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Royal Canal Urban Greenway 2nd non-statutory Public Consultation

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the second non-statutory consultation on the Royal Canal Urban Greenway. We have looked in detail at the Preferred Route that is being proposed by Fingal County Council, and we are broadly supportive of it.

The refurbishment of the 12th Lock to Ashtown section of the Greenway has resulted in significant usage of this stretch of the Greenway and we look forward to seeing similar usage on the proposed route once completed. The completion of this section of the Greenway will have a positive impact for those living in Dublin 15. Children will be able to use the Greenway to travel to school safely and commuters will be able to use it to travel to work, which will see a reduction in traffic on our roads. Perhaps most significantly, the Greenway will be used recreationally by locals and by tourists. Once completed, the 12th Lock to Kildare border part of the Greenway, will allow users to travel from Dublin to the Shannon unhindered.

We recognise the concerns expressed by some residents, regarding the opening up of the areas behind their homes by the Greenway, in the public meeting held by the Green Party in 2019, in submissions to the first public consultation, and in email correspondence.

We note the changes that have been made to the proposal with fewer cul de sacs being opened up and the advice from the Crime Prevention Office of An Garda Síochána in terms of

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the height of boundary treatments, the use of defensive planting and their commitment to engage with Fingal County Council in relation to the final route option. We have also noted that the path of the bridge proposed over the canal between Castleknock and Coolmine has been altered to address concerns raised in the first public consultation in relation to a loss of privacy.

This submission highlights further improvements we feel that could be made to the Greenway in order to ensure sure that we end up with a piece of infrastructure which will be used and enjoyed for generations to come.

Kind regards,

Roderic O’Gorman, TD, Cllr Pamela Conroy and Cllr Daniel Whooley

Deep Sinking – Choice of the North Bank route

Throughout the public consultation process, the question of whether the Greenway should run on the North or South Bank of the Canal between Coolmine and Castleknock stations has been one of the most controversial. Having examined the Preferred Route that is currently being proposed by Fingal County Council in detail, we believe that siting the route on the North Bank is supported by the studies and material that have been provided.

With specific reference to the proposal to use the North Bank on the Deep Sinking, the *Feasibility and Constraints Study* outlines a range of reasons why the South Bank has not been chosen such as permeability, safety and the visual impact on the canal. Similarly, the *Route Options Assessment – Main Report* outlines potential risks for the anchoring structures for any cantilever boardwalk built on the South Bank, once the works for DART+ are undertaken. This is supported by the submission made by Irish Rail in relation to the Preferred Route which states that putting the Greenway on the North Bank will “ensure that the DART+ West project and train services are not adversely impacted”.

In terms of the respective environmental impact of the two routes on this section, we note the impact that a greenway cantilever boardwalk would have on the South Bank, necessitating the removal of virtually all existing trees and plant-life. We believe that such an approach would have a negative impact on the Canal, with the South Bank being completely exposed and barren in sections. This part of the Canal towpath is particularly visually attractive and should be protected.

Cul de sacs between Castleknock and Coolmine

Throughout the consultation process so far, some residents living in Delwood, Brompton and Lambourn estates have raised concerns about access points from their estates to the Greenway being opened. While we recognise the need for access to the Greenway, this should be balanced with the feelings of residents who live on the cul de sacs which Fingal

County Council proposes to be open. We note that in the preferred route, the original access point previously proposed for Lambourn has been omitted.

We propose that Fingal County Council remove the Delwood Close and Brompton Grove access points. Provision of access points can be reviewed with residents in a few years time. Dublin City Council has done something similar at Sheriff Street when it was proposed that the cul de sac be opened onto the Royal Canal Greenway there. DCC kept the cul de sac closed, with the understanding that it would be reviewed in a number of years to establish if public feeling had changed and if the residents wanted access to the Greenway at that point.

We feel a single opening onto the green space at Brompton would provide the access that the Council is looking to achieve for residents of Roselawn and Blanchardstown, while maintaining the privacy of the cul de sacs. This space is currently open, with people walking and cycling through on a regular basis so the impact of providing access to the Greenway via this location is not the same as opening cul de sacs. We note and welcome the fact that the Council will be segregating the Greenway from the green space in Brompton by a fence and planting.

Parking Management

During the first round of public consultation, and this current consultation, many submissions were made highlighting concerns in relation to additional vehicles parking in estates near the Royal Canal Greenway. This was a particular concern raised by those residents living in Roselawn, Delwood and Brompton if the Greenway was to be sited on the North Bank near their homes.

