



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Lagan Canal Restoration Trust
<b>Date:</b>	20 March 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<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. The Trust is a not for profit company limited by guarantee with charitable status.
1.2	The Trust currently represents core funding bodies and key interest groups including; Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Craigavon Borough Council, Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL). Other Trust stakeholders include; Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Department of Social Development (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.
1.3	In August 2009 Development Committee funded 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.
1.4	For the three year period 2009-2011 all of the key partners contributed funding to the Trust, and for the three year period from April 2011 until March 2014, the following key partners further committed funding. This included; Lisburn City Council £112,200, DCAL £56,100, Craigavon Borough Council £22,500, and Castlereagh £11,200.
1.5	In April 2011 Members agree one year funding of £16,800 for the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust until March 2012 with a review of future funding. The Trust is now seeking funding from Council for the next two year period.

1.6	For the period 2012-2013 the Council's financial commitment would be £16,827 and in period 2013-2014 it would be £17,341. A total funding contribution of £34,178
1.7	A number of key impact reports are currently being undertaken by the Trust, namely; a Business Case and Funding Strategy, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Technical Assessment of the canal and locks of the Lagan Corridor from Belfast to Lough Neagh. These reports are considered fundamental to the possible future capital development of the project and will be completed in summer 2012.
1.8	Belfast City Council in conjunction with Castlereagh Borough Council and Lisburn City Council has submitted an Expression of Interest for funding to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) AXIS 3, Rural Development Programme, for the Lagan Strategic Rural Project. This submission is based on partnership support and includes the Stranmillis Gateway project as a key element of the project.
1.9	Following a meeting on the future of the Lagan Gateway with DCAL Minister Ni Chuilin in November 2011, a business breakfast will be planned for key stakeholders during April in the City Hall. With the city's draft Investment Programme 2012-2015 recently launched, the business breakfast is being used as an opportunity to feed into the consultation process.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<u>The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust</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 bases that match funding would be available.
2.2	UGV 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	As an emerging partnership project, the Lagan Canal corridor project is included in Belfast City Council's Investment Programme 2012-2015
2.4	In the draft Investment Programme 2012-2015, it is recognised that the Council cannot realise the objectives on its own, and therefore an underlying principle is the need to work in partnership and develop productive relationships with the Northern Ireland Executive and other key partners from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.
2,5	Funding commitments have been agreed by the following key core funders up to 2014; Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Craigavon Borough Council and DCAL.
2.6	The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is seeking funding of £34,178 from Council for the two year period from 2012-2014.
2.7	A number of key Trust outputs have been highlighted in Appendix 1



## Lagan Canal - Key Outputs to date

### Belfast:

- A Topographical and River Survey has been completed for Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway.
- A Scoping Study was completed for the Lagan Gateway Project from the Lagan Weir to Edenderry (First Phase)
- An Economic Appraisal was conducted for the stretch of river from Lagan Weir to Edenderry. This study confirmed the feasibility of re-opening the Lagan Navigation.
- The Lagan Steering Group was established to exchange advice and information between stakeholders.
- A three dimensional model of the proposed development at Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway has been completed.
- A virtual (computer generated) model completed. This allows detailed examination of the project through 360 degrees. This interactive 3D environment will allow the user to navigate around in real-time and assess views from any location. It is compatible with use on the Council Website and is being used as a marketing and promotional tool.
- Interpretative signage has been installed beside Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway and includes interpretation of the Lagan Navigation, the history of the area, the river and canal.
- Held 2 successful Lagan boat rallies including the rally to coincide with Belfast Tall Ships event
- DSD has installed interpretative signs based on the Council's signage template. They link areas along the Lagan from Belfast Harbour to Stranmillis.
- Funding Research undertaken and liaison with potential funding bodies ongoing
- A workshop was held in June 2008, in Enniskillen to raise awareness of the potential to establish a single inland waterway with a maritime connection at either end linking the East and West coasts of Ulster to form new water based tourism products. (East-West Project) This workshop attracted support from Alderman Jeffrey Donaldson MP, MLA and Tánaiste, Mary Coughlan TD. The overall aim was to raise awareness and buy-in from stakeholders especially Central Government and Waterways Ireland.
- A reciprocal meeting was held in December 2008 at Lisburn City Council. Alderman Jeffrey Donaldson MP, MLA and Tánaiste, Mary Coughlan TD. Pledged their support for the East West project.

- New web pages have been constructed highlighting the Lagan Corridor Navigation and the proposed development at Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway. This web page has been added to Belfast City Council's website [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/lagan](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/lagan)
- A site meeting was arranged for members of the Development Committee, in June 2008. Representatives from DSD, DCAL, Lagan Valley Regional Park Board, Lagan Trust Manager and Belfast City Council Officers visited the Lagan Lookout to Locks 1, 2 and 3 via the Tow Path.
- Waterways Ireland arranged a best practice visit for officers and steering group members in June 2008, for the Lagan Steering Group to Ballyconnell Lock in Co Cavan. The purpose of the visit was to view the operation of the lock and gain an understanding and insight into the benefits of canal restoration.
- DSD has currently undertaken a major refurbishment of the Lagan Weir worth £2 million. DSD have also commissioned a feasibility report on the redevelopment of the Lagan Lookout, and an economic appraisal on two proposed bridges over the lower Lagan. They have also undertaken dredging work of the tidal stretch of the Lagan from the Lagan Weir to Stranmillis Gateway Lock 1.
- Belfast Activity Centre - based in Barnett's Demesne, completed the building of a boat house at Shaw's Bridge in 2010, and rebuilt canoe steps and reinstated the slipway. (Cost approximately £270k)
- DCAL through the Lagan Navigation Trust conducted a Business Case for the re-opening of the Lagan Navigation from Stranmillis to Union Locks, Lisburn. This study confirmed the feasibility of re-opening the Lagan Navigation.
- Lock Keepers Cottage – Castlereagh Borough Council  
The Lock keeper's cottage (Lock 3) grade B1 listed building has been refurbished and the new visitor centre, café, toilets and Interpreted space is opened. Canoe pontoons and moorings at the lock are currently being installed.  
DCAL restored the Lock and gates at Lock 3.
- Lagan Valley Regional Park worked in partnership with Castlereagh Borough Council in the development and refurbishment of the Lock 3 project. This has included towpath improvements, extension and interpretation signage.
- Lisburn Council operates a Lagan Corridor Programme. They re-opened lock 12 as part of the new Island Civic Centre. They have created a strategic framework – identified nodes for development along the canal which includes improvements in towpaths, interpretive signage, land purchase, and potential links to developments such as the Maze complex. These nodes pass through various eligible areas identified under the NISRA rural classification 2005.
- Received funding from NITB for the restoration of a Lagan barge "Lighter" for their proposed canal/waterways museum at Oxford Island. They have also developed a canal leaflet for the Craigavon section of the Lagan Canal.

- Lagan Canal Restoration trust Established. Partnership members recruited and structures formalized. Registered as company limited by guarantee and recognised as a charity
- Stakeholder workshops organised to inform the strategic way forward
- Identified key necessary pre-restoration tasks steps, action plan developed & delivery initiated
- Vision document developed and distributed
- Landownership database being developed and Geographical Information Systems database being developed
- Website launched
- Delivered program of events including, Walks, Lectures, Exhibitions and Community Events
- Secured funding from the Rural Development Program to develop the Guide to the Lagan Canal, Past, Present and Future.