Aidan J. ffrench MILI
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Friday, 31 March 2017 by em: npf@housing.gov.ie

NPF Submissions, Forward Planning Section,

Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government,

Custom House, Dublin D01 W6X0

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: NPF 'Ireland 2040 – Our Plan' – Issues and Choices Consultation Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of Draft NPF.

I am making this submission in a personal capacity, drawing on over 30 years experience work in academia, private and public sector, including substantial experience in forward planning and development management in Ireland and England.

I attach a brief professional biographical note for your information.

I look forward to studying the Draft NPF in due course and to taking a second opportunity to contribute to the during the 2nd. Consultation stage.

If you require any clarification on my submission, please contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

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Aidan J. ffrench

IRELAND 2040- OUR PLAN

National Planning Framework

Initial Public Consultation - Issues Paper

SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, PLANNING, COMMUNITY & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

31 March 2017

Aidan J. ffrench MILI Landscape Architect

Project Manager, Blue-Green Infrastructure

General Comments

I concur with much of the Minister's Foreword, especially his remarks about values and sense of belonging, related to Placemaking. However, while such visionary, inspiring words are inspiring and positive, in real-world daily practice, there is – with some honourable exceptions – considerable dysfunction, inefficiencies and capacity gaps in the planning system, resulting in mediocre service delivery. That does little honour or meet the Minister's noble and laudable aspirations.

Much of this submission in based on the conference paper I presented at a Liveable Cities Conference in Rome in June 2016. The abstract and full paper are provided in Appendix 2 to the submission.

Urgent and Growing Challenges,

I believe that moving beyond Rhetoric to Reality is the overarching challenge and imperative, for the NPF. Priorities actions and issues include:-

- Resourcing and investing in HUMAN CAPACITIES (public sector staffing with professional expertise – staffing : Landscape Architects, Horticulturists and Arborists _ very few of the 31 Planning Authorities employ these disciplines; the RoI is embarrassingly a laggard in international comparisons, relative to most the EU, Canada and U.S.A, where these professions are well represented within the public sector generally and in respective planning systems (a recent business vacation to Vancouver-Seattle-Portland metro-region confirm this)

- Governance of Urban Blue-Green Infrastructure: lack of statutory basis to Parks and Landscape Services as a function of Local Government is impeding effective, efficient and enforceable Planning-Development Management, especially at Pre-Planning and Constructon stages;

- Modernise the Planning code (P&D Act and Regulations) to take account of best national and international professional practices in Landscape Architecture, Blue-Green Infrastructure and Arboriculture; key issues – Urban Amenity Trees' Protection&Preservation and Planting; mandatory performance and development standards and planning conditions for Open Space, Landscape Design

- Cross-sectoral and All-of-Government framing: linking and expanding themes and within Planning Framework Issues and Choices paper to embrace relevant State policies and strategies (e.g. .National Landscape Strategy, Climate Change Adaptation Framework Plans – national, regional and local; Capital Infrastructure Investment Programme, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, National Biodiversity Plan etc.) This broad 'umbrella–frame' would display joined-up cross sectoral approach, enabling iteration of potential synergies and efficiencies (e.g. removing duplication, leveraging partnerships, collaborations across government, enterprise, civil society, academia). The Draft NPS should show this frame in a Mind Map(s) with infographics as an effective means of capturing and communicating the frame.

- Establish Professional Forum to work with Implementation Management Team, that would provide active and practical means of achieving cross-disciplinary collaboration between Planners, Landscape Architects, Ecologists, Engineers, Chartered Surveyors and Architects : respective professional institute s to nominate representatives; Urban Forum may assist in this matter

Business as Usual

Learning from our Experience

The key lessons from Ireland are:

- Do build a healthy synergistic relationship between Civil Society and the State around delivery of G.I and Placemaking

- Don't rely totally on a relationship-based societal model alone (as in Ireland: 2006 OECD report found Ireland is a relationships based society more prone to cronyism and corruption that systems-based German society)

- Do invest in appropriate, accountable governance (policy, law, regulation) and investment (funding, human resources – professional specialists and capacity building)

Failures and errors in Planning and Infrastructure were exacerbated by severe reductions in human resources in the public sector (e.g. local government sub-sector: 10,700 less staff - 30% - in local authorities than in 2008) have created substantial short and medium-term challenges. While some recruitment is now taking place, it is not

addressing the historic gaps in expertise in Landscape Architecture, Ecology and Arboriculture; all of which play significant roles in the planning systems, where postholders to exist on a very limited basis (largely confined to the GDA)

In a wider context of immediate imperatives, as follows:-

- <u>COP 21 Paris</u> – Ireland must meet EU targets to reduce carbon emissions
- <u>Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation</u> – sectoral plans now a legal obligation
- <u>Housing and Homeless</u> – severe crisis in provision and dysfunctional market
- **<u>Blue</u>**<u>-Green Infrastructure and Urban Greenspace</u> – out-dated parks policy (1987) no statutory obligation to plan, provide, invest or resource G.I, Urban Greenspace
- <u>Public Health</u> – rising teenage diabetes and adult obesity levels
- <u>Energy and Food Security</u> – excessive reliance on imports, domestic activity weak

Some of these challenges are not unique to the Republic of Ireland. However, significant deficits in governance, policy, law and investments for Housing, Climate Change, Green Infrastructure and Place-making[1] - are '*self-imposed errors*', of a singular nature, that exposes the state's comparative delinquency, relative to more environmentally-progressive states (e.g. Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, The Netherlands, U.K).

The outgoing government's *Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021* (€27 billion) does not mention Green Infrastructure: there is no provision whatsoever for G.I. This indicates a traditional, narrow understanding of what constitutes 'infrastructure'. The allocation of €430 million for flood mitigation (grey infrastructure) could conceivably be used to incorporate (and potentially reduce costs) by using soft G.I measures (eco-engineering)

[1] It's noteworthy that the previous government's National Development Plan 2007-2013, '*Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All*' allocated €1,137billion under 3 headings, that could be categorised as Green Infrastructure: Natural Heritage (National Parks, nature reserves, raised bogs), Waterways and Community Infrastructure: (urban village renewal projects, streetscapes, public buildings, public libraries, green spaces).

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[1] It's noteworthy that the previous government's National Development Plan 2007-2013, '*Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All*' allocated €1,137billion under 3 headings, that could be categorised as Green Infrastructure: Natural Heritage (National Parks, nature reserves, raised bogs), Waterways and Community Infrastructure: (urban village renewal projects, streetscapes, public buildings, public libraries, green spaces).

People's Health and Well-Being

3.**3 Linking Health and Well-Being to Place**

However, despite conservative mindsets among some powerful interests, it's evident that progressive forces are making headway. And ultimately, for a relatively young state that is blessed with vibrant creativity and a growing civil society [13], '*environmental maturity*' is growing and eminently attainable.

