

## Donegan, Fergus (Alab)

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**From:** Ian Diamond [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday 10 January 2024 16:52  
**To:** Alab, Info  
**Subject:** RE: AP1/1-3/2022 Site Ref. T05/640A  
**Attachments:** Updated\_GCA Guideline\_2023\_24\_Final.pdf

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Hi Majella,

Please find attached the guidance for Green Coast Award applicants.

Kind regards

**Ian Diamond**  
**Coastal Awards Manager**  
Environmental Education Unit  
An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland  
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**From:** Alab, Info <[Info@alab.ie](mailto:Info@alab.ie)>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 22, 2023 12:21 PM  
**To:** Ian Diamond [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** 'elainemcgoff@antaisce.org' <[elainemcgoff@antaisce.org](mailto:elainemcgoff@antaisce.org)>  
**Subject:** AP1/1-3/2022 Site Ref. T05/640A

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Dear Ian,

Please find attached correspondence for your information and consideration, please.

Regards,

Majella

**Majella Murphy**



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**An Bord Achomhairc Um Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe**

*Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board*

**Cúirt Choill Mhinsí, Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath, Port Laoise, Contae Laoise, R32 DTW5**

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# Green Coast Award Guidance 2023 (Bathing Season 2024)

Sinead McCoy



# Community-Focused Green Coast Award Guidance Document

## Aims and Objectives

The Green Coast Award aims to celebrate and honour beaches that boast excellent water quality and are adopted by a local Clean Coasts volunteer/community groups.

To be eligible for this award, beaches must have:

- A Beach Management Plan in place that acknowledges of the environmentally sensitive nature of the site, that engages with conservation organisations and other relevant stakeholders. .
- Regular beach cleaning activities in place, that avoid the removal of natural debris such as driftwood and seaweed.
- A local Clean Coasts group(s) in place and engaged in meaningful actions. This key element relates to the main purpose of this award scheme, which is to foster partnerships with communities in an effort to protect and enhance local coastal environs, and to celebrate the efforts of those communities.
- Have excellent water quality that meets the EU Bathing Water Directive standards.

To qualify for the Green Coast Award, beach operators and the relevant parties should follow the guidance provided in this document. Failure to do so may result in the temporary removal of the award until these objectives are met. The assessment for the award is based on submitted applications, which includes water quality results, Beach Management Plans and site visit in 2023. In 2024, an additional element will be reviewed in assessment for the award, an additional Community Action Plan for site, created by Clean Coasts group with support from Clean Coasts staff and Local Authority staff.

Throughout this document, 'must' indicates a mandatory criterion, while 'should' signifies an advisable action.



## The Importance of Local Community Engagement for Natural Site Maintenance and Protection

Natural sites, in this case coastal or beach areas, play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. These sites serve as essential components of our environment, providing ecological, recreational, and aesthetic benefits. To ensure the sustainable preservation of these valuable assets, it is crucial to foster strong local community engagement. This justification outlines the myriad benefits that stem from involving the local community in the care and protection of natural sites.

- **Environmental Stewardship** - Local community engagement in coastal/nature site care and protection encourages responsible environmental stewardship. When community members actively participate in preserving these areas, they develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the environment. This heightened awareness often leads to more sustainable practices, such as litter cleanup, habitat restoration, and the reduction of harmful behaviours that may threaten the site's ecological balance.
- **Improved Site Maintenance** - Having a dedicated community group responsible for site maintenance ensures that the area receives regular attention. Routine maintenance tasks, such as trail upkeep, invasive species management, and erosion control, are crucial for the long-term health of natural sites. With community involvement, these tasks are more likely to be consistently addressed, preventing the site from falling into disrepair.
- **Increased Public Safety** - Community engagement can also contribute to the safety of coastal/nature sites. When local residents take ownership of the site's well-being, they are more likely to report safety hazards or suspicious activities promptly. This helps maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all visitors.
- **Educational Opportunities** - Natural sites offer unique educational opportunities, serving as living classrooms for environmental education and outdoor recreation. By engaging the local community, we create platforms for educational programs, guided tours, and workshops, fostering a greater understanding of the site's ecological significance. This knowledge empowers individuals to become ambassadors for nature and environmental conservation.
- **Sense of Belonging and Identity** - Participating in the care and protection of a natural site instills a sense of belonging and identity among community members. It strengthens the community's connection to its environment, history, and cultural heritage, fostering a shared sense of pride and responsibility. This can lead to greater community cohesion and a stronger commitment to site preservation.
- **Sustainability and Longevity** - A community actively involved in coastal/natural site care is more likely to advocate for sustainable practices and policies that protect the site in the long term. This advocacy can lead to increased funding, resources, and legal protections for the site, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

Engaging the local community in the care and protection of a natural site is not only beneficial but also essential. It enhances environmental stewardship, improves site maintenance, increases public safety, offers educational opportunities, fosters a sense of belonging, and ensures the site's sustainability and longevity. By recognising the value of community engagement in preserving natural sites, we can safeguard these invaluable resources for the benefit of all.

