

# Howth Special Amenity Order Draft Operational Plan 2015-2020



## Howth Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO) Operational Plan 2015-2020

### 1) Rational for Special Amenity Area Order

A special amenity area order (SAAO) is an environmental designation made under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts. It applies to an area which is either an area:

- of outstanding beauty,
- of special recreational value and/or,
- where there is need for nature conservation.

The SAAO provides the most secure type of planning protection for an area. The Howth SAAO made in 1998, was community led, granted by the Minister of the Environment and made by Fingal County Council.

### 2) Rational for Operational Plan

- The Howth SAAO came about as a result of community and public concern regarding the nature and scale of development on the Howth Peninsula.
- The Howth SAAO Management Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the SAAO Operational Plan.
- The involvement of multiple stakeholders, in particular, continued community participation ensures greater implementation of the plan and ultimately more effective conservation and planning control.
- Approximately 8,000 residents and approximately 750,000 visitors/tourists (120,000 paying) use/visit the area. Howth SAAO covers an area of 547 hectares. It is essential that the area is managed properly and environmentally sustainable development occurs.

### 3) Vision & Values

Our vision is to ensure that the natural environment and development work hand-in-hand to conserve the Howth Peninsula & Ireland's Eye for future generations (*– taken from the Howth SAAO 1998*).

The values of the Management Committee are to:

- facilitate active inclusive
- work in partnership
- protect the environment
- support sustainable development.

#### **4) Mission Statement**

Our mission is to deliver and maintain to the highest standards, the conservation management and development in the Howth SAAO area. This includes the facilitation of appropriate educational, recreational and community interests and activities, consistent with the conservation imperative. This mission is to be achieved in co-operation with local interests, Fingal Co. Co. and other statutory agencies (*– taken from the Path Management Group Paper 2015.*)

#### **5) Operational Objectives & Working Groups**

##### 1. Conservation and Recreation

Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage, Recreation and Tourism:

Membership:

Declan Doogue (Dublin Naturalists Field Club), Mary Tubridy (Irish Uplands Forum), Diarmuid O’Cathsaigh (Howth Peninsula Heritage Society), Anne Thornton (Howth Pathways), Nessa O’ Brien (Howth/ Sutton Community Council), Cllr. Daire Ní Laoi, Cllr. David Healy, Paul Mc Donnell (Executive Parks Superintendent, Operations Department, Fingal County Council), Hans Visser (Biodiversity Officer, Fingal County Council) and Gerry Clabby (Heritage Officer, Fingal County Council)

##### 2. Planning and Communication

Membership:

Elaine O’Sullivan (Fingal Tourism), Jackie Feeley (Hillwatch), Cllr. Cian O’Callaghan, Gemma Carr (A/Senior Executive Parks Superintendent, Parks and Green Infrastructure Division, Fingal County Council) and Una O’Neill (Planning Department, Fingal County Council)

#### **6) Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for Operational Objectives**

1. Conservation of Natural & Cultural Heritage
2. Recreation and Tourism
3. Planning
4. Governance & Communications

## 7) Operational Plan

Goal 1: Conservation & Cultural Heritage				
<b>Objectives:</b> <b>1A. Conservation of the Natural Environment</b> <b>1B. Cultural Heritage</b>				
Actions:	Partners	Resources	Timeline	KPIs
1A: Conservation of the Natural Environment				
1.1 Map existing waterbodies (wetlands, springs, streams etc) and make comparison with historical data and maps (include note to ensure all mapping data is integrated into FCC GIS systems)	FCC Biodiversity Officer, D. Doogue, Historical society, landowners and potential student		2016	Map with narrative produced
1.2 Hydrological Study of Kilrock Quarry and removal of dumped material in quarry.	FCC Biodiversity Officer, D. Doogue, landowner and hydrological consultant		2016	Hydrological study undertaken and dumped material removed
1.3 Hydrological Study of Whitewater Brook	FCC Biodiversity Officer, D. Doogue, landowners and hydrological consultant		2017	Hydrological Study undertaken
1.4 Management appraisal of best flora sites in Howth including Council owned sites at Red Rock and field adjacent to Sutton Woods and road verges near the Summit and St. Fintan's Cemetery.	FCC Biodiversity Officer, FCC Operations, D. Doogue, M. Tubridy, landowners		2015	Key sites identified and visited. Management options prepared and agreed with landowner

