

WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Hook Head
Other names used for site	The Hook
IGH THEME	IGH3 Carboniferous to Pliocene Palaeontology IGH8 Lower Carboniferous
TOWNLAND(S)	Churchtown, Slade, Loftus Hall, Portersgate, Houseland
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Fethard
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	54
ITM CO-ORDINATES	673300E 597350N (below Lighthouse)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	76 GSI Bedrock 1:100,000 Sheet No. 23

Outline Site Description

Coastal exposures around the Hook Head Peninsula.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The rocks are Lower Carboniferous in age and are mostly limestone formations.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This succession dips gently southward so the youngest rocks are at the end of the peninsula and going northward is going back in time down the strata. Taking the view of oldest first, from the Devonian rocks at Harrylock Bay, the sequence passes up into non-marine but Carboniferous age rocks of the Oldtown Bay Formation, then into the fully marine Porter's Gate Formation, followed by the Ballymartin Formation and the Ballysteen Formation, both fully marine limestones with numerous fossils in them. There is also a local Bullockpark Bay Member which is oolitic and sometimes dolomitised.

This site is perhaps Ireland's best known fossil site with hundreds of species of fossils found. Many museum collections from here include type specimens – the species were first described on material from Hook Head.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

This site is of national and perhaps international importance and should be designated a geological NHA.

Management/promotion issues

As with any coastal site there are risks of getting caught by tides, large waves and storms, and slippery rocks. Caution must be exercised by any visitor to publicly accessible areas to maintain their personal safety.

The coast here is already protected as an SAC and pNHA, but only for marine habitats and other aspects, which includes little definition or comprehension of the geology in the original designations. There is much scope for an improved treatment of the geological and palaeontological interests within the existing framework of protection.

There is scope for a local Fossil Collecting Code, founded in a conservation message, as long as the local community are involved and supportive of it. The Hook Lighthouse Visitor Centre would play a key role in the promotion of such a code. Any attempted collection of fossils or rocks, other than as loose material, should be strongly discouraged and reported to NPWS and/or GSI.



The rocks exposed on the west side of Hook Head around Doornoge Bay.



The cliffs around the Lighthouse can be quite dangerous in bad weather.

