

Blue Flags for Lough Derg and Burren Passport

Monday, 9 June 08

An Taisce has awarded the prestigious International Blue Flag to eight of County Clare's beaches.

Mountshannon and **Ballycuggeran** on Lough Derg retained the Blue Flag status they lost in 2006 due to the presence of algal bloom in the lake while **Cappa**, **Kilkee**, **White Strand** (Miltown Malbay), **Lahinch** and **Fanore** have also held on to their Blue Flags.

Meanwhile, Clare County Council has expressed its delight that White Strand (Doonbeg) regained its Blue Flag for 2008. Deputy Mayor of Clare, **Councillor Brian Meaney**, today collected all eight flags at a ceremony in County Louth.

Speaking following today's awards ceremony, **Cllr Tommy Brennan**, Chair of Clare County Council's Environment, Emergency Services and Consumer Protection Strategic Policy Committee said, *'I am delighted that Clare has secured eight Blue Flags this year. I especially welcome the fact that White Strand, Doonbeg regained its Blue Flag Status. This loss in 2007 was not because of inadequate bathing water quality but due to necessary access works at the beach, which Clare County Council has since successfully completed.'*

Cllr. Brennan indicated that the awarding of Blue Flags to eight Clare beaches was achieved through the hard work of local communities and Local Authority staff.

'Again, it is further proof of what the county can achieve when Clare Local Authorities and members of the public work together', he added.

According to **Sean Ward**, Senior Engineer, Environment & Emergency Services Directorate, *"Clare County Council is extremely happy with the eight blue flags achieved, especially the re-awarding of White Strand, Doonbeg, which is a reflection of the positive actions taken by Clare County Council at this beach to improve access."*

The Blue Flag award is an exclusive eco-label awarded to more than 3,000 beaches and marinas in 28 countries in the Northern Hemisphere each year. It symbolises high standards in water quality, safety and services as well as environmental management, information and education.

In Ireland, in 2006 the International Jury awarded Blue Flags to 81 beaches and 3 marinas from a total of 88 beach and 4 marina applications.

Ballycuggeran

http://www.clarecoco.ie/Environment/Beach_Bye_laws/Docs/2008/Maps_Ballycuggeran.pdf

Blueflag.org

<http://www.blueflag.org/>

Citizens Information

http://www.citizensinformation.ie/categories/travel-and-recreation/recreational-activities-in-ireland/sport-and-leisure/blue_flag_beaches_and_marinas_in_ireland

Discover Ireland - Blue Flag

<http://www.discoverireland.com/gb/search/?q=BLUE+FLAG&submit.x=10&submit.y=6>

Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)

<http://www.fee-international.org/>

Leave No Trace Ireland - News

<http://www.leavenotraceireland.org/News.aspx>

Ireland's Islands

<http://www.irelandsislands.com/default.aspx>

Irish Blue Flags - Lifeguard Ireland

http://www.lifeguardsireland.com/blue_flags.htm

EU Water Bathing Directive

http://ec.europa.eu/water/water-bathing/index_en.html

EU Urban Wastewater Directive

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/water-urbanwaste/index_en.html

Water - Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/>

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Revised Beach Bye-Laws Are Enforced In Clare

Thursday, June 05, 2008

Newly revised bye-laws affecting beaches and promenades have been rolled out at 13 locations across County Clare.

The Clare County Council Beach Bye-Laws 2008 include a relaxation of the prohibition on dogs at various locations, on the spot fine increases, and an extension of the licensing function on beach and water related activities.

The regulations, which came into force on 22 May following widespread consultation, are designed to protect beach eco-systems and to regulate the ever increasing variety of beach uses, to ensure that all beach users can enjoy the beauty and amenity of County Clare's beaches equally.

Areas covered by the bye-laws include littering, lighting of fires, removal of beach materials and protected species; nuisance; the bringing onto 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 bye-laws apply to the beaches at Bishopsquarter (*Ballyvaughan*), Fanore, Doolin Harbour Beach, Trá Leathan (*Doolin*), Lahinch, Whitestrand (*Miltown Malbay*), Spanish Point, Doughmore (*Doonbeg*), Whitestrand (*Doonbeg*), Carrigaholt, Brew's Bridge (*Kilrush*), Ballycuggeran (*Killaloe*) and Mountshannon. Clare County Council is working in partnership with An Garda Síochána in the implementation of the bye-laws.

