

# Beach Management Strategy



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## INTRODUCTION

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The stretch of coast from Magilligan Point to Brown's Bay, contains some of the finest beaches in the British Isles. These beaches provide local communities and visitors with space for socio-economic development, healthy outdoor recreation, activity and tourism opportunities. They also represent areas of scientific interest, important for the protection and conservation of habitats, species and natural processes of local, national and international importance. They are quite simply a natural heritage resource of enormous tangible and intangible value for Northern Ireland.

Numerous organisations and individuals have an interest in the management of Northern Ireland's beaches; however it is apparent that uncertainty surrounds many of these responsibilities and interests. On occasion this can result in inefficient use of resources, duplication of efforts and limited communication of best management practice between partners.

A number of beach management issues received media attention during and following an exceptional '2013 Summer Season' characterised by a marked increase in beach users. On the basis of enhanced public, media and government interest, and with a small amount of allocated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) funding, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage

Trust (CCGHT) and its partners are committed to developing a strategic approach to beach management which enhances available resources and contributes to more effective and inclusive management of beaches within the area.

## STRATEGIC VISION

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"Our coasts have some of the most attractive beaches on the island of Ireland. Sharing best practice and resources where appropriate, managers will maintain and if possible enhance the value of this natural resource. They will seek to protect the operation of natural environmental processes, and to balance amenity value with conservation requirements. Working in close cooperation with beach users, managers will endeavour to achieve high standards of beach management, beach cleanliness and water quality. In doing so, they will ensure that our beaches continue to make a significant contribution to the economic, environmental and social well-being of Northern Ireland"



## STRATEGIC AIMS

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Eight strategic aims encompass all issues relevant to beach management:

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1. **Maintain/enhance the physical integrity and natural processes of the beaches**
  2. **Maintain/enhance the conservation interest of the beaches**
  3. **Maintain/enhance the amenity value of the beaches**
  4. **Maintain/enhance the quality of the beach and the water**
  5. **Promote beaches to the general public**
  6. **Establish a management structure for the beaches**
  7. **Seek sufficient resources to implement beach management strategy**
  8. **Establish a cross-authority Beach Management Coordination Group (BMCG)**
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Each of these strategic aims is expanded in the subsequent sections. Aims 1-7 contain several objectives, while Aim 8 is more appropriately dealt with in a less structured format.

## PRIORITIES

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Within aims 1-7 each objective has been colour coded to indicate its relative prioritisation. In broad terms the colour coding indicates the following:

**Red: most immediate and should be or can be progressed rapidly with existing structures and resources**

**Blue: medium term objective requiring preliminary work and/or additional resources**

**Green: longer term, requiring one or more of: significant lead-in times, extensive consultation with external bodies, substantial expenditure, and resolution of legal or regulatory complexities**

It is inappropriate to be prescriptive about priorities in a strategic document that will be used by a number of different beach management authorities. While all may agree on the same Aims, each authority may well have different priorities, either in general or in regard to specific beaches. The authorities differ in their relative access to resources (finance, personnel, expertise). This variation will tend to push a given objective up or down any priority list. The beach management strategy presented in this document does allocate priorities to each objective, but it does so only as an exemplar, and in the full knowledge that each beach management authority will make its own decisions. Priorities allocated in this document reflect the strategic vision for the entire coastline from Magilligan Point to Brown's Bay.

In addition, it is important to recognise that, in the system outlined here, high priority is **not** necessarily an indication of absolute importance. An objective might be coded as high priority, not because it is inherently important or even urgent, but rather because:

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- (i) **it needs to be done**
  - (ii) **it can be done quickly**
  - (iii) **it can be done without time-consuming consultation with other bodies**
  - (iv) **it can be done cheaply and needs few other resources**
  - (v) **it can be done without legal or regulatory complexities**
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In contrast, a much more important objective might be coded as longer term because only the first of these points applies; an example might be the planning and construction of a new sewage treatment plant to deal with chronic water quality problems on a beach. Indeed, in this example there is the huge additional hindrance that beach managers have no statutory remit to deal with the issue.

