

# National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme

## Dursey Island 2025



**Fáilte  
Ireland**

Turasóireacht Náisiúnta  
An tÚdara Eorbartha  
National Tourism  
Development Authority

# National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme

## Report for Dursey Island 2025

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## DURSEY ISLAND – INTERESTING FINDS

### Interesting Finds

Dursey Island supports an internationally important population of breeding Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive and is amber listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern Ireland 2020-2026. They are identifiable by a long red bill and red legs, with black plumage, and were recorded during the ecological survey. Two Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) were recorded surfacing in Dursey Sound during the cable car crossing to Dursey Island. Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*) were recorded at various locations on the island during the survey.



### Features of the Site

- Carpark at Ballaghboy with benches, food and coffee truck and informative signage.
- Wild Atlantic Way Discovery Point on Dursey Island and the mainland carpark.
- Signage throughout the site indicating the trail routes.
- Defibrillator located in the townland of Ballynacallagh.
- Seating at various locations along the road to the townland of Ballynacallagh on Dursey Island.
- Signal tower at the highest point of Dursey Island.

### Habitats

The following habitats were recorded on site:

- Stone walls and other stonework (BL1)
- Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
- Rocky sea cliffs (CS1)
- Exposed siliceous rock (ER1)
- Eroding/upland rivers (FW1)
- Dry-humid acid grassland (GS3)
- Dry-humid acid grassland / Dry siliceous heath (GS3/HH1)
- Dense bracken (HD1)
- Dry siliceous heath (HH1)
- Dry siliceous heath / Wet grassland (HH1/GS4)
- Dry calcareous heath / wet grassland (HH2/GS4)

### Key Recommendations

- Additional informative signage regarding the ecological value and biodiversity of Dursey Island should be considered.
- The provision of public toilet facilities on Dursey Island should be considered.
- Improvements to the condition of paved road from the carpark on Dursey Island should be considered.
- The provision of signage relating to the hazardous nature of the steep exposed cliff edges, particularly along the Garnish Point Loop Trail should be considered.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) was appointed by Fáilte Ireland to conduct Visitor and Environmental Surveys as part of the National Environmental Surveying & Monitoring Programme. Fáilte Ireland regularly engages with environmental research that is used to make informed management decisions and produce robust guidelines to facilitate the protection of the environment. From its inception in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Operational Monitoring Programme has been conducting research into the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment.

Building on the success of the WAW environmental monitoring programme which ran from 2015-2019, Fáilte Ireland expanded the programme to a national level. From 2021 to 2022 the programme monitored 19 individual sites located in all of Fáilte Ireland's regional areas: The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East, and Dublin. This 2025 National Monitoring report builds on environmental surveying and monitoring undertaken on behalf of Fáilte Ireland as far back as 2015 and to date (excluding the 2025 data), the surveys have monitored a total of 70 sites and recorded the activities and effects of over 31,000 visitors at a range of popular sites, including inland, urban, coastal and WAW discovery points.

The environmental surveys and monitoring in 2023 followed the methodologies used in previous years. Following the completion of the 2023 surveys, a review of the methodology was undertaken. In developing the survey methodology used in 2024 and 2025, ROD considered the methodology for gathering the data, the presentation of the data, and the usefulness of the data gathered. The review also considered the time required to gather the data.

Eight sites were surveyed in 2025. Figure 1.1 below shows the locations of these sites. This report is for Dursey Island, Co. Cork.



Figure 1.1 Environmental Monitoring Programme 2025 locations. Basemap provided by Google.

## 1.2 Aim of the Report

The purpose of the monitoring programme is as follows:

- To gain insight from an environmental perspective at amenity and recreation sites across Ireland;
- To obtain data on path and trail conditions etc. for each site;
- To obtain data relating to habitats, flora, and fauna for each site;
- To identify observable trends or variations among the sites;
- To make recommendations where appropriate for site management for the benefit of the site, the visitor, and the natural environment.

## 1.3 Site Description of Dursey Island

Dursey Island is located off the West of Co. Cork, 18km West of Castletown-Bearhaven (50km West of Bantry). The island is only accessible by cable car, which is accessible via the R572. The area being surveyed for this report ("the site") consists of Dursey island itself, the cable car and Garnish Point Loop Trail Carpark, and the beginning of the Garnish Point Loop Trail. The site boundary is presented in Figure 1.2. Cable car services, informative signage and a food truck are available on site. Visitors have views of the Beara Peninsula and the opportunity to see dolphins, whales, and thousands of birds including many migrating species.

The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 (CDP) designates Dursey Island part of "West Cork Island Communities" and states the aim of supporting economic, social, and cultural development and to preserve their unique cultural and linguistic heritage. The CPD also recognises that Dursey Island Sound is a "signature discovery point" on the Wild Atlantic Way.

The site is located within Beara Peninsula Special Protected Areas (SPA) [Site Code: 004155], Kenmare River Special Area of Conservation (SAC) [Site Code: 002158], Dursey Island Proposed National Heritage Area (pNHA) [Site Code: 000086], and Garnish Point pNHA [Site Code: 001986]. The site is 300m East of The Bull and The Cow Rocks SPA, 2km West of Firkeel Gap pNHA, and 2.3km East of the Bull and Cow Rocks pNHA. Also supports breeding colonies of a number of sea birds including:

- Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)
- Chough (*Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)
- Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)
- Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)
- Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*)



**Figure 1.2** Site boundary outlined in red. Basemap provided by Bing.

#### 1.4 Critical Infrastructure

Table 1.1 to Table 1.3 below provide information on the infrastructure on Dursey Island. Uisce Éireann’s website was used to access information on the Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment Capacity Registers for County Cork (Uisce Éireann 2025a, b).

**Table 1.1** Dursey Island Wastewater Infrastructure

| Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)  | Uisce Éireann Indication of Capacity  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No public toilet facilities are available on this site.</li> <li>There is no WWTP onsite.</li> <li>The nearest settlements with a WWTP are located in Castletown Bearhaven (WWTP Reg #D0297), Glengarriff (WWTP Reg #D0471), Bantry (WWTP Reg #D0168) and Kenmare (WWTP Reg #D0184).</li> </ul> | <p>There is spare capacity available at Castletownbere WWTP, Bantry WWTP, Glengarriff Septic Tank.</p> <p>There is no capacity available at Kenmare WWTP.</p> |

**Table 1.2** Summary of Drinking Water Infrastructure at Dursey Island

| Drinking Water  | Water Resource Name (WRZ) | Uisce Éireann Indication of Capacity                        |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| Nearest serviced settlement to the site is Castletown Bearhaven | Castletownbere            | Potential capacity available (Capital Investment Required). |

**Table 1.3 Summary of Transport Infrastructure at Dursey Island**

| Nearest Settlement      | Current Transport Infrastructure   | Comment  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Castletown<br>Bearhaven | Dursey Island is accessed by the R572. There is a carpark located near Garnish Point, where visitors can access the cable car. | The TFI Local Link Cork No. 263 Bus serving Allihies and Castletownbere stops at the Garnish Point Loop Trail Carpark. |

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The following surveys were undertaken:

- Habitat survey
- Pathway condition survey
- Survey of the features, signage and hazards

The survey at Dursey Island was undertaken on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2025. There was heavy fog for the duration of the survey with poor visibility. Maximum temperatures were between 15 °C and 17 °C, with 100% cloud cover and a moderate wind. There were light showers throughout the day. The sub-sections below present the methodologies followed.

