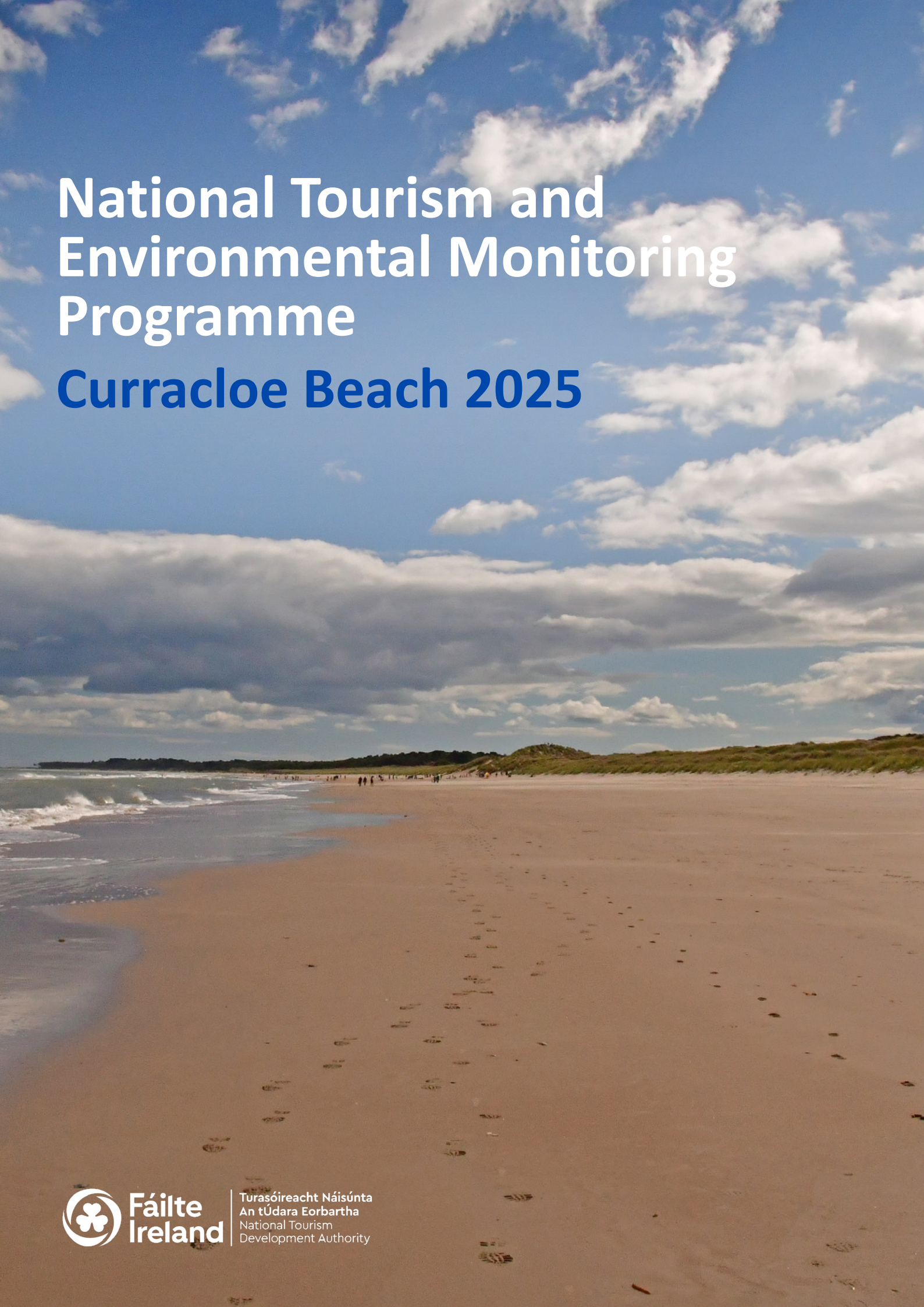
National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme

Curracloe Beach 2025



Fáilte Ireland
Turasóireacht Náisúnta
An tÚdara Eorbartha
National Tourism
Development Authority

National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme

Report for Curracloe Beach 2025

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CURRACLOE BEACH – INTERESTING FINDS

Interesting Finds

Six-spot burnet moths were abundant throughout the dunes. Cocoon cases were observed on Marram grasses, as was Bird's-foot trefoil – a host plant for the larvae. The Raven, located directly south of Curracloe Beach, is home to the only population of Natterjack Toad outside of Co. Kerry. It breeds in freshwater pools in the dunes.

Features of the Site

- Parking including bicycle racks is available in the main car park. Parking is also available in The Raven overflow car park.
- Beach equipment and food and beverages are available at 'The Strand'.
- Toilet facilities are available in the car park and are being supplemented with a new watersports facility which opened on the 28th of August 2025.
- Categorised rubbish bins and dog waste bags and bins are available in the main car park.
- A beach wheelchair is available free of charge.
- A lifeguard hut and life-rings are present along the beach.
- Signage on the site relates to beach and water safety, local history, local amenities and services, beach bye-laws, and dune restoration.
- The dune restoration efforts are underway at the main entrance of the beach.

