



Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall

Fingal County Council

HOWTH SPECIAL AMENITY AREA ORDER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Members/alternates of the Howth SAO:

Cllrs D. Healy, J. Hopkins, B. McDonagh, C. Haughey
 Chairperson: Philip O'Connor
 Dublin Naturalist Field Club: D Doogue/C.Breen
 Fingal Tourism: Neil Kennedy/Elaine O'Sullivan
 Hillwatch: Jacqueline Feeley
 Howth Land Owners: Fiona Bellingham, Caroline Gore Grimes
 Howth Pathways: Conn Redmond/Dougal Cousins
 Peninsula Heritage Society: Edgar McLoughlin
 Irish Uplands Forum: Mary Tubridy
 Howth Castle: Eoin Quinlan
 Howth Sutton Community Council: Nessa O'Brien
 National Parks and Wildlife Services: Mairéad Stack
 Howth Peninsula: Mary O'Connor/Sean Doran
 Friends of Balscadden Bay: Guy Molyneux

Fingal County Council Officers supporting Howth SAO:

Brian Murray (SEO, Planning) Kevin Halpenny (Snr. Parks Superintendent) Gemma Carr (Snr Exec. Parks and Landscape Officer) Fearghal McSweeney (AO, Planning) Hans Visser (Senior Exec. Parks and Landscape Officer) Therese Casey (Exec. Parks and Landscape Officer) Lisa Doyle (Assistant Biodiversity Officer) Killian O'Sullivan (Executive Planner) Sorcha King (Graduate Parks and Landscape Officer) Zer Barokas (Graduate Parks and Landscape Officer) David Daly (Admin)

Minutes of meeting held 18th March 2026

Present: Philip O'Connor, Dougal Cousins, Jacqueline Feeley, Renee Malone, Edgar McLoughlin, Caroline Core-Grime, Siobhan Clifford (rep. FOBB), and FCC officers Fearghal McSweeney, Hans Vissar, Therese Casey, Sorcha King, Lisa Doyle

Apologies: D. Doogue, M. Tubridy, C. Redmond, G. Molyneux, N. O'Brien, Cllr D. Healy

Minutes: Minutes adopted, as proposed by Edgar McLoughlin, seconded by Renee Malone.

Update on SAO works by Fingal Operations: Therese reported:

- Contractor engaged to cut veg. encroaching on pathways. Work completed 1st March.
- Ops. continues to liaise monthly with Howth Pathways.
- On **repair of pathways**, gravel solution preferred, but expensive as must be repeated annually. Not sustainable! Some concreting at high-pressure points needed. **Agreed** when Sport Ireland inspection identifies these areas, a mtg. will agree a plan.
- Noted that walkers should be alerted to need to wear suitable footwear on paths.

Update from Fingal Biodiversity: Hans reported on works in the SAAO:

- Cattle and goat grazing to continue.
- Rhododendron controls also to continue at Howth Demesne/Ben of Howth.
- Irelands Eye visitor management, pathways, wardening (cost: €56,000) continue.
- Surveys: Wetland survey ongoing with Biodiversity funding. Moss survey to go ahead. Cooke's Quarry survey not to proceed as owner has decided against it.
- Discussion of pathway security at Whitewater Brook. Probably necessary to block steps access, but coastguard access essential. Cliff fence will probably be decided.

Report from the Conservation & Recreation (C&R) Subcommittee: Dougal reported.

- Sub-Cttee minutes must be speedily approved and not delayed.
- NPWS notified Sub-Cttee and Chair/SAAO that it will be unable to attend meetings for some time due to staff/resources issues. It was agreed that Chair write to M/State for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity seeking resolution.
- Issue of educating land owners re garden-waste dumping and enforcing this discussed. NPWS to be asked for clarification.
- Benefit of LIDAR data and access to it discussed. Hans to follow up.
- Hard copies of SAAO reports discussed. Not practical, as storage not available.
- Heritage Council project to identify county biodiversity areas noted.
- Sub-Cttee urged that next Op. Plan include a focus on historical/vernacular features.
- Next Sub-Cttee mtg. to hear Mary Tubridy on dry heathland restoration in Portugal
- Repair of Balscadden Beach steps tendered out by FCC. To be completed by summer.
- Issue of inadequacy of public toilets at Baily Green: agreed that Sub-Cttee draft a letter for SAAO chair to send to Niamh Russell (FCC) on this.
- Sub-Cttee proposes that next Op. Prgrm include action on historical/vernacular heritage

Report from the Planning & Communications (P&C) Subcommittee: Jacqueline reported:

- Renewal of Fuzion HR contract discussed. Scope now less but proposed price too high.
- **Events Programme** of 2025 not to continue, as FCC priority now Liffey Valley, apart from Schools programme, Public Mtg. and a marquee for SAAO at Maritime festival (w/end 22nd May), though without FCC staff participation.

- **Operational Plan** completes end 2026. Workshop of SAAO members and FCC staff to be held 13th May, Howth Courthouse, 1-4pm, to identify/prioritise actions for new Plan.
- **Enforcement**, esp re revealing text of Court Orders. Proposed letter to CEO/FCC to be redrafted as a specific info request and cleared with Enforcement before sending.

Expenditure: Hans reported:

- 2026 budget is €46,000 + €10,000 annual FCC input.
- €23,000 remains in o/standing commitments, leaving bal. of €32,000 for the year.
- Proposed continuation PR contract would cost €30,000
- Wildlife Management/Irelands Eye work €160,000, but is wholly funded by Biodiversity.
- Site survey by Declan Doogue and of Cooke Quarry jointly €27,000.

• **DISCUSSION/DECISIONS:**

- It was agreed to pause the PR contract for 2026 and that P&C Sub-Cttee try to find a volunteer or employ a young person to update social media etc.
- **SAA Order of 08/02/1999** provided for levy on all Howth planning applics. to fund SAAO work. Fearghal McSweeney to try to establish what became of this.
- Future viability of SAAO: Chair to sek mtg. with CEO/FCC and Senior Staff on this.
- **SAAO Workshop** 13th May, Howth Courthouse, 1-4pm, to identify/prioritise actions for a new 5-yr Op. Plan.
- **Surveys:** Site study inc. probono work by Declan Doogue. Agreed that both proceed. although Quarry survey requires agreement of owner. Hans to prepare tenders.
- **In general, agreed** that budget be spent and funding of next Op. Plan be the major issue in preparing it. Hence mtg with CEO. Support of local pols. also to be sought.

Meeting concluded at 15:43

The Meeting concluded at Time Not Specified

AREA CHAIRPERSON

DATED