A Place-Making Strategy 23

4.1 Our Capital, Cities and Towns 23

4.2 Opportunities for our Regions

Opportunity and Optimal Return on Investments

- Expand the blue and greenways network at regional and local levels, with key objective and increased emphasis on linking urban centres (villages, towns and cities)

- Leverage longstanding and reputable Tidy Towns and Tidy Districts movement by raising skills capacity through education/awareness programmes (in partnership with professional institutes – IPI, ILI etc.) of the Planning System, especially regarding participation in Forward Planning : Regional and Local Area Plans

4.3 The Potential of Rural Ireland 30

- Ditto bullets above, with added planning goals at regional and local levels for Community Peri-Urban Forestry as genertors of socio-economic growth and of Climate Change Adaptation (watershed –river basin management), informed by best and progressive pratices in British Columbia, Canada, England and Scotland and The Netherlands

<u>Place-making</u>

<u>Note:</u> Dlr (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council) has adopted the PPS (Project for Public Spaces) model and definition - " *an overarching idea and hands-on approach for improving neighborhoods, cities or regions, Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places".. ." refers to a collaborative process by which*

we can shape our public realm.."; " *it creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution."* (adapted from original at www.pps.org). In March 2012 Dlr staff (engineers, architects, a landscape architect, planners) took part in a 2-day training course run by leaders from PPS's headquarters in New York, USA.

- Explore and expand Dlr approach to other planning authorities at regional and local levels, through public sector reform agenda (e.g. using C.P.D aligned to PMDS); in context of upskilling and optimal professional practice

Ireland's Unique Environment – Sustainability

5.4 Heritage and Landscape 45

5.5 Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

This section should be expanded – there's no mention of Ecosystems Services or Nature Based Solutions, which can play a large role in Climate Change Adaptation, Quality of Life, Health and Well-being and resilience. At EU level the M.A.E.S.S project is exploring NBS and Ecosystems Services within the context of Regional and Local Planning. Ireland needs to up its game in this important area of innovation in engineering, planning and landscape architecture. It is also extremely relevant to resolving our difficulties with Flooding and Stormwater Management – moving beyond conventional, costly and somewhat outdate 'grey', hard engineering. The planning systems in Ireland has yet to fully embrace this emerging paradigm, much of it evidence-based.

See my conference paper (Appendix 2) re: benefits of linking G.I and Placemaking, in both urban and rural settings; especially regarding role of voluntary activity, in partnership with Planning Authorities, using the Planning System in a creative manner.

- **Change term to Blue-**Green Infrastructure, which is the more up-to-date and recently emerging term at international level; the word "Blue" captures the sometimes ignored, vital water elements of the water cycle and landscape hydrology and they interface with terrestrial elements (e.g. natural and manmade water bodies, watercourses etc.) – see also Appendix 2 paper.

Lip-service from governments as to how essential is Urban Parks and Greenspace is inadequate. Its provision is invariably optional (as in Ireland and U.K): it is not mandatory, so not on a par with other essential services (drainage, roads, planning, etc.), for which there is legislative provision [19, 20]. Bearing this in mind, it's useful to dissemble some urban myths, which can stymy legal and policy progress in this area:-

- Parks are not discretionary luxuries - parks are vital infrastructure, requiring state support, law and investment, and professional planning, design and management
- Parks are not revenue suckers! – parks are revenue and wealth creators
- Urban Greenspace is a natural capital asset; parks are landscape lungs vital to sustaining human culture, spirituality, health and well-being, leisure, social cohesion, prosperity and to natural biodiversity
- Urban Greenspace is indispensable to the imperative of Climate Change Adaptation

Debunking these myths is based on a growing catalogue of evidence-based research by academics, think-tanks, state agencies and advocacy groups across the planet. Elaboration of this evidence is not possible here, but sources are readily on the Web.

> "The measure of any great civilisation is its cities and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares".
> - John Ruskin

We need to approach Parks and Urban Greenspace in its wider Green Infrastructure canvas with a comprehensive, systematic and city scale approach, conscious that:-

> "Can a few conspicuous solar homes, constructed wetlands, bike paths, recycling industries, wildlife habitat corridors, organic agricultural plots, and wind farms really be the key to saving the world? Isn't a much greater transformation needed in global economic, political, and social institutions?" – Robert Thayer, 'Gray World, Green Heart: Technology, Nature, and the Sustainable Landscape'

Notes: although stated in academic and policy literature (e.g. COMHAR 2010 Green Infrastructure in Ireland_DoEHCLG) there's no agreed definition of Green Infrastructure among practitioners. Perhaps this because (Blue-) Green Infrastructure is an emerging area of research, policy and practice. Also, agreeing a cogent, comprehensive definition isn't easy, because of a variety of emphases and priorities among practitioners (planners, ecologists, landscape, etc.). In a positive sense, this variety is a virtue: common ground is achievable. G.I is inherently multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary and cuts across professional 'silos' (e.g. departments for conventional 'grey'/engineered infrastructure, biodiversity and ecology, spatial planning and land-use, parks and recreation). Therefore, I've adopted an approach that crystallises the essentials of G.I practice, to arrive at the following two definitions:-

Professional (a generic connotation)

The planning, design and management of natural, semi-natural and manmade environmental assets and resources, for socio-economic-ecological goals, by studying, understanding and applying their inherent multi-functionality and Ecosystem Services[2], through policy and practice

Layman's

A network of natural and manmade elements and places - including parks, farms, gardens, forests, open spaces, rivers, lakes and seas. These provide essential services, functions and products to humans and wildlife - food, shelter, protection, beauty and recreational opportunities

Practical application of G.I uses its multi-functional links to Ecosystem Services (Fig.1)

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[2] **Ecosystem-based Adaptation :** *"the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change"* (Convention on Biological Diversity)

Benefit / Practice	Reduces Stormwater Runoff				Increases Available Water Supply	Increases Groundwater Recharge	Reduces Salt Use	Reduces Energy Use	Improves Air Quality	Reduces Atmospheric CO_2	Reduces Urban Heat Island	Improves Community Livability					Improves Habitat	Cultivates Public Education Opportunities
	Reduces Water Treatment Needs	Improves Water Quality	Reduces Grey Infrastructure Needs	Reduces Flooding								Improves Aesthetics	Increases Recreational Opportunity	Reduces Noise Pollution	Improves Community Cohesion	Urban Agriculture		
Green Roofs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Tree Planting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Bioretention & Infiltration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Maybe	No	No	Yes	Yes
Permeable Pavement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Water Harvesting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	No	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Yes   Maybe   No

Fig. 1. Matrix of G.I practices and benefits (extract – '*The Value of Green Infrastructure. A Guide to Recognizing its Economic, Environmental and Social Benefits*'_CNT, American Rivers, USA_2011)

Equipping Ireland for Future Development - Infrastructure 47

6.1 Setting the Bar 47

- Broad definition of "Infrastructure" to include Blue-Green Infrastructure", avoiding silo mentality and policy narrowness, moving to all-over government approach and join-up mindsets and practices

Resources

- *Making the Links.Greenspace.* March 2005. Greenspace Scotland. www.greenspacescotland.org.uk
- Landscape Urbanism - http://landscapeurbanism.com/
- M.A.E.S.S
- EU Commission
- E.I.B
- Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia http://waterbucket.ca/gi_Green Infrastructure

Aidan is a Past-President of the ILI (Irish Landscape), the professional body representing Landscape Architects and Parks Professionals in Ireland. **He chairs the ILI's new Working Group on *Blue-Green Infrastructure (Sept 2016 -). Aidan's tenure as president (200-07) saw a significant increase in the Institute's public profile, arising especially from consciously amplifying its advocacy and lobbying roles.*** This included a media first for the profession, with Aidan as the first landscape architect interviewed on the state broadcaster, RTE's '*Morning Ireland*' – the nation's leading current affairs radio programme. This achieved much-need publicity for the profession. The ILI's lobbying resulted in the first public commitment by an Irish government to introduce a National Landscape Strategy - eventually published in 2015. In 2010, the Oireachtas (Irish parliament) passed the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, which provided the first-ever definition of 'landscape' in Irish law, for which the ILI had also lobbied with others; in line with the Ireland's obligations under the Council of Europe's European Landscape (Florence) Convention.

