

Inbhear Dee Athletic Club

On behalf of Inbhear Dee Athletic Club, I wish to make a submission.

The club has been active in Wicklow town since 1980 and currently has over 150 members, the majority juveniles. We have a long history in training successful athletes at county, regional and national level. A number of our athletes have been awarded sport scholarships in Irish universities while others have taken the American college route. Some have represented Ireland at European and World Championships and two are Olympians.

All of this has been achieved without a home. We have rented space at GAA, Soccer and Rugby clubs in the area but due to their own need have been forced to go elsewhere. At present we have limited access to the Soccer club in Rathnew but while welcome there, the pitches and poor lighting are not suitable for our older group.

The Murrough, once used by us 3 - 4 times a week is no longer suitable due to overuse and erosion. The provision of a proper path might have saved it. It may not be too late ! While we recognise it is a conservation area, it has not been conserved and is likely to disappear entirely in the near future. The development of a suitable path is strongly recommended.

We also use the River walk area - another conservation site. It is also extensively used by local people. When we run with up to 40 athletes up the path it is problematic for both walkers, their dogs and us. Ideally we would like to see the path widened up to 2m where possible, weeds etc. cut back, a railing to be built by the steep bank at the northern end and the pathway continued to join the seafront walk. Preferably, the rough tarmac surface would be replaced with a softer gravel path or similar. Lighting of some kind is essential, in winter with no daylight after 5-00pm. We have to train later than this as do all clubs.

Inbhear Dee athletes train during the winter in the only lit areas in the town - the bike paths on Hawkstown road and the Port road. This is far from ideal - bikes use the path, we have to run and cross roads to get to them. We have a special needs teen with a dog phobia which is a constant worry. The surface is hard on growing legs - two of our athletes have had stress fractures this year.

We organise a 5km run on St. Stephen's Day each year. We raised €10,000 to go towards the development of a track in the area beside the lakes (not beside the lake itself). We have been in negotiation with the County Council for 3 years and had been led to believe this was a possibility. In the last six weeks, we have been informed this can never happen. As it is, many people wander at will in the area - a one mile gravel trail would actually concentrate the activity there and prevent impact on the environment. Other areas, such as the Roundwood reservoir, have multiple paths in a similar setting. Why ? What is the difference ?

We had hopes of a space at Brides Head - have now been told planning was denied.

We also had hopes of a space at the Tinakilly Park - originally the developer offered to provide 30+ acres but the Council didn't allow it. We've been told there will be a path there on which we can run on at some point but we've been unable to access a map and have been told it will not be lit ?

We're still waiting to hear whether we can use a field zoned recreational on Hawkstown road. This is ongoing for over a year.

In short :

There is no green space in the Wicklow/ Rathnew area.

There are no existing facilities we can rent that are suitable for our needs.

The only lit areas suitable for running are bike paths which are problematic.

We don't have the money to buy land and no grants are available until you own land. Catch 22.

Please consider the needs of a club which has contributed greatly to the lives of children and adults locally for over 40 years with ever decreasing access to any place remotely suitable.

Thank you,

Noreen O'Reilly,

