

Bettystown/Laytown Beach Management Plan



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1 Introduction

1.1 Beach Management Plan

The Bettystown/Laytown Beach Management Plan (BMP) will act as the main reference document for the day to day management of the beach and will be proactively and reactively updated as and when required.

The primary issues in summary are Management Structure, Beach Wardens, Access, Parking and Traffic, Beach Safety, Community, Sports and Recreation, and the existing Bye-Laws.

1.2 Location

The Beach Management Plan covers the areas of coast adjacent to the Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington in Co. Meath.

Meath has the second shortest coastline of Ireland's coastal counties (21km), all of which is classified as soft coast. Bettystown beach is located on a 5km long beachfront which stretches from Mornington at the River Boyne, boarding County Louth to Laytown at the River Nanny.

a. Type of Beach

Laytown/Bettystown consists of a fine sand beach backing onto sand dunes.

b. Bathing Waters

Laytown / Bettystown is the only designated bathing water in the Bathing Water Regulations (2008) along this stretch of beach. The Boyne River discharges to the sea to the north of the bathing water, while the Nanny, Mosney and Delvin Rivers discharge to the sea to the south of the bathing water. The bathing area is approximately 1.5km in length and 0.6km² in area.

c. Sea Action

The dominant wave direction along the Meath coastline is from the east to south-east, and the prevailing drift therefore from south to north. Laytown and Bettystown are experiencing a net loss of sediment and the beach levels are lowering significantly.

Sand from Laytown / Bettystown is being carried north where it has been trapped by the training walls at the Boyne entrance. The holding capacity of the south training wall, which was built in the 1970s, is now limited due to the growth in the width of the beach at Mornington. As a consequence, Drogheda Port Company is required to frequently dredge the entrance channel at the Boyne Estuary to remove sand which now bypasses the end of the south training wall.

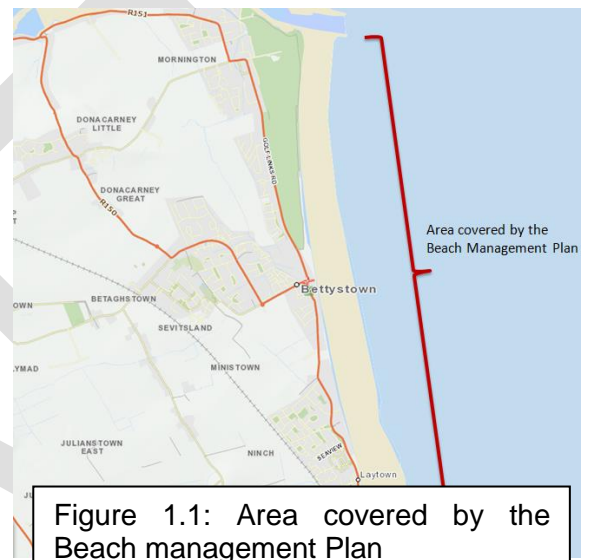


Figure 1.1: Area covered by the Beach management Plan

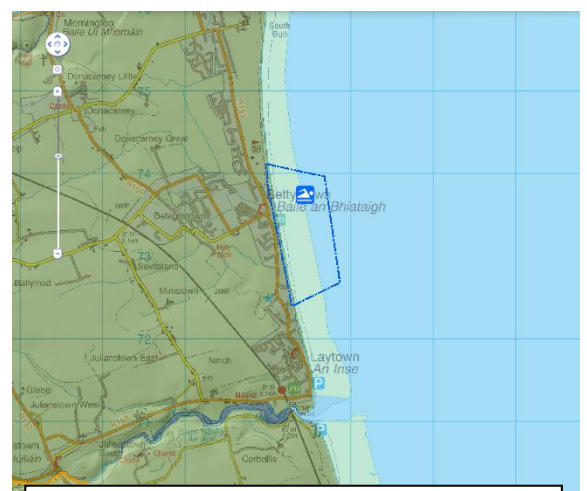


Figure 1.2: Bettystown Bathing Area (source: <http://splash.epa.ie/#>)

d. Tides

The beach is mesotidal with a tidal range between 2-4m.

e. Ownership

The dunes are privately owned. Any works to be carried out on the dunes requires the agreement of the owners.

f. Right of Way

Public Rights of Way which gives access to seashore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility, have been identified to date by Meath County Council in accordance with Section 10(2)(o) Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011. There are twelve Public Rights of Way to the Seashore in the Bettystown area, as set out in Section A14 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

1.3 Beach Access

Seaview Terrace is the primary vehicular access point onto the beach. The access is dominated by vehicular traffic as footpaths for pedestrian access are narrow. Generally accepted that the access needs to be improved and upgraded for pedestrian safety and improved streetscape.

The Foreshore Bye-Laws control/govern the traffic access to the beach and parking on the beach.

1.4 Drogheda Port Company

The area covered by the Beach Management Plan falls within the jurisdiction of Drogheda Port Company which is a commercial state port handling over 1 million tonnes of cargo annually in addition to over 700 vessel calls. The Company provides port facilities for both general freight and container services. The limits of the Port Company are defined by the Harbours (Amendment) Act 2009 but essentially run from Benhead to the south and Clougherhead to the North.

Figure 1.3: Beach Access Points



1.5 Recreational Areas

Car parking is permitted on the beach from 150m north of the Seaview Terrace beach entrance all the way south to Laytown. The densest area of car parking on the beach is directly in front of the Seaview Terrace and this also forms the main recreation area of the beach. This is also dependant on whether the tide is in or out. When the tide is out, beach users will recreate on the beach in front of the parking area however this may not be possible when the tide is in. North of the parking area is the lifeguard patrol zone during the summer months where people also recreate. The northern portion of the beach is most popular with walkers, with many people preferring the soft sand on the more southerly section of the beach around the Seaview Terrace entrance.

