

Chapter 7 Recreation and Amenity

7.1 Introduction

Recreation and amenity are essential components in the creation of a high quality of life. Drogheda Borough Council recognises the importance of an adequate provision of attractive and conveniently located open spaces throughout the town. Drogheda has a wide variety of open spaces including outdoor sports facilities, parks and gardens, amenity green space and children's play areas, as well as also natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, green corridors and civic spaces. It includes not just land, but also inland bodies of water that offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and which can also act as a visual amenity. Open spaces can provide a variety of functions including active recreation, passive recreation, visual amenity, ecology, drainage management and socio economic needs. The protection of public open space is consistent with the principles of sustainable development.



Drogheda has an attractive physical setting. The Boyne River flows through the heart of the town and there are a number of designated environmental areas of national importance. Drogheda also boasts a rich historical fabric. The integration of Drogheda's natural and built heritage and recreational facilities combine to form an indispensable resource in terms of quality of life for residents.

It is acknowledged that due to lack of land and resources, the opportunities for the development of new facilities e.g. playing fields are limited. Notwithstanding this, the Borough shall endeavour to protect and enhance existing recreation and amenity facilities. The Borough will also resist development that would result in the loss of public or private open space, playing fields, parks, children's play areas and public amenities and facilities.

Strategic Objective 7 Protect and enhance existing recreation and amenity facilities within the Borough and secure the provision of additional facilities subject to demand and availability of land and resources.

7.1.1 Objectives pertaining to Open Space

- Protection of existing green areas and public open spaces which provide for the passive and active recreational needs of the population
- Improvement in the quality and range of recreational uses provided within parks and public open spaces
- Provision of new parks and green spaces with recreational facilities which are designed to a high standard
- Development and improvement of access and linkages between parks and public open spaces

It is important to increase levels of local participation and promote the development of opportunities for all groups to become involved in sports and amenity activities. This is particularly relevant in the case of disadvantaged groups and specific target groups such as the elderly, females, people with disabilities, unemployed people, ethnic minorities and those who live in disadvantaged communities. The provision of both passive and active recreational opportunities should be included in public open space and park lands in order to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

Policy RA 1

Secure the provision of public parks, open spaces and recreational facilities which are well designed, suitably proportioned and accessible to all sections of the community.

7.1.2 Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy and Play Policy

The *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006 – 2012* outlines the Councils' commitment to the development of quality opportunities and facilities for sport, recreation and leisure activities for all through the protection and development of both leisure and amenity resources. The adoption of the *Louth Play Policy in 2006* and its implementation has raised awareness of the need to provide high quality, age appropriate play facilities and opportunities throughout Drogheda for all children.

There is presently a playground at St Dominick's Park, two playgrounds at Moneymore one of which is a multi use games area (MUGA) and a MUGA within the sports grounds at Rathmullen. Planning permission was also recently granted for a MUGA at Rowan Heights. The Council shall endeavour to upgrade existing facilities and provide further playgrounds subject to demand and resources



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Policy RA 2

Implement the *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006 – 2012* and the *Louth Play Policy 2006*.

Require developers to provide play and recreational facilities in new residential areas where there is an identified need.

Resist the loss of recreational and amenity land and facilities and ensure that new developments do not impact negatively on either existing facilities or designations.

7.1.3 Public Parks

Urban parks are a desirable asset. Existing parks in Drogheda contribute to the quality of life and overall sense of well being of those living in the town. Drogheda has experienced significant growth in recent years and large depositories of land have vanished. Public parks and open space should be dispersed in a coherent fashion according to a defined hierarchy and should provide for district, neighbourhood, local and pocket parks. Ideally, all households should have access to each level of open space within the hierarchy, at an acceptable distance.



Despite the scarcity of public parks, many of the green open spaces within the town remain underutilised. Drogheda Borough Council shall endeavour to provide a hierarchy of public parks to meet the needs of residents by developing new public parks on open spaces which are presenting underutilised.

The following table contains details of existing parks in Drogheda and objectives for their upgrading and future development.

Table 7.1: Existing Parks in Drogheda

Name	Approx Size	Objective
St Dominick's Park and the Ramparts walkway	4.9ha	To protect and enhance the existing amenities of the park.
The Glen including the Glen Children's Garden.	4.2ha	To protect and enhance the existing amenities of the park.
Northern side river walk way	5.04ha	To protect and enhance the existing amenities of the park.
Buttergate	1.4ha	To protect and enhance the existing amenities of the park & to protect the town walls.
Rope Walk	0.29ha	To protect and enhance the existing amenities of the park.
The Dale	7.6ha	To enhance the existing amenities for recreation purposes. Protect the areas rich bio-diversity.
Lands adjacent to the bus station, Ballsgrove & Grove Hill	7.2ha	To enhance the existing amenities for recreation purposes. Protect the areas rich bio-diversity.

