

Submission on behalf of Cllr Mary Fitzpatrick, Fianna Fáil, Dublin Central to the PHOENIX PARK “VISITOR” EXPERIENCE STRATEGIC REVIEW 2019.

Public Consultation:

The Phoenix Park is a national public amenity and any proposals relating to the park must be considered on a national scale. The scope of the public consultation on the proposed “visitor experience strategic reviews 2019” was far too limited. The fact that the “consultation” was non-statutory means there is no clarity of the process being followed, the process for approval or outcomes. Public notification and access to the document was inadequate and consequently there was insufficient public awareness of the proposals.

A larger scale and more comprehensive and transparent review must be undertaken prior to any of the proposals being adopted.

Bio-diversity:

The draft plan proposes creating or designating one section of the Phoenix Park to bio-diversity. It is shocking and unacceptable that any organisation of the state would propose limiting bio-diversity in the Phoenix Park to one section. The entire Phoenix Park should be treated as an oasis of bio-diversity for our capital city. The protection and development of open green space, wildlife and nature throughout the entire park should be the priority of any strategy for the Phoenix Park. The proposal to restrict bio-diversity to one section must be rejected.

Transport:

Transport to and around the park is critically important to ensuring maximum public access to the Phoenix Park and there are some positive but unclear suggestions in the draft document. The proposals for traffic, parking, transport to and around the Phoenix Park should be developed in conjunction with Dublin City Council and public transport providers. An integrated and comprehensive transport and traffic proposal should be produced and made available for public comment prior to any decisions being made.

Housing:

There are a significant number of residential properties in the Phoenix Park which historically were made available as residential accommodation for park employees. There are currently a significant number of such properties vacant and becoming derelict. It is totally unacceptable that any organisation of the state would so negligently manage valuable housing stock particularly in the context of the greatest housing crisis in the history of the state. Additionally, the OPW recently applied for planning permission to use one such property, Rose Cottage, for short-term holiday rentals. The draft “visitor strategy for the Phoenix Park” should be amended to

City Hall, Dublin 2.

Info@maryfitzpatrick.ie

085 838 3427

include a plan to retro-fit to the highest environmental standards and re-let to staff all residential properties in the Phoenix Park.

Culture:

The Phoenix Park is of enormous cultural and historic value to our state. The OPW should undertake to capture and share the unique history and culture of the Phoenix Park in an on-line visitor experience that could be freely available to all visitors to the park via smart phone.

Retail:

The primary purpose of the Phoenix Park is to provide city residents and visitors with the opportunity for passive recreation, such as walking, cycling, meditating and generally enjoying the natural setting. The Phoenix Park is a free natural public amenity and should not be developed into a revenue, profit generating or commercial facility. The draft strategy contains more than a dozen pages outlining retail opportunities within the park. The proposal to develop significant retail activity in the park is wholly inappropriate. Dublin City is very well served with city centre and suburban retail outlets. The Phoenix Park should not be turned into a retail/shopping experience and the proposals to introduce significant retail outlets in the park should be rejected.

Sanitary facilities:

The OPW should include provision of adequate toilet facilities in any development proposals for the park.

Finally, the proposals contained in the draft “visitor strategy for the Phoenix Park” could have far reaching consequences for the Phoenix Park and its owners the people of Ireland.

Before any consideration is given to adopting the proposals in the draft strategy there must be further and more comprehensive public engagement and consultation.

I specifically ask OPW to meet with elected members of Dublin City Council to review and discuss the future of the Phoenix Park prior to adopting any proposals in the draft strategy.

Thanks for considering this submission.

Cllr Mary Fitzpatrick

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Info@maryfitzpatrick.ie

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