

**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil:** SD-C195-284

**Údar:** Clare Hamilton

**Stádas:** Submitted

**Submission:**

Ringfence certain areas (existing and potential) for biodiversity

**Comhairliúchán:**

Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 - 2028

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## Chapter 4: Green Infrastructure

**Caibidil:** Volume 1: Written Statement » Chapter 4: Green Infrastructure

The Green Infrastructure plans are very welcome and essential in the midst of a biodiversity crisis. As we are in a crisis, SDCC need to be even more ambitious and include all natural streams and waterways for protection, not just specific waterways such as the Dodder. The biodiversity along streams such as Woodstown Stream deserve the same level of protection from developments, removal of riparian landscape and existing hedgerow etc as any other stream. Woodstown Stream flows down from the start of the Dublin Mountains through Stocking Woods into Woodstown and would be perfect for development as a GI, especially as a 1.5km stretch of streamside walkway already exists in Knocklyon Park / Woodstown Village and connects the Dublin Mountains to the M50 corridor. An area of meadow land within Knocklyon Park, bordering Woodstown Stream is already showing signs of reforestation with Oak, Ash, Blackthorn, Whitethorn, Spindle, Dog Rose, Willow, Elder and Holly all self seeding and flourishing. It is fantastic to see this young forest begin, alongside a centuries old protected hedgerow which is providing the seeds! However, an area of scrub exists along the Southern side of Woodstown Stream, bordered by Knocklyon Park, White Pines (c/o another tributary sometimes also referred to as Woodstown Stream), Stocking Well Close and the playground by Stocking Well Close. This area is rich in habitat and has pockets of habitat undisturbed by human activity. This land is zoned as park land but is rough and unkempt and thus perfect for wildlife. It would be great to see areas like this ringfenced for protection mainly for biodiversity with the balance tilted in favour of biodiversity as opposed to recreation (bearing in mind this area is not an amenity area at present).

**Trees:** Trees along our waterways should be automatically protected. Many hedgerows in areas earmarked for development are subject to tree surveys which always seem to identify lots of 'low quality' or dying trees suitable for removal. In a healthy hedgerow / woodland, dying trees would be replaced naturally by regrowth, but with regrowth impossible due to developments seeking to maximise their sites, the net trees in a hedgerow within a development area, even if protected, is greatly reduced than had the development not occurred. Please consider even more areas for woodland development or meadow. Really, only areas designated for sports and recreation should be tight grass - all our other public grass areas should transition towards meadow for pollinators or woodland where suitable (through natural reforestation or the fantastic stepping stone forests).

**Drainage:** More efforts should be made to encourage porous ground in public / private areas as opposed to tarmac / concrete.

Whilst it is fantastic to read of plans to include GI in planning decisions and to see many mentions of waterway and habitat protection and enhancement, there is little point in including these if they are only aspirational. What is the point in having an objective to protect waterways in the future if we ignore the fact that huge amounts of damaging litter have been left accumulate in our waterways for years, blocking the waterways and killing wildlife and contributing to flooding issues. SDCC have let themselves down terribly in this regard and were it not for teams for volunteers such as Dodder Action group- what state would our waterways be in? It is not acceptable for SDCC to state these admirable objectives if there is no intent to empower their own staff to enforce protection so hopefully SDCC will ensure sufficient funds for active cleaning of our waterways from here on. A similar point could be made about increasing funds to tackle littering in our parks and forests. We may wish that education is the key to tackling littering but sadly, once human activity in an area increases, so does littering so assuming passive methods like education will eliminate litter is an experiment where only the wildlife navigating the increased litter suffer the consequences.

Lastly, the biodiversity aspirations in the plan are great - and hopefully the ecobridges etc will appear in the lifetime of the plan. However, watching various Part 8 developments rip through the LAP in the last few years has been beyond disheartening with only developers winning. The sheer amount of submissions from developers regarding this LAP is concerning but please remember that though we desperately need houses - we can't undo the damage of destroying existing habitats, hedgerows and streamside woodland by throwing a pack of wildflower seeds onto a green in the resulting estate. There are no options for the biodiversity to reconsider their locations, but there is for developers so please ensure biodiversity objectives are backed up with clear, solid regulations and enforcement as we tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis - this is vital to protect biodiversity for our future generations!

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**Documents Attached:** Níl