1.6 Car Parks

Cars presently park on Bettystown Beach. Aside from the beach itself there is no public car park in Bettystown, owned or operated by MCC, which provides car parking for beach users. MCC are therefore under pressure to accommodate all car parking on the beach.

Other large car parks in the town within walking distance of the beach include the Funtasia car park (approximately 3 minute walk), The Anchorage car park (approximately 4 minute walk) and Tesco car park (approximately 7 minute walk). These are all privately owned and have various restrictions and parking management measures in place which may deter beach users from utilising them.

An area for car parking is provided close to the Mornington Beach pedestrian access.

A temporary car park of approximately one hundred spaces is provided in Laytown every year in close proximity to the existing train station car park and next to the childrens playground. During the Laytown

Races all cars are removed from the beach, it is currently the only day of the year when parking is entirely removed from the beach.

Car parking on the beach currently costs €2.50 per day. In 2015 a Beach Warden was appointed to manage the parking on the beach for the summer period, amongst other duties.

1.7 Public Toilet Facilities

At present the only toilet facilities are located in the Arcade building in Bettystown and are accessed from the street. There is a 50c charge to use these toilets.

1.8 Infrastructure

The following infrastructure is in place on the beach;

- Coastal protection measures are present from the southern end of Laytown beach carpark and include relatively recently constructed gabion stone cages with stone toe protection present along this stretch of shoreline to the southern end of Netterville Terrace. While these measures protect the shoreline, they also exert pressure on the beach with no dry sand present in this area and extensive stretches of the underlying stone basement exposed in the intertidal zone.
- Coastal protection measures consisting of stone armour are present from Netterville Terrace as far as the southern end of Laytown Racecourse with similar pressure to the beach as outlined above.
- Boardwalks provided in the Dune System at Mornington;
- Gravel car park at Mornington.



1.9 Coastal Erosion

There is evidence of coastal erosion observed in two sections on Bettystown Beach (shown in red bracketing on Figure 1.4 below); (a) on the southern portion of the site from Railway Road slip to Laytown Racecourse and (b) on the central portion of the site from south of Bettystown (where surface water discharge was observed) to the access road to Bettystown Beach.

Figure 1.4: Coastal Erosion Areas



2 Environment and Wildlife

2.1 Natura 2000 Sites

There are 2 No. SPA's Special Protection Area (SPA) and 1 No. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located on the Laytown / Bettystown Beach. This includes the following;

- Boyne Estuary SPA;
- Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC; and
- River Nanny Estuary and shore SPA.

The implication of the SAC and SPA designations in terms of managing the beach is that Meath County Council, as lessee and landowner of the beach, has a responsibility to protect features of floristic, faunistic, geological or physiographical interest.

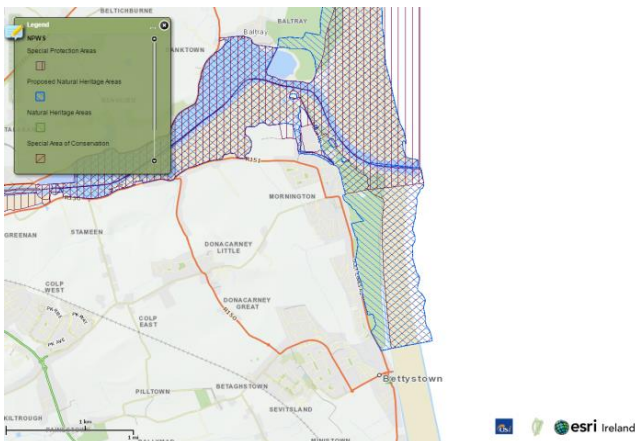


Figure 2.1: Boyne Estuary SPA & Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (© NPWS)



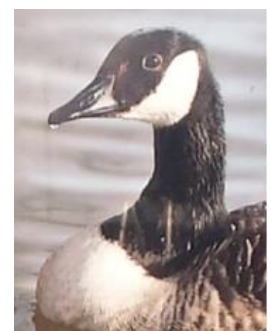
Figure 2.2: Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC & River Nanny Estuary and shore SPA (© NPWS)

2.1.1 Boyne Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and River Nanny Estuary and shore SPA

The Boyne Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and River Nanny Estuary and shore SPA have been designated Special Protection Areas under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). The Boyne Estuary supports nationally important numbers of many wintering birds including Shelduck, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover and Sanderling.

Many water birds are winter visitors to our shores. They migrate here over thousands of kilometres from their breeding grounds further north. Light bellied Brent Geese and Knot are two such species that fly south over the winter period to less harsh environments where food is more readily available.

Estuaries provide rich habitats for many wildlife species and have an abundance of invertebrates (animals without backbones) such as worms, snails and crustaceans that provide food for bird communities. The Boyne Estuary supports intertidal



Brent Geese



Golden Plover



Oystercatcher

mudflats and saltmarsh habitats. These are important areas where flocks of birds gather to feed and roost.

2.1.2 Boyne Coast and Estuary Special Area of Conservation

The Boyne Coast and Estuary is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC includes most of the tidal sections of the River Boyne, intertidal sand and mud flats, salt marshes, marginal grassland, and the stretch of coast from Bettystown to Termonfeckin that includes the Mornington and Baltray sand dune systems.

The Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC is a coastal site that supports a high diversity of habitats. A total of eight habitat types seen here including the estuary, tidal mudflats, embryonic shifting dunes, marram dunes, fixed dunes, Salicornia mud, and both Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadow are protected under Annex 1 of the European Union Habitats Directive because they are rare and at risk of being lost or damaged.

2.2 Sand Dunes



Marram Grass



Common bird's-foot-trefoil



Small Blue Butterfly *Cupido Minimus*

Dunes are dynamic ecosystems that support an array of plant, bird and animal life. Marram grass is the main dune building species. It helps bind loose, windblown sand into ridges and dunes. This allows other plant species to begin to take root and grow. The more stable areas of dunes support a high diversity of plant species including common bird's-foot-trefoil, wild thyme, lady's bedstraw and wild pansy along with a variety of grasses, mosses and lichens. Many of these species are important food sources for butterflies and bees that live on the sand dunes.

Although created and shaped by natural processes, sand dunes require conservation measures to protect them from erosion caused by human activity. Public use and trampling by horses can wear away grass cover on the dunes allowing the wind to further erode the fragile dune system. If this continues much of the existing sand dunes will disappear along with the wonderful plant and animal life they support.

The dune system in Bettystown is National Parks and Wildlife System protected but most are in private ownership. During periods of very good weather, reports have been received of anti-social behaviour particularly in the vicinity of the dunes.

The installation of a timber boardwalk through the dune system was completed in 2014. It was installed to minimise the paths through the dune system by encouraging the use of this designated path to the beach thereby assisting in the protection of the dune system.

2.2.1 NPWS Ranger Contact details

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), contact details is National Parks and Wildlife Service, Government Buildings, Kilcarn, Navan, Co. Meath Tel: 076-1002634.

2.2.2 Wildlife Monitoring

The NPWS undertake a number of regular surveys of wildlife on Bettystown / Laytown Beach including:

- Marine biotope classification
- Saltmarsh

Historical research and monitoring information is also available for the following:

- Skate population
- Dog welks

For further information on any of these please contact the Senior NPWS Ranger and/or MCC heritage officer.

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3 Management of the Beach

3.1 Management Structure

The implementation of the Beach Management Plan will require the successful coordination of tasks and roles through the management system put in place. Key to the new management system is the Beach Manager. The Beach Manager is a representative from Meath County Council who will manage the resources which are made available from Meath County Council for the operation of the beach. The Beach Manager will be the first point of contact from MCC regarding any issues that may arise from the Beach Wardens, Life Guards, local groups or communities, or from the general public. The will be the key contact for the beach, to ensure effective communication is maintained between key stakeholders.

3.2 Proposed Structure

The proposed management structure for Bettystown Beach is shown in Figure 3.1.

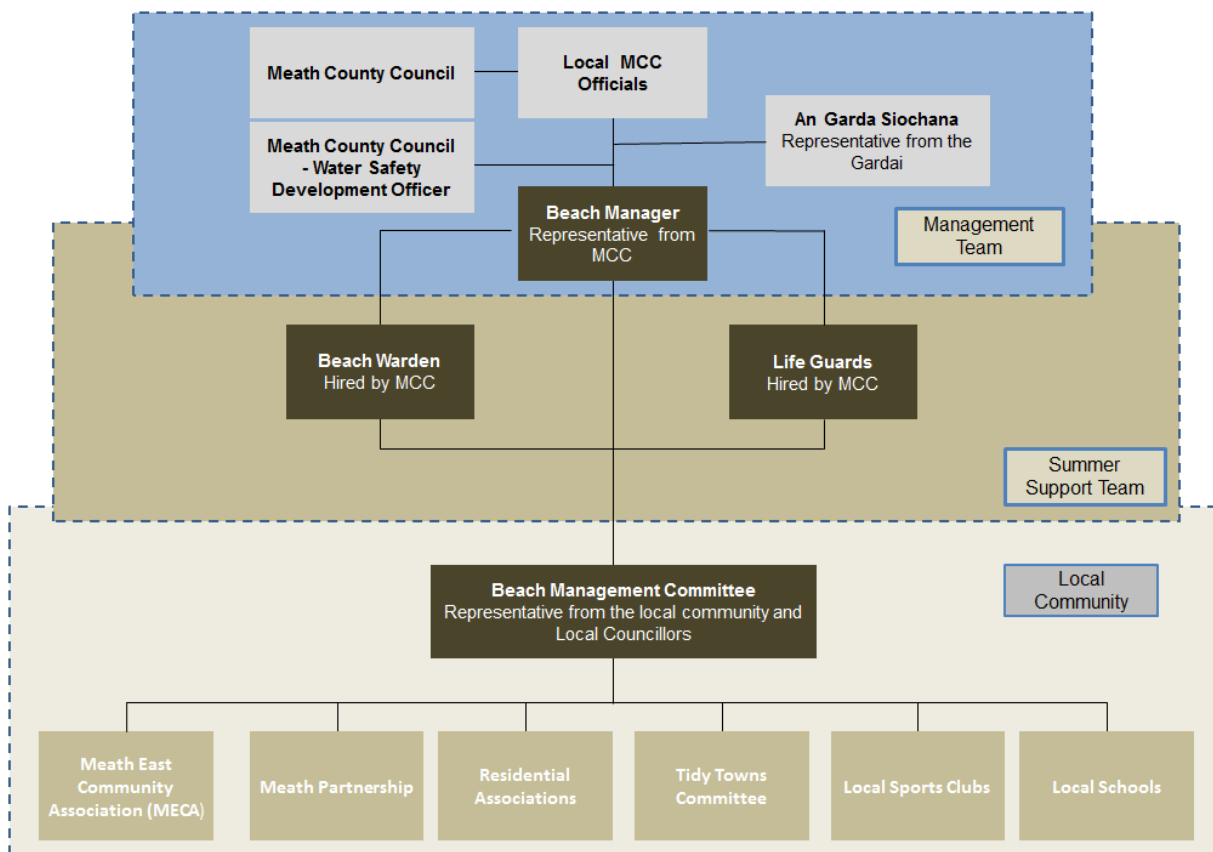


Figure 3.1: Bettystown/Laytown Beach Management Structure

3.3 Beach Manager

The Beach Manager will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the beach. The Beach Manager will be a representative from Meath County Council. Whilst the role does not require a full-time position, the person will need to perform beach management functions throughout the year and tasks including;

