



SUBMISSION ON PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SKERRIES TOWN PARK

Skerries Cycling Initiative (SCI) makes the following submission in response to Fingal Co. Council's proposed [Skerries Town Park Masterplan](#).

Overall response to Skerries Town Park Masterplan

Skerries Cycling Initiative (SCI) welcomes this plan in principle. The proposed new entrances and paths have the potential to create better access to amenities in the park and more importantly, to provide links between the North, South, East and West of the town.

The Town Park serves many purposes and its redevelopment gives Skerries a unique opportunity. Our comments in this submission are directed towards improving the Town Park as an active travel hub as well as improving access to the many amenities -existing and planned- in the Town Park. As such our focus is on extending the capacity of the Park to provide safe routes of travel for persons walking and cycling, using wheelchairs and other mobility vehicles including cycles adapted for persons with disabilities. We want the end result of the redevelopment to be the creation of an inclusive, age friendly and attractive space. We wish also to point out that increasing numbers of battery powered mobility vehicles are in use around the town and it is important that the users of these vehicles are catered for through well designed pathways in the Park.

Health benefits of more active travel

[Active travel-healthy Lives](#) published by Institute of Public Health finds that "Across Ireland, there is considerable scope to replace many short car journeys with walking and cycling which would bring about a range of benefits to health as well as saving money for individuals and society." Active travel (walking and cycling) brings health, economic benefits and environmental benefits and provides a viable, safe and attractive alternative to car use. The continuing increase in the use of private cars for most journeys, including short and uncomplicated travel, highlights the need to strengthen policies which promote active travel. In the Republic of Ireland, half of all car owners in the Greater Dublin Area drive for journeys of less than one mile. There is considerable scope to replace car journeys with walking and cycling and doing so would increase physical activity which would benefit people's health straight away.

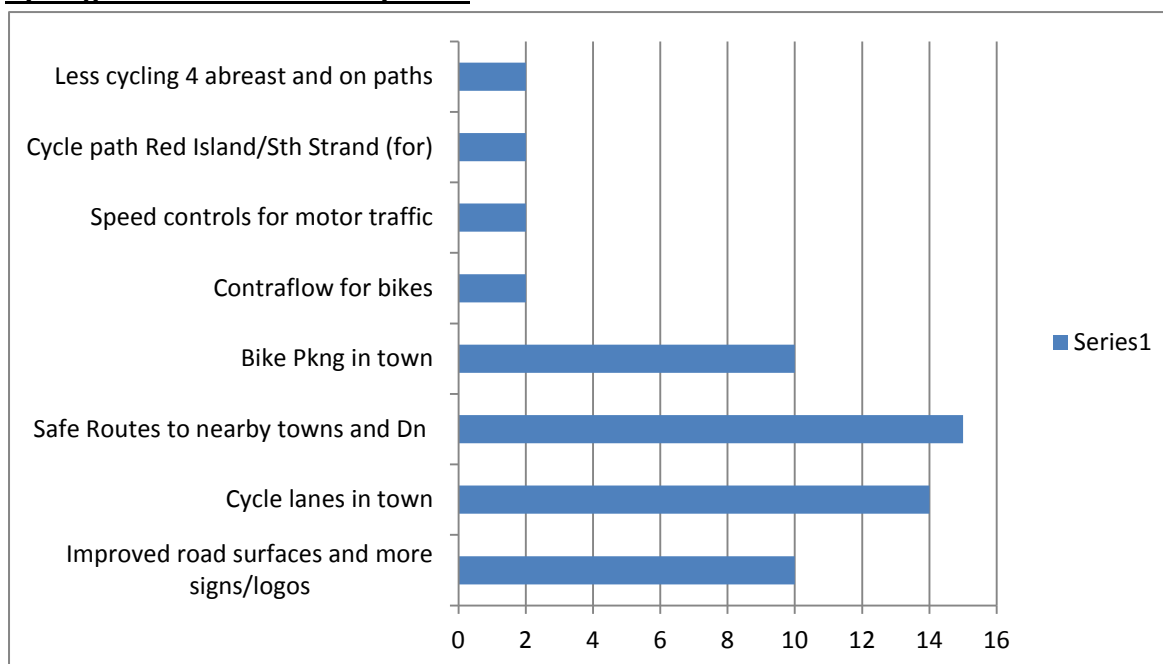
As the level of active travel increases, road traffic injuries and deaths decrease. For example, in Germany and the Netherlands where there are high rates of active travel pedestrian fatalities are ten times lower than in the United States which has high car usage.

