Welcome to Boleybrack
Booleybrack Mountain comprises an extensive upland plateau. It is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site code no. 002/032, under the EU Habitats Directive for its important habitats of mountain blanket bog, dry heath, wet heath, dystrophic lakes and Purple moor grass meadows. SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas, considered important on a European level, as well as an Irish level. Boleybrack Mountain is home to many wonderful species of plants, birds and mammals. Of particular interest are birds such as the Red Grouse, Snipe, Curlew, Ravens, Golden Plover, Hen Harrier, Peregrine & Merlin.

The northern side of Boleybrack overlooks the parish of Glenfarne, and much of the mountain lies within the Glencar Club territory of Glenfarne Gun Club (GGC). GGC, supported by its affiliation to the North Leitrim Regional Game Council (NLRGC) and the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), has a strong wildlife conservation ethos. Of particular concern is the decline in Red Grouse on Boleybrack. The loss of Red Grouse, or Moor hen as many local people call it, has been gradual and unheralded. GGC identified Boleybrack as an area that could be managed to protect and enhance its Grouse population, and so the Boleybrack Red Grouse Management Plan was born.

Financial & technical assistance for this project is provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), and the Golden Eagle Trust.

Booleybrack Red Grouse Habitat Management Project

In 2007, GGC commissioned a Red Grouse Habitat Management Plan for Boleybrack. Key objectives of this plan were to maintain and increase the Red Grouse population, and to maintain and enhance sensitive habitats. These objectives are being achieved through disturbance control, heather management, predator control, public awareness, monitoring, and the review of management practices. The successful implementation of this plan could lead to Boleybrack securing 1% of the Irish Red Grouse population, while helping conserve habitats and other species in the study area. The Boleybrack Red Grouse Management Plan offers a unique opportunity for a pilot project on an area of commonage. GGC, with the support of the Glenfarne community, can ensure this project is a success. Our Red Grouse Habitat Management Plan will face many obstacles, the same issues threatening most Grouse populations in Ireland. Overgrazing, undergrazing, random burning, fox and crow predation, afforestation, development, rogue shooting and human disturbance are all threats to Red Grouse on Boleybrack Mountain, as they are across the Irish uplands.

What can be done to help?
The project enjoys the support of the commonage owners, the Glenfarne Community and Coillte. Visitors and the people of Glenfarne can help in a number of ways.

Visitors and those farming within or adjacent to the project area are asked not to burn heather or grass at any time of year. Fires can damage birds, their nests and their habitat. The use of scramblers and other off-road vehicles on the mountain causes disturbance and habitat damage. Those engaged in such activity should be asked to leave.

Hunters are asked not to hunt or shoot game, or any protected species, or train their dog(s) on Boleybrack mountain. The NLRGC has adopted a moratorium on hunting for Boleybrack mountain, which will be reviewed every 5 years. If a hunter is seen going on to Boleybrack with or without dogs, he/she should be advised of the “Hunting Suspension” and a GGC member informed immediately.

What Next?
Since 2007, the project has gone from strength to strength. The implementation of the Habitat Management Plan is now well advanced. Heather management techniques used include strimming of rank heather and experimenter controlled burning of heather (under licence). The impact of grazing is being monitored over time, using small exclusion plots. Predators are managed to ease the pressure on all ground nesting birds. Annual surveys have shown increases in grouse numbers each year. In Spring 2012, the project’s professional Grousekeeper was appointed to manage the habitat’s heather and its predators and to monitor all developments within the project area. The Boleybrack Project Team want to see projects such as this developed all over Ireland.