



# KEEPING IT GREEN

## An Open Space Strategy for Fingal





*"Keeping It Green", An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

# **KEEPING IT GREEN**

## **AN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY FOR FINGAL**

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## **PART 1 : SETTING THE SCENE**

### *Scope, Definitions, Vision & Objectives*



*Ardgillan Demense, Walled Garden*

### **1.1 Introduction, Scope and Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to define the appropriate strategy for the planning, development and sustainable management of public open space in Fingal. Currently there is no defined strategy within the Council for prioritising open space management and maintenance. This document brings together in a coherent way existing policies and practices and introduces new and innovative approaches to public open space.

A key concept in the strategy is understanding open space as part of Green Infrastructure. This Strategy seeks to improve open space provision through better management and to outline qualitative standards for the provision of existing and future open spaces. The main focus of this Open Space Strategy is publicly owned and/or maintained land, the primary use of which is for outdoor recreation and amenity in Fingal.

This document has been prepared in the context of the Government's 'Action Framework for Effective Local Government, Putting People First' which sets out government policy on local government reform (see [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)). The expressed vision of this reform programme as it relates to local government is as follows:

*"local government will lead economic, social and community development locally. It will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, deliver efficient and good value services, and represent citizens and communities, as effectively and accountably as possible."*

Workforce planning forms part of this action programme with local authorities directed to determine optimal local authority organisational and staffing arrangements within the context of a sectorial workforce plan.

The Council is working to ensure the sustainable provision of high quality public open space. There are limited resources and great amounts of land to be managed. This open space strategy, therefore, seeks to prioritise resource allocation whilst maintaining an appropriate standard of public open space provision for the citizens of Fingal.

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This Strategy promotes community involvement, greater use of public open space, and more effective cross-departmental initiatives working in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders.

The Strategy references and builds on other relevant national and local policy documents including ‘Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan’, ‘The Forest of Fingal - A Tree Strategy for Fingal’ and the ‘Fingal Development Plan 2011 – 2017’.

### **1.2 Definition of Open Space**

All open space is an important element of Green Infrastructure. The term ‘*Green Infrastructure*’ is used to describe the interconnected networks of land and water all around us that sustain environmental quality and enrich our quality of life. This includes the nature conservation areas, parks, open space, rivers, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, farmland and coastal areas which surround and are threaded through our villages, towns and urban areas.

#### **Open Space included in this Strategy**

The focus of this Open Space Strategy is on the publicly owned and/or maintained land, the primary use of which is for outdoor recreation and amenity in Fingal. There are various typologies for this land including:

#### **Regional Parks and Public Golf Courses**

Regional Parks and Historic Demesnes are an important part of the landscape of Fingal. Examples include Ardgillan, Malahide and Newbridge Demesnes and major parks located along river valleys such as the Tolka and Ward River Valleys. They are all managed by The Council as an amenity for the public. Out of a total of approximately 2,000 hectares of open space in Fingal approximately 800 hectares is located in historic and designed landscapes. Many of these parks have historic properties and heritage buildings located within them which function as important cultural and tourism assets.

Regional Parks are large open spaces typically in excess of 50 hectares in area. They provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. These parks include outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children’s playgrounds for different age groups and areas for informal recreation pursuits.



*Corballis Public Golf Course Donabate*

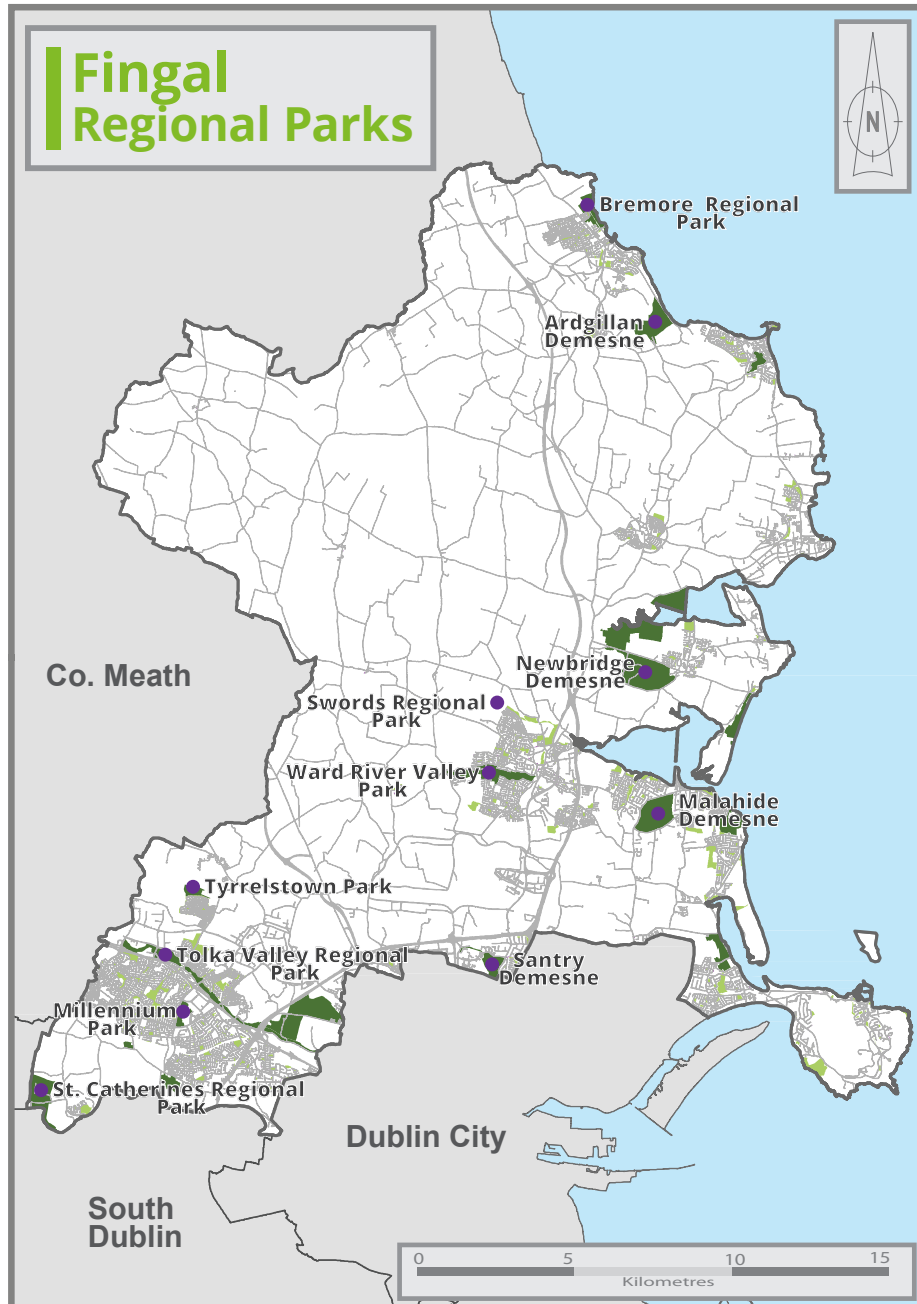
There are three golf courses owned and operated by The Council. These are:

- Elmgreen Golf Centre, Castleknock  
( 18 hole Golf Course, 18 hole Pitch and Putt Course and 24 Bay Driving Range)
- Corballis, Donabate  
(public links golf course)
- Malahide Demesne  
(9 hole par 3 Golf Course and Pitch and Putt Course)

#### **Local Parks and Residential Open Spaces**

Local Parks are relatively large enclosed parks typically 20-50 hectares, located in close proximity to residential and town centre areas. These are usually very intensely used areas and are often the location for sports and recreational hubs.





Residential open spaces are provided within easy walking distances of homes and are available for formal and informal recreation. These open spaces are very diverse in terms of size, design, layout and land form. Boundaries are usually defined by the surrounding road and/or residential development.

These sites accommodate a wide range of usage patterns from active play and sport, through routes to shops and other amenities as well as more passive recreational purposes. Sites with a smaller area may be subject to conflict of interest, i.e. ball games close to residential properties, and sites with a larger area may be multi-functional and allow for a wide range of facilities and uses, i.e. equipped play and informal sports use.

These spaces may also have a nature conservation role, particularly in the preservation of trees and other important features.

### **Public Playgrounds**

Playgrounds are outdoor areas for children's play. They usually have a number of pieces of equipment. Within the Fingal area, they are located in Regional, Local and Neighbourhood Parks and within residential open space. There are currently 39 public playgrounds in Fingal.



*Playground at Ardgillan Demesne*

### **Environmental Open Space**

This designation includes a wide range of open spaces generally located within residential areas. It includes approach routes into and out of villages and towns as well as space provided for visual set back and road realignment requirements.

These spaces are often visually significant and characterised by features or attractive areas that are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space. They are often used to accommodate civic decoration or feature planting or decorative road signage.

### **Open Space not included in this Strategy**

There are a number of types of open spaces not included in this strategy. This strategy recognises the importance of these spaces; however, they are dealt with in other the Council publications, i.e. ‘The Forest of Fingal - A Tree Strategy for Fingal’, ‘Fingal Allotment Strategy’, Public Realm Plans etc.

There are other open spaces managed and maintained by the Council which are not necessarily provided or used for recreation and amenity purposes. The maintenance and management of these spaces has nevertheless significant resource implications for the Council.

The following types of open spaces are *not* addressed in this strategy document:

### **Streets and Civic Spaces**

These spaces provide important links between open space but are not open space in the traditional sense and are designed and managed primarily as transport routes (streets) and urban gathering places (civic spaces). The Strategy recognises that these are important public spaces where people meet, socialise and recreate complementing the use and values in the public open space network. Despite this use, it is recognised that there are a range of other strategies that guide the future planning, design and management of streets and urban spaces.

### **Schools**

The Strategy recognises the contribution of schools especially where these can partner with Council open space. School land, however, will not be

added to the inventory of current open space or relied on as a replacement for public open space as school lands are not reserved for open space, are not under Council control and can be sold for other purposes.

### **Beaches and Coastal Walkways**

The Strategy further recognises the importance of beaches and the coastal landscape in the Fingal area, however, the management of these lands is not addressed in this strategy document

### **Privately Owned Spaces**

Privately owned open space, in many instances, contributes to landscape significance and habitat value in Fingal. Like streets and civic spaces, they may provide important links between open spaces but their long term availability and accessibility cannot be guaranteed unless they are acquired for open space purposes.

