

# 8

## Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity



*Fernhill Park, Stepaside*

## 8.1 Introduction

The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan (CDP), has adopted the principle of sustainable development within the Green Infrastructure (GI) Chapter, and identifies GI as a key strategic asset for the County, and one which can aid in the creation of a climate resilient County, as set out in the overarching vision and County Strategic Outcomes in Chapter 1.

This Chapter includes policies for the protection, creation, and management of this resource in an integrated manner by focusing on key themes within GI such as: landscape and the coast; access; biodiversity; and parks. In addition, the integration of the emerging Ecosystem Services Approach (ESA), will be promoted and encouraged. ESA is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. This will also be included in the forthcoming Biodiversity Plan for the County.

The strategic vision of the Plan in relation to GI, Landscape, and Biodiversity recognises the following key issues:

- Increasing awareness among all sections of the population of the importance of the County's green infrastructure, landscape, and biodiversity, which can aid the eco-systems services approach address the challenge of climate change.
- Ensure full integration of environmental considerations into other Development Plan policies.
- Ensuring that the forthcoming County's Wildlife Corridor Plan and the forthcoming Biodiversity Plan are implemented and that succession plans are put in place at the appropriate time.
- Recognising the interconnecting elements of GI and the importance of the distribution of landscape, and recreational assets (parks and open spaces) across the County, to provide an inclusive and accessible County.
- The need to update the existing 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' for the County during the lifetime of the Plan.
- Recognising the challenges of climate change and its impact on GI and, biodiversity and the availability of ESA to address this challenge.
- Ensuring full compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

## 8.2 National and Regional Planning Context

The policies and objectives set out in this Chapter fully align with national and regional planning policy in the form of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region. Both documents seek to protect and enhance the unique identity, and character of places, and to facilitate improvements to human wellbeing, and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their environment.

### 8.2.1 National Planning Framework

The NPF highlights the relevance of open space and recreation to enhance our amenities, landscape, heritage, and healthy living. It also emphasises that open space and recreational facilities are key to the delivery of sustainable communities. The NPF includes the following National Policy Objectives (NPOs), which relate directly to the issue of green infrastructure, open space, and recreation:

- NPO26: Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.
- NPO62: Identify and strengthen the value of greenbelts and green spaces at a regional and city scale, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, prevent coalescence of settlements and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas.

### 8.2.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The RSES seeks to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of places and to facilitate improvements to human wellbeing and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their environment. The RSES also contains a number of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs), which could be included under the broad heading of Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity (including landscape, access, open space and recreation).

The NPF and RSES outcomes, and policy objectives, outlined above have been taken into account, and form the basis for a number of the specific Policy Objectives set out in this Chapter.

This Chapter is divided into the following Sections:

- Green Infrastructure;
- Landscape;
- The Coast;
- Access and the Mountains;
- Biodiversity.



*Flowers Fernhill, Park*

### 8.3 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure (GI) can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings (consistent with Section 7.7 of the RSES).

GI serves a wide variety of important functions including but not limited to; provision of habitat, increased biodiversity, provision of ecological corridors, climate change adaptation and mitigation, water treatment, water retention, local amenity provision, air quality improvement, cultural and heritage preservation, provision of a mentally restorative environment and flood mitigation.

At the local authority scale, GI offers an opportunity to develop integrated strategies around economic development, urban placemaking and rural policy. Linking strategic natural assets with cultural and heritage assets further enhances the opportunities for GI strategies to drive recreation and tourism benefits.

#### 8.3.1 Policy Objective GIB1: Green Infrastructure Strategy

It is a Policy Objective to continue to implement, and update, the DLR Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, to protect existing green infrastructure and encourage and facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development, design and management of high quality natural and semi-natural areas. This recognises the ecosystems approach and the synergies that

can be achieved with regard to sustainable transport, provision of open space, sustainable management of water, protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

The GI approach for the County, also guides and assists in developing a County-wide green infrastructure network to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystems, including the protection of European Sites.

GI includes our stocks of natural assets and the ecosystems services they provide to us, which if planned for in the same way as other services, can provide long term benefits in a County such as DLR. For example, our parks and open space promote health and well-being, providing recreational facilities and enjoyment for our communities and for our visitors to DLR. GI is also a crucial component in building resilient communities, capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change with trees, woodlands and wetlands, providing carbon capture and slowing water flows while improving air quality. GI also enhances opportunities for tourism, and encourages new businesses to invest, helping the economy of the County.

It is the Council's intention to review and update the existing Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County in consultation with all key stakeholders and with the public during the lifetime of the County Development Plan, 2022- 2028. The Strategy will identify key green infrastructure aims, with support from the forthcoming DLR County Wildlife Corridor Plan, 2021, and objectives for the County taking account of the main Policy Objectives identified in the County Development Plan.

## 8.4 Landscape

The landscape, and biodiversity of DLR represent some of the most important intrinsic assets of the County. Indeed, to a great degree they actually define the County. The extensive network of public parks and open spaces in the County, provide important areas for passive and active recreation, as well as key spaces for eco-systems and enhancement of biodiversity. The County is framed by its coastal and upland landscapes, and the diverse range of landscape character areas 'Between the Mountains and the Sea', testify to the variety of landscapes in what is the smallest administrative County in Ireland.

All these assets are integral to the County's image and add greatly to the quality of life for both residents and visitors alike. They set the physical context to the daily experiences of those who live, work, and visit DLR. The landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity of the County also represent valuable economic assets. The effective management of these assets is integral to the future successful development of the County.

By promoting greater levels of information, communication, and imaginative design, however, conflicts can be minimised, and it should be possible for DLR to continue to grow in vitality whilst retaining its very distinct characteristics.

### 8.4.1 Policy Objective GIB2: Landscape Character Areas

It is a Policy Objective to continue to protect, manage and plan to conserve, maintain or enhance the distinctive characteristics of the County's landscapes, townscapes and seascapes in accordance with the recommended strategies as originally outlined in the Landscape Character Assessment (2002 and since updated), in accordance with the 'Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment' (2000) as issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention) and in accordance with 'A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – 2015-2025'. The Council shall implement any relevant recommendations contained in the Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht's National Landscape Strategy for Ireland, 2015 - 2025.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010 defines landscape as per Article 1 of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (2000) "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*".

