



Parks, Municipal Services Department

Blackrock Park Masterplan 2020

Have Your Say Public Consultation Report

Prepared by: Dara O'Daly, Executive Parks Superintendent

Approved By: Eoin O'Brien, Senior Executive Parks Superintendent

Revision: 0

Date: 17th July 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A public consultation “Blackrock Park Masterplan- Have your Say” was carried out from the 27th February to the 12th April 2020. As part of this process, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) undertook a presentation followed by a workshop in Carysfort National School on the 11^h March 2020 from 19:00-21:00. A second public workshop/information session was due to take place on 1st April 2020 but was cancelled due to the escalation of the Covid 19 Pandemic. The public workshop took the form of a roundtable conversation. The structure of the meeting was casual and informal. This approach allowed attendees to offer any information that they felt relevant. The goal was to collect information, particularly specific local knowledge, to help inform the masterplan. A sense of ownership on behalf of the public is key to the long-term success of Blackrock Park and it is hoped that this was instilled during the public workshop held.

A total of 108 submissions were received consisting of 104 through the consultation hub, 2 via email and 2 hard copy posted submissions. The online consultation was promoted through the DLR and Citizen Space website and through the Councils social media platforms. The workshop events and the process were promoted with signage in Blackrock Park, Blackrock Library and the Lexicon in Dun Laoghaire.

It is recognised through lessons learned from previous park masterplan public consultations, that early engagement with the public and stakeholders is key to a successful outcome. Therefore, it was decided to refrain from developing any sketch layout until the conclusion of the public consultation process. Sketch masterplans were presented to the public in previous consultations which had caused misunderstanding. Also, the questionnaire was refined to simplify the reporting process and guide interested parties when submitting responses/observations. Key stakeholders were also identified and directly contacted via email or phone. Schools within a 15min walking radius of the park were contacted as they contain a large concentration of key stakeholders. The outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic corresponded with the timing of this survey. Unfortunately, there were no response from any of the schools. This is fully understandable as all schools were occupied with the logistics of decanting their students and re-establishing remote learning.

The key outcomes from the public consultation process are as follows;

- Build on existing community knowledge and enhance community awareness
- Create an accessible plan, easily understood
- Help build trust
- Nurture sense of place
- Maintain a community link
- Promote a ground up decision making approach
- Stimulate socio-economic
- Generate social capital (relationships, communication)
- Enhance the quality of life

A site analysis was conducted by DLRCC at the very outset of the process. This document looked at the park from a strategic point of view, the detail within the park, its history, nature and its relevant context. It also set out the strengths and weaknesses as concluded by the DLRCC Parks Section. The

site analysis document was included in the DLRCC citizen space website (<https://dlrcoco.citizenspace.com/parks/blackrock-park-have-your-say/>) as an aid to members of the public with their submissions.

The questionnaire was broken into 6 simple questions as follows;

- The first and second question were interrelated. The first question was a simple yes/no answer asking respondents were they regular users of the park. The second question inquired to the frequency of visits.
- The third question asked the respondents to list the “best attributes” of the park.
- The fourth question asked the respondents to list the “biggest drawbacks” of the park.
- The fifth question asked respondents to suggest improvements in the park.
- The final question asked would respondents “use the park more frequently if improvements were made?”

The questionnaire included wording to prompt members of the public to keep answers concise and to a maximum of 50 words. A list of suggested sub category headings were also included;

- Nature (Habitat and wildlife)
- History (Built structures and landscape features)
- Passive recreation (Seating and walks)
- Active Recreation (Structured sport)
- Amenities and facilities (Café and toilet)
- Events
- Ease of access (pedestrian entrances)
- Environment and sustainability (Power generation and clean modes of transport)
- Other

Most of the respondents adhered to the guidance. The submissions have been grouped under the above listed headings. Where multiple people made the same observation, the number of people is indicated beside it. Some people provided only a one-word answer while others elaborated and provided more specific opinions. Where possible, all the submissions have been grouped under the common suggested headings. Extracts from the comments have been included to give a sense of the feedback. The majority of the submissions were by private individuals who are not listed in this report.

All submissions received have been reviewed in detail and taken into account during the design process of the Blackrock Park Masterplan. Comments from ‘the design team’ have been included to describe how the masterplan has been shaped to respond to the observations made by the public.

SUBMISSIONS/OBSERVATIONS:

A total of 108 submissions were received consisting of 104 through the consultation hub, 2 via email and 2 hard copy posted submissions. The online consultation was promoted through the DLR and Citizen Space website and through the Councils social media platforms. The workshop events and the process were promoted with signage in Blackrock Park, Blackrock Library and the Lexicon in Dún Laoghaire. Direct communication was made with several local stakeholders to insure the survey was targeted at key park users. All submissions received have been reviewed in detail and taken into account during the design process of the Blackrock Park Masterplan. Comments from 'the design team' have been included to describe how the masterplan has been shaped to respond to the observations made by the public.