## Guidelines

### Community Group Site Adoption – Clean Coasts Group

All Green Coast Award sites must be adopted by a Clean Coasts volunteer/community group. Encouraging community involvement in the care and management of beaches in Ireland is a core aim of the award, therefore, it is essential to develop a guardianship scheme that involves local communities and environmental groups registered with the Clean Coasts programme.

The Green Coast Award is part of the Clean Coasts programme, as a result groups working on award sites must also be registered with the Clean Coasts programme. The Clean Coasts programme is an environmental programme run by An Taisce. It is a community focused programme, and the central aspect of the programme is a network of community groups, called Clean Coasts groups. These groups sign up to adopt their local beach, and do so through hosting clean ups, educational activities, and coastal/environmental restoration work on these sites. All groups who sign up for the Clean Coasts programme are assigned a Clean Coasts Development Officer, These officers support them with their work and provide guidance for activities on site, such as beach cleans and educational activities.

In 2024, Clean Coasts groups associated with a Green Coast Award Site will be asked to submit a Community Action Plan (CAP) to set out intended community activity for the coming year. These plans will be done with the support of the Clean Coasts Development Officer and will be reviewed and submitted by the Local Authority with the application in 2024 for 2025 season.

The award acknowledges that no two award sites or communities are the same, allowing for more flexibility in the assessment of Community Action Plans. In addition, community efforts on past projects, current management practices and future planning will also be considered during the review.

### Information for Visitors

Beaches awarded the Green Coast Award should prioritise providing beachgoers with sufficient information to make informed decisions about entering the water and easily locate on-site facilities and services. To minimise excessive signage, consider the following information for display:

- Basic information about the Green Coast Award, including a brief overview of the program's objectives.
- The name of the local authority responsible for the site and the Clean Coasts group(s) involved in its management.
- The awarded beach's name.
- A map or aerial photo of the award site (depending on the extent of on-site facilities).
- Contact details for An Taisce's Coastal Awards Manager and the Green Coast Award website ([www.greencoastaward.ie](http://www.greencoastaward.ie)). Encourage the public to visit this website and, where applicable, the local authority's website for detailed information on the program and the site.
- Ensure information about bathing water quality is available to the public. Displaying individual sample results for identified waters is necessary. For non-identified waters, indicate where sample results are accessible, e.g., on [www.beaches.ie](http://www.beaches.ie).
- Provide a map or aerial photo of the beach indicating the site's extent, services, facilities, sensitive areas, and points of interest. Ensure it clearly indicates the Green Coast Award boundaries and the location of key facilities and services. Use easily readable, properly oriented maps with pictograms, if possible.
- Include a "You are here" pointer, swimming, lifeguard station, lifesaving equipment, first aid equipment, telephones, toilets, parking areas, camping sites, recycling facilities, disabled access, zoning (e.g., swimming, surfing), public transport, footpaths, rivers, landmarks, stormwater outlets, nearby sensitive natural areas, direction (North), and a scale bar on the map.
- Provide a code of conduct reflecting local rules for beach use.



## Water Quality

The bathing water must meet the equivalent of the "Excellent" standard outlined in the current EU Bathing Water Directive.

- To qualify for the award scheme, the beach's associated bathing water must meet the equivalent of the 'Excellent' standard as outlined in the Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC. Present the current water quality rating, calculated based on a minimum of 20 samples from the past four years, where available.
- The beach does not necessarily have to be identified bathing water. However, all monitoring must be carried out strictly within the Directive methods of analysis of inspection by either the national agency responsible or a laboratory accredited for the testing of seawater samples. One sample is to be taken shortly before the start of each bathing season and no fewer than four further samples are to be taken and analysed per bathing season. Sampling dates are to be distributed throughout the bathing season, with the interval between sampling dates never exceeding one month.

The suitability of monitoring bodies should be confirmed with An Taisce. Where the Beach Operator is made aware of adverse bathing conditions, e.g., failed sample or prolonged heavy rain, which is likely to affect water quality, they should inform the public as quickly as is reasonably practicable, highlighting that rivers and streams which cross the beach should not be used as an alternative bathing area.

