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| Subject: | Mary Peters Track Management |
| Date: | 8th April 2025 |
| Reporting Officer: | Stephen Leonard, CNS Operational Director |
| Contact Officer: | Edel Gowdy, Lead Officer Open Spaces and Streetscene |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues |
| 1.1 | To provide highlights from the engagement with Mary Peters Track and Barnetts Demesne stakeholders which including drop-in sessions and an online survey which ran from 16 th August to 22 nd September 2024. |
| 1.2 | To request approval to proceed with the procurement options for the management, maintenance and development of the track. |
| 2.0 | Recommendation |
| 2.1 | To note the findings of the Mary Peters Track and Barnetts Demesne stakeholder engagement. |
| 2.2 | To consider and approve the proposed next steps and timeline regarding management procurement options. |
| 3.0 | Main Report |

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that the management, routine maintenance and sports development of the Mary Peters Track is currently outsourced since 1996. Whilst there have been various iterations of the contract, as demonstrated in table one below, the service has always been delivered by NIAF/ANI, the governing body for the sport in NI. There has been little or no other interest from the market when it has been tested.

3.2 **Table one** below provides a timeline of external management of the Mary Peters Track from 1996 onwards. The rationale for entering a Facility Management Agreement with NIAF at that stage was to utilise the organisations developments and outreach function to work with its network of interested bodies involved in athletics and its development, including schools, athletics clubs and other sporting groups. In addition to this, the NIAF to manage the track maintenance, and undertake agreed maintenance operations within the track arena and its pavilions.

3.3 **Table One**

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| <p>August 1996 – July 2011</p> | <p>The Council entered a Facilities Management Agreement (FMA) with ANI (formerly known as NIAF), in respect of the management and maintenance of the Mary Peters Track and associated pavilions in August 1996. The original agreement expired on 31/07/04.</p> <p>The former Parks and Amenities sub-committee granted approval, at its meeting on 11 May 2004 to enter into a new Facility Management Agreement with NIAF for a period of five years up to 31 July 2009 with a view to extending for a period of two years. This extension was granted in June 2009, extending the contract to July 2011. At that stage the committee agreed that the arrangement had worked very well to the advantage of the Council and ANI, with an annual increase in user figures.</p> |
| <p>August 2011 to September 2012.</p> | <p>The Council agreed at its meeting on 9 February 2011 to allocate £3million from the Capital Programme to upgrade the Mary Peters Track. (works included the building of the stand and relaying of the track to change it from a 6 lane to an 8 lane track).</p> <p>The Parks and Leisure committee subsequently agreed to the proposed extension of the existing facilities management agreement to 30 April 2012 and on a month-by-month basis thereafter to facilitate the capital works, and that a process to</p> |

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| | procure for the facilities management of the new site being initiated in 2012. |
| September 2012 to September 2018 | In 2012 it was tendered again and there were two bids, one from Athletics NI and one from SERCO who run Bangor Track |
| September 2018 to September 2024 | <p>The current contract has been live since October 2018. It was extended initially from October 2023 to March 2024 to provide officers with time to review the existing arrangement, following concerns raised by ANI that the current arrangement was unsustainable. These concerns were largely due to financial pressure from increasing utility costs, and other capital investment requirements for the site. As mentioned above in the body of the report, previously there has been low interest in delivering this contract, as noted above. And therefore, putting the current model out to tender again risked not having a competent facility operator.</p> <p>In August/September 2024, Officers undertook to engage with stakeholders and users of the Mary Peters Track and Barnetts Demense, prior to proceeding with any procurement option for the general management of the track beyond the term of the current contract with Athletics NI. A further contact extension was requested to facilitate this request. The results of this survey is detailed below at section 3.5 to 3.9 and appendix one.</p> |
| September 2024 and then again to March 2025 | <p>In June 2024 ANI wrote to the Council formally requesting an uplift of £30,049 to the annual management fee to cover the current increases in utilities, insurance costs, staff costs, equipment & additional costs for TrackMark re-accreditation. A request for revenue budget was submitted and has now been approved for 25/26 and beyond, bringing the annual fee from approx. £130k per annum to £160k per annum.</p> <p>The paragraphs from 3.4 to 3.7 provide highlights from the survey and drop in sessions.</p> <p>Contract subsequently extended to March 2026 to facilitate member engagement and procurement.</p> |

