

Landscape And Open Space, Biodiversity And Recreation

Dublin City is shaped by its major landscape features - the Phoenix Park, the Liffey, Dublin Bay and the river valleys of the Tolka and Dodder - complemented by the man-made amenities and green spaces of the city squares and historic gardens, the parks, canals and waterfront promenades. All of these features contribute to the City's high quality environment.

The city's 'green infrastructure' - the networks of green areas around us, the natural heritage and recreational amenities - plays a key role in creating and sustaining places, making the city an attractive place to live, benefiting health and well-being and making sure that the essential components of environmental sustainability are safeguarded. There is a new emphasis nationally and internationally on planning for and managing the city landscape at a strategic scale and as a continuous green network.

Major Challenges

Rapid urbanisation and a growing population are placing increased demands on the City's open spaces. Although almost one-fifth of the city's land-area is set aside to preserve, provide and improve recreational

amenity and open space, there are deficits in many areas, particularly the inner city. It is a major challenge to find a balance between providing for economic development while at the same time creating and enhancing urban green spaces.

Landscape and Open Space

The City Council manages over 1,400 hectares (3,460 acres) of public open space and has started a programme of improvements for 23 parks in the city centre to make these parks accessible for all.

Creating additional areas of urban green space is a priority for Dublin City Council, in both newly developing and regeneration areas. New parks are being developed or are proposed for example, at Tolka Valley Park in Pelletstown and in the Liberties.

A City Landscape Strategy

The major issue for the next Development Plan is how to plan at a high level for the City's green infrastructure. An area-wide green space strategy could result in the development of a hierarchy of parks ranging from sub-regional parks down to pocket parks, and the creation of links between parks, river valleys and other amenity spaces. Such a linked network would add to recreation options and tourism infrastructure and would take pedestrians and cyclists away from busy roads.

Greening the City

Existing areas and streets in the urban environment can be invigorated through greening initiatives, for example provision of green roofs and soft landscaping can create new habitats.

The City Council maintains more than 60,000 street and roadside trees within the city. The quality of the city landscapes contribute to the character and visual amenities of the city.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity means the variety of living things, and includes our rare plants and animals as well as the common species that show the richness of our local environment. Biodiversity provides important environmental services, reducing pollution, controlling flooding etc. Dublin City's natural heritage and biodiversity is characterised by its coastal location and access to waterways and significant green spaces. The city has EU designated sites on Dublin Bay and the Bull Island, part of the 'Natura 2000' network of protected areas.

The Council has adopted and is implementing the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan 2008 – 2012. This Action Plan has identified many areas of high biodiversity interest and features of the landscape such as rivers, hedgerows, ponds and small woods, which are of major importance to flora and fauna.



Sport and Recreation

Dublin City Council's new Sports and Active Recreation Strategy (2009-2016) is being developed to deliver enhanced services to encourage healthy and active living. The Council is promoting active participation for all age groups, for example the Passport for Leisure Scheme for the over 55s gives free or low-cost access to the wide range of facilities managed by the Council, including swimming pools and pitch and putt. The City Council is also a key provider of children's play facilities and is implementing its Policy on Children's Play.

Meeting the increased demand for sports facilities is a major challenge, both in terms of resources and in finding suitable locations for new facilities.

The issue of informal recreation is also increasingly recognised as important, particularly to encourage out-of-doors activity for children and teens. There is a need to provide space for unstructured play, for casual games and for young people to hang out in our public spaces and parks.



Landscape and Open Space, Biodiversity and Recreation: The Big Picture Questions

- Should a City Landscape Strategy be developed for the next Development Plan, setting out a green network of parks, public spaces and routes?
- How can we find an appropriate balance between accommodating development and recreational use, heritage and biodiversity needs of the city?
- How can the Development Plan facilitate the provision of more publicly accessible open space and ensure that the new spaces created are located to meet deficiencies?
- Are current standards – both quantitative and qualitative - for public open space provision associated with new developments appropriate? How might new standards help achieve objectives for sustainable urban development?
- How can we provide for a greening of the city landscape and the protection of existing natural features including trees and hedgerows? What greening initiatives should be considered for the city and incorporated into new developments?
- How should the key areas and features of natural beauty or interest and the landscapes of historic value be identified and conserved?
- How can the Development Plan identify and protect areas or sites of high biodiversity not designated in the Natura 2000 (EU designated) network?
- How can the Development Plan develop ecological corridors linking green spaces to benefit nature / wildlife and movement?
- How can we exploit the development process to maximise biodiversity opportunities?
- How can we make sure that the increasing demand for Sports and Leisure facilities can be met and that all new developments are addressing the Sport and Leisure needs of their communities, including new communities?
- How can we provide for informal recreation and play areas suitable for all ages including older persons and teenagers?
- How can the Development Plan bring about a national, regional and city focus in development of Sport and Leisure facilities and facilitate the development of key regional sports infrastructural projects?
- How can the Development Plan assist in ensuring that existing sports / recreational facilities which form part of educational establishments are made more accessible to the public outside school hours?

What do you think? Have we left out any of The Big Picture issues?

We want to hear your views...