



Blackrock Park Management Plan 2020

Green Flag Awards Application 2020



Parks & Landscape Services Section (Municipal Services Dept.)

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1: A Welcoming Place – Blackrock Park

Blackrock Park is very well known Victorian landmark heritage property located within the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (South County Dublin) and extends from Blackrock Town north to Williamstown, overlooking Dublin Bay. It amounts to an area of approx. 14 hectares. It is bounded by Blackrock Road to the Southwest and the railway and sea to the Northeast. It is a coastal linear park which features many recreational opportunities, a children's playground, gardens, walkways, an ornamental lake, bandstand, pavilion and an amphitheatre. There are fabulous viewing points out to sea and across the park, and the park provides a pleasant link for commuters through to Blackrock Train Station and for pedestrians into the villages of Blackrock and Booterstown.

Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this management plan is to provide guidelines, to inform the management of Blackrock Park for the benefit of future generations whilst addressing the context of a modern urban Park with a strong historic fabric. Blackrock Park has a unique geographical setting which continues to influence its continued development. This plan provides background, analysis and policy which guide the park management. It will help to identify priority areas and future investment within the park. This management plan will be reviewed annually. Once the master plan is in place it will define and guide the management strategy of the park in future.

The plan has been developed in conjunction with the objectives and recommendations of supporting policies and documentation:

County Development Plan 2016 – 2022

Example policies;

4.1.2.8 Policy LHB9: Coastline Parks and Harbours

It is Council policy to continue to upgrade recreational and tourism-related amenities in the public parks and harbours along the coastline including improved accessibility by the general public.

There are a number of public parks and smaller incidental urban spaces along the coastline including Blackrock Park, the People's Park and Newtownsmith.

4.2.2.7 Policy OSR8: Greenways Network – Blackrock to Booterstown via Blackrock Park

It is Council policy to develop a comprehensive network of County Greenways linking parks and public open spaces and to liaise with adjoining local authorities and other stakeholders to achieve and improve wider external linkages and corridors

Green Infrastructure Strategy 2016 - 2022

2009 – 2013 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Biodiversity Plan

Natura Impact Report March 2016

All Ireland Pollinator Plan

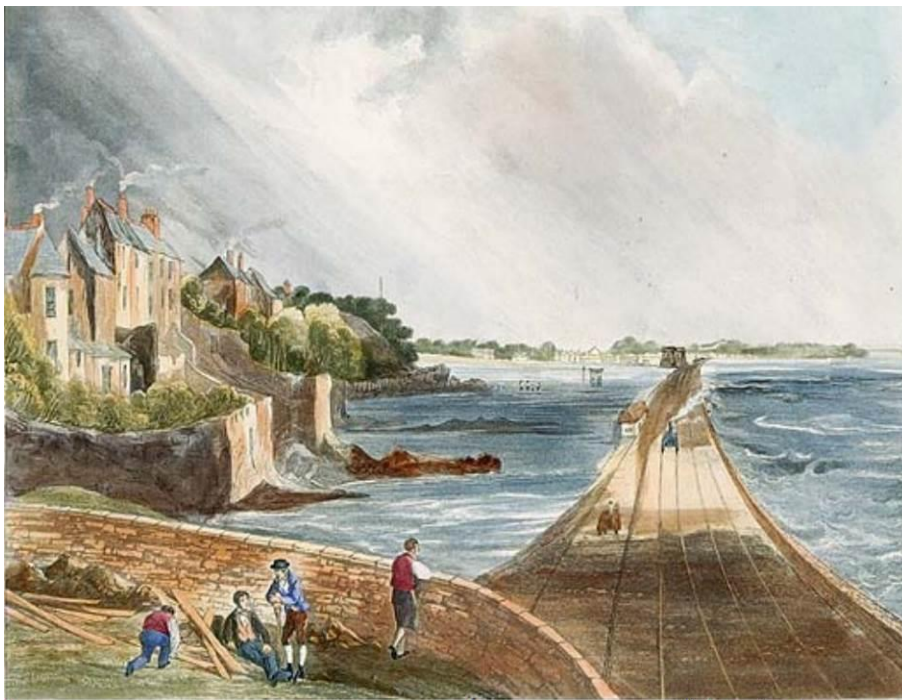
DLR Tree Strategy

All of these policy documents are available through DLR County Councils website, e.g.

<http://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/planning/county-development-plan/county-development-plan-2016-2022>

Development of a Park

Historically the area that we know as Blackrock Park, consisted of a linear strip of land located between the shore and the coastal railway line. During high tide, the seawater would flood into this narrow parcel of land, creating a salty marsh environment similar to that at Booterstown marsh. The Blackrock Town Commissioners (established in 1860) agreed to fill the area in and develop a park for the local community. The park, which stretched from Blackrock to Booterstown (encompassing Williamstown), was created in the early 1870s.



View from Blackrock railway station (1834). The Williamstown Martello tower is depicted in the distance, to the left of the train track, surrounded by water at high tide. (Painting by John Harris Jr. in the National Museum of Ireland)

Historical Features

The granite gates at the main entrance once belonged to a house called Vauxhall. The gardens at the entrance were part of the gardens of the old house.