3.4

Survey response

Officers ran an open survey on the Councils your say platform from 16th August and 22nd September 2024. The survey was publicised through Athletics NI club network, as well as the Councils sports development networks. It was advertised on the Councils social media pages and posters were distributed in the locality. Two drop-in sessions were held at the site on 19th September. Whilst the drop-in sessions were not well attended, the online survey attracted 292 responses.

a. Overall response rate

- We had a total of 292 responses to the survey, which ran from 16th August to 22nd September 2024.
- Of those who responded, 59.1% were people who attended the Mary Peters Track at least once a week.
- 6.8% of respondents said they had never visited the track before.

b. Primary reason for visiting

- 83.5% of respondents said that their primary reason for visiting was for participating in sports, watching sports or training/exercise/keep fit.
- Other reasons for attending included: being outside in nature (6.6%), being with family and friends (1.1%), walking the dog (2.9%) and other (5.9%).

c. Satisfaction of service

- 72.4% of respondents indicated that they were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the facility including opening hours, carparking, maintenance, signage and information, staff presence, seating and toilet facilities.
- There was notable dissatisfaction rate for current toilet facilities, with half of respondents 50% indicating that they were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- In terms of overall maintenance, 66% indicated that they were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied. 17% indicated that they were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

d. Additional Comments

- The adequacy of the size and management of toilet facilities was mentioned a total of 193 times within the open response questions.
- Car-parking facilities was mentioned 50 times by respondents within the open questions. Both opening hours and capacity, particularly on event days.

- Improvements in booking systems was mentioned 13 times, with reference users ability to see how many people are using the track at difference times.
- The need to upgrade track equipment (e.g. starting blocks), was mentioned 40 times as being in need to investment.
- Upgrading of signage, both on the track and around the park. In particular reference to the bike trails and jump park,

3.5 Much of the feedback from users relates to the need for investment in the facility overall, with particular attention given to the need to refurbishment and enhancement of the toilet, stand and car parking provision. This will require capital investment in region of £220k and is currently included in a list of pipeline projects requiring capital funding across the OSS estate. Officers continue to engage with Athletics NI to ensure the experience of all track users can be enhanced where possible. e.g. improving signage on the track and wider park, ensuring toilets are regularly cleaned, and that equipment is replaced / upgraded where possible.

3.6 **Mary Peters Track Management, Maintenance and Development Procurement Options**
The Council's current contract with Athletics NI has an annual fee of £160k. Officers are proposing to engage in preliminary discussion with both ANI and GLL to explore possible opportunities under our current leisure partnership agreement. as one option for the next phase of the management of the facility. The purpose of these discussions would be to assess the viability and merits of including the MPT within the partnership agreement, and to better understand how a potential tripartite partnership between the Council, Athletics NI and GLL could work to benefit the Council, site users, sports and athletics development and the wider community.

3.7 The intended outcome of these discussions is to inform a more detailed appraisal, for members consideration. The current contract with ANI has been extended to March 2026, which would allow sufficient time to consider this and all other procurement options.

At this stage it is envisaged that the following procurement options would be considered:

Option One: Pre-market engagement to assess and stimulate market interest, with a view to:

- A. Awarding a new facility management arrangement, similar to the current arrangement with ANI. Timeframe for PQQ and full tender exercise would take between 6 to 9 months). As outlined above, previous tender exercises have not attracted a lot of interest.