- Implementation of the Beach Management Plan.
- Control of budgets where allocated
- Hiring / Coordination with the Beach Wardens.
- Hiring / Coordination with the Life Guards.
- Liaison with the local community.
- Attending meetings with the local councillors / Beach Management Committee.
- The licensing of public events.
- Coordinate with the Gardai regarding any anti-social behaviour reported on the beach.

3.4 Beach Wardens

Beach Wardens are employed by Meath County Council for the summer bathing season. Beach Wardens have a number of different responsibilities, including duties to be carried out on a daily basis, enforcing the Meath County Council Foreshore bye Laws 2010, coordinating the traffic management, and ensuring that litter management is provided. A list of duties for the Beach Wardens includes the following;

Table 3.1: Duties of the Beach Wardens

Daily Duties	Traffic Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To oversee and ensure the observance of the Fore Shore Bye-Laws • Manages the assigned area in respect of all activities and enforces same • To act as a first point of contact with the public with particular emphasis on the provision of tourism related advice and guidance. • To remove/arrange for the removal of hazards from the beach. • To carry out any other instructions which may be given by the line manager/supervisor from time to time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On good days, in the interest of Beach Safety and traffic Management, cone off the entrance to the beach. • To ensure the implementation of the Traffic and Parking Bye-Laws in the coastal area including the issue of on the spot fines.
Beach Bye-Laws	Litter / Animal Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with the local Gardai • prosecutions and attending Court • To enforce the Casual Trading Bye-Laws for the Laytown/Bettystown area in association with the local Gardai. • To meet with and act as liaison to Community Groups as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist in the implementation of the County Meath Litter Plan including the issue of on the spot fines, the initiation of prosecutions, etc. • To ensure that litter bins on the beach are emptied, as required and maintained in a tidy condition. • To work as part of the local authority's regulatory/enforcement machinery including the carrying out of inspections, the issue of oral and written instruction, etc. This will cover such areas (but not exclusively) as dog and horse control, indiscriminate dumping, unauthorised skips, abandoned vehicles, etc.

3.5 Beach Management Committee

The Beach Management Committee is the voice of the local community and will oversee all aspects of the management of the beach. It will comprise of 15 members of the local community.

The activities of the Beach Management Committee will involve:

- Coordination with the Beach Manager regarding Beach issues/concerns.
- Coordination with sports/local groups and teams.
- Coordination with schools.
- Working with the local communities
- Developing new sports and events for the beach.
- Attendance at public meetings to listen to any concerns / issues that the public may have.
- Elect a chairperson to whom members of the public can directly address with queries.

3.6 Beach Resources

Bettystown Beach currently has a limited range of resources to offer beach users. On the beach itself, aside from the ability to park on the beach, there are no resources available to beach users. This lack of resources is reflective of the culture which has developed on the beach itself which centres around beach users being self-sufficient by bringing packed lunches picnics etc. with them in their cars.

There are a greater range of resources provided a short walk from the beach entrance at Seaview Terrace in the form of take aways, retail stores, public houses, a hotel as well as the Funtasia amusement centre.

3.7 An Garda Síochána

The local Gardai are vital in the management of the beach, as they will be able to enforce the law and provide support to the Beach Wardens and Lifeguards should the need arise.

In order to ensure a strong line of communication between the Beach Wardens / Lifeguards and the local Gardai, the Gardai shall meet with the Beach Wardens and Life Guards at the start of the summer season. This meeting will be arranged and coordinated by the Beach Manager.

A communication plan will be agreed with the Gardai so that the wardens and lifeguards know who to contact should an incident occur on the beach.

3.8 Lifeguards

Life Guards are employed by Meath County Council. Two Life Guards are on duty at any one time and operate on weekends during the month of June and on a seven day week basis during July and August. All the lifeguards employed by Meath County Council must have a current Irish Water Safety, National Beach Lifeguard Award or equivalent qualification as recognised by the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS).

Lifeguards have a number of different responsibilities, as indicated in the Table 3.2;

Table 3.2: Duties of the Beach Lifeguards

Daily Duties	Hazards / Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check weather for appropriate flag to be erected • Check tide • Wear official lifeguard clothing that is provided by the County Council at all times when on duty • Put out Temporary Signage • Keep the assigned area clear of all hazard and remove same as required e.g. broken glass etc • Check all signs and life saving equipment on beach daily • Reports to MCC on the state of all rescue equipment, facilities and supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority must be given to the Swimmers / First Aid • Warns the public of dangerous conditions and post warning devices
Beach Bye-Laws	Water Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains state and local bye-laws and regulations • Investigates complaints and accidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach Patrol must take place regularly • Supervises and assists in rescue operations • Administers medical aid and performs cardio-pulmonary resuscitation • Coordinates with and requests assistance from other agencies as required • Log all accident and incident reports in book provided

3.9 Complaints Procedure

Complaints about the beach, its services, or incidents on the beach may be received from members of the public by the Beach Manager, Beach Wardens, Lifeguards, or other Officials of Meath County Council.

