



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Report to Arts, Culture, Leisure
and Recreation SPC

29th June 2020
Item No. 6

PARKS, BIODIVERSITY & LANDSCAPE SERVICES UPDATE REPORT

Report on Response to Covid 19 event:

Parks throughout the City remained open during the Covid event and even with reduced staff the parks have never looked better or been in so much demand. This is all down to the commitment and dedication of Parks Staff who have worked tirelessly throughout to keep up the standard in all our Parks.

Changes to work practices were introduced with staff operating in Pods, staggered start/finish times to maintain social distancing and to reduce the risk of any transmission. Additional PPE was purchased and all staff were supplied with individual bottles of hand sanitizer for their own personal use.

Staff adjusted to the new working arrangements very quickly and new Health & Safety measures were put in place to protect staff including regular cleaning of depot offices, canteens and toilet facilities as well as installing screens in vans to allow for two staff members to be in a vehicle at the same time.

The care, attention and cooperation of staff with these measures was successful as there was only one reported case of covid infection in the 190 staff involved in Parks operations.

In the Civic Offices, Parks staff who have been able to work remotely have done so with a roster in place for the administration team who have been able to attend socially distanced. All aspects of work from operations, administration, project design/management and forward planning have been able to continue their works programmes.

The Pandemic highlighted more than ever the importance of parks to local communities and their role in the mental health and wellbeing of our City.

One of our most difficult challenges was in the centre of the City where there is a high percentage of apartments, the highest population density and the lowest provision of greenspace. Parks were extremely busy. This was particularly so because of the fine weather and at weekends the gardai had to temporarily close some city centre parks because of the number of people who wanted to get out of their homes to walk and exercise. Signs were placed at the entrances to all parks to promote social distancing and there has been close liaison with the Gardai to monitor the situation.

Coastal areas, Dollymount, Clontarf and Sandymount were also very busy and there were huge amounts of waste collected from Parks bins and litter collections.

One of the legacies from the event has been the allocation of car parking spaces on the Causeway road to the North Bull Island Nature reserve and Dollymount beach which is being converted to a shared 1.2km pedestrian/cycleway.

While Parks facilities such as tearooms, tennis courts, playgrounds, outdoor gyms, skateparks, all weather pitches are gradually coming back into operation the public toilets and markets are not yet operational, however plans are in preparation.

Dublin City Council Parks Service's initiatives to promote nature in the city.

In the period of the current Biodiversity Action Plan (2015-2020), Dublin City Council has implemented a number of actions and initiatives to support nature in the city. This has seen the gradual 'wilding' of former mono-culture amenity grassland in its parks, open spaces, roadside verges and graveyards to allow wild flowers, which in the past have been considered weeds, to flower and seed. Mowing regimes in peripheral areas of parks and on verges have been adjusted to allow the grasses and suppressed wildflower species such as clover and dandelion to grow and provide habitat and food for insects and pollinators.

This wilding policy has coincided with the elimination of the use of the chemical glyphosate as a herbicide and in fact the Parks Service has significantly reduced its use of all such chemicals over the last three to four years. Many parks and all playgrounds are now chemical free. Alternative methodologies for weed control using manual methods, electric trimmers, heavy mulching and plant-based products for spraying including concentrations of vinegar are being trialled.

The reduced frequency of mowing in many areas has been supplemented by the mass planting of bulbs to take areas out of the mowing cycle for a number of months. These bulb mixes which are evident at the moment include muscari, gladiolus, camassia, tulips and allium as well as daffodils which herald the coming of spring. These combinations of bulbs flower well into May and are cut back mid to late June. We are trialling various wildflower seed mixes which will last well into autumn and would require cutting only once a year.

Together with the planting of perennial pollinator-friendly plants in ornamental schemes, it is expected in 2020 that over 80% of planting schemes by Dublin City Council will be suitable for pollinators.

The support of local people is critical in this journey as the traditional scorched earth policy of eliminating every 'weed' must change. Although aesthetically this mean that 'weeds' will be more evident, wild flowers are an essential food source for bees and many insects which in turn feed into a wider ecosystem.

To promote this positive change the staff of Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services have been working with local community and Tidy Towns groups to improve greenspaces for pollinators, to plant trees across the city and to implement greening strategies in those parts of the city which traditionally had a deficit of green infrastructure, and several of these projects are seeing practical results.