It makes no sense to delay work on a relatively minor, but immediately attainable, objective until a more important, but more complex and time-consuming, objective is achieved. It is also important that any initial assessment of priorities should not be perceived as set in stone. Management must remain flexible and pragmatic so that it can adapt quickly to opportunities and hindrances. For example, an objective once regarded as a longer term priority because of its high cost may suddenly become realisable when targeted funding is made available from European, national Government or even private funding initiatives. In contrast, an objective initially regarded as attainable in the short-term may have to be reassessed as longer term if unexpected legal complications arise.

Seawall at Cushendall. Such structures prevent beaches adjusting to storms and cut the vital dune-beach exchange (Photo: University of Ulster)



## **Aim One:**

### **Maintain/enhance the physical integrity and natural processes of the beaches**

All beach-related activities and values depend upon the physical integrity of the beach being sustained. Beaches undergo periods of erosion and accretion in response to changing wave and tidal conditions. Most of the natural beaches along the north-east coast are confined to small bays and sand that is lost during storms generally returns during subsequent fair weather. During rising sea levels beaches migrate landwards but maintain their integrity in the medium term. Human activities and engineering structures can damage the ability of beaches to survive storms and sea level rise and can in extreme cases lead to the total demise of the beach. The following objectives are designed to ensure the long-term survival of the region's beaches.

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#### **1. Minimise/reduce human interference with natural processes**

Beaches survive in the hostile marine environment by their ability to change shape. This natural buffering of storm waves makes beaches excellent natural defences. It is vital that no human structure or activity interferes with this ability.

#### **2. Ensure new development does not compromise the physical integrity of the beach**

Bearing in mind the natural changes that occur on beaches it is important that they are free to fluctuate in response to storms and sea level rise. Steps should be taken to prevent any construction that would impede the natural response of the beach.

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#### **3. Where feasible, remove any obstacles to the natural functioning of the beach**

There are several instances where structures have already or will cause damage to beaches in the future. This objective seeks to value the beach more highly than the structures and to act accordingly.

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#### **4. Where possible, repair damage caused by human activity**

This might include, for example, re-vegetating dunes that have been degraded by trampling, but would exclude any interference in natural beach changes such as occur during storms.



### 5. Promote understanding of physical processes among beach users

There is a good deal of misunderstanding about how beaches work. For example, some are alarmed by erosion of dunes and consider it ‘damage’. In reality, occasional erosion of dunes is a perfectly natural (and usually temporary) response to storms; the extra sand helps break the wave energy in the storm. Public education efforts are needed to overcome such false perceptions.

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### 6. Monitor the physical status of beaches

In order to understand the changes that take place on beaches (e.g. during storms or long periods of storminess) it is important that beaches be regularly monitored. This can be done at various levels of sophistication from routine topographical surveys to fixed point photography. It can be done in-house or by external contractors or even communities.

### 7. Promote/encourage research on physical processes

All beaches are unique to some extent and the way they ‘work’ is determined by the local setting as well as wave energy, tidal range and volume of material. To properly understand them, research is needed. This may be informed by the regular monitoring and will in turn assist in promoting public understanding.

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### 8. Prevent the removal of sand gravel and/or pebbles from beaches

All beaches in the region have a limited amount of sand, gravel and/or pebbles and very little fresh supply. Maintaining and preserving the existing sediment is vital for their survival.



## Aim Two: Maintain/enhance the conservation interest of the beaches

Beaches are important ecosystems in their own right. It is important that their biodiversity and ecosystem functioning are preserved. Many creatures live in or on the beach or utilise it at critical stages in their life cycle. Many of these (e.g. angling species) have additional value to humans. The importance of beaches and dunes is often recognised in conservation designations, but even outside formally designated sites, beach ecosystems should be valued and protected.