Policy RA 3

Protect and enhance existing public parks in Drogheda in order to provide for passive and active recreational needs of all sections of the community.

7.1.4 Sports and Recreational Organisations operating in Drogheda

Drogheda has a wide range of sport, leisure and recreation facilities and organisations. The Borough recognises the importance which these play in the quality of life enjoyed by the Borough. There may be benefits to be gained by encouraging the multiple usage of sports, recreational



and community facilities which could help achieve greater efficiencies thus giving wider access to a variety of sports clubs, organisations and the general public. In recent years a number of recreation and sporting facilities have opened in Drogheda including a new purpose built swimming pool and gym on Marleys Lane. This facility will be expanded during the lifetime of the plan. There are also a number of private gyms and leisure facilities within the Plan area including the Boyne Valley Hotel and Country Club, Jackie Skelleys at the MI Retail Park and Westgate Fitness and Leisure Centre at the Boyne Business Park.

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It is acknowledged that some sporting facilities within the Borough such as the athletic facilities at the Lourdes Stadium are in need of modernisation and upgrading. The Lourdes Stadium covers 3.75 acres of land, 60% of which is owned by Drogheda Borough Council and the remainder by the parish of St Peter's. The stadium was built in the 1950's and will undergo redevelopment during the course of the plan.

Louth County Council's, North Drogheda Environs Master Plan has identified lands to the north of the Borough in a newly designated "Neighbourhood Three" where a new campus and sports centre is to be located. This will include provision of a public park and sports facilities catering for the sports and recreational needs of those residing in the Northern Environs Area and also those residing in the Borough itself.

Table 7.2: Sports and Recreational Facilities in Drogheda

Name of Sports Facility	Sports & Recreational Clubs Listed as within Drogheda and Environs
Adventure Sports	Funtasia
Angling	Drogheda & District Anglers & Drogheda Course Anglers Club
Athletic Clubs	Drogheda & District A.C, Boyne A.C
Australian Rules	Drogheda Dockers
Badminton Clubs	Greenhill College Badminton Club & O'Raghallaighs
Basketball Clubs	Bullets & Drogheda Basketball Clubs
Bowls Clubs	Boyne Bowls Club & St Patricks & Stoney Lane Bowls Club
Bridge Clubs	The Gate Bridge Club Donore Bridge Club The Star and Crescent Bridge Club
Road Bowls Clubs	Drogheda and District Road Bowls Club
Boxing Clubs	Drogheda Amateur and Holy Family
Chess Club	Drogheda Chess Club
Cycling Club	Drogheda Wheelers Cycling Club
Gaelic Football Clubs	Newtown Blues GFC; Oliver Plunketts GFC; O Raghallaighs GFC, St Nicholas GFC; Wolfe Tones GFC,
Soccer Clubs	St Lawrence's Gate F.C. River Celtic F.C Drogheda Boys F.C Cedarfield F.C Bay F.C Drogheda Town F.C Boyne Rovers F.C Drogheda United F.C
Handball & Squash	O' Raghallaigh GFC

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Hillwalking	Tredagh Trekkers Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club.
Kayaking, canoeing Club	Silverbridge KC
Martial Arts	Boyne Valley Taekwon Do School & Drogheda School of Karate Judo Club Drogheda.
Pigeon Racing	Boyne Valley
Pitch & Putt Clubs	Cement Road Mc Bride
Rugby	Boyne R.F.C
Snooker	Whitworth Leisure Centre
Special Needs club	One in existence
Swimming and Water Sports	Drogheda Swimming Club Drogheda Water Polo Club
Table Tennis	Saint Paul's Table Tennis Club
Tennis	Boyne Valley Leisure Centre

Policy RA 4

Resist the loss of private sporting and recreational facilities within Drogheda Borough.

Co-operate with local sporting / recreational organisations, community groups and schools to facilitate grouping of sports activities and multiple usage of sports, recreational and community facilities.

Co-operate with local sports and recreation organisations to establish their requirements in relation to space and facilities.

Encourage the development of public private partnerships in the development of the recreational facilities.

Drogheda Borough Council will identify opportunities for the provision of playing fields for the benefit of all citizens of the Borough where such opportunities arise including provision through the Borough Council in conjunction, if appropriate with adjacent local authorities, voluntary groups, the private sector and / or other stakeholders.

Seek to develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders in developing clustered playing fields for the benefit of all sports and recreational organisations with the Borough, within the lifetime of the Plan.

Drogheda Borough Council will identify opportunities for the provision of playing fields for the benefit of all citizens of the Borough where such opportunities arise including provision through the Borough Council in conjunction, if appropriate with adjacent local authorities, voluntary groups, the private sector and/ or other stakeholders, delivered within the lifetime of the Plan.

