



Policy Statements, Specific Objectives and Actions

The main report of the Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan contains more than one hundred measures and actions. Conservation and management will be carried out in accordance with the principles of sustainability. The more significant of these, including all major policy statements, are summarised below.

Legal and Planning Context

The Phoenix Park is designated as a National Historic Park and is governed by the Phoenix Park Act 1925. The whole of The Phoenix Park is protected under the National Monuments Act. The overall objective is to ensure appropriate legislative support to protect the Park.

Landscape

The historic landscape of The Phoenix Park is its most important attribute and the over-riding objective in respect of landscape is to conserve and maintain its unique character. Specific policies relating to landscape include the prevention of further erosion of the enclosures, the protection and reinstatement, where feasible over the long-term, of views to and from the Park and the strengthening of conservation designations pertaining to the Park.

Nature and Biodiversity

The Phoenix Park is an important site for biodiversity, a significance enhanced by its urban location. Actions to protect this significance include the restoration and development of the natural drainage system, the re-planting of woodlands with an appropriate mix of species and management initiatives to protect habitats and rare plant species. Other actions relate to the securing of further research, together with improved measures to facilitate educational use and the introduction and promotion of management measures sensitive to biodiversity.

Archaeology, Architecture and the Built Environment

The architectural, archaeological and cultural significance of The Phoenix Park is due partly to the landscape setting provided for important buildings and monuments, partly to high standards of maintenance, and partly to the international renown of architects and artists whose work survives. Within the overall context of protecting and conserving, and where appropriate restoring, the built heritage, specific actions include further recording and research, the establishment of appropriate management principles and the strengthening of statutory protection.

Access and Movement

The Phoenix Park has an extensive network of roads and is heavily used by commuting traffic. An important objective is to reduce the environmental impact of traffic, including if necessary the restriction of unnecessary traffic from the Park. Access and car parking for recreational use will be improved, based on the establishment of appropriate capacities, whilst the existing network of paths and cycle tracks will be enhanced and linked to similar networks outside of the Park. Other proposed actions relate to monitoring and management tools.

Public Use

The overall objective in relation to public use of The Phoenix Park is to provide a world-class visitor experience within the setting of a national historic park. Specific actions include the formalisation of recreation and events policies, the provision of additional information and facilities for the public and the provision of additional support measures for education.

Management

The key objective is to ensure the highest professional standards in the management and operation of The Phoenix Park. Specific actions include the acquisition of additional data necessary for sustainable management and the securing of the necessary financial and manpower resources to implement the Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan.

The importance of The Phoenix Park in meeting wider sustainability objectives, for example in maintaining quality of life, will be considered in all aspects of Park management and further opportunities for connecting with the wider sustainability agenda will be considered.



The Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan

**Consultation Draft
Executive Summary
March 2009**



Introduction

Preamble

The Phoenix Park is a historic landscape of international importance and one of the largest designed landscapes in any European city. It was originally established as a Royal Deer Park in the 17th century, was substantially re-modelled in the 19th century by Decimus Burton and has largely maintained its character since that time.

Its historic continuity and openness, together with its scale, urban setting and tranquillity, are the attributes that define The Phoenix Park and give it a unique appeal and integrity that compares favourably with other large historic city parks. To-day the Park extends to over 700 hectares and represents a unique natural and cultural landscape that is both a historic park and a city park and which provides a setting for a range of activities and amenities and acts as a location for a number of important public institutions and residences.

The Park is a complex place comprising many components that serve a variety of functions. It is used by large numbers of people and is also a heavily trafficked route between the centre of the city and outlying suburbs. In recent decades, the growth of Dublin has significantly altered the position and use of The Phoenix Park and affected its role and potential.

Management of such a vast and complex park, of great historical and cultural importance, must be both conservative and progressive. The essence of managing historic parks and gardens is continuity. That is, it must strive to maintain, for the benefit of the public, the valuable inheritance of the past, but must also address challenges arising from the inevitability and desirability of change.

Overall responsibility for The Phoenix Park is shared by the Minister for Finance, who is responsible for operational policy and manages the Park through the Commissioners of Public Works, and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, who is responsible for heritage policy.