### 1. Monitor the conservation status of the beach (biological/geological/archaeological)

To ensure early detection of any undesirable changes or impacts, it is important that beach ecosystems and other conservations interests be monitored regularly.

### 2. Adhere to statutory requirements in managing designated sites (e.g. SAC, ASSI)

Each beach management authority should be familiar with the conservation status of their sites and take this into account in any management actions.

### 3. Where possible, remove any existing impediments to the natural ecosystem functioning of the beaches

Certain activities (e.g. mechanical beach cleaning, driving, bait digging) and infrastructure (e.g. paths, pipelines) can impact negatively on the beach ecosystem. Efforts should be made to minimise these effects, for example by relocation of infrastructure.

### 4. Minimise/reduce potential negative human impact on the conservation interest

Steps should be taken to minimise potential human impact on the conservation interest. Examples include installation of protective fencing around nesting sites, erection of warning signs, construction of boardwalks, implementation of bye-laws.

Quad tracks destabilise vegetation on dunes (Photo: University of Ulster)







Dune vegetation at Red Bay (Photo: University of Ulster)

### **5. Where appropriate, restore degraded areas**

If the cause of damage can be removed, efforts should be made to rehabilitate degraded areas. (e.g. removing invasive species, replanting dune vegetation)

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### **6. Promote understanding of biological processes among beach users.**

There is low public awareness of the ecosystem values of beaches and dunes. This can be counteracted by a public awareness campaign using, for example, leaflets, websites, interpretative boards and way-marked trails.

### **7. Promote/encourage research on beach ecosystems**

Beyond general scientific knowledge, there is little existing understanding of the ecosystems of Irish beaches. Research to fill this gap and inform management decisions should be encouraged.

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### **8. Ensure that new development or activity does not compromise the conservation quality of the beach.**

Anything that damages the physical integrity of the beach will also damage its conservation value and should be avoided. Potentially damaging physical interventions include seawalls, jetties, pipelines, car parks, while some new activities may require careful management.



Car parking at Portstewart Strand (Photo: University of Ulster)

### **Aim Three:** **Maintain/enhance the amenity value of the beaches**

Beaches present a range of potential amenity values. It is for each management authority to decide its own vision of what activities are appropriate to a given site, and then to promote and regulate these activities accordingly. This will influence the provision of infrastructure and services for that site and the nature of the access. All these decisions should take account of potential impacts on the physical integrity of the beach and its ecosystem, as well as legal requirements.

#### **1. Identify desired human uses for each beach and provide/enhance infrastructure appropriate to these**

This might include provision of toilets, boardwalks, water tap, showers, picnic areas, play areas, equipment provision/hire.

#### **2. Maintain and enhance beach access for a range of users appropriate to the site**

Appropriate access should be provided with due regard to the envisaged use/visitor profile of each beach. This might include car parking as well as direct pedestrian access. It is envisaged that some beaches will seek to attract large visitor numbers while others may be promoted as 'wilderness' beaches.



### 3. Monitor patterns of visitor use

Car and pedestrian counts can provide a useful measure of levels of use which can in turn inform management decisions.

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### 4. Promote safety on the beach using appropriate methods

The diversity of activities on beaches creates many safety issues that can be addressed using a variety of approaches. Examples include lifeguards, beach traffic control, zoning, First Aid, ambulance routes, bye-laws.

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### 5. Maintain appropriate public order

Acknowledging the relaxed holiday atmosphere of the beach environment, there is nevertheless potential for conflict among beach users. It is in the interests of all visitors that a level of order appropriate to the occasion should be maintained by, for example, the presence of beach wardens/manager, police, bye-laws.

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### 6. Minimise inter-user conflicts

Measures may be introduced to avoid conflicts between competing beach and water uses (e.g. surfing versus swimming). These may include, for example, temporal/spatial zoning, selective bans, or the complete banning of activities deemed to be incompatible with the envisaged beach use.