### 2.1 Habitat Conditions Assessment Methodology

The habitats within the site were classified and mapped in accordance with *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000) and *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Surveying and Mapping* (Smith et al. 2011). Notes were taken on species composition and habitat condition. Fossitt habitats corresponding to Annex I habitats were noted using the *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats* (EC, 2013). A desktop study was also undertaken to identify designated sites and rare and protected species in the vicinity of each site. Incidental sightings of birds, mammals, reptiles, etc. were also recorded during the site surveys.

The condition of the habitat in each polygon or line will be noted, including any damage and the likely cause of the damage. The areas along pathways are outlined by the pathway condition assessment in Section 2.2 below. The following criteria were used to assess habitat condition:

- Extent of habitat degradation;
- Impact of habitat degradation (localised or widespread);
- Potential for the habitat to recover; and
- Whether or not intervention is required.

### 2.2 Pathway Condition Assessment Methodology

The main pathways were defined during the site visit and a desk study which included a review of the Strava heat maps ([www.strava.com/heatmap](http://www.strava.com/heatmap)), and a review of the previous site monitoring reports, if available. Typically, the main paths are formalised waymarked trails or heavily trafficked pathways that are not formalised. These paths usually link the site entry points and car parks to a destination or feature of interest. The pathways were categorised into sections by type and composition. The different types of pathways are described in Table 2.1 below. Each path section is described as 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' based on the condition of the path and whether or not it could accommodate the current levels of use. Indicators that a path was not suitable for the current levels of use included the presence of wet areas, erosion, trip hazards, damaged pavement, braiding, path widening and habitat loss along the path.

Paths that generally facilitated unobstructed movement between locations were deemed as 'satisfactory'. It should be noted that the methodology outlined here is independent of and not linked to the trail registration and management process run by Sport Ireland Outdoors.

**Table 2.1 Pathway Types**

| <b>Pathway Type</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|---------------------|---|
| Paved Car Park      | An area used for parking, wider than the road, that is paved, usually with tarmacadam.  |
| Gravel Car Park     | An area used for parking, wider than the road, that is gravel or crushed stone.   |
| Paved Road          | A road that is paved with tarmacadam or similar hard material.  |
| Gravel Road         | A road consisting of gravel or crushed stone, with no grass in the middle.  |
| Gravel Track        | A single vehicle pathway used by small numbers of vehicles. Tracks are normally paved with gravel and can have grass in the middle  |
| Grassy Track        | A single vehicle pathway used by small numbers of vehicles. These tracks are not paved and are used primarily by tractors, quads or small numbers of private vehicles.  |
| Paved Path          | A path is primarily for foot traffic. Paved paths are found in more developed areas, to cater for higher levels of traffic.   |
| Gravel Path         | A path is primarily for foot traffic and can be a single track or a track wide enough for several people to walk abreast. Gravel paths are found in more developed areas, to cater for higher levels of traffic.                          |
| Grassy Path         | A path is primarily for foot traffic and can be a single track or a track wide enough for several people to walk abreast. Grassy paths are found in less developed areas, often beyond feature of interest, and are used less frequently. |
| Bare Ground Path    | These paths occur where the vegetation had been eroded by foot traffic and is bare ground, or damages vegetation. These paths are often widespread on sites where formal waymarked trails are not provided.                               |

### **2.3 Features, Signage and Hazards**

Signage, features of interest, and hazards were recorded, photographed and mapped. Features include built heritage, sculptures as well as the temporary toilets and bins. Hazards including unstable walls, broken fences or unprotected cliff tops.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Habitat Condition Assessment

Habitats were surveyed during the optimum habitat survey season i.e., April to September (Smith et al., 2011). Habitats were classified according to *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000). Table 3.1 lists the habitats identified in Dursey Island along with their corresponding Annex I habitats. A habitat map is presented in Figure 3.1. It should be noted that having a corresponding Annex I habitat does not indicate the Annex I habitat is automatically present.

**Table 3.1 Fossitt (2000) habitats and links to Annex I habitats**

| Fossitt 2000 Habitat                                     | Corresponding Annex I habitats (Natura 2000 code) <sup>1</sup>  |
|--|---|
| Stone walls and other stonework (BL1)                    | None  |
| Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)                  | None  |
| Rocky sea cliffs (CS1)                                   | Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts (1230)   |
| Exposed siliceous rock (ER1)                             | Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation (8220)  |
| Eroding / upland rivers (FW1)                            | Watercourses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation (3260)<br>Rivers with muddy banks with <i>Chenopodion rubric</i> p.p. and <i>Bidention</i> p.p. vegetation (3270)   |
| Dry-humid acid grassland (GS3)                           | *Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in continental Europe) (6230)<br>Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> (6130)   |
| Dry-humid acid grassland / Dry siliceous heath (GS3/HH1) | *Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands on siliceous sunstrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in continental Europe) (6230)<br>Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> (6130)<br>European dry heaths (4030)<br><i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands (5130) |
| Dense bracken (HD1)                                      | None  |
| Dry siliceous heath (HH1)                                | European dry heaths (4030)<br><i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands (5130)  |
| Dry siliceous heath / Wet grassland (HH1/GS4)            | European dry heaths (4030)<br><i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands (5130)<br>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils ( <i>Molinion caeruleae</i> ) (6410)  |
| Dry calcareous heath / Wet grassland (HH2/GS4)           | European dry heaths (4030)<br><i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands (5130)<br>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils ( <i>Molinion caeruleae</i> ) (6410)  |

