

**COMHAIRLE CONTAE FHINE GALL  
FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HOWTH/MALAHIDE AREA COMMITTEE MEETING  
(Services A – Operational Matters)**

**WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2026**

**ITEM NO. 16**

**BURROW BEACH MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS - AI108266**

**Question: Councillor D. Healy**

"To ask the Chief Executive to advise what analysis has been done of the potential to alter the beach maintenance and cleaning regime on Burrow Beach to encourage dune restoration since this was discussed with local residents in February 2026?"

**Reply:**

The Operations Department currently carries out the following beach maintenance and cleaning regime on Burrow Beach:

**Winter Months (Non-Bathing Season 36 weeks)**

The beach is attended to 4 days per week by the cleansing crew. The bins are emptied and bags removed, and any discarded litter is removed from around the bin areas. If required, the bin emptying frequency is increased as monitoring spot checks dictate.

The beach is not mechanically raked for 36 weeks of the year. i.e. during the non-bathing season.

**Summer Months (Bathing Season 16 weeks)**

In the run up to the Bathing season, additional bins are placed on/adjacent to areas throughout the County with highest footfall and needs which includes beaches. These bins are serviced 7 days per week by the cleansing crew. The bins are emptied and bags removed, and again any discarded litter is removed from

around the bin areas. The frequency of this bin emptying is increased during hotter/drier weather conditions.

For the Bathing Season, the beach is mechanically raked 3-5 times per week dependent on weather forecasts and more frequently in the run up to Bank Holidays/hot weekends/holidays etc when large numbers are expected. On advice from the Fingal Biodiversity Team, the mechanical raking operation does not occur within 2 metres of the foot of the dunes to protect both the dune ecosystem and to encourage sand deposition.

The product of the raking operation consists of both rubbish/litter and organic seaweed/natural material. These rakings are already hand combed and the seaweed separated by hand from the rubbish. The rubbish is then removed off the beach for disposal. The seaweed is then deposited approximately 1 meter in front of the dunes at various locations along the beach. This seaweed (a) acts as a natural fertiliser for Maram Grass growth promotion, whose roots are essential for the stabilisation of sand dunes, and (b) to act as an anchor point to encourage sand deposition, the precursor of new dune formation.

### **Update since February 2026**

Since the meeting in February, the Operations Department has reviewed the additional budget and additional staff numbers which would be required to be recruited to replace the 3-5 days of mechanical raking with a team of staff recruited for the 16 week Bathing season alone to hand litter pick the beach during the Season.

To cover the same area that takes the mechanical rake 3-5 days per week could take approx. 10-15 men working 7 days per week (i.e no overtime multipliers). This would cost a minimum of €14,649 per staff member for the Bathing Season at the 1<sup>st</sup> point of the incremental General Operative scale. 10 persons recruited for 16 weeks would cost €146,490 for the Bathing season period rising to €219,744 for 15 staff.

### **Budget Costs & Resources**

The budgeted cost for the management of beaches across the County in 2026 is €432,800. There is no provision within the 2026 budget for manual litter picking on the beaches or for the recruitment of additional seasonal staff for the Bathing

Season. It is also very difficult to recruit people to carry out seasonal work such as manual litter picking.

To redeploy existing staff to carry out this required level of hand litter picking for Burrow Beach would divert them away from their primary duties and would result in other essential works not being carried out.

By way of comparison, the additional costs for manual litter picking for Balcarrick Beach, Donabate ranges from €28,857.92 to €32,235.84 for the 16- week Bathing Season however this beach manual work is heavily supplemented by community volunteers.

In addition to the budgetary cost, manual litter picking deflects staff resources away from their primary duties. The mechanical beach raking process ensures that the Operations Department staff can be allocated to their primary vital tasks which enhance surrounding areas enjoyment for all users. A clean and well-maintained beach enhances its overall appearance and reduces complaints from recreational beachgoers expecting a clean beach. Beach raking removes debris, often perceived to be unsightly, making the beach more attractive for visitors, tourists and families. The improved aesthetic appeal positively impacts tourism and community well-being, contributing to a positive perception of the coastal area.

### **Conclusion**

Given that the seaweed is already currently being separated from the litter and deposited at the base of the dunes for the aforementioned environmental benefits, following mechanical raking, there is little benefit to be gained by the high budget costs involved in recruiting seasonal staff at this heavily used Burrow Beach.

The Howth Malahide Area team do not currently have the staff resources or budget to support this change to manual litter picking on Burrow Beach and as such the current arrangement will remain.

**Source of Reply:**

Karen Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Operations Department