

**ICOMOS National Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes  
Observations on DRAFT Phoenix Park Visitor Experience Strategic Review**

The review is to be welcomed for its analysis, clear presentation and general aspirations – It sets out new development proposals for a number of areas of the Park. In principle we welcome and support the following :

- The proposed conservation/enhancement of the Magazine Fort in the commemorative quarter (with compatible use) and connections to the War Memorial Park
- The future upgrade of Visitor Centre facilities at Ashtown Demesne subject to compatible uses and future impact assessment.
- Proposals to provide information and orientation points for the Park at the main entrance as well other entrances to the park subject to Historic Landscape Assessment (HLA ) of the impact of proposals on the historic landscape character
- The need to address the challenge of the Central Line Chesterfield avenue which has become a through route for too much traffic at too high a speed and the requirement for a Mobility Management Plan which should address current needs but also recognize that mobility options are likely to change in the future because of climate change
- The proposed feature points along Chesterfield Avenue for the enjoyment of pedestrians and cyclists, with opportunities for information provision, orientation and interpretation as well as providing safe crossing points and regulating traffic speed and subject to impact assessment
- The proposals to connect the Phoenix Park to other green spaces beyond the park boundary. And also to make connections between Croppies Acre/Collins Barracks, the War Memorial Garden, RHK and the proposed Commemorative Quarter within the Park.

The Strategic Review refers to the Conservation Management Plan of 2011 which highlights the overriding importance of the historic landscape character of the Phoenix Park and the importance of its protection and appropriate enhancement. (CMP Section 6 particularly section 6.5 and 6.6) It also refers to International ICOMOS Charters and European Conventions which identify important principles for conservation practice.

The ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013 ) defines 'conservation' as all the actions of looking after a place of cultural significance specifying that '*New work should be readily identifiable as such, but must respect and have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place.*' (Article 22.2)

The Phoenix Park is a designed landscape of great cultural landscape significance dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but containing earlier archaeological components from up to 6000 years ago. However, this important aspect of the landscape of the Park is under- valued in the new development proposals as follows:

Registered in Ireland as a Limited Company No. 435591 with Charitable Status, CHY 17077.

Registered Office: 8, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Directors: Gráinne Shaffrey (President), Paul McMahon, (VP), Nick Long (Treasurer), Catherine Gorman (Company Secretary), Audrey Farrell (Membership Secretary), Mary-Liz McCarthy, Ivor McElveen, Caroline Engel Purcell, Grellan Rourke



An impact assessment of the location and scale of proposed new developments at the main entrance on the historic landscape park character is lacking. A contemporary signifier element for information and orientation could be provided but should have minimal impact on the designed landscape of Chesterfield Avenue and the People's Garden.

A small less prominent, building might be appropriate provided the impact on the historic landscape character and vista of the avenue framed by significant evergreen oak trees from Parkgate Street is assessed and visual impact is minimized.

Chesterfield Avenue, the central spine, divides the park due to its function as a thoroughfare. Traffic calming measures could be introduced to improve the connectivity for recreational use and so improve the visitor experience of this central axis. Consideration should be given to reducing vehicular speed to 30 kph more appropriate for this historic route.

Clustering information points and refreshment kiosks along Chesterfield avenue /central spine would at present concentrate pedestrians in a heavily trafficked area

Proposed new water features, fountains and sundecks here may be inappropriate to this particular park landscape which provides a valuable semi-rural experience for the community and visitors. The design of new features should enhance this quality rather than a more typical urban/municipal approach.

Opportunity for low-key circular public transport would reduce the requirement for cars to penetrate parts of the park and make universal access more possible. Some form of transport routes to and within the park should therefore be considered.

The proposed Mobility Management Plan should take account of sustainability and climate change issues. The medium objective should be to reduce speed and to consider the removal through traffic altogether in the longer term. On occasions when it has been closed to traffic the experience of the park has been very different - the historic photographs are particularly informative.

New Signage should be of the minimum necessary and preferential use should be made of technology /apps along with existing historic signage- part of the presentation of the park.

Registered in Ireland as a Limited Company No. 435591 with Charitable Status, CHY 17077.