The ELC definition introduced the concept of landscape as a dynamic system, not just confined to the countryside; but including urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and encompassing land, inland waters, coastal and marine areas. Landscape policy deals with every-day and degraded landscapes, as well as those that are considered to be exceptional. The new definition in law recognises the importance of all landscapes, not just exceptional landscapes, as having a crucial bearing on our quality of life and as deserving attention in policy.

The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000 (Part II, S10 (e) and 1st Schedule, Part IV (7) requires every planning authority to include objectives in their Development Plan for the "*preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that...the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.*"

The Council will take a proactive approach to the landscape with policies that seek to conserve, and enhance strongly distinctive, and specific landscape elements of significance that are intrinsically important or contribute to the general amenity of the County, and that underpin the broader landscape character of areas.

The updating of the County Landscape Character Assessment, and the County Development Plan is informed by existing European, national, regional, and local planning documents and policies.

Landscape assets are non-renewable resources that the Council will seek to protect. The existing Landscape Character Assessment is included as Appendix 8 of this Development Plan.

### 8.4.2 Policy Objective GIB3: Seascape

It is a Policy Objective to carry out a Local Seascape Assessment in accordance with any relevant recommendations or methodologies contained in the Irish Marine Institute's National Seascape Character Assessment and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's 'National Landscape Strategy for Ireland, 2015 – 2025'.

*Seascape Dún Laoghaire Coast*

Seascape Character Assessment is an extension of Landscape Character Assessment and, with 17km of coastline, Seascape is a crucial element of the County's history, identity, and culture. It is recognised that a Seascape Assessment for coastal parts of the County should be carried out, as there is a need to identify and describe seascapes in order to recognise the character, and key visual attributes of different parts of the coast/sea, and to understand and manage the natural and other factors that lead to seascape character change.

#### 8.4.3 Policy Objective GIB4: High Amenity Zones

It is Policy Objective to conserve and enhance existing High Amenity Zones and to seek to manage these and other areas to absorb further recreational uses and activity without damaging their unique character.

The County Development Plan maps indicate areas that are zoned as High Amenity areas. These areas consist of landscapes of special value where inappropriate development, would contribute to a significant diminution of the landscape setting of the County.

These areas include the Glencullen Valley, Glendoo Valley and Kilmashogue Valley. The areas immediately adjacent to the High Amenity areas are, likewise, also sensitive landscapes. Development in these areas proximate, may affect directly or indirectly the quality, and integrity of the adjoining High Amenity areas.

Within these areas, the presumption will be generally to resist any development not directly related to the area's amenity potential, or its existing use for agriculture, mountain, or hill farming.

#### 8.4.4 Policy Objective GIB5: Historic Landscape Character Areas

In assessing development proposals and in the preparation of plans, it is a Policy Objective to have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessments (HLCA), already undertaken for a number of the urban-rural fringe areas of the County most likely to come under development pressure.

A HLCA is a detailed holistic study of the historical development and environmental significance of an area. The HLCA offers a dynamic perspective of the total landscape, thereby contributing to the management, and promotion of sustainable development within that area. Five HLCAs have been carried out in the County to date:

- Barnacullia;
- Kiltiernan;
- Glencullen;
- Ballycorus – Rathmichael; and
- Old Connaught.

#### 8.4.5 Policy Objective GIB6: Views and Prospects

It is a Policy Objective to preserve, protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interests, and to prevent development, which would block or otherwise interfere with Views and/or Prospects.

DLR contains many sites and vantage points from which scenic views over areas of great natural beauty, local landmarks, historic landscapes, adjoining Counties, and the City of Dublin may be obtained. In addition, the County also contains important prospects i.e. prominent landscapes or areas of special amenity value, or special interest which are widely visible from the surrounding area. Specific Views and Prospects for protection have been identified in the Plan and are considered when assessing planning applications.

It is also recognised that visual linkages between landmarks, landscape features and views exist. The Council will also take into account any Views and Prospects of adjoining Counties—Wicklow, Dublin City and South Dublin, when assessing planning applications for development proximate to the mutual County boundaries.

In evaluating planning applications for development in the foreground of identified Views and/or Prospects, consideration will be given to the effect such development may have on the View and/or Prospect.

Where possible, DLR will seek to improve and retain the viewing potential of existing views and/or prospects.

Roads or other public areas from which there is a View and/or Prospect worthy of protection are graphically shown on the suite of Development Plan Maps.

**Table 8.1:** *Prospects to be Preserved*

Prospects to be Preserved
Dublin City and Bay from Deerpark, Mount Merrion
Carrickgollogan from Ballybrack (e.g. Church Road and Churchview Road)
Carrickgollogan from Bray Road (Shankill to Bray area)
Carrickgollogan from Ballyman Road
Carrickgollogan from the Enniskerry Road (south of Kiltiernan Village)
The Scalp from Ballyman Road and part of the Enniskerry Road
Three Rock Mountain and Two Rock Mountain from the Enniskerry Road (Sandyford-Kiltiernan area) and Sandyford Village
Three Rock Mountain and Two Rock Mountain from the Ballybrack Road
Three Rock Mountain and Kilmashogue Mountain from Marlay Park
Tibradden Mountain and Kilmashogue Mountain from Kilmashogue Lane
Glencullen Mountain and Valley from the Ballybrack Road
Glendoo Mountain from the Ballybrack Road
Dalkey Hill from Ulverton Road, Station Road and the East Pier
Killiney Hill from Vico Road, Station Road and the East Pier

Additional Views and Prospects may be considered throughout the lifetime of the Plan.



## 8.5 The Coast

The Coast is a feature iconic of the County. It is used for a wide variety of purposes - amenity, recreational activities, commercial, sporting, and economic. It represents areas of high landscape quality, natural heritage, and amenity value.

The 17km coastline of DLR is diverse - varying from rocky headlands with a variety of inlets, long established historical harbours, and high-quality beaches. The retention of the Blue Flag status at Seapoint and Killiney Bay is an objective for the duration of the County Development Plan and beyond. The Coast is also an important economic resource - particularly for the fishing, aquaculture, leisure, and tourism industries.

The Coast is home to a variety of important habitats and species. This is reflected in the number of designated sites of National and International importance along its length, including South Dublin Bay, Booterstown Marsh, and the Dalkey Coastal Zone.

It is important that the coastal zone is managed and developed in a way which protects and enhances its natural heritage and landscape. The impacts of climate change also need to be considered.