The Williamstown Martello Tower in Blackrock Park was built between 1804 and 1806. When the tower was built, it would have been surrounded by sea water at high tide as it was built in the inter-tidal beach area. The tower became isolated from the sea when the construction of the railway took place, but sea water continued to flow into the area during high tide. It wasn't until this area was filled and levels elevated during the process of developing the Park that the tower was finally separated from the sea and incoming tides. The tower structure that is visible above ground today represents the first floor and the roof of the structure, as the ground floor was buried beneath the fill material during the construction of the Park.

Many of the original Victorian features are evident today and form key focal elements of the Park, the bandstand, the pavilion, gateway piers and gates and the saltwater pond, not to mention a number of significant trees.



View of the lake and the island, with the bandstand to the back right of the photo and the sea in the back left handside.

Good and Safe Access

Presently there is a footpath and cycleway that extends from Booterstown Station to the eastern end of Blackrock Park, with a pedestrian link into Blackrock Station and on into the village. The main park gates at the end of Mount Merrion Avenue provides the key access point to the park. Visitor safety is of utmost importance and measures are in place to make visiting a safe and enjoyable experience, such as lighting along the full length of the dual cycle and walkway, some CCTV around the bandstand. A car park has been provided within the park beside Phoenix Terrace. Schools and large scale residential development are located in very close proximity to the Park so the preferred mode of access is:

- Walking and cycling
- Dublin Bus routes allow wide accessibility to Blackrock Park; you can avail of the no. 7 and no. 17, no. 45 and 114 bus services.
- The Dart station provides an efficient service for visitors from further afield.
- Information signage and maps are provided at the entrance points, with details of opening and closing times, emergency contact numbers and other useful information.
- Park Byelaws are available on the DLR Council website:-
<http://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/environment/environment-by-laws/parks-by-laws-2003>
- Vehicles allowed into the parklands are restricted to maintenance and emergency purposes only, with some exceptions i.e. concessionary ice creams vans
- There is an agreed protocol in relation to maintenance vehicles using the park with strict speed limits of 15km and hazard light usage.

Opening Times:

September	8.00am to 8.00pm
October	8.00am to 7.00pm
November – January	8.00am to 4.30pm
February - March	8.00am to 6.00pm
April	8.00am to 8.00pm
May - August	8.00am to 9.00pm

Signage

At the entrance points to the Park, there are interpretive panels providing a map of the Park. These outline details of opening/closing times, park usage guidelines, emergency contact numbers and park events.



Sample picture of an interpretative map found at the park.

Equal access for all

- The path layout is original to the Victorian park and generally radiate from the bandstand. There is an excellent network of paths throughout the Park ensuring that most areas are accessible to all, however in some areas the gradients are steep. Where there are steps or steep slopes, alternative routes are provided; the majority of the park is accessible to those of varying ability or with a little assistance.
- The children’s playground while enclosed is available to all with specific play units incorporated for children of different ability.

Something for everyone

The park has a range of passive and active recreational facilities from walking, jogging, cycling, and two playgrounds and gym equipment. Provided within the park are landscape gardens, including the Italian

garden at the (Booterstown end) and the 1916 garden, constructed for the centenary celebration of the rebellion.

By virtue of its linear nature and more in keeping with modern ideas of how large city open spaces should perform, the park is capable of providing an agreeable visual prospect for those travelling either by road or by railway while at the same time affording a pleasant pedestrian refuge between Booterstown to Blackrock away from the busy R118 regional road. The cycleway also encourages increased public usage, with a high morning and evening commuter traffic (pedestrian and cyclists).

The interesting topography means the complete expanse of the park is not visible from any one point. There are lots of different experiences to be seen and appreciated within the Park, the views being one of the highlights.

Planting schemes use a wide range of plants attractive to bumble bees, honey bees, butterflies, moths and other insects. It reflects sustainability as the plants are perennial and supports the objectives of the All Ireland Pollinating Plan 2015-2020 published by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

The pond gives the park a special character, it is a tidal pond and features many marine species such as crabs and mussels, its island provides shelter and protection to many varieties of water fowl and wildlife.



View of the Temple on the lake

2: Healthy, Safe and Secure

Public safety is a matter of importance and a range of measures are put in place to ensure that visitors to the Park can enjoy the facilities safe and secure in the knowledge that the parks staff and management have and continue to make positive interventions that all trips to the Park are happy events. When incidents occur, the causes are investigated and assessed. Where deemed necessary, modification / interventions are undertaken to avoid repetition.

Safe Equipment & Facilities

1. All machinery is serviced on a regular basis to ensure optimum efficiency.
 - In compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, a safety statement, risk assessments covering all activities and safe operating procedures in the park has been prepared. ¹
 - Policies, bye-laws and park procedures have been put in place to ensure that the park is a safe environment for the workers of all grades who work in the park and for the many visitors who come to enjoy the facilities of Blackrock Park.
 - CCTV has been strategically located throughout the Park where risk of graffiti on historic structures is deemed high, i.e. Victorian band stand, Martello Tower.