Registered Office: 8, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Directors: Gráinne Shaffrey (President), Paul McMahon, (VP), Nick Long (Treasurer), Catherine Gorman (Company Secretary), Audrey Farrell (Membership Secretary), Mary-Liz McCarthy, Ivor McElveen, Caroline Engel Purcell, Grellan Rourke



The Principles of the Florence Charter (1981) and the Burra Charter (2013) should be applied in the discussion of necessary changes and historic landscape assessment. Both of these conservation Charters indicate the need to respect and support the cultural significance of a place -

*'The preservation (conservation) depends on Identification and listing.... the authenticity of a historic Garden (or Park) depends as much on the design and scale of its various parts as on its decorative features and on the choice of plant materials adopted ' ( Article 9 Florence Charter ).*

We recommend that a Historic landscape Assessment (HLA ) assessments be carried out by appropriate landscape conservation professionals to assess the impact of the proposed new developments on the historic landscape character of the Phoenix Park. This would also identify its carrying capacity for new developments and retaining its cultural significance.

The proposals for all interventions in the park should also be linked to the Conservation Management Plan 2011 including - strategic objectives for the park, to ensure an overall integrated approach is applied in maintaining its cultural and natural heritage.

The comparative analysis of similar parks is appropriate, particularly London's Royal Parks. These have the benefit of statutory protection as Grade 1 listed places on the English Heritage Register of Parks & Gardens which provides protection of landscape historic character , encourages appropriate protection, appreciation and assessment of the impacts of new development on their historic character. ICOMOS Ireland would be available to discuss the proposals further and inform the process through dialogue with our National Scientific Committees and informed by our colleagues internationally.

Liz Morgan

President National Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes

NSC CL contributors Liz Morgan, Mary Laheen, Willie Cumming, Claire Foley Tony Williams

23 April 2019

Registered in Ireland as a Limited Company No. 435591 with Charitable Status, CHY 17077.  
Registered Office: 8, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Directors: Gráinne Shaffrey (President), Paul McMahon, (VP), Nick Long (Treasurer),  
Catherine Gorman (Company Secretary), Audrey Farrell (Membership Secretary),  
Mary-Liz McCarthy, Ivor McElveen, Caroline Engel Purcell, Grellan Rourke



## **ICOMOS Cultural Tourism National Scientific Committee Response to Strategic Review of the Phoenix Park, Dublin**

The number of feasibility plans proposed in relation to mobility, transport and use of the Park for recreational and educational purposes for both local people and visitors are welcomed. The partnership with Failte Ireland is to be commended and is critical in order to achieve the balance between tourism and local needs.

The Phoenix Park is an intrinsic park of both the living culture and heritage of Dublin. The International Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) identifies the need to recognise the dynamic interaction between tourism and cultural heritage. A sustainable approach to both operation and management of the park will require a **responsible approach to marketing** of the Park. There is a danger that the very reason why the Park is attractive providing a 'sense of peace and tranquillity' to visitors could be undermined by development and an

### *Balancing the numbers*

The development of the children's education centre, the Magazine Fort and the improvements at Farmleigh, and the pavilions at the Knockmaroon Gate are welcome and will encourage visitor flow through the Park.

A base line study of the complex offering in the park using the appropriate tools, will help identify the **sustainable balance of use and optimum target numbers**. This is especially important as there is limited restriction of access the Park and therefore numbers of visitors are difficult to manage.

As well as developing a strategic plan for the Park, **an alternative plan** (de-marketing etc.) should be identified should numbers of visitors exceed optimum identified target numbers.

It is proposed that the development of a new focus in the form of a visitor centre should act as a hub and a conduit to disperse visitors throughout the Park to avoid carrying capacity issues and negative impacts. There should also be further linkage beyond the Park, **looking outward** through to surrounding sites and walks such as along the Liffey and over to Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

### *Transport*

The numbers of visitors to the Park have increased substantially, and include the tourist buses which although restricted to a certain area in the park, do still impact on the busy road area close to the Zoo (especially from April to October). These will need to be managed and could link with the proposed shuttle bus.

Registered in Ireland as a Limited Company No. 435591 with Charitable Status, CHY 17077.  
Registered Office: 8, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Directors: Gráinne Shaffrey (President), Paul McMahon, (VP), Nick Long (Treasurer),  
Catherine Gorman (Company Secretary), Audrey Farrell (Membership Secretary),  
Mary-Liz McCarthy, Ivor McElveen, Caroline Engel Purcell, Grellan Rourke



Parking is a problem and needs to be addressed. However, an **alternative parking area** is required for those who use the Park as a park and walk, park and cycle each day.

#### *Role of the local communities*

A plan developed with the local communities (actual and regular users) should identify methods of increased engagement and ownership of the Park. As development and numbers increase, **local engagement** is key to ensuring the Park remains part of the local identity and this plan would form part of social sustainable provision

#### *Future Management*

Measurable parameters (based on best practise and objectives) will emerge from the feasibility studies and these should form the basis on **ongoing research** within the Park and in turn will serve to act as a monitoring basis of the development, management and engagement of this unique space.

Catherine Gorman  
President National Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism

April 2019