Aidan holds primary and post-graduate degrees in Landscape Horticulture from University College Dublin, the latter for his thesis on Water in the Landscape; and a Diploma in Applied Project Management. He has 33 years experience in research, public, private practice and advocacy, including spells with Mitchell & Associates, Dublin Corporation and Ealing Borough Council, London. He is currently employed by Dlr (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council) Parks & Landscape Services, as a Landscape Architect/Placemaker and Green Infrastructure champion; with a work-portfolio embracing Spatial Planning, Placemaking and Landscape Design, Climate Change Adaptation, Transport and Housing and Urban Trees. He is Project Manager for Dlr's first, award-winning, Green Infrastructure Strategy (County Development Plan 2016-22), in collaboration with Dlr Planning . He continues to work on implementation of the Strategy with colleagues, on a multi-disciplinary basis, across the Council and with external stakeholders.

Aidan is a keen outdoor enthusiast, traveller, theatre-goer, photographer, singer/amateur actor and sea-swimmer. When he's not planning or designing landscapes you'll probably find him relaxing in one, preferably a seascape - fishing rod in hand!

Published Articles

▪ '*The last time the government thought about parks – critical issues affecting urban greenspace* Village current affairs magazine_November 2014.

▪ *A View from the Urban Forest -Trees and development: same old story?* Horticulture Connected. April-May 2014: opinion piece written from a personal perspective and informed by daily experience with the travails of the Irish urban tree and by what passes for official policy in the Republic of Ireland. **Conference Papers & Presentations**

▪ ***People, Place and Quality of Life – Achieving Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Placemaking – Lessons from Ireland*** '*Caring for Our Common Home - Sustainable, Healthy, Just Cities & Settlement'* 53rd. Intl. Making Cities Liveable Conference, Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Vatican City / Rome **17 June 2016**

- *__People, Place and Quality of Life – Irish lessons - Integral Ecology for Urban Landscapes__* UNISCAPE Conference, '_Landscape Values and Praxis_'_ Centre for Landscape Studies, NUI Galway, Ireland_July 2016

- *__Future directions for Irish urban parks__*. IFPRA World Congress, RDS Dublin (Sept. 2007)

- *__A Green Infrastructure Strategy for the GD Region. The Humane Metropolis: from City Parks to Green Infrastructure__*. Irish Landscape Institute seminar, Dublin (Dec. 2013)

- *__Caring for our Trees – towards a Sustainable Tree Policy and Strategy for Dlr__* (Feb. 2009). Dlr Parks & Landscape Services's discussion paper, leading to preparation of '_Dlr Trees(2011-2015)_', adopted as the Council's official Tree Strategy in 2011.

Other

Lead author for '*__A Manifesto for Irish Landscapes__*' (April 2007) published by the Irish Landscape Institute in the lead-up to General Election 2007 (May). **The manifesto called on all political parties to take actions to protect and manage Ireland's landscapes, especially those under threats from speculative development, urban sprawl and neglect. The document complimented and elaborated on the Irish Urban Forum's election manifesto,** '_A Better Quality of Life for All_' **(Feb. 2007), of which ILI was a co-author**. 10 years after publication (Jan.'17), of the Manifesto's cogent and wide-ranging case and calls for action, only *the National Landscape Strategy* has been delivered.

The ILI manifesto called on government to honour its commitments under the ELC (European Landscape Convention) by delivering the necessary policy, legislation and resources to properly manage landscapes as vital and valuable national assets, in a systematic manner. The manifesto called on government to invest in , protect and enhance urban landscapes; regulate the landscape profession and modernise governance and systems in spatial/land-use planning.

ILI also highlighted the paucity of landscape architects and fully-developed parks and landscape services departments in the public sector (civil service, regional government, local councils, state agencies). Critically, the ILI called on government to prepare a National Policy on Urban Green Infrastructure (Parks, Greenspaces etc.) and Parks and an Urban Parks Act **[both are still required]** to address these resource deficiencies. The policy would put in place a programme for the recruitment of landscape architects in central and local government, through a targeted relaxation of the public sector embargo. ILI has prepared draft modernised national policy and primary legislation to close governance gaps and dysfunctions, to align Ireland with best international practices in progressive jurisdictions.

Contact

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Aidan J. ffrench MILI, Landscape Architect

Past President, The Irish Landscape Institute

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53rd International *Making Cities Liveable* Conference on

CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME:

SUSTAINABLE, HEALTHY, JUST CITIES & SETTLEMENTS

Pontificia Università Urbaniana,

Vatican City / Rome, Italy

Monday 13 – Friday 17June, 2016

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People, Place and Quality of Life

Achieving Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Place-making

Lessons from Ireland

ABSTRACT

After the country's disastrous flirtation with a neo-liberal model of economy that gravely impacted on people and environment, Ireland is experiencing amplified urbanisation just as climate change is acutely impacting on human lives. This against a background of constrained public resources, exacerbated by dysfunctional governance, ineffective policy delivery, poor regulation and misplaced investment priorities.

Despite these systematic weaknesses, inspiring examples of progress do persist; driven by civil society and passionate 'champions' in the public sector. At local levels in towns and cities, a new focus on community place-making and urban horticulture is enhancing health and well-being. Dublin City Region's constituent local authorities are engaged with this process by fostering and delivering practically-orientated projects, that benefit the common good (public health, social solidarity, quality living, working, leisure places).

The philosophy underlying these trends (though not expressed as such) suggests the emergence of a new paradigm in Irish society that could resonate with, and bring to life, the communal ethos that is central to LAUDATE SI.

Dlr County Council's _Green Infrastructure Strategy 2016-2022_ is a holistic response to this trend. The award-winning, multi-disciplinary project - jointly-led by landscape and planning professionals – comprises 3 strands: smart movement, natural heritage and water management; all taking cognisance of the imperative of Climate Change mitigation.

The Strategy harnesses existing initiatives, e.g. urban greenways for health, eco-tourism and local economy; greenspace for green exercise/eco-therapy; while seeking to programme pilot, demonstrator projects in biodiversity, constructed wetlands, 'green streets' stormwater management and PPS (New York)- inspired place-making; thereby leveraging the diverse synergies that G.I potential offers to people, place and a more sustainable model of economy and urbanism.

People, Place and Quality of Life
Achieving Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Place-making
Lessons from Ireland

1.   Background and Context

Ahead of the general election in spring 2007, the Irish Urban Forum – an inter-disciplinary group, representing the 5 professional institutes for architects, landscape architects, engineers, planners and surveyors – published an important document., *'A Better Quality of Life for All'* [1]. Timed to coincide with the General Election, it presented proposals addressing a wide-ranging agenda: dysfunctional planning, urban sprawl, land prices, landscape policy, parks and open spaces, housing and transport, among others. The document was well received by Irish media, following a press conference and media interviews with the institutes' presidents. A series of meetings followed between the Forum and all political party's spokespersons on the environment, and with some senior civil servants. Simultaneously, the Irish Landscape Institute (ILI), a Forum member, published its own, landscape-specific manifesto [2]. Some proposals from that manifesto –relating to parks and landscape policy – were incorporated into the new government's Programme for Government[3] (June 20007).

Of course, all this occurred a year before the Lehman crash and the subsequent global economic collapse of 2008-09; and well before the humiliating IMF/EU/ECB ('troika') bailout (2010) of the Irish sovereign state. There followed 7 years of harsh austerity, bringing disastrous (in some cases irreparable) humanitarian and social consequences. Most commentators acknowledge the seeds of Ireland's collapse were sown during the country's disastrous flirtation with a resource-hungry, neo-liberal model of economy, tied to corrupt and inept spatial/land-use planning ('Celtic Tiger' period 2002-2007). This unsustainable model impacted deeply on people at individual and communal levels, diminished their quality of life and marginalised the planning and environment agenda.

Today, Ireland is experiencing, once again, amplified urbanisation[4], car dependency, declining public health, social division, changing demographics (ageing population, rural depopulation,

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[3] The government committed to finally implementing the Council of Europe's Landscape (Florence) Convention; It did so in the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2010, which provided legal definition to landscape in Irish law, for the first time. After almost 20 years of campaigning by various groups and individuals, in 2011 the government finally adopted the state's first National Landscape Strategy (2015-2025).

[4] Republic of Ireland is rapidly urbanising: urban population was 63% of total population in 2013, up from 46% (1960); 48% of that increase occurred in the last 20 years. 1.8 million people (39.2% of total population, 4.6 million; Census 2011) live in Greater Dublin Region, GDA (Dublin City, South Dublin, Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown,

emigration). An added factor is the clear manifestation of *climate change*, particularly as more frequent and severe storms cause flooding that acutely disrupts daily life. A fragile, uneven economic recovery is underway within a fractured society. This is occurring against a background of diminished, demoralised and constrained public resources, exacerbated by a legacy of dysfunctional governance, overly-centralised power, ineffective policy delivery, poor regulatory enforcement and misplaced investment priorities (e.g. roads).

Despite these systematic weaknesses, some inspiring examples of progress have emerged as part of a wider cultural *zeitgeist;* largely driven by civil society, passionate 'champions' in the public sector (state agencies, local authorities) and to a lesser extent, progressive actors in the private sector[5]. In urban settlements, especially in towns and cities, there's evidence of energetic, community activism in place-making, the arts and urban horticulture. This is focused on using and improvement local environment for enhanced health and well-being, for social solidarity and in some instances job creation (e.g. related to eco-tourism).

In Dublin, the 4 local authorities (city and county) have, to varying degrees (despite resources constraints), responded to this *zeitgeist*, by supporting projects and initiatives that benefit the Common Good (public health, social solidarity, quality places for living, working and leisure). The authorities have reflected this agenda in their statutory land-use/spatial plans and policies, including those dealing with Green Infrastructure and Placemaking.

3.   Issues and Imperatives

Nine years later, in post-recessionary Ireland, the issues raised and proposals made by the Urban Forum and ILI remain disturbingly relevant. A facile mantra among the chattering classes and media – '*the lessons have been learned*[6] – emerged around 2014, a short-hand expression, vaguely suggesting that – someone unspecified (they? we? us?) – has learnt the lessons (unspecified). Some improvements in law and policy have been made, such as Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 (moving from developer-led planning to local authority-led, but in other respect, didn't go far enough), Flood Risk Assessment regulations and guidance (e.g. restricted

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Fingal, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow), part of a city region on the eastern seaboard, stretching from Belfast to Waterford city. GDA growth is predicted at +400,000 by 2031, 66% of total projected growth in the state [sources: CSO, Dublin; www.indexmundi.com/facts/ireland/urban-population
[5] Barry McCall_*It's good to be green*_Irish Times_ 22 February 2016_ www.irishtimes.com
[6] National Planning Conference (Irish Planning Institute_IPI), Limerick city_April 2014: then IPI President's opening address included this phrase, but did not elaborate upon or substantiate its vague claim with any evidence (e.g. as to what lessons, where's proof and who had learned them)

building on floodplains), a National Landscape Strategy, [3, 4]). But at a foundational level, significant systemic deficits (policy, law, regulations, financial investment, human resources) remain. For example there's an ongoing failure to put Green Infrastructure - especially Urban Greenspace and Parks – on a statutory, mandatory basis, as a vital public service in local government. Very few of the country's 31 local authorities employ landscape architects, architects, ecologists or tree officers. Ireland is unusual in this respect, compared to most EU states and states and city administrations in North America, Asia and Australasia. As long as Urban Greenspace and Parks remains a discretionary service (solely in the power of the chief executive to decide), delivery continues to be vulnerable to personality-based patronage and the subjective judgements of unelected administrative executives (non-professionals), captured by narrow techno-economic drivers. [7]

A substantial body of informed opinion among academics and researchers (in planning, development, infrastructure and environment policies), shared by reputable economic and financial media correspondents, believes the lessons have not been learned or learnt sufficiently deeply [7, 8, 9, 10]. Furthermore, there are concerns that Ireland is in danger of repeating its mistakes and its flawed development model [11].

In that context, it's arguable that the prevailing culture – populist, 'clientelist' (relationships-based society) is largely disengaged from urgent environmental issues and old habits die hard. Consequently, there's little public pressure on politicians to address these issues and the aforementioned deficits around Green Infrastructure. The Irish – the majority not known for environmental consciousness (it's something of a 'minority sport!) – are not immune to the dominant Western capitalist ethos, reflected in behaviours spanning unfettered materialism and impulsive consumptive lifestyles, of which Pope Francis warns us in '*Laudate Si'* [5]. While there's anecdotal evidence of the emergence of more mature attitudes, the prevailing popular and political culture is short-sighted and focused on the short-term. This suggests, that for many, resumption of '*normal service'* (aka the Celtic Tiger),would be welcome!