Habitats

The following habitats were recorded on site:

- Marram dunes (CD2)
- Fixed dunes (CD3)
- Embryonic dunes (CD1)
- Sand shores (LS2)
- Dense bracken (HD1)
- Dune scrub and woodland (CD4)
- Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
- Exposed sand, gravel or till (ED1)
- Amenity grassland (improved) (GA2)
- Recolonising bare ground (ED3)

Key Recommendations

- A small area at the entrance to the beach has been fenced off for dune restoration. The extension of the fencing along the beach should be considered.
- The construction of a formal pathway / trail leading from the main car park through the dunes would reduce the damage to the dune habitat. This could extend from the car park or existing boardwalk, and lead to the beach and / or the Raven overflow car park.
- The addition of signage for biodiversity should be considered. This could include information on ground nesting birds in the dunes, wetland and coastal birds, including species associated with The Raven Point.
- The provision of teleological signage indicating that dogs should remain on a lead should be provided, accompanied by dog waste bins and bags, and associated signage.
- A formal path with teleological signage and way markers should be considered to direct visitors from the Raven car park towards the beach.
- The provision of rubbish bins and signage regarding beach safety and bye-laws in The Raven overflow car park should be considered.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) was appointed by Fáilte Ireland to conduct Visitor and Environmental Surveys as part of the National Environmental Surveying & Monitoring Programme. Fáilte Ireland regularly engages with environmental research that is used to make informed management decisions and produce robust guidelines to facilitate the protection of the environment. From its inception in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Operational Monitoring Programme has been conducting research into the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment.

Building on the success of the WAW environmental monitoring programme which ran from 2015-2019, Fáilte Ireland expanded the programme to a national level. From 2021 to 2022 the programme monitored 19 individual sites located in all of Fáilte Ireland's regional areas: The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East, and Dublin. This 2025 National Monitoring report builds on environmental surveying and monitoring undertaken on behalf of Fáilte Ireland as far back as 2015 and to date (excluding the 2025 data), the surveys have monitored a total of 70 sites and recorded the activities and effects of over 31,000 visitors at a range of popular sites, including inland, urban, coastal and WAW discovery points.

The environmental surveys and monitoring in 2023 followed the methodologies used in previous years. Following the completion of the 2023 surveys, a review of the methodology was undertaken. In developing the survey methodology used in 2024 and 2025, ROD considered the methodology for gathering the data, the presentation of the data, and the usefulness of the data gathered. The review also considered the time required to gather the data.

Eight sites were surveyed in 2025. Figure 1.1 below shows the locations of these sites. This report is for Curracloe Beach, Co. Wexford.

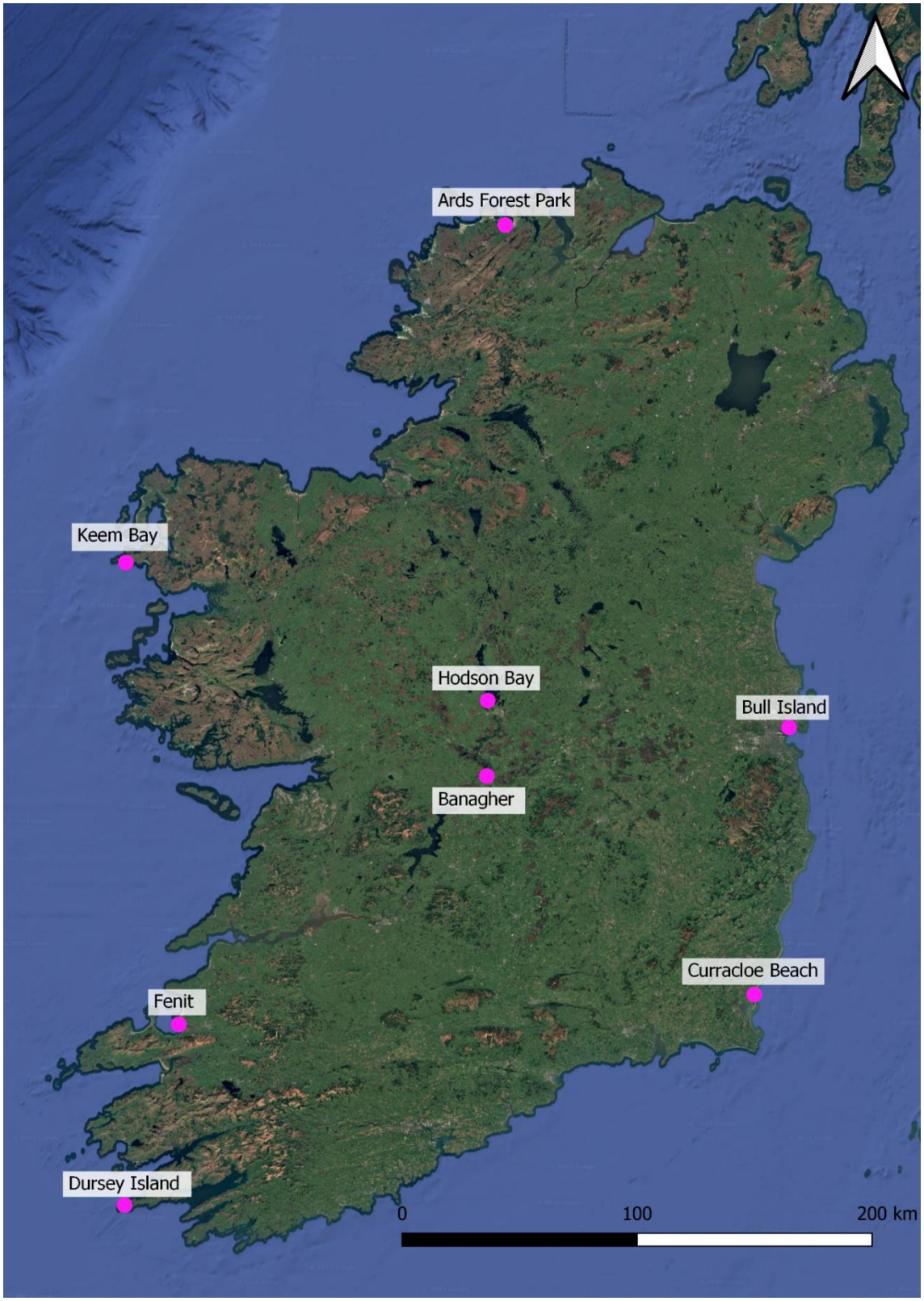

Figure 1.1 **Environmental Monitoring Programme 2025 locations. Basemap provided by Google.**

1.2 Aim of the Report

The purpose of the monitoring programme is as follows:

- To gain insight from an environmental perspective at amenity and recreation sites across Ireland;
- To obtain data on path and trail conditions etc. for each site;
- To obtain data relating to habitats, flora, and fauna for each site;
- To identify observable trends or variations among the sites;
- To make recommendations where appropriate for site management for the benefit of the site, the visitor, and the natural environment.

