Welcome to Coney Island Beach

Your home for the holidays, but the home of many different kinds of wildlife the whole year round.

Visitor Information Centres near Coney Island:

- Ardglass Tourism and Marine Heritage Centre
  12 Bath Street
  Ardglass
  BT30 7SE
  T: 028 9182 6846

- Portaferry VIC
  The Stables
  Castle Street
  Portaferry, BT22 1NZ
  T: 028 4272 9882

- Ards VIC
  31 Regent Street
  Newtownards
  BT23 4AD
  T: 028 9182 6846

- Downpatrick VIC
  The Saint Patrick Centre
  53a Market St
  Downpatrick, BT30 6LZ
  T: 028 4461 2233

This leaflet was produced by:

Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership
AONB office, Downshire Civic Centre
Ardglass Road, Downpatrick
T: 0300 013 2233
www.strangfordlough.org

Supported by:

- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- NIEA Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Have fun on the beach, explore the shore and the rock pools but always remember to keep the shore alive:

- If you pick up an animal put it back exactly where you found it.
- Do not pry animals off rocks. This will injure or kill them.
- Watch where you step (especially on the rocks) - as many organisms are very fragile.
- Remember to handle all the animals with care and put all rocks or boulders back where you found them.

Please LEAVE NO TRACE of your visit
www.leavenotraceireland.org

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Be considerate of others
- Respect farm animals and wildlife
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Leave what you find
- Dispose of waste properly
- Please keep dogs under control especially around overwintering birds
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Turn overturned stones back to protect animals on the shore
As humans, we are naturally drawn to the seaside; to the broad vistas of the beach, water and sky. Coney Island is one of the many hidden gems on the County Down coast. When on holiday in magical places such as this, we often like to take a souvenir home to remember it by. However, next time you consider picking up that seashell, take a second to imagine how empty the beach would look if everybody took home even a few natural knick-knacks. Thousands of people visit this beach every year, if we all collected souvenirs, that would add up to a whole lot of missing flowers, rocks and shells.

Coney Island is part of the Strangford Lough and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its habitats and wildlife are protected by several nature conservation designations, including Killough Bay Ramsar Site, Special Protected Area (SPA) and as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). The beach, and all the material on it, is protected under the law. Please do not remove any natural material from this beach or damage or disturb the natural habitats in any way. The AONB is also part of a candidate Unesco Geopark, and the removal of any rocks for sale or profit from a Geopark is banned.

Harry the Hermit Crab
That beautiful shell that you want to put on a shelf is my next home. As I grow, I leave my old home and move up the housing ladder to a larger shell. I need a good supply of new shells to choose from so please don’t take away my house.

Roisin the Redshank
When you lift a strand of seaweed to take as garden fertiliser or for a skin-softening bath, you are lifting the roof of the home of all the tasty invertebrates that I like to eat. Insects like sandhoppers like to live in sheltered, rotting seaweed, and I love to eat sandhoppers! Without a good supply of food, I will not survive the winters that I spend on this coast. Please also remember not to scare me or my friends into flight when you are walking on the beach; the calories I waste on even one panicked scare-up can be the difference between survival and death.

Ciara the Crab
The stones on this beach are beautiful. When they are wet, they show the stripes of quartz against the greys of ancient mudstones laid down 450 million years ago, but please don’t take them home to trim your flowerbeds. County Down has a rapidly changing coast, and the rocks and stones help to protect the land. The boulders and pebbles also protect me from the gulls that would like crab for tea!

Sammy the Starfish
The driftwood that I’m sheltering under is a dynamic part of this beach. It has washed up here temporarily and in the next storm it will float off. While it is here, itremakes the beach, trapping silt, sand and seeds. While it is at sea, it forms a raft for a weary cormorant or seal. It can stay afloat for 17-months and provides shelter for 130 species of fish and 100 types of invertebrates - an island of biodiversity. Please don’t use it to light your fire.

Colin the Cockle
Over time my shell will break down into small particles that help to stabilise the shore and protect the land from the strong storms that beat this coast in the winter. The sand here is vital for defending the low-lying coast of Lecale, especially as climate change increases sea levels and cause storms to become more frequent and severe.

Coney Island is part of the Strangford Lough and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its habitats and wildlife are protected by several nature conservation designations, including Killough Bay Ramsar Site, Special Protected Area (SPA) and as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). The beach, and all the material on it, is protected under the law. Please do not remove any natural material from this beach or damage or disturb the natural habitats in any way. The AONB is also part of a candidate Unesco Geopark, and the removal of any rocks for sale or profit from a Geopark is banned.