### 8.5.1 Policy Objective GIB7: National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)

It is a Policy Objective to support the policies and objectives as appropriate and relevant of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), with respect to the conservation, management, and protection for a sustainable future for the marine area.

The NMPF (2021) sets out a vision, objectives, and policies to aid decision making in the marine area.

It is an important component piece of progressing requirements under EU Directive 2014/89/EU. Part V of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 transposes the Directive into primary legislation. It is important to note that Section 68 states that Part V, “shall not apply to those parts of the nearshore areas to which a Development Plan, a Local Area Plan, the NPF, a RSES, a guidance on a directive under Part 11 of the principle Act applies”.

The NMPF also references the Marine Planning and Development Management Bill, which introduces a “single development management process for the maritime area for activities and development to be administered by An Bord Pleanála and Local Authorities, as appropriate”.

The Council supports in principle the provision of a small pier/jetty at Shankill Beach and to promote its use as a health and well being amenity for water based and recreational purposes. Proposals for such development shall be accompanied by Screening for AA and, as necessary, an AA Natura Impact Statement and EIAR Screening and Environmental Assessments as appropriate.

A general scheme of the Bill was approved by the Government in December 2019. The role of the Local Authority in this respect will crystallise as the legislation is finalised.

### 8.5.2 Policy Objective GIB8: Coastline Parks and Harbours

It is a Policy Objective 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.



Gulls at Dublin Bay

There are a number of public parks and smaller incidental urban spaces along the coastline including Blackrock Park, the Peoples Park, Newtownsmith, Killiney and Shanganagh. The Council will continue to develop the amenity potential of these parks, and ensure continued public access to harbour areas. It is an Objective of this Council to maintain the Coal Harbour area, and the East and West Piers of Dún Laoghaire Harbour as publicly accessible facilities. Any public realm projects at both Sandycove and Bulloch Harbours shall have regard to the concept proposals that are contained in the 2020 Masterplan for Sandycove and Bulloch Harbours.

**8.5.3 Policy Objective GIB9: Beaches and Bathing Areas**

It is a Policy Objective to promote the use of certain beaches and Bathing Areas for amenity and recreational use, and to continue to develop the County’s beaches and Bathing Areas in co-operation with local and environmental interest groups.

Whilst the DLR beaches team maintain a number of locations across the county, there are five (5) designated bathing areas as follows:

**Table 8.2:** *Bathing Areas in the County*

Name of Bathing Area
Seapoint
Sandycove Harbour and Beach
40 Foot Swimming Area
White Rock Beach
Killiney Beach

**8.5.4 Policy Objective GIB10: Dublin Bay Biosphere**

It is a Policy Objective to participate, support and contribute to the management of the biosphere, along with its partners and to aim to raise awareness and education to people living, working and using the biosphere, through an Education Strategy. In furtherance of this Policy Objective, DLR have contributed to the development of an Environmental Code of Practice for those working in the Biosphere, and all partners carry out conservation actions including gathering biodiversity data, and monitoring within the biosphere.

Biosphere reserves are places where nature and people connect. They are areas which are internationally recognised for their biological diversity, yet also actively managed to promote a positive relationship between people and nature.

The Dublin Bay Biosphere is a special designation awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural organisation (UNESCO). It is part of a global network of 701 biosphere reserves in 124 Countries. The biosphere designation does not add or detract from the regulatory framework already in place for the Bay, but is designed to assist stakeholders in finding sustainable solutions to the management of the Bay, which ensure good outcomes for both people and nature.

The biosphere reserve is managed by the Dublin Bay Biosphere Partnership which includes Fingal County Council, Dublin City Council, DLR County Council, Dublin Port Company and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The Partnership is working to promote the protection of habitats and species, to support education, and research within the site, and to support a sustainable economy for people living, and working in the area in accordance with the Habitats Directive. The Partnership works with local community groups and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). A number of NGOs are valued members of the Biosphere Conservation Working Group.

**8.5.5 Policy Objective GIB11: Coastal Area Feasibility Study**

It is a Policy Objective to explore undertaking a comprehensive feasibility study on the recreational potential along the coastal area of the County, which comprehensively addresses recreational impact - including visitor numbers, mapping and surveying of sensitive habitats and species and identification of significant threats on European sites - and which would allow an assessment of any future proposals, alone or in combination, to assess impact on the coastal and marine zone within and adjacent to the County boundary. The Council will explore the possibility of carrying out this study with adjoining and/or coastal Local Authorities and/or other agencies.

## 8.6 Access and the Mountains

The County has extensive possibilities for recreational use between parks, natural routes, beaches, and the hills/mountains. Traditionally, the recreational use of the Dublin Mountains would have been primarily for activities such as walking, road cycling, dog exercising and picnicking, which capitalised upon the scenic qualities of the mountains and the panoramic vistas over Dublin. Today there is a much wider range of recreational pursuits taking place in the mountains including mountain biking, orienteering, mountain running. The Dublin mountains also play an important role as a natural, scenic and heritage amenity (see also sections 8.4 Landscape, 8.7 Biodiversity and 11.5 Countywide Heritage).

A number of policies are contained within this Section of the Chapter to protect and enhance the mountains, including their use for access and recreation.

### 8.6.1 Policy Objective GIB12: Access to Natural Heritage

It is a Policy Objective to promote, protect and enhance sustainable and appropriate access to the natural heritage of the County, where practicable, in a balanced way while protecting the natural heritage of the County.

### 8.6.2 Policy Objective GIB13: Dublin Mountains Strategic Plan

It is a Policy Objective to support the vision and objectives of the Dublin Mountains Partnership Strategic Plan (2020- 2025), including the continued sustainable management, development and enhancement of the Dublin Mountains Way and its rerouting off public roads, wherever possible.

In 2006 the Dublin Mountains Initiative (DMI) was formed - to represent the views of recreational users of the Dublin Mountains and to foster the development of a management plan for the area.

The Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) was established in 2008, to improve the recreation potential of the public lands in the Dublin Mountains. The DMP Partners include Coillte, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, DLR County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dublin City Council and the DMI.

The Partnership was also established to oversee the preparation of the Dublin Mountains Partnership Strategic Plan. The flagship project of the DMP is the 42.6km National Way marked trail, which crosses the mountains from Shankill to Tallaght.

In order to enhance the enjoyment and safety of walkers, the Planning Authority will facilitate, where possible, the Dublin Mountain Partnership's efforts to reroute the Dublin Mountains Way off public roads and to provide/improve access to publicly owned land in the upland area.

The Dublin Mountains Area also contains significant archaeology, particularly in the form of passage graves, portal tombs and wedge tombs among other features, which add to the overall recreational component of the Dublin Mountains Asset.

### 8.6.3 Policy Objective GIB14: Public Rights-of-Way

It is a Policy Objective to:

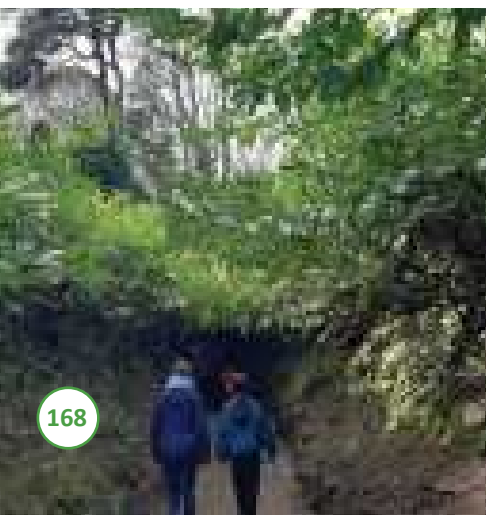
- i. Preserve, protect, promote, and improve for the common good all existing public rights-of-way which contribute to general amenity.
- ii. Extend or enhance existing rights-of-way either by agreement with landowners or using compulsory powers in the interest of ensuring access to amenities, including the coast, upland areas, riverbanks, heritage sites, geological sites and National Monuments.
- iii. Prohibit development and keep free from obstruction existing rights-of-way, and to take legal action if necessary, to prevent any attempt to close them off.
- iv. Prohibit development which would prejudice public access to existing rights-of-way, unless the level of amenity is maintained by the right of way, footpath, or bridleway being diverted by the minimum practical distance and the route continues to be segregated from vehicular traffic.
- v. Consider favourably planning applications which include proposals to improve the condition and appearance of existing rights-of-way.

The Council will continue to use its powers under the Planning Acts to preserve and maintain existing rights-of-way, and to promote their greater use in amenity areas. In addition, the Council may seek to incorporate the creation of pedestrian ways as a condition of a planning permission to link amenities, facilities, and points of interest.

Rights-of-way will be displayed on the County Development Plan Maps, where possible, and the Council is committed to ensuring that access by the public to amenity areas is retained. It is an objective of the Council to secure the retention of those established public rights-of-way as set out in Appendix 11.



*Routes through Fernhill, Stepside*



#### 8.6.4 Policy Objective GIB15: Recreation Access Routes

It is a Policy Objective to preserve all Recreation Access Routes, which contribute to general amenity.

The current Plan identifies Recreation Access Routes (RARs) within the lands under the control of Coillte. Coillte Teoranta, the State Forestry Board, was established to manage the public forest built up since the commencement of State planting and is the largest provider of forest recreation in Ireland. Coillte's commitment to recreation and nature is underpinned by its membership of the Dublin Mountain Partnership, and its recent 'Coillte Nature' alternative, which is dedicated to addressing the biodiversity and climate change crises via reconfiguration with native woodlands, and restoration of biodiversity areas.

It is an objective of the Council to support the sustainable management of recreation in the Dublin Mountains. As members of the Dublin Mountains Partnership, which comprises representatives from a wide range of partner organisations, the Council will continue to support the role of the Dublin Mountain Partnership in improving the recreational experience for users of the Dublin Mountains.

#### 8.6.5 Policy Objective GIB16: National Park

It is a Policy Objective to promote and to co-operate in the extension of the Wicklow Mountains National Park.



Walking Route through Dublin Mountains

The Wicklow Mountains National Park was established by the Government in 1991, and originally covered an area of 3,700 hectares. This area has been expanded to over 20,000 hectares, and it is envisaged that the Park will continue to grow as new lands are acquired. The primary aim of the Park is the conservation of local biodiversity and landscape. A very small portion of the Park falls within the jurisdiction of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

#### 8.6.6 Policy Objective GIB17: Trails, Hiking and Walking Routes

It is Policy Objective to promote the development of Regional and local networks of hiking and walking routes/trails. These should be waymarked/signposted and listed, where feasible and appropriate.

The Heritage Plan 2021 – 2025, informs the Council's policies regarding the protection, and management of and access to heritage in the County. The County Development Plan (CDP) will have full regard to the new County Heritage Plan, during the lifetime of the CDP, and will also continue its commitment to the development of hiking and walking trails in the County.

Implementation of this policy may involve the development of walks designed around cultural and historic personalities and events, coastal and sea-based routes, and long-distance hiking trails in the Dublin Mountains. The Council will co-operate with relevant agencies and groups, e.g. the Dublin Mountains Partnership and Biosphere Partnership, local groups, and landowners as appropriate, with a view to increasing such routes - particularly in upland areas. This will include consultation with adjoining Local Authorities with a view to promoting routes extending beyond the County administrative boundary.

Steps to encourage such routes may include public transport connectivity, safe cycling routes, secure parking, publication of maps, and the provision of other appropriate facilities for users of such routes. Where possible and appropriate established hiking and walking routes will be signposted. (Refer also to Section 5.8.11 'Policy Objective T33: Directional/Information/Wayfinding Signage). That all in use public rights of way including those over private lands be suitably signposted. Other trails in the County include routes such as mass paths, which were historic routes used to access mass in penal times. The Draft Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Heritage Plan 2021-2025 contains an action to map historic paths including mass paths and it is an objective of the Council to preserve mass paths throughout the County where possible.



## 8.7 Biodiversity

### 8.7.1 Introduction

The natural heritage of DLR includes our flora, fauna, geology, and the landscape that surrounds us. In simple terms biodiversity includes all the variety of life on Earth. It is the diversity of nature, of our habitats, plants, and animals (including us), and their interconnections with each other. We are a part of nature and everything in nature is connected. Biodiversity forms part of the overall Green Infrastructure of the County.

The Council will aim to protect and enhance biodiversity and landscape and will strive to ensure the protection of environments and habitats (consistent with RPO 7.15 of the RSES). DLR, stretching from the coastal strip along South Dublin Bay to the uplands of the Dublin Mountains, contains a wealth of diverse natural habitats and species.

