

Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil: FIN-C453-1081

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Aighneacht:

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Comhairliúchán:

Draft Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029

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## Chapter 4: Community Infrastructure & Open Space

**Caibidil:** Section 1: Written Statement» Chapter 4: Community Infrastructure and Open Space

We welcome the focus within the plan on expanding community resources available to all and the provision of appropriate recreational, community, social and educational facilities for children, teens and young adults which is essential for a thriving community. The plan further aims to facilitate the development of new schools, the re-development of existing schools and extensions planned as part of the Government's School Building Programme. These would be very positive and necessary developments for the communities of Fingal and we further strongly recommend that **any new community facilities and schools, or the re-development of existing facilities and school, prioritise the provision of access to unstructured play in nature to promote physical and emotional development as well as allowing people of all ages to (re)connect with nature**. Many schools and community centres around the country provide excellent examples of this which allow students of schools or patrons of community initiatives to grow food, learn about biodiversity in a real-life setting and work together to protect natural habitats and wildlife. This must be built into the design of infrastructure rather than something that is external to facilities that are predominantly concrete, sterile and unnatural.

We further welcome that the plan will ensure that the design of schools and other educational centres take account sustainable building practices, water and energy conservation as well as air quality and climate change. This will further **allow for educational opportunities within schools and help in curriculum reform which allows young people to learn about sustainable design and living**. The requirement for new schools to be designed in accordance with "School Streets" principles will also provide **excellent learning opportunities for students regarding climate action in practice** and should be strongly supported. These learning opportunities will be further supported by the proposed provisions of a wide variety of resiliently designed, sustainably managed and accessible public open spaces, including allotments, community gardens, parklands and sporting facilities, on a hierarchical basis throughout the County, most of which should **ideally be accessible for schools for nature-based learning**

There are huge opportunities in Fingal to use public lands, and promote government biodiversity schemes on private lands, to restore appropriate habitats in the county particularly woodlands (including agroforestry), wetlands, grasslands and hedgerows. **Tree planting should be carried out with the aim of restoring functioning woodland ecosystems**, an opportunity often lost by open parkland tree-planting. In all cases lands will have their past land-use histories to take into account in determining the most appropriate restoration objective.

When it comes to open space, the plan often refers to 'biodiversity areas', with the sense that these are to be separate zones. While, as described above, these are essential to begin to restore nature in our county, the opportunities to embed biodiversity in all areas of open-space development should not be lost e.g. landscaping, soil health, green roofs/walls, SUDS, soil banks, natural materials, integrated or artificial habitats. While some of these are mentioned in other parts of the plan, **an open space objective that clearly seeks to integrate biodiversity in all use-areas and sets targets for same** would be welcome.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl