



Forest of Fingal

A Tree Strategy for Fingal

The following is a Draft Document and is subject to change following a process of Non-statutory Public Consultation.



Foreword

The revision of Fingal County Council's Tree Strategy '*Forest of Fingal*', is an indication of the Council's continued commitment to looking after one of its most important natural resources and assets, its trees. Fingal County Council manages approximately 2,000 Hectares of Public Open Space and many public parks in the county have significant stands of woodland framing important and often iconic landscapes. Fingal also has approximately 70,000 street trees most of which are maintained by the local authority. The Council recognises how significant urban trees, parkland trees and green space have helped to shape the landscape of towns and villages across the county. Even in the harsh urban environment, many trees will live for a long time, given enough space, care and attention. Our current streetscapes host quite a diverse range of street trees from London Planes to Cherry Blossoms and Lime Trees. Trees represent fundamental elements of green infrastructure across the county in both urban and rural environments. The *Forest of Fingal* Tree strategy aims to ensure that the economic, social and environmental benefits trees provide today will continue and increase for generations to come.

The '*Forest of Fingal*' encapsulates the planning, establishment, protection and management of trees and associated plants, individually, small groups, or under forest conditions within towns, villages, suburbs and rural areas within the County.

The '*Forest of Fingal*' is aligned with our Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024:

Vision: Fingal - a great place to live, work, visit and do business

Mission: To be a vibrant, outward looking, well run Council that shows leadership and embraces diversity and opportunity

The Strategy outlines the Council's position regarding the ongoing maintenance, renewal and management of trees to improve upon our Corporate Plan objectives –

- Quality of Life
- Quality and Climate Resilient Environment
- Quality Business Environment
- Quality in Our Work

This document has also been prepared in the context of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024, Biodiversity Action Plan and Open Space Strategy. Trees enhance our citizens' quality of life and will help to secure a future of sustainability in Fingal.

Ten years have passed since the adoption of the first Fingal Tree Strategy which at the time was the first of its kind in Ireland. The primary focus of that document was aimed at addressing the 'wrong tree – wrong place', related issues that required solving. Its implementation on the ground has been a success, with a significant reduction in all tree related incidents, complaints and requests.

Foreword

In the intervening time however, the approach to urban tree management has significantly evolved, to the point that it is necessary to update the Tree Strategy. As environmental awareness improves, more and more of us are conscious that the importance of our trees greatly outweighs their negative aspects. Besides their visual amenity value, trees help remove pollutants from our air and water, provide us with oxygen, reduce flooding and erosion as well as making a huge contribution to wildlife, biodiversity and climate change.

The scope of the revised strategy applies to all trees, woodlands and hedgerows within the public realm of the county, as well as seeking to influence and support tree planting and management of trees on privately owned land including farmland and gardens.

This strategy aims to use every opportunity to continually develop a thriving, diverse and sustainable tree population in line with the county's fast paced urbanisation.

The aims set out in this document can be reached through implementing sensible policies, robust guidelines, sound management approaches and by setting realistic targets, while continually searching for new ways to improve the delivery of a thriving tree population for the lifetime of 'Forest of Fingal 2021 - 2031' and beyond.

"To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, and to live as people, we must have trees."

Theodore Roosevelt

The Forest of Fingal Tree Strategy Vision Statement



'To protect and enhance Fingal's trees, to maximise both the benefits they offer and the character they bring to the county, to ensure a greener and healthier Fingal for now and future generations'



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Part 1

Setting the Scene

Introduction, vision, scope, purpose and context

*'Three hundred years growing,
three hundred years standing, three
hundred years decaying'*

*Peter Collinson (1776) on the life cycle of English
Oak and Sweet Chestnut*

Part 1 Setting the Scene

1.1 Introduction - Why do we need a tree strategy?

The purpose of this document is to define the appropriate strategy for the sustainable management of trees in Fingal over the next ten years 2021 - 2030.

Fingal is continually changing and will continue to need to accommodate growth. New development needs to provide people with a high-quality environment as well as one that adapts to and mitigates the effects of climate change and enhances our landscape and its biodiversity.

Trees in Fingal provide a positive impact, particularly on the environment and in climate change mitigation, greenhouse gas emissions and in enhancing the county's green urban infrastructure.