Playground Equipment Maintenance

The playgrounds are a major attraction in the park and during the summer they are full from opening to closing.

- The play area is designed and constructed to comply with EU standards (European Standards for Playgrounds Equipment EN 1176 and EN 1177)
- A visual inspection of the playground is undertaken daily, and on a weekly basis all pieces of equipment are checked and written records retained. On an annual basis the playground is inspected by an independent inspector in accordance with the criteria set out by the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA). This is carried out in July of each year. ²
- A similar inspection regime with all relevant criteria is followed for all exercise equipment throughout the Park. Routine inspections are conducted by a competent person qualified to RPII Routine Inspection level.
- Rules and regulations in terms of usage are displayed with opening and closing times.

¹ Available on day of park inspection from the parks supervisor

² These are available on day of park inspection from the park supervisor.

Public Equipment

Equipment within the park includes benches and picnic tables, bins and lighting. To ensure efficient operation of machinery and equipment it needs to be maintained on a regular basis, annual services being important. Recording of faults and part replacement is an important part of Health & Safety Monitoring.

Staff Vehicles

All vehicles are serviced on a regular basis to ensure optimum efficiency, reduce emissions and ensure vehicle safety.

Personal Security in Park

While there is not continuous staff presence in the park, random inspections to different areas take place throughout the day as part of regular maintenance duties.

- Supervisory staff takes responsibility for dealing with lost and found, inspecting the playground, and support in preparation of events. They are also first point of contact for any public concerns, contact numbers are on the interpretative boards.
- Regular contact is kept with An Garda Síochána and they would often visit the park.

Dog Fouling

As part of park policy, owners are requested to pick up their dog waste and deposit it in one of the bins provided. All bins have the capability to accept dog waste. The level of compliance is generally acceptable.



The park provides solace and space away from the busy urban setting that encompasses it.

3: Well Maintained & Clean

Quality of facilities

Regular maintenance of the parks various structures and furniture such as bins, benches, steps, play equipment, buildings etc., ensure that a high standard is maintained. These are checked regularly and all defects recorded dealt with in a timely manner. However, in a park of this size the real determination of quality is the opinions of the visitors who vote with their feet, returning again and again.

Paths & Cycleways

A cycle path facilitating connection between the Booterstown and Blackrock Dart stations is located along the eastern perimeter, measuring 1.25km. The combined cycle/path way through the park accommodates significant numbers of commuters and Park visitors. The condition of this shared cycle/pedestrian path is of good quality, ensuring safe and free flowing movement.

Paths in several areas were upgraded in recent years; those around the Merrion Avenue gate entrance were upgraded in 2017. The Parks section will continue its schedule of path improvement works in 2019 and will enhance access through the park as part of the up-coming Master Plan which is currently being developed. The 2019 paths tender survey has identified several other areas within the park that would benefit from future upgrading works.

Action:

1. Include areas identified for upgrading in the next path tender.
2. Include improved access to the park as part of the Master Plan.

Litter & Waste Management

Blackrock Park is maintained as a litter free zone. Despite the large numbers of visitors all year round, especially during summer months, both the public and staff work hard to keep the park litter free.

- The park is serviced by 8 bins and there are two Big Belly Bins located just outside the main gates; one at the Mount Merrion entrance and the other at the Williamstown entrance. The Big Belly Bins are serviced by the Cleansing Department staff, experienced and well equipped to deal with large volumes of refuse material.
- A series of recycling bins for glass, drink cans, clothes are provided within the Park car park facility.
- A policy of recycling Green waste has been adopted as part of the management regime of the Park i.e. branches, leaves, pruning's are recycled and used as mulch throughout the park.

Graffiti Management

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council seeks to reduce and manage the extent of graffiti within the park and acknowledge that this is an ongoing issue. The park has been on a continual journey of rejuvenation over the last several years, with restoration of planting beds, buildings and rejuvenation of trees. Graffiti has been a problem in the past but through on-going inspections and removal, the incidents of graffiti has

been reduced considerably. It has now been limited to one specific area within the park. With the assistance of the councils Environment department, staff endeavour to control incidents of graffiti.

Action

1. Continue to work closely with other department colleagues to reduce and remove graffiti.
2. Clean and repaint any street furniture where graffiti has occurred.

Ground Maintenance and horticulture

Sustainable Park management has been adopted for Blackrock, necessitating minimal intervention for many areas throughout the Park, for the purpose of encouraging biodiversity in all its forms. In these areas expect to see vegetation that previously might have been subject to herbicide treatment which is now recognised as being important. For example nettles for butterflies, bramble for pollinating insects, ivy on trees is retained, unless causing problems to tree growth, as the ivy flowers are a very important source of late nectar for insects. Conventional colour on a seasonal basis is provided by bedding plant schemes, however over the years the extent of bedding plants has been reduced and the amount of perennials increased to help pollinating and other beneficial insects and to improve on the Park's aesthetic qualities. Single flowering types are chosen as these prove more beneficial to pollinator species. The park has retained historical horticultural features such as the rose beds which were traditionally kept in the gardens around the bandstand. The roses planted have high disease resistance and have been under planted with spring bulbs which create a blast of early colour and are an early nectar source for pollinators. In spring mass bulb plantings gives colour throughout the length of the park.