1.3 Site Description of Curracloe Beach

Curracloe Beach, a 'Blue Flag' beach, is located along the Irish Sea, north of Wexford Town in Co. Wexford and is accessible by a local road network connected to the R742. The area being surveyed for this report ("the site") consists of the main carpark, the overflow carpark for the Raven, the dunes and the beach. This site is located 1.6km east of Curracloe village, and 8km northwest of Wexford Town. The site boundary is presented in Figure 1.2 below.

Curracloe Beach is a long white sandy strand. The 11km beach is popular among sun bathers, walkers, nature lovers, surfers, and swimmers alike. The site is a popular tourist attraction in itself, and has also and featured in the films 'Saving Private Ryan' and 'Brooklyn'. The '*Wexford 2022-2028 County Development Plan'* (Wexford County Council) includes Curracloe Beach along with a few other named coastal hotspots as "Leading Lights" for Coastal Tourism in Wexford which will receive particular focus in the development and promotion of Wexford's coastal offering. Bins, a coffee shop and restaurant, toilet facilities, parking, and surfing facilities are available on site.

The site is located within one European designated site, the Raven Special Protection Area (SPA) and one Nationally Designated site, the Wexford Slobs and Harbour Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). The site is 300m from the Raven Point Nature Reserve Special Area of Conservation (SAC), 400m from the Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA, and 1.6km from the Screen Hills SAC.

Figure 1.2 **Site boundary outlined in red. Basemap provided by Google.**

1.4 Critical Infrastructure

Table 1.1 to Table 1.3 below provide information on the infrastructure at Curracloe Beach. Uisce Éireann's website was used to access information on the Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment Capacity Registers for County Wexford (Uisce Éireann 2025a, b).

Table 1.1 Curracloe Beach Wastewater Infrastructure

Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)	Uisce Éireann Indication of Capacity
• Toilet facilities are available in the car park. A new watersports facility with showers and toilets opened on the 28th August 2025 • The nearest settlements with a WWTP are located in Blackwater (WWTP Reg # D0143) and Ballymurn (WWTP Reg #D0407).	There is spare capacity available at Blackwater WWTP and Ballymurn WWTP.

Table 1.2 Summary of Drinking Water Infrastructure at Curracloe Beach

Drinking Water	Water Resource Name	Uisce Éireann Indication of Capacity
The nearest serviced settlement to the site is Castlebridge-Blackwater	Sow Regional	Potential capacity available (level of service improvement required).

Table 1.3 Summary of Transport Infrastructure at Curracloe Beach

Nearest Settlement	Current Transport Infrastructure	Comment
Curracloe	Curracloe Beach is accessed via the R743. The main car park is in the north of the site at the beach's main entrance, and the overflow car park for the Raven is to the south of the site.	The Wexford Summer Beach Service runs to Curracloe from Wexford and Enniscorthy, bringing visitors to the beach main car park. In 2025, the service was available from the 31st of May to the 31st of August (TFI, 2025). Bus Éireann operates the No. 379 Bus from Roasslare Harbour to Gorey. The Michael Gray Coach Hire service provides the No. 872 Bus from Ballyvaldon to Kilmuckridge and the No. 875 Bus from Blackwater to Wexford Clonard Village. Both Michael Gray Coach Hire services and the Bus Éireann No. 379 stop in Curracloe village, which is approximately 30-minutes' walk to the beach.

2. METHODOLOGY

The following surveys were undertaken:

- Habitat survey
- Pathway condition survey
- Survey of the features, signage and hazards

The survey at Curracloe Beach was undertaken on the 7th of August 2025. The weather conditions were overcast and breezy. The sub-sections below present the methodology used.

2.1 Habitat Conditions Assessment Methodology

The habitats within the site were classified and mapped in accordance with *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000) and *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Surveying and Mapping* (Smith et al. 2011). Notes were taken on species composition and habitat condition. Fossitt habitats corresponding to Annex I habitats were noted using the *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats* (EC, 2013). A desktop study was also undertaken to identify designated sites and rare and protected species in the vicinity of each site. Incidental sightings of birds, mammals, reptiles, etc. were also recorded during the site surveys.

The condition of the habitat in each polygon or line will were noted, including any damage and the likely cause of the damage. The areas along pathways are outlined by the pathway condition assessment in Section 2.2 below. The following criteria were used to assess habitat condition:

- Extent of habitat degradation;
- Impact of habitat degradation (localised or widespread);
- Potential for the habitat to recover; and
- Whether or not intervention is required.

2.2 Pathway Condition Assessment Methodology

The main pathways were defined during the site visit and a desk study which included a review of the Strava heat maps (www.strava.com/heatmap), and a review of the previous site monitoring reports, if available. Typically, the main paths are formalised waymarked trails or heavily trafficked pathways that are not formalised. These paths usually link the site entry points and car parks to a destination or feature of interest. The pathways were categorised into sections by type and composition. The different types of pathway are described in Table 2.1 below. Each path section is described as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory’ based on the condition of the path and whether or not it could accommodate the current levels of use. Indicators that a path was not suitable for the current levels of use included the presence of wet areas, erosion, trip hazards, damaged pavement, braiding, path widening and habitat loss along the path. Paths that generally facilitated unobstructed movement between locations were deemed as ‘satisfactory’. It should be noted that the methodology outlined here is independent of and not linked to the trail registration and management process run by Sport Ireland Outdoors.