The delivery of a higher level of tree canopy cover will enhance and improve the quality of our public streets, open spaces, parklands and waterways of Fingal, improving the county's health, welfare and development, a county that delights the senses. Fingal County Council has a duty of care and responsibility for the management and maintenance for trees in the public realm – streets, parklands, open spaces and woodland demesnes. The estimated numbers are 70,000 publicly owned or managed trees, and approximately 400 hectares of public woodland, these numbers also increase

annually as the Council takes ownership and charge of additional lands. Trees and woodlands are living and everchanging features integrated throughout both the urban landscape and urban life. They impart a unique range of environmental, social and economic benefits, and have specific requirements regarding their management and care. This is the reason why the overall tree and woodland resource merits its own specific strategy. The following is the vision for The Fingal Tree Strategy.

1.11 An Historical Perspective

Fingal has a rich history associated with trees and woodland. The origin of many place names is evidence of the prominence of trees and woodlands in the County and their value from earliest times. The following are some interesting examples that illustrate this close association.

- The name Ardgillan is derived from the Irish Ard Choill, meaning high wood.
- The townland names of Hazelwood and Beechwood In Portmarnock relate to local historic houses.
- In Swords, the townlands of Forest Great, Forest Little and Forestfields refer to the fact that there was once a large forest to the southwest of Swords.
- Skidoo, a townland north of Swords which comes from *Sceach Dubh* or 'Black Bush'.
- Kilsallaghan, a townland near Swords which comes from *Coill Shalchán* or 'Willow wood'.

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- In Lusk, Bridetree is a townland south of the village which refers to the fact that there was a tree associated with a holy well dedicated to Saint Brigid.
- The townland of Rush Demesne used to be known in medieval times as Kenure, which comes from *Cionn Iúir* or 'Headland of the Yew'.
- In Dublin 15, the name Clonsilla comes from *Cluain Saileach* which means the 'Meadow of Willows'. There used to be 'Sally Gardens' along the River Road which locals used to make baskets for selling in Dublin.
- Much of the present-day Blanchardstown was once covered by a huge oak forest called the Scaldwood.

1.12 The Role of the Strategy

A Tree Strategy provides a framework for the management of the local tree population to achieve agreed aims and objectives. It helps put trees on equal footing with other types of infrastructure when it comes to decision making. It also provides a clear statement of Fingal's overall tree policies and practices. It is envisaged that the eventual launch and success of the strategy will lead to increased funding in future budgets for the entire tree population in order to manage in terms of maintenance, planting, planning and safety management in a coherent and structured approach. Caring for our trees requires careful management and joint work by landowners, local authorities and other stakeholders. The strategy shall be a one stop

shop point of reference for audiences such as elected members, staff, public, developers, and designers.

It is to be used as a framework for all stakeholders who have a role to play in protecting and increasing tree cover across Fingal. It addresses how we will enhance the benefits trees can give and how challenges can be met, delivering a tree population that will benefit all people who visit, work and live here. Different services may provide for tree provision across the Council's different land use forms over a wide variety of capital projects. To ensure appropriate delivery there must be a coherent approach, this is also the role of this strategy. This approach will reduce future potential maintenance and liability issues. There is also the opportunity to recognise the planting potential inherent in any given site.

1.13 The Scope of The Strategy

Every part of Fingal contributes to our urban forest as a whole; gardens, schools, business and sports campuses, industry, local communities etc., in fact nearly 60% of the tree canopy cover within urban Fingal is within private lands (Dublin Tree Canopy Study, March 2017). It is therefore prudent that the Council will encourage the continued planting of trees on private lands through working with community and residents' groups, and the provision of information and advice.

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Where possible, tools such as TPOs (Tree Preservation Orders), planning control and legislation shall also be used to influence the protection and retention of important trees and vegetation on private lands. However, *Forest of Fingal* primarily covers all trees, woodlands, and hedgerows within the public realm of the County for which the Council is solely responsible, with the main focus being urban Fingal, where the ecosystem services and public good of trees is most needed.

1.14 Tree Strategy Structure:

Forest of Fingal proposes a series of 12 Policies, these are referenced throughout the document as well as Appendix I.

The Tree Strategy Vision outlined above is supported by a range of Guiding Principles, Aims, Objectives and finally Actions which give effect to the Strategy. The diagram below illustrates the relationship between these elements of the Strategy.