Seek to develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders in developing clustered playing fields for the for the benefit of all sports and recreational organisations within the Borough.

Table 7.3: Playing Fields and Pitches in Drogheda

Name	Approx Size	Policy Objective
O' Raghallaighs GFC	4.45ha	To protect and preserve the existing pitch and ancillary facilities.
Newtown Blues GFC	3.36ha	To protect and preserve the existing pitch and ancillary facilities.
Jim Pentony Park	2.93ha	To protect and preserve the existing pitch and ancillary facilities.
Sports Ground along Marleys Lane	4.08ha	To protect and preserve the existing playing fields and ancillary facilities.
Oliver Plunketts	2.66ha	To protect and preserve the existing pitch and ancillary facilities.
Moneymore Playing Fields	3.38ha	To protect and preserve the existing playing fields and ancillary facilities.

Drogheda Borough Council will resist the loss of playing facilities and insist that where proposed developments would result in a reduction or loss, provision of replacement facilities be provided at an accessible location.

7.1.5 Integration of Natural Heritage and Recreation

Open space, whether or not there is public access to it, is important for its contribution to the quality of urban life. Open space contributes positively to the character, attractiveness and vitality of Drogheda. Open space also provides a range of other functions including;

- Providing valuable areas for nature conservation and promotion of biodiversity
- Acting as a buffer between conflicting land uses
- Helping to reduce and alleviate flood risk
- Providing pedestrian linkages
- Providing 'green lungs' which can assist in meeting improving air quality which is vital in built up urban areas such as Drogheda

Ultimately open space and the use of such space contributes to the health and quality of life for all. Drogheda Borough Council shall strive to improve access to existing open spaces through the provision, where feasible, of pedestrian accesses and routes to form a town wide network.

7.1.6 Riverwalk Way along the Boyne

The River Boyne flows through the heart of the Drogheda. The people of Drogheda have benefited from the attractive natural environment provided by the River Boyne with the opening of the Ramparts River Walk on the southern side of the Boyne. This provides an active recreational open space where people from all sections of society can enjoy walking, jogging and cycling in a safe and secure environment. In order to capitalise fully on the river's potential, all developments fronting the Boyne will be required to provide a continuous public boardwalk or walkway along the stretch of the river and adhere to specific development criteria for this walkway. Any proposals for walkway development must comply with policy HC 12 (Chapter 4) with respect to design and impact on Natura 2000 sites beyond the Heritage Quarter.

7.1.7 Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way enable the enjoyment of high quality amenity areas and are an economic asset to the Borough. Drogheda Borough Council is committed to preserving public rights of way, creating new ones where deemed appropriate and promoting greater use of existing ones.

Policy RA 5

Develop a public pedestrian / cycle network by preserving and protecting existing rights of way and by creating new rights of way in the interest of amenity and as the opportunity or need arises.

7.1.8 Ecological Corridors

An ecological corridor is used by wildlife, potentially allowing movement of flora and fauna between two areas. Ecological corridors are a key element in the creation of an ecological network.

Ecological corridors have the vital role of facilitating the movement and migration of species between core and adjacent areas. Ecological corridors can be provided by roadside verges, railway lines, rivers and other such features. They may vary in size and shape.

Drogheda Borough Council will investigate the feasibility of designating ecological corridors linking the selected potential biodiversity rich sites identified in the Drogheda Biodiversity Strategy 2008. The Council shall also examine the possibility of integrating and linking ecological corridors with areas of public open space.

Policy RA 6

Identify and protect and enhance ecological corridors, based upon existing natural and manmade features.

Link and integrate ecological corridors with areas of public open space.

7.1.9 The Boyne River

The Boyne River is an important amenity feature for the inhabitants of the town and the surrounding area. It requires protection particularly having regard to Loughboy Callows designation as part of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC as well as, the designation of Stragrennan Polder as a part of the Boyne Estuary SPA. Stragrennan Polder has been rezoned as open space thereby reflecting its ecological and biodiversity importance

A strip of land to the south of the Boyne has been also been rezoned as public open space providing an important ecological corridor between the existing open space to the south of the Boyne and the Stragrennan Polder.

The Council shall investigate opportunities to provide access for passive recreational and amenity purposes in these areas subject to the preparation of an appropriate assessment where there may be infringement upon a Natura 2000 site.

Policy RA 7

To investigate the potential of facilitating non invasive access to the River Boyne utilising, where feasible buffer zones between Natura 2000 sites and surrounding development. Any proposals which might impinge upon the integrity of a Natura 2000 site shall ensure that a screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment is carried out. Where required, full Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out for any plan or project which, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant direct or indirect impact on any Natura 2000 site.