## Goal 1: Conservation & Cultural Heritage

Actions: 1A: Conservation of the Natural Environment	Partners	Resources	Timeline	KPIs
<p>1.5 Control of Invasive Species with particular focus on Rhododendron, Birch and garden plant escapees.</p> <p>1.5a Conservation and Recreation Working Group to meet with Matthew Jebb of the National Botanic Gardens to advise on best management of control of invasive plants and a set of recommendations shall then be draw up by the Working group.</p> <p>1.5b Implement recommendations of working group on control of invasive species</p>	<p>Matthew Jebb and Conservation and Recreation Working Group</p> <p>FCC biodiversity Officer, D. Doogue, landowners, Botanic Gardens, Conservation Volunteers and contractors</p>	<p>?</p> <p>€50,000 minimum</p>	<p>2015</p> <p>2016-2020</p>	<p>Annual control programme identified and carried out.</p>
<p>1.6 Preliminary discussions on setting up an SAAO Advisory Habitat Management Service (examining how to develop a partnership approach with local landowners (public &amp; private incl. FCC, farmers, residential and commercial landowners).</p>	<p>FCC Biodiversity Officer, D. Doogue, M. Tubridy</p>		<p>2015</p>	<p>Advisory service established. Point of contact established. Service advertised to landowners</p>
<p>1.7 Assess grazing options for heathland and grassland resource in the SAAO area</p>	<p>FCC Biodiversity Officer, FCC Operations, D. Doogue, M. Tubridy, landowners</p>		<p>2016</p>	<p>Grazing report prepared</p>
<p>1.8 Develop a Fire Management Plan– incl. mapping fire hazards, fire brigade access, use of seawater, fire breaks, public fire awareness etc. Consider a community based Fire Watch Service based on the neighbourhood Watch Service.</p>	<p>All stakeholders</p>		<p>2017</p>	<p>Fire management plan prepared</p>

## Goal 1: Conservation & Cultural Heritage

Actions: 1A: Conservation of the Natural Environment	Partners	Resources	Timeline	KPIs
1.9 Support the publication of the new Flora of Howth book	D. Doogue and D. Nash		2016	Book published
1.10a Red Squirrel Conservation Management Plan, Howth  1.10b Implement Recommendations Red Squirrel Conservation Report	FCC and consultants  FCC Biodiversity Officer, Ecological consultants	€6,000-€25,000	2015  2016-2020	Tender for report and report produced by ecological consultants  Annual programme of works identified and implemented
1.11 Develop a prioritised list of Research Projects for 3 <sup>rd</sup> level institutions	All stakeholders		2016-2020	Annual list of research projects published
1.12 Prepare Management Plan for Ireland's Eye (Focussing on nature conservation, recreational use and cultural heritage)	FCC Biodiversity Officer, NPWS, DNFC, Birdwatch, Boat operators, landowners		2017	Detailed survey work undertaken and Management plan prepared
1.13 Develop a Biodiversity Management Plan for Cook's quarry	FCC Biodiversity Officer, Quarry owner, NPWS, consultant		2017	Biodiversity Management plan prepared

## Goal 1: Conservation & Cultural Heritage

Actions: 1B: Cultural Heritage	Partners	Resources	Timeline	KPIs
1.14 Design and approve a Heritage Trail for Howth	Howth Heritage Trail Committee, FCC		2015	
1.15 Develop a Howth Cultural Heritage Map (depicting holy wells, streams, townlands and other features of interest)	Howth Peninsula Heritage Society, Howth Pathways, FCC		2015	
1.16 Provide information signs as part of the heritage trail at key archaeological monuments (e.g. Aideen's Grave, Howth Castle, St Mary's Abbey, Martello Tower, St Nessan's Church and Martello Tower)	FCC, Key Individuals		2016	
1.17 In co-operation with building owners, develop a programme to provide commemorative plaques on buildings to commemorate key individuals associated with these buildings	Howth Heritage Trail Committee, FCC		2017	
1.18 Examine new ways to present the history and heritage of St Fintan's Graveyard to the public. Bring forward and implement a proposal based on this research	Howth Peninsula Heritage Society		Long term	
1.19 Make a submission to the current review of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) to recommend the addition of buildings/structures to the RPS based on the list contained in the SEMPA project report, 2001	FCC, local groups		Completed	
1.20 Communicate the traditions, oral history, literary and artistic achievements of Howth using opportunities arising from the implementation of relevant actions in this plan	Howth Heritage Trial Committee		Ongoing	



Goal 2: Recreation & Tourism				
<b>Objectives:</b> <b>2A: Management and maintenance of Howth pathways</b>  <b>2B: Recreation &amp; Tourism</b> Develop a sustainable tourism & marketing approach for the SAAO area.				
<b>Actions:</b> <b>2A: Management and maintenance of Howth pathways</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>KPIs</b>
2.1 Drainage works to Lower Cliff path at Casana Rock  <b>(Note:</b> Major difficulty with accessing this area. Meeting required on site with working group - area to be measured and agreement on access with private householders is required. Work will have to be carried out by contractor. Quotations can then be sought by Operations Department and will be forwarded to Working group for final decision).	FCC, Howth Pathways	? Quotations to be sought	2015?	Path drained
2.2 Remedial works on boardwalks, e.g. wire mesh attached the wrong way, just past golf club and damaged wire mesh and sleepers at Tweedy's  <b>Note:</b> Works to be carried out by contractor. Operations Department shall seek quotations for this work and will then submit this information to the Working group.	FCC, Howth Pathways	? Quotations to be sought	2015	Boardwalk repaired



