

Community and Recreation Committee

Friday, 13th January, 2006

SPECIAL MEETING OF COMMUNITY AND RECREATION (PARKS AND CEMETERIES SERVICES) SUB-COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair); and Councillors Attwood, Austin, Hartley, Kirkpatrick, Long, McCausland, McClenaghan and Stalford.

In attendance: Mr. M. Elder, Director of Community and Recreation; Mr. M. Parkinson, Head of Parks and Cemeteries Services; Mr. M. McBride, Business Support Manager; and Miss L. Hillick, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor Rodgers) and Councillor O'Reilly.

Biking Facility at Cavehill Country Park

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries Services reminded the Sub-Committee that the former Parks and Amenities Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 10th September, 2002, had agreed in principle to establish a mountain biking facility at the Cavehill Country Park. He reported that, initially, the Cavehill Country Park had been considered as one of four venues throughout Northern Ireland where such facilities could be built in order to manage high levels of unofficial mountain biking activities. However, due to the fact that the Forest Service had offered the use of a number of larger sites with less recreational pressure but of more strategic benefit to participants, the initiative had been delayed. He pointed out that, due to problems associated with costings and the completion of the economic appraisals, the proposed large-scale projects had not proceeded beyond the planning stage.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Countryside Access and Activities Network was now seeking to develop mountain bike facilities at smaller sites in order to cater for local demand, with the Cavehill Country Park having been identified as a potential location. Discussions had taken place between Council officers and the Network and it was the view of both parties that a downhill mountain biking facility might attract funding from the Sports Lottery Fund. The Fund could cover up to 85% of project costs, with the Environment and Heritage Service funding some of the remaining costs. A prerequisite of the scheme was that local communities and user groups were to be consulted and involved in the development of the project.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries Services recommended, in order to enable the project to proceed, that the Sub-Committee grant authority for an initial application for funding to be submitted to the Sports Lottery Fund and that discussions take place with various stakeholders, including local interest groups.

The Sub-Committee granted the authority sought and noted that a report in relation to the progress achieved would be submitted for its consideration in due course. In addition, the Sub-Committee agreed that maps of the site be included within future reports.