**Submission by Cllr Ann Graves**

I welcome the draft tree strategy, which is a comprehensive document. We have for too long taken our trees, woods and forests for granted – disregarding them to ‘progress’.

There is no doubting the value of trees for our well being, for the good of the environment and for biodiversity. The supporting evidence relating to the impact on behaviours in reduced criminal behaviour is very pertinent moving forward. Education is a key factor and interaction with schools in Fingal not only on trees but their involvement in planting programmes – perhaps encouraging schools to adopt an area in public parks for tree planting and maintenance.

While a diversity of tree types is important for Fingal and the inclusion of non native trees welcome, each area should be considered and particularly the impact of non native trees on our native trees. Our native trees are suited in our native climate - insects, birds & mammals are also found to live in and around our native trees more so than any other tree. The Oak alone has 285 different speices of insect living off it. Therefore we can see the importance of maintaining and protecting these national treasures which include oak, ash, hazel, birch, Scots pine, rowan and willow

We need to look at alternatives in relation to removing healthy trees – where they are impacting on street lighting, can alternative lighting be considered or existing lights moved? Trees removed from streets should be replaced with more suitable trees close by.

Any plans to remove trees from housing estates should be agreed in consultation with residents in the area who will be affected with a run in time for them to consider in detail. These decisions should only be made on foot of agreed criteria – and in an open and transparent manner.

FCC needs to address the issue of trip hazards and pavements lifting caused by tree roots, this is an issue in a lot of mature estates and including main streets in our towns. FCC also needs to reconsider its policy on tree pruning, which in many cases will address the need to remove healthy trees. In many instances mature trees have simply grown too high for the estates in which they were planted. It would be preferable to invest in maintenance rather than removal.

I welcome the approach of FCC in liaising with relevant stakeholder groups including residents and community groups. The targeted strategic annual tree planting is also welcome and particularly availing of funding opportunities to progress.

We are lucky in Fingal to be surrounded by large areas of parks, but new developments and replacing lost green areas should be a priority for us all.