



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Lagan Canal Restoration Trust
Date:	15 February 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<u>Lagan Gateway Project</u> Members will be aware that in 2006 an offer of £1million funding was made available to Council by Ulster Garden Villages Limited (UGV) towards the reopening of the Lagan gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis, on the basis that match funding would be available. Since then a number of actions have been delivered and funding streams investigated by Council. (see Appendix 1 for a list of achievements).
1.2	Discussions have been held with a number of key Lagan Corridor stakeholders including the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI), Department of Social Development Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate (DSD), Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB), however to date the only concrete offer of funding for the project has come from UGV.
1.3	A letter has been received from UGV to establish Belfast City Council's intention to proceed with its proposal to develop the Lagan Corridor. The letter highlights the decision of the Board of UGV to reallocate the £1m funding to other projects in the Province unless the Council is in a position to confirm the scale of its contribution to the project by 31 March.
1.4	DCAL, who have a responsibility for inland waterways, indicated that the Department has bid for capital funds in the Comprehensive Spending Review. With the delay in the announcement of the Budget, the allocation to DCAL has not been formally confirmed therefore no commitment to the Lagan canal can be given. DCAL has indicated however that it continues its commitment to the Lagan Canal Trust and intends in principle to part fund the Trust in the future, conditional upon the continuation of core funding by the four local authority partners.

1.5	DSD, who have a responsibility for the Lagan river from the Lagan weir at Donegall Quay to Stranmillis gateway Lock 1, indicated that due to the draft budget consultation process they have been unable to confirm a funding position on the Lagan Navigation Gateway Project at this time.
1.6	A meeting has been scheduled for March with the Mr Tony Hopkins Chair of Ulster Garden Villages and Mr Erskine Holmes Board Director, to discuss the current situation.
1.7	<u>Lagan Canal Restoration Trust</u> In November 2006 Members approved the establishment of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust and in 2008 the core funding bodies appointed a manager whose remit was to set up the Trust.
1.8	In August 2009 Development Committee committed funding to the Trust until March 2011 and the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee were appointed as Belfast City Council representatives on the Trust Board. The Board is a not for profit company limited by guarantee with charitable status.
1.9	The Trust currently represents the following core funding bodies including; Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Craigavon Borough Council, DCAL and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Other Trust stakeholders include; DSD, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI), Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN), Ulster Waterways Group (UWG) , Lagan Valley Regional Park and a number of public stakeholders.
1.10	Over the previous three year period Council has contributed core funding of £50,500 to the Trust. The Trust is now seeking the same level of funding from Council for the next three year period from 2011/12-2013/14. With the exception of NIEA all of the key funders have committed to fund the Trust; Lisburn City Council £112,200, DCAL £56,100, Craigavon Borough Council £22,500, and Castlereagh £11,200.
1.11	<u>City Investment Fund</u> Future work on the Lagan has been viewed potentially as a major project to receive funding from the City Investment Fund which Members will be aware has invested in the Titanic Signature Project, Lyric Theatre, the MAC and Connswater Greenway projects.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	Ulster Garden Villages offered the Council £1million towards the development of the Stranmillis Gateway Project.
2.2	Ulster Garden Villages initially supported the Council by providing funding of £50,000 from the £1 million offer, to establish the Lagan Corridor Officer post within the Development Department.
2.3	The Director of Development will be meeting with UGV in March to discuss the future of the £1million offer towards the development of the Stranmillis Gateway Project. The Director is currently seeking an extension to the time period granted by UGV, which will allow consideration of the prioritisation of the overall project.