These include our marine and coastal environments, our hedgerows, rivers, streams, wetlands, woodlands and areas of upland grassland, heath, fen, and bog. Various species can be found across the County in all of these habitats, from our protected harbour porpoise, our seals and birds in our marine and coastal areas to our red squirrels in Killiney Hill, bats roosting and foraging across the County, terns, swallows and swifts that fill our summer skies, to our watercourses and wetland with otter, newts and frogs. The less shy of our

species visit our gardens such as urban foxes, badgers and hedgehogs, and not forgetting all our wonderful flora including many rare species.

The condition of these natural habitats and species, affects how they can provide ecosystem services, including providing us with resilience to climate change. It affects the quality of life of the residents and visitors to the County and is important in supporting local businesses such as tourism and recreation, highlighting the importance of protecting, and enhancing our natural habitats and species.

#### 8.7.1.1 Policy Objective GIB18: Protection of Natural Heritage and the Environment

It is a Policy Objective to protect and conserve the environment including, in particular, the natural heritage of the County and to conserve and manage Nationally and Internationally important and EU designated sites - such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservations (SACs), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and Ramsar sites (wetlands) - as well as non-designated areas of high nature conservation value known as 'Stepping Stones' for the purposes of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.



*Red Squirrel, Killiney Hill*

Implementation of this Policy Objective will involve, inter alia:

- Protection of existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character, including those listed under Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) and ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management.
- Designation of High Amenity zones.
- Identification of Views and Prospects of special amenity value or special interest.
- Mapping of existing public rights-of-way and other strategic access routes.
- Protection of sites of geological and geomorphological importance.
- Protection of a Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservations (SACs), and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs).
- Maintaining the ecological character and sustainable use of our wetlands that are considered of International Importance. DLRs Ramsar site is the Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary No. 832.
- Protection of existing access (including established rights-of-way) to such sites, where feasible, and the promotion of public access where it does not exist at present – but subject to ensuring and maintaining the highest environmental standards.
- Development and protection of the DLR Ecological Network (Refer to Appendix 9).
- Identification and protection of non-designated sites of local and high nature conservation value, and the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.
- Maintenance and, as appropriate, achievement of ‘favourable conservation status’ of habitats and species within SACs and SPAs as per the requirements and obligations of the Habitats Directive Council Directive 92/43/EEC and the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC.
- Undertake field studies and map invasive alien species throughout the County in line with the forthcoming DLR Invasive Species Plan.
- Working with local communities, groups, landowners, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and other relevant parties to identify, protect, manage and, where appropriate, enhance and promote understanding of sites of local biodiversity value.
- Protection of the ecological integrity of proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Statutory Nature Reserves, Refuges for Fauna and Annex 1 Habitats.
- Promotion of the Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment (IBIA) approach - a methodological framework for biodiversity impact assessment that integrates SEA/EIA requirements with AA.
- Continuing as partners of the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere and to support the agreed plans and actions of the partnership.
- Continuing to actively support the aims and objectives of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2020 - 2025 by encouraging measures to protect and increase the population of bees and other pollinating insects in DLR.
- Implementing any relevant recommendations contained in the Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht’s National Peatland Strategy 2015.

#### 8.7.1.2 Policy Objective GIB19: Habitats Directive

It is a Policy Objective to ensure the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including European Sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network, in accordance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines.

Implementation of the above policy will be in accordance with the following and any updated/ superseding documents:

- EU Directives, including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as amended, the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EC, as amended, the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC).
- National legislation, including the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2010, as amended, the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003, as amended, the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011), as amended, the European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations 2008, as amended, and the Flora Protection Order 2015.
- National policy guidelines, including the Landscape and Landscape Assessment Draft Guidelines 2000, the Environmental Impact Assessment Sub-Threshold Development Guidelines 2003, Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines 2004, Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009, Guidelines



on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports 2017, and the Appropriate Assessment Guidance 2010.

- Catchment and Water Resource Management Plans, including the National River Basin District Management Plan 2018-2021.
- Biodiversity Plans and guidelines, including the forthcoming DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2025, the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021, and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.
- Ireland's Environment 2016 (EPA), and to make provision, where appropriate, to address the report's goals and challenges.

### 8.7.1.3 Policy Objective GIB20: Biodiversity Plan

It is a Policy Objective to support the provisions of the forthcoming DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan, 2021-2025.

The DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan has been written with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, and the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021, in mind along with other plans and policies. As outlined in the National Biodiversity Action Plan, 2017-2021, Ireland's Vision for Biodiversity is *"that biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally"*.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 announced in May 2020, is a comprehensive, ambitious, long-term plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems. It aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030, with benefits for people, the climate, and the planet. A core part of the European Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy will also support a green recovery following the current pandemic.

The forthcoming DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan, 2021-2025, aims to incorporate the aims of these EU and National Biodiversity plans into objectives and actions. This will be reflected in the primary features of the forthcoming DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan, which will aim:

- To translate International, European, and Irish policies and obligations into effective local action on the ground.
- To provide a framework for the conservation of biodiversity of International, National, and local importance.

- To collect biodiversity information on the County and assess our ecosystem services.
- To raise public awareness of biodiversity, ecosystems, and ecosystem services, and to coordinate existing and new initiatives.
- To improve resilience of biodiversity to climate change and, thereby, improve human resilience to climate change.
- To provide a basis for monitoring the success of biodiversity conservation at an International, National, and local level.

The implementation of the current DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan has resulted in the completion of a number of projects/studies that have increased the overall level of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the biodiversity of the County. These projects/studies are listed in Appendix 9, and have been used to produce the DLR Ecological Network Map (Refer to Supplementary Map B1). The Ecological Network Map visually demonstrates the ecological network that currently exists across the County. The Council will undertake necessary ecological surveys, and update the habitat and species mapping for the County.

### 8.7.1.4 Policy Objective GIB21: Designated Sites

It is a Policy Objective to protect and preserve areas designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and Special Protection Areas. It is Council policy to promote the maintenance and as appropriate, delivery of 'favourable' conservation status of habitats and species within these areas.

There are a range of sites in the County that are designated under National and EU legislation. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) designates Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the EC Birds and Habitats Directives, respectively.