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### 7. Provide signage and information

Beach users require information on amenities, services, and, in particular, safety provision. This can be provided by, for example, information kiosks, warnings, zoning notices, way-marked routes, environmental interpretative boards, water quality information.

Games on Ballygally beach (Photo: Larne Borough Council)





Marine plastic litter at Whiterocks after January 2014 storms (Photo: University of Ulster)

## **Aim Four:**

### **Maintain/enhance the cleanliness and water quality of beaches**

Research has demonstrated that the most important factor for visitors is the cleanliness of the beach environment. There is potential for both the beach itself and the adjacent waters to be polluted. Sources of pollution can be local or distant. This is a major management challenge for managers as sources of pollution are often outside their direct control. Most of the region's beaches have streams discharging across them and beside them, and all are recipients of marine-derived litter.

#### **1. Monitor the quality of both sand and water**

Water quality is monitored on award beaches, but it is desirable to carry out at least occasional testing on other beaches. The beach surface should also be inspected regularly, and beach managers should welcome external surveys that provide information on beach cleanliness.

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#### **2. Establish an effective litter management regime**

Litter management is often the most intractable problem of beach management, and is aggravated by the unpredictable nature of visitor activity. All-year use of some sites implies that litter cannot be regarded as a seasonal issue. Decisions need be made about a workable system, e.g. number and location of bins and collection frequency.



### 3. Organize/encourage school or community-led beach clean-ups

Offers from voluntary groups to carry out beach cleans should be welcomed as they augment the management authority's own resources, and do so in a cost-effective manner. The authority can provide assistance, e.g. bags, gloves etc. An additional advantage is promotional and educational, particularly when the beach clean is reported in the local media.

### 4. Establish a method of dealing with live/dead strandings

This is often a troublesome problem for management, mainly because of a lack of internal expertise. A protocol should be developed to allocate a lead responsibility and to organise assistance from specialist agencies, e.g. veterinary and disposal services.

Disposal of Minke Whale, Magilligan (Photo: Limavady Borough Council)



## 5. Where possible, act to remove/reduce threats to water quality from external agencies

The main external sources of pollution are sewage, agricultural effluent and shipping flotsam. Beach managers rarely have the resources or legal remit to deal effectively with flotsam, while sewage problems are not usually amenable to quick-fix solutions given the long lead-in times of new infrastructure. Farm-derived pollution often reaches the coast via rivers, and here the manager may have more success in identifying point sources. While legal action (taken through the appropriate statutory body) should be a last resort, it may be necessary to deal with persistent offenders.

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## 6. Seek beach award status to provide targets for water and beach surface cleanliness

While beach awards are not a panacea, they do provide targets and standards for water quality and beach surface cleanliness. Those that focus on water quality are particularly important to visitors, for example the Marine Conservation Society's Good Beach Award. The need to achieve or maintain an award can strengthen the beach manager's hand in internal negotiation for resources.

## 7. Introduce bye-laws to control beach parties, fires and BBQs

Informal beach parties are a growing problem as they are often associated with problems of litter, noise, alcohol/drug use and anti-social behaviour. Bonfires and careless use of BBQs bring increased fire risk to dune vegetation and beach infrastructure. While heavy-handed control is inappropriate, beach managers need legal authority to control or, in some cases, prohibit these behaviours.

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## 8. Establish a method of dealing with seaweed appropriate to the desired use of the beach

Seaweed control is a vexed question. On the one hand it is argued that seaweed is not litter; it is a natural part of the beach environment and necessary to its ecosystems. On the other hand it is unsightly, has an unpleasant smell, attracts flies and vermin and repels visitors. One compromise approach is to remove seaweed only when it is present in unacceptable quantities, such as after a storm. On a popular resort beach the manager might set the acceptability criterion quite low, but at a beach designated for its exceptional natural values the seaweed could be allowed to remain.