In addition to the Council identifying works on its own land, it is recognised that the Council has a strong advocacy role to improve the design and management of open space owned and managed by other agencies, such as schools and private clubs, through the County Development Plan and planning applications.

### **Other Lands not included in the Strategy**

Other lands not included in this Strategy include Graveyards and Church Lands, Institutional Lands and Public and Private Allotments.

## **1.3 Vision and Objectives for Open Space Provision**

The vision of this Open Space Strategy is to:

*“Provide a diverse, network of attractive, sustainably managed open spaces to enhance the quality of life of the citizens of Fingal”.*

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the open space strategy revolve around the following five major themes: Value, Quantity, Quality, Sustainability and Conservation & Protection.

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### **(1) Open Space Value**

*Recognise the value and increase the use of open spaces for health, social economic and environmental purposes*

The strategy outlines the health, social, economic and environmental benefits of open spaces. Parks and open spaces provide communities with a focal point for social interaction and cultural activities. Using parks and open spaces for events, festivals and other activities increases the value of open spaces. Promoting healthy, active lifestyles and encouraging events in open spaces are ways to increase the use and benefits of open spaces. Greater usage of open space will be achieved by making them more multi-functional, with a range of attractions and facilities for people of all ages and abilities.

### **(2) Open Space Quantity**

*Provide a network of diverse open spaces*

Open space is an important element of Green Infrastructure in Fingal. Connecting our urban open spaces and the surrounding more rural open spaces to each other and to the communities around them will achieve a wide range of social, health, economic and environmental benefits.

### **(3) Open Space Quality**

*Enhance the quality of open spaces*

This Strategy will outline how open space improvements will be programmed to enhance their quality and utility and will focus on improving access to and within open spaces.

### **(4) Sustainable Open Space**

*Provide well maintained and managed open spaces having regard to available resources*

The provision of well-maintained and managed open spaces is essential.

This Strategy outlines how this will be achieved in a sustainable manner having regard to available resources. Significantly, this Strategy will establish a hierarchy of maintenance of open space to address risk management, usage pattern and amenity value of the open spaces in question.

### **(5) Conservation and Protection**

*Conserve the natural and manmade heritage in our parks and open spaces*

Open spaces provide an important opportunity to protect and enhance the natural and manmade heritage of Fingal. As part of Green Infrastructure, the importance of biodiversity in open space is recognised. The Strategy outlines measures for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in open space. In addition, this Strategy will outline measures to protect manmade heritage located in our parks and open spaces. In particular, it will provide guidance on measures to protect archaeological features and sensitive historic landscapes within our open spaces. (See Part 4).



*Trees on Open Space*

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## **PART 2 UNDERSTANDING OPEN SPACE**

### *Legislation, Policies, Value and Quantity*



*Talbot Botanic Gardens, Malahide Demesne*

### **2.1 European Union Legislation**

Currently at EU level there are no directives relating specifically to the planning, design and management of parks and open spaces.

The ‘European Landscape Convention’ (also known as the ‘Florence Charter’), was adopted in March 2004. This is the first international treaty to be exclusively devoted to all aspects of the European landscape. It applies to the entire territory of the member countries and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as every day or degraded landscapes. The focus of the charter is the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and the raising of awareness of the value of a living landscape

Ireland ratified the ‘European Landscape Convention’ (ELC) in 2004. The Convention defines landscape as:

*“... an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” and “as a zone or area as perceived by local people or visitors, whose visual features and character are the result of the action of natural and/or cultural (that is, human) factors.”*

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government has produced a recently adopted ‘National Landscape Strategy’ (NLS), in order to meet its obligation under the Convention.

### **EU Green Infrastructure Strategy**

In 2013, the European Commission adopted a Green Infrastructure Strategy, *Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital* “to promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in urban and rural areas.”

The strategy recognises that Human society depends on the benefits provided by nature such as food, materials, clean water, clean air, climate regulation, flood prevention, pollination and recreation. However, many of these benefits, frequently referred to as ecosystem services, are used as if their supply is almost unlimited and treated as free commodities whose true value is not fully appreciated. The strategy further recognises that the Green Infrastructure approach is a successfully tested tool for providing

## *“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

ecological, economic and social benefits through natural solutions. It helps us to understand the value of the benefits that nature provides to human society and to mobilise investments to sustain and enhance them. The Fingal Open Space Strategy has been prepared in line with this approach.



*Royal Canal Walkway, Ashtown*

## **2.2 National Legislation and Policies**

### **Historical Background**

The provision of open space has historically been the remit of the local authority. The original legislation relating to the provision of open space was the Town and Regional Planning Act, 1934. This Act stated that provision may be made by Planning Schemes for the reservation of particular lands for the use as public parks, recreation grounds, open spaces, allotments, or other particular purposes, whether public or private.

In 1963 the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act was passed.

This act repealed the earlier Town Planning Acts and placed an obligation on local authorities to make Development Plans. The Act stated that a development plan shall consist of a written statement and a plan indicating the development objectives for the area in question, including objectives for preserving, improving and extending amenities.

In 1987 the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government published the document (DoEHLG) published: ‘A Policy for the Provision and Maintenance of Parks, Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation Areas by Local Authorities’. This guidance which is now almost 30 years old still represents the only national advice specifically for local authorities providing for parks, open spaces and outdoor recreational activities. This document identified the growing demand for the provision of public parks, open spaces and recreational areas and the need to co-ordinate this provision if public demand is to be adequately catered for and if maximum value is to be obtained from the limited resources available. At that time, emphasis was placed on providing a hierarchy of spaces with prescriptive quantitative guidance standards as follows:

Local Park of minimum 2 hectares open space per 1,000 population with a typical provision of a 16 Hectare, Neighbourhood Park and 2 No. 2 Hectare. Local Parks per 10,000 population.

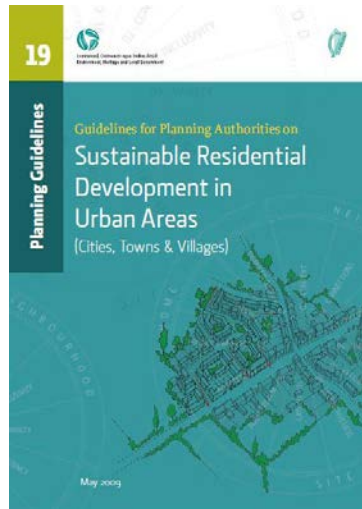
The Neighbourhood Park should be capable of including:

- Up to 6 football pitches
- Up to 10 tennis courts
- Up to 2 netball or basketball courts
- Up to 2 golf putting greens
- 1 children’s playlot
- 1 athletic facility
- Car parking

More recently, emphasis has been re-balanced to focus on the quality and accessibility of provision. In this respect, the most influential documents are the U.K. Fields in Trust’s document, ‘Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play’. In 2009; the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government published the document “Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages)”.

## Current Legislation & Guidance

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out principles for the control of private land in the interests of the common good and for proper planning and sustainable development. Section 10 of Part II of the Act sets out the requirements for each county development plan including the provision for zoning of land for recreation and open space. The Act also requires Development Plans to set out objectives for the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities.



*'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities'*

The *'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities'*, published in 2009 state that the provision of appropriately designed open space is a key element in defining the quality of the residential environment. This document highlights the importance of strategic city or county-wide policies for open space and recreational facilities (both indoor and outdoor), which are based on an assessment of existing resources and user needs, including local play policies for children. Area-wide green space strategies facilitate not only the development of a hierarchy of provision – ranging from sub regional parks down to pocket parks – but also the creation of links or green corridors between parks, river valleys and other amenity spaces. Such strategies should be supported by an audit of existing green spaces within the area.

Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines recommend qualitative standards, these including:

- **Design:** The layout and facilities – particularly in larger parks – should be designed to meet a range of user needs, including both active and passive recreation, as identified in the city/county strategy referred to above.
- **Accessibility:** Local parks should be located to be within not more than 10 minutes' walk of the majority of homes in the area; district parks should be on public transport routes as well as pedestrian/cycle paths. Playgrounds should be carefully sited within residential areas so that they are both easily accessible and overlooked by dwellings, while not causing a nuisance to nearby residents.
- **Variety:** A range of open space types should be considered having regard to existing facilities in the area and the functions the new spaces are intended to provide.
- **Shared use:** The potential for maximising the use of open space facilities (such as all-weather pitches) should be explored, for example, by sharing them with nearby schools.
- **Biodiversity:** Public open spaces, especially larger ones, should provide for a range of natural habitats and can facilitate the preservation of flora and fauna. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems are often used to reduce the impact of urban runoff on the aquatic environment.



*Ardgillan Demense, Skerries*

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- **Provision for allotments and community gardens:** Allotments are small plots of land which are let (usually by a local authority) to individuals for the cultivation of vegetables and plants. They are of particular value in higher density areas.

The recommended quantitative standards are:

- In green-field sites or those sites for which a local area plan is appropriate, public open space should be provided at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. This allocation should be in the form of useful open spaces within residential developments and, where appropriate, larger neighbourhood parks to serve the wider community;
- In other cases, such as large infill sites or brown field sites public open space should generally be provided at a minimum rate of 10% of the total site area; and
- In the case of institutional lands and some private sites characterised by substantial open lands which in some cases are accessible to the wider community, any proposals for higher density residential development must take into account the objective of retaining the “open character” of these lands, while at the same time ensuring that an efficient use is made of the land. In these cases, a minimum requirement of 20% of site area should be specified; however, this should be assessed in the context of the quality and provision of existing or proposed open space in the wider area.

Regarding the quantitative aspect, the Guidelines note it will be necessary to take a more flexible approach to quantitative open space standards and put greater emphasis on the qualitative standards.

### **The National Landscape Strategy**

The Irish government recently adopted a National Landscape Strategy. This aims to: implement the European Landscape Convention in Ireland by providing for specific measures to promote the protection, management and planning of the landscape. The National Landscape Strategy sets out a series of actions the following of which are relevant to and supported by the Fingal Open Space Strategy:

**Action 8** Develop public awareness programmes to (i) promote an understanding of the nature of landscape, its value as a cultural and visual resource, its role in promoting Ireland’s attractiveness as a tourist destination, and also in ensuring economic prosperity and(ii) how it should be managed sustainably and beneficially to meet the challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, food-security, health and well-being.