#### Internationally Protected Areas:

There are a number of areas designated in DLR to conserve habitats and species of European importance pursuant to the EU Habitats and Birds Directives. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) designates Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the EC Birds and Habitats Directives respectively.

SPAs are designated for wild birds listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. SACs are designated for habitats listed on Annex I, and for species listed on Annex II, of the EC Habitats Directive. SPAs and SACs form part of a European network of designated sites called European sites.

The Council is also committed to avoiding pollution or deterioration of important bird habitats outside SPAs (as per Article 4(4) of the Birds Directive). In line with the requirements of Article 3 of the Habitats Directive, the Council will endeavour to improve the ecological coherence of European sites by maintaining, and where appropriate, developing, further features of the landscape, which are of importance for wild fauna and flora.

The Council shall endeavour to engage with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure Integrated Management Plans are prepared for all European sites, and ensure that plans are fully integrated with all land use and water management plans in the County. It is the intention that such plans are practical, achievable and sustainable and have regard to all relevant ecological, cultural, social and economic considerations and with special regard to local communities.

Appropriate Assessment (AA), Article 6 of the Habitats Directive requires that the impacts of any plans or projects likely to affect European sites are assessed by the Planning Authority. In accordance with 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities', any plan or project that has the potential to impact on European sites must undergo the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process (Refer to Section 12.1.2.2 of the Plan).

Beyond the Appropriate Assessment part of the process, if adverse impacts remain even after mitigation measures have been considered, then alternatives may be examined or in the absence of any alternatives, there is the final stage of the process, where a proponent may request permission for Imperative Reasons of Over-Riding Public Interest (IROPI), subject to the strict requirements of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

### Nationally Protected Areas:

Under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) have been designated to conserve species and habitats of national importance. This includes some of our few remaining native woodlands such as Fitzsimons Woods, and Loughlinstown Woods, along with wetland sites such as Ballybetagh Bog, and important coastal areas such as the Dalkey Coastal Zone, and Killiney Hill. There is also a Statutory Nature Reserve at Knocksink Woods, that straddles the border of DLR and Wicklow.

These areas, established under the Wildlife Act, are areas where nature conservation is the primary objective and takes precedence over all other

activities. The Council will normally only grant permission where it is clearly demonstrated that a proposal will have no significant adverse impact on the habitats, and species of interest in the designated area, and its ecological integrity.

All designated sites in the County are shown on the Development Plan Maps, and are set out in Table 8.3 below.

**Table 8.3:** Designated Sites in DLR

Site no	Site name	SPA	pNHA	SAC	pNHA Site ID
00210	South Dublin Bay SAC		✓	✓	
004024	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (includes Booterstown Marsh)	✓			Site 2
004172	Dalkey Islands SPA	✓			
001205	Booterstown Marsh pNHA	✓	✓		Site 1
001206	Dalkey Coastal Zone and Killiney Hill pNHA		✓		Site 3
001753	Fitzsimons Wood pNHA		✓		Site 4
001211	Loughlinstown Woods pNHA		✓		Site 6
001207	Dingle Glen pNHA		✓		Site 5
001202	Ballybetagh Bog pNHA		✓		Site 8
000713	Ballyman Glen SAC		✓	✓	Site 9
00725	Knocksink Woods SAC (also a Nature Reserve)		✓	✓	Site 7
002122	Wicklow Mountains SAC	✓		✓	
003000	Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC			✓	

*Note: SPA -Special Protection Area (Birds), pNHA - Proposed Natural Heritage Area, SAC - Special Area of Conservation.*

### 8.7.1.5 Policy Objective GIB22: Non-Designated Areas of Biodiversity Importance

It is a Policy Objective to protect and promote the conservation of biodiversity in areas of natural heritage importance outside Designated Areas and to ensure that notable sites, habitats and features of biodiversity importance - including species protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000, the Birds Directive 1979, the Habitats Directive 1992, Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011, Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, Annex I habitats, local important areas, wildlife corridors and rare species - are adequately protected. Ecological assessments will be carried out for all developments in areas that support, or have potential to support, features of biodiversity importance or rare and protected species and appropriate mitigation/avoidance measures will be implemented. In implementing this policy, regard shall be had to the Ecological Network, including the forthcoming DLR Wildlife Corridor Plan, and the recommendations and objectives of the Green City Guidelines (2008) and 'Ecological Guidance Notes for Local Authorities and Developers' (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Version 2014).

The biodiversity of DLR is not just contained within specifically Designated Areas but is found throughout the County. Many areas that do not have formal protection under legislation still possess a level of natural heritage importance, which needs to be recognised and protected, where possible. These areas include woodlands, wetlands, semi-natural grasslands, hedgerows, trees, rivers, streams, private gardens, and other urban green spaces. Other areas of important biodiversity in DLR can include graveyards, cemeteries and the green spaces associated with institutional lands.

The Council recognise the importance of these areas as buffer zones, and 'linkages', between formally designated ecological sites. A number of surveys of non-designated sites have been carried out since 2010. Sites which have been assessed and identified as making an important contribution to the biodiversity resource of DLR at the National, County, and local level have been incorporated in the DLR Ecological Network, and are detailed in Supplementary Map B1. The wildlife corridors will be depicted in the forthcoming Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2025. It is a desirability to adhere to the wildlife corridors as set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2025

The Council will ensure that the impact of new developments on biodiversity is minimized and will seek to include measures for the enhancement



Fernhill Park



of biodiversity in all proposals for large urban developments. The 'Green City Guidelines' prepared by UCD Urban Institute Ireland, Fingal County Council and DLR County Council provides general guidance and advice on how best to retain, and enhance biodiversity in new medium-to- high density urban developments.

In accordance with Article 4(4) of the Birds Directive, the Council will endeavour to ensure the avoidance of pollution or deterioration of important bird habitats outside formally designated SPAs.

The Council will also continue to support swift species and other important bird species through the encouragement of the provision of swift nest boxes in development(s), with advice from Swift Conservation Ireland.

The four Dublin Local Authorities have also published 'Ecological Guidance for Local Authorities and Developers', which aims to provide both developers and Local Authority staff with concise factual information on the best approach to deal with certain specific ecological issues.