North East Inner City Greening Strategy

Dublin's North East Inner City (NEIC) has significant social and economic challenges which both the Government and Dublin City Council have set out to address as part of a multi-annual programme of improvements. The NEIC Greening Strategy is one of these initiatives.

The lack of trees and greenspace is one of the challenges for people living in one of the most densely populated parts of the country. Green space, trees and access to nature reduce health inequalities, improve physical and mental well-being.

In a tree canopy survey carried out in 2017 it was found that there are just 1000 trees in the NEIC equating to a canopy cover of only 1% compared to the figure of 10.2% tree canopy coverage for the city as a whole.

A year on from the start of this greening strategy every opportunity is being considered including build-outs onto roads and the redesign of existing car parking layouts for the construction of tree pits (James Joyce Street), Green walls (Seville Place, Liberty House and St Patricks Parade), the refurbishment of central medians within carriageways to facilitate greening interventions (Drumcondra Rd Lower) and the retro-planting of existing plazas and public spaces like Store Street, Belvedere Place and Gloucester Place.

Over 200m of roadside hedgerows have been installed within the north east inner city to date.. Research has shown that roadside hedgerows are very effective at reducing pollution exposure, cutting black carbon by up to 63%”

The greening interventions so far have seen the removal of 830 sq. of hard surfaces, which allows for the re-establishment of the natural soil structure and its ecological and environmental functions. De-paving allows for the creation of open ground and under tree planting, creating street level habitats. An increase in the tree canopy cover and de-paving helps with the capture of rainfall and reduces surface water runoff which supports sustainable urban drainage.

Since this initiative began 80 street trees have been planted in the first year. Over 8 different species of trees were introduced as part of these projects such as the tried and tested Plane tree (Platanus) but also more unusual trees such as the Honey locust (Gleditsia), Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia), and The Pagoda Tree (Sophora), which are being trialled in response to the warmer climatic conditions which prevail in the City Centre.

Birch (Betula) was chosen as the predominant species for planting as the locations were within densely populated areas beside main traffic corridors. Evidence has stacked up for the ill effects of traffic fumes and minuscule particulates, with studies linking them to asthma, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, dementia and depression. Research has shown that Birch is the best performing species at removing air pollution, capturing up to 79% of ultra-fine particles from the air, dramatically increasing the air quality for the local community.

Street tree selection is very important to future proof the longevity of trees. The urban realm introduces a lot of stress factors, and the trees chosen need to be pollution tolerant, drought tolerant, capable of enduring occasional flooding, tolerant of paving and robust enough to withstand anti-social behaviour.”

One of the central tenets of the strategy is the importance of community engagement. In order for any recommendations to be fulfilled, it is essential to establish a consultative process that engages the community and gives them an ownership of decisions that are made toward the regeneration of their area. To date there has been a wide variety of engagement through

community workshops, stakeholder meetings and public engagement from senior citizens residential centres to primary schools, meetings in community centres, libraries, to open air meetings within parks.

The next phase of the NEIC Greening Strategy will see further community participation with volunteer groups, schools and local residents to facilitate and promote greening opportunities on an individual scale to develop and enhance private spaces.

The main parks in the area Mountjoy Square, Diamond Park, Liberty Park and Sheriff Street Park are also currently the subject of improvement plans.

The NEIC Greening Strategy and projects is an initiative by Dublin City Councils Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services and the NEIC Area Office. The NEIC Greening Strategy is one of a number of greening initiatives aimed at reducing the impacts of greenspace and tree canopy deficits, which were highlighted in the Dublin City Parks Strategy 2019.

These include the Liberties Greening Strategy (2015) and The Stoneybatter Greening Strategy for which the outcome of the public consultation will be published shortly.

Les Moore,
City Parks Superintendent
29th June 2020

SCULPTURE DUBLIN UPDATE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Sculpture Dublin aims to raise awareness of Dublin's sculptural heritage and to commission new sculptures in parks and public spaces city-wide. It is a Dublin City Council initiative, developed by Parks and Landscape Services and the City Arts Office and supported by the Hugh Lane Gallery and Visual Artists Ireland.

The idea originated with *Art in Parks* (2014), a guide to public sculpture sited in 22 Dublin City Council parks. *Art in Parks* acknowledges a wealth of sculpture in Dublin's parks and includes information on almost 40 works dating from the early 1900s and spanning 100 years.