**Action 9** Provide appropriate support to public participation initiatives to ensure that landscape change management is effective and evidence based and informed by best practice.

**Action 16** Develop methods of participation for organisations, public and private, as well as individuals in the shaping, reviewing and monitoring of landscape policies and objectives and, if necessary, establish new innovative approaches. This includes fostering actions to achieve delivery of these to encourage citizens, as well as the State, in the sustainable management of the landscape.



*Baldoyle Racecourse Park Community Garden*



## 2.3 Play Policy

### International Play Policy

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. Article 31 of the convention recognises the right of the child to *“engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”*



*Beech Park Playground, Clonsilla*

### National Play Policy

The National Children’s Strategy published in 2000 recognised that all children have a basic range of needs and set out a schedule of objectives to address these needs. Objective D of the strategy stated that *“Children will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood”*.

The Policy Context for this objective recognised that play, recreation and cultural activities are essential childhood experiences which enrich the lives of children and provide them with experiences and competencies that will serve them well in later life. It further recognised that the importance of play and recreation in children’s lives is reflected in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The National Play Policy was launched in March 2004 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and titled Ready, ‘Steady, Play! A National Play Policy’. With the publication of this policy, Ireland became one of the first countries in the world to produce a detailed national policy on play. The reason for the development of such a policy by Government was to honour commitments made in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the National Children’s Strategy (2000) and the Programme for Government (2002).

The definition used in the National Play Policy to provide an understanding of play is: *‘Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child.’*

Put more simply, it could be said that play is what children do when no-one else is telling them what to do. The vision statement for the policy is as follows: *‘An Ireland where the importance of play is recognised, so that children experience a range of quality play opportunities to enrich their childhood’*.

The objectives of the National Play Policy are:

- To give children a voice in the design and implementation of play policies and facilities.
- To raise awareness of the importance of play.
- To ensure that children’s play needs are met through the development of a child-friendly environment.
- To maximise the range of public play opportunities available to all children, particularly children who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have a disability.
- To improve the quality and safety of playgrounds and play areas.
- To ensure that the relevant training and qualifications are available to persons offering play and related services to children.

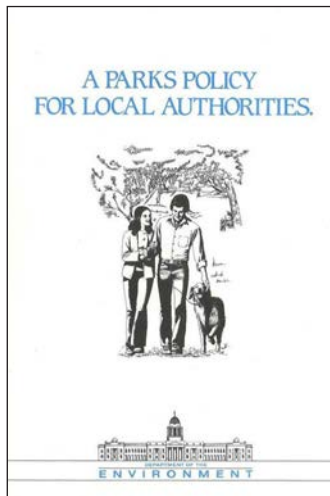
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- To develop a partnership approach to funding and developing play opportunities.
- To improve information on, and evaluation of, play provision for children in Ireland.

### **Implementation of the policy**

There are 52 actions in the National Play Policy that follow from the objectives outlined above. Responsibility for implementation of these actions lies with a number of entities including Local Authorities and the implementation of the policy is monitored by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). The play policy references the 1987 Park Policy for Local Authorities, published by Department of the Environment. This document recommended a minimum level of playlot provision at 1 playlot (incorporating fixed play equipment) per 10,000 population. This standard can still be regarded as a National benchmark. In Fingal the standard overall provision is approaching 1 playlot per 5000.

*PARKS POLICY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES: published by*



*Department of the Environment in 1987*

### **Local Play Policy**

In national terms The Council achieves a relatively high standard of play provision. The Fingal Development Plan 2011 – 2017 requires that all new residential schemes in excess of 50 units should incorporate playground

facilities and that these facilities should be provided at a rate of 4 square metres of play area per residential unit. The plan further requires the provision of play facilities for smaller children within 100 metres of all houses in new residential developments. This requires the development of Pocket Parks to accommodate these quite modest facilities. The plan also requires the provision of larger play facilities to suit a wider age group within 400m of all houses in new residential developments.

The Development Plan is currently being reviewed. This policy will be updated to reflect any changes to the open space strategy policy arising from this process

### **Natural Play**

Climbing trees, playing in streams, running through meadows are activities most people tend to associate with their childhood. Nowadays however many children, particularly in urban areas, do not have the same natural play opportunities. Play opportunities now often come as playgrounds with metal and timber play equipment and safety surfaces. There is an increasing trend around Europe to provide alternative play areas of a more natural character. In Ireland, these natural playgrounds are very uncommon and the Council intends to develop demonstration sites for natural playgrounds in a variety of settings e.g. regional parks, housing estates and pocket parks.

A pilot project showcasing Natural Play has been developed for St. Catherine's Park in Lucan.



*Example of Natural Play Area*

## 2.4 Local Policies

### Fingal Development Plan 2011 – 2017

#### Green Infrastructure

Chapter 3 of the ‘Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017’ contains the following aim in respect of Green Infrastructure:

*“Create an integrated and coherent green infrastructure for the County which will protect and enhance biodiversity, provide for accessible parks and open space, maintain and enhance landscape character including historic landscape character, protect and enhance architectural and archaeological heritage and provide for sustainable water management by requiring the retention of substantial networks of green space in urban, urban fringe and adjacent countryside areas to serve the needs of communities now and in the future including the need to adapt to climate change.”*

Section 3.1 of the Development Plan recognises that, “High-quality accessible parks, open spaces and greenways provide health benefits for all including space for children to play, a meeting place for people from all backgrounds and communities and can provide for the development of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes.”

Parks, Open Space and Recreation is identified as a key theme which The Council’s Green Infrastructure Policy shall address. Section 3.3 of the Development Plan outlines Green Infrastructure Objectives.

Specific objectives in relation to Parks, Open Space and Recreation are as follows:

#### **Objective GI18**

*Maximise the use and potential of existing parks, open space and recreational provision, both passive and active, by integrating existing facilities with proposals for new development and by seeking to upgrade existing facilities where appropriate.*

#### **Objective GI19**

*Provide a range of accessible new parks, open spaces and recreational facilities accommodating a wide variety of uses (both passive and active), use intensities and interests.*

#### **Objective GI20**

*Consider all sections of the community in the provision of parks, open space and recreational facilities.*

#### **Objective GI21**

*Seek to enhance connectivity for people through the provision of parks, open space and recreational facilities.*

#### **Objective GI22**

*Ensure parks, open space and recreational provision is appropriately designed to respond to and integrate with the landscape and townscape context.*

#### **Objective GI23**

*Ensure that proposals for parks, open space and recreational facilities which may have an impact on the Natura 2000 network either directly or indirectly are subject to Appropriate Assessment and are given very careful consideration.*

#### **Objective GI24**

*Seek to draw public use away from sensitive Natura 2000 sites through the use of alternative provision for parks, open space and recreation, where appropriate.*

#### **Objective GI25**

*Provide attractive and safe routes linking key green space sites, parks and open spaces and other foci such as cultural sites and heritage assets as an integral part of new green infrastructure provision, where appropriate and feasible.*

#### **Objective GI26**

*Ensure all proposed walking and cycle routes in the Liffey Valley are sited and designed to ensure the protection of the Valley’s heritage including its biodiversity and landscapes.*

#### **Objective GI27**

*Provide opportunities for food production through allotments or community gardens in new green infrastructure proposals where appropriate.*

## *“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

The Development Plan also states that, *“The provision of accessible open space is an integral part of the provision of high-quality green infrastructure for communities and forms a core element in the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy for the county.”*

Green Infrastructure Map 1 from the Development Plan outlines a number of relevant mapped objectives:

**GM1** *Provide new Active Recreational Hubs in Bremore Regional Park, St. Catherine’s Park (Rush), Lusk, Donabate, Mooretown/Oldtown (Swords), Drinan, Baldoyle Racecourse Park and Phoenix Park Racecourse.*

**GM2** *Protect the natural and built heritage of the following (which include important historic sites, landscapes and gardens, while providing significant public amenities): Bremore Castle and Park, Ardgillan Castle and Demesne, Newbridge House and Demesne, Malahide Castle and Demesne, Swords Castle and Park, Santry Demesne and Beechpark (Clonsilla).*

**GM3** *Upgrade and enhance Bremore Regional Park, Ward Valley Park, Tolka Valley Park and Millennium Park, Blanchardstown.*

**GM5** *Upgrade existing Active Recreation Hubs in Skerries, Ridgewood (Swords), Broomfield (Malahide), Hartstown, Porterstown and St. Catherine’s Park (Liffey Valley).*

**GM8** *Provide new Regional Parks at the following locations: Baleally Lane, Mooretown/Oldtown (Swords), Baldoyle, and Dunsink subject to Appropriate Assessment screening.*

**GM10** *Seek the development of the Royal Canal as a significant public amenity while protecting its natural and built heritage.*

**GM12** *Develop Anna Liffey Mills as a significant public amenity within the Liffey Valley while protecting its architectural and industrial heritage values.*

### **Recreational Hubs**

The Council is seeking to develop active ‘*Recreational Hubs*’ at various locations throughout Fingal as provided for in the map based objectives above. These hubs will be provided by or facilitated by the Council and will allow clubs from different sporting codes to share facilities such as changing/meeting rooms, car-parking, all-weather pitches, and other ancillary facilities. The Recreational Hubs concept has been developed to encourage multi-use and sustainable community sporting facilities. The hub will also act as a catalyst to build and bring communities together by delivering services that meet the needs of the community and serve other purposes such as providing a safe meeting place and hosting the delivery of community programmes that develop community capacity and connectivity. Recreational Hubs shall be inclusive and open to all sectors of the community, including sport participants and members at all ability levels and age groups.

The purpose of the hub is to locate sport in an area where it doesn’t conflict with adjoining residential use. It will create intensive recreational areas. The Council will endeavour to locate these hubs adjacent to school buildings or other municipal facilities to increase the use of same.



*Bremore Park Recreational Hub, Balbriggan*



## Principles of Open Space Provision

Section 7.5 of the ‘Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017 outlines five basic principles for the provision of open space which are as follows:

### Hierarchy

Design open space and recreational facilities on a hierarchical basis according to the needs of a defined population and having regard to the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy.

### Accessibility

Ensure as far as practical open space and recreational facilities are accessible by sustainable means of transport namely walking, cycling and public transport, depending on the catchment of the facility in question.

### Quantity

Provide sufficient quantities of open space and recreational facilities.