Table 2.1 Pathway Types

Pathway Type	Description
Paved Car Park	An area used for parking, wider than the road, that is paved, usually with tarmacadam.
Gravel Car Park	An area used for parking, wider than the road, that is gravel or crushed stone.
Paved Road	A road that is paved with tarmacadam or similar hard material.
Gravel Road	A road consisting of gravel or crushed stone, with no grass in the middle.
Gravel Track	A single vehicle pathway used by small numbers of vehicles. Tracks are normally paved with gravel and can have grass in the middle
Grassy Track	A single vehicle pathway used by small numbers of vehicles. These tracks are not paved and are used primarily by tractors, quads or small numbers of private vehicles.
Paved Path	A path is primarily for foot traffic. Paved paths are found in more developed areas, to cater for higher levels of traffic.
Gravel Path	A path is primarily for foot traffic and can be a single track or a track wide enough for several people to walk abreast. Gravel paths are found in more developed areas, to cater for higher levels of traffic.
Grassy Path	A path is primarily for foot traffic and can be a single track or a track wide enough for several people to walk abreast. Grassy paths are found in less developed areas, often beyond feature of interest, and are used less frequently.
Bare Ground Path	These paths occur where the vegetation had been eroded by foot traffic and is bare ground, or damages vegetation. These paths are often widespread on sites where formal waymarked trails are not provided.

2.3 Features, Signage and Hazards

Signage, features of interest, and hazards were recorded, photographed and mapped. Features include built heritage, sculptures as well as the temporary toilets and bins. Hazards including unstable walls, broken fences or unprotected cliff tops.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Habitat Condition Assessment

Habitats were surveyed during the optimum habitat survey season i.e., April to September (Smith et al., 2011). Habitats were classified according to *A Guide to Habitats* in *Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000). Table 3.1 lists the habitats identified in Curracloe Beach along with their corresponding Annex I habitats. A habitat map in presented in Figure 3.1. It should be noted that having a corresponding Annex I habitat does not mean the Annex I habitat is automatically present.

Table 3.1 Fossitt (2000) habitats in Curracloe Beach and this corresponding Annex I habitats.

Fossitt 2000 Habitat	Annex I habitats (Natura 2000 code)[1]
Marram dunes (CD2)	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes") (2120)
Fixed dunes (CD3)	Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes") (2130)* Decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum* (2140)* Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (*Calluno-Ulicetea*) (2150)* Dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*) (2170)
Embryonic dunes (CD1)	Embryonic shifting dunes (2110)
Sand shores (LS2)	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide (1140) Annual vegetation of drift lines (1210)
Dense bracken (HD1)	None
Dune scrub and woodland (CD4)	None
Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)	None
Exposed sand, gravel or till (ED1)	None
Amenity grassland (improved) (GA2)	None
Recolonising bare ground (ED3)	None

Dune Habitats (CD1, CD2, CD3)

Marram dunes (CD2) is the dominant habitat type on the site, with Embryonic shifting dunes (CD1) forming the interface between the marram dunes and the beach. Marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) dominates the marram dunes, with wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), evening-primrose (*Oenothera sp.*), lesser hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), common bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), hare's-tail (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), narrow-leaved hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum*), sand pansy (*Viola tricolor ssp. curtisii*), wild pansy (*Viola tricolor ssp. tricolor*), ivy (*Hedera hibernica*), and mosses also present.

[1] * Indicates priority habitat

Fixed dunes (CD3) are present further from the shore. The species recorded were similar to that of marram dunes, with marram grass present, but not dominating. The species recorded were marram grass, bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), narrow-leaved hawkweed, kidney vetch, Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), wild carrot, cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*), knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), bent (*Agrostis sp.*), false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), bird's-foot-trefoil, crested dogs-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), wild thyme (*Thymus drucei*), and mosses. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and willow saplings (*Salix sp.*) are also scattered throughout this habitat. In some areas, Maram grass and bracken dominate, particularly where the habitat transitions into marram dunes (CD2) or dense bracken (HD1). Images of marram and fixed dunes are presented in Plate 3.1 below.

Plate 3.1 **Marram dunes (CD2) with informal paths and chestnut pale fencing at the beach entrance (top), and fixed dunes (CD3) with informal paths visible (bottom).**

Dune habitats support ground-nesting birds, lizard and other sensitive species. Dogs were observed off-lead in the dunes, which may disturb ground nesting birds. Dog fouling was observed in some areas. A variety of invertebrates including Garden snails (*Cornu sp*.) and six-spot burnet moths (*Zygaena filipendulae*) were recorded in the dunes, as were several bird species. Species observed during the surveys are listed in Section 3.4.2.

Numerous informal paths are present in the dunes, particularly leading to and from the beach, resulting in erosion and habitat loss. This is discussed further in Section 3.2 below. Visitors were observed sliding down less vegetated areas of dunes on body boards, which has resulted in erosion. There is a very large area of blowout immediately south of the main entrance to the beach, displayed in Plate 3.2 below.

Blow outs are features of dune systems where the dunes are eroded by the wind following the loss of vegetation due to storms, or more commonly human activity.

Visitors were observed in this area and fire pits were also recorded. It is likely that erosion as a result of walkers is preventing vegetation this area from recovering. Smaller blowouts are also present near the Raven overflow car park and had footprints visible in them. At the entrance to the beach, chestnut pale fencing with signage has been installed to discourage people from walking in the damaged areas, and marram grass was recorded in these areas, indicating that efforts to restore the dunes in this area are working.

Plate 3.2 Large area of sand blowout near beach entrance.

Sand shores (LS2)

A sandy beach extends along the entirety of the shore. Visitors were active on the beach at the time of the survey. There are numerous paths leading from the shore into the dunes, which is negatively impacting this habitat. A view from the beach is displayed in Plate 3.3 below.

Plate 3.3 The sandy beach (LS2) with visitors sliding down the dunes (CD1 and CD2).