## Goal 2: Recreation & Tourism

Actions: 2A: Management and maintenance of Howth pathways	Partners	Resources	When	KPIs
<p>2.3: Finish remedial works to boardwalk at Tweedy's Black Linn Loop between old Thormanby Road and new Thormanby Road near Summit</p> <p><b>Note:</b> As above</p>	FCC, Howth Pathways	? Quotations to be sought	2015	Boardwalk repaired
<p>2.4: Safety signs to warn motorists and walkers where Loops cross roads e.g. Bog of the frogs loop at Carrickbrack rd., Cliff Path Loop at Thormanby Rd., Black Linn Loop at Tweedy's and Tramline Loop at Balkhill Rd.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 16 no. signs are required – Style of sign to be agreed with Working Group. Operations Department will erect these signs. Funded by Howth SAO.</p>	FCC, Howth Pathways	? Quotations to be sought	2015	Safety signs in place
<p>2.5: Clearing of garden waste dumped between Baily Lighthouse and Ceanchor Road on Lower Cliff path, where invasive species are already evident and prioritising information to landowner involved.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> There is an estimated 20 tonnes of garden waste material in this area. Working group needs to discuss how it is proposed to remove this material as the majority of these areas are inaccessible to machinery.</p> <p>Working group to liaise with the Enforcement Section, Environment Department, FCC for guidance on this matter.</p>	FCC, Howth Pathways Planning & Comm Sub Group, Landowners, Hillwatch	?	2015?	Garden waste cleared and landowner aware of problems associated with garden waste

## Goal 2: Recreation & Tourism

Actions: 2A: Management and maintenance of Howth pathways	Partners	Resources	When	KPIs
<p>2.6: Sign at the exit from the Tramline Loop onto Balkhill Road giving people the option to follow the Tram track to the DART station or go through the village. (Arrow straight 'DART via Tram Track' and arrow to the right 'DART via Howth Village')</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Operations Department will be erect post and signage if items are funded by Howth SAAO</p>	FCC, Howth Pathways	?	2015	Sign erected
<p>2.7: Replace missing directional signs on Loop walks as detailed in appendix.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Meeting is required on site with Working Group.</p>	FCC, Howth Pathways	?	2015	Missing directional signs replaced
<p>2.8: Engage with Enforcement Officer with respect to dumping of garden waste at Cook's Quarry, maintaining views and prospects, stopping dumping and storage of a variety of stone, building and hard surface materials and the continued extension of the quarry area</p>	FCC, Howth Pathways		2015	Laws and bylaws enforced

## Goal 2: Recreation & Tourism

Actions: 2B: Recreation & Tourism	Partners	Resources	When	KPIs
2.2 Investigate a range of tourism & recreational activities and how they would relate positively to the Howth SAAO. In particular, the possibility of holding scheduled guided walks from the Tourist Kiosk.	Fingal Tourism, FCC & Visit Howth Peninsula Ltd.		2015	Regular organised guided walks
Sustainability: Human and traffic management within the Howth SAAO. 2.3a Visitor Counts Organise volunteers to carry out visitor counts at Balcadden Carpark and Red Rock and or the use of DIT Tourism student project work.	FCC Fingal Tourism and Visit Howth Penninsula Ltd. and Howth Pathways		2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter Committee meeting 2015	Report provided on feasibility / costing
2.3b Carry out traffic count surveys at Harbour Road, Howth.	Visit Howth Peninsula Ltd.	Organised and funded by Visit Howth Peninsula Ltd.	2015	Traffic counts carried out and report on results produced.
2.4 Research the feasibility of developing an Interpretative Centre at the Courthouse with information on Howth SAAO being provided here.	FCC		2015	
2.5 For Marketing of Howth SAAO: see Communications sections				

## Goal 2: Recreation & Tourism

Actions: 2B: Recreation & Tourism	Partners	Resources	When	KPIs
2.6 Develop a Litter Strategy for the Howth SAAO Area; identify litter blackspots, garden waste, dog bins, clean up days, examine good practice elsewhere (e.g. Skerries beach 'adopt a stretch') and link to national litter strategy (e.g. money back plastic bottles etc.)	FCC, Fingal Tourism, Howth Pathways, Chamber of Commerce, Visit Howth Peninsula, Hillwatch, Friends of Balscadden Beach, Schools, general public		2015	SAAO Litter Strategy produced
2.7 Implement SAAO Litter Strategy	As above		2016 / 17	Litter free SAAO area

### Goal 3: Planning

**Objective: Ensure that planning controls are implemented and communicated to all stakeholders**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>KPIs</b>
3.1 Produce an accessible and easily understood guidance reference regarding planning in the Howth SAAO area.	Working group		2016	Guidance reference produced
3.2 Ensure circulation of all relevant SAAO documents and information at all pre-planning meetings			On going	Relevant SAAO documents and information at all pre-planning meetings
3.3 Planner to be designated/assigned to Howth SAAO Management Meetings and form part of FCC internal team for SAAO		Planner from FCC Planning Dept.	Complete	Planner to be designated
3.4 Planning Enforcement to be engaged where planning breaches occur within SAAO	Working group and Planning Enforcement	Planning enforcement	On going	Planning Enforcement engaged where breaches occur
3.5 Ensure internal integration within Fingal County Council of Howth Public Realm Project and SAAO Operational Plan	Planning and Operations Departments	Fingal staff	On going	Ensure internal integration within Fingal County Council of Howth Public Realm Project and SAAO Operational Plan

## Goal 4: Governance & Communications

Howth SAAO Management Committee to work as an efficient team to ensure effective implementation of the plan.  
Communicate with multiple stakeholders ensuring that the SAAO Operational Plan is widely supported in the community.