### Quality

Meet the needs and expectations of the user through the provision of high quality facilities. Different types of open space and recreational facilities meet different needs and therefore have different functions. Larger open spaces and recreation facilities should perform multiple functions i.e. passive and active recreational use.

### Private Open Space

Provide adequate private open spaces such as back gardens, balconies.

Further details in relation to the provision of Public Open Space in Fingal are provided in Part 2 of this document.

## 2.5 Value of Parks and Open Spaces

### Introduction

Public open space can have a positive impact on physical and mental well-being as it provides spaces to meet, interact, exercise and relax. It needs to be appropriately designed, properly located and well maintained to encourage its use and is a key element in defining the quality of the residential environment. It adds to the sense of identity of a neighbourhood, helps create a community spirit, and can improve the image of an area.

Parks and Open Spaces are a shop window for local authorities and well managed and clean outdoor spaces are a source of pride for local communities. The costs of building, maintaining, or upgrading parks are readily calculated and conspicuous but the benefits open space provides are spread over many areas, making them hard to quantify and easy to overlook.

Parks and open spaces are vital contributors to the achievement of wider urban policy objectives, including job opportunities, youth development, public health, and community building. They provide a sense of place and engender civic pride, enabling social interaction and helping to reduce social exclusion particularly in deprived areas.

Public green spaces also help to conserve natural systems, including carbon, water and other natural cycles, supporting ecosystems and providing the contrast of living elements in both designed landscapes and conserved wildlife habitats.

Providing for the recreational and leisure needs of a community assists the economic development of an area, increasing its attractiveness as a place for business investment and for living, working and leisure pursuits.

This section will look at the evidence based empirical research relating to the value of Public Open Space under the following headings:

- Public Health Value
- Community and Sport Value
- Enhanced Property Value
- Ecological / Natural System Value
- Heritage and Tourism Value

### Public Health Value

Childhood obesity has become national health concern in recent years. One in five Irish children is considered to be obese with levels of obesity reaching epidemic proportions in recent years, according to a four-year study carried out by the Department of Health.

## “Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal



*Balheary Skatepark, Swords*

This increase in obesity is linked to ever more sedentary lifestyles and a reduction in outdoor activity. Inactivity breeds inactivity, so a lack of exercise when young can in turn create problems in adulthood. It is not just people's physical health that is at risk, there are concerns too about people's mental well-being.

Access to good-quality, well-maintained public open spaces can help improve our physical and mental health by encouraging people to walk more, play sport, or simply enjoy a green and natural environment.

Safe, clean spaces encourage people to take more exercise and therefore offer significant health benefits. Some doctors even prescribe a walk in the park to aid patients' health. A study of walking groups has shown that just increasing the distance walked from one to two miles a day means one less death per year among 60 male patients aged 61-80 who suffer from heart disease.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bird, W. (2003) 'Nature is good for you!' *ECOS*, Vol. 24(1) pp29-31.

In a UK study regular walking was shown to reduce the incidence of heart attacks by 50%, diabetes by 50%, colon cancer by 30% and fractures of the femur by 40%. NHS Scotland has calculated that if an additional 1 in 100 inactive people took adequate exercise it would save the health service there £85 Million per annum.

Sports such as soccer and hockey are part of the weekly routine for many people and require good-quality pitches. As people get older, the types of sports they enjoy may change, with activities such as bowls associated with older people. Many of our hard urban public spaces also offer opportunities for less formal but equally beneficial sports, such as skateboarding. All these activities help us to keep fit by protecting the cardiovascular system and preventing the onset of other health problems.

Recent studies have established that the presence of trees and “nearby nature” in human communities generates numerous psychosocial benefits. A series of school-related studies show that children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) show fewer symptoms and girls show more self-discipline in academics if they have access to natural settings. Other studies confirm that hospital patients recover more quickly and require fewer pain-killing medications when having a view of nature. Finally, studies suggest that office workers with a view of nature are more productive, report fewer illnesses, and have higher job satisfaction. In conclusion the Council will continue to take account of the increasing evidence of health related benefits of open space.

### Community Value of Open Space

Parks and Open Spaces help build and strengthen ties within communities by bringing people together, including those who may otherwise be separated by ethnic or social background. Public open spaces are open to all and, when properly designed and cared for can provide meeting places and foster social ties. These open spaces shape the cultural identity of an area, are part of its unique character and provide a sense of place for local communities.

Open spaces are not just empty voids. Typically, they are filled with both soft and hard landscape elements to help shape their character and the open spaces near our homes create a valuable place to socialise. In this regard, quality counts; the better the design of the space, the better the

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quality of the social experience. Research has shown that big, bland spaces on housing estates fail to offer the same opportunities for social cohesion as more personal spaces.<sup>2</sup>

A key benefit of high-quality public space is its potential as a venue for social events. Well managed events can have a very positive effect on the urban environment, drawing the community together and bringing financial, social and environmental benefits. For example, in the Fingal area, the ‘Flavours of Fingal Festival’ at Newbridge Demesne, the ‘Howth Dublin Bay Prawn Festival’ and ‘Theatre in the Park’ events make use of parks and open spaces as venues. To encourage and support events like these, it is essential to plan the physical layout of public spaces with festivals and other social activities in mind.



*Flavours of Fingal, Newbridge Demesne*

There is evidence to show that people use their public open spaces more, and are more satisfied with them, if these spaces include natural elements. A view of trees is, along with the availability of natural areas, the strongest factor affecting people’s satisfaction with their local area. It is shown that if green spaces are surrounded by or adjacent to housing, a sense of ownership develops among residents. These areas are less likely to suffer from the kind of problems that arise when there is a lack of perceived ownership. Large, featureless open spaces do not often generate such positive community feelings. It is most beneficial, therefore, to provide smaller green areas close to housing.

<sup>2</sup> Quayle, M. and Dreissen van der Lieck, T. C. (1997) ‘Growing community: a case for hybrid landscapes’. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 39, pp99-107

### Enhanced Property Value

A high-quality public environment can have a significant positive impact on the economic life of an area and is therefore an essential part of any successful town or city. As towns and cities increasingly compete with one another to attract investment, the presence of good quality open spaces becomes a vital element of any economic strategy.

A good public landscape also offers very clear benefits to the local economy in terms of stimulating increased house prices, since house-buyers are willing to pay to be near green space. For example, it has been shown that a view of a park or having a park in close proximity to housing can increase property prices.

For commercial enterprises, a good-quality public environment can attract more people into an area. It has been shown, for example, that well-planned improvements to public spaces within town centres can boost commercial trading significantly and generate significant private sector investment.

### Ecological and Natural System Value

Open space possesses ‘*natural system value*’ when it provides direct benefits to human society through such processes as ground water storage, carbon sequestration climate moderation, flood control, storm damage prevention, and air and water pollution abatement. It is possible to assign a monetary value to such benefits by calculating the cost of the damages that would result if the benefits were not provided, or if public expenditures were required to build infrastructure to replace the functions of the natural systems. Our parks and open spaces also provide important habitats for many species of flora and fauna such as otters, kingfishers and bats which are protected under European and Irish legislation.

In Melbourne, Australia the planting of 100,000 trees has led to a Carbon reduction equivalent to 1.3 Million tonnes with a consequent annual saving of AU\$29 Million.

Another example of Natural System Value is the Charles River Basin in Massachusetts, where 8,5000 acres of wetlands were acquired and preserved as a natural valley storage area for flood control for a cost of \$10 million. An alternative proposal to construct dams and levees to accomplish the same goal would have cost \$100 million. In another study, the Minnesota



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Department of Natural Resources calculated that the cost of replacing the natural flood water storage function of wetlands would be \$300 per acre-foot of water.

Details of how Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) can be appropriately incorporated into Public Open Spaces are included in Part 3 of the document.

Trees are an essential part of a healthy urban environment; their root systems hold soil in place, preventing erosion. Trees help maintain healthy air quality by absorbing, or sequestering, carbon dioxide and converting it into oxygen to breathe. One acre of trees provides enough oxygen for 18 people, and absorbs as much carbon dioxide as a car produces in 26,000 miles. Trees also remove sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, two major components of acid rain and ozone pollution, from the air. Trees reduce noise pollution by acting as a buffer and absorbing urban noise. Trees also create homes for birds and other wildlife.

In providing Open Space the Council recognises the significant Ecological and Natural Systems benefits generated by it.



*Wildflower Meadow, St. Catherine's Park, Lucan*

### **Heritage and Tourism Value**

Tourism is an important source of revenue, investment and employment throughout Ireland. Within Fingal, alongside our coastline and countryside, the Council's heritage properties are a unique selling point for the County and must be managed correctly and in a sustainable manner to ensure their success and longevity.

Tourism has been identified as one of the main areas for economic growth and development in Fingal. The 'Fingal Heritage Plan' recognises the significant opportunity represented by heritage properties as tourism assets conferring important economic benefits on the county. It is recognised that tourism can have negative impacts on areas such as natural resources, pollution, consumption patterns and the environment. However, when heritage tourism development is appropriately implemented, it also helps to protect our natural and cultural treasures and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. In order for the tourism industry to survive, it is important that responsible and sustainable planning and management techniques are applied.

The Fingal Tourism Strategy notes that the tourism and hospitality sector plays a critical role in the health of Fingal's economy as well as enhancing the quality of life for its residents. The future success of tourism depends on a shared vision guiding an integrated response from a wide range of stakeholders including local government, businesses, community groups and individuals. Based on its natural and man-made assets, Fingal has the potential to project a number of key appeals and attractors to well defined segments of the visitor markets. The vision for the future is one of a fresh start in maximising the potential to deliver distinctive visitor experiences while enhancing the quality of life for the area's residents and sustaining the natural environment.

Heritage properties in Fingal represent a key element of Sustainable Tourism. Several of our large regional parks are also heritage properties and function to manage and conserve parts of the county's natural and built heritage. Over 40% of the 2,000 hectares managed as parks and open spaces in Fingal can be regarded as important historic landscapes. It is therefore essential to understand and appreciate these properties and landscapes and to promote and present them properly to visitors.

At a national and local level Parks and Gardens play a major role in the tourism economy and are important factors for choosing Ireland as a holiday destination. During 2013 there were over 1.59 million visits by overseas tourists to gardens in Ireland generating an estimated revenue of €3.4 Billion. Fingal is well placed to take advantage of this trend in heritage tourism.