Actions

1. Introduce more perennials and bulbs into the existing beds.
 - Perennial and bulb planting has taken place as part of last year's action plan and will continue over the forth-coming years.

Equipment Maintenance

A variety of equipment and machinery are used throughout the park, including strimmers, mowers, chainsaws, etc. These are stored at the main area depot. Regular daily vehicular checks are carried out and all equipment is checked prior to use. All staff using equipment are trained in the use of that equipment. Recording of faults and part replacement is an important part of Health & Safety Monitoring.

4: Heritage Buildings and Infrastructure

The park has many original features, some of which have been restored but all historic features within the park are conserved.

Landscape and historical features include the bandstand, the Martello Tower, the Merrion Avenue Pavilion (Old Tea Rooms) and Gate, the lake, temple and amphitheatre (see page 21 for reference to these three features).

The Tower (Folly)

This is located on the western edge of the park, and probably predates the parks development. It is not included in the 1843 Ordnance Survey map but this may be due to it being an open-sided structure. It is unknown as to its purpose, but one possible suggestion is it acted as a changing room at the Peafield baths (a swimming point based at this location in the early 19th Century); it would have made a good viewing point out over the sea. It is constructed from rubble granite, with two Gothic-arched doorways which are blocked with cement. The top has crenellations on the corners and sides.

Action

1. Erect an informative board on or near the structure.
2. Investigate the possibility of clearing earth around the base of the structure and introducing a hard-standing to it's base.
3. On-going maintenance includes keeping free from vegetation and inspecting for any cracks or structural decay.

The Bandstand

Located at the east end of the park, this was built in 1883; it has a high octagonal podium with recessed panels. Originally a copper roof was supported on iron posts with foliated ironwork brackets. The repeated theft and vandalism of the roof has resulted in an alternative material other than copper being used to roof the structure during the recent restoration works. A staircase accesses the podium on the east side. A wrought iron weather vane is positioned on top. Originally the bandstand was surrounded by shrub beds, but these were removed in the past. During the restoration of the bandstand in recent years the beds were reinstated and planted with perennial flowering plants. Other restoration works included structural repairs to the roof, supporting poles, floor bracing, upgrade of railings and painting of structure. An upgrade of the paved area encircling the bandstand included new macadam surface, new seating and the installation of new underground services.



The restored bandstand surrounded by perennial planting which encourages pollinators and provides colour from late spring to early autumn.

Action

1. On-going maintenance to include inspecting the condition of the paintwork and removing any graffiti.
2. Damaged access Door/gate to plinth of bandstand to be upgraded.

The Pavilion (Old Tea Rooms)

The Pavilion lies by the Merrion Avenue gate in the southeast of the park. This area was originally part of a private residence Elm Cliff, which was leased to the park when it was originally developed. It is uncertain when the Pavilion originally dates back to, and it was never mentioned in the early descriptions of the park. Around the 1890's, it was popular to install 'kiosks' into parks, the first reference to the Pavilion was in 1896, when the commercial tenant, Mrs Jones who ran a tea rooms in the building was robbed. The building is half-timber construction with a distinctive bonnet roof, which forms a veranda sheltering fitted benches. The structural posts are fitted into a rockery-style granite base.

Action

1. The structure requires significant repair work. This will be addressed in the up-coming Park's Masterplan.
2. Ensure that protective fencing remains in place.

Martello Tower

The Williamstown Martello Tower was built between 1804 and 1806. When the tower was originally built, it would have been surrounded by sea water at high tide as it was built in the inter-tidal beach area. The tower became isolated from the sea when the construction of the railway took place, but sea water still

flowed into the area at high tide. It wasn't until the filling in of the area to form the Park that the tower was to be on dry land. That part of the tower which is visible today is actually the first floor as the ground floor is buried underground. It has been used in the past as a changing room. Future use will be outlined in the Parks Master Plan.

Action

1. Determine the use and restoration plan of the Martello Tower as part of the Parks Master Plan.
2. On-going maintenance to include monitoring for graffiti, cleaning and security.

Entrances & Gates

The gates at the east park entrance from Rock Road/Phoenix Terrace were partly funded by a contribution from Lord Pembroke in the autumn of 1879, when he agreed to lease some of the property to the park. These are Beaux-Art style granite gate piers and decorative cast-iron gates with fleur-de-lis finials. The southeast gateway has a road and pedestrian double entrance set back of the road. This gate facing Merrion Avenue has cast iron urns topped with globe light cages on the piers and were repaired recently. There is another plainer entrance which has a capped granite pier on the Rock Hill Road, titled 'to the railway'.

There are still some cast iron railings along the park front. Recent refurbishments have seen sections of railings replaced along the stream.

- Regular and sustained inspection of all the building assets, including the Bandstand, is carried out, and a program of works agreed with Parks management.
- Footpaths are kept clean and safe year round, debris and leaves being blown off paths when necessary.
- Boundary walls and gates are checked regularly for any defects, and works carried out when identified.

Action

1. On-going maintenance to include inspecting the stone-work for any graffiti or damage, cleaning down of any vegetation that may have self-seeded within joints.
2. The pedestrian stepped entrance along Rock Hill shall be cleared of all vegetation that has self-seeded and the text 'To the Railway' shall be repainted.

Old Toilet building and storage rooms

The old toilet building at the Rock Road gate entrance is closed to the public. They are currently used by the environment section as storage. New toilets will be provided within the park as part of the Master Plan.

Action

1. Public toilets along Rock Road to be reviewed as part of the Landscape Masterplan with a view of removal & new toilets being provided as part of the tea rooms building upgrade.

Temple on the pond island

The temple located on the island within the pond is thought to have housed the pump for a water jet associated with the pond.

Action

1. As part of task schedule outlined from last year's maintenance report, the temple has been cleaned down and repainted.

5: Environmental Management

Sustainability

Sustainability is a commitment to social, economic and environmental factors that promote a sustained quality of life. It is important that our parks have a positive impact on the environment.

Management of our parks should be driven by a sustainable ethos; DLR Parks are embedding sustainable practices within the daily running of our parks but also in our future planning to include:

1. Designing capital projects that use long-lasting materials and plants that are easy to maintain.
2. Conserve and restore natural areas to protect biodiversity.
3. Reduce carbon emissions by making our vehicles, equipment and buildings more energy efficient.
4. Reducing the impacts of climate change by ensuring our parks can withstand weather extremes which are more common.
5. Engaging visitors and stakeholders in the stewardship and care of their parks.
6. Establishing more meadow grass areas / pollinator sites, reducing the extent and frequency of mowing.

Pesticide use

The EU 2009/128/EC Directive or the sustainable Use Directive was transposed into Irish Law in 2012. It requests members of the Community to reduce the use of pesticides (including herbicides) and those used should be used in a more sustainable manner. The directive also requires member states to develop and implement a National Plan enabling the private and public sector to comply with the various rules.

It is current council practice to reduce chemical use as and when possible. In Blackrock Park very limited usage is made of herbicides, alternative options are frequently used i.e. dense mulching with wood chip from recycled Christmas Trees around trees, high density planting of herbaceous to ensure fast ground cover with vegetation preventing weed colonization and need for herbicide usage. Ultra-low volumes are applied if necessary.

DLR Co Co has invested in a herbicide-free weed control system that removes the need for chemicals from the Park's maintenance regime and therefore a chemical zero use policy is being implemented. However, chemical herbicides will be required to manage on-going control of invasive weeds in the park.

Actions

1. Link existing biodiversity areas throughout park and promote pollinator plants as part of National Pollinator Plan

Last year's action to review the Park's policy on chemical use has been undertaken and as noted above a zero chemical policy has been implemented in this year's Park management.

Peat use

There has been a significant reduction in peat usage achieved by a subtle change in the plant mix used in the Park, colourful displays' are still present however the amount of annual bedding and thus peat usage has been reduced by substituting perennial plants. In relation to peat usage it should be noted that the harvesting of peat and its use in agriculture and horticulture is approved by the Government and unlike many Countries in Europe, Ireland has large reserves of peat.

Action

1. Continue to find alternative strategies to reduce peat usage, such as increased perennial plant usage or finding alternative combinations with bedding plants.

Environmental Waste Minimisation

- Grass clippings are left in situ to decompose back into the soil
- Any leaves collected are composted
- Tree chippings, branches, Christmas Trees are shredded and the material used as a mulch.
- DLR has a general policy of leaving trees in suitable safe locations that are dead and blown over to increase habitat diversity for wildlife. There are instances when high quality timber i.e. Walnut and Yew may be harvested and used for furniture or wood carving.
- Paper is minimised in the office environment and recycled.

Carbon Reduction

All park vehicles and machinery are serviced regularly and maintained to a high standard which contributes to the reduction of carbon usage. DLR is trialling electric utility vehicles in one park at present, with a view to reducing pollution. All vehicles produce substantial life cycle emissions. Electric vehicles typically produce fewer life cycle emissions than conventional vehicles because most emissions are lower for electricity generation than burning petrol or diesel. With some further investigation it may be possible to introduce electric vehicles into Blackrock, when the time comes to replace current vehicles.

Actions

1. Create a specific objective within Blackrock Park of reducing carbon and pollution emissions through advances in technology and replacement machinery / vehicles.

6: Biodiversity, Landscape & Heritage

Blackrock has a wide range of habitats which are highly influenced by its history, location and original construction. A masterplan for the park is currently being developed, as part of this an appropriate assessment of the ecology and wildlife of the park has been commissioned and we are awaiting results.