Policy Statements

A series of 12 Statements are outlined throughout the text of the document as well as Appendix I

Part 1 Setting the Scene

The diagram below illustrates the main elements of the Strategy which require consideration in the context of the non-statutory public consultation process.



* Full list of Actions are included in Part 5 of this document

Part 1 Setting the Scene

1.15 Guiding Principles and Values

There is a wealth of information and knowledge today informing how trees contribute positively in providing a resilient future. The approach of the Strategy is derived from the following underpinning values in which trees have a direct impact.

Trees Improve our Health, Wellbeing and Quality of Life

Trees and a connection to nature enhance the lives of the many residents, workers and visitors of Fingal and will continue to do so in terms of both physical and mental health. Studies show that spending as little as 2 hours per week in nature including trees is associated with good health and wellbeing (White et al., 2019).

Trees for Climate Action

Trees, forests and woodlands play a large role of the global solution in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. (See 2.3)

Trees for a Sustainable and Resilient Fingal

Ireland's cities and infrastructure are vulnerable to Climate Change, the contribution of trees as part of Green Urban Infrastructure and nature-based solutions is vital in adapting to the effects of Climate Change. The intrinsic value trees have in terms of these qualities can help to play a fundamental role for a resilient county going forward.

Trees for the Environment & Biodiversity

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows provide an invaluable habitat for biodiversity. Urban trees are vitally important for nature. They may act as the only link to habitats beyond the urban boundaries and provide food and shelter for wildlife within the urban forest such as birds, bats, and many important insects like bees and other pollinators.

High Quality Tree Provision

The ten-year approach to this Strategy will lean largely on how this very important Principle is followed. Quality is to take the driving seat in guiding decisions, due to the intrinsic value of trees, they increase the quality of any environment, particularly urban streets and public open spaces where other Green Infrastructure opportunities and elements may be lacking.

Quality in terms of planning, selection, planting and aftercare will take priority over the quantity of trees planted in a given area, or time period.

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'It is the policy of the Council to ensure all development is of a high quality design and promotes the achievement of accessible, safe and sustainable built and natural environments, which reflect the special character and heritage of the County and its varied townscapes and landscapes'

FCC Development Plan 2017 – 2023

Right tree right place

This is possibly the most important Principle in the approach to the lifetime of the strategy, careful selection and planning will go into species selection for a given location, always keeping in mind where trees will grow to their full potential, providing maximum benefits and at the same time avoid future conflict.

Best Practice

Throughout the implementation of this strategy and for its lifetime, the Council will ensure that the best practice will be at the fore in all deliverables from planning, selection, planting to aftercare, ensuring a tree population that not merely survives, but thrives.

Green Equity

The Council understands that every neighbourhood and community in Fingal is entitled to the access and use of green spaces, trees and nature in their environment regardless of address. The Council will seek to continually improve on tree provision in this regard. Trees are not a luxury, but a vital element of urban infrastructure and an environmental asset for public good.

Collective Action

If everybody planted one tree in their garden or land, this would go a long way towards achieving our vision of increasing the Forest of Fingal and securing its future. Over the lifetime of the strategy, the Council will continue to encourage, support and promote private tree planting initiatives.

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Conclusion

Trees provide a direct link to our past and are fundamental to our future. Provision and care for the County's trees will be given so that the County is in a better state for when it is handed over to future generations. According to Census 2016, Fingal has the youngest population in the country with more than one in four under the age of 15 and an average age of 34, a high quality and renewable tree population will go a long way towards achieving a long lived, thriving tree population. To plant the right tree in the right place will allow new trees to thrive, not merely survive and grow to their full potential. The fulfilment of this strategy will provide Fingal with a thriving and well managed urban forest resource.

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

Greek Proverb





Part 1 Setting the Scene

1.2 Tree Policies and Guidance

1.21 Global Context: Policy decisions taken at a global level can have significant implications for what we do locally

Paris Climate Change Agreement

Members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change signed the Paris Agreement in 2016, its central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global average temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

It is estimated that Nature Based Solutions can provide up to one-third of the emissions reductions required by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement targets and must be in conjunction with decarbonisation of key industry sectors. Increased tree planting represent an excellent and practical example of a Nature Based Solution which will contribute to this process.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States including Ireland in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.