Increased active travel reduces greenhouse gas emissions, brings better air quality and less noise. It also promotes social cohesion and enhanced community life by increasing opportunities for social interaction as well as increased safety from anti-social behaviour due to more people on foot or bicycle in the area.

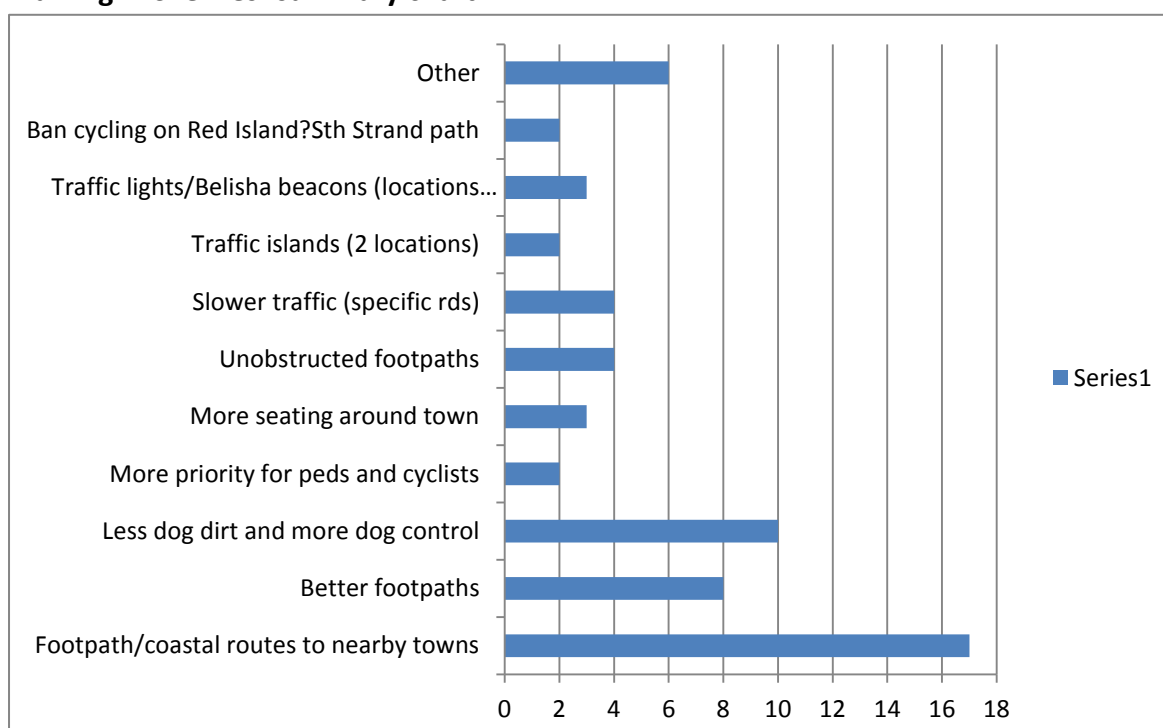
Results of on-line survey by SCI

A survey carried out by SCI in December asked residents how they would improve walking and cycling around Skerries. The results indicate strong support for improved walking and cycling routes within the town so that people, young and old, can access schools, shopping and services in safety. It is imperative that the redevelopment process uses the opportunity to provide well designed and safe walking and cycling routes to achieve this.

Cycling in Skerries - summary chart



Walking in Skerries- summary chart



COMMENTS ON PROPOSED NEW ENTRANCES

The proposed entrance at Skerries Roundabout is excellent and the proposal to open the existing entrance to the Town Park the rere of the Kybe estate is welcome.

The proposed new entrance shown near Sherlock Park needs to be clarified. As shown on the drawing, it would access a marshy area with no footpaths or cyclepaths. There is an existing access point in on Miller's Lane, at the side of house #48 in Miller's Lane, which should be resurfaced. There is also an existing pedestrian access from Sherlock Park (between houses numbered 47 and 19B, which needs upgrading (removal of steps and resurfacing) to allow better access. The proposed new entrance on the Masterplan drawing-between the two access points above - would lead to a part of Town Parks which is not accessible from the rest of Town Parks because of the stream (see drawing) and vegetation. This proposed entrance needs to be clarified and the Masterplan drawing amended accordingly.

[MALAHIDE-SKERRIES STUDY \(2009\)](#)

The insights and recommendations in the study, prepared for FCC by consultants SUSTRANS/Colin Buchanan are particularly relevant to the Masterplan and we strongly urge that these are examined by FCC in finalising the Masterplan.

