



**Eastern Regional Fisheries Board**

Bord Iascaigh Réigiúnach an Oirthir

Senior Executive Officer  
Culture, Community Development &  
Amenities Department,  
Level 3,  
County Hall,  
Marine Road,  
Dun Laoghaire,  
Co. Dublin

27<sup>th</sup> September 2007

**RE: Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Draft Beach Bye-Laws 2007**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to the above draft bye-law impacting on beaches within your jurisdiction.

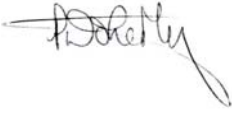
The Board is opposed to the introduction of any restrictions on angling along the beaches and surrounding areas within your area for the following reasons:

1. The substantial benefits that angling tourism brings to the local and national economy.
2. Development of sea angling has provided much needed facilities for both domestic and visiting anglers and it would not constitute value for money to alter this
3. The participation of youths in sea angling is vital for angling as a sport to continue in the future
4. A byelaw will restrict the freedom of choice and movement of resident and visiting sea anglers in the area.

I attach a detailed submission which outlines these reasons in more detail. Angling provides a recreational activity to people of all ages and with the population of Dublin ever increasing; to place restrictions on such an important activity would be detrimental to the people of Dublin.

We would therefore urge you to reconsider your proposals. We would also like to meet with you at which we could give a detailed presentation to you on this matter.

Yours Sincerely,



**Pat Doherty**  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Eastern Regional Fisheries Board (ERFB) is a statutory authority whose function it is to conserve, develop, protect, manage and promote the inland fisheries and sea angling resources within its jurisdiction. The Region extends from Northern Ireland in the north to the south Wexford coast and includes all catchments which enter the sea between these boundaries.

Sea angling in the Dublin area extends from Balbriggan in North County Dublin to Corbawn Lane in Co. Dublin. There are 53 sea angling clubs in this area who represent approximately 3500 anglers. Many of the sea angling clubs in the Greater Dublin area use the beaches within the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area for pleasure, practice and competition purposes. The beaches within this area are used for shore fishing and Coliemore and Bullock Harbour for boat fishing.

There are 2 sea angling federations and most sea angling clubs are affiliated to either one of these. The Irish Federation of Sea Anglers (IFSA) is a national organisation, with various provincial branches. The European Federation of Sea Anglers Ireland (EFSA) is a European organisation of which Ireland is a national section. Both of these organisations have vast numbers who fish the beaches in question on a regular basis.

There are also many anglers who are not members of any angling clubs and who purely fish from our beaches for the purposes of pleasure. The major attraction of sea fishing in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council area is that there is a wide variety of

species on offer to catch, it is free and easily accessible by public transport, no permits or licences are required and bait is readily available (either from a tackle shop or by digging it). This differs to other types of fishing available such as game and coarse fishing where there are more complex systems in place in order to enable you to fish.

The Board is opposed to placing any restrictions for angling on the beaches and harbours within the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. In summary, the main reasons for this are;

- The substantial benefits that angling tourism brings to the local and national economy
- Development of sea angling has provided much needed facilities for both domestic and visiting anglers and it would not constitute value for money to alter this
- The participation of youths in angling is vital for angling as a sport to continue in the future
- A byelaw will restrict the freedom of choice and movement of resident and visiting sea anglers in the area.

Each of these elements will now be looked at in more detail;

## **2) Angling Tourism**

The ERFB is responsible for promoting angling to both domestic and international markets and in doing so we work closely with Failte Ireland at a national and regional level. If angling was to be prohibited and certain areas designated, it would have detrimental effects on angling tourism in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area.

Angling Tourism is considered by Failte Ireland to be one of its key products and Ireland is rated as a top angling destination. Expenditure by overseas anglers is estimated at €66m with the average spend per angler well above that of general visitors (source: Failte Ireland). Ireland has benefited from angling tourism for decades and whilst other types of angling such as game and coarse have suffered declines in recent years, due to low stocks

in relation to salmon and illegal poaching of coarse fish, sea angling has remained consistent and in fact, Ireland's East Coast is considered a key sea angling centre at home and abroad.

The unique selling point for sea angling on the East Coast is the variety of species available including cod, Pollack, pouting, plaice, tope, wrasse, smoothound, dogfish, mackerel, bull huss and mullet to name but a few. From a marketing perspective, it is also easier to sell than other types of angling as it is free of charge, no permits are required and access in these areas is good. The popularity of the venue is clearly demonstrated by the number of shore and boat competitions held each year, charter boat bookings and enquiries made to our Board and requests for angling information from local hotels and accommodation providers.

#### *World Surfcasting Championships*

Many international Angling Championships have been brought to shores within Ireland and two of these have been headquartered in Bray in recent years. Killiney Beach and Corbawn Lane have been used as practice beaches prior to Championship competitions.

In October 1996, for the first time the World Surfcasting Championships were hosted by Ireland in Wicklow and Killiney Strand was used as a practice session for this competition. Eleven nations took part in this competition and it was a resounding success with in excess of 1,400 fish caught over the four competition days.

The ultimate result of this competition is that Killiney Beach (and a number of venues in Wicklow) is now an internationally recognised angling destination. Eamon Gilmore, TD, was heavily involved in promoting this hugely successful competition in conjunction with the Central and Eastern Regional Fisheries Boards. Further international competitions have been held on this beach since then and the ultimate benefit of this to the economy during the off peak season has been tremendous (Appendix 1).

In order to ensure Ireland continues to be a top angling destination, Failte Ireland and the Fisheries Board recently drafted a National Angling Marketing Strategy in order to jointly promote angling in Ireland to the relevant target markets and align both agencies'

marketing activities (Appendix 2). The strategy outlines a vision of what we hope to achieve by 2009 and sets out clear targets that must be met by that deadline. How can we do this if key angling areas are restricted?

### *The Effect on Local Tourism Revenue*

As you are aware, Dublin welcomed a total of 5,676m tourists in 2006, giving total revenue to the city of €1.670m. The Dun Laoghaire Rathdown catchment also benefits from a percentage of these visitors as they arrive into or travel to Dun Laoghaire during their visit, particularly as the area is easily accessible from the city centre by bus or Dart. A great deal of visitors also descend on the catchment via the HSS Seacat, as you can imagine a number of these visitors, particularly UK visitors, wish to go fishing in the area and visit the local tackle shops to purchase fishing gear and bait.

Visiting anglers come to Ireland with the sole purpose of fishing. These anglers research their trips well and they are already aware of the key marks such as Killiney Strand, Corbawn Lane, White Rock etc. They are not willing to fish in a designated area where their chances of catching fish are minimal. If this was allowed to happen we would experience a quick decrease in angling visitors to the area and local tackle shops, accommodation providers and restaurants would suffer as a result.

Casual anglers also form an important part of our angling tourism revenue. These are people who come to Ireland but not necessarily for the purpose of fishing. Often these can be business people, corporate groups or families looking for an activity to participate in whilst on holidays. Sea fishing provides a perfect activity for people to participate in and over the years we have organised a large number of incentive group trips, corporate fishing trips and provided much information to people who just want to sea fish for a day.

This type of fishing is particularly prevalent in the Dublin area, as it is estimated that 5% of our visitors are casual anglers (Source: ESRI study, 1988) and with 5.6m visitors to Dublin in 2006, the potential in this area is enormous. Any restrictions to be placed in this area would deny the citizens of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown the benefits that these visitors

bring to the local economy. Dublin is one of the few capital cities in Europe who can offer a variety of good fishing within a very short distance of its capital city.

### **3. Development of Sea Angling in the Greater Dublin area**

The Board has significantly developed and promoted the sea angling product since its inception in 1980. It has done this by carrying out surveys on the product, erecting signposts and information boards, improving access through the development of slipways and ancillary services. It has also promoted the product through the publication of brochures and other promotional material.

In 1998, funding was granted from the EU Tourism and Recreational Angling Measure to erect and install a number of information boards and finger signposts in the Region, specifically relating to sea angling. An investment of approximately €100,000 was made in this area with the purpose of developing the sea angling product in order to attract visitors to this area.

In the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area, an information board was erected at Dun Laoghaire port (Appendix 3) and finger signposts erected at the following locations; Dun Laoghaire, Bullock and Coliemore Harbour, Killiney Beach and Corbawn Lane. At the time written permission was sought and received from Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council in support of this project. As you are aware, it is a condition of the European Commission grant that these signposts are maintained for a period of ten years. These signposts have proved very successful in providing the necessary information for both domestic and visiting anglers to the area and bringing the many benefits to the local area and to Ireland as outlined above. The proposed beach byelaws would mean dismantling this infrastructure when the ten year period was up in 2008 and in the Board's opinion this would not constitute good value for money given the significant benefits that this infrastructure has brought to date.

### *Promotional Materials*

Failte Ireland and the Fisheries Boards have also made significant investments with regard to angling promotional materials over the years. The Central Fisheries Board has regularly produced angling guides which provide information on sea angling in Ireland, which included all of the beaches within the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council area. The ERFB produced its first sea angling guide in 1997 and this has been updated and improved many times. Appendix 4 contains a copy of this guide along with accompanying insert for the Dun Laoghaire area. This guide is now published in 3 languages and is widely distributed at both national and international trade shows. A new national sea angling book is currently in the design process which highlights again the importance of fishing in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. To secure positive articles in international trade magazines, the Board also organises FAM trips inviting well known international angling journalists to visit these areas to experience the fishing on offer. These promotional materials have been received extremely well by both national and international consumers.

All of this investment will be lost if anglers are restricted to designated areas and consequently new brochures and signs will need to be produced alerting anglers to the new bye-laws. We believe that this is a pointless and costly exercise that will greatly damage our reputation as an angling destination.

#### **4. Why it is not possible to effectively market designated angling areas**

Areas where there may be fish, or are known to be fish, are known to sea-anglers as 'marks'. Some are on rocky coastlines (for instance near Whiterock Beach), others are on beaches (e.g. parts of Killiney Beach, near Blackrock) and others are near harbours etc. However, whilst angling is marketed as a product, the goalposts are constantly moving as it is subject to changes in the environment and natural habitat. Fish are unpredictable, they move. This can happen for a number of reasons from outside influences such as pollution or a food source may disappear in one place and a new one appear in another. Natural reasons can also have an effect such as the shifting of sandbanks. As the fish

move, so do the marks and therefore the sea-anglers follow. It is therefore impossible to fix areas for angling and market them effectively within a set budget.

The areas that are listed as designated angling areas in the draft bye-laws i.e. Coliemore and Bullock harbours, are not suitable as shore angling areas. They are simply areas where people can hire small boats; no angler would be in a position to fish from these harbours as the area is too crowded and therefore unsafe, particularly for small children. If we were to promote these areas to tourist anglers, they would not return again and the local area would therefore suffer a downturn in angling tourism revenue.

## **5. Youth and Educational Programmes**

### *The Dublin Angling Initiative*

The Dublin Angling Initiative was set up in 1995 with the purpose of developing, promoting and encouraging young people to become involved in angling. This project is sponsored by the Board and has been a resounding success since its inception, by both developing and promoting the angling product and above all increasing our youths to the sport of angling.

Fishing courses are organised by the DAI for sea fishing (also game and coarse fishing). Since the project's inception more than 5,000 youngsters have come through these courses. Many of the young people participating in these fishing courses come through diversionary programmes funded by the Department of Justice, drugs task forces, early school leavers programmes and youth organisations. These groups recognise that angling is an important tool in their goal in helping young people, particularly from disadvantaged areas, to achieve their full potential.

In 2004, the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards launched an educational resource pack with the purpose of educating our primary school pupils about our aquatic environment. The "Something Fishy" pack has proved highly successful and since its launch thousands of primary school children around the country, (10 schools in Dublin),

have used the pack as part of their curriculum. Learning about rivers, estuaries, the coastline and the various fish species which inhabit our coastal waters are important components of the programme with a strong emphasis on angling. Appendix 5 contains a copy of this pack.

The participation of young people in angling is vital to the future of angling as a sport. It is well documented that people who take up fishing in general do so because a family member introduces them to it. The youth programmes that the Board organises therefore exposes a large audience to angling who would more than likely never have been introduced to angling. A direct result of these programmes is that a large number of young people have taken up angling as their hobby, joined fishing clubs, fished at national and international level and above all acquired a hobby for life that will be passed on to another generation.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Board is aware that the entire community must be allowed to enjoy the beach amenities in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area but it does not make sense to punish the angling community in this way. Anglers are generally very good at respecting the area and for the most part have no interest in fishing from a packed bathing area! Indeed, some anglers' fish at night as it provides the best results so this would not interfere with other community groups. Anglers are fishing these areas for the past 100 years and we have never heard a complaint to justify this action. In order to ensure an important and economically viable resource is protected, we believe a more measured approach is required

Sea angling is integral to Dublin, even more so in light of recent conservation byelaws introduced earlier this year relating to salmon. These effectively mean that all salmon fishing in the Eastern Region is effectively banned (with the exception of the Rivers Fane and Castletown in Dundalk) until further notice. Although this is essential for the future

of our salmon stocks, there have been many impacts of this closure. Apart from the loss of revenue to the economy in the short term that salmon fishing brings, at community level many angling clubs have dissolved and numbers are decreasing all the time. As a result, sea angling provides provides an alternative to game anglers who can still continue to fish and hone their sea angling skills within the local communities whilst the ban is in place.

Sea Angling helps to keep fishing and communities alive and offers people a great chance to excel at a sporting activity that is on their doorstep in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. It provides a recreational activity to people of all ages and with the population of Dublin ever increasing, to place restrictions on such an important recreational activity would be detrimental to the people of Dublin. We therefore urge the Council to reconsider their proposals.