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DLR Open Space Strategy

Final Draft Report

April 2010

“Urban parks and green spaces are an essential part of the urban heritage and infrastructure, being a strong element in the architectural and landscape character of towns and cities, providing a sense of place and engendering civic pride. They are important for enabling social interaction and fostering community development¹, as well as providing an outdoor classroom for biological and ecological studies.

Public green spaces help to conserve natural systems, supporting ecosystems and providing the contrast of designed landscapes and conserved wildlife habitats within our urban settlements”.

[The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers’ States on Urban Open Space, as revised by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management.[CoE, 1986 Recommendation No. R (86) 11].

¹ For examples in DLR see Chapter 8, s.8.4 Community Engagement and Partnerships

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Enjoying the Sleeping Fields Art Project in the walled garden, Marlay Park (August 2009)

Foreword

Good quality, safe and welcoming parks are an integral part of Dún Laoghaire and they contribute greatly to the creation of sustainable communities. DLR is fortunate to have a network of parks for active recreation, relaxation, peace and tranquillity and escape from the rigours of daily life. Parks provide the spaces where children and young people can meet, learn and play. Parks also contribute to wildlife and biodiversity and to local pride and community well-being. Moreover, the quality of our public parks and open spaces adds value to the local economy by providing an attractive base for business investment and a significant heritage offering for local tourism.

Good quality pavements carefully aligned through designed and natural landscapes provide the opportunity for less active members of society to exercise by walking, which is the most popular means of exercising.

In a survey of public opinion, 87% of respondents stated that they visit a local park at least once a week; 49% of these respondents visit daily.

Therefore, the challenge that the Council, its partners and local communities face is how to raise the quality of our open spaces to be even safer, more welcoming and maintained to the highest standards. We know that they may sometimes fall short of this expectation.

We need to reinvigorate our parks and open space with new infrastructure that is fit for purpose, that offers opportunity to participate in healthy lifestyles and that contributes to local communities. We want to develop our parks and open spaces as vibrant, well-planned spaces that are valued by local people, add value to neighbourhoods and that are sustainable for future generations.

I would like to commend the Parks Team, under the direction of the Senior Parks Superintendent Leslie Moore for adopting this strategic approach to open space, and in particular the contribution of Rory O'Sullivan, Senior Parks Superintendent on the GIS mapping and Aidan J. French, Executive Parks Superintendent who managed the project.



An Cathaoirleach / Chairperson

Councillor Lettie McCarthy

April 2011

Chapter 1

Executive Summary

The Strategy included a public consultation and an independent technical audit, both of which indicate that DLR is relatively well provided with public open space of reasonable quality and good accessibility.

- almost 90% of respondents stated that the travel time to all types of open space is acceptable.
- over 80% of households are within an 8 minute walk of a local park,
- almost 100% are within 6 minutes of a local, amenity open space.
- the most popular reasons for visiting open spaces related to health and social benefits to exercise, relax, to be close to nature and for dog-walking.
- The biggest deterrent to the enjoyment of open space is dog fouling.

The quality audit affirmed the Council's expectation that its 5 Flagship Parks are presented to a good standard. However, both the audit and public consultation point to areas where improvements are required and the Council will review and consider how best to implement improvements on a phased basis with available resources. It will explore methods to apply a systematic approach to quality assessment, which is guided by best practice.

The study recommends standards for quantity, quality and accessibility to open space and outdoor recreation and a 4-year Action Plan for implementing improved policies and services.

With regard to outdoor recreational facilities, the audit identified 344 facilities of which 46.1% are in public ownership, 33.3% are educational bodies (schools, colleges) and 20.6% are private clubs. These facilities occupy a total of 164.62 hectares: a countywide provision of 0.85 hectares per 1,000 population.

A large number of respondents to the consultation drive to their nearest play facility. While this is to be expected in relation to the large regional playgrounds, it points to the need to review the current policy to improve local provision. In terms of overall quality, 75% of the sample of play sites scored 'Average' and above, with Cabinteely Park scoring 'Excellent'. The new playground in Marlay Park was not constructed at the time of the audit.

Young people were under-represented in the consultation survey relative to their proportion in the DLR population. This points to the need for a more targeted approach to this group.

To exploit the open space network, the Strategy includes a preliminary Greenways plan which could take advantage of network's potential for safe, off-road cycling routes that could be linked to other transport modes

The outcome of the Strategy's analysis provides evidence of the investment by local government in the provision, development and maintenance of parks and open space over the last 30 years and since DLR Parks Service was established in 1994. It also reflects the contribution of the Parks Service to the planning process to ensure that public open space (quality and quantity) is given due consideration both in strategic forward planning and in development control.

Finally, the Strategy includes a 13-point Action Plan that addresses deficiencies identified in the report with realistic and achievable actions over the next 4 years.



Obelisk at Killiney Hill Park