The General Election of 26 February 2016 resulted in a hung-parliament, and as of 31 March no government had been formed. An incoming government faces urgent and mounting challenges, largely arising from past failures to undertake long-term planning for housing and sustainable

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[7] Irish local government doesn't have elected mayors; other EU states, such has France, U.K, and USA do.

urban communities, infrastructure (including Green Infrastructure[8]), in spatial and land-use planning, public transport, environmental protection and state and local services (e.g. mental health, disability, enterprise support). These failures, exacerbated by severe reductions in human resources in the public sector (e.g. local government sub-sector: 10,700 less staff - 30% - in local authorities than in 2008) have created substantial short and medium-term challenges, in a wider context of immediate imperatives, as follows:-

- <u>COP 21 Paris</u> – Ireland must meet EU targets to reduce carbon emissions

- <u>Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation</u> – sectoral plans now a legal obligation

- <u>Housing and Homeless</u> – severe crisis in provision and dysfunctional market

- <u>Green Infrastructure and Urban Greenspace</u> – out-dated parks policy (1987) [12], no statutory obligation to plan, provide, invest or resource G.I, Urban Greenspace

- <u>Public Health</u> – rising teenage diabetes and adult obesity levels

- <u>Energy and Food Security</u> – excessive reliance on imports, domestic activity weak

Some of these challenges are not unique to the Republic of Ireland. However, significant deficits in governance, policy, law and investments for Housing, Climate Change, Green Infrastructure and Place-making[9] - are '*self-imposed errors*', of a singular nature, that exposes the state's comparative delinquency, relative to more environmentally-progressive states (e.g. Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, The Netherlands, U.K). An authentic commitment to correcting these errors will require significant culture-shifts, in terms of ingraining deeper environmental consciousness in decision-makers. These are government ministers, senior civil servants, local officials and private sectors developers (and their design teams), who effect Quality of Life and of Place in urban settings. However, despite conservative mindsets among some powerful interests, it's evident that progressive forces are making headway. And ultimately, for a relatively young state that is blessed with vibrant creativity and a growing civil society [13], '*environmental maturity*' is growing and eminently attainable.

4.   Definitions

I am using two terms central to this paper – Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Place-making. These require definition, a task I have essential to writing this paper and to my work. I hope my

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[8] The outgoing government's *Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021* (€27 billion) does not mention Green Infrastructure: there is no provision whatsoever for G.I. This indicates a traditional, narrow understanding of what constitutes 'infrastructure'. The allocation of €430 million for flood mitigation (grey infrastructure) could conceivably be used to incorporate (and potentially reduce costs) by using soft G.I measures (eco-engineering)

[9] It's noteworthy that the previous government's National Development Plan 2007-2013, '*Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All'* allocated €1,137billion under 3 headings, that could be categorised as Green Infrastructure: Natural Heritage (National Parks, nature reserves, raised bogs), Waterways and Community Infrastructure: (urban village renewal projects, streetscapes, public buildings, public libraries, green spaces).

definitions provide clarity and a platform for discussion by conference delegates. I would welcome delegates' comments on terminology, to see how it may or may not align with their own experiences and expertise in G.I and Placemaking.

Green Infrastructure:

Seemingly, there's no agreed definition of Green Infrastructure among practitioners. Perhaps this because (Blue-) Green Infrastructure is an emerging area of research, policy and practice. Also, agreeing a cogent, comprehensive definition isn't easy, because of a variety of emphases and priorities among practitioners (planners, ecologists, landscape, etc.). In a positive sense, this variety is a virtue: common ground is achievable. G.I is inherently multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary and cuts across professional 'silos' (e.g. departments for conventional 'grey'/engineered infrastructure, biodiversity and ecology, spatial planning and land-use, parks and recreation). Therefore, I've adopted an approach that crystallises the essentials of G.I practice, to arrive at the following two definitions:-

Professional (a generic connotation)

The planning, design and management of natural, semi-natural and manmade environmental assets and resources, for socio-economic-ecological goals, by studying, understanding and applying their inherent multi-functionality and Ecosystem Services[10], through policy and practice

Layman's

A network of natural and manmade elements and places - including parks, farms, gardens, forests, open spaces, rivers, lakes and seas. These provide essential services, functions and products to humans and wildlife - food, shelter, protection, beauty and recreational opportunities

Practical application of G.I uses its multi-functional links to Ecosystem Services (Fig.1)

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[10] **Ecosystem-based Adaptation** : "*the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change*" (Convention on Biological Diversity)

Benefit → / Practice ↓	Reduces Stormwater Runoff				Increases Available Water Supply	Increases Groundwater Recharge	Reduces Salt Use	Reduces Energy Use	Improves Air Quality	Reduces Atmospheric CO₂	Reduces Urban Heat Island	Improves Community Livability					Improves Habitat	Cultivates Public Education Opportunities
	Reduces Water Treatment Needs	Improves Water Quality	Reduces Grey Infrastructure Needs	Reduces Flooding								Improves Aesthetics	Increases Recreational Opportunity	Reduces Noise Pollution	Improves Community Cohesion	Urban Agriculture		
Green Roofs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tree Planting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bioretention & Infiltration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Permeable Pavement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Water Harvesting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	No	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

● Yes   ◒ Maybe   ○ No

Fig. 1. Matrix of G.I practices and benefits (extract – 'The Value of Green Infrastructure. A Guide to Recognizing its Economic, Environmental and Social Benefits' CNT, American Rivers, USA_2011)

Both definitions reflect the deliberate anthropocentric focus of G.I. This paper does not allow for discussion of legitimate concerns about the ethics of this human-centred paradigm. Pope Francis has eloquently expressed the dangers here [14]. Such concerns generate heated debates arising from philosophical, political and spiritual perspectives. (e.g. Nature has an intrinsic self-referential value and right to exist, independent of Ecosystems Services and the needs of Homos sapiens). I suggest that we be familiar with and respect such concerns, so that we approach Nature with humility based on a generosity of stewardship of the Earth [15]. This respect has practical application, for example by reserving wild areas and natural habitats for conservation, which deliberately exclude human access and use.

Place-making

In Ireland, Dlr (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council) has adopted the PPS (Project for Public Spaces) model and definition - " an overarching idea and hands-on approach for improving neighborhoods, cities or regions, Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places".. ." refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm.."; " it creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution." (adapted from original at www.pps.org)

In March 2012 Dlr staff (engineers, architects, a landscape architect, planners) took part in a 2-day training course run by leaders from PPS's headquarters in New York, USA.

5.   Projects and Initiatives in Ireland

5.1   Overview

While perhaps not explicitly stated in practice or project-planning, the benefits of linking G.I and Placemaking, are increasingly manifest in a widening variety of projects, both in urban and rural settings. In many projects there's evidence of considerable voluntary activity. Some people have noted how this volunteerism evokes previous generations' love of the *'meitheal'*: a Gaelic term for the seasonal work-gatherings in rural communities, where collective harvesting and other tasks were undertaken. *Meitheal* [11] is an act of mutual, neighbouring support that goes to the heart of the placemaking philosophy. [12]

My sense is that *meitheal* partly fulfils humans' innate desire for belonging to *place*, so eloquently expressed by the late John O'Donohue, one of Ireland's most loved poet-philosophers, a lover of landscapes and gardener of the soul. Nowadays, *meitheal* is not confined to rural settings, but can be seen in projects run by self-reliant urban communities, sometimes with the support of state and local government.

5.2   Examples

The current state of affairs regarding G.I and Placemaking in Ireland is varied and geographically patchy, but inspiring, practical and resilient.. I pay particular attention on to the Greater Dublin Region (GDA), focused on Dlr, with which I'm most familiar, in my role as Dlr G.I champion and project manager. What follows is a random selection of successful examples of recent, current and ongoing projects and initiatives. The selection spans plans and strategies, practical site-based projects, community initiatives and academic research.

