

Chapter 4

Public Consultation

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Council undertook public consultation to ascertain local needs and aspirations. The consultation was based on a survey questionnaire (see Appendix B) which was made available to the public for a period of 11 weeks (15 June to 4 September 2009), through a range of media:

- Online Questionnaire – an online version of the questionnaire was displayed on the DLR website for downloading
- Paper Questionnaires – hard copies of the questionnaire were available at the Council headquarters and Dundrum office, at all public libraries, sports and leisure centres and on request by phone or email.

4.1.2 The survey was advertised in the local print media⁷, the DLR website and posters were displayed in the Council's offices, public libraries, parks and leisure centres.

4.1.3 The consultation was supplemented by on-site surveying of park users at Cabinteely Park and Deerpark in Mount Merrion, using the same questionnaire.

4.1.4 The purpose of the survey was to assess the views of the public, especially attitudes and aspirations regarding parks and open spaces across the county. In particular, the survey set out to investigate the following:

- The usage of open spaces, outdoor sports and recreational facilities by residents of the county
- The values local people attach to open spaces and recreational facilities
- Attitudes to the current levels of provision
- The frequency of use of the types and hierarchy of open space

⁷ Also, the Irish Times notified readers in its 'Horizons' column on 22.8.09

- The main modes of transport used to access greenspace and facilities
- Views on the accessibility of greenspace and facilities
- The deterrents that prevent or reduce use and enjoyment of greenspace.

4.2 Profile of Respondents

4.2.1 Seven hundred and eleven (711) people completed the survey questionnaire which represents 0.37% of the population of Dún Laoghaire. This is considered a good response when compared to other similar studies. Research by Sheffield Hallam University Market Researchers indicates that a response of 500 is acceptable, as the change in response trends does not vary significantly between 500 and 5,000.

4.2.2 The younger cohorts⁸ of the population are under-represented in the survey (2% of respondents were aged 16-19 years) relative to their proportion in the DLR population (7% approx.). The DLR Comhairle na n-Og (Young People's Parliament) was not available during the survey period.

4.2.3 Fewer than 3% of respondents (19 people) considered themselves to have a disability. According to the Disability Federation of Ireland website there are over 18,000 (9.3%) people with a disability living in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. DLR should endeavour to target this group when implementing the Strategy's Action Plan.

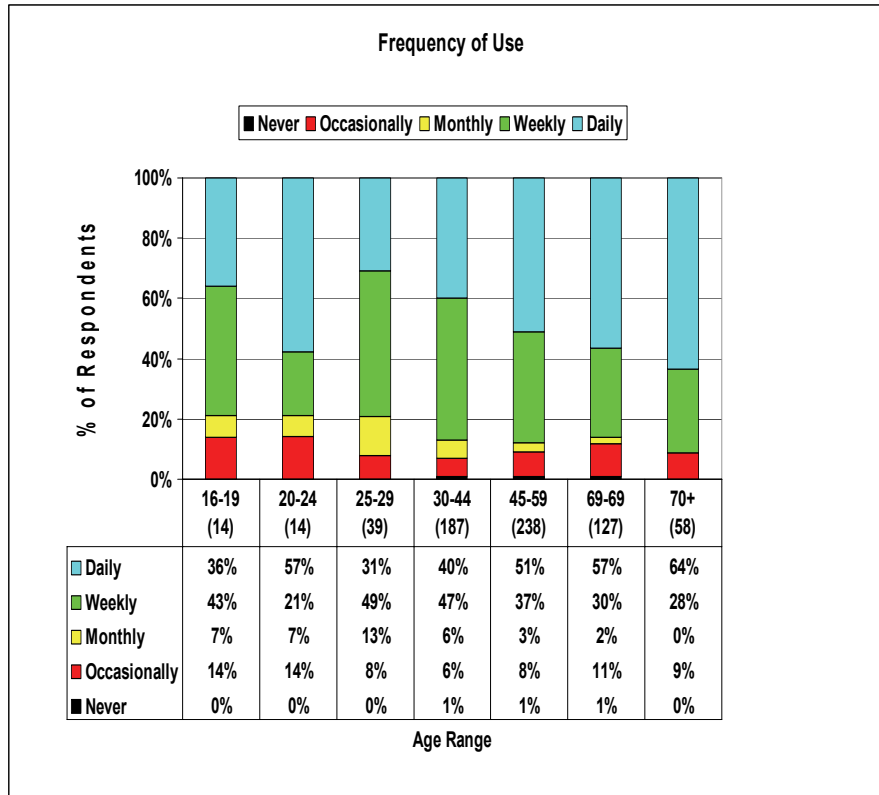
4.3 Frequency of Use of Open Space

4.3.1 Figure 4.1 gives a breakdown of the age of survey respondents and how frequently they visit their local open space. There is a relatively high visitation rate: 49% of respondents said that they use parks at least on a daily

