



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Update on Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme
Date:	24 January 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that at the Development Committee of 14 November 2007, approval was given for Belfast City Council to cluster with Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council for the delivery of Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-2013 under the name the Lagan Rural Partnership (LRP).
1.2	In September 2008 a final Rural Development Strategy was submitted to DARD and was used to apportion the funding allocation to the cluster. In January 2009 the final allocation of RDP Axis 3 funding amounting to a total of £8,691,556 was allocated to the Lagan Rural Partnership.
1.3	The cluster allocates funding under the following 6 measures contained in Axis 3: 3.1 Farm diversification 3.2 Business creation and development 3.3 Encouragement of tourism activities 3.4 Basic services for the economy and rural population 3.5 Village renewal and development 3.6 Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage
1.4	Calls for funding applications are opened periodically for each of the above measures throughout the duration of the programme.
1.5	Within the Belfast City Council area, there is a defined boundary for RDP-eligible projects. This generally covers most of the Belfast Hills area as well as some of the Lagan Valley Regional Park. Only projects falling within this boundary are eligible for funding under the programme.

2	Key Issues
2.1	To date £482,814 of grant funding has been approved by the LRP for projects located within the Belfast City Council area. This contribution represents a significant investment within the council area with total costs for these projects anticipated to be £1,091,813. A further £45,907.67 of funding has been allocated to projects spanning the 3 council areas, with total project costs anticipated to be £61,210.23.
2.2	<p>Applications for these projects have been submitted by private enterprises, local councils and charitable organisations. Belfast City Council is directly benefiting from NIRDP funding through the creation of new facilities within council owned parks. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable Mountain Bike Trail Led by Belfast City Council this project involves the development of a sustainable mountain bike trail incorporating jump and skills areas within Barnett Demesne and Mary Peters. The RDP funding has been used to support an economic appraisal as well as providing capital funding to undertake construction of the trail. - Belfast Hills Strategic Tourism Project Led by Belfast Hills Partnership, this project includes the creation of a new pathway and recreation facilities in Cavehill Country Park.
2.3	<p>Additional applications approved for funding exclusively or partially within the Belfast City Council area are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belfast Hills Rural Heritage Project – this is aimed at protecting the natural heritage and enhancing access to rural heritage sites in the Belfast Hills, including the creation of a Rural Heritage website. - Creation of a Village Plan for Hannahstown – the plan has been completed and work is now underway to deliver the physical regeneration projects identified within the plan. - The development of ‘A Guide to the Lagan Canal’ – publication by Lagan Canal trust to provide additional tourist information on the canal.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> No specific financial requirements. RDP funding for eligible projects is available to cover up to 75% of total project costs.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Human Resources</u> The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee are represented on the programme management structures, namely the Local Action group (LAG) and the Strategic Joint Committee (SJC). Project management and administrative support is provided by the Economic Development Unit.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	All projects will be subject to equality and good relations assessments.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the update on the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, including the upcoming opportunities for funding under this programme.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
LAG – Local Action group LRP – Lagan Rural Partnership NIRDP – Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme SJC – Strategic Joint Committee	