<p><b>Objectives:</b>  <b>4A: Governance</b>  Reform structure of the Howth SAAO Committee</p> <p><b>4B: Communications</b>  Develop a Howth SAAO Communications Strategy</p>				
<p><b>Actions:</b>  <b>4A: Governance</b></p>	Partners	Resources	Timeline	KPIs
4.1 Develop terms of reference of SAAO Management Committee.				
4.2 Elect chair from stakeholder representatives for a minimum of one year, with an option of up to three years.				
4.3 Define Roles, Responsibilities & Membership				
4.4 Review current practice & models of best governance				
4.5 Support the capacity development of stakeholder groups to participate in the process.				
4.6 Monitor & evaluate successes of the Operational Plan with relevant reports on Action Plan being made at quarterly meetings by sub groups				

## Goal 4: Governance & Communications

Howth SAAO Management Committee to work as an efficient team to ensure effective implementation of the plan.  
Communicate with multiple stakeholders ensuring that the SAAO Operational Plan is widely supported in the community.

Actions: 4B: Communications		Partners	Resources	Timeline	KPIs
4.7	Develop clear lines of communication with various staff in Fingal County Council	FCC and working group	N/A	2015	List of relevant contacts within FCC produced
4.8a	Incorporate a link for the Howth SAAO into fingaldublin.ie website.	Fingal Tourism, FCC		2015	Link provided.
4.8b	Provide and update information on Howth SAAO, video clips etc. Information to be sent to Elaine O' Sullivan, Fingal Tourism as required.	Working group	Need someone to continually update and send information to Fingal Tourism.	2016-2020	Information kept up to date
4.9a	Engage with landowners (farming, residential, community & commercial) -through the production of an information leaflet as well as an evening information meeting.	Working group	€2,000	2015	Leaflets produced and sent and evening meeting held.
4.9b	Engage with residents of the Howth peninsula -through the production of an information leaflet.				
4.9c	Produce list and map of landowners within the Howth SAAO.				
4.10	Design and produce information display boards to be used for events and open days (e.g. Dublin Prawn Festival etc.) and the Interpretive centre	Working group		2016	



**Howth Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO)  
Operational Plan 2015-2020**

**SAAO Management Committee & Key Stakeholders involved in workshops**

**1. Membership of Howth SAAO Area Committee as stated in the original order**

- 1) Fingal Co. Co. Elected Representatives
- 2) Community representatives including local landowners and relevant sectoral interests
- 3) People with specialist knowledge/expertise can be co-opted on

**2. Role of Management Committee as stated in the original order**

- 1) Develop a five year Operational Plan
- 2) Submit the plan to Fingal Co. Co. for formal approval
- 3) Monitor the environmental quality in the area
- 4) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan

**3. Fingal Co. Co. Elected Representatives**

Elected Representative  
Elected Representative  
Elected Representative  
Elected Representative  
Elected Representative  
Elected Representative  
Elected Representative  
Elected Representative

Cllr. Anthony Lavin  
Cllr. Jimmy Guerin  
Cllr. David Healy  
Cllr. Brian Mc Donagh  
Cllr. Daire Ní Laoi  
Cllr. Eoghan O'Brien  
Cllr. Cian O'Callaghan  
Cllr. Keith Redmond

#### 4. Community Groups Representatives

Howth Pathways

Hillwatch

Howth/Sutton Community Council

Howth Peninsula Heritage Society

Friends of East Mountain

Local Landowners

Visit Howth Peninsula Ltd.

Howth /Sutton Chamber of Commerce

Anne Thornton, David Caulfield, Dougal Cousins & Helen Lahert

Jackie Feeley, Stella Dunphy & Anita Cannon

Nessa O'Brien, Edgar Mc Loughlin

Diarmuid O'Cathsaigh & Vincent Mc Brierty

Pat Hennessey

Edwina St. Laurence & Fiona Bellingham – (Landowners - Farmers, Residential, Property Developers e.g. Treasury Holdings, Golf Courses & Commercial Activities e.g. Quarry)

Aoife Healy

Al Ryan

#### 5. Specialist Environmental Groups Representatives

Irish Uplands Forum

Dublin Naturalists' Field Club

National Parks & Wildlife Service

Goats for Howth

Dr. Mary Tubridy

Dr. Declan Doogue, Con Breen & David Nash

Dr. Maurice Eakin, Neil Harmey

Marion Kelly

#### 6. Fingal Co. Co. Staff (in attendance)

Director of Services (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Senior Parks Superintendent (Parks and Green Infrastructure Division)

Senior Administrative Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Administrative Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Assistant Staff Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Heritage Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Biodiversity Officer (Parks and Green Infrastructure Division)

Assistant Parks Superintendent (Parks and Green Infrastructure Division)

A/ Senior Exec. Parks Superintendent (Parks & Green Infrastructure Division)

Executive Planner (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

A/ Executive Parks Superintendent (Operations Department)

District Supervisor (Operations Department)

Assistant Foreman Gardener (Operations Department)

Area Engineer (Operations Department)

Gilbert Power

Kevin Halpenny

Brian Buckley

Caroline Kelly

Niall Mc Coitir

Gerry Clabby

Hans Visser

Deborah Tiernan

Gemma Carr

Una O'Neill

Paul Mc Donnell

Christy O' Halloran

Matt Kelly

Kevin Vallely

**7. Other stakeholders that may be included**

More community representation, volunteers, schools, visitors etc.

Other statutory & voluntary bodies e.g. Fingal Heritage Network; Fingal Tourism; Fáilte Ireland; An Taisce; National Trails Office; Birdwatch Ireland; Irish Coastguards; Cycle Ireland; Boat Clubs; Walking/Hiking/Cycling/Horse Riding/Golf Clubs; Dublin Bus; Dublin Transport; the National Transport Authority; Irish Wheelchair Association etc.

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## **Howth Special Area Amenity Order: Draft Path Management Plan**

### **Vision:**

The primary aims of this Howth Special Area Amenity Order (SAAO) Path Management Plan are to develop and maintain the highest standards of conservation management and development, and to facilitate appropriate educational, recreational and community interests and activities, consistent with the conservation imperative. These aims are to be achieved in co-operation with local interests, Fingal County Council and other statutory agencies.

All interventions to improve the path network should have a low impact on the natural environment and should encourage the conservation and appreciation of the natural heathland.

### **Priority:**

Resources should be prioritised for paths that have the most use. The lower cliff path has the highest number of visitor numbers and should receive priority. The four national loop paths should also receive priority

Priority One: Lower Cliff Path between Balscadden Road and Strand Road Sutton

Priority Two: The four loop path walks which incorporate the lower cliff path

Priority Three: All other paths

## **Lower Cliff Path**

The Howth SAAO management committee should develop a database of the landowners whose rear gardens back onto the lower cliff path and begin a positive engagement and communication regarding the coastal habitat and the detrimental effect that garden dumping and invasive species can have.

### **Interpretative Signs:**

There is currently interpretative signage at the Strand Road, Sutton entrance to the lower cliff path and at the Balscadden Road car park entrance and at the Summit Car Park and at the 31 terminus at Howth Summit. Additional interpretive signage should be located at the Bailey Lighthouse.

### **Signage:**

The key aim of Howth Pathways has been to help the public access the coastal, heathland and woodland areas of the peninsula.

In 2009 Howth Pathways in conjunction with Fingal County Council and Failte Ireland established 4 loop paths which now form part of the Failte Irelands National Loop Walks. These paths include Trailhead maps and directional arrows and all of the 4 walks commence at Howth Dart Station

While we are delighted at the success of this project it is our view that it is targeted at those members of the public who come to Howth with the sole purpose of spending a day in Howth walking or hiking.ie they come with a specific idea of how they will spend their day.

The majority of visitors, however fall into a different category and need much more visible guidance on what attractions Howth has to offer. At present it is a very confusing place to get around and the variety of existing signs particularly at the dart and harbour area add to this confusion

We wish to concern ourselves with pedestrian signs that will direct the public to the coastal, heathland and woodland areas of the peninsula and with this in mind draw your attention to The Howth Special Amenity Area Order

Objective 1.2 of the SAAO states: *To increase public access on foot of coastal heathland and woodland areas for informal recreation.*

*Policy1.2.1 In order to clarify their status the Order designates the Cliff Walk and other existing public rights of ways on East Mountain, Middle Mountain, Shielfmartin and Ben of Howth as public footpaths (shown in Map A and Table 1) the Council having been advised by the area management committee, will develop this footpath system in an appropriate manner (signage, footpath surfaces, notices and maps, designation of bridleways etc.)*

To meet this objective we suggest that the pedestrian signs are placed at:

a) key road junctions and public transport nodes

- b) key junctions on walking paths
- c) all points where walking paths lead off roads on the peninsula
- d) all pedestrian shortcuts in the built-up areas on the peninsula
- e) on the promenade detailing directions to the Cliff Walk

The signs under a) and b) should be more detailed, directing to key destinations and giving either distance or an estimate of walking time.