⁸ Cohort: a group of subjects with a common characteristic, typically *age group*

basis with 38% using parks on a weekly basis. Very few of the respondents (0.7%) stated they never use their local open space.

Figure 4.1 Age of respondents and frequency of visits to open space



Note: figures in brackets are actual numbers of respondents by age range

4.3.2 These results indicate a strong allegiance of respondents to their local open space, with 87% visiting at least once weekly.

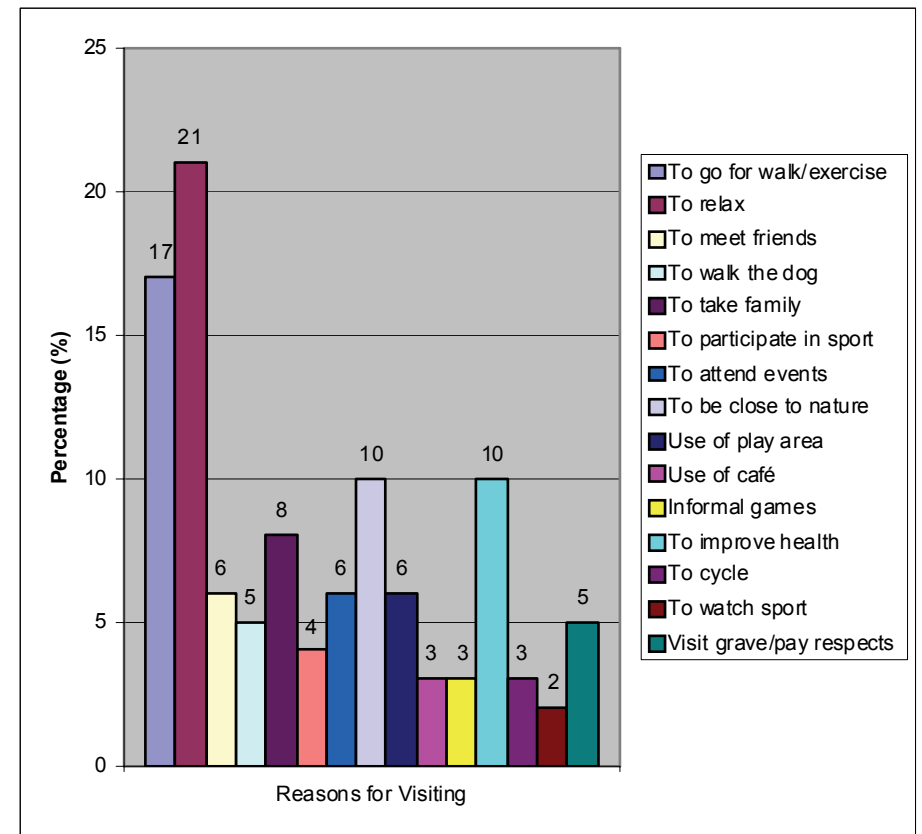
4.3.3 People were asked why they visit open spaces in the county.

- The greatest response was for relaxation.

- To walk/exercise, be close to nature and dog-walking were the next most popular reasons
- Spending time with one's family was the next most popular choice
- The use of open space to watch sport and cycling were two of the least popular uses identified.
- Usage of cafés, playing informal games and cycling scored equally

The results confirm the multiple benefits of open spaces and particularly their important contribution to people's quality of life.

Figure 4.2 Reasons for visiting - numbers of people





Cycling through Deerpark, Mount Merrion

4.4 Public perception of Quantity

4.4.1 The questionnaire asked people if they thought they have enough open space in their local area. Table 4.1 gives the results on an electoral area and a district basis.

4.4.2 The respondents in the Glencullen and Clonskeagh districts gave the greatest negative district response: 60% in both districts stating their local area does not have enough open space. In Glencullen, this perception may reflect the somewhat rural nature of this area and the fact that being such a large area people are more distant from Local Parks. More likely, it reflects

the fact that one of the largest parks, Jamestown Park, is not yet open to the public. (Details of open space provision in Glencullen - section 5.1.6.).