<sup>1</sup> \*Indicates priority habitat

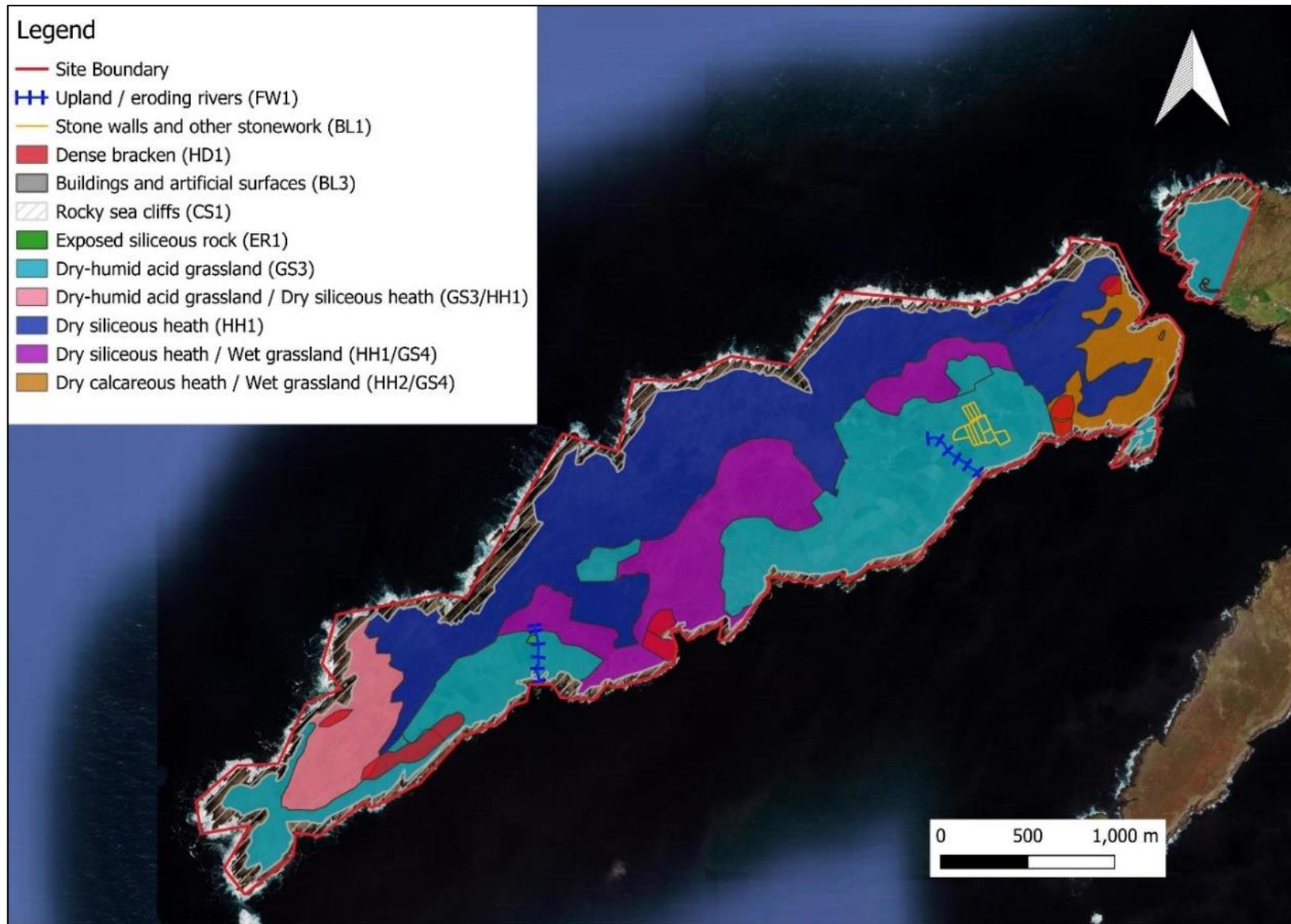


Figure 3.1 Habitat map of Dursey Island and Garnish Point Loop Trail. Basemap provided by Google.

### **Stone walls and other stonework (BL1)**

This habitat is present throughout the island, marking boundaries of fields or properties. This habitat is considered to be of low biodiversity value.

### **Buildings or artificial surfaces (BL3)**

This habitat is present at the mainland car park for the Garnish Point Loop Trail and also at the cable car landing point and car park on Dursey Island. This habitat is considered to be of low biodiversity value.

### **Rocky sea cliffs (CS1)**

Due to the location of the site on the southwest coast, this habitat is present along all boundaries of the site. Much of this habitat comprises of exposed rock, although grasses and Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) are present along the cliff edge.

### **Exposed siliceous rock (ER1)**

A small area of this habitat is present on the western side of the island. There is little vegetation cover in this area. Species recorded include grasses, Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). This area is hazardous as loose rock and scree is present underfoot.



**Plate 3.1** Exposed siliceous rock recorded in one area of the site.

### **Eroding / upland rivers (FW1)**

This habitat is present at two locations on Dursey Island, one at the eastern end of the site, which appears to be in use as a drainage ditch from adjacent farms. This is heavily vegetated and species recorded include Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*), Beech (*Fagus*

*sylvatica*) and Fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*). The other occurs further west, intersecting exposed siliceous rock and dry-humid acid grassland.



**Plate 3.2** Heavily vegetated upland / eroding river in use as a drainage ditch

### **Dry-humid acid grassland (GS3)**

This habitat comprises a large area of the site, occurring on the west and southeast sides of the island. Species identified in this habitat include Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Thyme-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*), Common Field Speedwell (*Veronica persica*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*), Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*), Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). This habitat comprises a large area of Garnish Point Loop Trail. This habitat is heavily grazed on both Dursey Island and the Garnish Point Loop Trail. Species identified on the mainland loop include Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*).

### **Dense bracken (HD1)**

This habitat is present at various locations along sloping hillsides throughout the island. Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is the dominant species in this habitat.



**Plate 3.3** One of the areas of dense bracken on Dursey Island.

### **Dry siliceous heath (HH1)**

This habitat is very prominent along the northwest, north and northeast sides of the island. Species recorded in this habitat include Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). Species listed in the habitat description for dry-humid acid grassland also occur in this habitat as it was often recorded as a mosaic with this habitat.

### **Dry siliceous heath / Wet grassland (HH1/GS4)**

These habitats occur as a mosaic in areas in the centre of Dursey Island. Species recorded include those listed in the habitat descriptions above for dry siliceous heath and wet grassland.

### **Dry calcareous heath / wet grassland (HH2/GS4)**

Where dry calcareous heath and wet grassland graded into each other, it was difficult to differentiate between the habitats and they were recorded as a mosaic. This habitat mosaic is present at the east end of the site, in the area surrounding the cable car landing point. The species recorded here include Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), Crested Dogs-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus drucei*) Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), White Stonecrop (*Sedum album*) and Black Bog Rush (*Schoenus nigricans*).



**Plate 3.4** Dry calcareous heath / wet grassland habitat on Dursey Island.

### **Dry-humid acid grassland / dry siliceous heath (GS3/HH1)**

Where dry-humid acid grassland and dry siliceous heath graded into each other, it was difficult to differentiate between the habitats and they were recorded as a mosaic. This habitat mosaic is present at the western side of the island. The species recorded here include those listed above under the habitats Dry-humid acid grassland and Dry siliceous heath, along with Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*), Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*).

## **3.2 Pathway Condition Assessment**

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.4 present Strava heat maps for the site. Strava aggregates data from users on its app who opt-in to share their activities and locations. The pathway condition assessment maps are presented in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.5 below.

