

8.1 Staff

8.1.1 In 2004 the DLR Parks Service Staff Forum provided opportunity for discussion and consultation which created a greater level of understanding and trust between management and staff. It also enabled the Parks Team to adapt to the various changes, which have occurred over the years, including the use of contractors for some maintenance and specialist operations.

8.1.2 We are now seeking to put in place a plan for the future, which will ensure greater efficiency, while also rewarding the skills, initiative and training of our staff. As such, the objective is to create a highly skilled and flexible workforce.

8.1.3 Additional horticultural staff will be required to achieve the required standards of presentation and maintenance in the Flagship Parks. This may be achieved, in part, by up-skilling existing staff.

8.1.4 Three professional staff, who work with DLR Parks Services, received training and instruction in the software that was used for the quality audit in the summer of 2009. This will enable DLR Parks Services to programme the auditing of remaining open spaces – see item 9 in the Action Plan.

8.2 Revenue Budget

8.2.1 All sectors of the Public Service are under pressure to show greater economy and efficiency particularly during the current economic downturn. DLR Parks Service will seek to maintain and improve the quality standards it has achieved in the parks, historic houses, towns and villages. This will be the challenge in the short term. It can only be met by improved team-work and greater flexibility in our thinking and work practices.

8.3 Capital Budget

8.3.1 In the period 2004 to 2009 the Council's infrastructure development programme was instrumental in upgrading the flagship and Local Parks and developing playgrounds and other recreational facilities. Many of the fruits of this programme are being realised in 2010.



Local playground, Deerpark, Mount Merrion -funded under capital development programme

8.3.2 The planning which has been carried out on other projects will now facilitate the implementation a new infrastructure programme for the period 2010 - 2013 during which DLR will invest almost €13 million (Table 8.1, next page).

8.3.3 This programme will be directed at addressing the needs which have been identified in the Strategy.

Table 8.1 Capital Investment in parks and open space

| Capital Projects 2010 – 2013 | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Project | Estimated cost €euros |
| Kilbogget Pitch (Shrewsbury Lawn) | 452,000 |
| Stepaside Sports Facility (pitch only) | 1,200,000 |
| Cabinteely Park (Tearooms, toilets etc.) | 540,000 |
| Marlay Park | |
| Marlay Sports Facility | 6,250,000 |
| Golf Pavilion | 670,000 |
| Marlay House - heritage restoration | 350,000 |
| Conservatory extension (tea rooms) | 180,000 |
| Car Park extensions | 350,000 |
| Depot buildings repair | 200,000 |
| Urban Parks: | |
| Playgrounds | 240,000 |
| Clonkeen Park Feasibility Strategy | 250,000 |
| Local Park Upgrading | 300,000 |
| Hyde Park Upgrade | 475,000 |
| Recreational Facilities | |
| Kilbogget Boxing Club | 270,000 |
| Kilbogget All Weather Pitch | 550,000.00 |
| Tennis Facilities | 300,000.00 |
| Shanganagh Park (Tennis & Bowling) | 450,000.00 |
| TOTAL | €13,027,000 |

8.4 Community Engagement and Partnerships

8.4.1 Working in partnership with the Community is integral to the *modus operandi* of the Parks Services. It is our intention to develop this further to achieve our objectives within the Strategy's Action Plan (see Chapter 8).

8.4.2 Partnerships work at all levels. At the local level we engage with a wide range of community, volunteer and interest groups in the normal course of our operations.

8.4.3 The support we provide for residents associations, Tidy Towns associations and Estate Management Fora has improved the standard of presentation of our open spaces, village and town centres. This contributes to a 'sense of place' and in turn more sustainable communities. Some examples of this work are the 'Friends of Fitzsimons Wood', the rejuvenation of Loreto Park and the Dublin Mountains Partnership.

Fitzsimons Wood

8.4.4 Fitzsimons Wood occupies an area of 10 hectares (24.7 acres) between Blackglan Road and Kilcross Estate near Sandyford Village. It is particularly significant for its unique urban, semi-natural woodland on calcareous soils. The Wood is designated a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA).

8.4.5 In 2003 Parks Services commissioned an ecological study of the Wood and subsequently local communities were invited to set up a committee leading to 'The Friends of Fitzsimons Wood'. The 'Friends' group is comprised of local residents and representatives of An Taisce, National Parks & Wildlife Services and DLR. It meets a number of times a year with the objectives of:

- maintaining and enhancing the bio-diversity of the semi-natural habitats, especially semi-natural woodland, scrub and grassland
- maximizing the Wood's potential as an educational resource
- providing recreational access that is respectful of the Wood's ecological significance
- initiating further community-based studies of flora and fauna

8.4.6 Programmes were run in 2004 and 2005 to heighten local awareness of ecological value and conservation issues. During autumn 2005 Conservation Volunteers Ireland ran a '*Halloween Environmental Programme*' to minimise the traditional vandalism and burning. This was followed annually by workshops for children based at Kilcross Resource Centre. These events promote the Wood and reduce anti-social activities associated with Halloween. The workshops involve mask-making, bird boxes, singing, song-writing and other fun activities, using the materials from the Fitzsimons Wood.