Blue Flag at Portrush West Strand (Photo: University of Ulster)

## **Aim Five:** **Promote beaches to the general public**

Beaches offer many benefits to the public. These include recreation, both passive and active, aesthetic/therapeutic benefits, and the appreciation of environmental values. However, beach managers should not wait for the public to “discover” these attractions and benefits. They should be actively promoted and publicised using whatever media are available and effective. Many beaches are used all year round, and this should be acknowledged in publicity work.

### **1. Organise a schedule of beach events**

Where appropriate to the site and time of year, it may be worthwhile to organise a schedule of events, particularly those of interest to family groups. Examples are sports, for example beach volleyball, street theatre, and nature walks. Management should use its discretion in deciding whether it should organise such events itself, or leave them to commercial/voluntary interests.

## 2. Provide promotional leaflets and brochures on-beach and elsewhere

Visitors often complain that they cannot easily find relevant information on local beaches, for example on location, parking and facilities. Information brochures and leaflets should be made available in beach kiosks, local hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, and tourism offices at home and abroad.

## 3. Promote the beach on authority website and on tourism/holiday websites

Given the very large, and growing, influence of the internet in all kinds of commerce and publicity, this type of promotion is no longer optional. Beach management authorities should publicise their beaches on their own and other websites, and should do so in a professional way.

## 4. Install beach webcams to show locals/others what the beach offers

Beach webcams are increasingly common, particularly at those sites used for surfing and its variants, and wind powered beach sports. They allow enthusiasts to remotely observe wind and wave conditions in real time. More generally, potential visitors can get information on weather, tidal stage, traffic and so on before they leave home. Webcams also give management a useful tool for monitoring visitor behaviour, e.g. speeding cars.

## 5. Promote beaches in the print media

Even in a digital age, traditional print media remain hugely influential. For this reason, beach management authorities should take every opportunity to promote their beaches, especially in the provincial and local press. This should include measured response to critical articles and letters.

## 6. Seek/maintain appropriate beach award status

Beach awards can be useful promotional tools, but they must be carefully assessed. Their main value may lie in providing management targets, rather than in increasing visitor numbers. They are most useful at traditional, heavily-used resort beaches, where they have accelerated improvements in cleanliness and facilities. However, they may be inappropriate at sites with high nature conservation interest because the award criteria may demand a level of infrastructure inimical to the nature interest.



Puppet show on Ballygally beach during World Oceans Day (Photo: Larne Borough Council)



## **7. Publicise specialist attractions of particular beaches**

Many beaches are managed as general “family-day-out” sites. Smaller sites should remain this way, because they cannot ensure a quality visitor experience, while simultaneously accommodating activities that need extensive beach/water space. However, some larger sites can safely accommodate specialist interests without compromising the enjoyment of other beach users. Examples of such interests include surfing, wind-powered sports and jet skiing. The presence of these activities widens the attractions of the site and should be publicised in beach promotional work.

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## **8. Actively encourage appropriate activities on the beach**

Individuals and organised groups may use the beach for various activities. Rather than adopt a neutral attitude, management should be proactive in encouraging appropriate use of the beach. However, it may be prudent not to over-commit to any specific activity if there are potential user conflicts.

## **9. Act quickly to respond to public comment/criticism**

It is an accepted principle of effective PR that public comment should be answered quickly. However, knee-jerk defensive reflexes should be avoided. In addition to dealing with traditional media, authorities must recognise the ever increasing presence of social media with even greater dissemination potential. Each management authority should develop a protocol to deal with these matters.

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## **10. Carry out research on visitor profiles and likes/dislikes so that management can be sensitive to beach visitor opinion**

Beach management decisions should be based on objective data. This includes data about beach visitors. The management authority should know visitor numbers (car and pedestrian counters are useful here), the visitor age profile, size of groups, frequency of visits, motivation for visits, and likes/dislikes. If visitor survey expertise is not available in-house, it can be contracted out to consultancies or academic researchers. Postgraduate research students may also provide useful data at no cost.