*Newbridge Demesne, Donabate*

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing demonstrates the wide range of benefits and value conferred by parks and open spaces and underlines the importance of having a strategy for the development and management of these resources.

The Council recognises the health, social, economic and environmental benefits of open spaces. The Council will promote healthy active life styles and encourage a greater use of open space

## **2.6 Quantitative Aspects Open Space Provision in Fingal**

The purpose of this section is to outline the quantity and typology of public open space provision in Fingal. A series of maps are provided at the end of this document which illustrate the distribution of open space in each of our main towns and villages. Separate maps illustrating our major regional parks are also included.

### **Supply of Open Space in Fingal**

In Fingal, land has become public open space through three main processes:

- Open space acquired by the Council
- Dedicated public open space (land generated through the planning process)
- Land transferred to the Council by Manager’s Order (lands formerly within the Dublin City Council administrative area).

### **Open Space Acquired by the Council**

Many of our larger Regional Parks and Heritage Properties have been purchased directly by the Council for use as recreational open space. If the property was acquired subject to any trusts, then the local authority is bound specifically by the trusts set out in the deeds. It should be noted that Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides that any land acquired by a local authority may be sold, leased or exchanged subject to such conditions as the authority considers necessary. Open space may also become available following the closure and reclamation of former landfill sites. Examples of this approach in Fingal are the major new parks are being developed at Dunsink in Dublin 15 and at Baleally near Lusk.

### **Dedicated Public Open Space**

This refers to lands conditioned as public open space by planning permission and legally dedicated to the Council. The lands are held on behalf of or in trust for the public. The Council is legally prevented from disposing of these lands or using them for purposes other than recreational open space. While title for this land passes to the Council, there can be no disposal of the land by the Council. Under current arrangements, the Council cannot give any title for this land whether by way of lease, transfer or licence to any person or group. This can lead to restrictions in relation to third party use and management of this land.

### **Lands Transferred to the Council by Manager’s Order**

The Council also has public open space, mainly in Sutton, Baldoyle and Howth, which was originally taken in charge by Dublin Corporation (now Dublin City Council) under Manager’s Order. Title to these lands remains with the original landowner but so long as it is used as public open space as detailed in the original Manager’s Order public access to the land for recreational use will remain unfettered.

### **Quantity of Open Space**

The Council has approximately 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres) of public open space, sixty per cent of which has been generated through the planning process. The quantitative standard used through the planning process requires that 25 hectares is provided per 10,000 of population. This is derived from a long established standard of British origin known as the ‘6 Acre Standard’ which provides for 6 acres per 1,000 population. This standard was proposed by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) of

## *“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

the UK in the 1930’s and has become the norm for quantitative provision of open space and is the standard used in Fingal.

While the approach of the current Development Plan has moved from a quantitative to a qualitative emphasis, there are still objectives relating to the amount of open space a particular development will generate. Objective OS02 states that the minimum public open space required is 2.5 hectares per 1000 population of which 10% must be provided on site. The Council has the discretion to accept a financial contribution for the remaining area. This contribution will then be made available for the provision of public open space.

Currently we have a very extensive public provision of grass sports pitches in Fingal. These pitches are allocated to local clubs on an annual basis. The Council maintains almost 170 grass sports pitches for public use. This services the needs of 76 sports clubs and during the current year the number of teams in these clubs playing on our pitches reached 936 (107 adult and 829 juvenile teams.)

### **Hierarchy of Open Space**

Public Open Space has been described in two ways in successive County Development Plans and both sets of terms are in use.

These are:

- Class 1 & Class 2 which focuses on a quantitative provision system and
- A qualitative and accessibility provision system.

### **Open Space Classification**

Open Space ‘Class 1’ and ‘Class 2’ have traditionally been used to describe open space to be provided through the planning process and these terms still form the basis of quantitative assessment of open space provision. Class 1 open space is normally constituted as a significant local park which provides inter alia for active recreation in the form of playing fields. Class 2 public open spaces are generally smaller and more numerous and are located in and around residential areas. They provide opportunities for informal recreation and play.

A significant amount of open space in Fingal is present in the form of roadside verges in urban and residential areas which provide for sight-lines, future road-widening and other non-recreational purposes. This open space is outside the scope of the traditional classification system outlined above. The manner in which this land is managed has important implications for the resourcing of open space maintenance and this issue is addressed comprehensively in Part 3 of this document.



*St Catherine's Park, Lucan*

### **Accessibility of Open Space**

The ‘Fingal Development Plan 2011 – 2017’ changes the emphasis from a quantitative approach to one which focuses on accessibility. The standards allow the provision of a wide variety of accessible public open spaces to meet the diverse needs of the county’s residents. The provision of pocket parks and more local, urban parks has been emphasised to achieve a more accessible arrangement. The table below taken from the ‘Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017’ outlines the open spaces hierarchy and accessibility standards which apply.

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*Extract from Fingal Development Plan 2011 - 2017*

**TABLE OS1: OPEN SPACE HIERARCHY AND ACCESSIBILITY**

Type of Public Open Space	Areas	Accessibility from homes	Note
<b>Pocket Parks</b> (Class 2 as per Development Contribution Scheme) Facilities for smaller children, but not necessarily formal play facilities. Have an important visual and social function also. Pocket parks must not be to the side or back of houses and must be adequately overlooked.	Between 400 sq m – 0.2 hectares	Every home within 100m walking distance	Provide pocket parks in all cases. No contributions in lieu
<b>Small Parks</b> (Class 2 as per Development Contribution Scheme) Depending on their size, these will accommodate playground facilities, kick about areas, and passive recreation.	Between 0.2 – 2 hectares	Within 400m walking distance of homes	
<b>Local Parks</b> (Class 1 as per Development Scheme) Accommodate playground facilities and a number of playing fields. Passive recreational and biodiversity areas will also be accommodated in these parks.	Between 2 hectares – 20 hectares.	400 metres.	
<b>Urban Neighbourhood Parks</b> (Class 1 as per Development Contribution Scheme). A wide variety of facilities and uses can be provided here due to their size. Biodiversity areas will also be accommodated in these parks.	Between 20 hectares – 50 hectares	Within 1km	
<b>Regional Parks</b> (Class 1 as per Development Contribution Scheme) Provide for a large range of uses. Formal and informal play areas, passive recreation areas, biodiversity areas and often a distinct attraction will be available on site.	Over 50 hectares	Within 5km	

## **PART 3 MOVING FORWARD**

### *A Sustainable Approach to the Management and Maintenance of Open Space in Fingal*



*Grazing project at St Catherine's Park, Lucan*

### **3.1 Introduction**

This part of the strategy outlines a new approach to open space management conservation and maintenance. This reflects a move away from the reactive and routine tradition of management which has been in place, towards a more proactive and planned approach to open space management conservation and maintenance. There is currently no objective standard for comprehensively assessing the quality of existing open space in Fingal. Several of the actions outlined below help to address deficiency. This strategy will build on the foundations developed by the Council and contained in existing policy documents, including: 'The Green Infrastructure Plan' (Chapter 5 of Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017); 'The Forest of Fingal - A Tree Strategy for Fingal'; 'Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan' and 'The Fingal Allotment Strategy'.

The core principles for the sustainable management of open space in Fingal are:

- Enhance the quality of Open Space provision
- Provide areas suitable for active and passive recreation
- Maintain a positive impression of the towns, villages, roadways and residential areas in the county.
- Enhance the biodiversity of our parks and open spaces
- Introduce more sustainable methods of maintenance without affecting the amenity value of the open spaces provided.

The following three major initiatives will deliver the changes necessary for enhanced sustainability and the overall quality of open space provision.

- Proposed Open Space Management and Maintenance Hierarchy
- Guidance for the Planning, Management and Maintenance of Open Space
- Changes to Open Space Byelaws and Other Relevant Actions

### **3.2 Proposed Open Space Management and Maintenance Hierarchy**

The following is the proposed hierarchy of maintenance of open space. This reflects the profile of different areas of open space under maintenance. It is

## *“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

important in establishing this hierarchy that risk management is addressed, as well as the usage pattern and amenity value of the open spaces in question.. It is proposed to prioritise the maintenance of the following elements of public open space in line with this hierarchy and according to their typology as follows:

- Playgrounds
- Sports Facilities
- High Profile Open Space in towns and villages
- Open Space within Residential Areas
- Grassed Roadside Margins

It should be noted that Regional Parks and Heritage Properties require particular attention on a stand alone basis and this is dealt with by way of individual Management Plans for these properties

### **Playgrounds**

Playgrounds are highly valued in local areas. Due to their popularity, heavy use and the potential consequences of vandalism, they must be inspected regularly and maintained in a ‘fit for purpose’ condition. Playgrounds are inspected regularly and maintenance requests are forwarded to the local supervisory staff for action. Playground repairs and maintenance will receive the highest priority. Potential for accidents where equipment is faulty can be lethal. As a result of this significant risk that may occur, public safety is a priority.

### **Sports Facilities**

The Council directly provides a major part of the facilities used for sports and outdoor recreation in Fingal (See Table 1). The maintenance of sports grounds is of critical importance to clubs in Fingal, some of which rely almost exclusively on the Council for their facilities. Over 400 teams from more than 60 sports clubs use these outdoor facilities. Severe disruption would therefore result if they are not maintained to an acceptable and safe level. The Council supports the objective of an active population which is a national goal and significantly enhances public health. For these reasons, maintenance of sports facilities is second on the priority list.

*Public Sports & Playing Facilities in Fingal*

Facilities	Quantity
<b>Grass pitches</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Changing rooms</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Tennis courts</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Playgrounds</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Multi use games areas (MUGA)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>All weather pitches</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Mini pitches</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Cricket pitch</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Basketball courts</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Golf courses (full size)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Golf courses (par 3)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pitch and putt courses</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Bowling greens</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Driving range</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>BMX track</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Skate park</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Traditional Farm</b>	<b>1</b>

### **High Profile Open Space in towns and villages**

These spaces include town parks and visually significant open spaces on the approaches to or in the centres of towns and villages. These spaces are important in social and economic terms and in creating a sense of place. They leave a lasting impression of a locality and also significantly affect residents’ views of the village or town in which they live. It is therefore important to ensure these impressions are positive both for visitors and residents alike. Scores achieved in ‘Tidy Towns’ competitions are a good barometer of how well these spaces are maintained. Open spaces identified as falling into this category will accordingly have a high priority rating.