Dense bracken (HD1)

The dunes transition into dense bracken to the southwest of the site. Bracken dominated, with marram and rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) also present. A small number of informal pathways were present in this habitat. This habitat is displayed in Plate 3.4 below.

Plate 3.4 Dense bracken (HD1) habitat with an informal path visible in the background.

Dune scrub and woodland (CD4)

A very small area (approximately 620m^2) of scrub / woodland is present in the fixed dunes. The dominant tree species is willow (*Salix* spp.), with creeping willow (*Salix repens*), bramble (*Rubus fructicosus*), false oat-grass, bent, meadow buttercup, ribwort plantain, and knapweed also present in the more open areas. An informal pathway runs through this habitat. The use of this path may inhibit the growth of shrubs and saplings in this habitat. This habitat is displayed in Plate 3.5 below.

Plate 3.5 **Dune scrub and woodland (CD4) habitat with an informal path cutting through it.**

Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)

This habitat is found at the main car park and The Raven overflow car park. This habitat is not of biodiversity value.

Exposed sand, gravel or till (ED1)

This habitat is present as a construction site, where the new watersports facility is being built. This habitat is not of biodiversity value.

Amenity grassland (improved) (GA2)

Small areas of amenity grass are present between the main car park and the dunes. There was some trampling of this habitat, and it was mowed to be very short, however, given its size and nature, this habitat is not of biodiversity value.

Recolonising bare ground (ED3)

A small area of recolonising bare ground is present at tthe Raven overflow car park in a wastewater treatment percolation area. The species recorded here were false oat-grass, goosefoot (*Oxybasis rubra*), redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*), common plantain (*Plantago major*), corn marigold (*Glebionis segetum*), prickly sow thistle (*Sonchus asper*), field speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*), dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), scarlet pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*), wild carrot, ribwort plantain, nettle (*Urtica dioica*), evening-primrose, and dandelion (*Taraxacum vulgaria*). This habitat is of some value to pollinators, and given that it is largely fenced-in, it is mostly undisturbed. This habitat is displayed in Plate 3.6 below.

Plate 3.6 **Recolonising bare ground (ED3) in a fenced off area at tthe Raven overflow car park.**

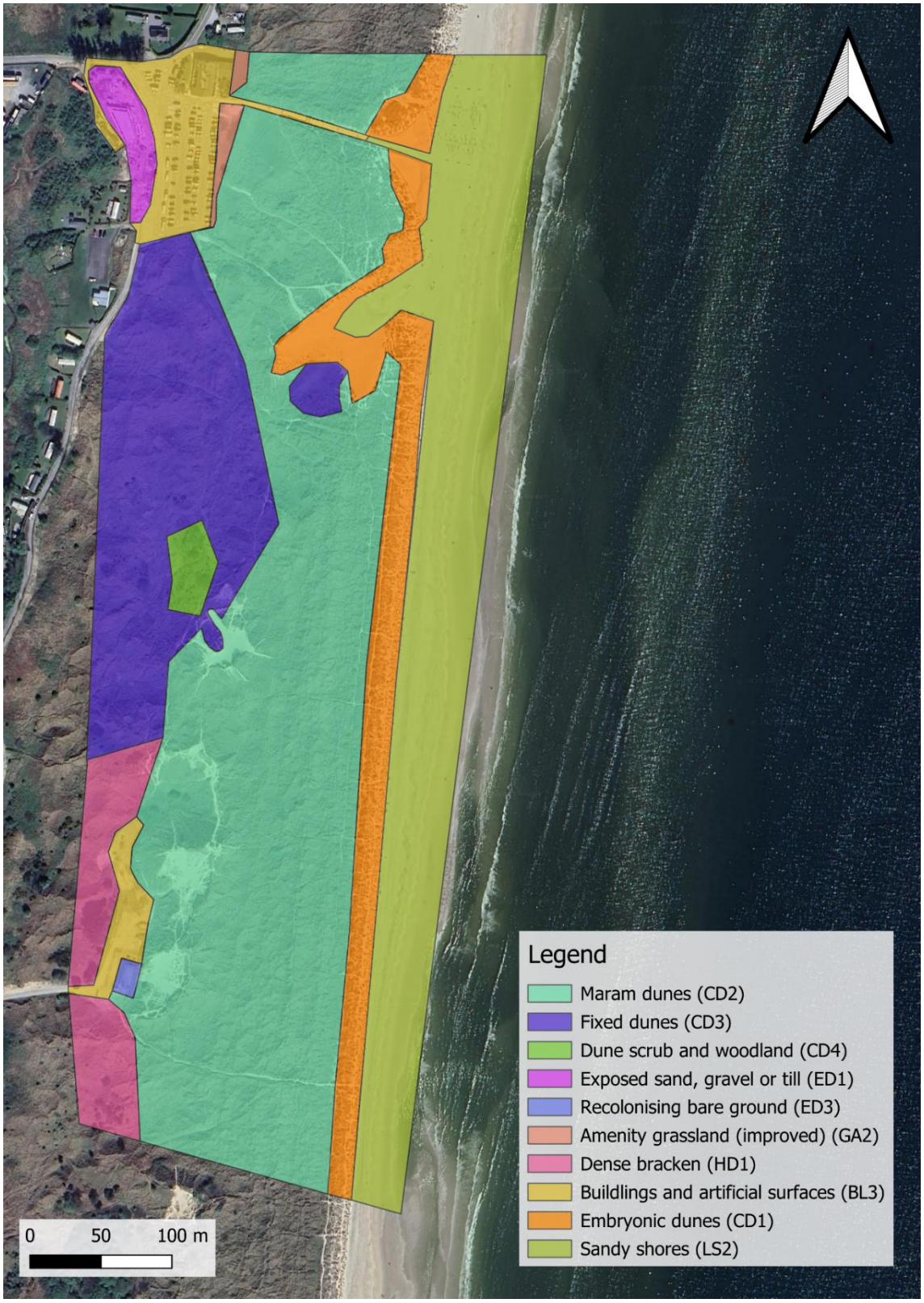

Figure 3.1 Habitats at Curracloe Beach

3.2 Pathway Condition Assessment

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 present Strava heat maps for the site. Strava aggregates data from users on its app who opt-in to share their activities and locations. The pathway condition assessment map is presented in Figure 3.4 below. Numerous informal pathways are present in the dunes and are visible in the aerial photography. Given the extent of these pathways, it was not possible to map them all.