Principal Issues

The sheer scale of the Park conveys the false impression that it can absorb significant levels of development, whether functional or for amenity, without altering its essential character. This, however, is not the case. The Phoenix Park is a finite resource, the integrity of which is dependent on maintaining its historic character and its openness.

That historic character has been eroded over the years, and continues to be eroded, by the intensification of built development (especially at the eastern end), by the use of the Park for commuting traffic, by increasing levels of car parking and by increasing demands for sporting and other recreational facilities and activities.

The fact that The Phoenix Park is in State ownership should ensure that its protection is guaranteed. This is undoubtedly the view of the public, but is also reflected in the attitude and approach of public authorities.

Plan Process

The Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan supersedes and replaces the Phoenix Park Management Plan of 1986. This draft Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan was developed through a number of research studies and was informed by a series of workshops and consultations, including a public consultation programme. An Advisory Committee oversaw this process.

It aims to balance the responsibility to protect, conserve and enhance the unique landscape, environmental, ecological, wildlife, heritage and vistas of The Phoenix Park with active and creative policies to facilitate wider access and to increase opportunities for enjoyment, information, education and recreation for now and into the future.

The plan is strategic in nature, setting out the vision and strategic objectives for the 21st Century. Within this broader framework, the plan also sets out specific objectives and actions for implementation in the initial five-to-ten year period. Some measures will continue to be implemented as long-term actions.

The Draft Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan and supporting documentation is available in PDF format on the OPW websites www.opw.ie and www.phoenixpark.ie

Vision and Strategic Objectives for the 21st Century

Vision

The long-term vision for The Phoenix Park combines its protection, conservation and where appropriate, restoration as an important and unique historic landscape with the facilitation of appropriate access and use through the accommodation of change in a planned, rational manner. The Park's importance for nature, including flora, fauna and biodiversity will also be conserved, as will the significance of its built heritage. Given the international significance of The Phoenix Park, the goal should be to realise this vision at a standard comparable to the best in the world.

In light of the above, the overall vision of this Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan is:

“To protect and conserve the historic landscape character of The Phoenix Park and its archaeological, architectural and natural heritage whilst facilitating visitor access, education and interpretation, facilitating the sustainable use of the Park’s resources for recreation and other appropriate activities, encouraging research and maintaining its sense of peace and tranquillity.”

The achievement of this vision requires an increase in the awareness and appreciation of the key qualities of the Park, especially its historic landscape character, together with the provision of adequate resources. Given the over-riding importance of the historic designed landscape of The Phoenix Park, priority must be accorded to the conservation of the landscape, even where this restricts or limits the achievement of other objectives relating to the Park.

Strategic Objectives

The following are the **Strategic Objectives** guiding the conservation and management of The Phoenix Park for the 21st Century. The specific objectives and actions outlined in the main report of The Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan expand on these strategic objectives and detail how they will be achieved, with particular regard to the next five-to-ten year period.

1. To protect and conserve the historic landscape character of The Phoenix Park.
2. To protect the historic setting and conserve the archaeological and architectural heritage of The Phoenix Park.
3. To conserve The Phoenix Park’s natural plant and animal species along with their habitats while improving biodiversity.
4. To preserve the peace and tranquillity of The Phoenix Park.
5. To promote an increased understanding and acceptance of the landscape, architectural, cultural, archaeological and biodiversity importance of The Phoenix Park, its extent and significance.
6. To seek appropriate international and national designation status and to seek the enforcement of existing legislative controls.
7. To facilitate an appropriate mix of recreational use and public appreciation that maximises visitor enjoyment and protects the landscape and infrastructure of The Phoenix Park.
8. To manage the levels of traffic within The Phoenix Park and reduce through traffic.
9. To facilitate public access and sustainable use of The Phoenix Park’s resources.
10. To respect the established patterns of recreational use in The Phoenix Park.
11. To facilitate the use of The Phoenix Park as an educational and research resource and to promote appropriate interpretation.
12. To liaise and consult with interested and relevant parties and organizations in the achievement of the above objectives
13. To secure the necessary resources to implement the policies and actions of this Conservation Management Plan.