While some projects – especially those that are community-based - may not be conceived, understand or labelled by those involved as G.I, in essence many are G.I. But does a prescriptive appellation really matter beyond professional circles, as long the work is done?

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[11] **Mountain Meitheal** (http://mountainmeitheal.ie/) has adopted the term: it is an voluntary group of enthusiastic hillwalkers (some drawn from hillwalking clubs) who construct and maintain facilities and infrastructure on mountain trails and walks across the country, in partnership with state bodies and local landowners.

[12] The old Gaelic saying '*Ní neart go cur le chéile' (there's no strength without solidarity)* comes to mind here.

This selection shares a numbers of common characteristics, which form the basis for their actual or potential successes. Chief among those characteristics is authenticity in terms of generosity of spirit – a shared ownership, because most are based on partnerships and/or a collaborative approach. The operating principle seems to be that no one has a monopoly of power or knowledge: strength in diversity points to a deep, sustainable success.

National and Regional levels

- The Wild Atlantic Way (www.wildatlanticway.com): state tourism initiate for the west coast, led by Fáilte Ireland (tourism agency) as branding exercise; 2,500 kms long, with places designated as points of interest. One of the objectives is to stimulate economic life of nearby struggling, villages and towns through eco-tourism.

- Sub-regional Greenways: state-led and locally-implemented by local authorities, in collaboration with local, voluntary groups and landowners; examples include the Mayo Greenway and planned Waterford Greenway

- Heritage Council (HC) Annual Grant Scheme and Community-led Planning: supports and priorities local community projects in built and natural heritage; over 21 years, HC has established reputable expertise and successes in foster, promoting and building partnerships and public awareness An example of a state agency that has survived recessionary cutbacks and continues to provide an excellent public service

- Cloughjordan Eco-Village, Co. Tipperary (www.thevillage.ie): Ireland's only eco-villages is a visionary model and practical example of community-based, democratic place-making, in a small urban setting close to an existing settlement. Founded in 1999, the village is a cooperative, with a members' agreement of rights and obligations, and ecological charter, setting out design guidelines for development. Capital finance to buy land for 130 homes and work units was raised through members putting in their own money and a loan from an ethical bank. The village also runs a range of courses in sustainable living (e.g. energy conservation, permaculture).

- TURAS (www.turas-cities.org): EU-funded, 5-year project, led by University College Dublin, local partners: Dublin City Council, Dermot Foley Landscape Architects); 11 local authorities, 9 academic bodies and 8 SMEs; addresses challenges facing cities and citizens' concerns about impacts of unregulated land use change, environmental health , human well-being; aims to devise holistic transition strategies; flexible strategies, adaptive, applicable to urban regions, scales. Dublin study: area planning in Pelletstown.

- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 (www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/irish-pollinator-initiative/all-ireland-pollinator-plan): national partnership of 68 state and NGO's, led by National Biodiversity Centre (state agency); 81 actions identified, including practical projects – in both urban and rural settings - which require collaboration between a range of actors, including state bodies, local authorities (city and county councils), NGOs, private enterprises and researches.

Local level – Dlr (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council), Dublin

- Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) [www.dublinmountains.ie; 2008 – ongoing]: active recreation in a peri-urban landscapes on south-western edge of Dublin city; a partnership initiative between 3 local authorities (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and South Dublin County Councils, Dublin City Council), a semi-state forestry company (Coillte) an environmental NGO (Dublin Mountains Initiative) and a state agency (National Parks and Wildlife Service), in collaboration/agreement with private landowners

- Shanganagh Community Gardens, Shankill, Co. Dublin (http://shanganaghcommunitygarden.ie/ 2010-2012, ongoing): a tangible example of active citizenship and community gain, arising from a 'grey' infrastructure project (a new sewage treatment plant). Run by a steering committee of local growers, with some administrative help from Southside Partnership and Dlr, the Gardens (60 plots of varying size) are located between the plant and a low-income, social housing estate, alongside a coastal landscape. Participatory engagement was strong key to success, which included a lowering of crime in the area and interest from abroad in the project as a model for the capacity-building and social solidarity aspects of community-based Placemaking.

- Community Placemaking URBACT Project 2013-2015 (www.urbact.eu): Dlr Community Department led this European project, with support from the Dlr business/enterprise development officer. The focus was on capacity building and social capital in poor, disadvantaged social housing estates in Loughlinstown. The results included a stronger sense of place identity, empowerment of previous disengaged residents and enhanced physical environment through simple activities (planting, murals, clean-ups, planning-for-real exercises). Crucially, a key outcome is a 12-member committee that continues to meet.

- Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere (launched June 2015, www.dublinbaybiosphere.ie): special UN designation for this beautiful Blue-G.I. resource (300 sq. kms.), intimately connected to Ireland's capital. The Biosphere Partnership (Dublin City Council, Dlr and Fingal county councils, Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, Dublin Port Co.) runs the project. Programmes

are in preparation and several projects commenced. Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils in local authorities) is co-designing an awareness campaign, including a video: a pilot project for EuroMAB Brand & Story toolkit; showcased as best public engagement practice at 4th. World Congress of Biosphere Reserves.

- Fitzsimons Wood Partnership, Sandyford, Co. Dublin (2004-2013): Dlr-led biodiversity and community placemaking, partnership project in a low-income social housing estate; with support of government departments and state agencies.

- Urban Forestry GIS – U.C.D and European Space Agency consultants: two related remote sensing projects of the urban forest of Dublin city and county, with the 4 local authorities as partners with academic researches and GIS consultants in Ireland and The Netherlands. Meets objectives in Dlr's Tree Strategy 2011-2015

- Temporary Urban Landscapes (Arts, Community Gardens etc.), Dublin: various project from early 2010's, in the inner city, on abandoned, derelict sites, involving bottom-up, grassroots community activists, sometimes assisted/supported by professionals reaching formal agreements with public (Dublin City Council) and private landowners for time-limited, use of sites for vegetable growing, arts and community events;

- S2S Cycleway, Dublin city – Dublin Bay: a complex, phased project spanning 3 local authority areas, comprising a coastal cycleway- pedestrian route at final design stages

Dlr County Council's Green Infrastructure (G.I) Strategy 2016-2022 [16]

Background and Status

G.I is relatively new in Ireland, only emerging into mainstream policymaking and professional practice in the last 8 years or so, following a seminal international conference [17] in 2008, followed by the first national guidance document [18]. Dlr's strategy is one of the few, in-depth and comprehensive G.I strategies in the country. It is an integral part of Dlr's new County Development Plan 2016-2022 (as Appendix 14), the statutory, spatial/land-use document for the county. Under the Irish state's _Planning and Development Act, 2000,_ all local planning authorities (city and county councils), must prepare development plans every 6 years. Preparation includes obligatory public consultation and legally, the plan is 'made' by the elected representatives (councillors). Therefore, the G.I Strategy has a legal significance that would not apply were it merely an optional policy document, as is the Council's Tree Strategy 2011-2015 (sadly, there is no national policy or primarily legislation on amenity trees in Ireland [13]). Furthermore, the Strategy is a standalone document, with implications for the entire Council organisation and services, i.e.