Figure 3.2 **Heat map of visitor movements classed as "Foot Sports" at Curracloe Beach (Strava, 2025)**

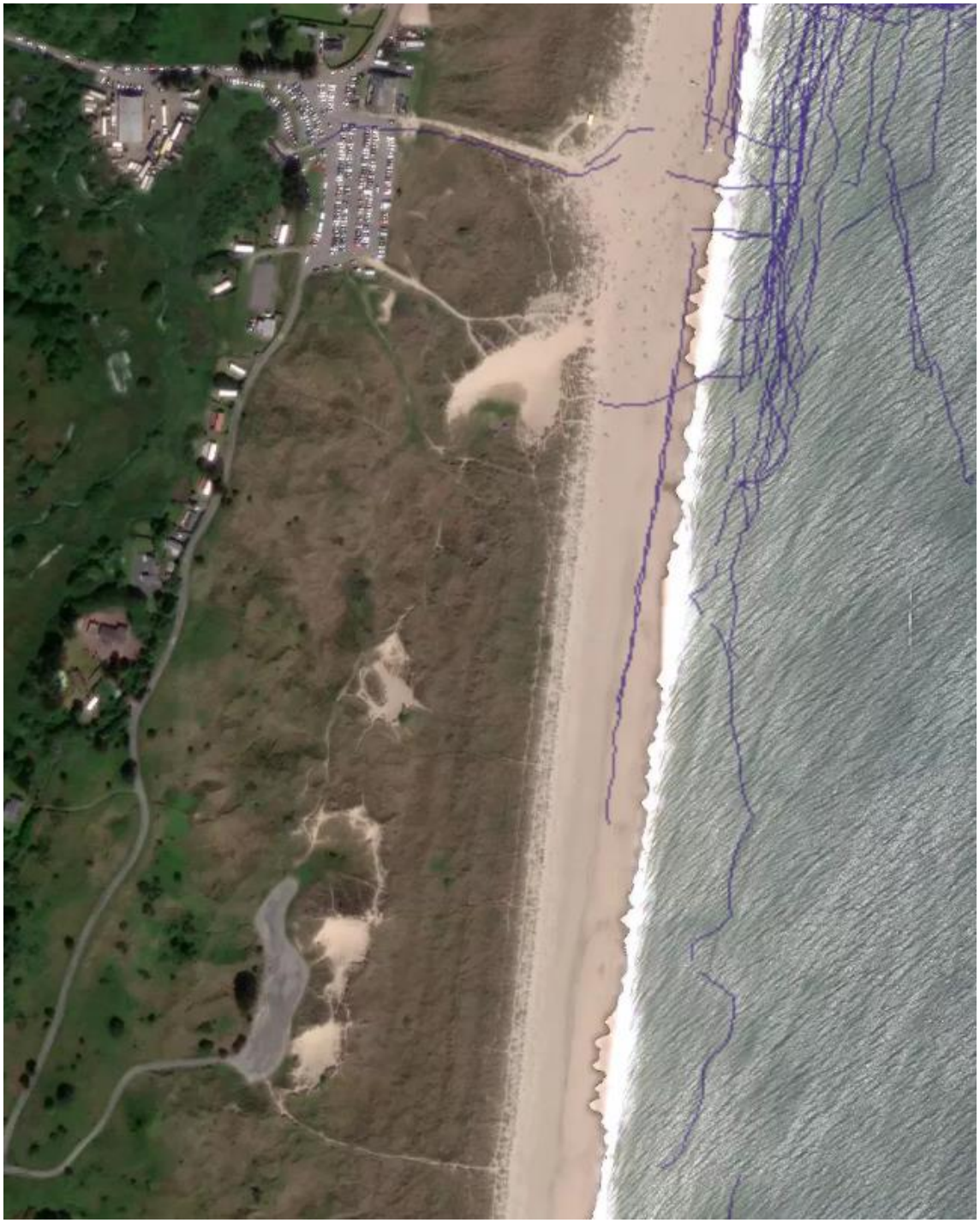

Figure 3.3 **Heat map of visitor movements classed as "Water Sports" at Curracloe Beach (Strava, 2025)**

Figure 3.4 Pathway types and conditions present at Curracloe Beach.

Four pathway types were recorded at Curracloe Beach and are displayed in Plate 3.7 and Plate 3.8 below. The main car park is paved. A boardwalk leads from the main cark park towards the beach. Both the car park and boardwalk are in a satisfactory condition and well-maintained. A gravel road leads into the gravel overflow car park for the Raven. While the car park was not as well-defined as the paved one at the main beach entrance, both the road and car park were in a satisfactory condition. Informal pathways through the dunes are presented in Plate 3.9.

Plate 3.7 **Paved car park (top) and boardwalk (bottom) at the main entrance to Curracloe Beach.**

Plate 3.8 Gravel road (top) and gravel car park (bottom) at The Raven overflow car park.