We are happy to forward you a list of public pathways and their locations where signposts should be erected

### **Priority Safety Issues and Important maintenance Actions:**

The 2013 Howth Loops Annual Inspection by the National Trails office outlined the following priority safety actions and important maintenance issues which must be addressed:

*One of three priority issues had not been properly addressed. This is on the Black Linn Loop:*

Coming down Tweedy's Lane vegetation can hide potential drop in drain in summer. Inspector recommends keeping vegetation cut back or install warning barrier such as rope handrail. Fingal did cut back the vegetation but HP believes this has not resolved the issue. Given the serious deterioration of the sleepers since the report was written (referred below) this area needs to be looked at.

#### *Important maintenance Issues*

These are all listed in the Inspectors Report. The inspector recommends:

1. **Missing information:**, eg, definition of grades, contact information ,leave no trace principles, information on whether dog are permitted and brief description of route on existing Information/map boards should be addressed by adding a water proof sticker until map boards revised
2. **Busy roads:** without signs to warn both motorists and walkers, Bog of the Frogs at Carrickbreac Rd, Cliff Path Loop at Thormanby Road, Black Linn Loop at Tweedys. HP also recommends signage on Tramline Loop at Balkill Road
3. **Waymarking**

Essential way marking missing on Cliff Path at Nose of Howth and on Black Linn Loop at Kids Pond have not been replaced. Throughout the report the inspector lists many other missing waymarks. Most of these have been replaced by HP. Waymark at entrance to GAA field needs a post.

#### **4. Trail Surface**

Path that circumvents Sheilmartin, path approaching Golf Club, path approaching GAA pitch, path below GAA pitch approaching Balkill Park and path at high area going towards Ben of Howth require remedial action. HP also recommends that drainage issues on lower Cliff Path be tackled. At present there are long patches of very muddy areas around Casana Rock which need to be urgently addressed.

#### **5. Vegetation and Litter:** Dumped rubbish around area of Grace O' Malley Park

#### **6. Trail Furniture:**

Important maintenance item has been addressed; other items listed are wire mesh attached the wrong way on boardwalks just past golf club. While it is not listed in the report there is serious deterioration of condition of sleepers on Tweedys with much of the wire mesh torn away and damaged.

Other issues raised in the reports are possible erosion issues at Red Rock which needs to be investigated by engineers. He also recommends additional arrow plates directing to Aideen's Grave and Ben of Howth with distance time and with landowners permission. It is recommended that additional information on some markers giving time/distance to Howth dart and village.

### **Proposed Extensions and changes to existing Loop Paths Routes**

Reference: [www.discoverireland.ie/walking](http://www.discoverireland.ie/walking)

#### **1. Bog of the Frog Loop (purple)**

As you enter the area Bog of the Frogs (F) instead of joining the red loop turn left through the woods and the path will bring you to the Rhododendron Gardens, Howth Castle and onto Howth Dart Station. We understand that this would need to be formally agreed with Julian Gainsford St Lawrence. If this route should prove not feasible an alternative route could be to continue on the Bog of the Frogs along Paddy Priest Wood and exit at the bottom of Windgate Road and down through the village.



It is recommended that a number of the way marks on this loop would contain additional information eg at Carrickbrack Road the way marks to include the distance to Howth Dart Station. It should also include an arrow pointing to Sheilmartin Summit. To give people an understanding of their bearings at this junction directional arrows are to be erected to indicate directions to that the Summit or Sutton

## **2. Black Linn Loop (red)**

Instead of walking from the Summit down Baily Green Road it is proposed that at the Summit Car park the loop is redirected to the path to the right of the car park down past the house called "Whitewater" and take the path to the right which brings you to the lower car park at Samuel's Hill. Turn right onto Tweedy's path.

At the way mark at the open hillside at Black Linn we recommend the way mark signs includes an arrow pointing to and naming the Ben of Howth. It is recommended that this path continues without any further changes.

## **3. Cliff path Loop (green)**

As the loop joins Thormanby Road we recommend that the loop takes a right (d) for approximately 100 metres and take a right turn down Cowbooter Lane the loop will then turn left at the bottom of Cowbooter Lane (i.e. onto Nashville Road), and then back to the DART through the village.

## **4. Tramline Loop**

At (e) where the path meets Balkill Road we recommend that the loop goes straight down Balkill Road and through the village. The Boreen Lane is a very attractive walking area and should be brought to the attention of walkers. Its entrance is on Dungriffen Road approximately 50 metres to the right of the tramline loop. A sign should be erected at the loop path offering an alternative walk (eg tramline loop via the Boreen Lane) - the path exits just below where the tramline exits at Balkill Road and then the walker will continue down through the village.

At the Summit the walker who arrives to Howth by bus or car needs more detailed directions. A post is required pointing to Tramline loop and giving the walking distance to Dart Station. A sign is also needed pointing to the Summit.

In conclusion the above changes to the loop paths will offer the walker a wider variety of views and prospects and will also encourage them to visit the historic centre of the village.