B. Exploring alternative management arrangements E.G. lease agreement with a third party organisation. The merits of this would be assessed as part of the pre-market engagement exercise.

3.8

Capital requirements are estimated to be £220k (Toilets and recladding of grandstand upgrading and refurbishment of informal stone car park). Current management fee is £160k per annum. The include the staff costs (1 facility manager, two track assistants, Development Officer, Cleaner), insurance, opening and closing, events management, track accreditation, marketing and sports development, routine maintenance and cleaning.

Option Two: Partnership between the Council, ANI and GLL:

The current leisure partnership agreement with GLL runs to 2031. Inclusion of the MPT facility within the contract could run for an initial three-year period with a break clause at the end of the third year, and the option to renew for a further three years.

This option would allow officers scope to explore potential partnership benefits, including:

- GLL currently manages 45 athletics courses and 7 track sites across the UK. Potential for integration of automated booking systems, as well as membership and other payment options.
- Access to GLL club and community networks. ('Better gym membership levels in Belfast are extremely high, and exceeding industry norms for market penetration'. *(Extract from recent performance and compliance report presented to P&C committee in November 2024)*).
- Any partnership agreement could align with remainder of leisure partnership agreement.

3.9

Indicative timeline for Options A and B

| Timeframe | Option A | Option B |
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| April – June 2025 | Review and prepare PQQ and tender documentation and specification of requirements with cps. | Preliminary discussions with both GLL and ANI to explore merits and deliverability of partnership arrangement. Review and prepare PQQ and tender documentation and |

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| | | | specification of requirements with cps. |
| | July – September 2025 | Run PQQ exercise. | If preliminary discussion are positive, prepare draft contract arrangements for review by parties and legal |
| | October – February 2025 | Tender exercise and evaluation | New partnership arrangement begins |
| | March 2026 | New management arrangement begins | |
| 3.10 | <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Financial information is provided in the body of the report. Works are ongoing to establish future capital requirements for the site. There are no additional financial considerations at this stage. The proposed options appraisal will assess the financial impact of the options explored.</p> | | |
| 3.11 | <p>Management of the track is currently outsourced. OSS carry out some of the site maintenance (grass cutting, some litter management, reactive and some routing maintenance e.g. plumbing toilets or lighting repairs) and it is envisaged this would continue with whatever option is chosen.</p> | | |
| 3.12 | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p> | | |
| 4.0 | Appendices - Documents Attached | | |
| 4.1 | <p>Appendix A – Extracts from Mary Peters Track and Barnetts Demense Yoursay Questionnaire August – September 2024.</p> <p>Appendix B – Current User Figures provided by ANI</p> | | |