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### **Open Space within Residential Areas**

These open spaces are used primarily for passive recreation and the frequency and nature of the maintenance carried out will reflect this. These are the open spaces most closely identified with and related to particular residential developments. Engagement with these communities in relation to the maintenance strategies adopted for these areas is therefore essential.



*Grass Maintenance in Open Space*

### **Grassed Roadside Margins**

Distributor roads, margins running alongside open space and entrances to estates not overlooked by businesses and dwellings are maintained by The Council. These areas are usually narrow and have a significant number of street trees, public light standards and signs located on them. They are also used as service runs for electricity, gas and telecommunications cables. This significantly increases the labour required to maintain them.

It is proposed to maintain them as follows:

- Margins running alongside public open space will be maintained to the same standard as the adjoining open space.
- Margins at entrances to residential estates and business parks which are not contiguous to other open space will be maintained on a less frequent basis.

- Narrow grassed roadside margins adjoining residential properties and businesses in Fingal are maintained by the residents/businesses in accordance with the ‘Fingal Citizen Charter’ which states “adopt the public footpath and grassed margin in front of your home or business premises as it is your responsibility. Sweep it clean and cut the grass on a regular basis”.

### **Regional Parks and Heritage Properties**

Fingal is unique among Local Authorities in Ireland in that approximately 800 hectares of its open space resource is located in designed historic landscapes. These areas are sometimes referred to as destination parks as most visitors make a special trip to visit them. Some have coffee shops and other facilities and generate income to help defray maintenance costs to the Council. Due to their size and location, they often have many elements ranging from highly maintained walled gardens and lawns to playing pitches, playgrounds, woodland areas, wildflower meadows and protected heritage structures. Unlike most open spaces, they contain a significant amount of woodland with many mature and sometimes over-mature trees that require specialised management. In some of these parks it has been possible to convert large areas of mown grass into wildflower meadows. Most visitors value this and enjoy walking on mown paths through the meadows. The wildflower meadows in Ardgillan and Newbridge were assessed in 2009 and rated as being in the top 10 sites in the country for biodiversity. This move to wildflower meadows with local farmers harvesting hay has significantly improved the sustainable maintenance of these parklands.

Conservation and Management Plans for both the built and natural heritage within these parks are being prepared. These will form the basis of long term management for these parks and will include significant initiatives to enhance the amenity and tourism potential of each property.

### **3.3 Guidance for the Planning, Management and Maintenance of Open Space**

The Council addresses the planning, provision and maintenance of high quality open space through a number of processes. In relation to the development of open space, detailed requirements are communicated to developers through the Planning Process and address the following areas:

## “Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal

- Requirements for detailed landscape design proposals
- Requirements for the provision of adequate play facilities
- Detailed surveying of trees and hedgerows
- Requirements for tree protection and the retention of arboricultural expertise
- Provision of tree bonds
- Site management during construction e.g. works compounds etc.
- Requirements relating to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in Open Spaces
- Requirements relating to the protection of biodiversity, wildlife and watercourses
- Requirements relating to landscape planting works including constructed tree pits
- Protection of Archaeology within open space
- Minimum standards in relation to soft landscape works
- Requirements relating to financial contributions as necessary.

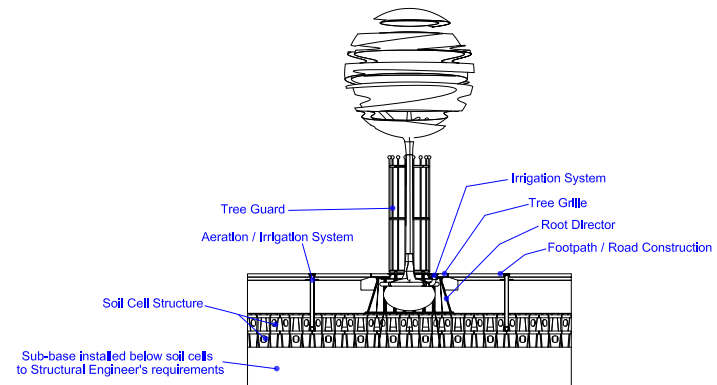
### Open Space Planning and Design Guidelines

In future a stronger emphasis on sustainable maintenance will inform the layout and arrangement of open spaces. This will avoid The Council taking in charge ‘left-over’ space that has few benefits and can be difficult and expensive to maintain.

The open space layout and design guidelines are as follows:

- Open spaces to the side or rear of residential developments shall be eliminated at planning stage to improve passive supervision and prevent future anti-social behaviour.
- Mature trees and single line hedgerows shall be retained wherever possible and wooded areas selected for open space shall be determined at the Planning/Local Area Plan stage.
- Where large canopy tree cover is desired in urban and in extensively paved areas, properly constructed tree pits should be conditioned at planning stage to ensure the trees can grow successfully to maturity without damaging built infrastructure.

- Active recreation facilities shall be provided in mainly larger parks in line with Council policy for the development of ‘Recreational Hubs’. This will ensure facilities such as changing and meeting rooms, all weather pitches and car parking, are provided in a sustainable manner.
- Playgrounds, play spaces, MUGAs (multi use games areas) and skate parks etc. shall be provided only where there is significant passive supervision.
- In locations where an open aspect is desirable, consideration shall be given to the provision of high kerbs in place of fencing, bollards or boulders. These shall be used to deter vehicles taking short cuts across public open space.



Constructed Tree Pit

### Planting and Grass Maintenance on Open Space

The Council aims to carry out the necessary planting and grass maintenance in such a way that public open space has an acceptable visual amenity and meets its usage requirements.

*The guidelines for planting and grass maintenance are as follows:*

- Shallow rooting trees such as Cherries (*Prunus* sp.) shall be planted at least four metres from paths and kerbs. This will help prevent tree root damage to footpaths and other built structures.



## *"Keeping It Green", An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

- Large trees shall not be planted within a distance of twice their mature height on the southern or western side of private dwellings.
- High growing shrubs shall be used only after careful consideration and not be planted along boundaries to private dwellings or along pathways. This shall prevent use of planting as cover for criminal or anti-social behaviour.
- Shrub plantings abutting paths shall be of species and varieties that do not grow over 1.2 metres high. Taller growing shrubs can be used back from paths.
- Trees in pocket parks shall have lower limbs removed up to a height of 2 metres to allow views across open spaces.
- Mowing underneath groups of trees shall be limited to once per year maximum to prevent compaction of tree roots. These areas can also be sown with wildflowers or flowering bulbs to increase seasonal interest, biodiversity value and general visual amenity.
- Where sufficient area is available, a meadow strip of 3-5 metres in width shall be maintained alongside hedgerows and waterways and mown once per year. This will increase the species range and biodiversity value of these areas.
- Currently tree planting in public areas is dominated by deciduous plantings. The planting of coniferous trees shall be increased at suitable sites to improve the diversity of tree species in public areas.
- Street trees are provided as avenues along most residential roadways. These trees are planted in roadside margins which are also used as service runs for a range of underground utilities. Many of these margins are too narrow to provide enough rooting volume for large canopy trees. The trend to narrower margins in recent years has resulted in too little soil to support trees and this can lead to pavement damage and trip hazards. In addition these narrow margins are difficult to maintain efficiently. Best practise suggests that trees should not be planted where the available

rooting volume is less than 16 cubic metres. Where tree planting is planned, grass margins shall be a minimum of 1.2 metres in width. Margins between 1.2m and 2.4m in width should only be planted with smaller growing tree species as set out in 'The Forest of Fingal – A Tree Strategy for Fingal'.

- Larger areas of 'Environmental Open Space' shall be planted with large canopy trees, where appropriate. These areas are typically in excess of 500 square metres and will provide sufficient space to grow large woodland trees. This approach will eliminate expensive footpath replacement works and service disruptions due to tree roots entering storm and foul drainage pipes or service ducts. Site selection and species selection must take account of shade patterns.
- Suitable open spaces less than 50 square metres in area shall be planted with trees, shrubs or groundcover as appropriate.
- A programme to replace annual bedding schemes with perennial herbaceous plantings where appropriate will be continued and extended.
- Mass bulb displays will be planted under trees in suitable open spaces.



*Mass bulb planting under trees*

## *“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

### **The Green Flag Award Scheme**

While there is currently no objective standard for the provision of quality open space the ‘Green Flag Award Scheme’ is currently being piloted in Fingal. If adopted county-wide, this will introduce an objective standard in the provision and maintenance of quality open spaces. The ‘Green Flag Award Scheme’ is the national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK. It was first launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in that country. It provides the high level of quality against which parks and green spaces are measured. It is also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve high environmental standards, setting a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.

‘Green Flag Award’ applications are judged against eight key criteria. The judging criteria also considers the fact that each park/green space will offer different kinds of facilities, and will be managed and developed to varying opportunities and constraints. Innovation and the way facilities offered are tailored to the needs of the community will also be taken into account. The Green Flag scheme also requires the development of management plans for the candidate parks which in turn will lead to the development of qualitative standards for the management of these parks and open spaces.



*The Green Flag Award Scheme for Parks*

The criteria used for judging the open spaces are as follows:

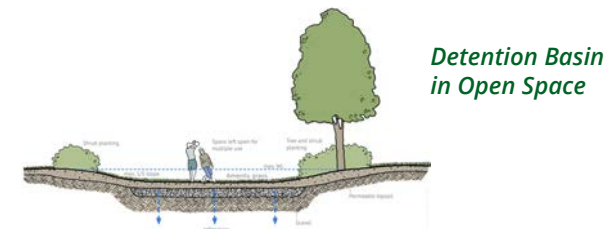
- 1 A welcoming place
- 2 Healthy, safe and secure
- 3 Clean and well maintained

- 4 Sustainability
- 5 Conservation and heritage
- 6 Community involvement
- 7 Marketing
- 8 Management

It is likely that these criteria will be adapted and refined over time to reflect the Irish context.

