



Howth Special Amenity Order Operational Plan 2021-2025



Howth Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO) Operational Plan 2021-2025

1) Rationale 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 1996, 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 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 1999*).

The values of the Management Committee are to:

- 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.

5) Working Sub-committees

1. Conservation and Recreation

This sub-committee deals with targeting actions for the Conservation management of Natural Heritage on the Peninsula. It also deals with the management of recreation and in particular the trail network throughout Howth.

Committee membership:

Mary Tubridy (Irish Uplands Forum), Philip O'Connor (SAAO chair), Conn Redmond (Howth Pathways), Dougal Cousins (Howth Pathways), Caoimhin O Laoi (Howth Pathways), Nessa O' Brien (Howth/ Sutton Community Council), Cllr. David Healy, Suzanne Ennis (Horse Owners), Ray Gilmore (Tetrarch), Con Breen (Dublin Naturalist Field Club)

Fingal County Council Support Officials:

Cornelia Raftery (Parks and Landscape Officer, Operations Department) and Hans Visser (Biodiversity Officer, Parks and Green Infrastructure Division),

2. Planning, Communication and Tourism

This sub-committee deals with Planning issues, Communication of SAAO material both internally and to the wider public, and Tourism. It also deals with all matters relating to the Heritage Trail and built Heritage on the Peninsula.

Committee membership:

Jackie Feeley (Hillwatch), Edgar Mc Loughlin (Howth Peninsula Heritage Society), Mary O'Connor (Visit Howth Peninsula), Philip O'Connor (SAAO chair), Cllr. Aoibhinn Tormey. Fingal County Council

Fingal County Council Support Officials:

Gemma Carr (Parks and Landscape Officer, Parks and Green Infrastructure Division), Kathy Tuck (Planner, Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department).

6) Achievements previous Operational Plan 2016-2020

The following projects were completed during the previous Operational Plan 2016 – 2020 by the SAAO committee and Fingal County Council:

- An upgrade of the entire walking trails network within the SAAO
- The provision of a new directional signage and waymarking scheme for the walking trail network
- The installation of 3no pedestrian counters
- The preparation of a management plan for the Council owned lands at Redrock
- The undertaking of woodland management works and hay meadow management at Redrock
- The preparation of a management plan for Irelands Eye and the implementation of pathway strimming and invasive species control works on the island
- The commissioning of nature conservation studies in the SAAO on breeding birds, bryophytes, lizards, beetles, wetlands and the heathland habitat
- The preparation of a wildfire management strategy for the heathland on Howth
- The undertaking of wildfire prevention measures, primarily by removing Gorse from strategic parts of the landscape
- The undertaking of invasive species studies and invasive species removal works

7) Operational Plan 2021-2025

The overall list of 59 actions has been divided under 10 headings; Wetlands, Redrock Management Plan, Invasive Species control, Heathland Management, Wildfire management, Irelands Eye Management plan, Planning and Development, Visitor Management, Communication and outreach and Resource Allocation. Each heading has a list of actions and these actions have a timeline for completion, person responsible for implementing the action and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which will be indicative of the success of each targeted action.

The table below outlines the actions to be undertaken in the years 2021 – 2025. The 40 actions highlighted in green are the priority actions for the next 5 years as determined by the SAAO committee and Fingal County Council. The other actions may be implemented when opportunities arise. The implementation of all actions is subject to availability of funding and Council staff in any given year.

No.	Action	Once off or Ongoing	Year	Project lead	KPI
Wetlands					
1	Restore Bog of Frogs by blocking the drainage channel at the eastern edge of the site and remove Downy Birch and Bracken	Ongoing	2022	Biodiversity Officer	Drainage channel blocked and Birch and Bracken removed from wetland.
2	Undertake drainage study of both golf clubs	Once-off		Biodiversity Officer	Drainage study completed and report prepared
3	Green Hollow – Remove Gorse from wetland	Ongoing		Biodiversity Officer	Annual % of Mature Gorse removed at Green Hollows
4	Kilrock Quarries – Clear Brambles and Gorse scrub and invasive species	Ongoing		Biodiversity Officer	Invasive species cleared and bramble cover reduced by 80%
5	Undertake Water quality survey of all water courses and wetlands in Howth	Once-off		Biodiversity Officer & Consultant	Water Quality assessment undertaken and report prepared
Redrock Management Plan					
6	To cut and collect the hay once a year in field 1	Ongoing	yearly	Biodiversity Officer	One cut taken from meadow per year
7	Cut back any growth of Bracken, bramble and other tall vegetation around the rare plant sites	Ongoing	yearly	Declan Doogue/ Biodiversity Officer	One cut taken from rare plant sites per year
8	Manage newly planted saplings in pine wood by strimming the weeds around them and replacing any dead trees	Ongoing	yearly	Parks and Landscape officer OPS	Weed control carried out 2 times per year
9	Re-route informal pathway across rare plant site and install signage to make visitors aware of the rare plants	Once off	2022	Biodiversity Officer /consultant	New pathway and signage installed

10	Plant trees at Redrock	Once off	2023	Parks and Landscape officer OPS	New woodland pocket planted
11	Remove invasive species from Redrock (Alexanders)	Ongoing	yearly	Parks and Landscape officer OPS	Alexanders cover reduced by 80% in meadow area
12	Monitor vegetation change using permanent quadrats and rare plants	Once off		Biodiversity Officer	Monitoring survey undertaken and brief report prepared
13	Repair wall along the boundary with Bellinghams Farm (fire management)	Once off		Parks and Landscape officer OPS / Biodiversity Officer	Wall repaired
Invasive species control					
14	Remove all invasive species from Offington Wetland + White water Brook - Removal of invasive species within the water course and ponds	Ongoing	2022/2023	Biodiversity Officer /Consultant	Invasive species removed from both sites
15	Develop and implement a Rhododendron Eradication Plan for the SAC	Ongoing	2021/2024/2025	Biodiversity Officer /Consultant	Plan prepared
16	Prepare tender and action removal of the following species on cliffs between Bailey and Redrock: - Carpobrotus edulis - Crassula helmsii - Gaultheria shallon - Veronica x franciscana	Ongoing	2022/2023	Biodiversity Officer /Consultant	Tender prepared and invasive species removed
Heathland Management					
17	Howth Goat grazing project	Ongoing	yearly	Biodiversity Officer	Acreage of wildfire breaks and heathland grazed and numbers of goats.
18	Monitor impact of goat grazing	Ongoing	yearly	Biodiversity Officer	Annual monitoring undertaken, brief report prepared and results presented to SAAO committee
19	Conduct small-scale cutting trials and monitor regeneration of Heather	Ongoing	2021, 2023, 2025	Biodiversity Officer	Annual monitoring undertaken, brief report prepared and results presented to SAAO committee
20	Monitor regeneration of vegetation after wildfire.	Ongoing	2021, 2023, 2025	Biodiversity Officer	Annual monitoring undertaken, brief report prepared and results presented

21	Reduce the proportion of dense Bracken and Gorse scrub within the heathland landscape from 36% (91.28 ha) to 20% (51 ha) or less by conversion to Dry Heath, grassland or woodland	Ongoing		Biodiversity Officer	Bracken and Gorse cover reduced.
22	Resurvey plot network in 2024.	Once off		Biodiversity Officer	Monitoring survey undertaken, brief report prepared
23	Engage with the public and stakeholders in relation to heathland management issues, including the provision of interpretative signage	Ongoing		Biodiversity Officer	At least 4 public meetings organised
Wildfire Management					
24	Establish Howth Wildfire Group	Once off	2021	Consultant/ volunteer	Group established
25	Organise Wildfire training for Wildfire group and DFB	Once off	2022	Biodiversity Officer /DFB	Training organised
26	Develop Operational Wildfire plan for Howth with DFB	Once off	2021	Biodiversity Officer	Operational Plan prepared and reviewed on an annual basis
27	Manage vegetation at Strategic Management Areas	Ongoing	Yearly	Biodiversity Officer	All tall Gorse removed from wildfire breaks and vegetation kept below 30cm.
28	Include a wildfire risk assessment in planning applications	Ongoing		Planner/ Biodiversity Officer	
29	Carry out study on developing suitable access to water supply for DFB at East Mountain, Green Hollows and Bellinghams Farm	Once off		Biodiversity Officer	Study undertaken and report prepared
Irelands Eye Management Plan					
30	Strim pathways each spring and maintain these on two dates between May and September + Install string fences to guide visitors away from seabird nesting areas and south beach during the period April to August + Reinstate spring	Ongoing	yearly	Biodiversity Officer	Circular pathway cut 3 times a year and string fencing installed. Spring reinstated
31	Install a pedestrian counter close to the main landing stage on the island	Once off	2021	Biodiversity Officer	Pedestrian counter installed and visitor numbers monitored
32	Monitor impacts of visitor management on breeding gulls by recording breeding success/productivity in sample areas	Once off	2023	Biodiversity Officer	Monitoring study carried out and report prepared
33	Provide an information panel on the west pier at Howth Harbour or on the island	Once off	2022	Biodiversity Officer	Information panel installed