The goals are voluntary and address the global challenges we face, including those related to inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. With less than ten years until the target date of 2030, the benefits trees provide can play a key role in meeting and endorsing these goals, as a nature-based solution to climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and much more. The implementation of the Fingal Tree Strategy can make a positive contribution to the fulfilment of the following Sustainable Development Goals:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Goal 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

15 LIFE ON LAND



Goal 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

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For further information on how a thriving tree population can help to deliver these goals and more, see Part II of this document, Value of Trees.

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 report 'Our Common Future' defines sustainable development as:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

1.22 European Union Policies

The following EU policies are relevant in the context of this Tree Strategy:

EU Clean Air Policy

Ireland is implementing the EU Clean Air Package containing a suite of policies and legislative proposals and trees are part of the solution to clean air, particularly in urban environments.

EU Habitats Directive ensures the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species. Some 200 rare and characteristic habitat types are also targeted for conservation.

EU Plant Health Directive

In acting to control plant diseases, Ireland like all other EU Member States must comply with EU plant health legislation.

1.23 National Legislation and Guidance

The information provided below is intended as a guide and does not constitute legal advice.

The Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended 2000)

is the principle legislation protecting nesting birds in Ireland. The Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird and to take, damage or destroy any nest that is either in use or being built. In general terms, bird nesting in Ireland can be expected to take place between March 1st and August 31st.



The Council will carry out tree pruning and felling outside of the nesting period as far as reasonably practicable. An example of an exception to this would be on the grounds of health and safety concerns.

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Forestry Act 2014 – Tree Felling Licence granted by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine provides authority under the Forestry Act 2014 to fell or otherwise remove a tree or trees and to thin a forest for silvicultural reasons.

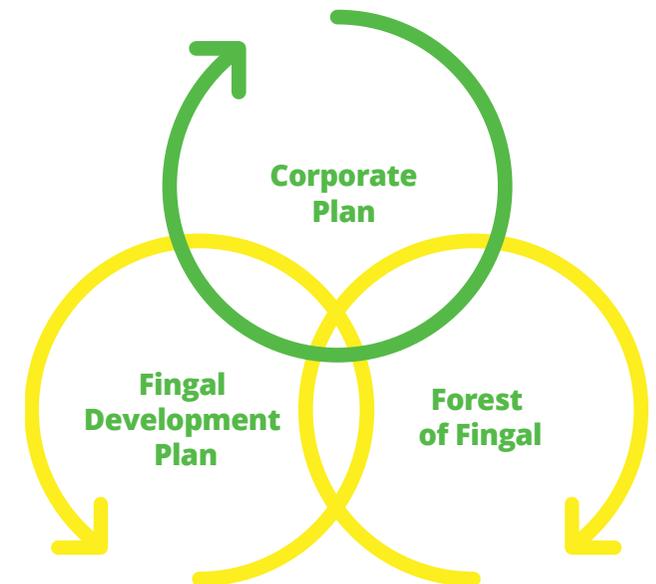
The Planning & Development Acts 2000 to 2011 - local authorities have a mandatory responsibility to include objectives in their Development Plans relating to the preserving of amenities such as trees. This empowers the planning authority to make provision for tree preservation by establishing a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). No tree covered by a TPO may be felled, topped, lopped or destroyed without the consent of the planning authority.

Occupier's Liability Act 1995 – As landowners, the Council is responsible for the safety and maintenance of trees on Public land. This is also true for private tree owners and trees within their ownership.