Arboriculture & Woodland Management

Trees are a very important feature of the landscape at Blackrock Park and are a viable link with the past. Due to the exposed location of the park they act as extremely valuable windbreaks for visitors protective habitats for wildlife. Ivy is often left on the trees as it provides shelter, protection and food for pollinators. The Tree Strategy has set out an objective to carry out surveys in all Parks and open spaces, as it is important to know what assets one has in order to plan for maintenance and to prepare for the future by putting in place a sustained program of replacement planting.

There have been extensive tree works carried out within the park in the last few years, following a tree survey in 2016. Trees here are scheduled to be surveyed on a 3 year rota and after every storm or big weather event are inspected. Self-seeded Sycamore and brambles had taken over much of the slopes along the Mount Merrion Gate and along the slopes bordering the road. These had obscured much of the views into the park and from the top of the park out to sea. These were removed in early 2017; new perennial beds were dug and planted along the slopes at Mount Merrion entrance. These are mulched with wood chip which is created from arboricultural waste at the depot. The plants were all grown from cuttings taken in local parks by the staff. The views out to sea have been restored. More perennial herbaceous plants will be put in this year and some bulbs in these slopes. Early 2018 has seen planting of a number of trees along the slopes bordering the main road.

Actions

1. Continue to identify areas for new tree planting.
2. Mulch bases of trees with arboriculture arising's, this makes them more attractive and reduces the need for spraying.
3. To survey the trees after big weather events.



There are some beautiful trees within the park, the base of the trees are mulched with wood chippings from recycled tree prunings and Christmas trees.

Lake

The irregular shaped lake has changed slightly since the Victorian period. The amphitheatre style embankment was added sometime in the 1930's to 1940's. The Temple on the island is not original but a later addition and may have been a pump house or retained some other function.

The lake is saltwater and tidal, creating a unique habitat to this park. The floor of the lake is often covered in shells brought in from the seabed and sometimes fish can be seen in the water. The lake is subject to fluctuations in levels due to the tides, this can be controlled by a 'sluice gate' whose mechanism is due for renovation. As the park borders Booterstown Marsh there are often birds and waders pausing for a rest in the lake as part of their journey.

Actions

1. Upgrade tidal inlet /outlet mechanism for regulating the lakes water levels
2. Explore installing an interpretative board for identification of birds and waders who visit the lake and park grassland.

Grassland

There are large areas of grassland, throughout the park under different management regimes. Due to the historic character of the park and the events that have taken place specifically in the middle section of the park (the circus field), the management practices were limited. This has changed this year; the areas of the park which retain the historical character will continue to be maintained to a high standard. However a

large area of the 'circus field', is being maintained as a meadow, and will be cut twice a year. This has not been undersown but will be naturally regenerated. This field and the lower Williamstown field (Boosterstown) is very often a resting place for Brent Geese who visit Boosterstown Marsh. Between the railway fence and the park wall at the Blackrock side is a flood zone and at times can contain seawater. From the Martello Tower this is a inter tidal flood estuary which feeds the Boosterstown Marsh and is managed by An Taisce, the National Trust for Ireland, and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy.

Actions

1. Monitor and review the new meadow areas, analyse their success, species content and the reaction of the public.
2. Continue to check 'Managed for wildlife' signs are in place throughout the year
3. The flood zone along the park requires a clean-up.

Tidal Estuary / Creek

The tidal estuary or creek located along the Boosterstown end of the park (northern end) feeds into the Boosterstown Marsh. The Boosterstown Marsh is an extremely important habitat and the last saltwater marsh on the south side of Dublin Bay. The marsh is designated as a pNHA and SAC while supporting protected plants. As part of the Dublin Bay area, Boosterstown Marsh is an essential refuelling and resting spot for migrating birds and provides three main habitats ranging from freshwater to saltwater(Moorhen, Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Teal, Snipe, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Dunlin, and Brent Geese). As such the management of this section of the park is of utmost importance. It is often an overlooked asset of the park and future plans to introduce engaging and informative info-boards are afoot.

Actions

1. Acquisition of information boards & signage.

Recognition & Conservation of other habitats

- There are old granite stone walls throughout the park, providing habitats for solitary bees and for colonization of lichen, mosses and other bryophytes. Staff are aware of the potential biodiversity that use these as shelter and protection, and any works required to the walls or stonework are checked before work is carried out.
- Bird boxes and bug hotels have been installed in the park with involvement from the Tidy Towns Committee.
- The park borders the estuary into Boosterstown Marsh and special attention is given the perimeter to keep it litter free.



A Bug Hotel within the park

Invasive Species

The perimeter fence between the railway and the park has been subject to on-going treatment for Japanese Knotweed. It is almost completely eradicated but the area is monitored annually. Through the Parks Department, Parks, Planning and Roads staff have been trained in the identification and proper management practices of this invasive species, throughout all our parks and county wide. It is a growing issue throughout Ireland and the first defense against its spread is recognition.

