

## Clare County Council Undertakes Review Of Beach Bye-Laws

*Members of the public in County Clare are to be consulted on a number of draft amendments to Beach Bye-Laws introduced by Clare County Council in 2006.*

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The proposed changes include the relaxing of the prohibition on dogs at a number of locations, including the Promenade at Lahinch: on the spot fine increases, a new system of penalties for breaches of event/activity licenses and the introduction of detailed signage at beaches targeted by the laws.

Areas presently covered by the bye-laws include littering, lighting of fires, removal of beach materials and protected species; nuisance; the bringing on to and parking of vehicles on beaches; camping on beaches; trading; control of animals; commercial filming; and regulation on the use of motorized craft and of water sports activities.

The byelaws apply to the beaches at Bishopsquarter (Ballyvaughan), Fanore, Doolin, Trá Leathan (Doolin), Lahinch, Whitestrand (Miltown Malbay), Spanish Point, Doughmore (Doonbeg), Whitestrand (Doonbeg), Carrigaholt, Brew's Bridge (Kilrush), Ballycuggeran (Killaloe) and Mountshannon. Beaches at Kilkee and Cappa are excluded, as they are in the jurisdictions of Kilkee and Kilrush Town Councils respectively.

The results of the 5-week public consultation process, which commences this week, will be presented to Council's the Environment, Emergency Services and Consumer Protection Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for consideration. The SPC will then recommend the adoption of the Bye-Laws, with or without amendments, to Clare County Council's elected representatives before they are officially passed into law.

SPC Chair Councillor Tommy Brennan described the proposed amendments to the Beach Bye-Laws as an important step towards the improved regulation and management of Clare's beaches and natural amenities.

He explained, "I would urge members of the public to carefully consider the proposed amendments to the Bye-Laws, which form part of the Council's continuing efforts to improve coastal amenity areas through ongoing coastal protection works, improvements to beach infrastructure and safety equipment, and better regulation of beach use."

"While the prohibition on bringing dogs on to beaches in the 13 designated Bye-Law locations is to remain in place, I warmly welcome the proposal to relax the prohibition at promenades and public car parks. I also welcome the requirement that dog owners keep their animals on a leash in the interests of public safety", added Councillor Brennan.

Among the other proposed changes to the Bye-Laws, is the provision for the suspension of an event/activity license. Under the current Bye-Laws the only penalty available for breach of a License is its complete withdrawal. The proposed change provides for a more gradual approach to dealing with breaches where this may be deemed more appropriate.

Meanwhile, on the spot fines will increase from EUR63.50 to EUR75, in line with new legislation, the Local Government Act 2001 (Bye-Laws) Regulations), 2006. The provision of improved public information signage at the 13 locations covered by the Bye-laws is also being proposed.

Commenting on the impact of the Beach Bye-laws since their introduction on June 1st 2006, Mr. Sean Ward, Senior Engineer, Environment Directorate, Clare County Council, stated, "The approach taken during the 2006 season was to raise awareness and educate rather than to impose strict legal sanctions. A campaign of public awareness was launched through the press and local radio. Signage with pictorial as well as verbal content was erected at all locations."

"During the 2007 season, the enforcement approach ensued. The Council's Environmental Patrol Wardens were the main agents of enforcement, assisted in Lahinch by the local traffic warden. The Water Safety Officer also made frequent visits at weekends to all the beaches covered by the Bye-Laws. Assistance was also received from the Gardaí when required", he said.

Mr. Ward stated that the Beach Bye-Laws were well observed by beach users. A total of 14 fines issued with the majority relating to for driving, bringing, placing on, or leaving vehicles on the beach or dune system appurtenant to the beach. Three fines were issued for animal related offences.

He added, "Clare County Council and An Garda Síochána have been greatly assisted in ridding the county's coastal amenity areas of nuisances. However, as with all legislation, the Council is seeking to make the Bye-laws even more effective by introducing a set a of proposed amendments."

"It is necessary to introduce all of these bye-laws in the interest of safety of persons using our beaches, to properly manage different beach activities, to protect the ecology of sensitive habitats and to ensure continuing success in achieving Blue Flag Status for our beaches. These bye-laws should assist the many thousands of visitors using our beaches whether they come to participate in a variety of water sport activities, or simply to enjoy our magnificent beaches", concluded Mr. Ward.

A copy of the amended Beach Bye-Laws 2008 will be available for public inspection, free of charge, at the offices of Áras Contae an Chláir, Environment Section, Block B, New Road, Ennis, from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Mon-Fri until Thursday, 28th February 2008. In addition they can also be viewed on the council's website at [www.clarecoco.ie](http://www.clarecoco.ie).

Clare County Council will consider all written submissions in relation to the amended bye-laws, which are submitted to the Administrative Officer, Áras Contae an Chláir, Environment Section, Block B, New Road, Ennis, by Friday, 7th March, 2008.

**- END -**

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