Plate 3.9 **Informal paths resulting in erosion and habitat loss in the dunes at Curracloe Beach.**

3.3 Features Signage and Hazards

The locations of features at Curracloe Beach are displayed in Figure 3.5. The main car park has bicycle parking available. There is a building at the car park that contains a number of businesses which serve beachgoers including 'The Strand' shop that sells beach equipment and food, a coffee shop and pizza stand. Toilet facilities are available on the west side of the car park, and a new watersports facility centre is under construction, which will provide hot showers, changing rooms, toilets, secure locker storage, induction spaces, and equipment washdown areas. Categorised rubbish bins are available in the car park, as well as dog waste bags and bins. A beach wheelchair is available for visitors free of charge. A lifeguard hut is located directly north of the beach entrance and life rings are present along the beach. Features at Curracloe Beach are presented in Plate 3.10 below.

Plate 3.10 Categorized rubbish bins in the car park (top left), beach wheelchair station (top right), lifeguard hut above dune restoration efforts (bottom left), and beach safety and bye-law signage (bottom right).

Signage in the car park relates to beach and water safety, local history, local amenities and services, and beach bye-laws, including warnings against campfires, littering, and dog fouling. At the dune restoration areas at the entrance to the beach, the chestnut pale fencing also has signage discouraging dog fouling, as well as informative signage on dune restoration, which included QR codes for further information. The dune restoration plan and associated signage is presented in Plate 3.11 below.

Plate 3.11 Recolonising marram grass (top) and associated signage (bottom) in dune restoration area.

3.3.1 Hazards

Given the nature of the site, the open water in itself could be considered a hazard, however a lifeguard hut is present, along with safety related signage and life-rings. The uneven nature of the informal paths through the dunes, with continuous deterioration, have the potential to become hazardous. No additional hazards were identified at Curracloe Beach.

Figure 3.5 The locations of features at Curracloe Beach.

3.4 Ecological Constraints

3.4.1 Protected Sites

A desktop study was undertaken to identify designated sites and rare and protected species in the vicinity of the site. There is one European site (the Raven SPA) and one Nationally Designated site (the Wexford Slobs and Harbour pNHA) within the site boundary. The site is 300m from the Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC, 400m from the Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA, and 1.6km from the Screen Hills SAC. Information on these sites was obtained from the NPWS website and their respective Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms. These sites are described in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Designated sites within 2km of the Curracloe Beach site

Site Name [Site Code]	Description	Distance (km) from Site	Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)
European Designated Sites			
The Raven SPA [004019]	• Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*) [A001] • Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017] • Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) [A065] • Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] • Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] • Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Within site boundary	• Sylviculture, forestry (H) • **Walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles (M)** • **Nautical sports (L)**
Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC [000710]	• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] • Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] • Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] • Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) [2120] • Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] • Dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*) [2170] • Humid dune slacks [2190]	300m South of site	• **Burning down vegetation (H)** • Forest and Plantation management & use (H) • Problematic native species (H) • **Walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles (H)** • Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing (M) • Biocenotic evolution, succession (M) • **Camping and caravans (M)** • Drying out – natural processes (M) • **Fire and fire suppression (M)** • **Garbage and solid waste (M)** • Invasive non-native species (M) • **Motorised vehicles (M)**

Site Name [Site Code]	Description	Distance (km) from Site	Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)
Screen Hills SAC [000708]	• Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*) [3110] • European dry heaths [4030]	1.6km Northwest of site	• Sand and gravel extraction (H) • Invasive non-native species (H) • Problematic native species (H) • Biocenotic evolution, succession (H)
Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA [004076]	• Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004] • Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) [A005] • Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017] • Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) [A028] • Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) [A037] • Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038] • Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046] • Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048] • Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050] • Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052] • Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) [A053] • Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054] • Scaup (*Aythya marila*) [A062] • Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) [A067] • Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) [A069] • Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) [A082] • Coot (*Fulica atra*) [A125] • Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130] • Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140] • Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] • Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142] • Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143] • Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144] • Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149]	400m Southeast of site	• Fertilisation (H) • Grazing (H & M) • **Hunting (H)** • Marine and Freshwater Aquaculture (H) • Roads, motorways (M) • Sylviculture, forestry (M) • **Urbanised areas, human habitation (M)** • **Walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles (M)**

Site Name [Site Code]	Description	Distance (km) from Site	Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)
	• Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156] • Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157] • Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160] • Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162] • Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] • Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183] • Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) [A195] • Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]		
Nationally Designated Sites			
Wexford Slobs and Harbour pNHA [000712]	No site description	Within site boundary	No site description

3.4.2 Incidental Species Recorded

A range of invertebrates were observed in the dunes. These included running crab spiders (*Philodromidae*), funnel-weaving spiders (*Agelenidae*), dwarf sheet-weaving spiders (*Linyphiidae*), bumble bees (*Bombus spp*.), grasshoppers, flies, and butterflies. Garden snails and six-spot burnet moths were particularly abundant in the dunes. Six-spot burnet moth cocoons were observed, as was breeding behaviour. Bird's-foot trefoil – the host plant of this species' larva – was also recorded in the dunes. Table 3.3 below presents the bird species recorded during the ecological surveys at Curracloe Beach, along with their Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCCI) status (2020–2026) (Gilbert et al., 2021). All of the birds listed below were found in the dunes, with the exception of black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*), which was observed roosing in quieter areas of the beach. Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) were also observed flying over the water, but were not formally recorded, as they did not land in the study area.