Complaints may be verbal or written, but in all cases should be logged. The Beach Manager, who investigates and retains a record of all complaints, should then be supplied with details of the complaint.

The Beach Manager will pass the complaint on to the appropriate Office at Meath County Council dependant on the nature of the complaint. This will then be investigated and the complainant responded to.

The Beach Manager monitors complaints and if appropriate action may be taken to address the issue after consultation with other officers as required.

3.10 Risk Assessments

All events and activities on the beach must have a risk assessment¹. The risk assessment should consider all aspects such as health and safety, environmental and welfare issues. MCC organised events are to be signed off by the Beach Manager. Any MCC activity or event that does not have a signed-off risk assessment will not be permitted.

Risk Assessments for other events not organised by MCC, should be prepared by the applicant and submitted in accordance with the event management guidelines.

Meath County Councils current Risk Assessment template is found in the Appendix².

The Beach Manager / MCC will be responsible for preparing a generic risk assessment form that can be provided to others for information.

¹ MCC finalised Event Management Guidelines in 2016.

² The Risk Assessment should cover health and safety, environmental and welfare issues.

4 Beach Cleaning

4.1 Introduction

The importance of a clean environment cannot be over emphasised. There is of course a duty of care in terms of public health and safety, but alongside this are the considerations of environment sustainability, and of course support for the local economy. At Bettystown / Laytown the local community welcomes visitors, with visitors taking the degree of cleanliness into account when making decisions on whether to visit, and whether to return.

4.2 Pollution Incident – who to contact

Occasionally an unusual quantity of waste or pollutant appears on the beach. Under the Sea Pollution Act 1999 (as amended), Meath County Council prepared an Oil Spill/NHS Pollution Response Plan. A draft plan for County Meath has been completed and submitted to the Coast Guard for comment and will be amended accordingly as necessary.

In the instance of chemical pollutant, unidentified waster or shipping waste, members of the public are asked to contact Meath County Council Environmental Department as a matter of urgency.

4.3 Fly Tipping – who to contact

Fly tipping is defined as ‘the illegal deposit of any waste onto land i.e. waste dumped or tipped on a site with no licence to accept waste’.

Fly tipping waste at Bettystown / Laytown Beach generally consists of large items of rubbish that are dumped illegally instead of being disposed of properly at a landfill site or recycling facility.

Uncontrolled waste disposal can be hazardous to the public, especially when the waste consists of drums of toxic material, asbestos sheeting, syringes or used drugs. There can be damage to watercourses and underlying soil quality from the dumped waste. Fly tipping also looks unsightly and this can harm investment into an area, whether through visitors or local businesses.

If fly tipping at Bettystown / Laytown Beach is reported to MCC by street sweepers, beach cleaners, park wardens or members of the public, it is aimed to be removed within 48 hours.

Investigation takes place to try to identify the fly tipper, which if successful can lead to criminal proceedings.

Responsibility for fly tipping procedures lies with Meath County Council Environmental Department.

4.4 Bathing Water

In accordance with the Bathing Water Regulations (2008), Meath County Council monitors the bathing water at Bettystown Beach on a weekly basis, from the end of May until September.

The results of testing of individual samples are displayed through the bathing season for public information purposes. The results of the Water Quality are displayed on a notice board at the entrance to the beach on Seaview Terrace by MCC Environmental Department. The sample quality status is a comparison of the individual test results with the EPA classification standards below.

Classification Standards for Coastal & Transitional Waters

Parameter	Excellent	Good	Sufficient	Poor
Intestinal Enterococci	<100	101-200	201-250	>250
Escherichia coli	<250	251-500	501-1,000	>1,000

While the quality of an individual sample will be determined in this way, the annual quality assessment will be based on statistical assessment over 4 bathing seasons, in accordance with the EU Bathing Water Directive (Directive 2006/7/EC) and Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008.

Assessing Water Quality Status

The water quality of designated bathing waters is assessed in accordance with Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 as follows.

For coastal and transitional waters

Parameter	Excellent quality	Good quality	Sufficient quality
Intestinal Enterococci (cfu/100ml)	100 (*)	200 (*)	185 (**)
Escherichia coli (cfu/100ml)	250 (*)	500 (*)	500 (**)

(*) based on a 95-percentile evaluation over 4 bathing water seasons

(**) based on a 90-percentile evaluation over 4 bathing water seasons

Further information on bathing water quality can be found at <http://splash.epa.ie/#> or by contacting Meth County Council Environmental Section (046-9097200).

4.5 Litter

Beach cleaning and bin emptying is the responsibility of MCC. Cleaning of the beach commences in April/May – in advance of the bathing season. Bettystown Beach is swept during the summer period; at weekends and where possible during the week between July and August. However this is both weather and staff availability dependent. Cleaning involves occasional usage of a specialised machine. Litter is removed however as a rule seaweed is not removed from the beach. Between September and May the beach is subject to responsive cleans only.

There are 4 big belly bins at the Square and Beach Entrance in Bettystown, together with bins at the beach. The existing bins are supplemented with wheelie bins as required during the busy periods.

The Council provide a small funding stream to both Julianstown Community District Group and Meath East Community Association (MECA) to support their sterling efforts in litter management on the beaches and the Dunes Areas.

4.6 Recycling

There are currently no recycling facilities at Bettystown / Laytown Beach for glass or aluminium.