### **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) on Open Space**

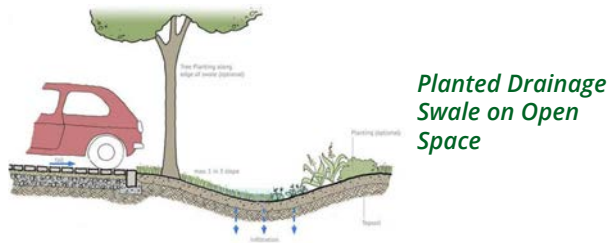
Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) can best be defined as offering a “total” solution to rainwater management and must be included in all new developments. Ponds, artificial wetlands and water features can make a positive contribution to the provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and to the amenity of an area. Properly designed and located SuDS features can be incorporated within and can complement the amenity and aesthetic value of open spaces. SuDS areas do not form part of the public open space provision, except where they contribute in a significant way to the design and quality of open space. The current Fingal Development Plan 2011 -2017 includes the following objective:



### **Objective OS25**

Ensure as far as practical that the design of SuDS enhances the quality of open spaces. SuDS do not form part of the public open space provision, except where it contributes in a significant and positive way to the design and quality of open space. In instances where the Council determines that SuDS make a significant and positive contribution to open space, a maximum 10% of open space provision shall be taken up by SuDS.

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While the above objective sets out at maximum of 10% open space provision to be taken up by SuDS, there may be situations in larger open spaces and particularly in major regional parks where this maximum limit may need to be reassessed in the interests of good design and sustainable management.

### Larger Open Spaces:

For larger parks including Local, Neighbourhood and Regional Parks and open spaces in excess of 2 Hectares, the construction of Attenuation Ponds and Detention Basins will be favoured as SuDS solutions.

### Smaller Open Spaces

In smaller Residential Open Spaces less than 2 Hectares or within roadside margins the construction of Filter Strips/Drains and Planted Swales, will be considered appropriate as options to meet local SuDS requirements. In these areas, Constructed Tree Pits incorporating SuDS elements will also be considered appropriate especially in smaller paved open spaces such as Pocket Parks or high profile civic spaces.

### Parkland and Open Space Furniture

Furniture for open space is essential and an important element of any open space area. This includes benches, lighting, litter bins and adult outdoor exercise equipment. The Council aims to provide furniture which complements the character of the area, responds to site attributes and features, e.g. views, landmarks and existing vegetation; is appropriately scaled and, where necessary, responds to the local heritage.

*The guidelines for parkland and open space furniture are as follows:*

- Where appropriate the Council shall facilitate the provision of public lighting along heavily used pedestrian routes and for access to schools, shopping and public transport routes.

- Seating/park benches shall be provided where there is significant passive supervision.
- A detailed inventory of all Parkland and Open Space furniture will be maintained and regular audits will schedule the provision and maintenance of this equipment.
- Adult outdoor exercise equipment will be provided at suitable location to augment opportunities for physical exercise along walking routes in parks and open spaces.
- Appropriate Signage and interpretation is key to ensuring that Open Space is well used and enjoyed. To this end a new signage template for open Space has recently been adopted. This will be rolled out across our network over the coming years and will emphasise the walking and cycling routes provided as well as the other amenities present in our parks.

## 3.4 Policy for Memorial Dedication of Benches and Trees

The Council supports the general principle of allowing memorial benches and trees in its parks. The Council is however mindful that the public use and enjoy these spaces for a range of reasons and it is important therefore to ensure that the issue is managed and regulated for the benefit of all. To this end memorial benches and trees will only be considered for inclusion in parks and open spaces where there are high levels of passive and /or active supervision e.g. Enclosed Regional Parks and Heritage Demesnes.

Significant memorials such as the naming of parks or commemoration of historic events in parks and open spaces will require an application in writing to the appropriate naming committee in The Council.

For commemorative benches and tree planting, the Council will accept contributions (subject to the availability of suitable locations), under the following conditions:

## *“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal*

### **Trees**

The location of the tree and selection of tree species shall be at the discretion of the Council which is responsible for the planting and maintenance works required. A fee will be charged as a contribution to the cost of this work including administration. Plaques or memorabilia will not be permitted in the vicinity of the tree. The sponsor shall be required to meet the cost of these works. In the event of vandalism or failure (within 18 months of planting), the Council will arrange on a one-off basis for a replacement.

### **Benches**

The Council will attempt to accommodate the wishes of the applicants in relation to the selection of the bench type, its location, installation and style of plaque. However, consideration has to be given to the ambiance and management plan for any particular park so the final decision on these issues will be at the discretion of the Council.



*Memorial Bench*

### **Inscriptions**

The inscription on the plaque will be required to be non-denominational. Dates that indicate lifetime may not be used and wording must be approved by the Council. The applicant shall be required to contribute the full cost of purchasing and installing the bench and associated plaque.

### **General Conditions**

The Parks Service reserves the right to remove or relocate a bench or tree at any time should it be considered necessary.

The Council will maintain responsibility for the bench for a minimum of 5 years. This will include any repair works and replacement of the bench where required due to normal wear and tear or vandalism. Should a bench become unsafe, the Council reserves the right to remove it immediately in the interest of public safety until repairs or replacement can take place. A bench that has been damaged and is in the view of the Council beyond economic repair may not be replaced beyond 5 years after the date of first installation.

The Council accepts no liability for damage to any benches, trees or shrubs from vandals, third parties or whilst the Council carries out routine maintenance in the park. The Council will not accept applications for memorial benches or trees dedicated to pets. No additional memorabilia e.g. vases, statues, flowers, wreaths, balloons or other ornamentation etc., shall be permitted on or around the bench. These shall be removed without reference to the original applicant.

Applications for commemorative trees or benches should be sent in writing to The Administrative Officer, Operations Department, The Council, Civic Offices, Grove Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.

This section will be updated from time to time in line with the changes to the Councils Memorial Policy.

### **3.5 Community Involvement in Open Space**

Community appreciation, involvement and identity will be fostered through the development and use of open space.

Community and resident groups shall be encouraged to participate in appropriate open space maintenance initiatives in agreement with the Council, e.g. the 'Adopt a Patch' Scheme which is run by the Council's Environment Department to facilitate local groups to clean up and maintain local residential areas. The 'Green Flag Award Scheme' now being piloted will be rolled out to include community involvement criteria.



*Adopt a Patch Scheme with Local Residents*

### **3.6 Biodiversity and the Fingal Growing Places Initiative**

The 'Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan' provides advice and direction for the management of biodiversity located in Fingal's Open Spaces and parks.

The maintenance of public open space is underpinned by a biodiversity ethos and the 'Growing Places Initiative'. For a number of years, The Council has piloted a new and more sustainable approach to open space maintenance involving the introduction of a range of new practices relating to these works. The collective term for these practices is the 'Growing Places Initiative'. The core of this initiative is to ensure the maintenance regime used in a given location reflects the profile and usage pattern of the site in question. In addition, this approach aims to enhance biodiversity through developing a range of conditions and habitats in open spaces. This more stratified approach to open space is common in many developed countries.

The key elements of the initiative which have been piloted to date are as follows:

- The development of Wildflower Meadows in larger parks and open spaces which are maintained with the assistance of local farmers who harvest the hay or silage for animal feed. Grass paths and kick-about areas are mown into these spaces to provide for the relevant recreational activities.
- Extensive Tree Planting on open spaces to reduce grass maintenance and enhance residential areas.
- Planting of extensive areas of Flowering Bulbs to reduce mowing and add colour and seasonal interest to open space.
- Introduction of Livestock Grazing programmes into suitable areas of parks and open spaces to lower cost of grass maintenance and add interest into these areas.



*Making Hay on Wildflower Meadow in Open Space*

Involvement of Local Communities in decisions and activities relating to the maintenance and development of their local open spaces and parks.

*The guidelines for Biodiversity and Growing Places Initiative are as follows:*

- The overall approach to managing the open spaces shall be modified in line with the 'Growing Places Initiative' and to maximise available resources and provide more opportunities for wildlife. These changes should not be achieved at the expense of the aesthetics or functionality of the park or open space.

- Some of the intensively maintained amenity grassland and species poor grassland shall be turned into wildflower meadows and cut once a year. Birds such as Skylark and Meadow Pipit and many insects will benefit from these more diverse grasslands.
- In accordance with the ‘Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan’, specific areas of grass for biodiversity purposes shall be maintained as short grass for Brent Geese grazing in coastal areas and wildflower meadows for particular colonies of rare plants e.g. orchids.
- The use of livestock for maintaining the grassland within some larger parks shall be more common. Grazing will help make grassland management more sustainable and provide an additional attraction for park users.
- The wettest sites within the parks shall be set aside for ponds and other Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) features to provide a habitat for amphibians.
- The Council will assess the various regional parks and other open spaces for opportunities for habitat enhancement and habitat creation. The focus in the management strategies for these parks will be on the development of wildflower meadows, copses of trees, arable flower mixtures and low maintenance herbaceous planting schemes. Pond and other wetland features can be added to the wettest parts of the open spaces and/or where SuDS are required.



*Birds such as Skylarks benefit from wildflower meadow habitats*

### **3.7 Guidelines for Archaeology and Open Space**

Fingal is rich in archaeology extending over thousands of years with numerous mounds, ringforts, cairns, passage tombs, monastic sites, castles, ruins of early churches, burials, etc. scattered throughout the County.

Historic Landscape Characterisations (HLC) have been carried out for certain areas of Fingal analysing the different periods of development of an area, highlighting archaeologically sensitive landscapes in the case of Balbriggan, and assisting in distinguishing significant groups of monuments. HLC studies for the environs of Swords, Balbriggan and the Donabate/Portrane peninsula have been completed.



*Swords Castle in Swords Town Park*

*The guidelines for Archaeology and open space are as follows:*

- Any proposed open space development should consider the potential impact on archaeology in the very earliest stages and seek to avoid affecting archaeological features or sites and their setting.
- Archaeological areas in open spaces will be sensitively designed to protect and preserve in situ their archaeological remains and will be designed in a modern context to ‘tell the story’ of this heritage resource through signage, design features and dissemination of interpretative material.
- The creation of areas of interest within/adjoining/linking the archaeological areas will also be important in ensuring these areas are attractive and well used open spaces. It is not about isolating or reconstructing the past to curtail change but rather to strike a balance between protecting the essential archaeological character of the landscape and its continuing evolution in response to modern needs.
- All archaeological areas in open spaces shall be maintained and managed so they retain their significance within and are integrated into the local community. Boundary treatment and the identification of the remains should encourage open access across and movement through these areas.
- An on-site management plan should be prepared for each archaeological site and should be a collaborative and evolving process between the local authority, statutory authorities and the developer of the lands.
- It is the intention that the identification of Archaeological areas in open spaces will provide a safe and informative experience for the visitor and local alike. Similarly, access to archaeological information will enhance the public appreciation of the area and provide a greater understanding of the sensitive nature of the below ground remains.