The [MALAHIDE-SKERRIES STUDY](#) includes the following:

“Skerries Town

6.2.1 Skerries has enormous potential to become a showcase cycling town. It is compact, flat and already has a culture of cycling. In order to improve the permeability of the town for cyclists, new links need to be created and existing ones upgraded. This is the main subject of this study. In order to make the town much more cycling friendly, some of the existing roads will need to be traffic calmed. The Dublin Road is of pivotal importance here.

6.2.2 A high quality traffic-free cycling facility needs to be provided on a N-S axis through the Town Park linking important amenities at the Northern end with residential areas in the South. It is recommended that this is a 4.0m wide shared use facility. See Section 4.3 for discussion and Section 4.10 for prioritization of interventions.

6.2.3 A high quality traffic-free route needs to be provided to cater for the E-W movement between the train station and the residential areas to the South and East of Miller's Lane. Of the options considered, the route hugging the East side of the Windmill Pond is likely to become the most popular route. See Section 4.2 for discussion and Section 4.10 for prioritization of interventions.

6.2.4 A link between the N-S route and the E-W route should be provided so as to improve the permeability of the town for cyclists. See 3.7 above.”

The proposals to construct new paths and upgrade existing ones are welcomed by the SCI and are broadly supported by the [MALAHIDE-SKERRIES STUDY](#) linked to above. However, the proposals do not seem to take on board a crucial recommendation of the consultants, namely the clear need for a 4metre North-South path through the Park. We quote the consultants (p47):

“4.3 North - South Route through the Town Park

4.3.1 *Some of the most frequently accessed destinations in Skerries lie within or very close to the Northern end of Skerries Town Park. These include:*

- Skerries Community Centre (including the Bowling club, Tennis grounds and Astro turf pitches);*
- St. Patrick's National and Junior Schools in Beau-piers and the nearby Holmpatrick and Realt na Mara National Schools;*
- Skerries Community College (Holy Faith De La Salle College), to the West of the Dublin Road;*

- The GAA pitches, to the West of the Dublin Road;
- The (Supervalu) Shopping Centre on Church Street;

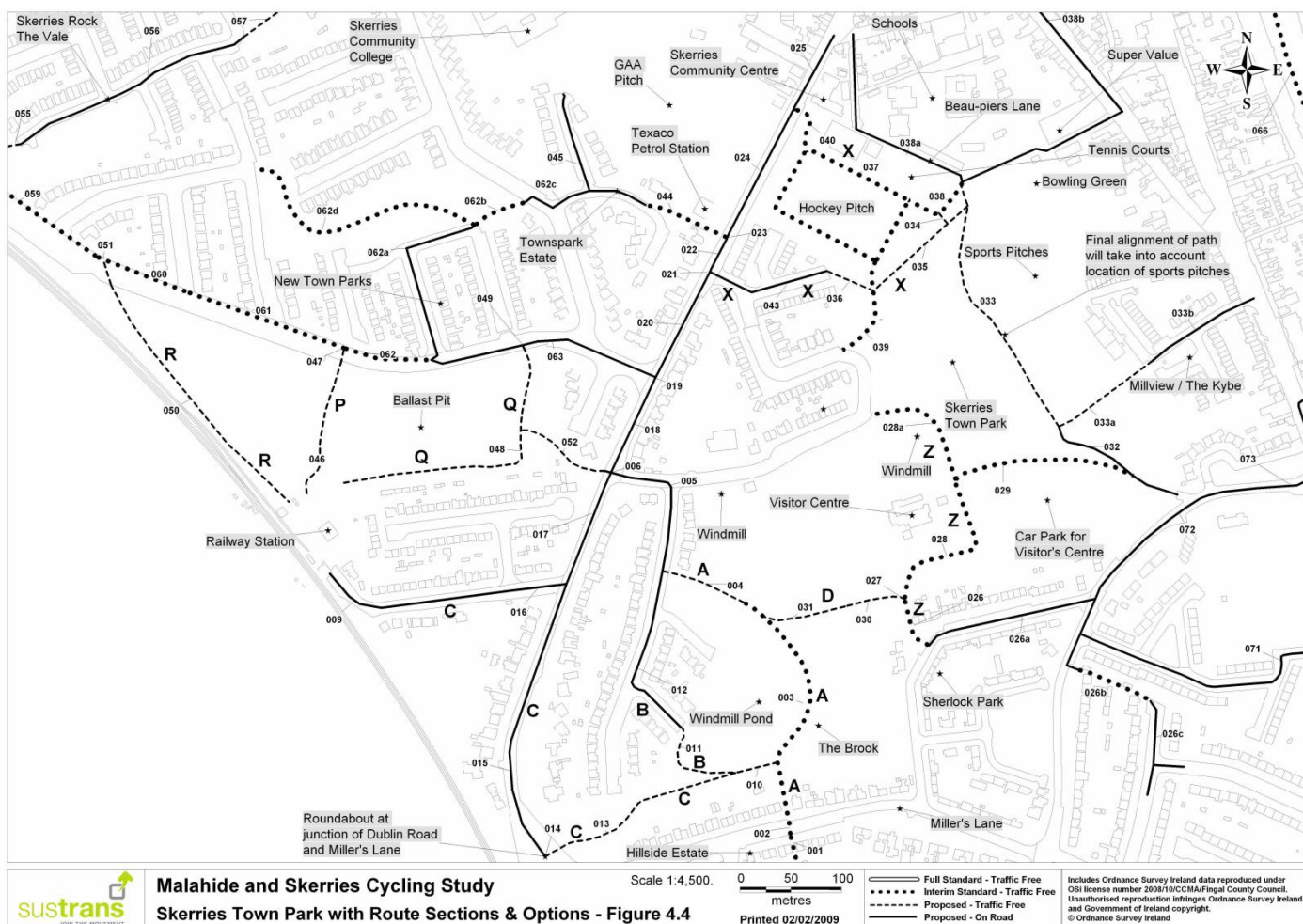
4.3.2 Since there is a large residential area to the South and East of Miller's Lane, there is a strong desire line running approximately North-South across the town park. On the day of the site visit, many pedestrians and cyclists were observed traversing the town park along this desire line. This movement is confirmed by the members of the Skerries Community Association with whom the project team is liaising.