8.4.7 In 2008 DLR received a grant under the Department of Agriculture's NeighbourWood Scheme. The grant funded a range of works - a path system, vegetation management (Gorse control, scrub clearance), native tree planting (2.5 ha. / 6.2 ac.) and deer fencing. These works proved very successful as a result of the work of the '*Friends*'. The amenity value of the Woodland has significantly improved, with incidents of dumping and vandalism much diminished.



Friends of Fitzsimons Wood



Learning about insects and other wildlife at local level

Loreto Park

8.4.8 Loreto Park is a local park of 8.5 hectares (21 acres) near Rathfarnham village. It is bounded by Nutgrove Way, Barton Road East Extension, Loreto Row, Nutgrove Avenue and the rear gardens of houses at Loreto estate. The houses on Nutgrove Avenue overlook the Park, providing limited passive surveillance. This was insufficient to curtail the Park's reputation for anti-social activities, such as the consumption of alcohol and drugs and the ensuing vandalism and littering.

8.4.9 In 2005/6 the Nutgrove & Loreto Community Association, with the assistance of the County Council, became proactive in addressing these issues. A parks committee was established and it organised the painting of walls by residents as soon as graffiti appeared. After some time the incidence of graffiti reduced to the extent that it no longer a serious problem. The Parks Service agreed to supply and install bins in the park on a trial basis. The committee also collect litter on a regular basis. The local community service the bins and leave rubbish for collection by Parks staff. This arrangement has been a major success, substantially reducing the amount of litter.

8.4.10 In response to residents' concerns, the Parks Service carried out a comprehensive range of improvement works within the park including:

- securing the boundary fence and access points
- removal of shrubbery that blocked visibility into the park
- installing additional footpaths in the park
- restoration of the dressing rooms
- fencing the pitches to prevent incursions during matches
- repairing the desire lines on the playing pitches

- improving and extending the playground to include an area for older children and teenagers

8.4.11 The Community Association was supplied with climbing and other plants which it planted to combat graffiti resulting in a complete and lasting facelift. All these works were discussed and agreed in advance with the Association as part of an overall vision for restoring the park as a positive amenity and as a means of reviving a sense of pride in the neighbourhood.

8.4.12 There have been ongoing problems with anti-social behaviour which are being continuously addressed by the Gardaí. The Parks Committee now have keys to lock the main gate in the park in the evening which has curtailed the amount of anti-social behaviour taking place.

8.4.13 The Nutgrove & Loreto Community Association host a meeting with the Gardaí and Parks staff and Community Officer at least once per year where all issues are discussed and future initiatives are tabled and discussed. Through the combined efforts of all the parties involved Loreto Park is a much safer, better used and appreciated local amenity. There are still anti-social issues and incidents of vandalism on occasion but the park has been transformed and represents an excellent example of successful community engagement, which has secured very positive results.

The Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP)¹²

8.4.14 The Dublin Mountains are an important recreational resource for young and old. The Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) is a joint project between DLR, Coillte, South Dublin County Council, Dublin City Council, Dublin Mountains Initiative (a voluntary outdoor recreation umbrella group)

¹² See www.dublinmountains.ie

and the Office of Public Works based on a sustainable approach to recreation in the Dublin uplands.

8.4.15 The DMP provides a process for partners to agree funding and resources to underpin their work of developing an integrated plan for the uplands that links existing and potential outdoor recreation lands, in particular forests and other public and state-owned lands. The ultimate aim of the plan is to improve the recreational experience for users of the Dublin Mountains.



Notice board at Barnaslingan Wood, The Scalp, Ballycorus

8.4.16 A Recreation Manager was appointed in January 2010 and work has commenced on a range of other initiatives including the provision of new and upgraded trails, improved signage (see above) and the preparation of a dedicated, up-to-date DMP map.

8.4.17 A key flagship project is the establishment of a long distance trail, the Dublin Mountains Way (DMW), across the mountains from Shankill in the

east to Tallaght (Sean Walsh Park) in the west, approximately 43 kilometres (26.2 mls.) long (see Map 10). The DMW has been an objective of the local authorities for close to twenty years and with the formation of the partnership it has been realised. The DMW was officially opened on the 31 October 2010.

8.5 Action Plan

The Action Plan covers the period 2011 – 2015 and will be the guiding reference for the DLR's actions in the planning, development and management of open spaces in the county.

8.5.1 Corporate Context

The Action Plan has been formulated to address the findings of the audit and assessment strands of this Strategy. It is designed to meet the corporate objectives set out in DLR's Corporate Plan (2010-2014).