The programme ambition is two-fold: to increase the visibility of public sculpture in Dublin, building public awareness and understanding of sculpture, and to commission exciting new works which enhance and draw attention to different locations and aspects of the city.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Stakeholder consultations were facilitated by DCC and Visual Artists Ireland in 2019 to forge a vision for the programme. The findings have informed key programme objectives:

- Programming – develop a programme of new commissions;
- Public Engagement – achieve a new public awareness of and interest in sculpture;
- Legacy – make sculpture central to the identity and experience of the city / make Dublin a destination city for sculpture.

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

Over 2 years, the programme will deliver a series of new public sculpture commissions, an extensive public engagement programme and communications campaign.

The programme is informed by DCC's *Policies and Strategies for Managing Public Art* and will support and adhere to the following DCC strategies and policies:

- *Dublin City Parks Strategy*
- *Dublin City Cultural Strategy and Arts Plan*
- *Dublin City Development Plan*
- *Your City Your Space Dublin City Public Realm Strategy and Masterplan*

The desired impact is a city where sculpture is part of everyday conversation, contributing to overall public confidence and pride of place. A range of stakeholders (arts, community, academia, city officials, business etc.) will have worked together to enhance the cultural life of the city. The programme will be realised through meaningful processes of consultation, selection and co-creation, ensuring that the city's sculptural offering will become a powerful cultural asset with significant local, national and international resonance and reach.

COMMISSIONS

One permanent sculpture will be commissioned for each of the DCC administrative areas as follows:

- South Central: Ballyfermot People's Park, Ballyfermot, Dublin
- Central: Smithfield Square Lower, Smithfield, Dublin
- South East: Bushy Park, Terenure, Dublin
- North West: Kildonan Park, Finglas, Dublin
- North Central: St Anne's Park, Raheny, Dublin

A temporary sculpture will be commissioned for the O'Connell Plinth – an empty plinth outside City Hall.

Selection of locations

A range of sites in each area were surveyed by the Sculpture Dublin team and Steering Group and assessed against the following criteria:

- Be in the public domain;
- Be visible to a broad and diverse general public;
- Be in the ownership of Dublin City Council;
- Be suitable for the best display of the sculpture;
- Give scope for artists to create a significant and noteworthy sculpture;
- Represent a deficit in the provision of public sculpture in the city i.e. there are no existing sculptures in the immediate surrounding area.

Reports have been submitted to the Local Area Committees, including potential sites in each area. Feedback from Local Councillors has been incorporated into the final assessment and selection of a location for each area by the Steering Group.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Public Consultation and Engagement Programme will consist of 2 strands:

- Local Engagement Programme (in 5 local areas, around the sites of commissioned works)
- General Engagement Programme (city-wide)

The Local Engagement Programme will include:

- Awareness-raising through stakeholder lists and programme publicity;
- Online consultation and facilitated public meetings;
- Artist's Cafes and Culture Clubs;
- Community Advocates programme;
- Schools programme;
- Talks programme for local libraries;
- Creative projects with community partners.

The General Engagement Programme will include:

- An inaugural Annual Sculpture Day in April designed to enable greater access to and engagement with public sculpture in the city and its cultural institutions;
- A city sculpture trail and guided tours;
- A public talks programme focused on historic and contemporary sculpture (various locations);
- Heritage and conservation schemes;
- Online information on the DCC public art collection and collections of public sculpture in Dublin;
- Online essays on public sculpture and commissioning of public art;
- Information on temporary exhibitions of sculpture in museums, galleries, college and studios through 2021;
- Public events surrounding the unveiling of commissioned works;

PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Sculpture Dublin is overseen by a Steering Group made up of representatives from Parks and Landscape Services, the Arts Office, the Hugh Lane Gallery, Visual Artists Ireland and an external expert on sculpture. It is an advisory, non-statutory body. Sculpture Dublin is managed by the Programme Director who reports to Parks and Landscape Services and the Steering Group.

A budget allocation of €1m (to include six new sculptural commissions, extensive public engagement and administration) has been agreed within the CRES Parks Capital Programme 2020-2022 for the delivery of the programme.

PUBLIC LAUNCH

The programme will be publicly launched at City Hall on 6 July. Full details of commissions, public consultation and engagement will be published on the programme website.

Les Moore,
City Parks Superintendent

Donncha Ó'Dúlaing
Senior Executive Officer

Ray Yeates
City Arts Officer

29th June 2020