



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Lagan Canal improvements – request for support
Date:	20 August 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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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) under the name the Lagan Rural Partnership (LRP).
1.2	In September 2008 a final Rural Development Strategy was submitted to DARD and as 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 LRP of which £7,306,576 was to be circulated through grant funding through Axis 3 funding measures.
1.3	The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) requires all funding to be allocated to projects by the 31 December 2013 with all projects completed in full by 31 December 2014. To expedite the cluster's allocation of funding, a call for strategic applications was issued by the Lagan Rural Partnership.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Led by Castlereagh Borough Council, a funding application was submitted under the call for strategic applications to deliver improvements to the Lock Keeper's Cottage Visitors' Centre and the former navigation at Lock III.
2.2	Developed in consultation with Belfast City Council officers, the project includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extension to the existing visitor centre to address public convenience and storage limitations on-site • Capital improvements to make the site more accessible to pedestrians and mark arrival at a key tourism node and entrance point to Belvoir Forest, Lagan Valley Regional Park, the Lock Keeper's Cottage and the Lagan Navigation and Tow Path;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, restore, fit-out and re-locate the 1890's Industry Barge to her former home on the Lagan Navigation at Lock III; • Creation of interpretative panels promoting the heritage of the canal and the installation of bike docks at key locations within the Belfast City Council boundary including Malone House, Clement Wilson Park and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.
2.3	Against a total project cost of £696,590, match funding of £572,100 has now been secured through Measure 3.3 of the NIRDP. Funding has also been secured from Castlereagh Borough Council (£111,015) and Inland Waterways (£4,000). Castlereagh Borough Council have requested match funding of £9,475 from Belfast City Council to contribute towards the cost of the interpretative panels and bike docks located within the Belfast City Council boundary.
2.4	This project will help further capitalise on the tourism potential of the River Lagan and the Lagan Navigation, by encouraging tourists and residents alike to visit the Lagan Canal. It provides Belfast City Council with an opportunity to develop a tourism trail from Belfast, linking The Lock Keeper's Inn facility, promoting the maritime heritage of the canal and its navigation. Whilst the Lock Keeper's Cottage is currently located in the Castlereagh Borough Council area, the development of this site is of additional interest to Belfast as boundary changes through the Reform of Local Government will position this facility within the new Belfast City Council area.
2.5	It is therefore recommended council supports the development of this project and approves match funding of up to £9,475 for the installation of interpretative panels and bike docks within the council boundary. Works have not yet commenced and therefore the final amount required is not yet known; however it will not exceed this figure.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Match funding is requested of up to £9,475 is required from Belfast City Council. The overall works budget is estimated at £696,590.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	No specific equality and good relations considerations at this stage.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of this report - Agree to the recommendation to provide £9,475 of match funding for the installation of interpretative panels and bike docks within the council boundary.

6	Decision Tracking
An update on progress will be brought back to Committee in January 2014.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
NIRDP - Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme	
DARD - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	
LRP - Lagan Rural Partnership	