Appendix 1 – User survey results extracts

Survey Responses

16 August 2024 - 22 September 2024

Mary Peters Track and Barnett Demesne

Your say Belfast

Project: Mary Peters Track and Barnett Demesne



VISITORS

551

CONTRIBUTORS

289

RESPONSES

292

0

Registered

0

Unverified

289

Anonymous

0

Registered

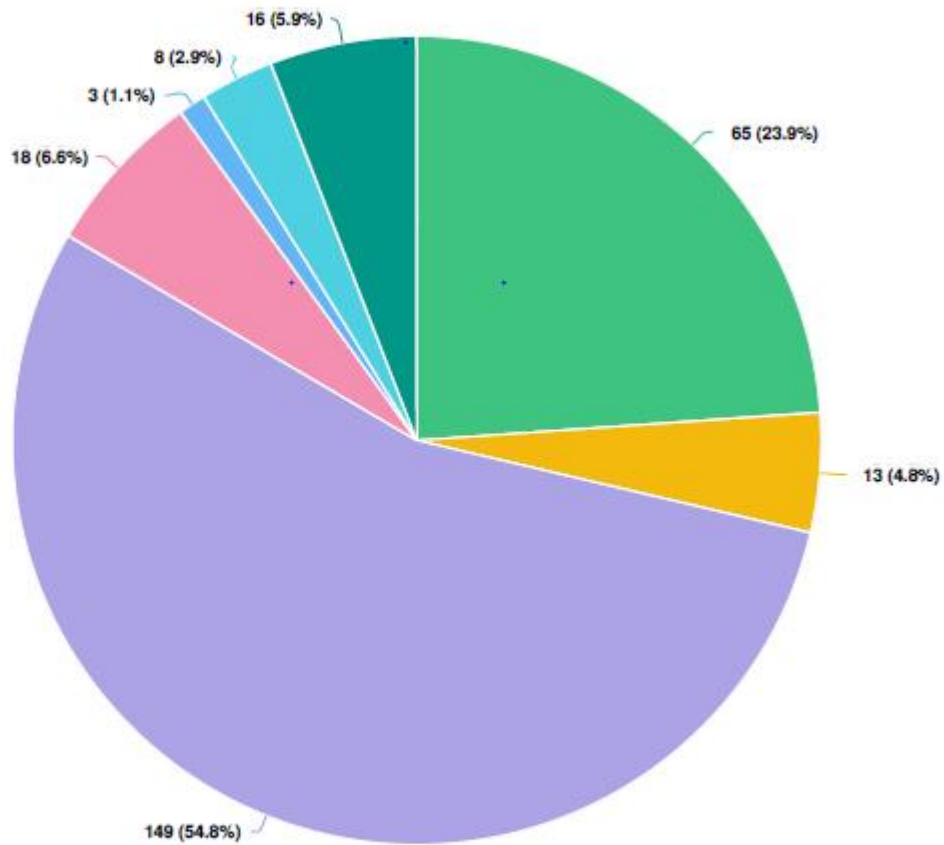
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Unverified

292

Anonymous

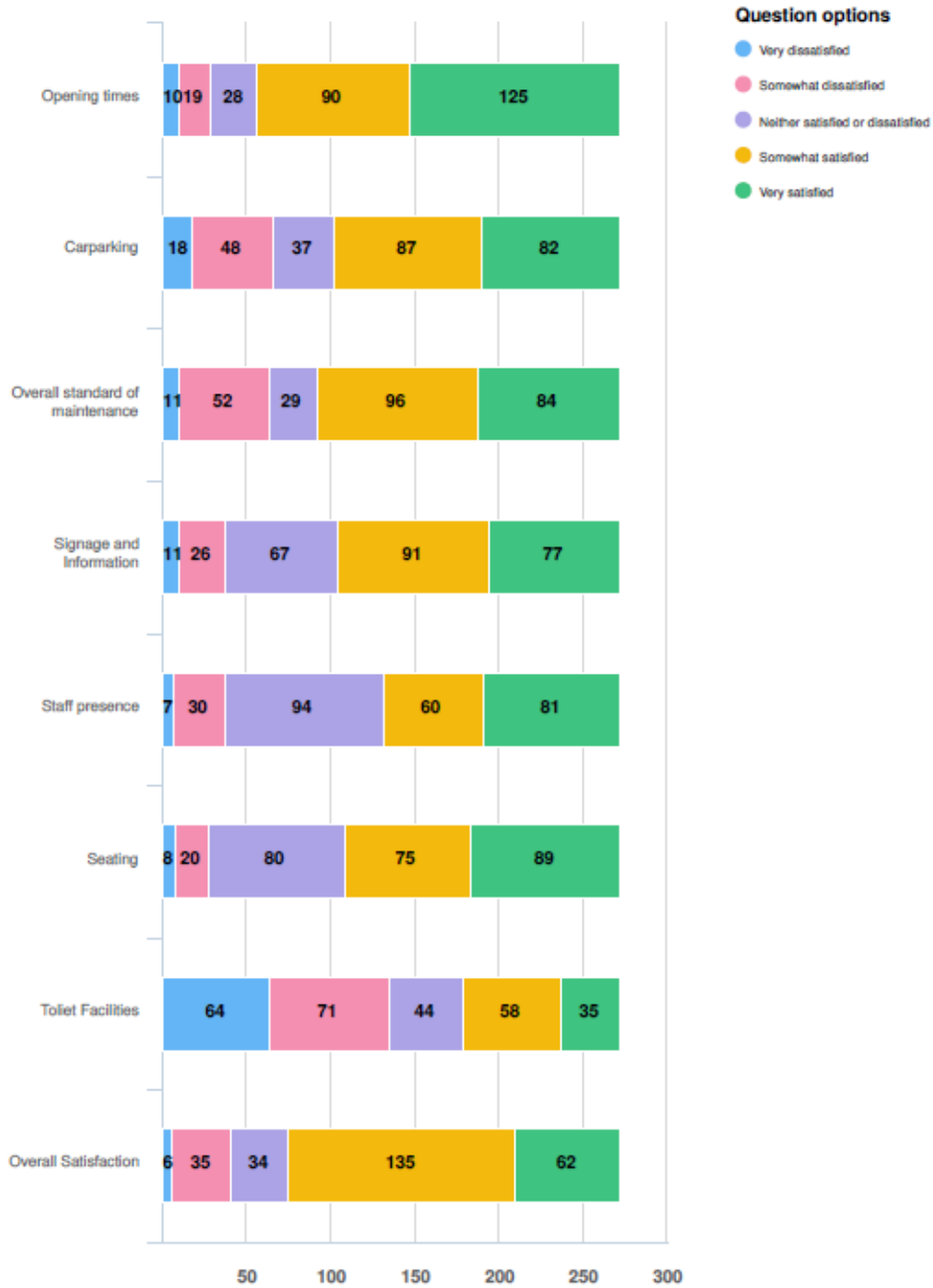
Q4 What is typically your primary reason for visiting Mary Peters Track?



