

Scientific name	<i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> – <i>Erica tetralix</i> heath
Common name	Purple Moor-grass – Heather – Cross-leaved Heath heath
Community code	HE4E

Vegetation

Molinia caerulea dominates this community but is accompanied by a reasonably well-developed dwarf shrub layer composed of *Calluna vulgaris* and *Erica tetralix*. *Potentilla erecta*, a plant common to most upland heaths and bogs, is again to be found here, and indeed is the only other constant species. Frequently, there are some patches of *Trichophorum cespitosum/germanicum* or *Eriophorum angustifolium* amongst the *Molinia* tussocks, and the blue flowers of *Polygala serpyllifolia* may be spotted. Occasionally there is some *Narthecium ossifragum* and *Carex panicea*. The bryophyte layer is not very abundant with *Hypnum jutlandicum* the most frequent component, frequently joined by *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *Sphagnum subnitens*.

Ecology

This community occurs on the lower to middle slopes of hills and mountains (mean altitude = 224 m, $n = 48$) on wet, acidic and infertile peaty soils.

Sub-communities

Two sub-communities have been described for this community. Somewhat flushed vegetation is represented by the *Sphagnum subnitens* – *Myrica gale* sub-community (HE4Ei). In addition to the titular species, *Sphagnum palustre* is frequent in this situation. The non-flushed variation has no specific indicators and is thus referred to as the typical sub-community (HE4Eii).

Similar communities

Community HE2D *Calluna vulgaris* – *Molinia caerulea* – *Erica cinerea* heath is similar, but in that assemblage *Calluna* dominates and there is a greater presence of both *Erica cinerea* and pleurocarpous mosses.

Records and distribution

<i>Number of records (all)</i>	
Clearly assigned:	188
Transitional:	63
Total:	251

<i>Number of records (mapped)</i>	
2001-2015:	
1986-2000:	95
1971-1985:	106
Pre-1971:	10
Total:	4

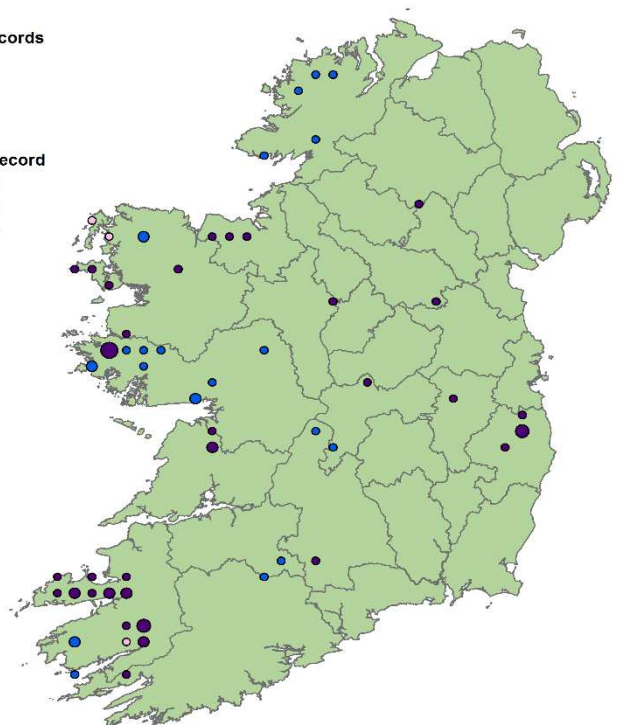
<i>Number of hectads (most recent records)</i>	
2001-2015:	32
1986-2000:	20
1971-1985:	3
Pre-1971:	0
Total:	55

<i>Number of hectads (all mapped records)</i>	
2001-2015:	32
1986-2000:	23
1971-1985:	5
Pre-1971:	2

Number of records



Most recent record



Synoptic table (n = 156)

Species	Frequency	Cover		Species	Frequency	Cover	
	(from I-V)	min	(med) max		(from I-V)	min	(med) max
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	V	5-	(8)-10	<i>Diplophyllum albicans</i>	II	+-	(2)-3
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	V	2-	(5)-9	<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	II	+-	(2)-3
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	V	1-	(4)-7	<i>Myrica gale</i>	II	2-	(5)-7
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	V	+-	(3)-7	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	II	+-	(2)-7
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>	IV	+-	(3)-5	<i>Schoenus nigricans</i>	II	1-	(3)-5
<i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>	III	+-	(4)-8	<i>Sphagnum papillosum</i>	I	+-	(3)-5
<i>Odontoschisma sphagni</i>	III	+-	(2)-5	<i>Sphagnum tenellum</i>	I	+-	(2)-3
<i>Sphagnum subnitens</i>	III	+-	(4)-8	<i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>	I	+-	(2)-5
<i>Trichophorum cesp./germanicum</i>	III	+-	(3)-7	<i>Carex echinata</i>	I	+-	(3)-4
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	III	+-	(3)-5	<i>Cladonia portentosa</i>	I	+-	(3)-5
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	III	+-	(2)-8	<i>Leucobryum glaucum</i>	I	+-	(3)-5
<i>Carex panicea</i>	II	+-	(3)-7	<i>Calypogeia fissa</i>	I	+-	(1)-3
<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>	II	+-	(2)-7	<i>Pleurozia purpurea</i>	I	+-	(3)-5
<i>Pleurozium schreberi</i>	II	+-	(2)-5	<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>	I	+-	(3)-5
<i>Rhytidiadelphus loreus</i>	II	+-	(2)-5	<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	I	+-	(2)-3
<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	II	+-	(3)-7	<i>Cephalozia bicuspidata</i>	I	+-	(1)-3
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	II	+-	(3)-5	<i>Campylopus flexuosus</i>	I	+-	(1)-4
<i>Breutelia chrysocoma</i>	II	1-	(3)-5	<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	I	+-	(2)-3
<i>Sphagnum palustre</i>	II	+-	(4)-8	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	I	+-	(2)-3
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	II	+-	(4)-8	<i>Ulex gallii</i>	I	+-	(4)-8

Affinities

GHI: HH3 Wet heath
 ZM: OXY-01A Ericion tetralicis Schwickerath 1933
 EUNIS: F4.11 Northern wet heaths
 NVC: M15 *Scirpus cespitosus* – *Erica tetralix* wet heath (74.1%)
 Annex I: 4010 Wet heath

Proxy environmental data

Light: 7.1 Reaction: 2.7 Wetness: 7.4 Fertility: 1.8 Salinity: 0.0

Conservation value

This is a moderately species-poor heath community (species/4 m² = 17.8, n = 83). Most examples may qualify as EU HD Annex I habitat 4010 Wet heath.

Management

This community, which often forms parts of commonages, is usually used as rough grazing land (typically for sheep); overgrazing may be a problem. Burning may be periodically used across large areas to suppress the dwarf shrubs and encourage grass growth. Other threats are afforestation and agricultural improvement.

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. HE4E *Molinia caerulea* – *Calluna vulgaris* – *Erica tetralix* heath, Glanteenassig, Stradbally Mountain, Kerry
(P. Perrin, August 2011)



Photo 2. HE4E *Molinia caerulea* – *Calluna vulgaris* – *Erica tetralix* heath, Glana, Killarney National Park, Kerry
(J. Denyer, July 2011)