1.24 Local Tree Related Policies

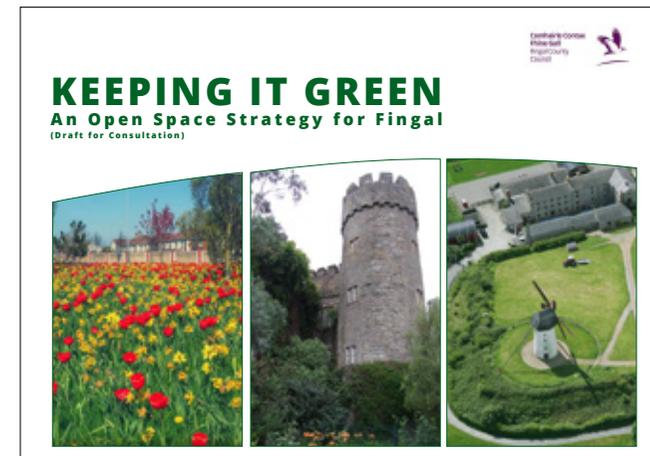
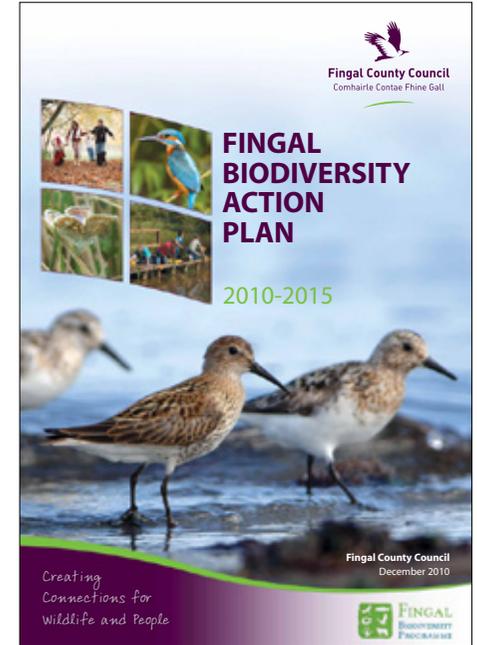
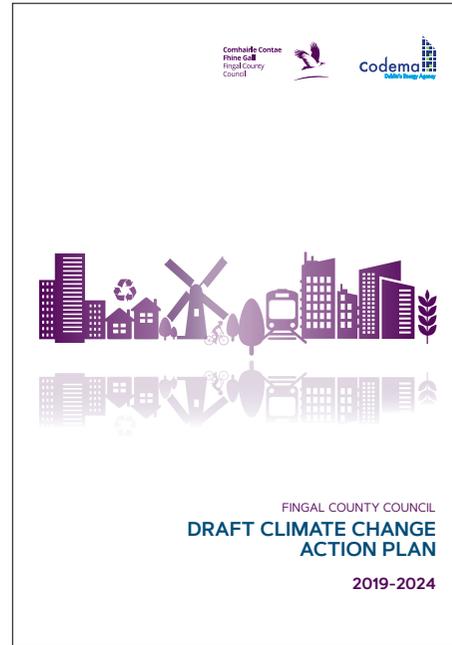
Forest of Fingal is a strategic document aimed at supporting a range of initiatives such as tackling Climate Change, boosting biodiversity and enhancing quality of life for residents, workers and visitors of the County. These Local Policies include:

- **Corporate Plan 2019-2023**
- **Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023**
- **Keeping it Green – An Open Space Strategy for Fingal**
- **Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024**
- **Biodiversity Action Plan**



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Part 1 Setting the Scene

1.3 Tree Related Issues, Challenges and Opportunities



Low Tree Canopy Cover



Climate Change



Pests and Diseases



Increasing Population and Urbanisation Pressures

While trees enhance the urban environment, the growing conditions are often hostile to good tree growth. Our trees face challenges from the day they are planted, through their establishment to growth and maturity. Many factors threaten not only the tree's survival but its ability to reach its full potential and deliver its many benefits. To achieve the aims of this Strategy the current and future distribution, health and suitability of our tree stock will be considered and managed. The following section discusses the main threats to all trees within Fingal, both public and private.

1.31 Climate Change

Climate Change is likely impact our trees and woodlands due to predicted increases in extreme weather such as high winds, heavy rainfall and periods of drought. These effects will probably be seen in declining tree health in some species or increased difficulty establishing young trees. As Climate Change progresses, some mature trees will

be lost through both direct causes such as windthrow due to gales or indirectly as weather conditions make them more stressed and thereby decreasing their tolerance to pests and diseases. Other factors such as increased winter rainfall may lead to water logging, which can affect tree roots and stability. If our woodlands are affected, this has a knock-on effect upon the plants and animals which are found there.

1.32 Pests and Diseases

Various insects and diseases can affect trees, reducing both their health and value, and therefore the sustainability of our trees. As most pests generally tend to have a specific range of tree hosts, the potential damage that can be caused by each pest will differ. A strong diversity of tree species is therefore prudent to reduce risk to our trees' health and possible loss posed by pests and diseases. Present in Fingal at the time of writing is Ash dieback, *Chalara fraxinea*, which affects and poses a serious threat to

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this native species. Ash trees are a prominent feature in woodlands, hedgerows, and parklands nationwide. In terms of planting, careful selection of tree stock from reputable suppliers is also key in lowering the risk.