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was broken into 6 simple questions as follows;

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The specifics of the questionnaire and the exact number of responses are included as an appendix to this report.

Responses - Positive:

The overriding positive characteristic of the park expressed through the submissions is its **unique coastal location and proximity to Dublin Bay**. People appreciate the views, the unique landscape topography and the convenient proximity to Blackrock Village. The emphasis on passive recreation and unoccupied space is also appreciated as there is a quieter more relaxed character to the park. The other aspect of the park that drew the most positive attention was the **cycleway**. This amenity is popular with people as it offers a safe, quieter route away from the traffic on the main road.

Design Team Response:

The design of the masterplan will seek a minimal but impactful intervention into the existing fabric of the park. All the interventions will be designed to complement the coastal location and retain the passive character of the park. There is great potential to open up better views from the old pavilion inside the Merrion Avenue entrance. There is nothing within the proposal that will obstruct or hinder existing views from vantage points within the park.

The cycle lane through the park is to be retained. It is proposed to widen it and improve sightlines at certain pinch point locations. This will help to reduce any potential conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.

Responses – Suggested Improvements:

Overall, the response to what people perceived as the negative aspects of the park was much more animated and focused. There are three main elements to the park that people find detracts from the overall user quality. Some of these are interchangeable and relate to a potential lack of investment in the park over the last number of years. These are outlined below;

1. Uninviting Character of the Park,

The submissions convey a clear lack of comfort for park users. The park seems to be somewhat uninviting due to a range of issues. These issues include:

- The exposed nature of the site.
- The lack of a sense of safety.
- The presence of anti-social activity.
- The lack of essential facilities.
- Derelict structures
- Intimidating, unsegregated shared cycling/ pedestrian surface

Design Team Response:

The masterplan will seek to plant more trees which will add to the greening in the park but also offer shelter in the expansive, windswept spaces. Other shelter will be proposed in terms of canopies and the renovation of the pavilion on top of the hill. It is acknowledged that certain areas of the park have blind spots that can attract anti-social activity. There will be some details included in the masterplan to remove old structures and help to open up darker areas. The removal of these structures will also help to reduce the sense of dilapidation in the park. The design will seek to introduce new facilities such as a tearoom, natural play areas and toilets. Any change that will increase footfall will help to improve the sense of safety. A permanent staff facility beside the car showroom in the centre of the park will foster a sense of safety as there will be more staff on the

ground. The existing shared cycle lane is the only access for pedestrians moving from one end of the park to the other. The masterplan will include a detail to widen the existing cycleway to improve the user quality for both pedestrians and cyclists. There is also a proposal to introduce a quiet path through the entire length of the park for pedestrians only.

2. Lack of Facilities

The second aspect of it is the lack of basic amenities and facilities within the park. This is everything from toilets, tearoom, play facilities and active recreation.

Design Team Response:

The masterplan is proposing the renovation and possible, sensitive extension of the dilapidated Victorian pavilion. This would be used as a tearoom, toilets and other facilities forming a hub for the park. It would coincide with the removal of other derelict structures. The old playground adjacent to the bandstand would be removed and a new natural play element constructed. An alternative active area including possible facilities for bmx, calisthenics, bouldering and skateboarding is being proposed. Improvements at the Booterstown end include a new natural play space, new entrance & boundary treatment and a generous provision of herbaceous planting display.

3. Poor Access

Access is the third element highlighted as a negative aspect of the park. The laneway along the side of Blackrock Dart station was a particular feature focused on within the submissions. Another frustration highlighted by the submissions was the poor interface with Blackrock Village even though the two areas are immediately adjacent to each other. The Rock Road forms a physical barrier was another aspect highlighted in the submissions.

Design Team Response:

A key part of the masterplan is to create greater connections with the surrounding area. This will be in the form of more convenient and well-located access points. The Dart Station laneway is an important aspect of this. The masterplan will propose a widened access with a formal entrance plaza at the Dart Station end creating a new official entrance to the park. This widened access will require consultation and a possible compulsory purchase of land from the neighbouring Deepwell property. The masterplan will seek to create two additional controlled pedestrian crossings on the Rock Road. The masterplan also includes a proposal for an entirely new, reconfigured entrance at Booterstown, announcing the park for people travelling from the city centre.

