



|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Scientific name</b> | <i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Potentilla erecta</i> – <i>Erica tetralix</i> heath |
| <b>Common name</b>     | Purple Moor-grass – Tormentil – Cross-leaved Heath heath                         |
| <b>Community code</b>  | HE4D   |

### Vegetation

Dense *Molinia caerulea* dominates this community, often forming dense tussocks and a thick litter layer. The only other constant species is *Potentilla erecta*. Frequently there is some spindly growth of *Erica tetralix* and occasionally some *Calluna vulgaris* or *Myrica gale*, but dwarf shrub cover is typically very low. Other occasional plants are *Succisa pratensis*, *Agrostis canina/vinealis* and *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. The bryophyte layer is very sparse or absent; some hunting amongst the leaf litter may reveal some patches of *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* or *Kindbergia praelonga*.

### Ecology

This is mostly a community of lowland peatlands (mean altitude = 146 m,  $n = 34$ ), usually occurring as a part of wet heaths or disturbed blanket bog. Soils are wet, acidic and infertile. There may be some degree of groundwater flushing but it is not pronounced.

### Sub-communities

No sub-communities have been described for this community.

### Similar communities

The very high cover of *Molinia caerulea* separates this assemblage from the other bog and heath communities, even the others within the HE4 *Molinia caerulea* – *Polygala serpyllifolia* group. Dense *Molinia* tussocks are also found in the similar GL1D *Molinia caerulea* – *Potentilla erecta* grassland, but that is a community of more mesotrophic wetland systems and the tussocks are accompanied by species such as *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Holcus lanatus* and *Galium palustre*.

### Records and distribution

#### Number of records (all)

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Clearly assigned: | 186 |
| Transitional:     | 32  |
| Total:            | 218 |

#### Number of records (mapped)

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| 2001-2015: | 85  |
| 1986-2000: | 78  |
| 1971-1985: | 15  |
| Pre-1971:  | 16  |
| Total:     | 194 |

#### Number of hectads (most recent records)

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| 2001-2015: | 18 |
| 1986-2000: | 13 |
| 1971-1985: | 3  |
| Pre-1971:  | 2  |
| Total:     | 36 |

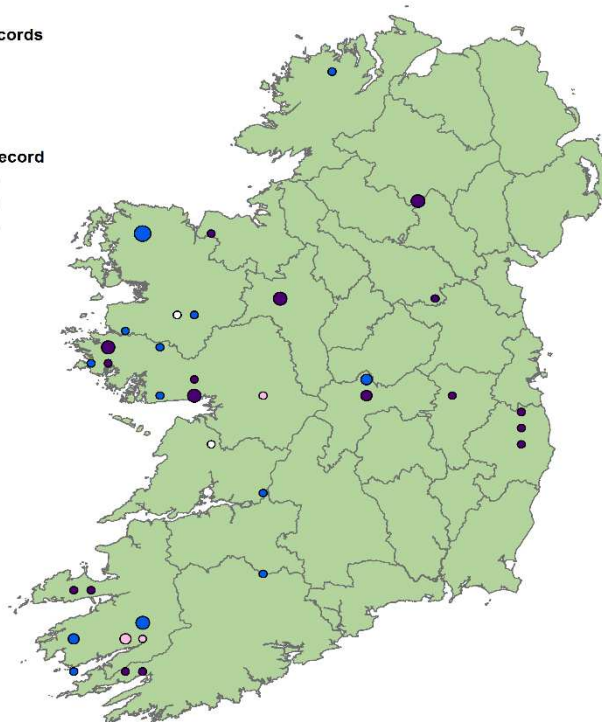
#### Number of hectads (all mapped records)

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| 2001-2015: | 18 |
| 1986-2000: | 16 |
| 1971-1985: | 4  |
| Pre-1971:  | 3  |

