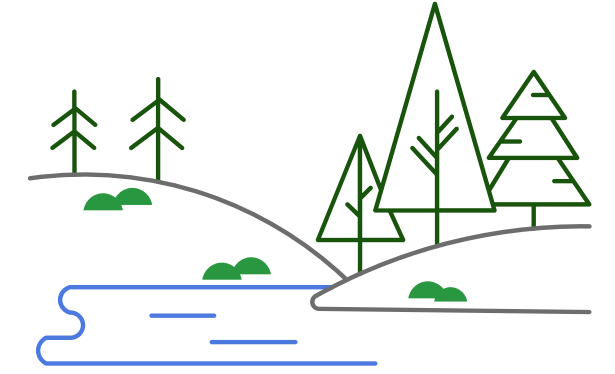


Cork City Public Green Spaces

Community Research



Background:

As our city population is projected to rise substantially in the next decade it is clear that we must protect, enhance and develop our urban green infrastructure as part of making Cork a truly 'liveable' city. Key stakeholders will include a wide range of community groups. There is an increased interest in public green spaces and their potential as areas for natural play, activities, discovery, learning, observation, relaxation, and as outdoor community hubs for all ages. There have been many focused studies on the importance of urban spaces for long term health and well-being. The area of Cork City has been extended to 187km² and has 44 listed parks and playgrounds on Cork City Council's Parks webpage. As a first phase of action during one of the lockdown periods between March/May 2021 an independent 'call-out' was made on Twitter to ascertain the quality and condition of the existing spaces. 31 people volunteered and returned surveys under the following headings:

Accessibility (Suitable safe access for all ages and abilities)

- We looked at general suitability of terrain and quality of surfaces for physical access and getting around each space in terms of all ages and mobilities.
- The surveys did not take into account accessible public transport connections, accessible parking or accessible play equipment.

Ancillary Accommodation (Seating/Toilets/Bins/Dog fouling bins)

- Each of the four ancillary accommodation items were given equal priority when rating the fitted items for each of the spaces.
- There is a national conversation happening regarding the massive reduction in public toilets over the last 30+ years.
- Dog fouling features as a problem and is also a national issue.
- Public bins also form part of a national discussion and approaches differ across the city depending on location.
- We may look at including bike parking and other items in future editions.

Landscape Features (Variety of grass/planted/wooded & mix of hard & soft)

- This is difficult to rate and can depend on the seasons.
- Many of the assessors had a great knowledge of plants and landscape types.
- Some of the smaller parks may have similar or higher ratings than larger parks but it depends on the scale, location, orientation of each park and also the potential for more variety.

Management (Visible wildlife management plan)

- Some local knowledge regarding community groups with an eye on biodiversity.
- Weed killer spray evident in many parks particularly in the later surveys following first CCC lap of the city using staff and private contractors. There is a general dissatisfaction with this practice.

Education (Information boards)

- There is merit in park information boards.
- If designed correctly they can instill a sense of nature, history and community.
- In larger parks they are very popular for visitors.

Play Value (Equipment on site)

- Visual survey of condition and photographs returned showing the quality of equipment.
- There is very little play equipment for older kids and teenagers in the city.

Safety & Security (Area overlooked -natural surveillance/condition)

- This was a difficult heading as much of the anti-social activity noted was mainly during late hours.
- A more accurate picture was formed where assessors had local knowledge or spoke to locals during the survey.

Cleaning & Maintenance (Evidence of vandalism/litter/dog fouling)

- The results from this heading were at times skewed as assessors noted rubbish and dumping in several parks which is also part of an ongoing national litter problem.
- We note that Cork City Council have a daily presence in almost all parks and are in a difficult position in some areas trying to resource the constant cleaning of litter blackspots.
- Dog fouling is an issue in many parks.