

Executive Summary

This Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown seeks to provide a vision and a framework which will identify, protect, promote and enhance the GI assets in the urban, rural and coastal environments of the County. The strategy provides a vision for the GI in the County that is supported by a set of key principles and a robust spatial framework. Importantly, the GI strategy aims to guide key aspects of planning policy and County and local level.

The benefits of GI are many and include; improving health and well-being through new and improved recreation and better local walking and cycling connections, enhancing social cohesion, protecting, managing and enhancing biodiversity, reinforcing sense of place, and improving water quality and management. GI also provides many potential economic benefits through enhanced opportunities for tourism and local business activities.

Existing Green Infrastructure

The existing Green Infrastructure in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is considerable. The County boasts many key features and activities along the coast and across the urban, rural and upland areas. Many of these are iconic in nature, including the varied and dramatic coastline itself, Killiney and Dalkey Hills, the Dublin Mountains, the numerous rivers and streams and the parks and open spaces of County and regional significance.

Three Themes

In this strategy the endowment and deficits in these features or assets are considered alongside activities under the broad themes of accessibility, recreation and health and well-being, natural and cultural heritage and water management. The Green Infrastructure strategy is based on the overlapping of these broad themes of GI.

Accessibility, Recreation, Health and Well-Being

Accessibility, recreation and health and well-being, is concerned with the nature, quality and continuity of connections of the GI (such as Greenways, walking routes and public transport corridors) and the ease of access to open spaces, greenways and recreational resources and issues, such as landscape character and views, and the range, nature and frequency of activities that take place in key amenities and attractions. **The main objectives of the strategy for accessibility, recreation and health and well-being are to:**

- Develop public parks at the threshold of urban and rural areas into 'Gateway parks'
- Improve sections of the Wicklow Way and Dublin Mountains Way where they occur along stretches of road
- Create new and improved connections between open spaces to generate a network of spaces across the urban areas
- Improve links within urban areas to encourage day-to-day use

- Improve links across transport infrastructure where there are barriers to movement
- Improve pedestrian and cycle links across railway barriers
- Improve links to the Green Infrastructure network from public transport
- Address the uneven distribution of allotments or community gardens

Natural and Cultural Heritage

Natural and cultural heritage is concerned with the range of natural and man-made assets of heritage value in the County. These include areas of importance for biodiversity, such as watercourses, woodlands, and coastline, and cultural assets such as important monuments, buildings and landscapes, as well as less tangible cultural heritage such as arts and sciences. **The main elements of the strategy for natural and cultural heritage are to:**

- Review and/or complete Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Character Assessments
- Complete Habitat Assessments and implement the County Tree Strategy
- Restore or mitigate the fragmentation of ecological corridors throughout the County
- Create a network of Greenways, Green Streets, including green roofs
- Harness the strong built heritage of the County
- Harness the strong cultural heritage of the County
- Ensure new developments enhance the Green Infrastructure network

Water Management

Water management is based on the role and potential of the Green Infrastructure to better manage surface and flood water and to contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of water in the County. **The main elements of the strategy for water management are to:**

- Utilise rivers and streams as one of the natural foundations for multi-functional GI corridors
- Use GI features to reduce impacts when drainage systems are exceeded
- Reduce the rate, volume, and improve the quality of surface water runoff
- Manage runoff at source by creating storage ponds and wetlands
- Promote local sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), 'Green Streets' and green roofs
- Enable SuDS to be located in the public realm
- Encourage the use of water to generate energy on a micro level

Spatial Framework

A key element of any Green Infrastructure strategy is the spatial framework. It provides an understandable structure on which priorities and actions can be based. The framework spans the short to long-term time horizons and it distinguishes between the GI framework that is already in place in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, and that which is emerging or to be developed over the coming years. **The key elements of the spatial framework for GI in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown are:**

- A higher level, countywide network of integrated elements, which connects to surrounding and Regional GI networks
- A structure for integrating the rich network of local-level GI in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
- A network of six, overlapping and multi-functional GI corridors, connecting higher-level GI hubs and the main elements of the mountains, the urban area and the coast
- Integration of important regional GI corridors, such as the coast, Dublin Mountains Way and Wicklow Way
- A 'chain' of improved 'gateway hubs' (parks and open spaces), which provide the transition between the mountains and the urban area

Delivery

A robust approach to delivery is essential for a strategy to succeed. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council have set out in this strategy a vision for GI in the County and the Council can provide significant policy leadership and influence on the form of new development and the maintenance of many of the green assets. This role can be enhanced by partnerships with communities and across County boundaries. **The strategy makes key recommendations in the area of delivery, including:**

- The setting up of a cross-disciplinary and departmental working group in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
- Preparation of a delivery plan, including roles, responsibilities, priorities and timelines
- Key recommendations for policy in the areas of accessibility, recreation and health and well-being, natural and cultural heritage and water management
- Exploration of local and external funding and investment opportunities for GI
- Development and use of tools for integrating GI into current planning practice
- Priority for key actions
- Ongoing monitoring and review of the delivery process.

