

**COMHAIRLE CONTAE FHINE GALL
FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HOWTH/MALAHIDE AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
(Services A – Operational Matters)**

WEDNESDAY 7th OCTOBER 2026

ITEM NO. 23

BEACH AND DUNE MANAGEMENT IN THIS LEA - AI109585

Motion: Councillor D. Healy

"That the Chief Executive bring forward proposals for alterations to the beach and dune management practices on Burrow, Claremont and Portmarnock beaches in order to protect dune vegetation and to encourage its growth and recovery in line with the recommendations of "Leave No Trace"."

Report:

The Operations Department currently carries out the following beach and dune management practices on Burrow, Claremont & Portmarnock Beaches:

Winter Months (Non-Bathing Season 36 weeks)

Beach maintenance and cleaning regime: The beach is attended to 4 days per week by the cleansing crew. The bins are emptied and bags removed, and any discarded litter is removed from around the bin areas. If required, the bin emptying frequency is increased as monitoring spot checks dictate.

The beach is not mechanically raked for 36 weeks of the year. i.e. during the non-Bathing Season.

Summer Months (Bathing Season 16 weeks)

In the run up to the Bathing Season, additional bins are placed on/adjacent to areas throughout the County with highest footfall and needs which includes beaches. These bins are serviced 7 days per week by the cleansing crew. The bins are emptied and bags removed, and again any discarded litter is removed from

around the bin areas. The frequency of this bin emptying is increased during hotter/drier weather conditions.

For the Bathing Season, the beach is mechanically raked 3-5 times per week dependent on weather forecasts and more frequently in the run up to Bank Holidays/hot weekends/holidays etc when large numbers are expected. On advice from the Fingal Biodiversity Team, the mechanical raking operation does not occur within 2 metres of the foot of the dunes to protect both the dune ecosystem/vegetation and to encourage sand deposition.

The product of the raking operation consists of both rubbish/litter and organic seaweed/natural material. These rakings are then hand combed and the seaweed & natural material is separated by hand from the rubbish. The rubbish is then removed off the beach for disposal. The seaweed & natural material is then deposited approximately 1 meter in front of the dunes at various locations along the beach. These natural materials (a) act as a natural fertiliser for Maram Grass growth promotion, whose roots are essential for the stabilisation of sand dunes, and (b) to act as an anchor point to encourage sand deposition, the precursor of new dune formation.

A clean and well-maintained beach enhances its overall appearance and reduces complaints from recreational beachgoers expecting a clean, smooth sandy beach during the Bathing Season. Beach raking removes debris, often perceived to be unsightly, making the beach more attractive for visitors, tourists and families. The improved aesthetic appeal positively impacts tourism and community well-being, contributing to a positive perception of the coastal area.

Review of Current Beach Management Practices

As recently as February 2026, the Operations Department has investigated the additional budget and additional staff numbers which would be required to be recruited to replace the 3-5 days of mechanical raking with a team of staff recruited for the 16-week Bathing Season alone to hand litter pick the beach during the Season.

To cover the same area that takes the mechanical rake 3-5 days per week could take approx. 10-15 men working 7 days per week (i.e without overtime

multipliers). This would cost a minimum of €14,649 per staff member for the 16 week Bathing Season at the 1st point of the incremental General Operative scale. 10 persons recruited for 16 weeks would cost €146,490 for the Bathing Season period rising to €219,744 for 15 staff.

The budgeted cost for the management of beaches across the County in 2026 is €432,800. There is no provision within the 2026 budget for changing to manual litter picking on the Howth Malahide area beaches or for the recruitment of additional seasonal staff for the Bathing Season.

To redeploy existing staff to carry out this required level of manual litter picking would divert them away from their primary vital tasks which enhance the Howth Malahide area for members of the public. The Howth Malahide Area team do not currently have the staff resources or budget to support this change from mechanical raking to manual litter picking on the beaches.

Dune Protection Measures

To encourage growth and recovery of the existing dunes on the Howth Malahide beaches, where required, the Operations Department have installed ropes/stakes and signage to alert the public and prevent human access onto the dunes at several beaches in the Howth Malahide LEA. This prevention of trampling encourages dune regeneration and expansion. We have erected the rope fencing in locations where there was excessive human footfall / trampling on sand dunes to prevent damage to this natural vegetation/biodiversity. There has been some marram grass growth due to the dune protection measures.

We will continue the maintenance and installation of such measures where there is excessive dune footfall. Arrangements are currently in train to repair and reinstate the roped-off areas in order to continue protecting the dune system.

The Operations Department has also recently liaised with the NPWS Conservation Ranger regarding the current beach management practices being carried out at these beaches.

Conclusion

Measures have already been put in place to reduce the impacts from human erosion in order to protect dune vegetation and to encourage its growth and recovery in line with the recommendations of "Leave No Trace".

The seaweed and other natural material are currently being separated from the litter and deposited at the base of the dunes, following mechanical raking for the 16-week Bathing Season. This is to encourage dune and vegetation growth.

Given the current beach management practices which are in place, there is little benefit to be gained by the high-budget costs involved in redeploying existing staff or recruiting seasonal staff for these heavily used beaches for the Bathing Season.

The Operations Department have examined the beach and dune management practices on these beaches and have determined that the current arrangement will remain.

Source of Report:

Karen Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Operations Department