### Dursey Island

There is a paved car park on the island, with a concrete ramp leading up to the cable car. The car park grades into a gravel track, which runs from the car park through the townlands of Ballynacallagh and to Kilmichael. This track has many pot holes, loose gravel, scree and uneven surfaces and is therefore classified as unsatisfactory. There is a gravel track that diverts from the main track and leads to the ruined monastery on the east coast of the island. This gravel track is also in an unsatisfactory condition due to the presence of loose spoil, erosion and widening. The main paved road runs as far as Kilmichael, where it becomes a gravel track. At this point, a grassy path diverts north of this gravel track. The grassy track is grazed, but no bare soil is showing, so it is considered to be in a satisfactory condition. The gravel track continues to the townland of Tilickafinna, where it grades into a grassy path. This grassy path is heavily trampled, but no bare soil is exposed and therefore, it is considered to be in a satisfactory condition. At Tilickafinna, a bare ground path runs northward and comprises much of the upper loop.

This pathway is considered to be in a satisfactory condition, although loose stones and rocks are present along this path. It is understood that the rough terrain is part of the appeal of the trail. This bare ground path runs the whole length of the upper loop as shown in Plate 3.5.



**Figure 3.2** Heat map of visitor movements on Dursey Island (Strava, 2025)

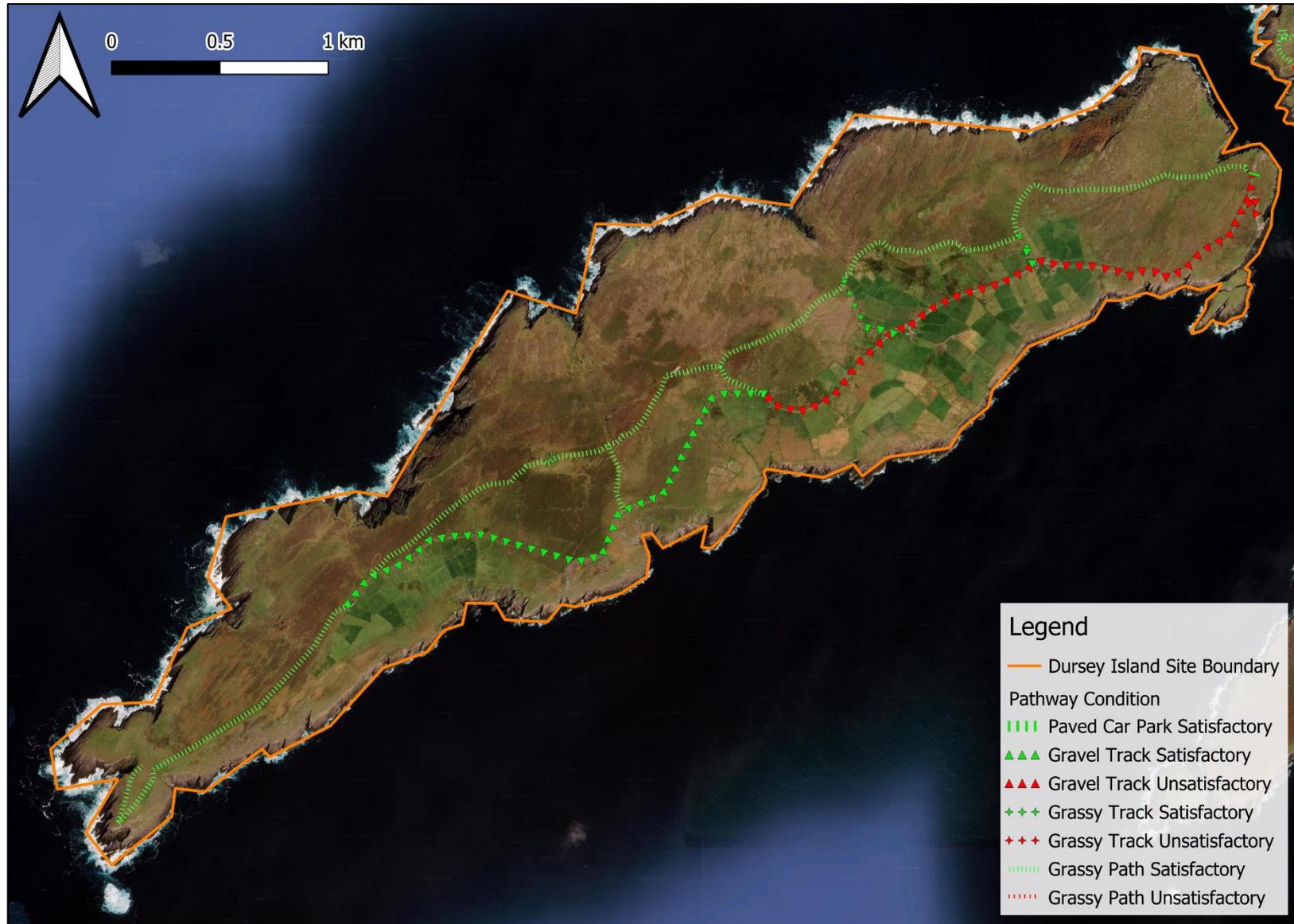


Figure 3.3 Pathway types and conditions present on Dursey Island. Basemap provided by Google.



**Satisfactory Gravel Track (left) and Satisfactory Grassy Path (right)**



**Unsatisfactory Gravel Track**

**Plate 3.5 The main pathway types recorded on Dursey Island.**

**Garnish Point**

There is a paved car park on the mainland at the starting point for Garnish Point Loop Trail, which is in a satisfactory condition. There is grassy path in a satisfactory condition at the beginning of Garnish Point Loop Trail. This is the main pathway condition throughout the looped walk, with some areas of unsatisfactory bare ground occurring in places. The main loop walk follows the waymarked points. It should be noted that significant braiding occurs along the looped walk, likely due to the overgrazing and lack of designated pathway. The waymarked points offer a suggested direction, but due to the expanse of low grassy vegetation, there is not considered to be a designated pathway as visitors are likely traversing across the hills rather than along a pathway. This braiding can be seen in Plate 3.6 and Figure 3.6.