In welcoming the bye-laws **Cllr. Tommy Brennan**, Chair of the Environment, Emergency Services and Consumer Protection Strategic Policy Committee, said *"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."*

Commenting on the impact of the Beach Bye-laws since they were first introduced on 1 June 2006, Mr. **Sean Ward**, Senior Engineer, Environment Directorate, 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 made frequent visits at weekends to all the beaches covered by the Bye-Laws while 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 that the bye-laws had greatly assisted Clare County Council and An Garda Síochána in ridding the county's coastal amenity areas of nuisances.

“It is necessary to continue to implement 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 will continue to assist the many thousands of visitors using our beaches”, concluded Mr. Ward.

Gerard Dollard, Director of Services, Environment and Emergency Services Directorate, commented, *“We will promote the new arrangement through additional signs and information boards at our beaches. We look forward to the co-operation of the public in the operation of the reviewed bye-laws”.*

Copies of the bye-laws are available for public inspection at **Environment and Emergency Services Directorate, Áras Contae an Chláir, Environment Section, Block B, New Road, Ennis**; at the **Council Area Offices at Ennistymon, Kilrush and Tulla**, and on the council website www.clarecoco.clare.ie.

Copies of the bye-laws may be purchased from the Environment and Emergency Services Directorate for €3 per copy.

Dunbulcaun Bay

http://www.cfb.ie/fisheries_research/estuaries/dunbulcaun.htm

Marine Dimensions - Education & Awareness

<http://www.marinedimensions.ie>

Marine Institute

<http://www.marine.ie/Home/>

Irish Seal Sanctuary

<http://www.irishsealsanctuary.ie/>

Irish Water Safety

<http://www.iws.ie/>

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group

<http://www.iwdg.ie/>

International Fund for Animal Welfare

<http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw/general/default.aspx>

INFOMAR - *Mapping the Irish Seabed*
<http://www.gsiseabed.ie/>

Shannon Dolphin and Wildlife Foundation
<http://www.shannondolphins.ie/>

UN Atlas of the Oceans
<http://www.oceansatlas.org/index.jsp>

Burren Passport

Friday, 6 June 2008 – A number of dedicated information points and a concise guide to the Burren have been developed to provide guidance to the thousands of tourists who visit the world-famous Burren region each year.

Established by the Burren Connect Project, the central focus of the nine Information Points is a 20-inch PC with broadband internet access to the Burrenbeo website www.burrenbeo.com, as well as other Burren related websites.

Each Information Point displays a detailed map of the Burren, a dedicated notice board area for local events and a revised version of the Burren Code, which highlights that the Burren is a fragile and protected landscape.

Visitors can browse through and choose from a range of Burren related material, from general guides to specialist books on the Burren's renowned Botany, Archaeology, Flora and Fauna. Leaflets about the various services and items of interest in the area are also made available to tourists.

The Burren Passport was initiated by a group of local businesses that have been working with the Burren Connect Project since 2007. The Burren Centre Kilfenora, Doolin Cave, Kilfenora Hostel and Burren Equestrian were brought together by the Clare Tourism Learning Network, which is funded by Fáilte Ireland and facilitated by Mayday Management.

The Burren Passport offers readers a taste of Burren-specific information written by various experts on the subjects of Geology, Archaeology, Agriculture, History, Flora, Fauna, Folklore and Culture, as well as the festivals and events that are relevant to the local towns and villages.

The guide also contains information relating to Burren-based activities, local produce and crafts, places to eat and drink, visitor centres, recommended reading, useful contacts and websites of interest.

According to **Ms. Eimer McCarthy, Burren Connect Project**, "*The Burren Information Points and the Burren Passport are part of the Information Provision element of the Burren Connect Project's strategy to increase awareness and appreciation of the landscape and culture in and around the Burren.*"

She continued, "As part of this strategy, the Burrenbeo Eco Beo schools programme has been revived and delivered to nine national schools in North Clare and South Galway this year. An information CD-ROM for businesses and the wider Burren community has also been developed in collaboration with Burrenbeo and will be distributed during the summer."