We welcome the fact that Fingal County Council intends to implement a parking management strategy in Roselawn, Delwood and Brompton. However, we feel that this parking management strategy needs to be extended to other areas along the Royal Canal Greenway such as, for example, Kirkpatrick, Riverwood, Station Court and the area around the Old Navan Road. Many of these areas already experience problems when it comes to parking as commuters often park their vehicles for the day and take the train to work. Therefore, it is important that the parking management strategy is not limited to the Roselawn, Delwood and Brompton areas.

It is important that before implementing any parking management strategy, that Fingal County Council consult with local residents to establish a system that centres on their needs. Residents will need parking passes to give to those visiting their homes. A time limit for parking should be considered to discourage commuter parking.

When creating a parking management strategy, it is vital that Fingal County Council include accessible parking where it can. One of the major benefits of the Greenway is that it is accessible to all, and adequate parking should be provided to ensure that those who require accessible parking are facilitated.

Lighting

While the Greenway should be properly lit for accessibility and security reasons, we would like the Council to consider low level (height-wise) lighting along the Greenway, similar to what Irish Rail are proposing on the DART+ pedestrian and cycle bridge at Coolmine. Low level lighting would minimise the lighting up of back gardens along sections of the Greenway close to houses, as well as minimising the impact of lighting on wildlife.

Security

We ask that the Council consider the inclusion of CCTV along the Greenway as an additional security measure to those already included in the current proposal.

Environment/Biodiversity

We note the *Route Options Assessment – Main Report*, which outlines the environmental surveys that have been done on both the North and South Banks of the Canal. We recognise the importance of the North Bank, between Granard and Kirkpatrick bridges, as a wildlife corridor. Building the greenway along the top edge of the North Bank means that it will, for the most part, avoid the high-value wooded areas. Siting the Greenway here will ensure that the wildlife corridor between the greenway and the canal is preserved and protected into the future, while also maintaining the original environment on the south bank and around both edges of the canal.

While we welcome the use of defensive planting along the route we request that native plants and trees are used as far as possible.

Access point – Hansfield

The current preferred route does not show any access points between the Royal Canal Urban Greenway and Hansfield. It is important that there is access to the Greenway from Hansfield in order to provide residents with access to the Greenway so that they can access it easily in order to travel to work, school or use it for recreational purposes.

Road crossings

At some points along the Preferred Route the Greenway crosses roads. We feel that traffic calming measures should be considered in the design of these crossings to ensure the safety of users of the Greenway.

Any pedestrian crossings included at these points should have extended green lights for those crossing the road to allow those with mobility issues who are using the greenway sufficient time to cross the road safely.

Kissing Gates/Barriers

Reference has been made in the consultation documents and briefings to the need for calming measures for cyclists along the greenway, particularly around schools, and barriers to stop scramblers from gaining access to the Greenway. We request that any barriers which are considered by the council do not include kissing gates. Kissing gates cause accessibility issues for those using wheelchairs or walking aids, prams and pushchairs, bikes, cargo bikes and those with disabilities who have bicycles designed for their needs. Kissing gates are opposed by the National Council for the Blind of Ireland, the Irish National Wheelchair Association and the Dublin Cycling Campaign.

It should also be noted that recently Waterways Ireland have removed kissing gates along the Grand Canal. Including kissing gates along the Royal Canal Greenway route would be at odds with the decision taken by Waterways Ireland to remove them elsewhere.

Amenities

The current drawings or videos do not show any amenities, such as toilets, benches, bins or contactless water fountains, along the Greenway. Inclusion of these amenities should be considered as part of the final design as they would enhance the Royal Canal Urban Greenway. Benches or rest stops would make the Greenway more accessible to those with mobility issues.

Contactless water fountains would provide refreshment for those using the Greenway. Bins should be located at access points to minimise littering along the Greenway route.

As the Greenway will be a fully accessible recreational option in Dublin 15, the council should look to incorporate a Changing Places (fully accessible toilets) along the route. The inclusion of accessible toilets should also be considered.

Heritage

We feel that the Council should use the opportunity provided by the completion of this section of the Royal Canal Greenway to create a Heritage Trail along this section. Information could be displayed on Fingal's heritage signage in relation to the construction of the canal at the deep sinking, the wildlife that can be seen in the area as well as the built heritage such as bridges and the Old Clonsilla Schoolhouse.