**Figure 3.4** Heat map of visitor movements at Garnish Point (Strava, 2025)

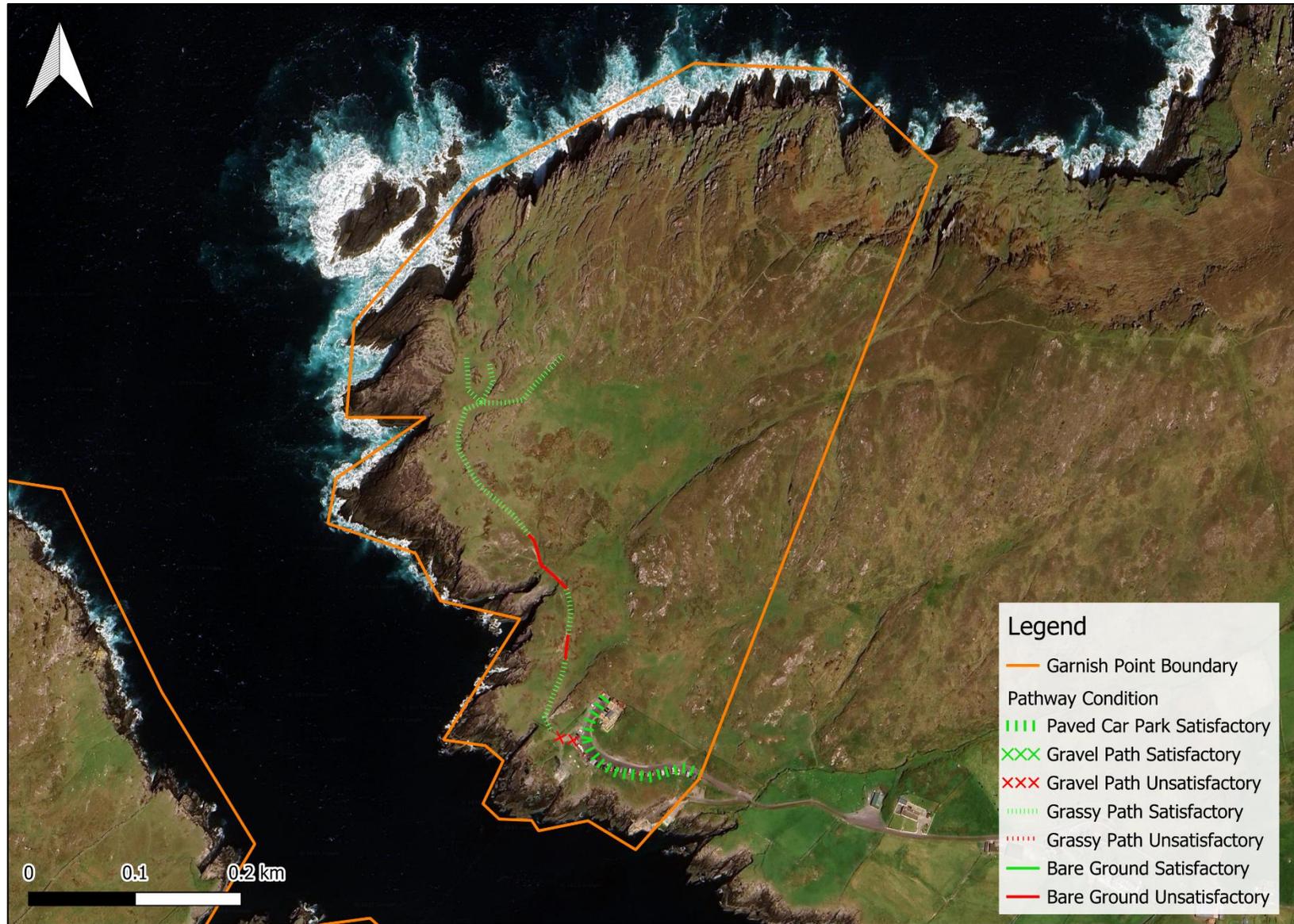


Figure 3.5 Pathway types and conditions present on Garnish Point. Basemap provided by Google.



**Plate 3.6 Braiding of grassy paths on the Garnish Point Loop Trail.**

### 3.3 Features Signage and Hazards

#### 3.3.1 Features and Signage

##### Dursey Island

At the cable car landing point and car park on Dursey Island, informative signage is available on the looped walk and the historic and cultural heritage of the island. Kilmichael Church and Graveyard is located west of the car park, along the main path. A signal tower is located along the northern trail of the looped walk, at the highest point on the island. There is no signage relating to the biodiversity of the site. A defibrillator is present in the townland of Ballynacallagh. All signage and features recorded on site during the survey are mapped below in Figure 3.6.



Plate 3.7 Dursey Island Signal Tower located at the highest point of the island.



Plate 3.8 Defibrillator recorded in the townland of Ballynacallagh.

