



## Belfast City Council

**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** **Consultation: Lagan Canal Trust - Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Preliminary Engineering Report, from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh**

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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	As part of a Public Consultation exercise, Council has been asked to respond to the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Report (SEA) and Preliminary Engineering Report. Following the completion of these reports, the Business Case will be developed and should be available to Committee for comment by March 2013.
1.2	<u>The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust</u> Members will be aware that the Lagan Canal Trust was formed in January 2009. Its Board members include representatives from Belfast, Castlereagh, Lisburn and Craigavon Councils, 4 Public Directors, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (formerly CAAN), the Inland Waterway Association of Ireland (IWAI); Ulster Waterway Group, Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).
1.3	In November 2011 an All Party Group met with the Minister for Culture, Arts & Leisure regarding the potential support for a Lagan Canal Project. Members outlined the various benefits to the project, including the work undertaken to date by Council. Although the Minister pointed out that her Department had no spare budgetary capacity, she did not rule out future funding if the project was sufficiently developed. The meeting was positive and was a useful step in enhancing the overall advocacy of Council in making projects happen for Belfast.
1.4	At the March 2012 Development Committee it was reported that a number of key reports were currently being undertaken by the Trust, namely; a Business Case, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Engineering Report 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 were to be completed in 2012.

1.5	In March 2012 Council agreed to fund the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust for a further two years, until March 2014, with a total cost to Council of £34,178, following which, a review of future funding for this organisation will be undertaken.
1.6	In May 2012 the Lord Mayor led a meeting of stakeholders to evaluate possible ways forward for the Lagan Canal Project.
1.7	Castlereagh Borough Council in conjunction with Belfast City Council submitted a funding application in June 2012 to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) AXIS 3, Rural Development Programme Measure 3.3, Encouragement of Tourism Activities for the Lagan Strategic Rural Project.
1.8	Members should note that as an emerging partnership project, the Lagan Canal corridor is included in the draft Belfast City Council's Investment Programme 2012-2015, furthermore 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.
1.9	<p><u>Strategic Environmental Assessment: Environmental Report (SEA)</u></p> <p>The assessment has been prepared following previous work that determined that the plan to reopen the Lagan canal from Belfast to Lough Neagh is likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have significant environmental effects, taking account of the relevant criteria in Annex II of the SEA Directive;</li> <li>- affect water management and land use which sets the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex II of Directive 85/337/EEC; and</li> <li>- have effects on sites that have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC.</li> </ul>
1.10	The SEA document was distributed to officers across Council for comment.
1.11	<p><u>Re-opening the Lagan Navigation from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh (Preliminary Engineering Report)</u></p> <p>This assessment is a review of the existing documentation update drawings, surveys and cost planning to inform the potential to re-open the Lagan Navigation from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh</p>
1.12	The consultation documents were made available on 10 August and comments are required to be returned by the 21 September. The full proposal for the SEA is available to Members upon request and the preliminary Engineering Report is attached as Appendix 1.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p><u>The Strategic Environmental Assessment</u></p> <p>Council are content that the SEA references a number of key City Plans and Strategies including; Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (Draft); Belfast City Council: Corporate Plans; Belfast City Council: Local Economic Development Plan; Belfast City Council: Open Space Strategy – 'Your City, Your Space', Belfast City Council: Cultural Tourism Strategy, Developing Belfast's Opportunity; Belfast City Council: Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism 2010-2014; These documents set the economic development and recreational framework for the area</p>

	and there is consistent reference to the aims to improve the amenity of the canal and its corridor.
2.2	The environmental report is compatible with the Council's priorities, however it would benefit from reference to Belfast City Council Investment Programme 2012-2015 Draft and the development of a more comprehensive list of open spaces within the 1.5 mile economic corridor of Belfast; Page 56 Table 4.9 Parks Gardens and Demesnes.
2.3	Our Environmental Protection Unit of the Health and Environmental Services Department have stated that they are fully supportive of the intentions of the Lagan Canal Trust to achieve the restoration and revitalisation of the Lagan Canal and its corridor and would be particularly involved once the plan is live in terms of noise, air quality and contaminated land. Furthermore those areas detailed in Appendix 1 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive that would potentially involve the Environmental Protection Unit are those relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The risks to human health or the environment, and</li> <li>2. The exceeding of environmental quality standards or limit values.</li> </ul>
2.4	The Environmental Protection Unit would therefore request that they are consulted at each stage of the project where noise, air quality and contaminated land are potential issues.
2.5	<u>Re-opening the Lagan Navigation from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh (Preliminary Engineering Report)</u> The Preliminary Engineering Report accurately reflects the Lagan Canal Scoping Report that was conducted by Scott Wilson Consultants on behalf of Belfast City Council in 2008. This Engineering Report is therefore consistent with the Council's previous study.

<b>3</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
3.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations implications attached to this report.

<b>4</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
4.1	Members are asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. approve the draft BCC response to the consultation and</li> <li>2. raise any additional issues, relating to the consultation document, that they would like to be included.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	There is no decision tracking attached to this report.

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
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SEA - Strategic Environmental Assessment  
EEC - European Economic Commission  
formerly CAAN - Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland  
DCAL - Department of Culture Arts and Leisure  
NIEA - Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
IWAI - Inland Waterway Association of Ireland

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
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Appendix 1 - Re-opening the Lagan Navigation from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh (Preliminary Engineering Report)" August 2012.
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