4.7 Dog Fouling

Dog owners are responsible for cleaning up dog faeces. It is illegal for a person to permit a dog under their control to foul and fail to remove the faeces, as per Section 22 of the Litter Pollution Act. All areas of Bettystown Beach, plus all adjoining public areas are covered by this legislation.

This law is enforced by Meath County Council, who regularly monitor the beach, particularly during the summer season by the Beach Wardens. Non-compliance with the Foreshore Bye Laws 2010 can result in receiving a fine of €75, which can be administered by MCC officials and the Beach Wardens.

4.8 Community Clean Ups.

A number of voluntary groups organise beach clean-ups at Bettystown / Laytown. Should a community group wish to undertake such a clean up the following will be required.

- Core information from the organisers: contact details, date, and duration of proposed beach clean
- A Risk Assessment
- Public Liability insurance
- Indemnity Insurance to MCC
- Agreed location for filled rubbish bags to be placed for collection

Meath County Council aims to support such clean ups wherever it can, and can assist by:

- Providing gloves and rubbish bags – available from the Beach Manager
- Loan litter pickers – available from the Beach Manager
- Helping to promote the event through media contacts – Meath County Council Communications Office
- Collections the filled rubbish bags and arranging their disposal

The Beach Manager is the main point of contact for Community Clean Ups relating to Bettystown Beach.

5 Access and Parking

5.1 Beach Access

Seaview Terrace is the primary access point onto the beach for both vehicles and pedestrians. Figure 5.1 illustrates the location of Seaview Terrace. Photo 5.1 shows a ground level view of the beach access.

Figure 5.1: Existing Beach Access in Context of Bettystown (© Google Streetview)



Photo 5.1: Existing Beach Access at Seaview Terrace



The current beach access is constrained in terms of space with a limited cross section existing between the property boundaries on Seaview Terrace. The existing width (including footpaths) varies from approximately 7m at its narrowest point to around 8.5m at the widest point approaching the beach.

A second entrance is provided further south at Delaney's, which has been opened during very busy periods. This is usually controlled by the Gardai. This entrance is closed the rest of the year, other than when opened by the Gardai.

5.2 Beach Parking

The MCC Foreshore Bye-Laws (2010) allows parking within a designated area on the beach. At present this permits vehicles to access and park on the beach all year round in the area between River Nanny in Laytown to a point 150m north of the Seaview Terrace in Bettystown. The majority of motorists currently park within a 150m long area to the north of Seaview Terrace entrance. North of this point is a lifeguard area and also a zone that is safer for younger children to play due to the restrictions on car parking. Parking on the beach is pay and display and is charged at a rate of €2.50 per visit.

Photo 5.2: Existing Parking on Bettystown Beach



5.3 Parking Management

For the majority of the year the number of vehicles parking on the beach is low. On a typical, dry, warm, summers day there may be up to several hundred vehicles parked on the beach. During periods of exceptionally warm weather however, there may be a demand of over a thousand vehicles on the beach.

The primary issue associated with these times of exceptionally high parking demand is the safety of beach users, children in particular, interacting with vehicles on the beach. Traffic congestion in the town was also flagged as a significant issue when the beach is this busy.

The Beach Wardens manage the traffic on the beach while they are on duty, using cones to direct traffic as in shown in Photo 5.2 below. There is not a set area for parking, and it is generally it is up to the vehicle owner to park where they think is suitable. During busy periods Beach Wardens are stationed at the entrance to beach to keep traffic moving. This is to ensure that the entrance to the beach is kept clear.

Photo 5.2: Bettystown Access with cones set out by the Beach Wardens



The entrance to the car park has been closed previously when MCC/Gardai have considered the beach to be at capacity. Motorists have been sent away from the entrance to the beach.

6 Bye-Laws

6.1 Byelaws

A number of restrictions and regulations apply to the beach and adjacent areas at Bettystown Beach. The relevant provisions are the following:

- Meath County Council Foreshore Bye-Laws 2010
- Litter Pollution Act, 1997

6.2 Foreshore Byelaws

Meath County Council Foreshore Byelaws commenced on 7th April 2010. They cover the control of animals (dogs and horses) and parking allowed on the foreshore. Also controlled are the littering and the use of watercraft including jet skis and power boats.

6.3 Enforcement

Preventing an offence in the first instance is the most effective way of enforcing byelaws and policies. Signage around the beach that clearly indicates to the public the activities that are permitted and prohibited should be maintained.

If the Beach Manager, Wardens, or Lifeguards identify a member of the public who has chosen to ignore a restriction then that person's attention should be drawn to the restriction. Generally an explanation suffices and the offender adheres to the request. In other instances where the offender refuses to comply the officer should obtain as much information as possible (including name or address if this can be achieved) in order that appropriate action can be taken. If this fails any information supplied to the Beach Manager, who collated and monitors details of offenders, and who will liaise with the council's legal advisors to pursue action as appropriate.

There is a 75 euro fine for infringement of the foreshore bye-laws by order of Meath County Council. If the fine issued under the Bye Laws is not paid, a maximum court fine of 3,000 euro can be imposed.

Confrontational situations should be avoided and the Gardai should be contacted.

7 Sports and Recreation

7.1 Background

One of the key objectives of the Beach Management Plan is to enable as many users as possible to access the beach for their activities, whilst avoiding conflict with other users, and without compromising the health and safety of other beach users.

7.2 Incidents

In the event of an incident, refer to the MCC Procedure for the Management of Incident Reporting and Investigation.