(Obj.1) Staff Development

To lead and develop staff so as to fulfil their potential and contribute to the development of the Council in a changing environment.

(Obj.2) Quality of life

To promote an environment that enhances the quality of life for all, including the conservation of our built and natural heritage.

(Obj.3) Sustainable Development

To facilitate the planning, development and maintenance of infrastructure, which meets the current and future needs of the county.

(Obj.4) Citizen Engagement

To seek greater connection between local government and local people.

(Obj.5) Social Inclusion

To facilitate social inclusion through programmes and actions that reflect our diversity and improves access for all.

(Obj. 6) Elected Members

To support Elected Members in their leadership and representative role.

(Obj. 7) Customer Service & Communications

To provide services and communications, which are responsive to the needs of customers.

(Obj. 8) Economic, Social and Community Development

To collaborate with partners across all relevant sectors to facilitate economic, social and community development in the county.

(Obj. 9) Sense of Place

To develop high quality sustainable places in which people will want to live, work, relax and enjoy a range of diverse arts and cultural activities.

(Obj. 10) Use of Resources

To use available resources effectively and efficiently in accordance with national, regional and local policies and guidelines in order to minimise the burden on taxpayers and ratepayers and the charges imposed by the Council for services.

(Obj. 11) Governance

To enhance systems and procedures that minimise risks to the organisation at a strategic, operational, financial and reputational level.

8.5.2 Review

The Action Plan along with the Strategy's recommendations will be reviewed in the context of the departmental business plan and in particular with regard

to the Annual Operations Plans and the Capital Levies Scheme (2010 - 2014).

The overall Strategy itself has a life-span of 4 years. It is envisaged that a full review of the Strategy, including an assessment of progress will be programmed for 2015 with the next full review of the current County Development Plan (2010-2016).

The 13-point Action Plan is set out in the following table.

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Action Plan 2011 - 2015

| Action No. | Actions | Outcomes | Corporate Objectives | Responsibility |
|------------|--|--|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Deliver a programme of improvements to flagship and Local Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improved accessibility and open spaces and recreational facilities of a higher quality | Obj. 1, 2, 3, 9 | Parks Service Heritage Service |
| 2 | Address deficiencies identified in the Strategy and update the current Play Policy (2003) to take account of the findings of this Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ larger number of play areas appropriate to local needs ▪ all new play areas are compliant with RoSPA's (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) safety and quality standards | Obj. 1, 2 | Parks Service Community Development |
| 3 | Investigate the potential for volunteering in the conservation, monitoring, management and interpretation of open spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increased participation by local communities | Obj. 4, 5 | Parks Service Heritage Service County Development Board |
| 4 | Develop local quality standards and performance indicators, derived and adapted from best practice, appropriate and relevant to DLR's open space network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ high quality open spaces in compliance with best practice standards, as appropriate to each type of space in the hierarchy | Obj. 1, 2, 9, 10 | Parks Service |
| 5 | Develop and implement management plans for all Flagship and Major Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ implementation of sustainable management regimes | Obj. 1, 9, 10 | Parks Service Water & Waste Services Heritage Service |

| Action No. | Actions | Outcomes | Corporate Objectives | Responsibility |
|------------|---|--|---------------------------|--|
| 6 | Prepare an Outdoor Sports Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clarity on any deficiencies in facilities for all sports ▪ high quality playing pitches and facilities ▪ increased participation in healthy lifestyles | Obj. 2,4 8, 10 | Parks Service Sports Partnership Sports Officer |
| 7 | Implement the policies contained in the DLR Parks Services' <i>'Parklife'</i> Biodiversity Policy (2010) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ protection of biodiversity and enhancement of habitat diversity | Obj. 1, 4, 7, 8, 9,10 | Parks Service Heritage Service |
| 8 | Increase provision of allotments and identify opportunities for community gardens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ greater community cohesion and healthier life styles | Obj. 3, 4, 5 | Parks Service Community Development County Development Board |
| 9 | Increase the range of skills within the workforce through the staff forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a confident workforce capable of adding value to the presentation and sustainability of parks | Obj. 7, 8 | Parks Service |
| 10 | Developing a Dog Management Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deterrents to use minimised or removed ▪ increased and enjoyable, safe use of the open space network | Obj. 1, 8, 9 | Parks Service Environmental Services |
| 11 | Develop the preliminary Strategic Greenways Plan to achieve a phased implementation programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increased numbers of cyclists and walkers connecting to and using the open space network | Obj. 1, 2, 4,9 | Parks Service Transportation, Planning |
| 12 | Develop a local horticultural events programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increased and improved engagement with local communities and users of open spaces | Obj. 4, 8 | Parks Service DLR Events Environmental Awareness Officer |
| 13 | Use the Open Space Strategy as a baseline for the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the county | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ scoping information for the Green Infrastructure Strategy | Obj.2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11 | Parks Service Water and Waste Services Transportation, Planning |