Table 4.1 Perceptions of sufficiency of open space

Electoral Area	District	Yes	No	Average Response	
				Yes	No
Ballybrack	Ballybrack	75%	25%	71%	29%
	Killiney	67%	33%		
	Shankill	72%	28%		
Blackrock	Blackrock	68%	32%	68%	32%
Dundrum	Ballinteer	84%	16%	80%	20%
	Churchtown	88%	12%		
	Dundrum	67%	33%		
Dún Laoghaire	D/Laoghaire	54%	46%	57%	43%
	Dalkey	60%	40%		
Glencullen	Glencullen	40%	60%	70%	30%
	Tibradden	100%	0%		
Stillorgan	Cabinteely	81%	19%	69%	31%
	Clonskeagh	40%	60%		
	Foxrock	78%	22%		
	Stillorgan	78%	22%		

4.4.3 It should be noted that the response in Tibradden is high because it represents a single respondent's opinion. Excluding that response the most positive responses came from Churchtown and Ballinteer where over 80% of respondents believe they have enough open space. Respondents in Ballybrack (75%), Cabinteely (81%), Foxrock, Stillorgan (78%), Dún Laoghaire (57%) all gave very positive responses.

4.4.4 Considering all the averages for the county's Electoral Areas, the general response is that respondents believe they have enough open space in their local area.

4.4.5 Perceptions of quantity on an electoral area basis must be balanced against the fact that people will also use parks and open spaces outside the electoral areas in which they reside.

4.4.6 Local people think that the provision of outdoor sports facilities in parks and open space is average to poor, suggesting that the range of provision needs to be improved. They also identified the need for more sports facilities for young people in local open spaces and parks.

4.4.7 Respondents from Dún Laoghaire and Dundrum particularly raised the issue regarding the lack of playing fields.

4.4.8 There is a need to undertake more focused consultation through the DLR Sports Forum to establish the need for facilities. The results of such consultation would be used to develop an Outdoor Sports Strategy. This Strategy would ensure that DLR provides the right type of facility in the right place to meet local needs.

4.5 Public perception of Quality

4.5.1 The public were asked to rate the quality of open space and facilities using the descriptions – very good, good, average, poor and very poor.

4.5.2 47% of respondents rated the appearance of parks and open spaces as being good and 37% as very good. 3% of respondents describe the overall quality as being poor or very poor. Key highlights of the results are:

- 69% of respondents rated natural and semi-natural open space as being good or very good

- 52% of respondents rated the quality of amenity space as good or very good
- 45% rated provision for children and young people as being good or above. 6% of respondents rated them as very poor
- 44% of respondents rated outdoor sports sites as average or below

4.5.3 Respondents commented on a perceived lack of provision for teenagers within parks.

4.5.4 A small but significant number of respondents acknowledged that the larger parks are a real asset but are concerned that the Local Parks are not being managed and maintained to a good standard. Also, respondents expressed concern over the range of facilities available in the smaller sites. There is a perceived lack of investment at the local level resulting in the deterioration of quality.

4.5.5 Respondents raised a number of concerns about the quality of outdoor sports facilities. Concerns included the use of sports fields for riding motorbikes and the lack of responsible behaviour by dog owners, who allow their pets to foul playing pitches.

4.6 Public perceptions of Accessibility

4.6.1 Respondents to the survey identified walking and driving as the main modes of travelling to parks, open spaces, sports and play facilities and cemeteries. The chosen mode varies according to the type of spaces, as shown in Table 4.2 (next page). The low percentage of users cycling to sites is noteworthy and of concern, in the context of DLR's emerging cycling policy. It reflects the need to encourage cycling as a preferred option, by investing in communications, promotion, signage and cycle parking facilities and in particular the strategic Greenways (see Chapter 6, section 6.2.7).

4.6.2 The public was asked to identify how long it takes to travel to each type of space and facility. The majority of respondents travelled no more than 20 minutes to reach their nearest site.