Actions

1. Continue to monitor invasive species and treat on an annual basis if necessary.

7: Community Involvement

There is regular interaction with the local Tidy Towns Committee within the park environs who are very supportive of the Park and the role it plays in the wellbeing of Blackrock Community. Events are held within the park throughout the year, schools use the park grounds for education and sporting events and staff will always accommodate groups with access and information on request or informally.

Park Events 2019

Some of the events taking place in Blackrock Park this year are:

- Mar – Leprechaun Chase
- April - Annual School Sponsored Walk - Our Lady of Mercy Convent School
- April - Blackrock Athletic Club - 5KM FUN RUN
- July - Teddy Bears Picnic

And more to be confirmed.

Action

1. Continue to engage and develop relationships with the local community, through events such as National Tree Week and through the Tidy Towns and schools.
2. Explore the possibility of involving the community in clean up days during the Summer.



The 1916 Proclamation is displayed on a plaque within the park alongside sculpture.

8: Marketing & Communication

Marketing and Promotion

To find out what's happening in Parks go to <http://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/parks-and-outdoors/parks>. Plans and policies detailing open space strategy, biodiversity and play policy can be viewed on the Council web site, e.g. <http://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/planning/county-development-plan/county-development-plan-2016-2022>

The website noticeboard for individual parks is being redesigned, with a view to providing historical and ecological information as well as events, news and a photo gallery for each park in a more user friendly way. Details of events are advertised on the website but also in the interpretative panels located within the park.

Events for all parks are also advertised on the facebook and twitter pages

<https://www.facebook.com/dlrevents/>

<https://www.facebook.com/dlrheritageevents/>

Action

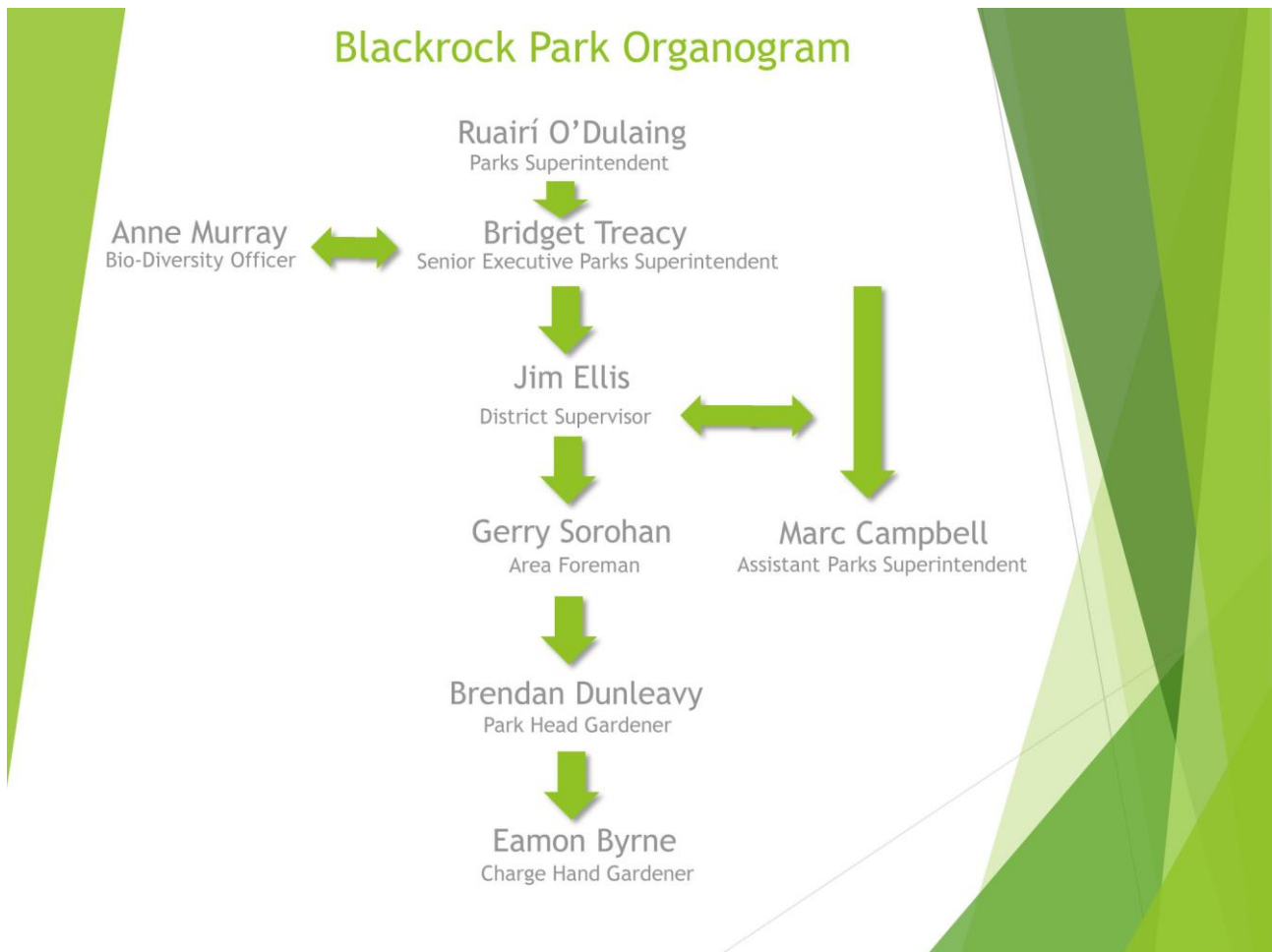
1. On completion of the new parks website, update information, history and events on Blackrock Park
2. Review signage and wayfinding for the park both internally and external to the Park.