It is therefore recommended that a new cycle / pedestrian facility should run from the East end of the Visitor car park (accessed from Miller's Lane) in a Northerly direction.

4.3.3 The ideal alignment is that it should link directly with the Southern corner of the tennis pitches – as shown in Figure 4.4 below. The exact alignment, decided upon at the detailed design stage, is subject to the recognition of the use of the pitches and on drainage considerations.

4.3.4 It is recommended that a 4.0m track is provided on the main "spine route". "

The proposed path is coded "033" in Fig 4.4 below. It is important to understand that walkers and cyclists will take the most direct route available to reach their destinations. Happily, as FCC's Masterplan diagram shows, it is feasible to create this North-South path, especially as the existing pitches are to be re-aligned. If the alignment of the two major pitches, GAA and Soccer pitches, is carefully done, and the alignment of the 7-A-Side pitch and the playground (or as we suggest, the second 7-A-Side pitch) is also slightly changed, one can create a fairly straight tarmacadam path from the Mills car park approximately to the tennis courts. Even if the pitch re-alignment does not permit a direct straight-line path, it will be direct enough to encourage walkers and cyclists to keep on it.



The study suggested an option for a short boardwalk over the marshy area linking Sherlock Park to the Mill Pond (Option “D”, page 46). We would urge that this recommendation be included in the Masterplan to connect the areas currently separated by the marshy ground.

The SCI also recommend that FCC consider upgrading the quality of existing paths in Skerries, according to the recommendations of Sustrans/Colin-Buchanan. At least, in this instance, an upgrade of those existing paths that lead to/from or traverse the Town Park should be considered.

COMMENTS ON PROPOSED 7-A-SIDE PITCHES AND PLAYGROUND

The SCI welcomes proposals for these new pitches and for the playground. However, we wish to raise the issue of the positioning of the playground. The centre of the park is used for sports and the new pitches match that usage. The construction of a playground in the middle of the park, alongside other playing pitches, while deploying one of the new pitches to the South of the park seems rather odd to us. Would it be better to place both pitches side by side in the centre of the park, aligned to allow a new North-South path (“033” as described above) and to build the playground South of the car park instead?

COMMENTS ON SIGNAGE

FCC might consider the strategic positioning of signs showing people how to take shortcuts across the Town Park to reach specific destinations. What we have in mind is the Sustrans-style **CONNECT-2** type of sign e.g. **CONNECT-2-TRAIN STATION** or **CONNECT-2-HILLSIDE** etc.

We would also suggest signage for the shared use paths urging all users to be respectful of each other.

Yours truly,

Signed:

Ray Ryan, Chairperson, Skerries Cycling Initiative (SCI)

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Michael McKenna, Secretary (SCI)

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