Table 4.2 Chosen mode of travel relative to amenities

Amenities	Walk%	Drive%	Public Transport%	Cycle%
Parks	58%	36%	2%	3%
Open space	70%	25%	3%	3%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	29%	58%	7%	7%
Provision for Children and Young People	38%	54%	5%	3%
Cemeteries and Burial Grounds	16%	75%	6%	3%

4.6.3 Amenity open space is the closest type of provision in the hierarchy to places of residence and therefore takes less time to reach. On the other hand, Flagship Parks may require greater travel times due to their larger catchment area.

4.6.4 On average almost 90% of respondents said the travel time to all types of amenities (parks, natural and semi-natural greenspace, amenity open space, outdoor sports facilities, playgrounds, cemeteries and beaches) was acceptable. The survey revealed the following specific responses:

Parks

- 58% state they walk to parks

- 50% of those who do walk do so in under 5 minutes
- 36% state they drive to their nearest park
- 30% of drivers to parks do so in under 5 minutes
- 93% believe travel time to their nearest park is acceptable



Walking along main avenue in Shanganagh Park, Shankill

Amenity Open Space

- 60% travel less than 5 minutes
- 97% travel less than 30 minutes
- 94% believe travel time to their nearest open space is acceptable

Outdoor Sport

- 25% travel less than 5 minutes
- 57% travel less than 10 minutes
- 95% travel less than 30 minutes
- 85% believe their travel time is acceptable



Cycle stop at viewing platform at Longford Gardens, Seapoint

Provision for Children and Young People

- 24% travel < 5 minutes to nearest playground
- 58% travel less than 10 minutes
- 96% travel less than 30minutes
- 78% believe the travel time is acceptable

4.6.5 Table 4.3 shows the average or the acceptable travel time for respondents to each type of open space. Walking distance is based on an average walking speed of 3 m.p.h (4.8 k.p.h). Driving speed is calculated on an average driving speed of 20 m.p.h (32 k.p.h), to compensate for stop/start at junctions.

4.6.6 The walking distances given in Table 4.3 will be used as thresholds for the purposes of the accessibility assessment - see Chapter 5, section 5.3. These accessibility thresholds have been designed to reflect the specific travel times and distances which respondents stated they use to access the

different types of open space. The thresholds can be interpreted as approximating catchment areas for each type of open space.

Table 4.3 Average travel time of respondents to each type of facility

Facility	Respondents	Average Travel Time (rounded to the nearest minute)		Equivalent Distance Walking (metres)
		Walk	Drive	
Parks	The majority of respondents (58%) stated an average travel time to walk to their local park	Walk	8 mins	600
		Drive	9 mins	5,000
Open space	The majority of respondents would expect to walk to their nearest site (70%)	Walk	6 mins	400
		Drive	10 mins	5,000
Formal Outdoor Sports Facilities	The majority of respondents would drive to their nearest local facility (58%)	Walk	10 mins	800
		Drive	12 mins	7,000
Provision for Children and Young People	The majority of respondents would drive to their nearest provision (54%)	Walk	10 mins	800
		Drive	13 mins	7,000

4.7 Public perception of Deterrents to Use

4.7.1 The survey questionnaire included a question, asking the public if there was anything that prevented them from visiting their Local Parks and open spaces. Of the total 711 respondents, 33% (232 people) stated that that they experience some kind of deterrent.