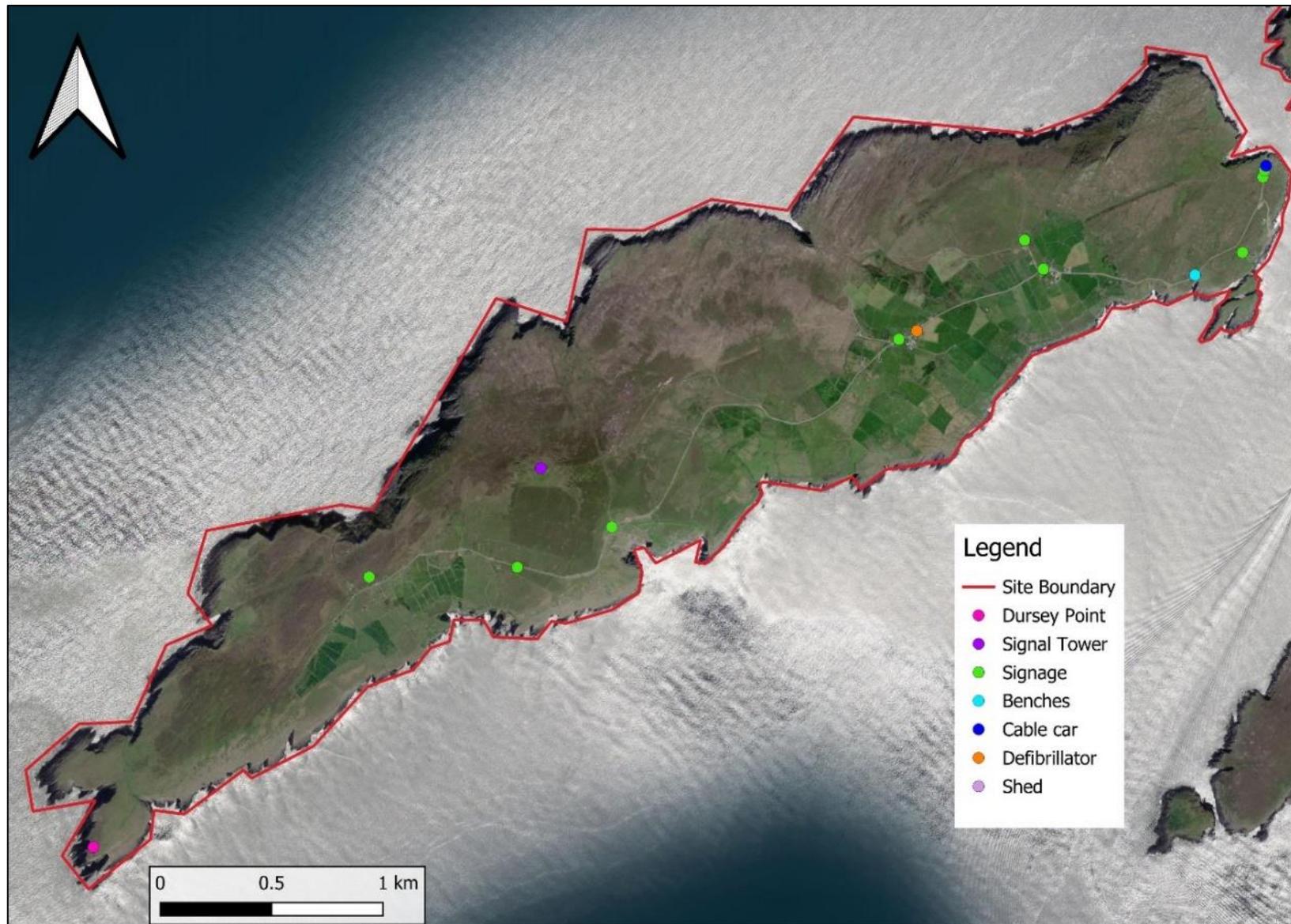


Figure 3.6 Features present on Dursey Island. Basemap provided by Bing.



Plate 3.9 Maintenance shed on Dursey Island in 2023 (left) and 2025 (right).

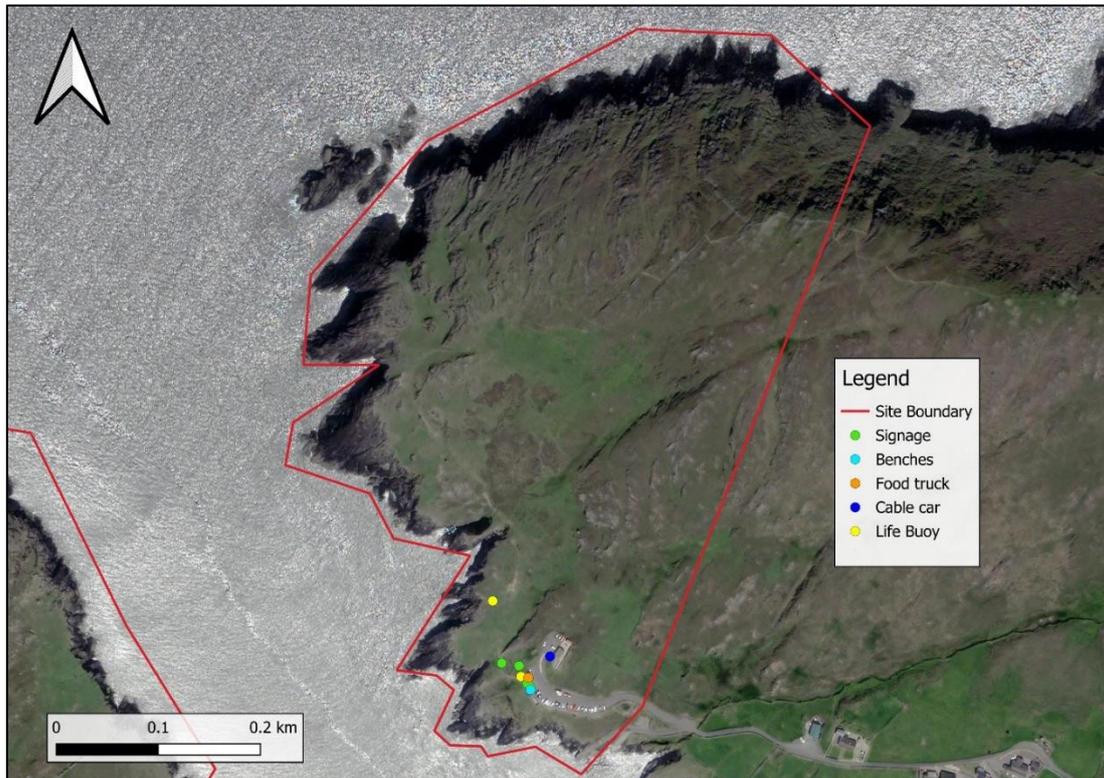


Plate 3.10 Fallen signage recorded in 2023 (left) that has since been reinstated (right).

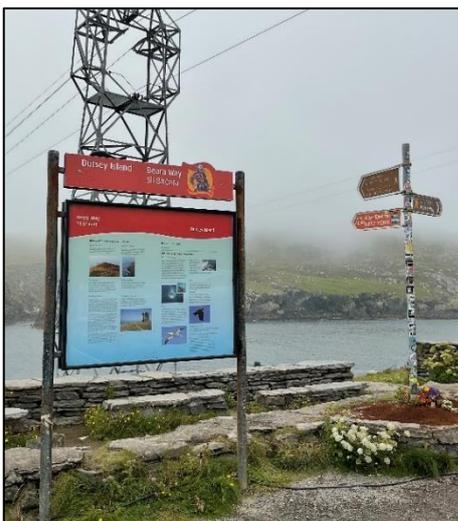
The 2023 National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme Report for Dursey Island recommended that fallen signage be reinstated. A fallen sign recorded in 2023 has been reinstated as of 2025, as shown above in Plate 3.12.

### Garnish Point

Car parking, a food and coffee truck and ticket office for the cable car are available at the Garnish Point Loop Trail car park on the mainland at Ballaghboy. Informative signage relating to the history of Dursey Island and the cable car and the no-littering policy are clearly highlighted at the carpark. Signage is available at the start of the loop trail relating to the no dog policy and warnings to walkers of ticks and cliff edges. Markers are present along the route of the loop to mark the route. All signage and features recorded on site during the survey are mapped below in Figure 3.7.



**Figure 3.7** Features present at Garnish Point. Basemap provided by Bing.



**Plate 3.11** Amenities and signage at the carpark at the start of the Garnish Point Loop Trail.



**Plate 3.12** Further signage at the carpark at the start of the Garnish Point Loop Trail.

### 3.3.2 Hazards

The steep sea cliffs surrounding the island and the Garnish Point Loop Trail are a hazard. There is no sign at the beginning of the Garnish Point Loop Trail highlighting the cliffs as a hazard. As there are exposed edges, loose gravel and scree on the pathways, trips and falls are a safety hazard (Plate 3.14, Plate 3.15). Along one area close to steep edges, fencing is used, as seen in Plate 3.13. All hazards recorded on site during the survey are mapped below in Figure 3.8.