#### Number of records



#### Most recent record



**Synoptic table (n = 143)**

| Species                         | Frequency  | Cover         | Species                              | Frequency  | Cover         |
|---------------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|------------|---------------|
|                                 | (from I-V) | min (med) max |                                      | (from I-V) | min (med) max |
| <i>Molinia caerulea</i>         | V          | 7-(9)-10      | <i>Sphagnum palustre</i>             | I          | 3-(4)-8       |
| <i>Potentilla erecta</i>        | V          | +- (3)-8      | <i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>         | I          | +- (2)-5      |
| <i>Erica tetralix</i>           | III        | 1-(3)-7       | <i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>          | I          | +- (3)-5      |
| <i>Myrica gale</i>              | II         | +- (4)-8      | <i>Scleropodium purum</i>            | I          | +- (2)-5      |
| <i>Calluna vulgaris</i>         | II         | 1-(3)-6       | <i>Sphagnum papillosum</i>           | I          | 1-(4)-9       |
| <i>Succisa pratensis</i>        | II         | 1-(3)-7       | <i>Sphagnum subsecundum</i> agg.     | I          | 2-(3)-8       |
| <i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>       | II         | +- (3)-5      | <i>Schoenus nigricans</i>            | I          | 1-(2)-5       |
| <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>    | II         | +- (3)-8      | <i>Diplophyllum albicans</i>         | I          | +- (2)-7      |
| <i>Agrostis canina/vinealis</i> | II         | 1-(3)-7       | <i>Hylocomium splendens</i>          | I          | 1-(2)-5       |
| <i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>   | II         | 2-(4)-8       | <i>Breutelia chrysocoma</i>          | I          | 1-(2)-4       |
| <i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>     | II         | +- (5)-7      | <i>Juncus acutiflorus</i>            | I          | 2-(5)-7       |
| <i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>   | I          | +- (2)-3      | <i>Luzula multiflora</i>             | I          | +- (3)-5      |
| <i>Carex panicea</i>            | I          | 1-(3)-6       | <i>Trichophorum cesp./germanicum</i> | I          | 1-(2)-9       |
| <i>Calypogeia fissa</i>         | I          | +- (5)-7      | <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>           | I          | +- (3)-5      |
| <i>Erica cinerea</i>            | I          | 2-(3)-5       | <i>Ranunculus flammula</i>           | I          | 1-(2)-5       |
| <i>Juncus effusus</i>           | I          | 2-(5)-9       | <i>Rhytidiadelphus loreus</i>        | I          | 1-(3)-5       |
| <i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i> | I          | +- (2)-5      | <i>Aulacomnium palustre</i>          | I          | 2-(3)-4       |
| <i>Carex echinata</i>           | I          | +- (3)-5      | <i>Odontoschisma sphagni</i>         | I          | +- (3)-5      |
| <i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>    | I          | +- (3)-5      | <i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>    | I          | +- (2)-3      |
| <i>Sphagnum subnitens</i>       | I          | +- (3)-7      | <i>Calypogeia muelleriana</i>        | I          | +- (3)-3      |

**Affinities**

GHI: HH3 Wet heath / PB3 Lowland blanket bog  
 ZM: OXY-01A Ericion tetralicis Schwickerath 1933  
 EUNIS: F4.13 *Molinia caerulea* wet heaths  
 NVC: M25 *Molinia caerulea* – *Potentilla erecta* mire (57.5%)  
 Annex I: 4010 Wet heath / 7130 Blanket bog (active)\*

**Proxy environmental data**

Light: 6.9      Reaction: 3.1      Wetness: 7.6      Fertility: 2.2      Salinity: 0.0

**Conservation value**

This is on average a very species-poor community (species/4 m<sup>2</sup> = 13.4, n = 58). Most examples represent either non-priority versions of EU HD Annex I habitat 7130 Blanket bog (active)\* or rather marginal types of habitat 4010 Wet heath, depending upon context and peat depth.

**Management**

Whilst this vegetation may occur naturally as a type of weak flush, it has probably developed in many instances due to negative impacts on the habitat, such as overgrazing, typically by sheep, or burning. On deeper peats, turf-cutting and associated drainage works may be contributing factors. Threats include agricultural improvement and afforestation.

**Key references**

Perrin, P.M., Barron, S.J., Roche, J.R. & O’Hanrahan, B. (2014) Guidelines for a national survey and conservation assessment of upland vegetation and habitats in Ireland. *Irish Wildlife Manuals*, No. 79. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**Synopsis version:** V1.0

**Synopsis date:** November 2017

**Synopsis author(s):** P.M. Perrin





Photo 1. HE4D *Molinia caerulea* – *Potentilla erecta* – *Erica tetralix* heath, Slieve West, Slieve Mish Mountains, Kerry  
(J. Martin, June 2014)



Photo 2. HE4D *Molinia caerulea* – *Potentilla erecta* – *Erica tetralix* heath, Fiddandarry, Ox Mountains, Sligo  
(R. Hodd, June 2012)