

Dublin Mountains Project

What is the concept?

At a high level the Dublin Mountains Project is a proposal by South Dublin County Council, Coillte and the Dublin Mountains Partnership to develop Coillte's Montpelier Hill (incorporating the Hell Fire Club) and Massy's Wood sites as a key recreation site and a gateway to the heritage and recreation amenities of the Dublin Mountains. The site was selected for its position at the threshold between city and mountains, its unique combination of landscape, natural and cultural heritage representing the essence of the Dublin Mountains, and its established and growing use as a recreation facility.

It is proposed to develop enhanced visitor facilities on the site in a manner sensitive to the environment, the local community and existing users. The concept (under review as part of the ongoing design process) presently includes development of a mixed forest to replace conifer plantations, improved networks of trails including a footbridge over the road to connect Hellfire and Massy's forests, conservation measures and sensitive interpretation of heritage, and visitor facilities such as a café, toilets and services to cater for the needs of local people, dedicated ramblers and tourists.

Key objectives for the Council, Coillte and the DMP in setting out on this Project included;

- A place of welcome and orientation for visitors to the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains - acting as the recognised launching point to access the network of walks and trails in the Dublin Mountains to provide the highest possible quality visitor enjoyment of the landscape and its key cultural, archaeological, geological and natural features;
- Improved managed, balanced and sustainable access across all modes and improved visitor experience of the Dublin Mountains through the provision and enhancement of services and infrastructure;
- A project that makes the Mountains a legible and coherent destination for visitors - in physical and service terms;



- A plan to protect and interpret the heritage of the Dublin Mountains, including opportunities for interactivity and learning, including a calendar of events and exhibitions;
- Supporting local and regional tourism and related sector businesses and employment levels;
- A proposal that sustainably balances the commercial forestry operations of Coillte with the growing demand for recreation access in the Dublin Mountains.

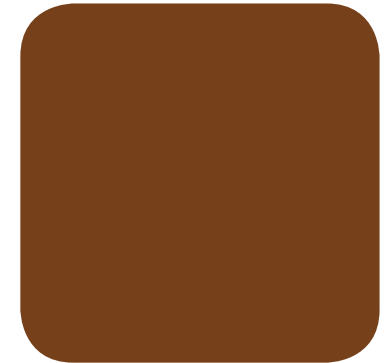
Emerging Design / Proposal (February – March 2017)

In response to the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment and other emerging factors the proposal is evolving and presently includes the following elements:

- A gateway/welcome centre enabling access to the wider trail network and activities of the Dublin Mountains and incorporating AV facility / education centre, café and outdoor terraces, toilets and changing facilities, walkers lounge and retail.
- The 26 hectare site relevant to the overall concept, which is currently used for commercial forestry and recreation, will evolve through the development of an extensive, diverse forest park interspersed with cultural heritage features.
- A Treetop canopy walk serving both as an experience and a safe connection to Massy's Woods
- An extended car park that will address existing congestion and illegal parking issues at the site.
- Improved trail network and establishment of new trails and loops with signage, picnic benches, natural play area, views etc.
- The Project also will deliver initiatives for the Hellfire Club and Massy's Estates heritage features; to arrest deterioration and make them safe.

Existing access and transport challenges will be addressed for example:

- Proposal to provide new footpath along Kilakee Road to Stocking Avenue to provide safe pedestrian access from the city direction.
- Bus service to be reviewed in consultation with Dublin Bus.
- Potential Greenway links to the site may be developed in conjunction with the Council



at a later stage – for example through existing regional strategies such as the National Transport Authority Dublin wide cycle strategy.

- Other ongoing assessments include satellite car parking, shuttling and vehicle messaging systems, features used at other visitor attractions to manage access and visitors

There are no proposed charges for access to trails, parking or the proposed bridge.

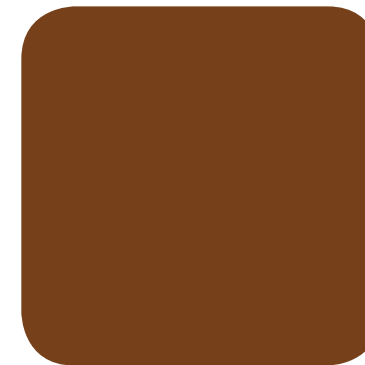
The design continues to be reappraised and at present the proposals have been rescaled from a total footprint of 2,017sqm to 922sqm.

Concept (November 2016 – January 2017)

Please note that the concept may evolve and change subject to the ongoing studies, assessments and engagement in preparation for the planning application.

The scope of the Project was such that the area and the components could deliver a gateway to the Dublin Mountains for visitors and Dubliners alike. The vision is for a multi-faceted development including complimentary measures for heritage conservation, landscape restoration, access improvement and provision of visitor facilities:

- Measures for the protection of the sensitive archaeological resources, e.g. the tombs beside the Hellfire Club and other features on Montpelier Hill;
- Measures to protect the historic architectural features, e.g. the Hell Fire Club and various structures including the walled garden on Massy's;
- A programme of developments to restore and enhance the landscape (replacing large areas of commercial coniferous forest on the eastern slopes of Montpelier Hill);
- Developments to improve sustainable access and increase the parking capacity;
- Works to improve the network of trails on Hellfire and Massy's and connection to the wider Dublin/Wicklow Mountains network;
- Development of visitor facilities in the form of a purpose-built building;
- Provision of interpretive material regarding the archaeology, the Hellfire Club and Story, Massy's Estate and the cultural and natural heritage of wider Dublin/Wicklow Mountains - for education and to enhance the visitor experience.