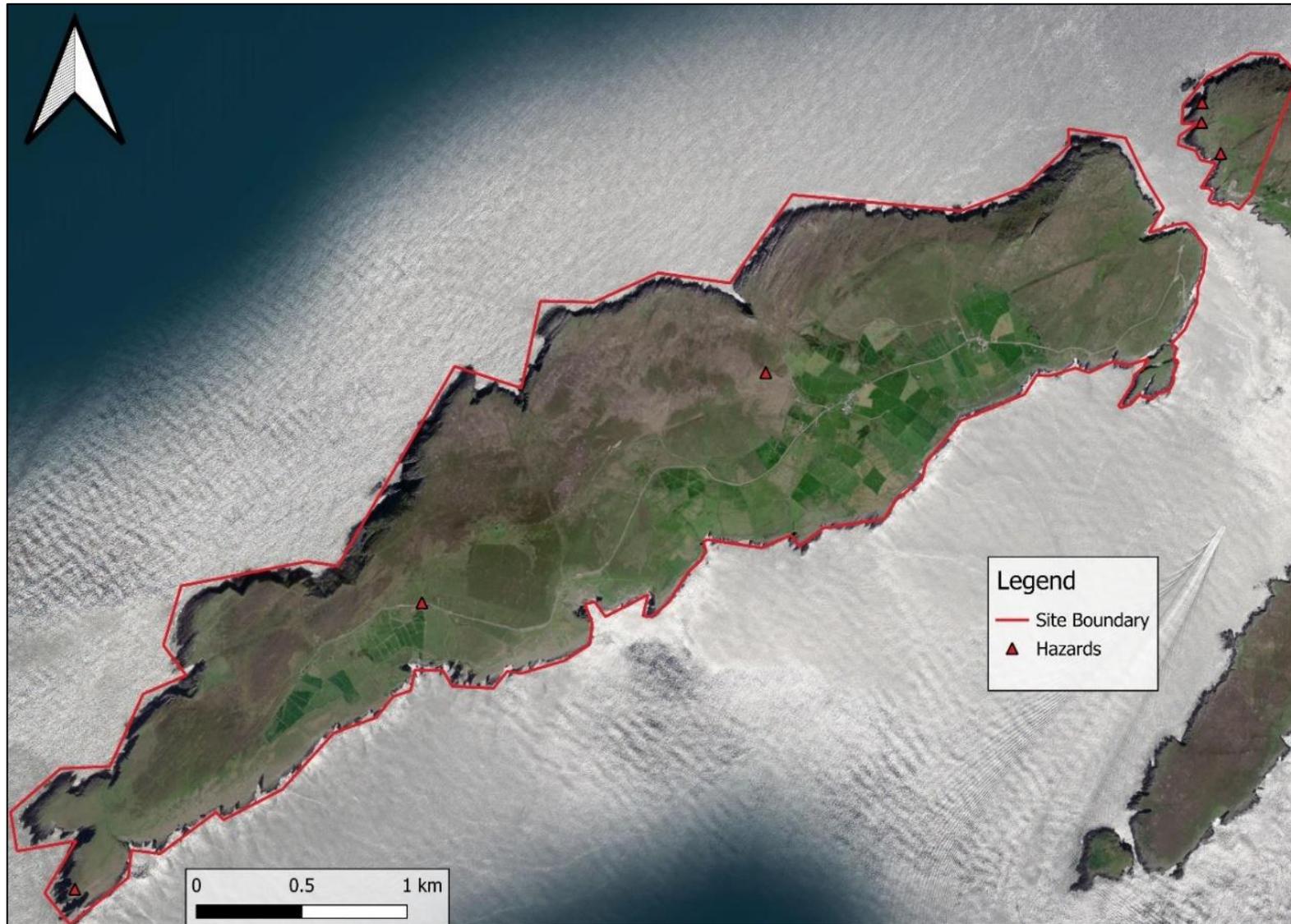


Figure 3.8 Locations of hazards present on site. Basemap provided by Bing.



**Plate 3.13** Fencing used in one steep area along the bare ground path on the upper loop.



**Plate 3.14** Loose rock and scree recorded as hazards along the pathway.



**Plate 3.15** Steep exposed rocky cliffs on the Garnish Point Loop Trail.

### 3.4 Ecological Constraints

#### 3.4.1 Protected Sites

A desktop study was undertaken to identify designated sites and rare and protected species in the vicinity of the site. There are three European (SACs and SPAs) and four nationally (NHAs and pNHAs) designated sites within or adjacent to Dursey Island. Information relating to these sites was obtained from the NPWS website and their respective Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms. These sites are described in Table 3.2 below.

The site is surrounded by the Kenmare River SAC [Site Code: 002158] and the Beara Peninsula SPA [004155], and the site is within the Dursey Island pNHA [Site Code: 000086] and the Garnish Point pNHA [Site Code: 001986].

The site is adjacent to (300m East of) The Bull and the Cow Rocks SPA [Site Code: 004066], and 2km East of the Bull and Cow Rocks pNHA [Site Code: 000080], 2km West of the Firkeel Gap pNHA [Site Code: 001051].

**Table 3.2 Designated sites within 2 km of the Dursey Island site**

| Site Name [Site Code]            | Qualifying Interests  | Distance (km) from Site | Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)  |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| <b>European Designated Sites</b> |   |                         |  |
| Kenmare River SAC [002158]       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]</li> <li>• Reefs [1170]</li> <li>• Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]</li> <li>• Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]</li> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]</li> <li>• Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</li> <li>• Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120]</li> <li>• Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]</li> <li>• European dry heaths [4030]</li> <li>• Juniperus <i>communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</li> <li>• Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> [6130]</li> <li>• Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]</li> <li>• <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]</li> <li>• <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]</li> <li>• <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</li> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</li> </ul> | Bordering site boundary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non intensive grazing (including cattle) (L)</li> <li>• Marine water pollution (L)</li> <li>• Urbanised areas, human habitation (M)</li> <li>• <b>Paths, tracks and cycling tracks (L)</b></li> <li>• Invasive non-native species (L)</li> <li>• Fertilisation (M)</li> <li>• Burning down existing vegetation (L)</li> <li>• <b>Nautical sports (L)</b></li> <li>• <b>Walking, Horse-riding, and non-motorised vehicles (L)</b></li> <li>• Marine and Freshwater Aquaculture (H)</li> <li>• Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources (H)</li> <li>• Abandonment of pastoral systems lacking grazing (L)</li> <li>• Pollution to surface waters (limnic, terrestrial, marine &amp; brackish) (L)</li> </ul> |

| Site Name [Site Code]                   | Qualifying Interests  | Distance (km) from Site | Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)           |
|---|---|-------------------------|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]</li> </ul>   |                         |   |
| Beara Peninsula SPA [004155]            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]</li> <li>Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346]</li> </ul>   | Bordering site boundary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No threats or pressures</li> </ul> |
| The Bull and the Cow Rocks SPA [004066] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014]</li> <li>Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016]</li> <li>Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]</li> </ul> | 300m West of site       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No threats or pressures</li> </ul> |
| Nationally Designated Sites             |   |                         |   |
| Dursey Island pNHA [000086]             | No site description. Refer to Beara Peninsula SPA and Kenmare River SAC.  | Within site boundary    | N/A   |
| Garnish Point pNHA [001986]             | No site description. Refer to Beara Peninsula SPA and Kenmare River SAC.  | Within site boundary    | N/A   |
| Bull and Cow Rocks pNHA [000080]        | No site description. Refer to The Bull and the Cow Rocks SPA.   | 2km West of site        | N/A   |
| Firkeel Gap pNHA [001051]               | No site description.  | 2km East of site        | N/A   |

### 3.4.2 Incidental Species Recorded

Dursey Island supports a range of habitats and species. Table 3.3 below presents the bird species recorded during the ecological surveys at Dursey Island, along with their Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCCI) status (2020-2026).