#### **8.7.1.6 Policy Objective GIB23: County-Wide Ecological Network**

**It is a Policy Objective to protect the Ecological Network which will be integrated into the updated Green Infrastructure Strategy and will align with the DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan. Creating this network throughout the County will also improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. The network will also include non-designated sites.**

The Council supports and recognises the importance of wildlife corridors, green infrastructure, and green initiatives. The Council also recognises the important role many of the wildlife corridors and biodiversity areas play in relation to improving

resilience to climate change, both for biodiversity and for our communities, providing many immediate benefits to society and the economy.

Regard should be had to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, which references ecological areas that link European sites. Many habitats of conservation concern - particularly designated sites - are 'linked' to the surrounding landscape by natural and man-made features, such as water courses (rivers, streams, canals, and drainage ditches), hedgerows, treelines, roads and railways. It is important that areas of conservation concern are not considered in isolation. The linkages between buffer zones around such areas must also be protected, to ensure the continued migration of species and genetic diversity throughout the wider County.

Issues related to connectivity, including maintaining and establishing connections between protected areas, play an integral role in land-use planning. The County Development Plan seeks to improve the overall ecological template in DLR, by enhancing connectivity between small fragmented areas and remedying gaps in the connectivity both within wildlife corridors, and also between important areas.

National and local studies undertaken through the implementation of the DLR Biodiversity Plan, have allowed for ongoing assessments of the current status and nature conservation value of notable sites, habitats and species in the County. The information collected to date (by way of ecological surveys) has been used to inform the development and updating of the Ecological Network for the County. The forthcoming Wildlife Corridor Plan will also inform the Ecological Network.

The specific habitats identified include treelines, hedgerows, scrub and woodland, watercourses, and semi-natural areas such as mixed broadleaved woodland, coastal habitats, which are mapped and are shown on The Ecological Network Map (Refer to Supplementary Map B1). A number of other specific



*Stream in Marlay Park*

Policies throughout the Plan are aimed at affording further protection of these features (refer also to Policy Objectives GIB24 and GIB25 below).

The DLR Ecological Network includes:

- Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, and pNHAs);
- Non-designated sites of high nature conservation value and locally important areas (such as non-designated sites of National/ County importance supporting Annex I habitats, Annex II species, rare and protected flora and high quality semi-natural habitats important at the County and local level);
- Non-designated sites of local conservation value (public parks, smaller local woodlands etc.);
- Forthcoming Wildlife Corridors that include our rivers and streams and associated habitats, hedgerows, pollinator areas and coastal habitats.

It is further recognised that the maintenance and development of the Ecological Network will play a future role in climate change adaptation. An Ecological Network throughout the County linked to, and with adjoining land areas, will allow for species migration which will inevitably take place over time as a climate change adaptation process.

#### 8.7.1.7 Policy Objective GIB24: Rivers and Waterways

**It is a Policy Objective to maintain and protect the natural character and ecological value of the river and stream corridors in the County and where possible to enhance existing channels and to encourage diversity of habitat and nature-based solutions that incorporate biodiversity features. It is also policy (subject to the sensitivity of the riverside habitat), to provide public access to riparian corridors, to promote improved passive recreational activities.**

This objective aims to protect rivers, streams and other watercourses and maintain them in an open state capable of providing suitable habitat for fauna and flora, including fish. Existing County flood plain management policy seeks to limit development in identified floodplains, and to preserve riparian corridors. Development proposals in riparian corridors will be considered providing, where practicable, they:

- Dedicate a minimum of 10m each side of the water's edge for amenity and biodiversity and up to 30m for areas where the ecosystem functioning of the catchment requires it, (where practicable).

- Ensure no development - including clearance and storage of materials – takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each top of bank of any river, stream, or watercourse, (where practical).
- Preserve the biodiversity of the site.
- Involve no land filling, diverting, culverting or re – alignment of river or stream corridors.
- Have no negative effects on the distinctive character and appearance of the waterway corridor and/or the characteristic and landscape elements of the specific site and its context.
- Do not impact on riparian corridors and wetland sites within river/stream catchments, which provide an important function in terms of regulating the flow of water in these catchments, and often support habitats and species of high nature conservation value.
- Take cognisance of any adverse impacts on the populations of protected species, including protected flora, otters, and bats.
- The Council will apply the principles set out in ‘Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment’ (IFI, 2020) and will ensure that any transport infrastructure near any river, stream, or watercourse will be accompanied by appropriate SUDS or Nature Based Solutions to mitigate the impact of pollution.

Rivers and Waterways are very important assets of DLR. The Council shall consult, as appropriate, with Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to any development that could potentially impact on the aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats, wildlife corridors and/or salmonid waters.

The Council will take cognisance of the Southern Regional Fisheries Board (SRFB), ‘Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment’. Any works which will impact on a watercourse must adhere to best practice guidelines as outlined in the Inland Fisheries ‘Guidelines on protection of fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to waters’ 2016.

The Council will provide for public understanding of and public access to rivers, waterway corridors and wetlands, where feasible and appropriate, in partnership with NPWS and other stakeholders and in line with the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2014, which gave effect to the co-ordination of the catchment management and public participation elements of the Water Framework Directive, while maintaining them free from inappropriate development and subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and screening for Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.

In terms of habitat loss, bridges and bottomless culverts have the least impact on fish passage and the use of clear span structures on fisheries waters should be considered in the design of river/

stream crossing structures. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) should be consulted on any such proposed developments.

#### 8.7.1.8 Policy Objective GIB25: Hedgerows

It is a Policy Objective to retain and protect hedgerows in the County from development, which would impact adversely upon them. In addition, the Council will promote the protection of existing site boundary hedgerows and where feasible require the retention of these when considering a grant of planning permission for all developments. The Council will promote the County’s hedgerows by increasing coverage, where possible, using locally native species and to develop an appropriate code of practice for road hedgerow maintenance. The Council will promote the protection of existing hedgerows when considering a grant of planning permission for all developments.

The Council are currently reviewing and updating the previously prepared ‘Hedgerow Survey, 2007’. The 2007 Survey identified a pattern of hedgerows and tree lines with the majority of these occurring in the south of the County (south of the M50 Motorway and east of the southern end of the N11 road). Hedgerows were also identified as important heritage and biodiversity features in the County Biodiversity Plan, which identified a survey of hedgerows as a targeted action.

An updated ‘Hedgerow Survey Report’, (2020-2021), will be prepared which will identify the most important hedgerows in the County in terms of their biodiversity, and that also form part of our wildlife corridors, and ecological network of the County. The update will be mapped and recorded.