Climate Change increases the range and threat of pests and diseases and the trees susceptibility. Early detection, vigilance and raising awareness is a prudent approach.

	Policy 2
The Council will review and implement biosecurity measures and protocols to keep tree pests and diseases under control within Fingal.	

1.33 Development

Changes of land use and development can put severe pressure on trees. Demolition and construction can damage trees in a variety of ways. This may be through direct loss to make way for the development, a reduction in space for retained trees' future growth and spread, direct damage due to compaction of soil, severing roots or branches or from spill of chemicals or fire. Infrastructure and service installation can also be damaging due to open trenching. For new trees, the presence of pre-existing or new utility

provision must be carefully considered if future conflict is to be avoided.

The Council considers tree planting an integral part of urban design and requires that substantial tree pit provision be given equal consideration to other infrastructure.

1.34 Damage and Vandalism

Damage to trees, both deliberate and through lack of knowledge is common. Criminal damage includes cutting down or lopping/topping, snapping saplings, setting fires beneath trees and various other attempts to kill Council trees. Some damage to trees is through lack of understanding for what is appropriate for example by failing to maintain trees or leaving on stakes, ties metal grilles etc. or through the fixing of decorative lights which are not loosened on a regular basis. Damage related to highway use and maintenance causes compaction of rooting areas, branches can be torn branches by high vehicles, the installation of driveways cutting across verges or through contamination from salt in grit or hydrocarbons. Enforcement action will be taken against anyone who damages Council trees as a measure of protection.

1.35 Resources / Budget

A dedicated annual tree management budget is lacking, and an action of this strategy is to seek the specific provision of this resource.

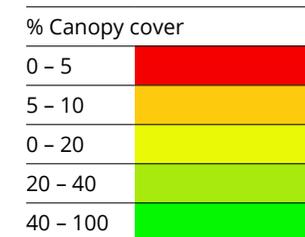
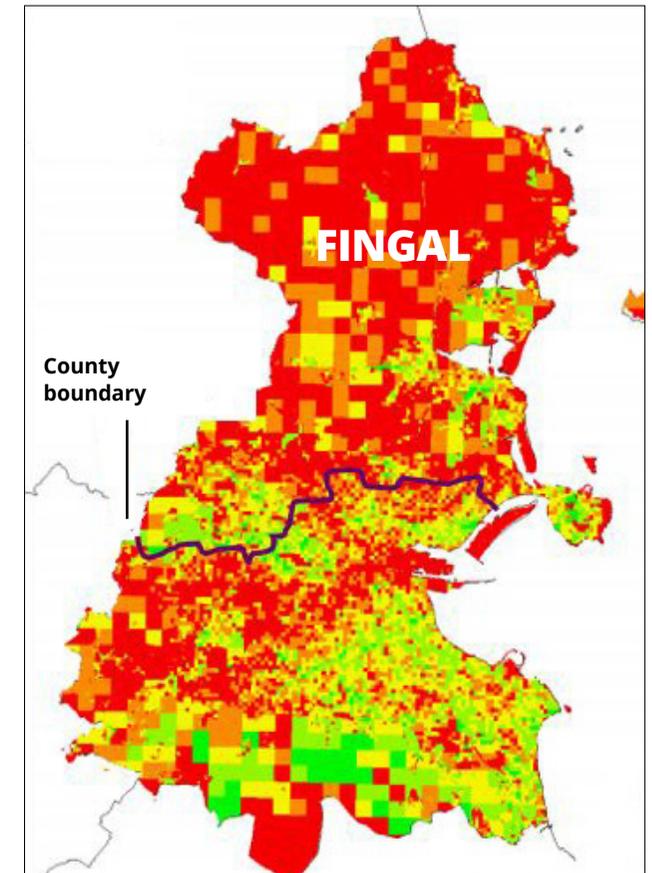
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1.36 Population increase and urban intensification

Between 2011 and 2016, the population of Fingal rose by 8%, the highest increase nationally, reaching a population of 296,020, the third highest in the county. 63% of the population of Ireland lives in urban areas. Currently over 70% of Europe's population live in cities, and this is expected to increase to over 80% by 2050. Responding to this population increase inevitably requires the provision of new open space amenities including urban trees.