**Future Actions:**

The following questions will need to be discussed and addressed:

**Users:** Which users will/will not be accommodated? How will access for people with disabilities be facilitated?

**Stakeholders:** How will we maximise engagement with stakeholders including walkers, landowners, the coast guard, horse riders, cyclists and local community groups?

**Audit:** How will we engage with the community to carry out an audit of the existing path network?

### *Bog of the Frogs Loop – Approximately 10k Purple route*

2013 Annual Inspection Report Ref	Map Ref. No.	Observation	Action
1/13	1	At official start of loops, map board inside DART Station very easy to miss	Relocate outside station if possible
2/13	2	At map board near end of promenade/ pier a) Arrow plates directing along walks not easily visible from here b) Complex junction maybe confusing	a) Move to better location b) Recommend erect finger sign, with clear directions
4/13	3	Opposite Nose of Howth, reassurance waymarking required.	Painted arrows on existing signage would suffice, and minimise opportunities for vandalism
5/13	4	Along the cliff path blue arrow missing	Replace blue arrow
3/11	5	1,500m along the cliff path past third stone bollard, waymarking needed.	Attach information plate (4s/o arrow plates with warning text) to blank Pole, or paint 4 s/o arrows on pole
6/13	6	100m after crossing tarred road to lighthouse, sheet of wood covering muddy patch is slippery	Repair ground and remove wood or attach suitable non-slip surface to wood.
7/13	7	Just past Jamesons Beach, sharp, pointed ends of old fence posts along track.	Remove
8/13	8	Past Drumleck, gorse encroaching on path	Cut back

24/11	9	Leaving the Red Rock beach to ascend towards Carrickbrack Road, at junction with path to right at top of steps, short way marker hidden in grass	Erect full length way marker and affix purple arrow.
17/13	10	Along Cliff area, several spots seem to be becoming undercut by the sea.	Recommend engineering survey to ascertain potential danger.
26/11	11	At Carrickbrack Road, where loop crosses the main road and enters hillside section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Erect road signs 100m on either side of crossing to warn motorists of walkers crossing road ahead</li> <li>b) Warning required for walkers. Attach plate with 'Warning busy Road' to marker on approach.</li> </ul>
10/13	12	Rising towards Howth Golf Club, path becoming muddy and spreading.	Remedial action required to make surface robust and durable, or consider re-route.
11/13	13	Just past golf club, mesh on boardwalk is attached the wrong way – prevents slipping in one direction only	Add staples
12/13	14	300mm past golf club, options to visit features to sides.	Recommend to add arrow plates to marker, directing to Aideens Grave and Ben of Howth (with distance/time). Get landowners permission first.
30/11	15	100m before the Black Linn Loop joins the Bog of Frogs Loop, at minor path from the right waymarker needed.	Attach purple s/o arrow plate to one of the leaning stone pillars.
13/13	16	At trail split, shortly after meeting Black Linn Loop, 2 arrow discs attached to tree.	Re-erect marker and remove discs from tree.
14/13	17	Below GAA pitch, path is very eroded with thick mud, with steps cut in clay collapsing. Difficult to get through.	Remedial action required to make surface robust and durable, or consider re-route. There may be an option to re-route by 'Ma Kellys', if required.
16/13	18	Coming off the grass onto concrete path at the entrance to Balkill Park, way marking difficult to see.	Move red and blue right arrow plates from service pole to concrete wall, with permission.
15/13	19	In Grace O'Malley Park, a lot of rubbish dumped in drain to the left.	Arrange for removal
9/11	20	Midway to end of tramline, reassurance waymarking needed.	Attach 4 s/o arrow plates to curved pole on left.