The 1916 Garden

9: Management:

The management & planning of the Park is prepared and implemented by a very experienced and dedicated team. The structure of the team is illustrated in the organogram below.



Action Plan

The following are identified as actions to be undertaken in the short-to-medium term (5 to 10 years). Some measures may be implemented as long-term actions. An annual review of actions and progression of goals along with an assessment of feasibility in light of previous year's events should be analysed.

Action No.	Action :	Completion Date	Progress
1	Continue to Develop the Master Plan for Park. Currently in the process of Public Consultation.	2020	On-going
	Well Maintained & Clean		
2	Include areas identified for upgrading in the next path tender.	2021	On-going
3	Include improved access to the park as part of the Master Plan.	2020	
4	Continue to work closely with other department colleagues to reduce and remove graffiti.	On-going	
5	Clean and repaint any benches which have been graffitied.	On-going	On-going
6	Introduce more perennials and bulbs into the existing beds	On-going	
7	Open-up planting to improve visual connection along the south-western link to the Dart station and the Park.	2020	completed
	Heritage Buildings & Infrastructure		
7	Determine the use and restoration plan of the Martello Tower as part of the Parks Master Plan	2020	
8	Continue to have as a long term goal, the restoration of historical buildings and infrastructure	2018-2028	
9	Plinth for sculpture to be assessed annually for paint upgrade	2020	
10	Continue inspection of all buildings, footpaths and boundaries as per best practice	On-going	
	Damaged access Door/gate to plinth of bandstand to be replaced with steel sheeting.	2019	completed
	Environmental Management		
11	Link existing biodiversity areas throughout park and promote pollinator plants as part of National Pollinator Plan	On-going	
12	Continue to find alternative strategies to reduce peat usage, such as increased perennial plant usage or finding alternative combinations with bedding plants.	On-going	
13	Create a specific objective within Blackrock Park of reducing carbon and pollution emissions through advances in technology and replacement machinery / vehicles	2021	
	Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage		
14	Continue to identify areas for new tree planting.	On-going	

15	Mulch bases of trees with arboriculture arising's, this makes them more attractive and removes the need for spraying.	On-going	
16	Resurvey all trees in 2019 and continue to survey the trees after big weather events.	2019	completed
17	Upgrade tidal inlet /outlet mechanism for regulating the lakes water levels	-	Put on Hold
18	Explore installing an interpretative board for identification of birds and waders who visit the lake and park grassland.	2020/21	
19	Monitor and review the new meadow areas, analyse their success, species content and the reaction of the public.	On-going	
20	Continue to check 'Managed for wildlife' signs are in place throughout the year	On-going	
21	Continue to manage the flood zone.	On-going	
22	Continue to manage invasive species and treat as required by best practice.	On-going	
23	Break-out concrete seating pods facing out onto the Rock Road and re-seed.	2021	
24	Upgrade entrance adjacent to Booterstown Dart Station car park	2021	
Community Involvement			
25	Continue to engage and develop relationships with the local community, through events such as National Tree Week and through schools.	On-going	
26	Explore the possibility of involving the community in clean up days during the Summer 2019	2020	
27	On completion of the new parks website, update information such as it's history, ecology and up-coming events within Blackrock Park.	2020	

*Red text identifies additions to Action Plan

Blackrock Park Masterplan

Although the short to medium term management plan is very important to the immediate future of the Park, a long term vision is key to its' continued success and relevance within the community. Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Parks Department is in the process of developing a masterplan that aims to inform all future development within the park in a considered and holistic approach.

The masterplan process is currently at the public consultation stage. The feedback received from this process will inform all aspects of the masterplan.

Many very encouraging and exciting suggestions have been put forward such as the development of a strong main entrance to the Booterstown area and a clearly defined parkland boundary treatment. Other noteworthy suggestions include the proposal of an active zone that does not involve traditional field sports, but instead will focus on alternative contemporary activities e.g. parkour, off-road cycle track, calisthenics etc. The purpose is to capture the interest of a wider sector of the community.

There is a long way to go in the Masterplan process and nothing has been set in stone, however the feedback to date is generating huge excitement within the community and the Parks team.

Appendix 1

<http://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/planning/county-development-plan/county-development-plan-2016-2022>

Note:

Supporting documents such as Health & Safety, equipment inspection reports, etc. will be made available by the Parks Foreman on inspection of the park.