Specific Details

More specifically the development may include the following physical interventions. Please note that the elements may evolve and change subject to the ongoing studies, assessments and engagement in preparation for the planning application.

Existing Hellfire Building/Setting

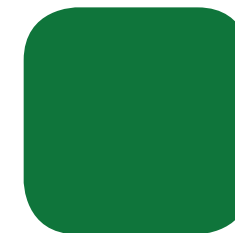
The existing location of the Hellfire Club Building is a national monument. As part of the County Heritage Plan. The Council, in association with Abarta Heritage and other bodies recently commissioned an excavation at the site which revealed two ancient passage tombs. Repair and protection measures are proposed to preserve the building and the tombs in their setting. Sensitive interpretation of the site will be facilitated by an enclosure - open to the sky and well removed from the features themselves, to tell the story of the tombs, the Hellfire Club and the surrounding area. The interpretation features are subject to review depending on the outcomes of the excavation and other emerging factors.

Landscape Development

It is envisaged that the coniferous plantations on the east slope of Montpelier Hill will be replaced with permanent, non-commercial mixed forest, as part of a wider landscape development that also includes protection and enhancement measures for the Massy's beech woodland. The result over time will be the development of an extensive, diverse forest park interspersed with cultural heritage features. The development of the forest would be complimented by sensitive interventions to restore the areas disturbed by previous commercial forest operations and un-managed visitor access, and to integrate the new and improved visitor facilities with minimal impact on the landscape and visual amenity.

Trails Plan

The project is intended to provide an improved walking experience for visitors to the Hellfire and Massy's site and the wider Dublin Mountains. It is proposed to upgrade the existing trails and forestry routes, where required, to provide a safe, accessible network of trails



through the forest park, giving access to the heritage features (while protecting the sensitive archaeology), the landscape and views, and linking to the Dublin Mountains Way. Equestrian routes are also envisaged to maintain this established use. The strategic objectives of the DMP in extending and connecting the trail network throughout the mountains are supportive of the gateway function of the project.

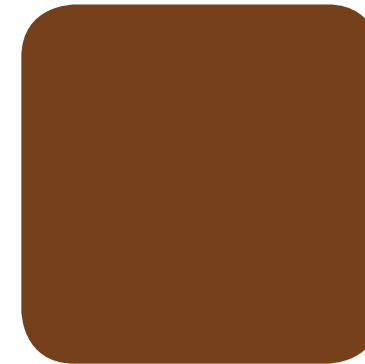
Tree Canopy Walk/Bridge

A feature tree canopy walk/bridge linking the lower flank of Montpelier Hill across the R115 to Massy's Wood. This will address current safety issues traversing the road between the two forests. It will be a promenade through the tree canopy providing a unique experience for visitors.

Proposed Visitor Centre

A building housing visitor facilities is proposed on the eastern side of Montpelier Hill, close to the parking area within the Hell Fire Wood, overlooking Dublin Bay. The facilities currently envisaged (subject to review) include:

- **Reception area** – including visitor orientation and booking for other services.
- **Café** - A glass fronted café offering panoramic views of Dublin Bay and the City.
- **An audio-visual exhibition space** – presenting high quality audio-visual experiences celebrating the cultural and natural heritage of the Hellfire Club and Massy's and the wider Dublin/Wicklow Mountains.
- **A small shop** – providing goods to support visitors and walkers.
- **A small kiosk** – to provide for the refreshment needs of short-stay visitors and visitors preferring outdoor refreshments at the site.
- **Outdoor terraces** – Viewing terraces with seating providing outdoor seating & viewing points.
- **Toilet and baby changing facilities.**
- **Education Space /Exhibition/Audio Visual** – This space provides a setting for groups (e.g. walking, heritage, school groups, etc.) to meet, and for events, exhibitions, training, etc. related to the site's function as a hub for heritage interpretation. The function of this space is being reviewed as part of the next stage of planning and design.



Natural Play Area

To cater to families with young children it is proposed to use the forest landscape, materials and the landform to create 'natural' play and exploration opportunities in a safe setting.

Parking & Access

The existing parking capacity on the Hellfire site is regularly exceeded and pressure is expected to grow. This causes uncontrolled parking on the R115 which leads to safety issues. It is proposed to extend the existing car park to cater for increased visitor numbers. This would take place as part of the wider landscape/forest park development. Existing conifer trees around the parking area, which are approaching end of life and due for felling, would be replaced by new, sustainable forest planting, Pedestrian access from the parking area to the wider site would be improved.

A number of similar facilities that have successfully balanced the needs of visitors with the sensitive rural character and heritage of their settings were reviewed in developing the concept, with learnings from them in relation to sensitively managing access and traffic considered. Solutions implemented at comparable sites include interventions such as advance car park notification systems to avoid congestion, satellite parking and shuttling - measures typical of destinations such as Newgrange or the Giants Causeway for example. Options will now be reviewed in greater detail and form part of the traffic, access and movement solutions to be proposed as part of the planning application.

The Council and Coillte do not perceive the Project as a commercial venture instead seeing the proposal as an essential and required proposal to improve the quality of life of Dublin's citizens in the broadest sense. It is not proposed that there be charging for car park access or access to the trails and forests of the Dublin Mountains.