- Local authorities must report bathing water quality test results for awarded sites to the EPA via the Environmental Data Exchange Network (EDEN) for display on beaches.ie.
- Document any industrial, urban wastewater, or sewage-related discharges into the award area or its immediate buffer zone.

## Safety

The safety equipment and services provided must, so far as is reasonably practicable, minimize the possibility of harm to beach users.

- The Beach Operator must ensure an Irish Water Safety risk assessment has been carried out on the applicant site. A copy of the most recent risk assessment report should be submitted with an application for the Green Coast Award. If a risk assessment has not been carried out confirmation that a risk assessment has been sought for the site from IWS is required as an interim measure.
- So far as is reasonably practicable, easy and safe access to the beach must be provided for all, including people with impaired mobility. Safe and easy access for all should be provided at every site where it is technically, and financially feasible to do so, and the works will not adversely impact the local environment. It is understood that not every site can be made accessible to everyone and if suitable access cannot be provided then this must be highlighted in the application. Lack of access is not in and of itself a barrier to the granting of the Award so long as there are reasonable grounds for the lack of provision. The Control visit will not, except under exceptional circumstances, make a determination on the safety of the site and access provision, but will instead be based on the provision of the control measures outlined in the risk assessment provided with the application. The current "Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach" provides comprehensive best practice guidance on how to design, build and manage buildings and spaces so that they can be readily accessed and used by everyone, regardless of age, size ability or disability. The Building for Everyone series is available for free download in accessible PDF format at: <http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/>.



- Any significant incident, known to the Local Authority which results in serious injury or loss of life, or significant harm to the environment on the beach must be notified to An Taisce as soon as is reasonably practicable and at most within two weeks. A significant incident is one which results in the attendance of an emergency service to deal with a serious injury or loss of life, or which causes significant damage to the local environment. This is included to ensure An Taisce is made aware of incidents which may affect the reputation of the Award or the beach as a safe place to visit or highlight operational issues which might affect future applications. It is understood that accidents can happen even when suitable and sufficient controls are in place. As such, the occurrence of a significant incident is not by itself an issue, but failure to report a relevant incident constitutes a non-conformance.

### Litter and Waste

The beach and adjoining facilities must be clean.

- There must be no obvious visual impact from litter or sewage-related debris (SRD) on the beach. The beach, intertidal area, backshore and any surrounding areas connected to the beach operation including carparks and amenity areas must be substantially free of litter, with no potentially harmful materials such as broken glass.
- Beach cleaning may be mechanical or manual, depending on the size, appearance, and sensitivity of the beach and its surroundings. When cleaning the beach, due consideration must be given to the protection and conservation of the environment. Where a choice exists for a process or technique, the expectation will be that the most environmentally advantageous option is selected even if it costs more to provide. This may result in the choice to litter pick by hand rather than use a mechanical screen, or to clean more often or to a higher standard than is required by regulation.
- Properly secured and covered litter bins in adequate numbers should be made available for litter. These should be of suitable character and appearance and sited where appropriate to the surroundings.
- Where a "take your litter home policy" is in operation, the public should be informed of this through education literature or via appropriate signage. This information could be included with other information at an access point to the beach such as the car park, possibly in the form of a countryside code. This method of litter management should be closely monitored to ensure its effectiveness.

### Beach Management with Community Engagement

The beach must be well managed in partnership with the local community to protect and promote the local environment.

- The Beach Operator must develop a guardianship scheme for the beach with local community and/or environmental groups, and act in agreement with them in managing the beach.
- The Beach Operator must develop a management structure which encourages local Clean Coasts group involvement in the decision-making process as well as the service delivery. Where such a group does not exist, the Beach Operator should liaise with the Clean Coasts Development Officer for their region to enquire about potential groups. Dogs and horses may be permitted in the award area unless local regulations prevent it. Owners should be encouraged by the provision of suitable facilities and signage at access points to clean up after their animals when using the beach.
- The Beach Operator must provide adequate access and parking facilities and where possible suitable access for disabled people. Parking on the beach must be prohibited.





## Application Process

For an updated application process, please refer to the most recent application form provided by Beach Awards, An Taisce. When submitting application for the 2024 Bathing Season please include the following enclosures with your application:

- Water quality results for the last four bathing seasons, where available, using the appropriate coastal or inland excel file.
- A beach management plan in Microsoft Word or PDF format, signed off by the Local Authority and Clean Coasts group associated with the site.
- A map or aerial photo of the site, as specified in the application form.
- A copy of the code of conduct reflecting local rules governing beach use.
- If applicable, the most recent Water Safety Ireland Risk assessment report or confirmation of a request for assessment from WSI.
- A copy of beach bylaws, where relevant.