## Aim Six: Establish a management structure for the beaches

Even without a formal structure, beach management, honed by experience over many years, can be effective. However, while not disputing this, beach management has much to gain by the implementation of a formal management structure. The ad hoc approach is too dependent on random factors such as the presence of particularly motivated staff members. Retirements or transfer to other posts can lead to significant problems. Structures establish, and then protect, the **principles** and the **process** of beach management, and to this degree they future-proof it against negative developments.

Structured units provide an identity and a focus for beach management per se, rather than allowing it to continue as just another aspect of the authority's environmental remit. Structures allow the development of coherent strategy, and they also make it easier to negotiate resources. In the context of 'review of public administration' (RPA), structures will also (i) serve to conserve and formalise the better parts of current practice, and (ii) make it easier to introduce elements of best practice elsewhere. One of the most pressing tasks for the Beach Management Group (BMG) described below would be to develop management plans for beaches or groups of beaches.

Sign at Whiterocks indicating control of trading (Photo: University of Ulster)



### **1. Each beach management authority should establish a formal in-house Beach Management Group (BMG) of relevant departments/units to deal with all operational matters re beach management**

Ad hoc arrangements can be effective but rely too heavily on individual enthusiasm and interest. Each management authority should establish a formal Beach Management Group (BMG) that includes all those individuals and units that currently contribute, or could contribute, to beach management. The BMG must be structured so that it is independent of changes of personnel within the authority, and of proposed changes in local government structure.

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### **2. Initiate appropriate internal and external co-operation with other departments**

Vertical communication and cooperation within a management authority is often much more highly developed than horizontal cooperation. This means that communication and cooperation between senior and junior levels in a given unit may be quite good, but different units have little contact with each other. Poor horizontal cooperation can also impact upon relationships with external regulators and agencies. The creation of a BMG should improve this situation by facilitating regular dialogue among all those with responsibilities in beach management, as well as increased data, information and knowledge sharing. For example, a joint research agenda with an internal or external group could avoid duplication of effort and expense in survey activities etc.

### **3. Confirm the management authority's legal position, and act to resolve any doubts**

Coastal law can be complex and there are problematic areas where the legal position is unclear. There is often little case law to guide management. However, in an increasingly litigious society, it is essential that management do what it can to clarify its legal position, especially in areas such as ownership, jurisdiction, liability and Rights of Way.

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### **4. Review/revise current beach bye-laws; if none exist consider introducing them**

While local authorities can rely on general legal instruments to manage beaches under their jurisdiction, at times it may become necessary to have something more specific. Bye-laws\* are an inherently flexible instrument which can be customised to deal with explicit problematic issues in a particular location(s) such as, for example, nuisance activities, dog fouling, littering etc. To be successful, bye-laws must have an effective enforcement and compliance system as well as be reviewed regularly to keep them up-to-date.

\* Generally bye-laws are made under Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, but they can also be made under The Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 where regulation of the use of the tourism amenity is concerned, or alternatively under the Public Health Acts 1907 with respect to activities on the seashore.





### 5. Engage with other interested parties when relevant to an issue

Where appropriate, the beach management authority through its BMG should seek the assistance and co-operation of external individuals and agencies. Examples are academics, specialists in various fields and community representatives.

### 6. Develop management plans and establish resourcing needs for beaches

The BMG should carry out a systematic appraisal of its beaches and then decide how they will be resourced. This should be done at two scales: initially a general overview of all beaches and then a detailed appraisal of individual beaches. This appraisal would lead to the development of management plans for specific beaches or groups of beaches.



## **7. Establish a Communications Strategy for (i) in-house sharing of information and good practice and (ii) external relations**

The details of the communications strategy will necessarily be influenced by the structure of the parent beach management authority and its BMG. Internally, communication would have both formal and informal dimensions. The former might include regular minuted meetings of the BMG. There would also be informal in-house discussion and exchange of documents either face to face or via text/email. External communication would probably be dominantly conducted through the nominated leader of the BMG. Here, communication with Government agencies, specialist advisers/contractors, other beach authorities, and the media would take place via occasional face to face meetings, but video-conferencing, phone, mail and email contacts would predominate. Communication with the general public would take place predominantly via digital media with a website as the focus. The BMG would, at minimum, have a tab on the authority's main website. The range of information available might include photographs, location maps, facilities, and contact details. Other material could include lists of references, uploads of documents including educational material, and visitor reviews.