### **3.8 Parks and Open Spaces Bye-Laws – Proposed Changes**

The management and usage of open space in Fingal is currently governed by Council bye-laws. These bye-laws are adopted in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government Act, 1994, for the control and regulation of the use of parks, open spaces and recreational playing grounds.

The ‘Regional Parks and Open Spaces Bye-Laws 1999 as amended by the The Council (Prohibition of Consumption of Intoxicating Liquor on Roads and in Public Places) Bye-Laws 2002’ (Appendix B) are in force to ensure that these open spaces are used in safety and comfort.

These bye-laws outline regulations in relation to a range of issues including but not limited to:

- Opening and Closing times
- Unauthorised Entry
- Drug and alcohol usage
- Licencing of Activities and Trading
- Litter, Graffiti and Vandalism
- Children’s Playgrounds
- Traffic
- Animals
- Public Disorder
- Games and Athletics
- Bonfires, Barbecues etc.

To reflect current usage patterns and the need for more sustainable management of our open spaces it is proposed to amend the Bye-laws in relation to a number of issues. The formal process for adoption of the amended Bye-laws will be pursued following the adoption of this Open Space Strategy.

The proposed changes to the current bye-laws under the following headings are outlined below.

#### **Traffic (Cycling & Parking)**

Currently the bye-laws include a general prohibition on cycling and similar activities in parks as follows: “No person shall cycle or use any skateboard, roller skates, roller blades, or other vehicle in the park except on such routes and in such places as may be designated by the Council for this purpose.”

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The following proposed amendments will permit the wider use of bicycles, skateboards, in-line skates, roller-skates, non-motorised scooters and similar vehicles in designated areas and on designated routes subject to due care and consideration for other Park users.

Currently a maximum speed limit of 10MPH applies to all authorised vehicles on authorised routes in parks. It is proposed that a maximum speed limit of 20KPH shall apply to all parks and open spaces with the exception of areas specifically designated for cycle training and racing or by prior agreement with the Council.

Currently the bye-laws prohibit cycling in parks and open spaces outside of designated routes. To facilitate young children learning to cycle; it is proposed that this bye-law shall not apply to bicycles or tricycles ridden by children under the age of 10 years who are accompanied by and under the care of an adult.

It is proposed that these Bye-Laws shall not apply to wheelchairs, perambulators or similar vehicles moved, drawn or propelled by hand or mechanically which are used solely for the conveyance of children or disabled persons.

In addition it is proposed to include the following amendments to the Bye-laws:

- No person shall in any park or open space engage in motorcycle scrambling except in an area designated by the Council for that purpose.
- Parking located in parks and open spaces may only be used by patrons. These car parks shall not be used for ‘park and ride’ purposes.
- No person shall carry out commercial activity or advertising in these car parks unless permitted by the Council.

### Smoke free Playgrounds

In 2012 following extensive research and public consultation; The Council introduced a policy of smoke free playgrounds. This requires members of the public to refrain from smoking in public playgrounds managed by The Council. It is now proposed to revise the Parks & Open Space Bye-laws to incorporate this provision as follows:

- No person shall in any Public Playground engage in smoking tobacco or tobacco related products.



Proposed Bye-Law Changes

### Animals (Dogs)

The current Bye-Laws require that no dogs shall be permitted in the parks unless they are “on a leash or under adequate control”.

The proposed amendments state:

- Dogs in parks and open spaces shall be kept on a leash, other than in areas designated as off-leash areas, or at times specified by the County Council.
- The Council will designate off-leash times and locations for dogs in parks and open spaces.

### Events

The current bye-laws address the provision of Musical Performances, Dances, etc. and Games and Athletics.

The proposed amendment states:

*All events in parks and open spaces shall be organised in line with Event Management Guidelines and Protocols as adopted by The Council.*



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*Outdoor Theatre at Newbridge Demesne*

### **Commercial Activity (Bootcamps and Personal Trainers)**

Currently, trading or other commercial activities in any park are not permitted without the permission of The Council. These bye-laws shall remain in place.

Due to a recent surge in commercial activity and in particular ‘Boot camp’ and ‘Personal Trainer’ style classes these provisions will be highlighted in the amended Bye-Laws.

### **Use of Model Aircraft/Drones in public open spaces**

The current bye-laws limit the use of model aircraft and similar equipment in parks and open spaces as follows:

*“No person shall operate any model aircraft, model sailing vessel or any model mechanically propelled vehicle save with the permission in writing of the Council and subject to the terms and conditions of such permission.”*

In recent times there is evidence of an increasing number of Hi-Tec model aircraft, Drones or Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs) being purchased by members of the public. The increasing use of drones in public open space may well lead to conflict with other park users. The issue is further complicated by the fact that many of these aircraft have very sophisticated photographic

capabilities. Currently the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) licences the use of drones for various purposes including aerial photography. The current relevant park bye-law is quite restrictive with regard to this activity and may prove difficult to enforce. A more sustainable and positive approach might be to provide that the Council designate certain areas at certain times as suitable for this activity subject to the requirements of the IAA and other privacy, health & safety and insurance related issues being met.

The suggested revised text is as follows:

*“No person shall operate any drone, remotely piloted aircraft, model aircraft, model sailing vessel or any model mechanically propelled vehicle in a public park or open space except in locations or a times designated by the Council for such activities and subject to the requirements of the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) or other relevant statutory bodies and subject also to the Council’s requirements in relation to privacy, health & safety and insurance being met.”*

### **Conclusion**

The making of bye-laws is a separate statutory process involving public consultation and the approval of the elected Council. The policy will be updated to reflect the outcome of this process

The wide range of proposals and initiatives outlined above will when implemented result in a more coherent and sustainable approach to the maintenance and management of public open space in Fingal. Updated bye-laws will make our open spaces more relevant to the everyday lives of citizens and revised maintenance regimes will reflect how these spaces are actually used while opening up new possibilities for recreation and enjoyment.

***“Keeping It Green”, An Open Space Strategy For Fingal***

## **PART 4 MAKING IT HAPPEN**

### *Summary of Actions*



*Aerial Photograph of Ardgillan Demesne during the Giro d'Italia 2014*

#### **4.1 An Open Space Policy for Fingal**

This document sets out a vision for the planning, development and sustainable management of Public Open Space in Fingal. This section contains the actions to be carried out as part of the implementation of this strategy. The actions are set out in relation to the 5 themes of the strategy namely Value, Quantity, Quality, Sustainability and Conservation.

#### **4.2 Open Space Value**

The Council recognises the wide range of benefits conferred on its citizens through the provision of high quality public open spaces. These include health, social, economic and environmental (including biodiversity) benefits. Part 2 of this document outlines current research and up to date information underpinning our understanding of these benefits.

**Action:** The Council will continue to promote healthy active life styles and encourage a greater use of our public open space.

To this end the Council will build on initiatives such as the provision of adult exercise equipment, all-weather pitches, multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and skateparks. In addition the Council will continue to facilitate activities such as “Park-run”, triathlons and family fun days along with a wide range of festivals and community events thus increasing the relevance of our open spaces in the day to day lives of people living in Fingal.

#### **4.3 Open Space Quantity**

The Council will continue to acquire open space to meet the needs of Citizens for active and passive recreational purposes.

Action: Open space will continue to be planned, provided and Taken In Charge through the planning process.

**Action:** Major new parks will be provided at:

- Bremore Regional Park in Balbriggan,
- Northwest Balbriggan,
- Balleally Former Landfill,
- Swords Regional Park,
- Tyrrellstown, Dublin 15
- Dunsink Former Landfill, Castleknock

## "Keeping It Green", An Open Space Strategy For Fingal

### Swords Regional Park Master Plan



Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall  
Fingal County Council



### 4.4 Quality of Open Space in Fingal

Greater emphasis will be placed on the quality of open space provision in particular to meet accessibility standards and the requirements of Green Infrastructure Planning as set out in the Fingal Development Plan. The Recreational Hubs concept has been developed to encourage multi-use and sustainable community sporting facilities. More extensive and accessible play facilities will enhance our open space provision for children.

**Action:** The Green Flag Award Scheme will be rolled out in coming years to develop qualitative standards in Open Space and achieve greater sustainability in open space management and maintenance.

**Action:** The mapping of open space and auditing of outdoor facilities will be continued to ensure that the necessary quantity and accessibility of open space is being achieved and to plan adequately for future population changes.

**Action:** The Council will continue to pursue the development of Recreational Hubs at key locations throughout the County.

**Action:** Fingal Council will pilot the provision of Natural Play Areas in open spaces. The first of these facilities will be provided at St. Catherine's Park, Lucan.

**Action:** Develop master plans for existing Regional Parks and large existing open spaces in Fingal.

### 4.5 Sustainability of Open Space

Providing sustainable open space is a key motivation to the development of this Strategy. The Planning and Design of Open Space along with the approach to its Management and Maintenance combine to determine the sustainability of its provision. The strategy details a wide range of initiatives aimed at enhancing the environmental and economic sustainability of our parks and open spaces.

These include the following actions:

**Action:** Implement Open Space maintenance hierarchy outlined in Part 3.2

**Action:** Update approach to Open Space layout and design as outlined in Part 3.3.

**Action:** Adopt and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) Best Practice Guidelines

**Action:** Comprehensively revise and update the Open Space Bye-laws as proposed in Part 3.8 of this Strategy

**Action:** Implement the draft Policy on Memorial Dedication of Benches and Trees in Open Spaces

**Action:** Improve Biodiversity in Parks and Open Spaces through a range of initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for wildlife.

## **4.6 Conservation of Open Space**

The historic significance and environmental sensitivity of Fingal's parks and open spaces is emphasised in this draft strategy document. Initiatives aimed at protecting these landscapes for current and future generations include the following actions:

**Action:** Prepare Conservation & Management Plans for all our major Public Demesnes and heritage landscapes used as public parks and open spaces. Further master-planning for these parks will take account of the objectives outlined in the relevant Conservation Plans.

**Action:** Implement the Open Space Strategy guidelines in relation to Archaeology on Open Space as outlined in Part 3 of this document



*Victorian Glasshouse Talbot Botanic Gardens*

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