

# WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Curracloe Beach and The Raven Point</b>
Other names used for site	Raven Nature Reserve, The Raven
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH13 Coastal geomorphology</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>The Raven, Ballinesker, Ballyaloo Lower, Ballynaclash, Ballyconnigar Lower</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Curracloe</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>33, 38</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>711500E 627575N (entrance to beach at White Gap)</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>77 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 19, 23</b>

## Outline Site Description

Curracloe Beach and the Raven Point comprises the coastal strip running north to Blackwater Head and the dynamic sand dune system of Raven Point itself.

## Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The feature has been forming in the Holocene Period following the last glaciation, and the beach itself comprises sand sediment continually washed and recycled onto it during that time. The adjacent sand dunes, though windblown and formed by a different process, are also Holocene in age.

## Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Curracloe Beach is the result of wave action by which waves or currents move sand, which makes up the beach, as these particles are held in suspension. Sand may also be moved by saltation (a bouncing movement of large particles). The sand in the beach originated in the sands and gravels deposited in the Screen Hills and Blackwater areas at the end of the last Ice Age, and have been continually eroded, deposited and reworked since then.

The Raven Point is a sand spit, which formed as a result of deposition by longshore drift, which is the movement of sand along the coast by the waves. The spit is formed when the sand material that is being carried by the waves gets deposited due to a loss of the waves energy, because of the estuary emerging in adjacent Wexford Harbour slows it down. As time progresses the deposited material has formed a spit.

The dynamic nature of the system at the Raven Point is best seen at the southern end of the site where sand flats, lagoons, driftlines and small dune slacks develop and are being continuously transformed by the activity of the sea and the wind. Much of the dunes was planted with commercial conifer forest in the 1930s and 1950s, partly as a coastal defence measure to stabilise the dunes and protect the polder of the North East Slob to the west of it. Interestingly, some of the current slack communities are associated with artificial ponds that were originally created as forest fire control reservoirs.

## Site Importance - County Geological Site

The beach is a textbook locality for the recognition of a dynamic coastal depositional environment. The beach is already a proposed NHA (pNHA 000712, Wexford Slobs and Harbour), 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 feature means it is easily accessible, and Curracloe beach and The Raven Nature Reserve are popular recreational features. Information boards 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 site could be highlighted in future on literature produced on the beach and Raven Point.



A view of Curracloe beach, looking south towards The Raven Point.



The sand dunes north of Curracloe, looking north towards Blackwater Head.