1.37 Low canopy cover

According to the Dublin Tree Canopy Study (undertaken by the UCD School of Geography), the total tree canopy cover of Fingal stands at 6.5%, the lowest of the four Dublin local authorities and well below the European city average of 15%. Although this is partly due to different land uses, the study does highlight a significant deficiency in the valuable natural resource that is trees, which must be addressed.



Clearly visible from this Dublin Canopy Study image that there is a deficiency of tree cover in the county

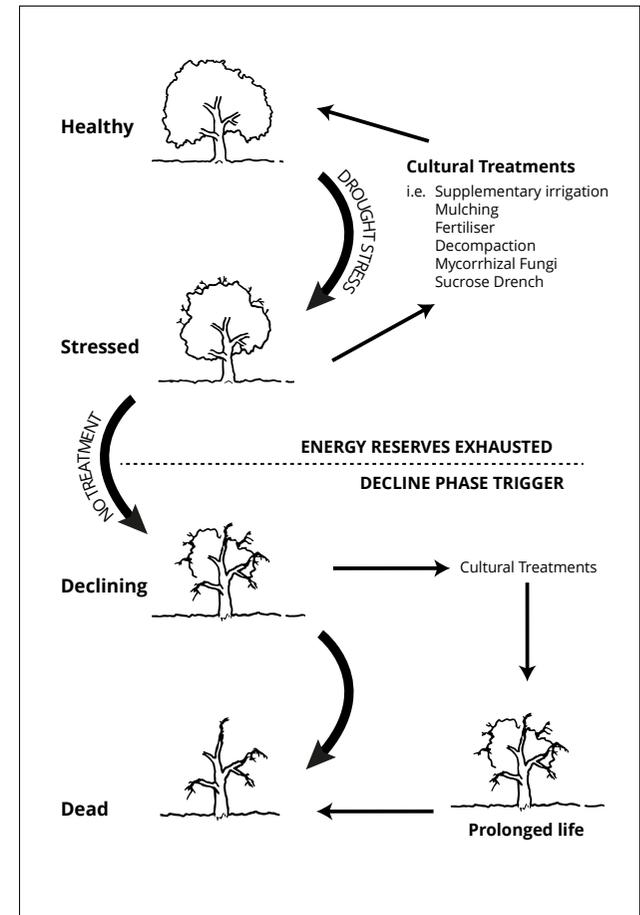
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1.38 After Care of Newly Planted Trees

Typically, around half of newly planted urban trees do not live beyond ten years. Incorrect pruning and failure to remove tree stakes and tree ties can negatively affect tree growth. The Council will plant numbers of trees that can be managed within the resources available using a qualitative approach to selection, planting, monitoring and maintenance to ensure their survival and longevity.

1.39 Ageing tree population and general mortality

Even as we are planting new trees many of our trees are nearing the end of their lives. Fingal will continue to manage the population of ageing trees through regular assessments to determine which trees need to be maintained or removed, and by planning when, how and with what tree species they will be replaced. At some point all trees will go into decline and will pass the point of return to good health.



Tree mortality spiral illustration. City of Melbourne Urban Forest Strategy, Making a Great City Greener

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1.40 Conflicts caused by trees

From semi-maturity onwards, trees occasionally present problems, varying in severity from nuisance (such as unwanted shading and blocking views) to danger due to defective branches, roots, the effects of disease, or extreme weather. In most cases these issues can be effectively managed. There are variations between species and varieties in the probability and severity of problems occurring, and in this regard, it is essential to select the right tree for the right place.

1.41 Conclusion

In summary, urban trees strive to survive in the most challenging of environments immediately after planting and throughout their lives. Competing for good root growing medium in footpaths and roadside margins with utility networks, road works and a variety of pollutants such as car fumes, salt and de-icing agents. Physical damage and disturbance to trees roots are frequent consequences of road and footpath reconstruction or trenching works. Vehicular damage, particularly by skips and high-sided vehicles, and vandalism can damage trees causing death or disfigurement resulting in misshapen or weakened trees. There is also an increasing trend by car users to park their vehicles on verges, causing rutting and soil compaction, which causes damage to tree roots as well as leaving the verge in an unsightly and unsafe condition. Despite these

challenges, urban trees can and do survive, albeit with a more limited life expectancy and with varying degrees of success. However, the above challenges demonstrate the need for a strategic approach to tree management, planting and maintenance.



The Council plans to promote the importance of trees as part of the urban environment affording them a similar status to other urban infrastructure.