

Éamon de Buítléar Park

A proposal for a park, with water feature and nature trail, on public open space at the Three Trout Stream bridge in Delgany Village Blackberry Lane/Priory Road.

Notes; This plan is open to ongoing modification in accordance with the wishes of the local community and the county council.

The proposal must respect both the zoning and the long term objectives for the area as stated in the 2013-2019 Delgany Greystones and Kilcoole Local Area Plan. It must respect the privacy of adjacent private landowners, while allowing public access to the vast majority of the site which is zoned as "Open Space". This is defined "*to preserve, provide for and improve public and private open space*". "*Uses generally appropriate for open space zoned land include tourism and recreational uses, community facilities, open space, sports grounds, public utilities, civic amenity and ancillary developments for open space uses in accordance with the County Development Plan.*" Much of the site is also marked as "floodplain" on council maps.

As well as creating a public amenity, the plan should also facilitate better local pedestrian and cyclist "permeability" within the village area, in line with best planning practice. It is anticipated that the community park plan can be implemented using a mixture of both national and local funding.

Map Key

The following numbers correspond with the numbers marked on the associated map plan.

1. Social housing unit. Social housing should be integrated into any community, and as a council house existed previously on the site (recently demolished by WCC and replaced by a mobile home) the proposal should allow for the development of a new and properly built social housing unit in the same area of high ground along Priory Road as the existing mobile home. This particular part of the site is zoned "RE - Existing Residential" which is defined; "*To protect, and preserve existing residential uses and provide for infill residential development. To protect provide and improve residential amenities of adjoining properties and areas while allowing for infill residential development that reflects the established character of the area in which it is located.*" Therefore any such house would have to be designed and built in such a way as to blend in with the other houses in the area, and without detracting from the amenity of the neighbouring houses.

The immediate curtilage of this proposed new social housing would be considered a strictly *private* open space, for the purposes of the general public who would be accessing the remaining *public* open space area (in the same way as the adjacent privately owned properties would be).

2. The Band Hall, its history and environs. This building was formerly dedicated to community use, but in recent years it has unfortunately been boarded up, and undoubtedly the structure of the building will have deteriorated somewhat due to dampness and disuse. It is believed that the 2 Acre site (0.81 Hectare) was originally donated by the La Touche family, for the purposes of public benefit and the use of the Delgany community, in the latter part of the 19th century.

The Band Hall was subsequently built by locals for band practice (conveniently out of the earshot of the general village population).

A treatment plant which was known as *Delgany Sewage Works* was built by the local authority of the day; Rathdown District Council.

In the modern era, the treatment plant was downgraded to become a pumping relay station by Wicklow County Council, which nowadays pumps the wastewater on to the modern municipal treatment plant in Greystones. The former soakaway areas of the redundant plant quickly returned to nature, and a rich ecosystem of native woodland established itself throughout most of the site. Small herds of deer could occasionally be seen emerging from their hiding place inside the riparian woodland, and crossing Blackberry Lane into the grounds of Stylebawn House.

Then, in November 2015, WCC moved machinery onto the site, and without any prior warning or public consultation, began felling the trees. A large section of the most low lying part of the site was cleared, hard standings suitable for caravans or mobile homes were installed, and some concrete septic holding tanks were installed adjacent to the Three Trout Stream, on the floodplain and below the water level. Local people objected to these works on the basis that they contravened planning laws, national Building Regulations, the EU Habitats Directive, and the EU Water directive.

WCC then changed tack, covered over the hard standings and septic holding tanks, leaving behind the scarred landscape that can be seen today around the floodplain area. An existing semi-derelict council house on the higher ground was demolished, one single hard stand was installed in its place, and a new mobile home was installed with a water and sewage connection to the adjacent pumping station. When a number of unauthorised traveller caravans appeared shortly afterwards, and installed themselves on the lower ground of the cleared floodplain, WCC removed them and installed a line of ugly concrete barriers along the road outside the perimeter fence.

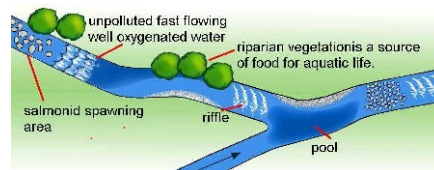
This takes us up to the present day, where we now have an ugly and under-utilised patch of wasteland with a poorly maintained Band Hall building, in place of what should be a valued community amenity and wildlife haven.

3. Water feature. This large pond will form an attractive entrance to the site, while also forming a barrier against unauthorised vehicular incursions onto the site. It is envisaged that the water feature will be easily viewable by passing motorists and pedestrians on the road at Blackberry Lane, and also from parts of any future development at the adjacent Stylebawn House site, on the other side of the bridge. The water feature will be dug out adjacent to the north riverbank of the Three Trout Stream, and will fill with fresh water naturally. The unused septic holding tanks that were previously installed in this area will be removed and broken up/disposed of. Before any more excavation works proceed, the area will be carefully inspected for the presence of the invasive species known as Japanese

Knotweed. A small patch of this invasive plant had existed for several years along the roadside at the bridge, but works by council machinery during 2015 may well have spread the rhizomes of this prohibited plant throughout the site. Specialists began treating the original patch of Japanese Knotweed at the bridge in 2016, which work is currently ongoing.

When finished the new pond will quickly become a magnet for native plants and wildlife, including ducks, herons, possibly swans, possibly otters, frogs, newts, dragonflies and various species of fish. It will be essentially self-maintaining, as it will have its own supply of fresh water from the stream.

The Three Trouts Stream is designated as an important biodiversity area in Appendix C of the 2013-2019 Delgany Greystones and Kilcoole Local Area Plan; *"The Three Trouts stream which feeds the Glen of The Downs SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and flows into the sea between Charlesland Golf Club and the Driving Range is a natural asset for the area and its importance cannot be underestimated. It is an important stream that contains migrating sea trout, eels, grey heron, dipper and otters and provides a strong natural wildlife corridor/refuge that divides the Delgany/Greystones area. No other designated areas occur in the area."* The proposed pond would enhance and improve the biodiversity capacity of the stream, and can provide an extra habitat for the young of the aforementioned sea trout and eels, before they return to the sea.



This diagram is taken from the Eastern Fisheries Board document *"Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries*

Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites". As the river is known to contain certain "salmonids" (brown trout and sea trout) there is a legal requirement to consult with the Fisheries Board before undertaking any works adjacent to it. We will respect these requirements, and take on board any suggestions or instructions they may have. From the diagram it can be seen that the three main elements required for these species are a) a fast flowing stream with gravel beds for spawning, b) riparian (riverbank) vegetation to encourage insects for food, and c) a slow moving pool or pond in which the young fish can grow. It is hoped that the plan as outlined above will meet with their approval in that it incorporates all these elements, and can actually enhance and improve the suitability of the habitat, as compared to what is there at present.

For safety reasons there will be a shallow edge area surrounding the pond (zone A) where the water depth is no more than 30cm. Beyond this shelf (extending out to approx 1.5 metres) the depth will increase gradually in zone B to a maximum depth of approx 1.2 metres; a depth more suited to fish and diving ducks. A weir maintains the water level. Some stone reinforcement may be applied to the far bank of the stream, but there will be no interference with the private property to the south.

4. This is a sloped earth bank topped by a low stone wall at the roadside. The bank is necessitated and created by the difference in height between the road and the water level. A few bare-stemmed trees planted along here such as Scots Pine and/or Silver Birch could enhance the overall scene when viewed from the road.

5. A small car parking area to take 3 or 4 cars will facilitate visitors. Essentially, this area already exists and is currently used as the temporary access entrance for the footpath up to the mobile home. A lockable steel barrier (as commonly used at forest entrances) would prevent unauthorised vehicular access beyond this point (to the Band Hall) A pedestrian swing gate adjacent to the steel barrier would be permanently open. The final arrangement would be confirmed to adequately facilitate wheelchair access. It has been suggested that a memorial seat dedicated to Éamon de Buitléar would be installed just inside the entrance, overlooking the water. Éamon was a highly respected former resident of Delgany village, whose love of nature and wildlife inspired many generations of Irish people, not just locally but throughout the nation. One or more picnic tables could also be installed here.

6. Provision for the Greenway route to continue westwards into the development site at Stylebawn House. The exact nature of this to be agreed as part of any future planning permission between the owner/developer, Wicklow County Council (WCC) Delgany Community Council (DCC), and Delgany Tidy Towns (DTT).

If there was a pedestrian link up through the Stylebawn grounds, to any future commercial/retail buildings situated along the main street (R762), then a safe pedestrian crossing could be installed here, opposite the Old Burial Ground. Currently the alternative nearby 4-way junction at the top of Blackberry Lane/Priory Road is a very unsafe place for pedestrians to cross the road, although this situation might be improved if/when the traffic calming measures as proposed in the 2018 Part 8 Delgany Village Accessibility Scheme are implemented.

7. Provision for the Greenway route to continue eastwards beyond the park itself. The Greenway would form a valuable link for pedestrians/cyclists between Delgany village and the Charlesland residential area, and on to the coast, which would be very good for local hospitality businesses. This Greenway along the stream has been a long term objective of WCC, and accordingly a linear strip of land along here has been zoned "OS" - open space in successive Local Area Plans.

8. At this point, in the longer term, the Greenway route crosses Priory road at the second road bridge and continues towards the nearby "Jacobs Ladder" pedestrian bridge route, which in turn passes through the nearby Glenair housing development. That path, in turn, forms part of the Delgany Heritage Trail.

For the purposes of this proposed park, this Point 8 on the map is the second access point into the site. The access point needs to be recessed slightly into the existing wall to protect pedestrians from passing cars while they wait to cross the bridge. This recess would also greatly enhance the safety of other pedestrians walking on Priory Road when crossing the bridge, even if they did not intend to access the site.

Some steps or a ramp would need to be built here, due to the difference in height between the road and the path within the site. There is also a tributary ditch into the Three Trouts Stream which needs to be crossed. This tributary takes stormwater from drains along Priory

Road and excess water from a roadside trough outside the entrance to the old ICA Hall. Therefore a small ornate stone footbridge similar to the one at the Jacobs Ladder could be considered, or as a cheaper option the tributary could be culverted inside a concrete pipe.

9. An informal Nature Trail (unsurfaced) winds its way off the main path, and through an area to be replanted with native trees. Local primary schools (St. Laurence's School and Delgany National School) will be encouraged to participate in this. It will be possible for staff and pupils to walk to the Nature Trail in groups. It is envisaged that nest boxes for birds, squirrels and bats will be installed around the Nature Trail, and the children will be encouraged to monitor these.

10. The main hard surfaced Greenway route will pass through the site, roughly following the line of the stream, but slightly set back from it. The vegetation and riparian woodland immediately adjacent to the riverbank will be retained in an undisturbed state.

The Greenway along here must be capable of withstanding the occasional river flooding, during which times users would have to divert along Priory Road.

11. This is the splayed entrance to the existing pumping station. These gates are occasionally used by maintenance engineers attached to WCC and/or Irish Water or Veolia. Between the pumping station and the road there is a narrow overgrown avenue leading to the social housing unit, which already benefits from the existing street lighting on Priory Road. This entrance could be reinstated as the main vehicular entrance to the proposed new council house.

12. Water trough. The roadside water trough adjacent to the old ICA hall is a receptacle for stormwater run off from the higher ground above it. If rainwater collects at the bottom of the hill in the vicinity of the bridge, instead of draining through pipes from the trough alongside the road into the tributary, it creates a traffic hazard at the bridge (aquaplaning). Any works conducted between the trough and the bridge must avoid impeding this roadside drainage, and if possible seek to improve it.

13. The existing temporary "pedestrian only" pathway access to the mobile home can be allowed to return to nature. In a previous planning application on the site in 2007 it was acknowledged that the entrance to any residential development would have to be on Priory Road due to the substandard nature of the junction at Blackberry Lane. The hill at that point is so steep and slippery as to be unusable in certain weather conditions. It is unreasonable to expect the residents of the mobile home to carry their shopping down the steep hill of Blackberry Lane and then up the long pedestrian pathway from the bridge to the social housing unit, which is actually located on Priory Road.