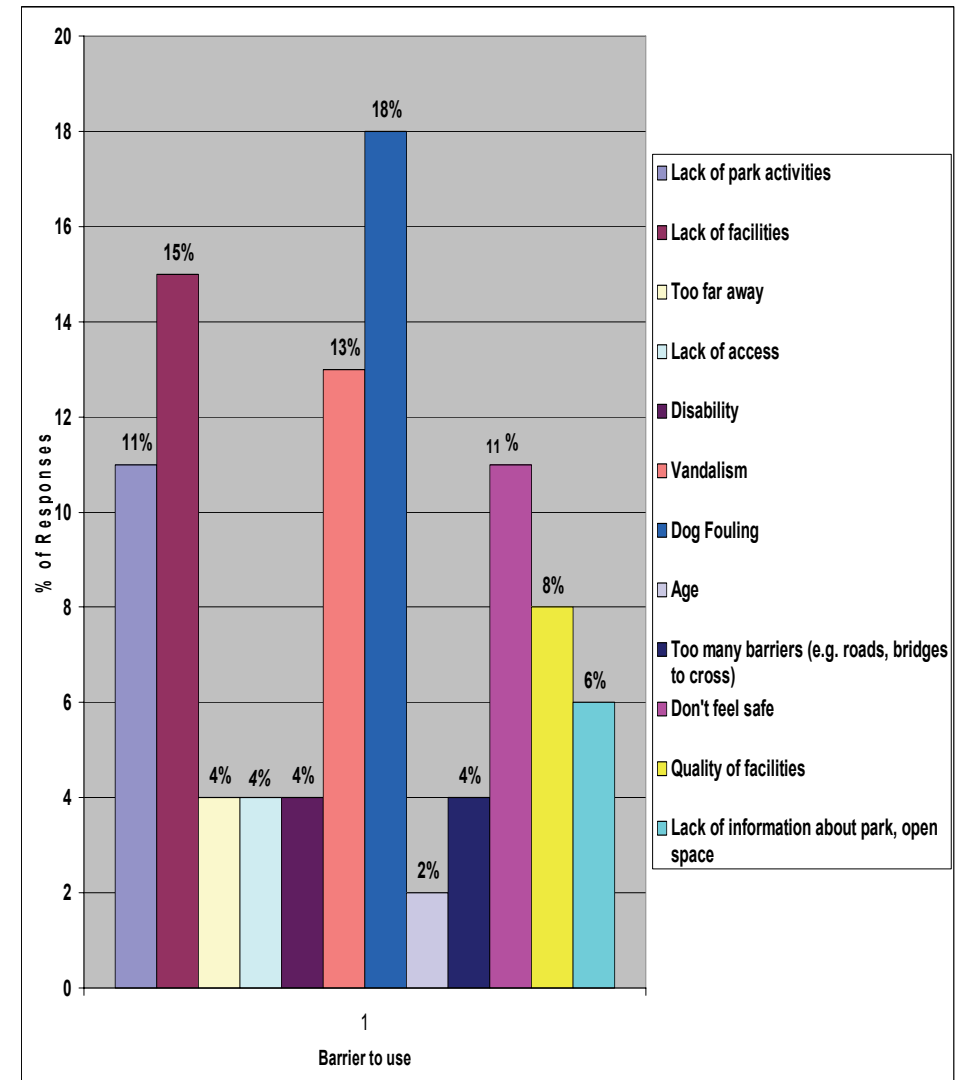
4.7.2 The most common deterrents were dog fouling (18%), lack of facilities (15%), vandalism (13%) and a lack of park activities (11%). Another 11% stated that they did not feel safe visiting their local open space.

4.7.3 Only 2% of respondents identified age as a barrier to use while 4% identified physical barriers such as too many roads to cross. 6% of respondents identified a lack of information as a deterrent using parks and open spaces. It is interesting to note that those deterrents with the highest response rate relate to quality, while the lowest relate to access.

4.7.4 A number of local people said that they do not feel safe walking to their Local Parks due to the volume of young people who gather in the area. The repercussions of this are that these people may choose to drive to parks which are within walking distance. Some local residents also suggested that they are experiencing difficulty accessing Local Parks which are slightly outside their residential area.

4.7.5 18% of respondents said that their local park either had a children’s play area of very poor quality or no play area at all. This leads to a number of people driving to parks outside their area in order to be able to use a play area which is of an acceptable standard. A solution to this problem would be to improve play areas where the quality is poor and build new facilities within Local Parks which meet the identified needs of the people living in the area (see sections 5.5 Provision for Children and Young People and Chapter 8 Action No. 2 of Action Plan).

Figure 4.3 Factors deterring use of parks and open spaces



4.8 Suggested Future Improvements

4.8.1 The public was asked if there were any improvements they felt were needed to their local park or open space.

4.8.2 It was suggested by some respondents that "mile markers" and cycle paths in parks would be beneficial. This would encourage more runners and cyclists to use parks. Those who currently drive may wish to cycle or walk in order that they can use these facilities.

4.8.3 Providing allocated dog areas in all parks may also reduce the number of people using cars as people may not need to drive to a park where they can let their dog off the lead. This may also encourage people who don't own dogs to use their local parks as they may not need to drive to a park where their children don't have to play in the same area as dogs which are running free. A comment made by many residents (18% of respondents) was that there is a amount of dog fouling and litter in their Local Parks. These included Cabinteely Park, Shanganagh Park and Killiney Hill Park. (see section 6.9 for Dog policy).

4.8.4 Regarding outdoor sports and recreational facilities, respondents suggested that they should be more training facilities and areas for warm-up prior to participating in sport.