



10th September 2018

Item No. 6

Report on Dollymount and Bull Island



Dollymount is a much loved and utilised recreational asset in Dublin. However it is probably under appreciated how unique it is for a capital city to have a beach within such proximity to its city centre. Dollymount is part of the Bull Island Nature Reserve which itself is a core part of the Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere. UNESCO Biosphere status for Dublin Bay was achieved in 2015 with the ambition to achieve a sustainable balance between human activities and the conservation of the important species and habitats which make the island and Dublin bay such a special place.

The policy of Dublin City Council is to maintain Dollymount Beach to a 'Blue Flag' standard. Three weeks prior to the bathing season (which commences 1st June) the beach is mechanically raked from 6.00am each morning, along with a litter pick. This operation is carried out seven days a week throughout the bathing season until 15th September each year. Barrel bins are put in place to accommodate the waste that derives from the use of the beach during the summer months and up to the end of June this year 48 tons of waste has been collected and disposed of by the Parks Service.

Lifeguards are employed on a temporary contract throughout the bathing season. Four lifeguards have worked in 2018 to ensure that there is adequate cover between 11.30 am to 6.30pm each day seven days a week. On two occasions so far the lifeguards' hours have been extended later into the evening based on an assessment of the tide and the numbers bathing.

While the majority of the time our life guards are busy observing activities, dealing with lost children and minor injuries, during June and July, seven rescues were carried out at Dollymount and our team was tasked to assist the Coastguard to rescue eight swimmers cut off on a sandbank at Clontarf.

The growth of sea algae called Ectocarpus is an annual occurrence at Dollymount coinciding with spells of warm weather. Given the long warm summer of 2018, Ectocarpus algae has been particularly bad spreading along the entire beach and creating an odour which some members of the public think is caused by sewage. Ectocarpus is collected and deposited at the edge of the dunes to bio-degrade and support the stabilisation of the dunes. This is considered to be good practice.



In addition to swimming, Dollymount is home to an active kite surfing community and beach volleyball. It hosts an increasingly successful kite surfing festival 'Battle for the Bay' and a kite festival as well as other activities related to nature conservation. In this regard a new Conservation Volunteer programme was established by DCC in 2018 and to date the volunteers have committed 295 hours to promoting nature conservation which includes walks, talks, workshops both for the local community and visitors from abroad including recently the John Hopkins University from the USA.

Unfortunately there were six fires so far this season on the island and all were malicious. The Garda Public Order Unit was present on one occasion to control a large group of youths that had set two fires. All fires were quickly brought under control by Parks staff and the Fire Brigade Service so damage was limited to about three acres.

In relation to water quality and microbiology, almost all of the samples, taken during this year's bathing season (1st June to 15th September) for Dollymount Bathing Zone, have indicated excellent bathing water quality. One sample, taken on 13th August failed to meet the minimum standard and following confirmation of laboratory analysis results on the 15th and consultations with HSE a temporary prohibition was put in place. It was lifted on 17th August, following results of a sample taken on 15th.

However, there have been a number of other occasions, where, on the advice of the HSE, prohibition notices were placed at the bathing zone. This was done as a precautionary measure where a risk to bathing water quality and public health was identified. I am advised that one of these incidents was attributable to an unplanned overflow of effluent into the River Liffey due to a power failure at the Irish Water wastewater pumping station at Spencer Dock. The other occurrences were associated with licensed discharges from the Irish Water Waste Water Treatment Plant at Ringsend which exceeded the limits set by the EPA licence in relation to E Coli. (For further information on water quality contact Patrick.ohalloran@dublincity.ie)

Beach wheelchairs are now available at Dollymount for visitors with mobility restrictions to better access the beach and to enjoy sea bathing. Two types of chairs are available, Hippocampe Beach Wheelchair (below) and the DeBug Beach Wheelchair (last image). Chairs can be booked in slots of up to 2 hours and possibly longer depending on bookings between the hours of 10am to 6pm, 7 days a week during the bathing season. The service is free of charge, but must be booked in advance by email by contacting Pat Corrigan at pat.corrigan@dublincity.ie



Users are required to present valid photo I.D. showing current address, fill out a waiver form, and must have a helper in attendance as staff or lifeguards are not in a position to help the user either into or out of the wheelchair.



Leslie Moore, Head of Parks Services.