Question options

- Participating in sporting event or competitions
- Watching a sporting event or competition
- Training, exercise or keep fit
- Being outside and in nature
- Being with family or friends
- Walking the dog
- Other (please specify)

Q8 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following:



Appendix 2

Statistics

| Mary Peters Track Usage | 2024 | 2023 |
|---|--|--|
| Sports Days | 33 | 32 |
| School Training Sessions | 50+ | 40+ |
| Ulster Schools Championships Participants | 1206 | - |
| District Schools Championships Participants | 3961 | - |
| Competitions (Including NI & Ulster Champs) Hosted | 38 | 33 |
| Club Usage | 24 Clubs (Average 750 users) Per Week | 20 Clubs (Average 600 users) per week |
| Student Usage (June) | 14000 | 10000 |

- Mary Peters Track hosted a total of 33 school sports days' last year, these ranged from small sports days of 50 – 100 students up to very large schools sports days of 400 – 500 students.
- Over 50 schools training sessions took place at Mary Peters as each school prepared for their Districts Competitions.
- MPT was delighted to host a number of the Districts Championships and also played host to the Ulster Schools Championships for the first time and the Irish University Championships. The district's schools saw 3961 athletes take part across four districts and 1206 athletes took part in the Ulster Schools Final. While 854 athletes took part in the Irish University Championships.
- Combined over 14000 students visited Mary Peters Track in June alone.
- Mary Peters Track hosted 38 different competitions during last year which all attracted large numbers of athletes, coaches and spectators.
- 24 clubs use Mary Peters Track regularly and this equates to 600 - 900 athletes using the track in the evenings throughout the week.
- Daytime usage has seen a sharp increase with CrossFit and Hyrox athletes using Mary Peters Track regularly. This shows that Mary Peters Track is not just an athletics stadium and is playing a vital role in helping the whole community stay active in a safe environment.
- The Mary Peters Track also hosts a number of community based programs such as Buggy club, MPT Panthers and Para athlete sessions, providing a service to underrepresented groups within the BCC area.