Ms. McCarthy indicated that the geographical spread and location of the Information Points was determined by a number of criteria, including the availability of high-speed Internet access.

She added that every effort would be made to promote the year-round use of the Points.

"Staff are available at each location to help visitors and assist in the sale of Burren-related literature, as well as to maintain and monitor each respective Information Point. Every effort will be made to maintain the year round opening of the Information Points so as to reduce seasonal dependency and to promote the sustainable development of services within the region", concluded Ms. McCarthy.

The nine Information Points are located at The Burren Centre in Kilfenora, The Burren Perfumery in Carron, The Burren Smokehouse in Lisdoonvarna, The Ballyvaughan Visitor Centre, The Carron-based Michael Cusack Centre, Café Beo in Kinvara, Doolin Cave Visitor Information & Ticket Centre, The Caherconnell Stone Fort Visitor Centre and The Genealogical Centre in Corofin.

Locally organised events, activities and items of interest can be listed on the Burrenbeo website event guide by contacting info@burrenbeo.com.

The Burren Passport is available to buy at the nine Burren Information Points and the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience. It may also be download from the Burren Connect website www.burrenconnect.ie, which will go live later this month.

The Burren Connect Project is funded by the Fáilte Ireland Development fund, Clare County Council, Shannon Development, National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Monuments Service and Burrenbeo Not for Profit Organisation.

For further information or comments please contact Carol Gleeson, Project Manager, The Burren Connect Project at 065-7072296 or cgleeson@burren.ie.

Collaborate Or Die Warns New Tourism Group

Tuesday, 10 June 2008

Tourism interests in County Clare and surrounding areas are being warned that they must collaborate or risk going out of business.

The **Shannon Tourism Cooperative (STC)** claims that the region must engage in a more collaborative approach to marketing the sector if it is to develop during a period of economic uncertainty spurred on by rising fuel prices and an increasingly weakened US dollar.

The newly established group says that not enough is being done to attract and retain visitors to the area as they pass through Shannon Airport.

According to **Councillor Sean McLoughlin**, Mayor of Shannon, *'Of the estimated 3 million transit passengers using the airport annually comparatively few are fully aware of what the Shannon area and County Clare have to offer the short stay visitor.'*

He added, *'Many who book with Ryanair and other carriers immediately head for the big centres such as Limerick, Killarney and Galway. The only way of reversing this trend is by pooling local resources and marketing efforts of tourism interests in the area.'*

Mayor McLoughlin continued, *'The Cooperative's aim is to make sure visitors planning to use the airport are aware of the area's attractions and, secondly, to start building the area as a destination. By establishing a cooperative, we can share experiences and marketing budgets, along with bringing the collective strength of all the area businesses to bear in developing this potentially lucrative market.'*

He said that Aer Lingus's recent announcement that it is to curtail its services between Shannon Airport and the USA in the first three months of 2009 had made it even more fundamental that the British and Continental mini-break market be targeted.

Meanwhile, all local business are being invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the **Shannon Tourism Cooperative** where an outline plan for Autumn 2008 will be presented.

The meeting, which takes place at **8.30pm on Wednesday 18 June in the Oakwood Arms Hotel Shannon**, will feature the launch of a dedicated group website.

'The website portal will point visitors to individual websites or, where they do not exist, offer space for all companies to promote themselves on-line. The aim will be to present an upmarket image across the board for all tourism related businesses in the county', Mayor McLoughlin concluded.

For more on the **Shannon Tourism Cooperative** call **086-2473712** or email: info@shannontourismcoop.org.

Clare County Council

<http://www.clarecoco.ie/>

Clare - *Live the Life*

<http://www.clare.ie/>

Clare Ireland Tourism Information

<http://www.claretouristcouncil.ie>

Economic Development and Tourism

http://www.clarecoco.ie/Planning/Economic_Development_and_Tourism.html

Evaluation of Promotional Methods in Tourism in Co Clare

http://www.clarecdb.ie/pdfs/Promotional_Methods_in_Tourism_in_Co_Clare.pdf

Social, Economic and Cultural Profile of County Clare

http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/profile/ccdb/the_economy_of_clare/economy_of_clare.htm