## **8. Encourage community groups and schools to “take ownership” of the beach and assist them in contributing to beach management.**

Community groups can be valuable assets to beach management. They have considerable positive influence and can generate public support for management initiatives, for example in reducing vandalism and eradicating harmful practices such as sand removal. Many groups organise regular beach cleans. Existing bodies should be encouraged, and where no such groups exist the BMG might kick-start formation. Local schools can also play a valuable role, and the educational outreach is an additional benefit.

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## **9. Sponsor/invite/participate as partner in systematic research on all physical, conservation, human and economic aspects of beach management.**

To be effective, beach management needs data on the physical, nature conservation, human and economic aspects of the beach environment. Management authorities should welcome any initiatives that might provide these data. The degree of the authority's involvement can vary: at the lower end it might be a matter of welcoming academic research, but without cost to the authority. A higher degree of involvement comes when the authority itself initiates, sponsors and pays for research carried out by academic institutions or consultancies. At a yet higher level of commitment the beach management authority can become a formal partner, perhaps even the lead partner, in a Government or EU-funded research project.

## Aim Seven:

**Ensure that sufficient resources are made available for beach management**

Appropriate aims and lists of practical objectives will achieve next to nothing unless those tasked with beach management responsibility have access to the resources necessary to deliver results. Beach managers, ideally acting through a Beach Management Group (BMG), must fight their corner to obtain what they feel is necessary to do their job.

### 1. Negotiate realistic funding allocation from authority's current budget

Beach management is frequently under-funded. This happens because some authorities allocate funding in accord with traditional practice which may take little account of current realities. Allied to this, there is often a prevailing view that “beaches manage themselves”. The BMG should not accept the status quo, but should press for increased funding.

### 2. Negotiate realistic allocation of non-financial resources

The same points made at no. 1 above can be made about non-financial resources. Indeed, at some sites and at some times, it is the lack of personnel (particularly staff with relevant skills/knowledge) and equipment rather than money that is the pressing problem.



Ice cream vendor, Benone (Photo: University of Ulster)

### 3. Assess and regularly re-assess resource needs (funding/staff/equipment)

The management authority through its BMG should routinely assess its resource needs. The unpredictable weather-dependence of beach activity and visitor numbers is a complication. Therefore, resource provision to deliver some services, for example litter management, must include safety margins. Beach managers should remember that they also need resources to cover the management needs of non-award beaches.

### 4. Develop and regularly review a budget for beach management operations

Beach managers cannot negotiate for a realistic allocation of funding and other resources unless they know what their needs are, and how these change over time. Accordingly, the managers, ideally acting within a BMG, should draw up an annual budget. However, they should resist any tendency for this budget to be regarded as a baseline template; they must emphasise that future needs may differ.

## 5. Assess potential income stream from:

- authority-run ventures (e.g. car parking, shops, equipment hire)
- privately-owned commercial ventures (e.g. lease to vendors)
- sponsorship (e.g. ads on bins, sponsorship of events)
- other initiatives (entry fees, tourism levy)
- funding opportunities (EU, Govt, private, voluntary sector)

Beach management needs money, and beach managers need to be aware of opportunities to obtain funds additional to those allocated by their parent authority. Ideally, there should be someone in the BMG whose job description includes (i) actively searching for funding opportunities, and (ii) organisation of applications and, where successful, the administration of the projects. However, it is important to consider carefully

before committing to any funding initiative whose outcomes might reduce the quality of the visitor experience. Initiatives that require visitors to pay for services previously free of charge are particularly sensitive, e.g. parking charges.

