



Subject:	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) BCC & Cavehill Mountainbikers Club
Date:	9 th November 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Kelly Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager, North

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	North Area Working Group had previously instructed officers in 2019 to proceed with a number of actions in relation to taking forward a mountainbiking pilot in Cavehill Country Park in partnership with Cavehill Mountainbikers Club. In December 2020, officers secured the services/support of Outdoor Recreation NI via a quotation exercise to assist them in developing and implementing the pilot project. A Project Oversight Group has been established and a number of key actions have been achieved over the past ten-month period – including the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) document included at Appendix 1 – which if agreed by Committee/Council will enable the pilot to proceed as planned.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<p>1. Note the contents of the proposed MOU document which has been drawn up following a series of focussed discussions and engagement with lead officers in CNS and Legal Services, with specialist advice provided by Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, and input from Cavehill Mountainbikers Club re. same. The document has also been shared with the Cavehill MTB Project Oversight Group which also includes membership from Belfast Hills Partnership and Cavehill Conservation Group.</p> <p>2. Agree the terms of the MOU.</p>															
3.0	Background															
3.1	At a meeting of the North Area Working Group in March 2019, members agreed that Council officers should take forward a number of actions in relation to mountain biking on Cavehill.															
3.2	At the reconvened North Area Working Group meeting held on 29 January 2020 members were updated in terms of progress to date against each of these actions outlined in the table below.															
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Agreed action</th> <th>Status</th> <th>Update</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Identification and mapping of mountain bike club proposed trails</td> <td>Completed</td> <td> <p>Lead officers externally commissioned commercial trail designers and mountain bikers identified and mapped trails currently in use at Cave Hill.</p> <p>The Council's Outdoor Recreation & Education Officer completed a desktop survey and mapping exercise. This was compiled into a report reflecting the extent of mountain biking and cycling at Cave Hill. The trails identified through the report were confirmed by the mountain bikers.</p> <p>Field visit held with Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) 10th January 2020. ORNI have provided advice to Council in relation to potential next steps.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Externally facilitated discussions with residents group</td> <td>Completed</td> <td>A meeting between senior CNS officers and those residents opposed to mountain biking on Cave Hill was facilitated by an external consultant.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environmental assessment by consultant</td> <td>Completed for the Middle Trail</td> <td>Allen and Mellon Environmental Assessment completed for the Middle Trail – no significant environmental risks identified.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Engagement with key stakeholders</td> <td>Ongoing</td> <td> <p>Engagement to date has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cavehill Conservation Group • Cavehill Mountainbikers Club • Cycling Ireland/Ulster • Local residents </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Agreed action	Status	Update	Identification and mapping of mountain bike club proposed trails	Completed	<p>Lead officers externally commissioned commercial trail designers and mountain bikers identified and mapped trails currently in use at Cave Hill.</p> <p>The Council's Outdoor Recreation & Education Officer completed a desktop survey and mapping exercise. This was compiled into a report reflecting the extent of mountain biking and cycling at Cave Hill. The trails identified through the report were confirmed by the mountain bikers.</p> <p>Field visit held with Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) 10th January 2020. ORNI have provided advice to Council in relation to potential next steps.</p>	Externally facilitated discussions with residents group	Completed	A meeting between senior CNS officers and those residents opposed to mountain biking on Cave Hill was facilitated by an external consultant.	Environmental assessment by consultant	Completed for the Middle Trail	Allen and Mellon Environmental Assessment completed for the Middle Trail – no significant environmental risks identified.	Engagement with key stakeholders	Ongoing	<p>Engagement to date has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cavehill Conservation Group • Cavehill Mountainbikers Club • Cycling Ireland/Ulster • Local residents
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	Committee approval of routes identified as suitable environmental consultant by	Recommendation accepted at NAWG meeting on 29 Jan 20	NB Proposal is to proceed with adopting 'The Middle Trail' as an initial pilot – with work to be overseen by an external agency.
	Public consultation – <i>if required</i>	Can be undertaken as part of project initiation and evaluation processes if approval given.	
3.3	In September 2020, Finance Oversight gave approval for non-recurrent funding of £30k to be allocated to cover the costs of securing the services of an independent consultant to assist council officers in developing and implementing The Middle Trail pilot and to cover the signage and trail adaptations/modifications costs on-site re. same.		
3.4	Following a quotation exercise, Outdoor Recreation NI were appointed in December 2020 and a Project Oversight Group (POG) comprising of relevant council officers, ORNI, Cavehill Mountain Bikers Group as well as representation from Belfast Hills Partnership and Cavehill Conservation Group was established and has been meeting regularly throughout 2021.		
3.5	<p>Between January 2021 to date a number of pieces of work have been taken forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of site visits to The Middle Trail and wider site with POG members • Review and development of trail signage and a trail management plan; • Engagement (ORNI-led) with key stakeholders; • Development of MOU in consultation with Legal (version for consideration/approval included in Appendix 1) 		
3.6	ORNI also provided an update, by way of presentation, to the May 2021 meeting of the North Area Working Group.		
3.7	ORNI liaised with the Project Oversight Group to identify organisations/individuals to participate in a series of one to one consultations during March/April 2021 as part of the stakeholder engagement process in order to provide further information on the project and gain initial feedback on project proposals. Stakeholders identified included Cycling Ulster, Grass Roots Mountain Biking, IMBA Europe, NI Orienteering / Lagan Valley Orienteers, North Belfast Harriers, UFRC (walking club), Farmer with Grazing Rights on Cavehill and a number of local residents/regular park users.		
3.8	ORNI is currently working on an Evaluation Framework which will then be used by officers and the Project Oversight Group to monitor and evaluate the pilot.		

3.9	Formal adoption of the MOU by committee/council will enable officers/the POG to finalise the other required elements such as the trail management plan, the new signage requirements, agreed amendments to the Middle Trail and to initiate the evaluation framework to enable the pilot to formally commence.
3.10	As per the MOU, the Project Oversight Group will continue to meet throughout the pilot period and the intention would be to bring a final project evaluation report through to committee/council Nov/Dec 2022.
3.10	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.11	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: MOU between BCC & CMC re Cavehill Middle Trail Mountainbiking Pilot</p> <p>Appendix 2: ORNI presentation to NAWG May 2021</p>