7.3 Activity Management Techniques

A number of techniques are used to enable the safe use of the beach by as many users as possible. A key tool is the zoning of activities on and around the beach in consultation with a user group. Prohibiting an activity is rarely successful, with the Beach Manager often lacking the resources to fully enforce the prohibition, and therefore the prohibition being regularly flouted, and resulting in a breakdown in communication between beach users and the Beach Management Team.

7.4 Zoning

Zoning has been found to be an effective tool, in conjunction with encouraging the formation of local clubs, and self-policing of activities. A number of activities are currently managed through zoning on the beach. Zoning may include both spatial and timing criteria, and full details can be found with the details for each specific activity.

7.5 Risk Assessments

Please refer to Appendix 1, for details of the Risk Assessment Procedure³.

7.6 Monitoring

Successful management of the beach at Bettystown requires zoning and other arrangements to be reviewed on at least an annual basis, with consideration given to any incidents or complaints, as well as the general working of the arrangement.



³ The Risk Assessment should cover health and safety, environmental and welfare issues.

7.7 Existing Events

Activities on the beach include sandsculpting and kitesurfing. Laytown / Bettystown has hosted the National Sand Sculpting and Sandcastle Competition in recent years. Laytown Strand Race is a horse racing event which takes place annually on Laytown Strand.

There are a number of existing large events held on the beach each year. Large events currently held during the year include:

- Sand yachting – held Feb/March
- Cricket Ireland Competition (held midsummer)
- Sand Castle Competition – held July
- Laytown Races –September. During this event parking is allowed on local fields and stewards are organised. Beach is closed to vehicle traffic on the day of the races.
- European Land Sailing Championship – September 2017.

7.8 Events – Application Procedure for Holding Events⁴

Requests to hold various activities primarily at Bettystown Beach are processed by the Council and only granted once certain criteria are met. A beach event application form is required. There is a Schedule of Conditions to be met when such an event is organised;

- Notification of the event to the council at least 2 weeks before the proposed event date(s)
- Confirmation that the event is beach related.
- Assurance that the event will not cause a nuisance or pose a danger to other beach users.
- Submission of a map showing the beach area affected by the event.
- Submission of an adequate safety plan and evidence of consultation with the emergency services i.e. Ambulance Service, Gardai etc.
- Submission of a traffic management plan to facilitate access to and egress from the event site
- Assurance that any litter / rubbish generated by the event is properly disposed of and the beach is left in a clean state.
- Indication of expected attendance.
- Co-operation on the event day(s) with the Area Engineer / Area Administrator or other Authorised Person and comply with any instructions given



Application Form for holding an event on Meath County Council Property or Public Spaces (for events with less than 5,000 people attending)

1. Name of Event Organiser(s): _____
2. Address for correspondence: _____

3. Contact no. for Event Organiser(s): _____
4. Location for proposed event: _____
5. Date for the proposed event: _____
6. Time for the proposed event: _____
7. Brief summary of proposed event: _____

8. Is there a road closure required? Yes No

Please submit the following in support of your application to hold an event:

- Completed "Event Management Plan" for the proposed event, including the names of the people for the relevant key appointments. Please refer to Meath County Council's Event Management Guidelines.
- Copy of the relevant insurance for the proposed event.
- Traffic management plan (if relevant). Events involving road closures or significant traffic disruption MUST also be notified to Meath County Council at least 8 weeks in advance of the event.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Event Organiser

⁴ MCC finalised Event Management Guidelines in 2016.

- Payment of fee as per application form.
- Payment of a contribution (if applicable) towards the cost of the works carried out by the Council to facilitate the event.

7.9 Events – Risk Assessments for all activities

All events on the beach must have a risk assessment undertaken and signed off by the Beach Manager. Any event that does not have a signed-off risk assessment will not be permitted. The risk assessment should cover health and safety, environmental and welfare issues.

The Beach Manager will be responsible for preparing a generic risk assessment form that can be provided to others for information.

7.10 Formation of Clubs

Local users are often aware of the pressures on their activity, and are happy to form a club or association. This enables easier communication between the users and the Beach Manager, a stronger “voice” for the activity, and the potential for the club to “self-police” their activity to ensure compliance with zoning requirements.

Bodies interested in forming a club are advised to contact the Meath County Council Community Section, on 046-9097400, for advice, assistance and grant aid.

7.11 Commerce – Casual Trading Licence.

There are six casual trading pitches licensed each year for Bettystown/ Laytown Beach covering the area from the disused public toilet at Laytown to the Lady’s Finger at Mornington and covering the period 1st May to the 30th September. Licences are not transferrable from one year to the next and must be applied for each year following a public notice seeking expressions of interest.

There are a number of MCC officials who are appointed Authorised Officers under Section 10 of the Casual Trading Act 1995 and article 13 of the Casual Trading Bye Laws 1997 for the Laytown/Bettystown Municipality District.

7.12 Fishing

Fishing licences are required as per existing Irish State legislation, with no other permits required.

The Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) is a Department of the Marine Initiative designed to breathe life back into Towns / Villages affected by economic downturn. There are six FLAG areas in the Country and including one for the coastal counties of Meath, Louth and North Dublin and for each such area an integrated local development strategy has to be prepared.