## 6. Participate as partner/lead partner in funded programmes (e.g. Interreg)

There are opportunities in the environmental programmes funded by Government Departments or the EU. Acting as either a partner or a lead partner, a beach management authority can acquire significant funds that allow it to do things that it could simply not have afforded otherwise. The downside is that administration of the projects can be very time-consuming. In general, the best projects are those that bring about permanent improvements; there may be little advantage in a project whose initiatives collapse as the project ends because they cannot be maintained on normal funding.

Beach shop, West Strand, Portrush (Photo: University of Ulster)



## Aim Eight: Establish a cross-authority Beach Management Coordination Group (BMCG)

It is accepted that coasts and their physical, biological and human systems do not fit neatly into the artificial administrative boundaries of terrestrial authorities. Coasts are integrated systems. Logically, this means that they need a high degree of integrated management. While it is certainly an advance towards this ideal if a number of beach management authorities are committed to the aims and objectives of an agreed management strategy, an even higher level of integration, coordination, co-operation and communication could be facilitated if the disparate authorities could agree to the creation of a co-ordinating body. This is seen as the best way to achieve a management regime for the entire beach resource that will be superior to anything that can be achieved by beach management authorities acting autonomously.

To take forward this strategy, the current co-ordinating body, the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT) will facilitate further meetings of the current Beach Management Strategy Steering Group and support efforts towards establishing a formal Beach Management Coordination Group (BMCG). Whilst the current Steering Group enjoys 'buy-in' from a number of management authorities, there is a desire to formalise this model through establishment of a

BMCG based on a similar grouping of officers and with support from an appropriate co-ordinating organisation.

There are many arguments for informal and formal management structures. On balance it is recommended that a degree of formality be established for the BMCG. This would provide recognition and status for the group and ensure buy-in at senior level from the participating authorities. A written agreement (such as a **Memorandum of Understanding**) would provide a suitable basis for the group. The group might be initially established in an informal way, and then seek formal status.

The business of the cross-authority group will be to actively promote and progress cooperative and coordinated beach management by a number of autonomous institutions. It will be concerned with operational issues. Since all the authorities are following the same agreed beach management strategy, there should be an inherent bias in favour of integration, coordination and cooperation, as all strive to meet the same objectives. The group will be a co-ordinating body that acts as a secretariat/convenor/knowledge exchange facility for all beach-related activities. Each authority/beach manager would still exercise their own powers on their beaches, but always with due regard to the Strategy and exchanging information and good practice with each other. The group members





Co-ordinated beach management: This sign at Benone is an example of the common format signage successfully developed by an existing cross-authority group (Photo: Limavady Borough Council)

might also decide to do some activities jointly. For example, beach visitor traffic surveys all conducted on the same day would give all the beach managers a useful regional context for their own survey findings. Other possibilities would be harmonisation of bye-laws, efforts to iron out anomalies in policies regarding permitted/ banned activities on adjacent beaches managed by different authorities, or public information campaigns regarding natural processes. The co-ordinating organisation would facilitate all of these possibilities. It is likely that many of the beach management authorities would advance their own activities by developing beach management plans.

The work of the BMCG would be founded on regular meetings at which common issues would be discussed. Between these meetings, more informal contacts could take place via digital media, sometimes involving the whole group, but more often involving individuals from it. At a yet more informal level, contacts and discussions can take place when representatives from the cross-authority group meet on the side-lines of meetings dealing with other matters.



The beaches and dunes at Downhill (foreground), Benone (middleground) and Magilligan (right background) lie along a continuous strip of sandy shore, but are managed by six different authorities and a number of private landowners. Here, there is a compelling case for co-ordinated management. (Photo: University of Ulster)

## Notes and Updates:

## Beach Management Strategy area



## Notes and Updates:



# Beach Management Strategy



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS  
HERITAGE TRUST

Developed by Dr John McKenna, Professor Andrew Cooper and Professor Derek Jackson with support from:

