



## AN TAISCE BLUE FLAG AND GREEN COAST AWARDS PRESS RELEASE



**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 2 pm on Friday 19th of May  
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### **2023 Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards Recognise Ireland's Best Beaches and Marinas**

#### **A Record-breaking of 159 Awards awarded for the 2023 season.**

Today, An Taisce has announced the recipients of the International Blue Flag and the National Green Coast Awards for 2023. A total of **159 awards, an increase of two awards compared to 2022**, were presented by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. Darragh O'Brien, TD, at an awards ceremony held on the Shoreline Hotel, overlooking Donabate's Balcarrick Blue Flag beach in Co. Dublin. The event was organised in collaboration with Fingal County Council.

Speaking at the awards ceremony Minister O'Brien said: *"This year celebrates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Clean Coasts and the Green Coast Awards and I am delighted to present a record-breaking 65 Green Coast Awards today. It also marks 36 years of the Blue Flag as an international programme and I am pleased to present 94 Blue Flags for the 2023 season. During its 36 years, the Blue Flag has become an internationally recognised symbol of high standards in water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety. Today's high number of awards is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the local authorities, An Taisce, local coastal communities and other volunteers around the country."*

For the 2023 season, 159 awards were conferred, marking a notable milestone as two additional sites received the prestigious award this year. During the ceremony, 84 beaches and ten marinas in Ireland received the Blue Flag, while 65 beaches were awarded the Green Coast Award.

**In the 36<sup>th</sup> edition of the award in Ireland, 84 beaches and 10 marinas were awarded the prestigious Blue Flag** this year. Talking about the event, Ms. Cathy Baxter, Director of the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce, said: *"We were delighted to have been present on the beautiful sandy beach of Donabate, as we gathered to celebrate another remarkable year of recognition for all the sites that have been honoured with the Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards for the 2023 season. It takes immense dedication and effort to manage a beach or marina to meet the rigorous standards set by these prestigious award programmes, and we extend our warmest congratulations to all the deserving sites that have achieved this remarkable reward."*

For 2023, 81 of the 85 beaches and all 10 marinas awarded last year have retained Blue Flag status for the season 2023. Three additional sites from Mayo are included this year, Bertra, Clare Island (Louisburgh) and Old Head, which it was awarded for the first time since 2012.

**The Green Coast Award** has achieved a noteworthy milestone by granting 65 awards for the 2023 bathing season. This is an increase of 3 awards compared to last year, and the highest number of awards given since its establishment. These achievements coincide with the celebration of Clean Coasts's 20-year anniversary.

The 3 extra sites awarded are Carrowniskey Beach, County Mayo, awarded for the last time in 2019, Bettystown in County Meath, awarded for the first time, and Rosslare Harbour Beach in County Wexford, last awarded in 2021.

The Green Coast Awards were first presented back in 2003 to four beaches in County Wexford, it was rolled out nationally in 2008 and has gone from strength to strength ever since. An important aspect of the Green Coast Awards is the involvement of Clean Coasts groups, of which there are currently over 1,800 comprised of tens of thousands of volunteers nationwide. These volunteers participate in community clean-ups and in cooperation with Local Authorities help manage their local beaches throughout the year.

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**Detailed explanatory notes for editors below.**

### **Summary Awards: 159 awards for 2023**

- 159 awards announced for 151 sites today, 2 more than last year with 8 sites receiving both the Blue Flag and Green Coast Award.
- The county with the most awarded sites is Cork with 27: 10 Blue Flag beaches, 2 Blue Flag marinas and 15 Green Coast Awarded sites.
- The 8 sites receiving both the Blue Flag and Green Coast Award are Fountainstown and Inchydoney East Beach (County Cork), Balcarrick, Donabate (County Fingal), Salthill Beach and Silverstrand Beach (Galway City), Trá Inis Oírr (County Galway), Baile an Sceilg, Ballinskelligs (County Kerry) and Rosses Point Beach (County Sligo).

### **Blue Flag key notes: 84 Beaches and 10 marinas awarded the Blue Flag for 2023**

- The Blue Flag Programme has been in operation since 1988 in Ireland, when 19 flags were awarded.
- 94 Blue Flags are being announced today, 84 beaches and 10 marinas.
- 3 beaches not awarded in 2022 have been awarded for the coming bathing season. These are: Bertra, Clare Island (Louisburgh), and Old Head, all in County Mayo.
- Bertra in Mayo, which last flew a Blue Flag in 2020 has been awarded for the 2023 bathing season.
- Clare Island, Louisburgh in Mayo regained its Blue Flag status after losing it in 2022 for not having achieved the "Excellent" classification for water quality.
- Old Head in County Mayo has been awarded a Blue Flag for the first time since 2012.
- All 10 marinas awarded in 2022 have retained Blue Flag status for the coming season.
- Kerry is the county with the most Blue Flags in 2023 with 15.
- The 4 beaches awarded in 2022 that have not been awarded for the 2023 season are: Cappagh Pier, Kilrush in County Clare, Garretstown in County Cork, and Counsellors' Strand (Dunmore East) and Dunmore Strand (Dunmore East) in County Waterford.

### **Green Coast Award Key Notes: 65 beaches awarded the Blue Flag for 2023**

- 2023 is the year of the 20th anniversary of Clean Coasts and the Green Coast Award, which started locally in Wexford in 2003 and became a national award in 2008.
- A new milestone has been reached as a record-breaking number of 65 beaches have been awarded for the 2023 season.
- 3 new sites were awarded this year, 2 of them regained the award lost in previous seasons. These sites are Carrowniskey Beach (County Mayo), Bettystown (County Meath) and Rosslare Harbour Beach (County Wexford).
- Carrowniskey Beach, County Mayo, awarded for the last time in 2019, has been awarded for the 2023 season.
- Bettystown in County Meath has been awarded a Green Coast Award for the first time this year.
- Rosslare Harbour Beach in County Wexford, regained the award after not being awarded in 2022.
- Cork is the county with the most Green Coast Award beaches again in 2023 with 15.

- Waterville in County Kerry and Portacloy in County Mayo, last awarded in 2022, haven't been awarded due to not achieving the "Excellent" water quality status required.

## 1. Blue Flag Beaches Awarded by Management Body 2023: 84 (-1)

#	LOCAL AUTHORITY	BEACH	SITE TYPE	2023 AWARD STATUS
1	Clare County Council	Ballycuggeran	Beach	AWARDED
2	Clare County Council	Fanore	Beach	AWARDED
3	Clare County Council	Kilkee	Beach	AWARDED
4	Clare County Council	Lahinch	Beach	AWARDED
5	Clare County Council	Mountshannon, Lough Derg	Beach	AWARDED
6	Clare County Council	Spanish Point	Beach	AWARDED
7	Clare County Council	White Strand Doonbeg	Beach	AWARDED
8	Clare County Council	White Strand Miltown Malbay	Beach	AWARDED
9	Cork County Council	Barley Cove	Beach	AWARDED
10	Cork County Council	Fountainstown	Beach	AWARDED
11	Cork County Council	Garrylucas, White Strand	Beach	AWARDED
12	Cork County Council	Inchydoney East Beach	Beach	AWARDED
13	Cork County Council	Inchydoney West Beach	Beach	AWARDED
14	Cork County Council	Owenahincha, Little Island Strand	Beach	AWARDED
15	Cork County Council	Redbarn	Beach	AWARDED
16	Cork County Council	Tragumna	Beach	AWARDED
17	Cork County Council	Youghal, Claycastle	Beach	AWARDED
18	Cork County Council	Youghal, Front Strand	Beach	AWARDED
19	Donegal County Council	Culdaff	Beach	AWARDED
20	Donegal County Council	Bundoran	Beach	AWARDED
21	Donegal County Council	Carrickfinn	Beach	AWARDED
22	Donegal County Council	Downings	Beach	AWARDED
23	Donegal County Council	Fintra	Beach	AWARDED
24	Donegal County Council	Killahoey	Beach	AWARDED
25	Donegal County Council	Marble Hill	Beach	AWARDED
26	Donegal County Council	Murvagh	Beach	AWARDED
27	Donegal County Council	Naran	Beach	AWARDED
28	Donegal County Council	Portsalon	Beach	AWARDED
29	Donegal County Council	Rossnowlagh	Beach	AWARDED
30	Donegal County Council	Stroove	Beach	AWARDED
31	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Killiney	Beach	AWARDED
32	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Seapoint	Beach	AWARDED
33	Fingal County Council	Balcarrick, Donabate	Beach	AWARDED
34	Fingal County Council	Portmarnock, Velvet Strand Beach	Beach	AWARDED
35	Fingal County Council	Rush, South Beach		AWARDED
36	Galway City Council	Salthill Beach	Beach	AWARDED
37	Galway City Council	Silverstrand Beach	Beach	AWARDED
38	Galway County Council	An Trá Mór, Coill Rua, Indreabhán	Beach	AWARDED
39	Galway County Council	Bathing Place at Portumna	Beach	AWARDED
40	Galway County Council	Cill Mhuirbhígh, Inis Mór	Beach	AWARDED
41	Galway County Council	Loughrea Lake	Beach	AWARDED
42	Galway County Council	Trá an Dóilín, An Ceathrú Rua	Beach	AWARDED
43	Galway County Council	Trá Inis Oírr (Main Beach)	Beach	AWARDED

44	Kerry County Council	Baile an Sceilg (Ballinskelligs)	Beach	AWARDED
45	Kerry County Council	Ballybunion North Beach	Beach	AWARDED
46	Kerry County Council	Ballybunion South Beach	Beach	AWARDED
47	Kerry County Council	Ballyheigue	Beach	AWARDED
48	Kerry County Council	Banna Strand	Beach	AWARDED
49	Kerry County Council	Doire Fhionáin (Derrynane)	Beach	AWARDED
50	Kerry County Council	Fenit	Beach	AWARDED
51	Kerry County Council	Fiontrá (Ventry)	Beach	AWARDED
52	Kerry County Council	Inch	Beach	AWARDED
53	Kerry County Council	Kells	Beach	AWARDED
54	Kerry County Council	Maharabeg	Beach	AWARDED
55	Kerry County Council	Rossbeigh, White Strand	Beach	AWARDED
56	Kerry County Council	White Strand, Caherciveen	Beach	AWARDED
57	Louth County Council	Clogherhead	Beach	AWARDED
58	Louth County Council	Port, Lurganboy	Beach	AWARDED
59	Louth County Council	Shelling Hill/Templetown	Beach	AWARDED
60	Mayo County Council	Dooega Beach, Achill Island	Beach	AWARDED
61	Mayo County Council	Dugort Beach, Achill Island	Beach	AWARDED
62	Mayo County Council	Elly Bay, Belmullet	Beach	AWARDED
63	Mayo County Council	Golden Strand, Achill Island	Beach	AWARDED
64	Mayo County Council	Keel Beach, Achill Island	Beach	AWARDED
65	Mayo County Council	Keem Beach, Achill Island	Beach	AWARDED
66	Mayo County Council	Mullaghroe Beach, Belmullet	Beach	AWARDED
67	Mayo County Council	Mulranny Beach	Beach	AWARDED
68	Mayo County Council	Ross Beach, Killala	Beach	AWARDED
69	Mayo County Council	Bertra	Beach	NEW AWARDED
70	Mayo County Council	Clare Island, Louisburgh	Beach	NEW AWARDED
71	Mayo County Council	Old Head	Beach	NEW AWARDED
72	Sligo County Council	Rosses Point Beach	Beach	AWARDED
73	Waterford City & County Council	Ardmore Beach	Beach	AWARDED
74	Waterford City & County Council	Clonea Beach	Beach	AWARDED
75	Waterford City & County Council	Tramore Beach	Beach	AWARDED
76	Wexford County Council	Ballinesker	Beach	AWARDED
77	Wexford County Council	Ballymoney North Beach	Beach	AWARDED
78	Wexford County Council	Carne	Beach	AWARDED
79	Wexford County Council	Curracloe	Beach	AWARDED
80	Wexford County Council	Morriscastle	Beach	AWARDED
81	Wexford County Council	Rosslare Strand	Beach	AWARDED
82	Wicklow County Council	Brittas Bay South	Beach	AWARDED
83	Wicklow County Council	Brittas Bay North	Beach	AWARDED
84	Wicklow County Council	Greystones South Beach	Beach	AWARDED

## 2. Blue Flag Marinas Awarded by Management Body 2023: 10

#	COUNTY	MANAGEMENT BODY	SITE NAME	AWARD STATUS 2023
1	Cork	Kinsale Yacht Club	Kinsale Yacht Club	AWARDED
2	Cork	Royal Cork Yacht club	The Royal Cork Yacht Club Marina	AWARDED
3	Clare	Kilrush Maritime Ltd.	Kilrush Marina	AWARDED

4	Donegal	Donegal County Council	Greencastle Marina	AWARDED
5	Donegal	Donegal County Council and Rathmullan Charters	Rathmullan Marina	AWARDED
6	Kerry	Kerry County Council	Fenit Marina	AWARDED
7	Kerry	Kilrush Maritime Ltd.	Portmagee Seasonal Pontoon	AWARDED
8	Westmeath	Quigley's Marina	Quigley's Marina, Killinure Point	AWARDED
9	Wexford	Wexford County Council	Kilmore Quay Marina	AWARDED
10	Wexford	Wexford County Council	New Ross Marina	AWARDED

### 3. Green Coast Awards by County 2023: 65 Beaches (+3)

#	BEACH NAME	LOCAL AUTHORITY	AWARDED 2023
1	Bishops Quarter	Clare County Council	Awarded
2	Ballyallia Lake	Clare County Council	Awarded
3	Carrigaholt Beach	Clare County Council	Awarded
4	Seafield	Clare County Council	Awarded
5	Ardnahinch, Shanagarry	Cork County Council	Awarded
6	Red Strand	Cork County Council	Awarded
7	Ballynamona Beach	Cork County Council	Awarded
8	Inch Strand	Cork County Council	Awarded
9	Ring	Cork County Council	Awarded
10	Oysterhaven	Cork County Council	Awarded
11	Ballyrisode	Cork County Council	Awarded
12	Galley Cove	Cork County Council	Awarded
13	Cadogan's Strand,	Cork County Council	Awarded
14	Garnish Beach, Lehanmore	Cork County Council	Awarded
15	Dooneen Pier	Cork County Council	Awarded
16	Fountainstown Beach	Cork County Council	Awarded
17	Inchydoney East	Cork County Council	Awarded
18	Rocky Bay	Cork County Council	Awarded
19	Sherkin Island, Silver Strand Beach	Cork County Council	Awarded
20	Ballyheirnan	Donegal County Council	Awarded
21	Dooley Beach	Donegal County Council	Awarded
22	Drumnatinney	Donegal County Council	Awarded
23	Magheroarty Beach	Donegal County Council	Awarded
24	Balcarrick Beach, Donabate	Fingal County Council	Awarded
25	Salthill	Galway City Council	Awarded
26	Silver Strand	Galway City Council	Awarded
27	Aillebrack/Silver Hill	Galway County Council	Awarded
28	Renvyle Beach (The Whitestrand)	Galway County Council	Awarded
29	Dumhach Beach	Galway County Council	Awarded
30	East End Bay, Inisbofin	Galway County Council	Awarded
31	Trá Inis Oirr	Galway County Council	Awarded
32	Trá Poll na gCaorach, Inis Oirr	Galway County Council	Awarded

33	Ballinskelligs	Kerry County Council	Awarded
34	Castlegregory	Kerry County Council	Awarded
35	Littor	Kerry County Council	Awarded
36	Béal Bán	Kerry County Council	Awarded
37	Seapoint Beach, Termonfeckin	Louth County Council	Awarded
38	Rinroe	Mayo County Council	Awarded
39	Srah Beach	Mayo County Council	Awarded
40	Cross, Erris Peninsula	Mayo County Council	Awarded
41	Termon Beach	Mayo County Council	Awarded
42	Tránaun, Inishturk	Mayo County Council	Awarded
43	Carrowniskey Beach	Mayo County Council	New Awarded
44	Mornington	Meath County Council	Awarded
45	Bettystown Beach	Meath County Council	New Awarded
46	Streedagh Beach	Sligo County Council	Awarded
47	Dunmorán Strand	Sligo County Council	Awarded
48	Rosses Point	Sligo County Council	Awarded
49	Annestown	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
50	Ballyquin	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
51	Curragh	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
52	Goat Island Beach	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
53	Guillamene Cove	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
54	Newtown Cove, Tramore	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
55	Kilfarrassey	Waterford City and County Council	Awarded
56	Baginbun Beach	Wexford County Council	Awarded
57	Ballyhealy	Wexford County Council	Awarded
58	Booley Bay	Wexford County Council	Awarded
59	Cahore Point Beach	Wexford County Council	Awarded
60	Cullenstown Strand	Wexford County Council	Awarded
61	Culleton's Gap	Wexford County Council	Awarded
62	Grange	Wexford County Council	Awarded
63	Old Bawn Beach	Wexford County Council	Awarded
64	St. Helen's Bay	Wexford County Council	Awarded
65	Rosslare Harbour Beach	Wexford County Council	New Awarded

#### 4. ABOUT BLUE FLAG

- The Blue Flag is administered in Ireland by An Taisce on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). The Foundation for Environmental Education is an international organisation that has been promoting environmental education for sustainable development since 1981. FEE is an umbrella organisation with members in 73 countries world-wide. The Blue Flag programme is funded in Ireland by the Department of the Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Blue Flag beaches must be identified bathing waters and are judged against a total of 33 criteria [www.blueflagireland.org](http://www.blueflagireland.org)
- The Blue Flag originated in France in 1985 when French coastal Local Authorities were awarded with the Blue Flag for compliance with sewage treatment and bathing water quality criteria.
- In 1987, the "European Year of the Environment", the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe (FEEE) presented the French concept to the European Commission, and the Blue Flag Programme was launched as one of the year's community activities. In addition to sewage treatment and bathing water quality, criteria for obtaining a Blue Flag on a European level included

other areas of environmental management, such as waste management and coastal planning and protection. Marinas were also eligible for the award.

- The Blue Flag has been operating in Ireland since 1987, in 1988 the first year flags were awarded here, 19 beaches and 2 marinas received the award.
- Blue Flags are awarded on the basis of:
  - Compliance with Blue Flag criteria relating to water quality, facilities for visitors, beach management, environmental education and the provision of information.
  - The results of in-season beach inspections which are carried out on 100% of all awarded beaches.
  - Recommendations of the National and International Blue Flag juries.

## **5. ABOUT GREEN COAST AWARD**

- The Green Coast Awards is supported by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and by Fáilte Ireland.
- The aim of the Green Coast Award is to recognise beaches of high environmental quality. To achieve the award, beaches must have excellent water quality and have effective and appropriate management to ensure the protection of the natural environment.
- The Green Coast Award aims to acknowledge and promote environmentally sensitive management of beaches. It places a strong emphasis on community involvement and encourages Local Authorities to work together with local communities in the management of sites.
- The Green Coast Award builds on the public participation process as it involves local communities in the production of beach management plans and encourages their participation in the adoption and implementation of these plans. This process gives the people who are most affected by such the plans, a say in how they should be designed and implemented, thus promoting a fine example of the bottom up approach.
- The plans must be sensitive to conservation sites of national and international importance and ensure that they are implemented in line with international beach management best practice.
- The Green Coast Award is also run in Northern Ireland by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and in Wales by Keep Wales Tidy.
- The Green Coast Award recognises beaches for their clean environment, excellent water quality and natural beauty. Green Coast Award sites are exceptional places to visit and enjoy our rich coastal heritage and diversity.
- The Green Coast Awards were presented back in 2003 to four beaches in County Wexford, it was rolled out nationally in 2008 and has gone from strength to strength ever since. An important aspect of the Green Coast Awards is the involvement of Clean Coasts groups of which there are currently over 2000 comprised of tens of thousands of volunteers nationwide. These volunteers participate in community clean-ups and in cooperation with Local Authorities help sensitively manage their local beaches throughout the year.

## **6. BLUE FLAG CRITERIA SUMMARY**

### **Criteria under which Blue Flag beaches are assessed (33 criteria):**

#### **1) Environmental Education and Information**

- Information about the Blue Flag must be displayed.
- Environmental education activities must be offered and promoted to beach users.
- Information about bathing water quality must be displayed.
- Information relating to local eco-systems and environmental phenomena must be displayed.
- A map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed.

- A code of conduct that reflects appropriate laws governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas must be displayed.

## **2) Water Quality**

- The beach must fully comply with the water quality sampling and frequency requirements.
- The beach must fully comply with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis.
- No industrial, waste-water or sewage-related discharges should affect the beach area.
- The beach must comply with the Blue Flag requirements for the microbiological parameter *Escherichia coli* (faecal coli bacteria) and intestinal enterococci (streptococci)
- The beach must comply with the Blue Flag requirements for physical and chemical parameters.

## **3) Environmental Management**

- The local authority/beach operator should establish a beach management committee.
- The local authority/beach operator must comply with all regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach.
- The beach must be clean.
- Algae vegetation or natural debris should be left on the beach.
- Waste disposal bins/containers must be available at the beach in adequate numbers and they must be regularly maintained.
- Facilities for the separation of recyclable waste materials should be available at the beach.
- An adequate number of toilet or restroom facilities must be provided.
- The toilet or restroom facilities must be kept clean.
- The toilet or restroom facilities must have controlled sewage disposal.
- There should be no unauthorised camping, driving or dumping of waste on the beach.
- Access to the beach by dogs and other domestic animals must be strictly controlled.
- All buildings and beach equipment must be properly maintained.
- Coral reefs in the vicinity of the beach must be monitored.
- A sustainable means of transportation should be promoted in the beach area.

## **4) Safety and Services**

- An adequate number of lifeguards and/or lifesaving equipment must be available at the beach.
- First aid equipment must be available on the beach.
- Emergency plans to cope with pollution risks must be in place.
- There must be management of beach users and events to prevent conflicts and accidents.
- There must be safety measures in place to protect beach users.
- A supply of drinking water should be available at the beach.
- At least one Blue Flag beach in each municipality must have wheelchair and accessibility features.
- Wheelchair access and accessibility features must be in place for at least one Blue Flag beach in each municipality.

## **7. ABOUT CLEAN COASTS:**

In 2023, the Clean Coasts programme is celebrating its 20th birthday. Clean Coasts is a charity programme, run through the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce, which engages communities in the protection of Ireland's beaches, seas and marine life.

Since 2003, Clean Coasts has been working with communities to help protect and care for Ireland's waterways, coastline, seas, ocean and marine life. Clean Coasts thrives to create tangible and immediate improvements to Ireland's coastal environment, involving thousands of volunteers removing large quantities of marine litter from our coastline each year.



For the past 20 years, Clean Coasts has grown from strength to strength and now includes two main national clean-up drives, as well as other initiatives, including the Green Coast Award, the Love Your Coast Photography competition, the Clean Coasts Roadshows for coastal communities and the Ocean Hero Awards. All these initiatives are aimed at celebrating the beauty of our coast and the efforts of our volunteers across all of Ireland.

Currently, there are over 2,000 registered Clean Coasts volunteering groups and 40,000 volunteers. There are a variety of group types such as community groups, residents' associations, tidy towns groups, sports clubs, schools, businesses, universities etc. Clean Coasts organises hundreds of beach clean-ups annually mobilising thousands of volunteers, removing considerable quantities of marine litter from Ireland's beaches and waterways. Our volunteering has expanded to also include Corporate Volunteering.