
Balscadden Bay, Howth, Co Dublin

The Case for Public Management of Balscadden Beach and Amenity Area

Development plan - February 2011



PART I - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to clearly set out a case for the public control of Balcadden Bay, which is one of Howth's best amenities. We also aim at succinctly capturing the past, the present and particularly the future of this beautiful place.

Balcadden Bay has an illustrious history and with appropriate and careful management it can be further enhanced thus continuing its role as a vital element in the lives of Howth residents and visitors alike.

Unfortunately as we write this report there are major problems with respect to access and maintenance to the beach and an imminent threat of private interference with the use of the amenity. These issues urgently need to be addressed.

We write with the determination that this report will form the basis of discussion to agree upon a strategy for the future management and control of Balcadden Bay. We wish to consult and collaborate with all the key stakeholders: residents, users, visitors and the various statutory bodies including Fingal County Council, Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Dublin Tourism, Fingal Tourism in this process.

The plans outlined in this report are written with the core intention of maintaining this valuable amenity and also to enhance it in a sustainable way for current and future generations. It is important to note that this area is protected under the *Special Amenity Area Order* (See Appendix A), thus highlighting that its inherent value has already been identified.

We, *Friends of Balcadden Bay* ("FOBB") affiliated to Howth Sutton Community Council (whose members include over 45 local community organisations representing many of the people on the peninsula) ask you to join with us in claiming this wonderful amenity for the enjoyment of all.

II. Location - Where is Balcadden Bay?

Balcadden Bay is an area in Howth that lies at the Southern end of the East Pier. It is a small quiet safe swimming area few minutes that is situated within a walk of Howth village.



It is accessed off the east side of Balscadden Road opposite the site of the former Edros Community Centre. Access is via concrete steps (approx. 60 in total). The beach is of shingle, stone and sand and extends in length to approx. 150 metres. The remains of a small concrete jetty and boat winch (from a former water skiing club) and an extensive concrete platform/walkway with the remains of an old boat / storage shed and shelter area is still evident there.

Years ago Balscadden Beach was a hive of activity in the community for locals swimming there, children learning to swim, life saving classes for young adults, and for fishermen earning their living. It was a place that was used daily and enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

FOBB understands from anecdotal evidence that Dublin Corporation maintained the Right of Ways during those times.

III. FOBB - Friends of Balscadden Bay

Friends of Balscadden Bay was set up by a group of concerned residents and visitors who want to see this beautiful amenity improved and preserved for the enjoyment of all the local people and visitors to the area to enjoy. The beach continues to be used daily by swimmers, and non-swimmers who just love to go there to relax, walk on the beach or early in the morning to watch the sunrise.

FOBB see Balscadden Bay as the “gem” in the heart of Howth. It still remains a beautiful, picturesque, quiet and safe swimming area, but over the years has become less attractive and its usage has declined mainly due to the poor Right of Way (the condition of the steps which are very steep and difficult to use) and the perception of poor quality for bathing. The completion of the Dublin Bay Wastewater Treatment Project has now ensured a huge enhancement in the water quality.

IV. FOBB's Vision for the Bay

4.1 Universal Access:

The immediate removal of the inappropriate Fence/Gate at the entry point to the Right of Way to the beach is paramount as is the repair of the concrete steps and installation of safety hand-rails.

In the longer-term we envisage a simple and attractive manifestation of the Right of Way to the beach. The exact form of this access needs to be determined taking on board issues of disability access, constructability and attractiveness etc. and would incorporate some form of ramp for wheelchair users and buggies.

4.2 Cleanliness:

The beach needs to be maintained to an acceptable level of cleanliness to allow residents and visitors to enjoy the amenity on a daily basis.

A cleanliness regime could include:

- 3- 4 user friendly bins on the beach that can be emptied easily
- The installation of a number of recycling bins at the top of the steps.
- An awareness campaign assisted by FOBB to encourage users of the beach to recycle and dispose of their litter properly.
- Incorporation by FCC of Balscadden Beach into their litter control programme with the possibility of giving employment to someone locally.

4.3 Improvement Programme:

In conjunction with the various stakeholders agree an improvement programme to include:

- Install 2 lifebuoy steel frames to hold lifebuoys permanently. Rebuild the existing jetty and install a ladder on it.
- Remove all debris and clear cement platform.
- Install a floating pontoon in the bay during the Summer months.
- Build a storage shed or install a storage container on the platform to store swimming and lifesaving equipment. FOBB wish to see the beach life-guarded during the summer months with swimming and lifesaving classes reintroduced for the benefit of the community.
- Right of Way to Fitzer's swimming area to be reinstated and maintained, so swimmers can have access to the rock to dive from to swim back to the beach.
- A ladder and diving board to be installed at Fitzer's

4.4 Signage:

Develop an agreed approach to signage to and from the beach including:

- Install a sign for Balscadden Beach at junction of Harbour Rd., and Abbey St., and also a pedestrian sign for the beach on Abbey St., where the entrance is to the Martello Tower. This is a short cut from the village to the beach for mothers with buggies and older people and was the preferred way to the beach years ago.

4.5 Blue Flag:

With the redirection of the sewage from the Sewage Outfall on the Nose of Howth the water quality in the bay has improved immensely and as a result FOBB would now genuinely aspire in the coming years to reaching a standard of cleanliness and management that would qualify for a Blue Flag.

V. Resources Required

We believe to start the process of improvement of Balscadden Beach there is a need for various resources:

- Nominate a Fingal County Council representative to the FOBB Committee
- Actively provide input / Attend meetings as scheduled between FCC & FOBB.
- Provide Funds for Improvement & Reinstatement of existing steps and handrails (this could be financed out of current expenditure for amenity works or the residue of contributions made under the SAAO or jointly through the FAS approved community employment scheme).
- Provide Regular Maintenance of the Beach & Access Steps.
- Provide In-kind support - gloves, bags etc to help FOBB with their clean ups of the beach.
- Provide Technical advice - access to specialists etc.
- Assist in sourcing Tourism/Job Creation Funding
- Provide Match Funding for FOBB Community events on the beach.

VI. Next Steps

Meeting of all Stakeholders to review Report	Late March 2011
Workshop on the Future	April 2011
Agree a Plan for the Future	May 2011
Implement the Plan in various stages	June 2011 Onwards
Management & Control Process	June 2011 Onwards

VII. Conclusion

We trust our sincerity and enthusiasm for the betterment of Balscadden Beach as a public amenity is evident from this report. Our hope is that this report results in an agreed proactive approach to managing and controlling this very special amenity.

We look forward to your input and support in this very worthwhile endeavour.

Marie Ó Laoi
Chairperson
Friends of Balscadden Beach
February 2011