

# WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Bannow Bay</b>
Other names used for site	<i>Cuan Bhanú</i>
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH13 Coastal geomorphology</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>Grange, Dengulph, Stonehouse, Gorteens, Saltmills, Tintern, Saintkierans, Taulaght, Clonmines, Ballylannan, Ballyowen, Maudlintown, Barrystown, Kiltra, Newtown, Vernegly, Brandane, Bannow, Bannow Island</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Wellingtonbridge, Fethard</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>40, 45, 50</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>682400E 689600N (centre of bay)</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>76, 77 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 23</b>

## Outline Site Description

Bannow Bay is a wide coastal embayment, flanked on either side by sand spits and sandy beaches, and incorporating wide expanses of estuarine flats.

## Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The feature has been forming in the Holocene Period following the last glaciation, and the bay itself hosts soft mud, silt and sand sediment washed into it during that time. It is likely that the macro-structure of the bay dates back beyond the Quaternary (Ice Age) to the Palaeogene Period.

## Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The estuary, including the saltmarshes, comprises just over 80% of the site. At low tide up to three-quarters of the substrate is exposed. There are mudflats in the narrow northern part and also in the southwest and southeast. The sediments of the inner estuary associated with the Corock and Owenduff Rivers are generally black anoxic mud, with some fine sand and broken shell.

The main areas of saltmarsh are on the islands at Clonmines, at the mouth of the tributary at Clonmines, at the mouth of the tributary at Taulaght, close to Saint Kieran's House, at the northwest of Big Burrow, at the south-east of Bannow Island and at the west of Rabbit Burrow in Fethard Bay. Very small fragmented linear strips of saltmarsh occur in the upper estuary as far north as the confluence of the Corock and Owenduff Rivers and along the other tributaries.

Also linked with saltmarshes in places are stony beaches and reedbeds. Narrow shingle beaches up to 30m wide occur in places along the edge of the estuary, as well as flanking sand dunes.

## Site Importance - County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

The extensive flats and the associated beach, dune and slack features, as well as the surrounding beaches, salt marshes and sand spits, make Bannow Bay a textbook locality for the recognition of coastal depositional features. The bay is already a proposed NHA (pNHA 000697, Bannow Bay), SPA and SAC for biodiversity reasons and the geodiversity of an active sedimentation system should be highlighted in promotion of this.

## Management/promotion issues

The location of the features of interest makes them easily accessible, and Bannow Bay is a popular recreational area given the number of fine beaches and bird-watching sites around its perimeter. Information boards at the roadside viewing point at Barrystown are worthy additions to the site, and explain the features associated habitats, flora and fauna. The geological formation of and geomorphological processes taking place within the feature could be highlighted in future on literature produced on the bay.



View across the stony beach and mudflats in Barrystown, along the northern edge of the bay.



Fine sandy beach with oyster collectors in the distance, at Kiltra.



View southwest towards Tintern, from Saintkierans Quay.