#### 8.7.1.9 Policy Objective GIB26: Geological Sites

It is a Policy Objective to protect, promote and preserve sites of Geological and Geomorphological importance, in particular the proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), and any County Geological Sites (CGS), that become designated during the lifetime of the Plan.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is compiling a list of geological/geomorphological sites in need of protection through NHA designation. A committee of expert geologists provides an initial list of sites, which then undergo a process of survey, reporting and review, to provide recommendations regarding NHA status or otherwise. The GSI has completed its list of karsts (i.e. exposed limestone) and early fossil sites.

However, there are currently no NHAs designated for geology/geomorphological heritage in DLR.

In furtherance of this policy the Council will endeavour where appropriate, to encourage, facilitate and support access and public Rights-of-Way to geological, and geomorphological features of heritage value.

#### 8.7.1.10 Policy Objective GIB27: Green Belts

It is a Policy Objective to retain the individual physical character of towns and development areas by the designation of green belt areas, where appropriate.

The function of this policy is to protect the special amenity and biodiversity value of countryside, while providing a visual and spatial break between urban areas.

There is some 'green belt' zoning between Rathmichael, Shankill and Bray but in other parts of the County the green area (parks and open space and wildlife corridors) tend to be less 'buffers' between development and more integral amenities for those areas. The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), refers to a metropolitan green belt around the built-up area of the city and suburbs. The National Planning Framework (NPF), specifically National Policy Objective (NPO) 62 references the role of greenbelts in preventing coalescence of built up areas, but also acknowledges their role in allowing long term expansion of urban areas. (see Policy Objective PHP24 Chapter 4 and Section 12.3.11).

#### 8.7.1.11 Policy Objective GIB28: Invasive Species

It is a Policy Objective to prepare an 'Invasive Alien Species Action Plan' for the County which will include actions in relation to Invasive Alien Species (IAS) surveys, management

and treatment and to also ensure that proposals for development do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, the applicants will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).

The overall aim of the forthcoming DLR Invasive Alien Species Action Plan, is to provide a roadmap for management of invasive alien species (IAS) in DLR. This will also help to fulfil our obligations to the EU Regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species and the Irish Statutory Instrument 477/2011 – European Community (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) 2011 - Article 49 and Article 50.

The objectives of this Action Plan are as follows:

- To develop a record of IAS within the County.
- To prevent new introductions of IAS into DLR.
- To prevent further spread of IAS within the County.
- To effectively treat IAS currently present in the County.
- To create awareness of IAS and the threats they pose, and to provide training and education for the public.
- To minimise the impacts of IAS and restore damaged ecosystems to their previous state.
- To create ties and co-operative relationships with other counties and agencies in order to effectively tackle IAS.
- To consider the impact of Climate Change in relation to IAS.

Crab apple blossom and spider - Credit Aaron Ryan



There are significant benefits to DLR if the objectives of this Action Plan are achieved.

IAS can represent a major threat to National, Regional, and local biodiversity. They can negatively impact on native species, can transform habitats, and threaten whole ecosystems causing serious problems to the environment and the economy.

#### 8.7.1.12 Policy Objective GIB29: Nature Based Solutions

**It is a Policy Objective to increase the use of Nature Based Solutions (NBS) within the County, and to promote and apply adaption and mitigation actions that favour NBS, which can have multiple benefits to the environment and communities. NBS has a role not only to meet certain infrastructure related needs (e.g. flooding management), and development needs, but also to maintain or benefit the quality of ecosystems, habitats, and species.**

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines NBS as *“actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems, which address societal challenges [such as food security, climate change, water security, human health, disaster risk, social and economic development] effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”*.

The Council will achieve this Policy Objective through the following:

- i. The Council will protect, maintain, enhance and restore our County ecosystems and their functioning that form part of our NBS interventions, to increase resilience and multifunctionality as a core part of our green infrastructure, providing key environmental services as well as increasing resilience to climate change.
- ii. The Council recognises the importance of coastal resilience and marine protection and will provide NBS that protect and enhance our watercourses, coastal and marine ecosystems in relation to coastal development and coastal protection.
- iii. The Council will require that all NBS for flood risk management will include for adaptive management, based on long-term monitoring, indicating that the proposed sustainable NSB is performing.
- iv. The Council will require that proposed development(s) provide NBS, where relevant, in order to encourage environmentally friendly solutions to economic/social development needs and to address climate change without negatively impacting existing natural

ecosystems, habitat and species. The Council will also require the monitoring and assessment of the success of the NBS that form part of the proposed development, and over an agreed timeframe, to provide the evidence and knowledge base for nature-based solutions.

- v. The Council will designate a number of ‘decarbonising zone’ areas (as defined under Action 165 of the Government’s Climate Action Plan 2019) within the County during the lifetime of the County Development Plan 2022-2028, utilising funds from the Government’s Climate Action Fund and other funding resources where available, incorporating biodiversity measures such as consideration of moss installations to aid carbon reduction (as well as reduction of other impurities such as nitrogen dioxide) within such designated zones
- vi. Urban run-off represents a significant pollutant threat to our bathing areas and coastal habitats. The Council will strive to install Nature Based Solutions such as urban rain gardens, wetlands and tree planting to mitigate the impact of pollution from urban rain run-off.

The DLR Biodiversity Officer will provide a set of guidelines and principles for the implementation of NBS for staff and various sectors involved in NBS.

Examples of NBS solutions include landscaping, SuDs, creating permeable green areas, and providing green roofs, restoring habitats such as wetlands, woodlands, and hedgerows to absorb/sequester carbon dioxide. Creating and restoring wetlands also functions to protect against flooding; and creating green and blue spaces in urban areas can also combat urban heating and enhance human health. Some features that add manmade natural features to an urban environment such as green roofs and green walls can also be included in the NBS approach.

#### 8.7.1.13 Policy Objective GIB30: Promoting Biodiversity by avoiding Widespread Use Of Herbicides and Pesticides

**It is a Policy Objective to promote biodiversity by avoiding the widespread use of chemical weedkillers, herbicides and pesticides such as glyphosate for routine road and park maintenance.**

It is acknowledged that specific circumstances such as the control of invasive species will require the use of such products. The Council will develop a set of guidelines for the exceptional circumstances in which such products should be used.