**Table 3.3 Incidental Species**

| Scientific Name         | Common Name  |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Red status</b>       |              |
| <i>Anthus pratensis</i> | Meadow Pipit |
| <b>Amber</b>            |              |
| <i>Alauda arvensis</i>  | Skylark      |
| <i>Hirundo rustica</i>  | Swallow      |
| <i>Morus bassana</i>    | Gannet       |

| Scientific Name                 | Common Name       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>        | Northern Wheatear |
| <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>      | Cormorant         |
| <i>Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax</i>   | Chough            |
| <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>         | Starling          |
| <b>Green</b>                    |                   |
| <i>Accipiter nisus</i>          | Sparrowhawk       |
| <i>Corvus cornix</i>            | Hooded Crow       |
| <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>        | Rook              |
| <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>       | Robin             |
| <i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i> | Pied Wagtail      |
| <i>Prunella modularis</i>       | Dunnock           |
| <i>Saxicola rubicola</i>        | Stonechat         |
| <i>Turdus merula</i>            | Blackbird         |

### 3.4.3 Records of Rare, Protected and Invasive Species

Records of rare, protected, and invasive species from the past ten years within 2km<sup>2</sup> of the site were obtained the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) online database (Grid References: V44V, V44Q, V54A, V43U, V43P). These records are presented in Table 3.4 below.

**Table 3.4 Rare, protected and invasive species recorded in the past decade from Hectads V44V, V44Q, V54A, V43U, V43P from NBDC database**

| Scientific name                   | Common Name          | Date of last Record | Status*                               |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Marine Mammals</b>             |                      |                     |                                       |
| <i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i> | Minke Whale          | 04/11/2023          | Annex IV HD; WA                       |
| <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>         | Bottle-nosed Dolphin | 17/04/2023          | Annex II, IV HD; WA                   |
| <i>Delphinus delphis</i>          | Common Dolphin       | 27/11/2023          | Annex IV HD; WA                       |
| <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>          | Common Porpoise      | 26/12/2023          | Annex II, IV HD; WA; OSPAR Convention |
| <i>Grampus griseus</i>            | Risso's Dolphin      | 08/07/2023          | Annex IV HD; WA                       |
| <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>     | Sperm Whale          | 20/06/2022          | Annex IV HD; WA                       |
| <i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>     | Humpback Whale       | 30/06/2021          | Annex IV HD; WA                       |
| <b>Birds</b>                      |                      |                     |                                       |
| <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>        | Pheasant             | 07/07/2024          | Annex II, III BD; WA                  |
| <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>          | Manx Shearwater      | 29/05/2018          | WA; Amber List                        |
| <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>          | Northern Wheatear    | 07/07/2024          | WA; Amber List                        |

| Scientific name                | Common Name           | Date of last Record | Status*                                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---|
| <i>Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax</i>    | Red-billed Chough     | 07/07/2024          | Annex I BD; WA; Amber List                    |
| <i>Alauda arvensis</i>         | Sky Lark              | 07/07/2024          | WA; Amber List                                |
| <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>        | Starling              | 07/07/2024          | WA; Amber List                                |
| <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>   | Oystercatcher         | 02/02/2018          | WA; Amber List                                |
| <i>Morus bassanus</i>          | Gannet                | 02/02/2018          | WA; Amber List                                |
| <i>Hirundo rustica</i>         | Barn Swallow          | 07/07/2024          | WA; Amber List                                |
| <b>Terrestrial Mammals</b>     |                       |                     |   |
| <i>Lutra lutra</i>             | Otter                 | 01/01/2017          | Annex II, IV HD; WA                           |
| <i>Sorex minutus</i>           | Pygmy Shrew           | 13/05/2017          | WA  |
| <b>Reptiles</b>                |                       |                     |   |
| <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>        | Common Lizard         | 12/10/2019          | WA  |
| <b>Cartilaginous fish</b>      |                       |                     |   |
| <i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>      | Basking Shark         | 07/05/2023          | OSPAR Convention; WA                          |
| <b>Molluscs</b>                |                       |                     |   |
| <i>Geomalacus (Geomalacus)</i> | Kerry Slug            | 03/11/2015          | Annex II, IV HD; WA                           |
| <b>Invertebrates</b>           |                       |                     |   |
| <i>Lasiommata megera</i>       | Wall                  | 16/09/2023          | Endangered                                    |
| <b>Invasive Species</b>        |                       |                     |   |
| <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>       | Brown Rat             | 16/10/2015          | High Impact Invasive Species; S.I. 477/2011   |
| <i>Allium triquetrum</i>       | Three-cornered Garlic | 01/05/2021          | Medium Impact Invasive Species; S.I. 477/2011 |
| <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>   | Rabbit                | 07/05/2017          | Medium Impact Invasive Species                |

\* Abbreviations: Annex II/IV/V (non-avian species) = Habitats Directive (HD); Annex I, II, III = Birds Directive (BD); Red/Amber List = Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026 (BOCCI) (Gilbert et al., 2021); Wildlife Act, 1976 (WA).

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information discussed and displayed above, the following recommendations are made:

- The signage regarding the ecological and biodiversity value of the island should be reviewed, as additional information for visitors would increase awareness of local biodiversity.
- Fáilte Ireland should support the provision of public toilet facilities on Dursey Island. This is supported by Objective GDO-06 of the Cork CDP 2022-2028 (CCC, 2022).
- The gravel track from the carpark on Dursey Island was recorded as being in unsatisfactory condition due to potholes, loose gravel and scree. Resurfacing of this track should be considered.
- At the start of Garnish Point Loop Trail, one sign was recorded regarding the cliff edges. Due to the exposed cliff edges, additional signage warning of the hazardous nature of the steep cliffs, should be provided to limit the risk to users.
- Appropriate land management is recommended to promote sustainable farming practices and reduce overgrazing. This would lead to improved habitat quality and resilience on site, as many areas within the site are heavily overgrazed.

## 5. REFERENCES

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