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[13] To address these glaring deficits, I'm pre preparing a national policy and related primary legislation, as a integrated proposal to take to the Irish government, on behalf of the Irish Landscape Institute.

beyond its provenance in spatial/land-use planning. So, for example, the Strategy will play a significant part in the preparation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, which is a new statutory requirement of all local authorities, under the state's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. Other applications relate to Dlr's operational services and infrastructure (e.g. using Green Streets to enhanced minor and major roads construction schemes, promoting 'green architecture – green walls, roofs, facades in retrofits and new public buildings, such as sports pavilions).

This award-winning, multi-disciplinary Strategy project was jointly-led by landscape, parks and planning professionals, working with a team of consultants. Preparation of the Strategy involved collaborative and holistic approach[14] to its thematic concepts and spatial framework.

Dlr's existing G.I is extensive and richly diverse: the county boasts many key features and activities along the coast and in urban, rural and upland areas. Many features are iconic, including the dramatic coastline (Killiney Bay), Dalkey hills, Dublin Mountains. Several large public parks are of regional significance. Analysis revealed that Dlr's G.I has contributed significantly to developing the county's reputation a vibrant place with the highest quality of life in the country. G.I remains vital to supporting the various socio-economic and environmental needs of the county's residents, enterprises, workers, students and visitors.

Three Themes

Conceptually, the Strategy has 3 overlapping themes: Accessibility, Recreation, Health and Well-Being, Natural Heritage and Water Management, with elements and objectives:-

Accessibility, Recreation, Health and Well-Being: concerned with the nature, quality and continuity of connections of the GI (such as Greenways, walking routes and public transport corridors) and the ease of access to open spaces, greenways and recreational resources and issues, such as landscape character and views, and the range, nature and frequency of activities that take place in key amenities and attractions.

Natural Heritage: concerned with the range of natural and man-made assets of heritage value in the county. These include areas of importance for biodiversity, such as watercourses, woodlands, and coastline, and cultural assets such as important monuments, buildings and landscapes, as well as less tangible cultural heritage such as arts and sciences.

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[14] This included an all-day workshop of invited guests (parks professionals, planners, landscape architects), representing Dlr's neighbouring local authorities (Dublin City Co, South Dublin Co.Co. Wicklow Co.Co.), so that trans-boundary issues and opportunities could be included in the discussions.

Water Management: in combination with the other themes, there are significant opportunities in this theme for Climate Change Adaptation, with G.I playing a larger role in optimising sustainable stormwater management, thereby mitigating urban flooding and maintaining and improving water quality in the county. These and other opportunities include:-

- Utilise rivers and streams as basis for multi-functional GI corridors
- Use GI features to reduce impacts when drainage systems are exceeded
- Reduce the rate, volume, and improve the quality of surface water runoff
- Manage runoff at source by creating storage ponds and wetlands
- Promote soft Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) - 'Green Streets' and Green Roofs
- Enable SuDS to be located in the public realm

Spatial Framework

The Spatial Framework is a key part of the Strategy as it provides a legible structure for making priorities and taking actions. The framework spans short to long-term horizons. It distinguishes between the existing GI framework and what's emerging and planned. The key elements of the framework are:

- A higher level, countywide network of integrated elements, which connects to adjoining (trans-boundary) and regional GI networks
- A network of 6, overlapping and multi-functional GI corridors, connecting higher-level GI hubs and the main elements (mountains, urban areas, coast)
- A structure for integrating the local-level GI elements (parks, open spaces, rivers etc.)
- Integration of important sub-regional GI corridors, such as the coast, Dublin Mountains Way and Wicklow Way (hiking and walking routes)
- A 'chain' of improved 'gateway hubs' (parks and open spaces), which provide the transition between the mountains and the urban area

Thus, in a very real way, the framework gives physical expression to Dlr's branding slogan – "*O Chuain go Sliabh*" (Gaelic), i.e. "*From the Harbour to the Mountains*", evoking the county's landscape character and location, between Dublin Bay and the Dublin Mountains.
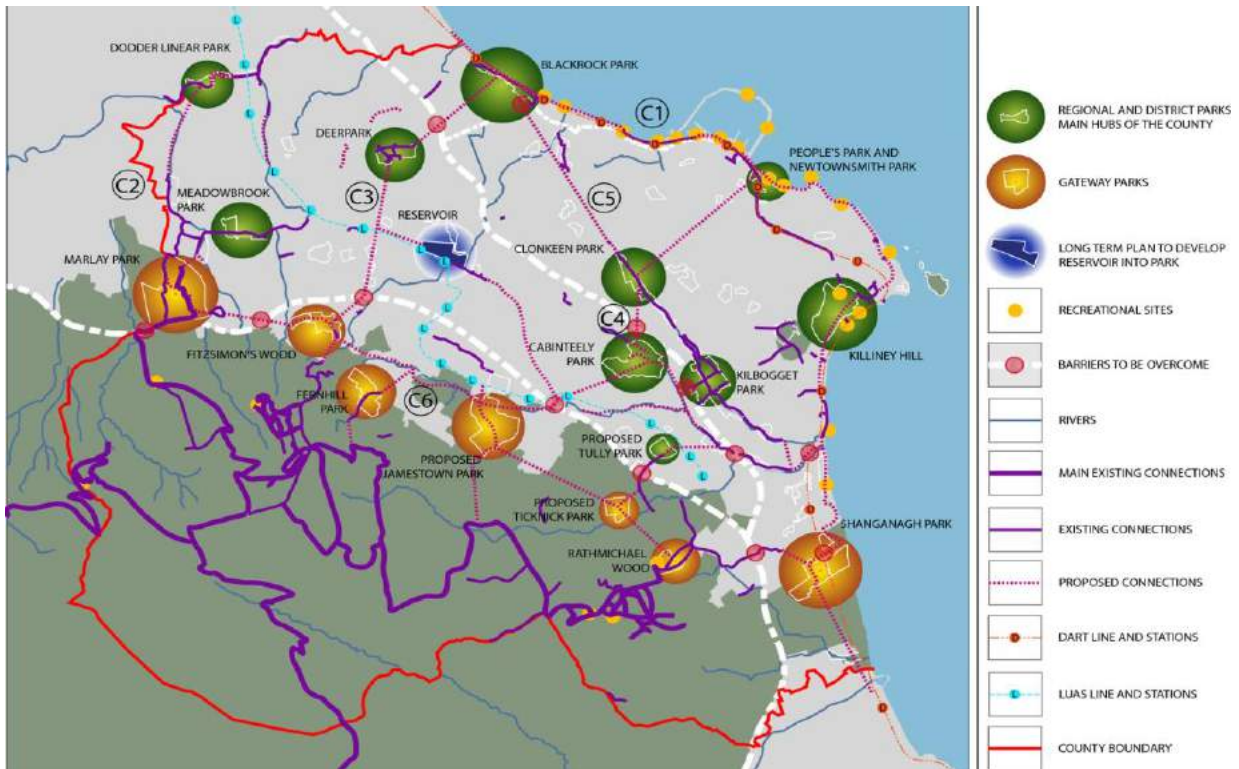
Fig. 2: Dlr G.I Strategy 2016-2022_Strategy: County Map showing Spatial Framework