8 Beach Safety

8.1 Main Hazards

Although Bettystown / Laytown Beach is relatively safe, incidents do occur as a result of the public use of the sea and adjoining area. Experience has shown that there are four main categories of hazards at Bettystown / Laytown Beach and these are as follows:

- Vehicles on the beach.
- The wind and its effect on both the sea and on inflatables
- The sea at low tide and the distance from the Life Guards
- The use of personal watercraft amongst bathers

8.2 Lifeguards – Risk Assessment for Monitoring and Patrolling of the Beach

A comprehensive Risk Assessment for monitoring and patrolling exists for Bettystown Beach. This covers the following topics:

- Working in Changing Environments
- Adverse Weather Conditions
- Raising and Lowering Flags
- Contact with jet skis, leisure craft, surfboards
- Violence and Aggression
- Child Protection
- Jellyfish / Weaver Fish
- Presence of Animals
- Managing the Needle Stick Injury
- Manual Handling / People Handling
- Young / inexperienced persons
- Bullying at work
- Expose to plants / insects
- Biological hazards

8.3 Emergency Action Plan⁵

The lifeguard service has a detailed Emergency Action Plan. This EAP covers procedures should either a minor or major incident occur.

8.4 Accidents – First Aid

First aid packs are available at lifeguard station when in operation. The Beach Wardens have a first aid box in their vehicle, however this is mainly for employee use. The Beach Wardens are not trained first aiders.

8.5 Lost Children

When the beach is busy during the main bathing season young children may stray away from their parents. Whilst the beach warden / lifeguard service is operating at the beach the wardens / lifeguards will usually be approached by parents, and will then assist in the search for the lost child.

⁵ The need for an EAP has been brought to the attention of MCC. This will be prepared by MCC.

If a child should become lost when the beach warden / lifeguarding service is not in operation the emergency services should be contacted.

8.6 Lost Possessions

The public may bring all types of possessions onto the beach, and in some instances may lose wallets and car keys.

If the Beach Warden or MCC staff member is approached by a member of the public advising they have lost such an item they may be able to assist in a search. Members of the public are able to leave their details with the Beach Wardens / MCC official so that an item may be forwarded on if found.

The Beach Manager retains all lost property found on the beach and handed in, and logs valuable items.

8.7 Objects on the Beach

In the event of an emergency the public in the vicinity should be moved to a safe distance and others should be prevented from entering the location.

If the object is anticipated being on the beach for any length of time temporary signage should be used at the beach access points to warn the public.

If the object is suspicious or hazardous it should not be approached or handled, and the emergency services should be contacted on 999 or 112.

9 Communications/Signage

9.1 Signage

There is a large amount of signage in and around Bettystown / Laytown relating to the beach.

This broadly falls into the following categories:

9.1.1 Information boards

There are 2 large information boards located near the beach, at the Bettystown and Mornington Access. These contain the following information:

- A map of the beach with the recreational/activity zone details marked on.
- Wildlife information.
- Details about the Blue Flag and Seaside Awards.
- An outline of do's and don'ts relating to the beach.
- Beach Safety advice.
- Results of Bathing Water Sampling.

These signs are reviewed annually and updated as necessary by the MCC Environment Department. Figure 9.1 shows the existing signs at the Bettystown Access.



Figure 9.1: Existing Signs at Bettystown Access

9.2 Information Signs

There are a number of other notices and signs adjacent to the beach, generally relating to laws, byelaws and other restrictions and regulations. These signs are strategically placed as close as possible to the area concerned.

The bye laws are provided on a large sign at Bettystown Beach.

9.3 Finger posts

There are finger posts located around the town centre. These are aimed at pedestrians.

10 Contact List

Name	Organisation	Role	Phone	Email

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Appendix



Appendix 1 Meath County Council Complaints Procedure

Meath County Council is committed to delivering the best possible care to our customers. Above all else, people expect and deserve courtesy, sensitivity, a unique response to their needs and the minimum delay when contacting their County Council. However, it is recognized that there may be, from time to time, cause for complaint.

You have the right to complain if you feel:

- You have been unfairly treated by Meath County Council
- That a service to which you are entitled is not being provided
- That a service, that is being provided, is inadequate
- That a decision made with regard to you is wrong or did not take into consideration all of the facts
- That a request for service / information has been ignored.

This Complaints Handling Procedure aims to ensure that any and all complaints are dealt with in a consistent, equitable and transparent manner.

Customer Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - A customer who is dissatisfied with a service from Meath County Council should make contact with the relevant department. As far as possible, we will try to resolve any issues at this stage.

Stage 2 - If issues are not resolved at Stage 1, a customer may lodge a formal complaint. Complaints should be submitted in writing or by email to the Complaints Officer, Corporate Services, Meath County Council, County Hall, Navan, County Meath or by email to customerservice@meathcoco.ie

Stage 3 - Complaints will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.

Stage 4 - Customer complaints will be investigated by the Complaints Officer.

- A response will issue within four weeks of receipt of a complaint. Where this is not possible, an interim reply will issue setting out the reasons for the delay.
- Where a complaint relates to a specific staff member, that staff member will be consulted in relation to the complaint.
- Where a mistake has been made, an apology and explanation will be offered and every effort made to rectify the matter.
- Where a complaint highlights deficiencies in our processes or procedures, every effort will be made to remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

Stage 5 - If you are unhappy with the response you receive to your complaint, you can refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. By law, the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about any of our administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction on our behalf. The

Ombudsman provides a free, impartial and independent dispute resolution service. The contact details for the Office of the Ombudsman are:

Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2
Tel: Lo-call 1890 22 30 30
Tel: 01 639 5600
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie
Web: www.ombudsman.ie

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Appendix 2 Meath County Council Risk Assessment Template

Risk Assessment						RA No.	
Section / Location:						Revision No.	
Description of the job / task / activity:							
Hazard and Risk	Risk Group	Current Risk		Control Measures	Responsible Person	Revised Risk	
		L x S	RR			L x S	RR

