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Údar: Blackpool Co-operative Services Ltd.

Comhairliúchán:
Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

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The River Bride

Caibidil: Volume 1 - Written Statement» 6. Green and Blue Infrastructure, Open Space and ...

Ábhair: Green and Blue
Infrastructure

The River Bride, specifically the section that flows through Blackpool Village, has not been given due attention in the 2022-2028 Cork City Draft Development Plan - it should be recognised as a non-designated area of Natural Heritage Importance, worthy of protection from development that may impact negatively on its biodiverse nature.

Non-Designated Areas of Natural Heritage Importance

Objective 6.25

Cork City Council will seek to map the City's ecological networks and corridors of local biodiversity value outside of designated areas and to work with local stakeholders in supporting the effective management of features which are important for wild flora and fauna and habitats.

The casual observer will note that the River Bride in Blackpool Village is a busy wildlife corridor, with regular appearances by heron, dipper, mallard and grey wagtail, brown trout and occasionally kingfisher.

A number of surveys of the River Bride were conducted by Cork Nature Network between 2016 and 2017. Their report 'The Otters of Blackpool' notes -

'The River Bride in Blackpool, Cork City was identified as an important location for Eurasian Otters (Lutra lutra) in White et al.(2003). Cork Nature Network conducted a Citizen Science Survey in 2016-2017 to assess the presence of otters over a decade later. In 2018, this was followed up with an invertebrate survey of the River Bride which included observations of fish, birds and mammals. The results of these surveys confirm the presence of otters in the River Bride as recently as 2018. As this is a busy urban area, this is evidence that otters are well adapted to exist in our city and are an important urban species for Cork city. However, they are also at risk of disturbance from any habitat destruction and fragmentation in the local area. The findings of this report suggest that the River Bride should be protected to ensure it is suitable habitat for Cork's otters'

Species present in the Bride River corridor (including bats and otters) are protected under EU law.

As a biodiverse nature corridor the River Bride is a valuable asset to the people of Blackpool Village, offering them the chance to experience nature in a urban area with very little green space and low tree cover.

Rivers, Waterways and Wetlands - Objective 6.6

a. To protect and maintain the integrity, and maximise the potential, of the natural heritage and biodiversity value of rivers, associated watercourses and wetlands in Cork City, and to

b. To promote an integrated approach to optimising opportunities associated with rivers, waterways and wetlands generate biodiversity, recreation, tourism and economic benefits

There has been extensive culverting (since the 19th century) of the River Bride between Blackpool Village and the River Lee, it flows underground for over a kilometre. Culverting of a river effectively sterilises the culverted section and contributes to flood risk. It prevents any future human interaction with the river and the biodiversity it contains.

There has also been extensive realignments of the Bride river course within the Cork City Boundary in recent years, with at least four major interventions in the period 1997-2007, with permission granted for a further diversion in 2009 (Ref: 0833476) on the former Sunbeam Site, the planning for this diversion has since lapsed. These diversions and development on known flood plains along the Bride have all contributed to flood risk in Blackpool Village.

Under the heading Potential GBI Opportunities and existing interventions in Chapter 7 of the Cork City Green and Blue Infrastructure Study 2021 (Table 7.1 Pg 151), one of the opportunities listed to improve/enhance the water environment within Cork City is the '**opening of existing culverts and avoiding new culverts to restore natural stream and river courses**'.

In Chapter 11 of the Draft Cork City Development Plan under Development Proposals in or Adjoining Watercourse Corridors (Pg 506 11.217), specific reference is made to **NOT** landfilling, diverting, culverting and realignment of river and stream corridors.

Development proposals in or adjoining watercourse corridors should:

- 1. Preserve the biodiversity value of the area subject to Ecological Assessment by a suitably qualified Ecologist.*
- 2. **Not involve landfilling, diverting, culverting or realignment of river and stream corridors.***
- 3. Not have a negative effect on the distinctive character and appearance of the waterway corridor and the specific characteristics and landscape elements of the individual site and its context.*
- 4. Protect and enhance wetland areas.*
- 5. In new major development locations, preferably retain and protect existing riparian habitats while providing parks in waterside locations to maximise the potential linkages between landscape, natural heritage and recreational opportunity.*

The Office of Public Works Blackpool Flood Relief scheme, seeks to culvert the entire stretch of the river Bride in Blackpool Village. Cork City Council supports this scheme that directly conflicts with the Objectives set out in the existing (2015-2021) and draft Cork City development plan (2022-2028) in relation to watercourses. Cork City Council should lead by example and embrace less environmentally destructive flood solutions for Blackpool, such as upstream storage - one of the four possible options deemed viable for Blackpool.