans).

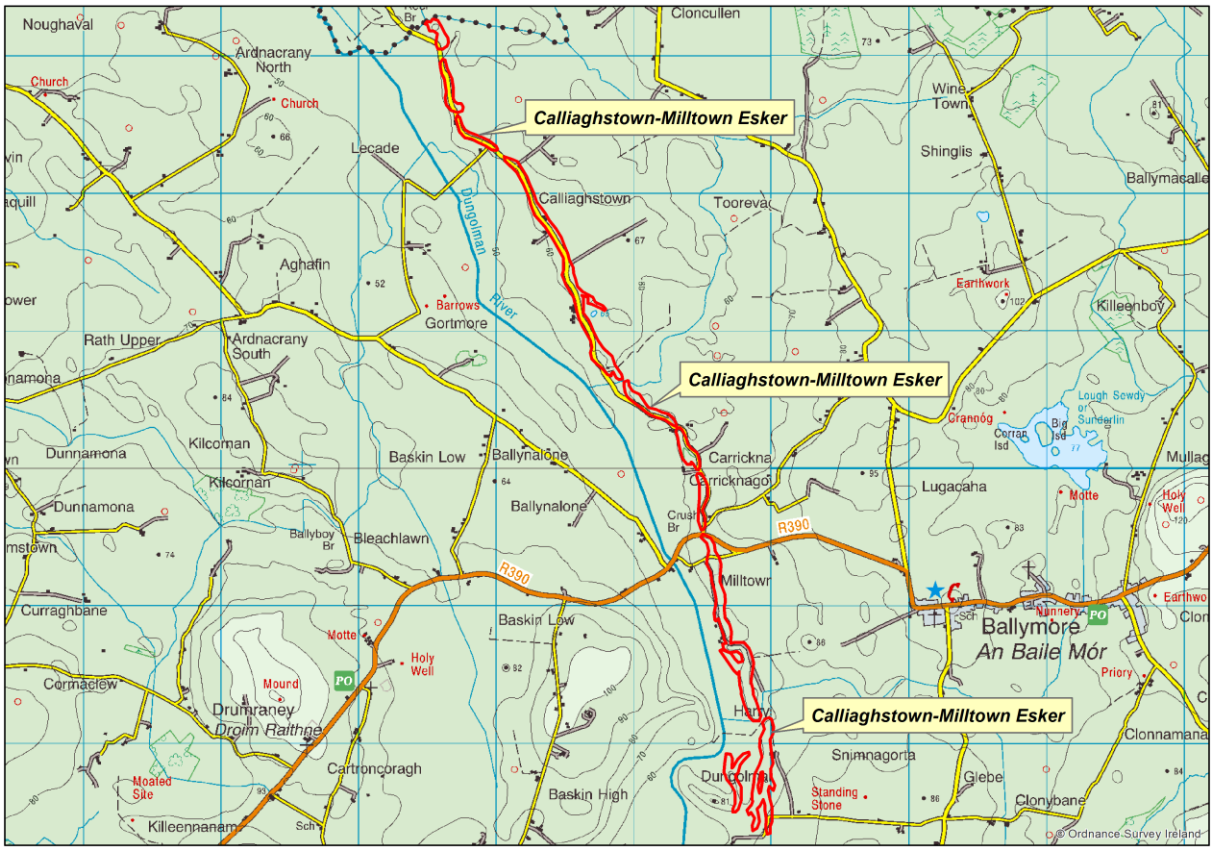
Management/promotion issues
This system comprises a well-defined landform sequence and should be listed as a County Geological Site. As with many eskers on the Irish landscape, the ridge carries a road across otherwise low lying land, and the route is most likely a very ancient trackway. A signboard along the R390 road at Crush Bridge in Milltown, where the feature passes nearby, might help promote the feature.

Road following the crest of the Calliaghstown-MIlltown esker at Calliaghstown.

Looking southwestwards in Dungolman Townland along a hummocky portion of the esker ridge.

Kettle hole adjacent to the esker in Harrystown.

Small pit in the esker ridge at Harrystown.



Meehan *et al*. 2019. Geological Survey Ireland.