
TECHNICAL REPORT

**ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT
FOR THE S2S PROJECT**

FOR

Dublin Regional Authority

Report prepared by: **AWN Consulting Ltd**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AWN Consulting Ltd were instructed by WSP, on behalf of the Dublin Regional Authority, to prepare an environmental report for a proposed cycle/pedestrian route, known as S2S, which it is proposed would run along Dublin Bay, from Sutton to Sandycove. This report forms part of the S2S Preliminary Design Study and Environmental Report prepared by WSP. The baseline data presented in this report will be useful in the preparation of an EIA for the S2S cycle path and in many cases, no additional baseline information will be required for the relevant EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) Chapters.

This report addresses the following environmental issues;

- Air
- Noise
- Soil & Geology
- Water
- Flora and Fauna
- Archaeology

Details of the baseline environment, constraints, opportunities, mitigation measures, recommendations for further studies and possible impacts of S2S are provided under each of the above headings.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

It has been said that in the past, the city of Dublin has turned its back on the sea as industry and commerce have developed and expanded. However, in recent years the people of Dublin have realised the importance of the amenity that is Dublin Bay, with its extensive array of bird life, a proliferation of interesting flora, improving water quality, and reminders of centuries of historical events that have shaped Dublin, as we know it today.

The coastal gateway to the city encircles a magnitude of ecological, cultural, historical and aesthetic amenities. There is a need to provide greater access to the coast, both for the people of Dublin and for visitors to the city and to encourage them to take advantage of this superb natural amenity.

The Dublin Bay environment has been exploited in the past, without regard to environmental impacts. In recent decades, a range of improvement and protection measures have been put in place around Dublin, including the designation of areas under conservation directives, improvement of water quality and enhancement of access to bathing and recreation areas.

There is an extensive range of environmentally important aspects to the Bay, which will be highlighted in this report. The proposed S2S route is designed, not as yet another intrusive development in an already over-developed city, but as a means of providing a gateway to the amenity of Dublin Bay. The route will allow a certain level of access to the bay, without encroaching on the well-established and sometimes vulnerable environment that already exists.

The important environmental elements of the bay are listed below. These elements have been fully investigated and characterised as part of the S2S study and the key receptors under each heading have been identified.

Water Quality and Amenity

The water quality of Dublin Bay has improved dramatically over the past few years. The discharge of untreated sewage to the Bay has ceased and this has led to a considerable improvement in bathing water quality. The coastal waters, both north and south of the city are used for thriving water sports and recreational purposes, and more and more people are using the beaches and piers that hug the coast. Some of the best fish and shellfish in Ireland is caught off the east coast and brought fresh to the harbours of Dun Laoghaire and Howth.

Geology and Geomorphology

There is constant geomorphologic change occurring all along the coastline; lagoons, estuaries and mudflats, inlets and outfalls are all being formed and reformed with each winter storm. Geologically important bedrock outcrops feature along the south coast of the Bay, whilst a dune system at Merrion gates provides a home to many important species of plants and grasses.

An old lead mine at Clontarf highlights the long history of Dublin as an industrial city, with the disused shafts still in place beneath the promenade.

Ecology

The proposed S2S route passes through, or runs adjacent to, 5 areas designated for conservation either under International or National regulation/legislation based on the flora and fauna species that are found along the coast. These areas are designated under, and protected by, Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural

Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive), which is the main Community instrument safeguarding biodiversity.

Rare and listed species such as the Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Peregrine Falcon and the Corncrake can be seen from the shores of Sutton, Kilbarrack and Clontarf on the north side, and from Sandymount, Booterstown and Blackrock on the south side.

North Bull Island is a low lying, dune covered sand spit, almost 5km long and 1km wide at its widest point, which runs parallel to the coast between Clontarf and Sutton in the northern half of Dublin Bay. The North Bull Island Lagoons are an important ecological amenity and are subject to more ecological conservation designations than any other site in Ireland, because of their international importance for wintering waterfowl, including; Brent geese, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit and redshank.

Large numbers of migratory species such as Brent Geese also regularly return to their wetland homes at Merrion Gates and Irishtown Park.

Booterstown Marsh supports an extensive range of wildfowl and waders including Snipe, Teal, Mallard, and Shelduck, with Shoveler and Tufted Duck occurring at times when the marsh is flooded. The marsh is used as a high tide roost and is also of significance for both feeding and roosting during the autumn migration and is a fantastic site for bird watching.

Archaeology and Cultural Interest

From the northern point of the proposed route at Sutton Cross to the southern perimeter of Sandycove, there is an abundance of archaeological and historical remnants from countless battles, settlements, industries and activities that record the evolution and development of Dublin since the area was first inhabited.

Dotted along the coast, at Howth and the south side of the city, Martello Towers still stand sentry. Built at the start of the 19th Century, as British defences, the Martello Towers remain as a reminder of this significant period in Dublin's history.

Also scattered along the coast are relics of not so long ago – the old and disused baths, which were in use all through the first half of the last century.

Maretime at Blackrock displays vestiges of a time when Blackrock was controlled by a number of elite families, with a private footbridge and a replica of a Doric Temple.

Further south, the East and West piers at Dun Laoghaire, the Coal Harbour, the sea front terraces of Regency and Victorian Houses and the railway and associated stations, are a testament to the continuing importance and prosperity of this busy port.

This report describes the baseline environment of Dublin Bay and the coastline under a range of headings archaeology and cultural aspects, geology and geomorphology, hydrogeology and hydrology, noise issues, air quality, and flora and fauna. Sensitive areas are highlighted, and vulnerable species, structures and features are identified.

More importantly, this report presents any possible impacts that the S2S route may have on the environment, and details measures that will mitigate any impacts that arise.

The Dublin Bay and coastline environment is one of great importance. The increased access to the Bay afforded by S2S will provide an opportunity to learn more about the historical elements of the coastline, to gain first hand knowledge of the wildlife that live in our back yard, and to promote understanding of the need to conserve and protect aspects of the nature that exists there. Or, quite simply, it will provide a chance to admire the beautiful scenery and breathe in the sea air.

Agencies Consulted during the Preparation of this Report

The following Agencies were consulted during the preparation of this report by way of a letter inviting comment and/or a meeting:

NPWS (meeting and site walkover 25/8/04)

Eastern Regional Fisheries Board (meeting held on 25/8/04)

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (meetings with Senior Drainage Engineer) (5/5/04 and 25/8/04)

The Heritage Council, (23/8/04)

Dublin City Council Drainage Division (Drainage Engineer) (24/8/05)

Fingal County Council Drainage Division (Drainage Engineer) (24/7/04)

Geological Survey of Ireland

Office of Public Works