To conclude, the suggested improvements offered through the submissions centre on providing the basic amenities and facilities to make the park more useable. The submissions also highlight the dilapidated and underutilised state of many of the original park features. There is also a clear demand to improve the use of the park in both a passive and active way. Passive elements include improved nature value and a more comfortable/safer user experience. Active elements include exercise equipment and appropriate structured sport facilities.

The masterplan layout addresses all the praise, concerns and suggestions made through the consultation process. The overall goal of the masterplan is to transform the park into a desirable

destination which will greatly improve the footfall. Improved footfall will help to perpetuate further improvements in the user experience of the park.

CONCLUSION:

A total of 108 submissions have been received for the Blackrock Park – Have Your Say public consultation. This report addresses all the major concerns and views raised during this process and provides a response on how these are being dealt with in the Blackrock Park Masterplan 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that a decision be made by the Elected Members of the Council to adopt the Blackrock Park Masterplan 2020 in accordance with the drawings and reports. Accordingly, it is recommended that the following resolution be passed by the Council:

“The foregoing report of the Chief Executive is **APPROVED** and it is **AGREED** to adopt the Blackrock Park Masterplan 2020”

Ruairí O’Dulaing, Senior Parks Superintendent

APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE DETAILS**Question 1 & 2 "Do you use Blackrock Park on a regular basis and what is your frequency of visits?"**

Daily (Mon-Fri) -	39
Weekends -	14
Few times a month -	40
Once a year (Events) -	11
<u>Total</u>	<u>104</u>

Question 3 - "What would you describe as the best attribute/s of the park?"**Nature**

• General/non-specific	23
• Mix of man-made and natural landscape	23
• Proximity to the sea	17
Total	63

History

• General	11
Total	11

Passive Recreation

• General/non-specific	22
• Horticulture	21
• Views	25
• Peace & quiet ways	17
• Safe for kids	5
• Walkways	6
• Seating	1
Total	95

Active Recreation

• General/no-specific	19
• Newer Booterstown playground	13
• Exercise equipment	6
Total	38

Amenities & Facilities

• General/non-specific	16
• Open Space	13
• Well maintained	8
• Segregation of spaces	1
• Christmas tree collection	1
• Cycleway	19
• Bandstand renovation	7
• Unique layout/design	3
• Dog friendly	5
• Architecture	3
Total	76

Events

• General/ non-specific	10
Total	10

Ease of access

• General/ non-specific	22
• Proximity to Village & Public Transport	11
• Location	11
• Buggy friendly/universal access	2
• Grand entrance at Merrion Avenue	1
Total	47

Environment & Sustainability

• General/non-specific	4
Total	4

Other

• Blank Canvas/Potential	2
Total	2

An overview of some comments below:

- *Sea view, feeling of space and the area recently created above the lake looking over the sea*
- *Pleasant walk by the sea*
- *Lake, view of sea from parts of it.*
- *To me it's the views over the sea and from the Rock Road that are my favourite part of the park, especially that piece of the park opposite Phoenix terrace where you are on a height overlooking Dublin bay.*
- *It's location beside the coast and views across Dublin Bay to Howth.*
- *Quiet space away from cars to bring children and dogs for walks.*
- *I cycle through the park on my way to and from work. I suspect I am a typical park user; I don't visit it, as such, but use it as a pleasant way to get somewhere else.*
- *Cycle-way safe away from the road traffic.*
- *Cycle path provides safe and scenic commute route.*
- *Quiet route to walk/cycle to Blackrock*
- *I cycle to work and to Dun Laoghaire through the park*

Question 4 – “What would you describe as the biggest drawbacks of the park?”**Nature**

- General/non-specific 7
- Total** 7

History

0

Poor passive recreational quality

- Proximity to Rock Road & Traffic 6
- Poor sense of safety 14
- Exposed site 7
- Lack of trees and shelter planting 7
- Cyclists travelling too fast 7
- Lack of a connection with the sea 11
- Anti-social activity 5
- Lack of footfall 6
- Total** 63

Lack of Active Recreation

- General/ non-specific 6
- Newer Booterstown playground 13
- Exercise equipment 6
- Total** 25

Poor provision of amenities & facilities

- General/ non-specific 27
- Poor seating and picnicking provision 6
- Underutilised space 7
- Poor playgrounds 21
- Unappealing lake 4
- Cycleway 19
- Poorly maintained 16
- Lack of carparking 6
- Lack of dog control 8
- Derelict portacabins 1
- Unsightly toilet pavilion 3
- No play provision for older kids 4
- Unused historic pavilion & bandstand 9
- Unsightly hardstand area 3
- Poor fitness equipment 1
- Poor universal access 1
- Booterstown entrance 1
- Lack of lighting 5
- Total** 142