34	Improve landing place on east side of Martello tower by constructing a small landing stage with surfaces at high tide and low tide levels. Install hand rails on stage and steps	Once off		Tetrarch	Landing point upgraded
35	Set up a steering group for Ireland's Eye	Ongoing			Steering group established
36	Undertake clearance of litter and dumping on the beach and other areas of the island	Ongoing	yearly	Tetrarch/clean coast / local volunteers	Litter clean up carried out once year
37	Monitor vegetation change using permanent quadrats	Once off		Biodiversity Officer	Monitoring survey undertaken, brief report prepared
General habitat management					
38	Review Road verges Management at Fintans cemetery and near the Summit	Ongoing	2021	Parks and Landscape officer OPS / Biodiversity Officer	Road verge management amended
39	Review sites of interest outlined in Protection Howths Habitats by D. Doogue	Once off	2023	Biodiversity Officer	Review carried out and report prepared
Planning and Development					
40	Planner to be designated/assigned to Howth SAAO Management Meetings and form part of FCC internal team for SAAO	Ongoing	yearly	Planner	Planner assigned
41	Ensure circulation of all relevant SAAO documents and information at all pre-planning meetings	Ongoing	yearly	Planner	Number of applications provided with SAAO documents
42	Update Design Guidance document for SAAO *	Once off	2022	Planner/ Parks and Landscape officer P&GD	Guidance document updated and made available to the public
43	Planning Enforcement to be engaged where planning breaches occur within SAAO	Ongoing	yearly	Enforcement Officer	Planning enforcement carried out where relevant
44	Make submissions on behalf of the SAAO committee to planning applications within Howth SAAO	Ongoing	yearly	Chair SAAO committee	Number of submissions made by SAAO committee per year
45	Integrate wider Howth issues in SAAO	Ongoing		Chair SAAO committee	
Visitor Management					
46	Conduct a review of the footpath network with specific regard to areas of erosion, particularly at Bellinghams Farm/Redrock	Ongoing	2022	Biodiversity Officer	Pathway review carried out and recommendations implemented.
47	Upgrade pathway network where necessary	Ongoing	yearly	Parks and Landscape officer OPS	Number of pathway locations upgraded per year in report format

48	Add additional signage along pathway network and remove obsolete signage where necessary	Ongoing	yearly	Parks and Landscape officer OPS	Number of new signs installed and excessive signs removed
49	Restore heathland where damaged by excessive trampling	Ongoing	2024-2025	Biodiversity Officer	Acreage of heathland restored
50	Pedestrian Counter Balscadden	Once off	2021	Parks and Landscape officer OPS	Counter installed and number of visitors monitored
51	Balscadden beach access study	Once off	2021	Senior Engineer, Transportation	Study completed and presented to SAAO committee
52	Assess impacts of new pathways and determine what options are available to stop new pathways being created	Once off		Biodiversity Officer	Impact Assessment carried out and report prepared
53	Liaise with horse owners on a regular basis	Ongoing		Chair subcommittee	At least 4 meetings with horse owners per year
54	Carry out a study on how to address mountain biking on Howth	Once off		Biodiversity Officer	Study carried out and report prepared
Communication and outreach program					
55	Develop and implement communication and outreach program	Once off	2022-2025	Parks and Landscape officer P&GD	Communication and outreach program prepared and number of actions implemented on an annual basis
Resource Allocation					
56	Develop a detailed and costed management plan for the Howth Head SAC	Once off	2022	Biodiversity Officer	Detailed management plan prepared
57	Prepare an options study for Howth SAAO trust or equivalent model to employ Ranger, Ecologist, Herder and Landscape manager	Once off	2023	Parks and Landscape officer P&GD	Options study undertaken and report prepared
58	Economic Impact Assessment SAAO area	Once off		SAAO chair	Assessment undertaken and report prepared
59	Develop volunteering strategy	Once off	2022	SAAO chair	Strategy developed and number of actions implemented on an annual basis

**Howth Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO)
Operational Plan 2021-2025**

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	Cllr. Anthony Lavin
Elected Representative	Cllr. Jimmy Guerin
Elected Representative	Cllr. David Healy
Elected Representative	Cllr. Brian McDonagh
Elected Representative	Cllr. Aoibhinn Tormey.
Elected Representative	Cllr. Eoghan O'Brien
Elected Representative	Cllr. Joan Hopkins

4. Community Groups Representatives

Howth Pathways

Hillwatch

Howth/Sutton Community Council

Howth Peninsula Heritage Society

Local Landowners

Visit Howth Peninsula Ltd.

Conn Redmond, Dougal Cousins, Philip O'Connor & Caoimhin O Laoi

Jackie Feeley

Nessa O'Brien

Edgar Mc Loughlin

Fiona Bellingham & Ray Gilmore

Mary O'Connor

5. Specialist Environmental Groups Representatives

Irish Uplands Forum

Dublin Naturalists' Field Club

National Parks & Wildlife Service

Old Irish Goat Society

Dr. Mary Tubridy

Dr. Declan Doogue & Con Breen

position vacant

Melissa Jeuken

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

Senior Parks and Landscape Officer (Parks and Green Infrastructure Division)

Senior Executive Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Administrative Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Assistant Staff Officer (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Biodiversity Officer (Parks and Green Infrastructure Division)

Senior Executive Parks and Landscape Officer (Parks & Green Infrastructure Division)

Executive Planner (Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department)

Executive Parks and Landscape Officer (Operations Department)

Kevin Halpenny

Philip Long

Gene Griffin

Marie McManus

Hans Visser

Gemma Carr

Kathy Tuck

Cornelia Raftery

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.