

“That Cork County Council would initiate its commitment to Green Infrastructure outlined in the Cork County Development Plan 2014 by ensuring the critical elements of green infrastructure within Cork County are identified and mapped during the remaining lifetime of the County Development Plan 2014:

- Biodiversity and ecological networks
- Water quality and flood attenuation infrastructure
- Recreational/quality of life infrastructure.”

I wish green infrastructure wasn't called green infrastructure. It makes it sound like some flowery, esoteric concept that costs a fortune.

It isn't. In a modern society, with our increasing knowledge, our awareness of the finite nature of the earth's resources and the impact of our footprint on them, the concept of green infrastructure is no longer a luxury. It is basic.

Green infrastructure is an interconnected network of green spaces which conserve the natural functions of ecosystems. These ecosystems don't just perform for their own sake: they deliver benefits to humans like purifying water, cleaning the air, giving us space for recreation, mitigating against climate change. Essentially whilst improving environmental conditions and enhancing biodiversity, they improve job opportunities, protect human health and improve the quality of our living spaces. We're very good at grey infrastructure. We're very good at driving big roads through green fields, constructing shopping centres on the last remaining pocket of green land in a town centre and expanding towns out into surrounding farmland. In fact, we're so good at it that our focus becomes all about the funding to do these things that drive our economic indicators higher.

Green infrastructure is based on the principle that protecting and enhancing nature and natural processes, and the many benefits human society gets from nature, are consciously integrated into our planning and development. It is not a constraint on development but a different – and seeing as our society is all about numbers, often cheaper – way of looking at development. It is always worthwhile. Research shows us that reduced access to the natural environment can result in social isolation, obesity and chronic stress. It shows us that human contact with nature is valuable for mental health. Green spaces act as a filter to improve air quality, water quality. And so on.

This concept is so basic that the National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Planning Guidelines and the government's guidelines for Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas all don't merely spout the benefits of Green Infrastructure, they require us to plan for it. The European Commission's Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to create a framework for progress in this area. And Chapter 13 of the Cork County Development Plan 2014 is devoted to talking about how this County Council will plan for green infrastructure.

Objective GI 2-1 of the County Development Plan commits to developing and implementing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Cork County during the lifetime of the plan which will help to identify, protect, manage and develop Green Infrastructure resources.

Objective GI 3-1 is to require new developments to contribute to the protection, management and enhancement of the existing green infrastructure of the county and the delivery of new green infrastructure, where appropriate, while Objective GI 3-2 is to require significant new developments (multiple residential developments including Part 8 applications) to submit a green infrastructure plan as an integral part of any planning application.

We have no definition of significant or of multiple nor can I recall having yet seen a single green infrastructure plan submitted with any planning application. We are three years into our CDP, we have had a review to see how it is going, the rate of house building is accelerating nationally and we definitely don't want another legacy of estates isolated without footpaths to the local road network. So I ask your support for putting Objective GI 2-1 of the CDP into action

This motion is on the agenda since 27th March. No response.

13.2.3 There are a number of key themes which the Green Infrastructure Strategy will seek to address which include;

- Sustainable Water Management.
- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.
- Recreation and Amenity Provision.
- Landscape Protection.
- Biodiversity Protection.
- Archaeological and Architectural Heritage Protection.
- Flood Risk / Alleviation.

13.2.4 In future, all Local Area Plans will include a list of key environmental assets at a local level in line with the County Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Green infrastructure is a **strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas** with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation. This network of green (land) and blue (water) spaces can improve environmental conditions and therefore citizens' health and quality of life. It also supports a green economy, creates job opportunities and enhances biodiversity. The Natura 2000 network constitutes the backbone of the EU green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure planning is a successfully tested tool to provide **environmental, economic and social benefits through natural solutions** and help reduce dependence on 'grey' infrastructure that is often more expensive to build and maintain.

GI is a successfully tested tool for providing ecological, economic and social benefits through natural solutions. It helps us to understand the value of the benefits that nature provides to human society and to mobilise investments to sustain and enhance them. It also helps avoid relying on infrastructure that is expensive to build when nature can often provide cheaper, more durable solutions. Many of these create local job opportunities. Green Infrastructure is based on the principle that protecting and enhancing nature and natural processes, and the many benefits human society gets from nature, are consciously integrated into spatial planning and territorial development. Compared to single-purpose, grey infrastructure, GI has many benefits. It is not a constraint on territorial development but promotes natural solutions if they are the best option. It can sometimes offer an alternative, or be complementary, to standard grey solutions.

GI is the network of natural and semi-natural areas, features and green spaces in rural and urban, terrestrial, freshwater and coastal areas (Naumann *et al.*, 2011a)[1]. It is a broad concept, and includes natural features, such as parks, forests, wetlands and marine areas, as well as man-made features, such as cycle paths

G.I places a particular emphasis on the "life support" functions provided by Nature, which policy makers call "natural assets management". It's a mutually sustaining cycle – a 'win-win'. The G.I approach analyses the natural environment in a way that highlights these functions and seeks to establish, through regulatory and planning policy, practices that maximize these functions.

Wicklow Co Co has a Green Infrastructure Development Plan Strategy 2016 – 2022

Green Infrastructure (GI) can be broadly defined as *'an interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations. Green Infrastructure is the ecological framework needed for environmental, social and economic sustainability – in short it is a nation's natural life sustaining system*

Green infrastructure can include varying land uses - pasture lands, croplands, woodlands, heath, bog, scrubland, quarries, parks, formal and informal green spaces, active and passive spaces, areas around domestic and nondomestic buildings, brownfield areas, waterways, waterbodies, waterway corridors, wetlands, coastal areas, and community/institutional lands such as hospitals, schools, graveyards, allotments and community gardens. Heritage Sites, Natura 2000 site and NHAs are also important GI sites/assets.

Regional Planning Guidelines: Each Council should prepare a county based Green Infrastructure Strategy linking to adjoining areas and following regional connections, and implement GI strategies in local area plans and development management processes. (Local authorities, shall where necessary, liaise with each other to ensure consistency in delivering regionally identified green infrastructure development as part of their green infrastructure strategies).

It is also important to recognise the economic, social, environmental and physical benefit of green spaces and networks through the development of and integration of GI planning and development in the development management process.

Fingal: For major developments a green infrastructure plan will be required as an integral part of proposals for development

GI involves natural and managed green areas in both urban and rural settings (b) is about the strategic connection of open green areas and (c) that GI should provide multiple benefits for people

high-performing green spaces, or green infrastructure, provides real economic, ecological, and social benefits. Integrating green infrastructure into the built environment must be a priority.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/enveco/biodiversity/pdf/GI_DICE_FinalReport.pdf

The planned European Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to create the framework for progress in this area and, more specifically, support Target 2 of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020.

Successful implementation, however, asks for the integration of green infrastructure considerations into other policies and sectors within Europe.

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/perfect/news/news-article/660/a-perfect-start-to-new-green-infrastructure-project/>

PERFECT (Planning for Environment and Resource eFFiciency in European Cities and Towns) is a new INTERREG Europe project on maximising the multiple benefits of green infrastructure, being led by the Town and Country Planning Association

(TCPA). The purpose of the project is to highlight the potential that green infrastructure has in creating resilient and prosperous regions