Table 3.3 Incidental Species Records & BoCCI Status

Scientific Name	Common Name
Red List	
Larus ridibundus	Black-headed gull
Anthus pratensis	Meadow pipit
Amber List	
Saxicola rubicola	Stonechat
Hirundo rustica	Swallow
Green List	
Corvus cornix	Hooded crow
Columba palumbus	Woodpigeon
Not listed	
Phasianus colchicus	Pheasant

3.4.3 Records of Rare, Protected and Invasive Species

Records of rare, protected, and invasive species from the past ten years within 2km^2 of the site were obtained the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) online database (Grid Reference: T12D). These records are presented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Rare, protected and invasive species recorded in the past decade from the 2km grid square T12D from the NBDC database

Scientific name	Common Name	Date of last Record	Status*
Terrestrial Mammals			
Meles meles	Badger	25/04/2015	WA
Sorex minutus	Pygmy Shrew	19/06/2017	WA
Sciurus vulgaris	Red Squirrel	25/11/2022	WA
Nyctalus leisleri	Lesser Noctule	11/06/2019	Annex IV HD; WA
Marine Mammals			
Delphinus delphis	Common Dolphin	14/02/2020	Annex IV HD; WA
Halichoerus grypus	Grey Seal	13/08/2023	Annex II, V HD; WA
Fishes			
Raja montagui	Spotted Ray	26/07/2020	WA; Amber List
Raja clavata	Thornback Ray	26/07/2020	OSPAR Convention
Birds[2]			
Larus ridibundus	Black-headed Gull	11/06/2016	Red List
Phalacrocorax carbo	Cormorant	12/05/2019	Amber List
Numenius arquata	Curlew	01/03/2020	Red List

[2] All birds are protected under the Wildlife Acts

Scientific name	Common Name	Date of last Record	Status*
Locustella naevia	Grasshopper Warbler	12/05/2019	Amber List
Larus argentatus	Herring Gull	15/05/2016	Red List
Delichon urbicum	House Martin	12/05/2019	Amber List
Passer domesticus	House Sparrow	15/05/2016	Amber List
Falco tinnunculus	Kestrel	19/06/2021	Amber List
Carduelis cannabina	Linnet	13/05/2018	Amber List
Larus canus	Mew Gull	12/05/2019	Amber List
Cygnus olor	Mute Swan	15/05/2016	Amber List
Morus bassanus	Northern Gannet	15/09/2016	Amber List
Haematopus ostralegus	Oystercatcher	12/05/2019	Amber List
Gallinago gallinago	Snipe	03/03/2019	Amber List
Muscicapa striata	Spotted Flycatcher	05/09/2018	Amber List
Sturnus vulgaris	Starling	13/05/2018	Amber List
Columba oenas	Stock Pigeon	13/05/2018	Amber List
Hirundo rustica	Swallow	14/06/2024	Amber List
Reptiles & Amphibians			
Rana temporaria	Common Frog	03/07/2019	Annex V HD; WA
Zootoca vivipara	Common Lizard	18/09/2020	WA
Dermochelys coriacea	Leathery Turtle	28/10/2023	Annex IV HD; WA; OSPAR Convention
Mollusc			
Ostrea edulis	Common Oyster	15/12/2024	OSPAR Convention
Arctica islandica	Icelandic Cyprine	26/07/2020	OSPAR Convention
Invasive Species			
Rhododendron ponticum	Rhododendron	28/05/2014	High Impact Invasive Species; S.I. 477/2011
Sciurus carolinensis	Eastern Grey Squirrel	31/05/2015	High Impact Invasive Species; EU Regulation No. 1143/2014; S.I. 477/2011

* *Abbreviations: Annex II/IV/V (non-avian species) = Habitats Directive (HD); Annex I, II, III = Birds Directive (BD); Red/Amber List = Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026 (BOCCI) (Gilbert et al., 2021); Wildlife Act, 1976 (WA).*

Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*) was classified as vulnerable under the Bern Convention of 1979, and were listed on the EU Habitats and Species Directive of 1992. In Ireland, they are endemic to Co. Kerry, however in the 1990's, they were introduced to the dunes at the Raven as a means of conserving the population in Ireland (Beebee, 2002).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information collected during the field survey and desk study, the following recommendations are made:

- A small area at the entrance of the beach has been fenced off for dune restoration, however informal pathways are found throughout the remainder of the dune habitats on the site. The extension of the restoration area should be considered, such as with additional fencing along the beach. Fáilte Ireland should continue to support initiatives that aim to enhance dune conservation efforts and engage with local authorities (Wexford County Council), local conservation groups (e.g. Climate Action Wexford, Clean Coasts, Leave No Trace Ireland), and EPA research projects in advocating for policies that protect and preserve sand dunes. Any further dune restoration efforts should be accompanied by informative / instructional signage. Where signage is being implemented, teleological signage (signage with instruction and justification for the instruction) should be used.
- Numerous informal pathways are present in the dunes. The construction of a formal pathway/ trail leading from the main car park through the dunes would reduce the level of damage current taking place. This could extend from the car park or existing boardwalk, and lead to the beach and / or the Raven overflow car park following the existing well used pathway which is clearly shown on the Strava heatmap. This would allow for the restoration of the surrounding dune habitat, while facilitating the existing walking route of visitors (including locals). Visitors should be directed along designated paths by teleological signage and fencing. This should be accompanied by a boundary such as roping or chestnut pale fencing and teleological signage.
- The car parks should be fenced off the ensure people use the boardwalk to access the beach.
- Existing signage is informative regarding dune restoration. The addition of signage for biodiversity should be considered. This could include information on ground nesting birds in the dunes, wetland and coastal birds, including species associated with The Raven Point, etc.
- Dogs off-lead and dog fouling was observed in the dunes. The provision of teleological signage indicating that dogs should remain on a lead should be provided by in the dunes, as this habitat supports ground-nesting birds. This should be accompanied by dog waste bins and bags, and associated teleological signage.
- A formal path with teleological signage and way markers should be considered to direct visitors from The Raven car park towards the beach. This could be accompanied by a boundary such as a rope or chestnut pale fencing and teleological signage in the car park. This would reduce the area of damaged habitat as a result of the numerous informal pathways through the dunes.
- There are no rubbish bins or signage regarding beach safety and bye-laws available at the Raven car park. The provision of these features in this area should be considered.
- Fáilte Ireland should consider opening discussions with Strava in relation to how sensitive sites could be protected. For example, people that register activities in sensitive area could receive a notification after logging an activity that would inform them that they have been in a sensitive area, and requesting them to stay on formal paths.

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Fáilte Ireland
Turasóireacht Náisúnta
An tÚdara Eorbartha
National Tourism
Development Authority