Lack of Events

- General/ non-specific 14
- Total** 14

Poor access

• General/non-specific	22
• Blackrock Dart Station Laneway	24
• Poor interface with Blackrock Village	16
• Buggy friendly/universal access	2
• Grand entrance at Merrion Avenue	1
Total	65

Lack of Environment & Sustainability initiatives

• General/ non-specific	1
Total	1

Other

• Disjointed park layout	6
• Presence of rats	4
• Flooding and surface water	3
Total	13

An overview of some comments below:

- *Playgrounds are too exposed to enjoy on windy days and it is often windy*
- *Not enough tree coverage. I think it could do with a lot more nut bearing trees which are native. The playground needs a huge renovation and the middle of the park is too open with not enough foliage and trees.*
- *It has never felt like a particularly safe park.*
- *Teenagers hanging out there after dark.*
- *The park can be very isolated, and users can feel quite vulnerable*
- *Dead atmosphere as not many people visit it*
- *The shared cycle/ walking path is hazardous at present.*
- *The number of cyclists that come through it and cycle fast makes it very hard to enjoy a walk in the park without worry.*
- *No visitor facilities to keep people in park.*
- *No investment in park, tired looking*
- *There's nothing in the park that's too attractive to look at*
- *Looks like there are toilets in building beside Rock Road but they are boarded up, I think that Public Toilets should be available in parks*
- *For the love of god, please put in some toilets. Or at least open the ones in the top of the park*
- *Dilapidated Victorian buildings in need of repair, these structures could be fabulous*
- *It's a shame they spent so much money doing up the bandstand and then locked it so it could never be used.*
- *The entrance by the dart station is very narrow.*
- *The long narrow entrance along the Dart line is poor and could be dangerous at night.*
- *Access with the narrow path at Blackrock Dart station is very poor, especially for cyclists, people pushing prams.*
- *Access via Blackrock Dart station is constrained. A parent with a buggy will have difficulty getting through via the alley way running parallel with the Dart platform.*
- *Ease of access is poor when crossing where I live in Sion Hill. Many people living here have difficulty crossing. There is many people who cross here to work locally and to go to local schools in Sion Hill school and Blackrock College when then get off the train.*
- *Access at the entrance to the Booterstown car park is awkward.*
- *Difficulty accessing it easily from the shopping centres. No pedestrian gate directly at the Rock Hill traffic lights.*

Question 5 - "What improvements would you like to see in the park?"**Improve the nature & wildlife value**

• General/ non-specific	17
• Improve the connection with the sea	18
• Interpretation & signage	8
Total	43

Restore and retain the park history

• General/ non-specific	7
• Renovate Bandstand & Pavilion	20
• Utilise Martello Tower	2
Total	29

Passive recreation

• More tree cover	7
• Less tree cover	1
• Improve lake	9
• Create buffers & shelters	1
Total	18

Improve Active Recreation

• General/ non-specific	22
• Incorporate natural play	2
• BMX & skateboard facility	4
Total	28

Improve amenities & facilities

• General/non-specific	37
• Upgrade playground facilities	29
• Segregated cycle lane	25
• Community garden & growing	2
• Interface with Blackrock Village	13
• Dog Park	7
• Renovate Bandstand & Pavilion	20
• More seating and picnic facilities	17
• Sea viewing platform	2
• More art & sculpture	1
• Incorporate shelters	4
• Horticulture and maintenance	9
• Play provision for older kids & teens	7
• Improve surfaces and pathways	4
• Better cycling facilities	6
• Remove carparking	3
• More carparking	1

- Reinststate the Italian Garden 1
- Total** 188

Events, promotions & activities

- General/ non-specific 35
- Total** 35

Improve access (Rock Road)

- General/ non-specific 13
- Improve Dart Laneway 27
- Improve access to Booterstown Dart 1
- Improve Rockhill access 1
- **Total** 42

Other

- Develop a coherent park layout 4
- Utilise defunct hardstand area 4
- S2S 3
- Total** 11

Question 6 - " Would you use the park more frequently if improvements were made?"

Clear Yes	82
Maybe	7
Use it everyday anyway	10
No	1
Unanswered	8
Total	108

The organisations/public reps who were contacted directly are as follows;

- An Taisce
- Benincasa Special School
- Blackrock College
- Blackrock Village
- Booterstown National School
- Carysfort National School
- Colaiste Eoin/Iosagain Secondary School
- Irish Rail
- Guardian Angels National School
- Newpark School
- Our Lady of Mercy Convent School
- Sion Hill College
- South Dublin Branch of Birdwatch Ireland
- St. Andrews School
- Willow Park School

Organisations/public reps who made submissions were as follows –:

- The Office of Richard Boyd Barrett
- Blackrock Village Rejuvenation Action Group
- S2S Project
- An Taisce