Delivery

The Strategy recommends a robust approach to delivery as essential to its successful. It points to an opportunity for Dlr to provide significant leadership and influence on the form of new built developments; and in the maintenance the county's green assets. It's envisaged that this role can be enhanced by sustaining existing and building new partnerships with communities and across County boundaries. Key recommendations for effective delivery include:

> Establish a multi-disciplinary, inter-departmental Working Group in the Council [15]

> Prepare a Delivery Plan (roles, responsibilities, priorities and timelines)

> Specific policy recommendations for Accessibility, Recreation and Health/Wellbeing, Natural and Cultural Heritage and Water Management

> Explore local and external funding and investment opportunities

> Develop and use tools for integrating GI into Planning Practice

> Priorities for key actions and ongoing monitoring and review of delivery

In promoting innovative and progress G.I practices, Dlr staff will face a learning curve. Equally, we will need to address anticipated and legitimate concerns of sceptical 'actors' (budget holders, senior managers, project designers). With that in mind, part of the answer will entail persuasion

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[15] An inter-departmental Steering Group oversaw the preparation of the Strategy by consultants. The Group has continued to meet informally since the Strategy was adopted, and has committed to developing a Work Plan, studing two of the G.I corridors at ground level, and arranging a technical seminar on Green Streets, in collaboration with the ILI and Engineers Ireland.

by doing, i.e. pilot demonstration projects. And such projects may provide a means for upskilling key professionals on the job (engineers and architects), linked to their respective institute's CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programmes.

Pilot and Demonstration Projects

The Strategy harnesses existing initiatives, e.g. urban greenways for health, eco-tourism and local economy; greenspace for green exercise/eco-therapy; while recommending specific pilot projects for construction, that demonstrate the practical benefits of G.I. Such projects include, constructed wetlands, Green Streets and other stormwater management measures, that will leverage the diverse synergies that G.I can offers across the organisation.

The inter-departmental working group has prioritised Green Streets as a pilot. This could be significant in assisting Dlr to meet its obligations regarding water quality under the EU Water Framework Directive, while also attenuating urban flooding in the worst affected areas of the county. Finally, Green Streets could be major contributors to quality Placemaking by enhancing aesthetics and local biodiversity and engaging the public. To that end, I've drafted a set of criteria to enable selection of candidate streets for retrofitting as Green Streets. Portland City Council, Oregon, USA is an inspiration and best practice guide in this type of G.I. It has over 20 years proven expertise and experience with award-winning Green Streets projects (see http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/45386 and http://hpigreen.com)

Health & Wellbeing - Social Enterprise

Coincidentally, just as the final draft of the Strategy was published, a wonderful, bottom-up initiative emerged locally that links seamless with the Strategy's Theme: Health and Well-being. A social worker, forester and health researcher – all living in the locality – launched an eco-therapy project at a public meeting in Dún Laoghaire. With a working title, 'Health and Wellbeing through Contact with Nature', the initiative seeks to "promote contact with nature to improve quality of life and build resilience in communities". Also known as 'Green Exercise', the initiatives takes people on guided walks and exercise in parks, greenspaces, woodlands and other G.I elements.

6.   Conclusions and Lessons

6.1   Implications for Healthy, Just, Sustainable Cities

The volunteer-ethic and practice remains strong in Ireland and has survived the recession, intact. In its simplest incarnation, the long-established and state-supported Tidy Towns movement, is

alive and well in towns and villages across the country. Strong, though insufficient in number, is the presence of dedicated, passionate professionals and champions in state agencies and local government. Looking to the future, it's conceivable that the relationships formed by these voluntary and public sector actors could raise environmental consciousness in political terms. This could then bring significant and concerted pressure on the political system to close the gaps between rhetoric and delivery around G.I and Placemaking. My hope is that an active, informed citizenry will force government to introduce the necessary systematic changes that will modernise Irish public policy, governance and investment in G.I and Placemaking

The key lessons from Ireland are:
- Do build a healthy synergistic relationship between Civil Society and the State around delivery of G.I and Placemaking
- Don't rely totally on a relationship-based societal model alone (as in Ireland: 2006 OECD report found Ireland is a relationships based society more prone to cronyism and corruption that systems-based German society)
- Do invest in appropriate, accountable governance (policy, law, regulation) and investment (funding, human resources – professional specialists and capacity building)

Finally, a specific lesson pertaining to Urban Parks and Greenspace is of wider relevance to those countries where there is no primary legislation for this vital G.I resource. Lip-service from governments as to how essential is Urban Parks and Greenspace is inadequate. Its provision is invariably optional (as in Ireland and U.K): it is not mandatory, so not on a par with other essential services (drainage, roads, planning, etc.), for which there is legislative provision [19, 20]. Bearing this in mind, it's useful to dissemble some urban myths, which can stymy legal and policy progress in this area:-

- Parks are not discretionary luxuries - parks are vital infrastructure, requiring state support, law and investment, and professional planning, design and management
- Parks are not revenue suckers! – parks are revenue and wealth creators
- Urban Greenspace is a natural capital asset; parks are landscape lungs vital to sustaining human culture, spirituality, health and well-being, leisure, social cohesion, prosperity and to natural biodiversity
- Urban Greenspace is indispensable to the imperative of Climate Change Adaptation

My debunking of these myths is based on a growing catalogue of evidence-based research by academics, think-tanks [21], state agencies and advocacy groups across the planet. Elaboration of this evidence is not possible here, but sources are readily on the Web.

> *"The measure of any great civilisation is its cities and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares".* - John Ruskin

We need to approach Parks and Urban Greenspace in its wider Green Infrastructure canvas with a comprehensive, systematic and city scale approach, conscious that:-

> *"Can a few conspicuous solar homes, constructed wetlands, bike paths, recycling industries, wildlife habitat corridors, organic agricultural plots, and wind farms really be the key to saving the world? Isn't a much greater transformation needed in global economic, political, and social institutions?"* – Robert Thayer, 'Gray World, Green Heart: Technology, Nature, and the Sustainable Landscape'

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Websites

- **www.blessedearth.org/** > inspiring faithful stewardship of all creation, delivers curricula, educational resources, workshops, retreats, sermons, monthly newsletter

- **www.pps.org** > Project for Public Spaces, New York, USA: non-profit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities

- **www.greenspacescotland.org.uk** > Greenspace Scotland, Glasgow, Scotland: an inspiring, practically-orientated, social enterprise that works with a wide range of local and national partners, to support planning, development and sustainable management of greenspaces and networks, as a key part of the green infrastructure of towns and cities.

- **http://greensurge.eu/** > Green Infrastructure & Urban Biodiversity for Sustainable Urban Development & Green Economy: EU project (24 partners - 11 countries); identify, develop, test ways to link greenspaces, biodiversity, people and economy, to meet urban challenges (land use conflicts, Climate Change Adaptation, demography, human health)