



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Request to support the relocation of the Lagan Canal Trust
Date:	16 December 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Brian Johnston, Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Development Manager, ext 3586.

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>In November 2006 Members approved the establishment of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust, a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The main purpose of the Trust is to work towards reopening the canal from Belfast to Lough Neagh. Current priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of the Union Locks - Feasibility assessments of the Aghagallon village plan - Reinstating the pedestrian route from the Blackstaff River to the Lagan towpath - A EU project addressing climate change in the Lagan valley - Development of the Waterways College
1.2	<p>The Trust currently represents core funding bodies and key interest groups including; Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Craigavon Borough Council and the 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.</p>
1.3	<p>Financial support from the relevant councils is currently calculated based on the length of canal which lies within their area. In 2013-14 this was 18% of the canal for Belfast amounting to £17,341 of funding. Should the same formula be applied, this will increase to 22% following Local Government Reform.</p>
1.4	<p>The current funding agreement between Lagan Canal Trust and the relevant councils runs out in March 2015. The Trust has indicated that they will be requesting a new funding package for the next three year period. It is likely that the request will include an increased contribution from Belfast City Council due to increased running costs, possible extra activity and the greater length of the river included within the city boundary. However in the short term in year costs have arisen that the Trust has indicated cannot be met from the existing funding agreement.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	The offices of the Trust are currently in Craigavon at the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre. An opportunity has emerged to relocate to Navigation House, built in 1866 beside the Union Locks in Lisburn, which was acquired by the not-for-profit organisation HEARTH and in due course HEARTH plan to complete a full restoration. A part restoration has already taken place and the board of the Lagan Canal Trust has agreed that the Trust will occupy the first floor on a three year tenancy. The relocation was not budgeted for within 2014/15 estimates.
2.2	A request has been made by the Trust to the councils for funding to cover costs for the relocation. These costs include one-off items totalling £9,300 including furniture and ICT installations. There will also be additional recurrent costs and for the period up to the end of the financial year (March 2015) these include rent and utilities amounting to £7,500. The total cost of relocation is therefore £16,800.
2.3	The Trust has applied the existing formula and requested a contribution from Belfast City Council of £4,652.31. Funding of £9,046.15 from Lisburn City Council and £2,067.69 from Craigavon Borough Council has been approved subject to confirmation of contribution from other councils. A request for £1,033.85 from Castlereagh Borough Council is currently under consideration.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	A request has been made that Council contribute a one off payment of £4,652.31 additional to the funding already agreed for the current financial year.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	There are currently no Equality and Good Relations implications.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the contents of this report and agree an additional payment to the Lagan Canal Trust of £4,652.31 within the current financial year from TCA unit's 2014-15 budgets.

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

7	Key to Abbreviations
TCA - Tourism, Culture and Arts	