# Trailhead 2 Loop 2D Bog of Frogs Loop

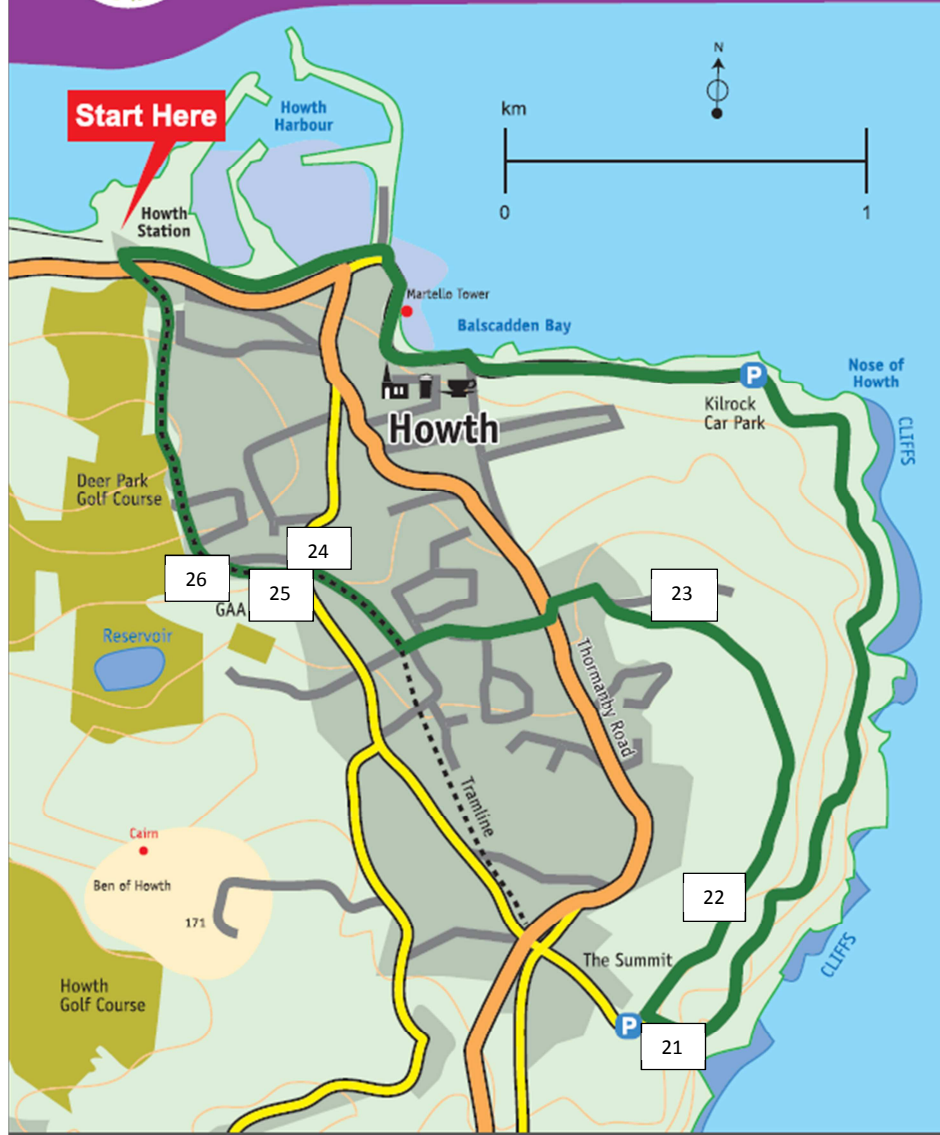


### *Cliff Path Loop – Approximately 6k Green route*

1/13	21	Approaching Summit Car Park from below, arrow plate for 3 walks keeps getting turned.	Secure plate and add arrow discs to wall for assurance
2/13	22	Heading north after leaving other loops, 3 areas where water is pooling, but path currently wide enough to avoid the worst of it.	Drains to right need to be opened and some mud scraped.
5/13	23	Joining tarred surface at Upper Cliff Road, way marking difficult to see.	Move arrow plate from side of service pole below junction to front face, pointing up.
3/13	24	Coming out onto busy road on blind bend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Warning signs required for motorists. Erect signs approaching from either side to warn of walkers on road.</li> <li>b) Warning signs required for walkers. Attach plate with 'Warning Busy Road' to marker on approach.</li> <li>c) Consideration should be given to erecting barrier to prevent children/ dogs running onto road.</li> </ul>
4/13	25	After crossing road, veering left up hill in housing estate, waymarking required.	Erect marker with blue and green arrow plates or attach arrow discs to service pole with permission.
7/11	26	At end of Balkill Park red and purple loops join from left, way marking unclear.	Add extra waymarking for loops joining from east.



# Trailhead 2 Loop 2A Lower Cliff Loop



### *Black Linn Loop – Approximately 8k Red Route*

1/13	27	Coming down Tweedys Lane a) Several muddy areas b) On sleepers, mesh starting to peel c) At side of sleepers, vegetation can hide potential drop into drain in summer	a) Remedial action required to make surface robust and durable, or consider re-route. b) Repair mesh c) Keep vegetation cut regularly, or install warning barrier (e.g. rope handrail)
2/13	28	After Tweedys Lane, busy road crossing a) Warning signs required for motorists b) Warning signs required for walkers on the road	a) Erect signs approaching from either side to warn of walker on road b) Attach plate with 'Warning Busy Road' to marker on approach.
3/13	29	Going off-road towards Ben of Howth a) Gate removed b) Pointy spikey stubs of old fence posts on path	a) Replace or, perhaps better, place boulders to prevent bike and horse use b) Remove
4/13	30	By high point a) Option to go to Ben of Howth b) Wide wet area, walking through heather to avoid mud	a) Recommend attaching information plate to marker, with time/ distance. Seek landowners permission first. b) Remedial action required to make surface robust and durable, or consider re-route.
14/11	31	At right turn on track at Kids pond, no way marking.	Erect s/o marker to direct straight ahead along narrow path.
5/13	32	Leaving quarry, left arrow misaligned, points to narrow, rough path.	Re-attach to point more straight on (approximately 11 o'clock)





*Tramline Loop – Approximately 7k Blue Route*

10/11	33	Midway down Bailey Green Road arrow plate on pole cover in graffiti.	Clean and re-attach as high as possible.
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