



Subject:	DRD Lagan Footbridge Gasworks to Ormeau Park
Date:	12th May 2015
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	Sabine Kalke, Project Sponsor, Property & Projects

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress of the proposed DRD Lagan Footbridge and the impact it may have on Council post April 2016, ahead of the anticipated planning application for this project.</p> <p>Members will be aware that the Laganside assets, including the impounded River Lagan and weir will be transferred from DSD to Belfast City Council in April 2016, along with the responsibility for managing and maintaining those assets. With the proposed construction of the bridge Council will need to consider management and operational issues that might arise post completion of the bridge. In addition, Members should be mindful that there might be proposals to make additional improvements to Ormeau Park, for example, to facilitate access through the park. Access through the Gasworks with opening of the railway underpass 24/7 also needs to be considered.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The committee is asked to note the contents of this report, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">An update for Members as a significant infrastructure project for the city and its importance for connecting the city centre with communities east of the Lagan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The progress in recent months from concept design of 9 options to detailed design of one preferred option and the anticipated submission of a planning application to the Council ▪ The continued engagement from DRD with the Council regarding operational issues and potential developments in Ormeau Park such as cycle paths
3.0	Main report
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p>The Department for Regional Development has plans for a new shared use pedestrian/cycle bridge across the River Lagan between the Gasworks and Ormeau Park. The preferred option that was identified has its landing points at the towpath next to the underpass (West) and at the small carpark at Ormeau Embankment (East).</p> <p>In summer 2013 the DRD Minister announced to launch a feasibility study into plans for a new shared use pedestrian/cycle bridge across the River Lagan between the Gasworks and Ormeau Park. The aim of the bridge is to encourage people in the city centre and local communities to use the park for recreational use and improve accessibility of the city centre to residents east of the Lagan.</p> <p>Main objectives of the scheme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve accessibility to Ormeau Park, the Gasworks/city centre and Central Train Station for local communities and commuters ▪ Encourage sustainability by enabling people to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper forms of transport ▪ Improve road safety by providing commuters travelling to and from the south of the city with an alternative route to the city centre which is traffic free. <p>There are social, economic and environmental benefits for a bridge at this location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve access for local communities to leisure facilities, places of employment, schools, colleges, pubs, restaurants, shops ▪ Improve access to and encourage the use of Ormeau Park and Ozone leisure facilities ▪ Reduce journey times for pedestrians and cyclists between Ormeau Park and Gasworks

- Cost savings to local residents and commuters who choose to use the bridge in favour of other less sustainable methods of transport
- Increased footfall within the city centre and around the Ozone
- Increase usage of Ormeau Park and the Lagan Towpath
- Improve accessibility to the River Lagan and existing slipways
- Promote the use of the river and the riverbanks for recreational activities

3.4

Key Issues:

A feasibility study was undertaken in late 2013 and 9 different options developed that were focus of an extensive consultation process in spring 2014. The 9 options had different designs and were spanning the section of the river from the NIR underpass (west bank) to either the small car park on Ormeau Embankment or into the Ormeau Park (east bank).

Estimated costs depending on design and length were between £4.2m and £11.6m

In September 2014 Transport NI commissioned a consultant, Amey, to assist with the design, procurement and construction of a new bridge – 3 options were recommended to be considered further.

Consultations were held with Belfast City Council, Translink, NI Water and various government departments outlining and discussion the 3 options.

A site investigation and a number of environmental surveys have been completed and information on existing services collated. A Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) has been prepared which identified a preferred bridge option in spring 2015. This has been agreed by the Minister for Regional Development. Consultations with stakeholders on the environmental implications for the proposed bridge took place and a planning application will be submitted in the next weeks.

The Laganside assets, including the impounded River Lagan and weir will be transferred from DSD to Belfast City Council in April 2016, along with the responsibility for managing and maintaining those assets. Council has to consider management and operational issues that might arise post completion of the bridge.

3.5

Key dates (programme of consultants):

Planning Application – May 2015

Planning Approval – September 2015

	<p>Contract Award – January 2016</p> <p>Contract Completion – May 2017</p>
3.6	<p>Bridge design:</p> <p>The proposed cable stayed bridge is 141 metres long designed for use by pedestrians and cyclists. It will have a steel deck and 40 metres high steel towers which will be constructed close to the banks of the river, leaving the main central section free from obstruction. It will also include a pedestrian and cycle crossing on Ormeau Embankment Road to allow access into Ormeau Park.</p> <p>Access ramps with a 1 in 21 gradient for cycle and disability access will be constructed at either end of the bridge. The abutments of the bridge will be located adjacent to the existing towpath at each bank, and the bank levels will be raised slightly to accommodate the access ramps. The bridge deck will be 5.2m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to allow suitable clearance for users of the river. The deck will be 5m wide and have 1.4m high parapets along the length of the deck.</p> <p>The areas at both ends of the bridge will be landscaped to provide an open space for relaxation with planted areas, seating and paths connecting to the existing towpath.</p> <p>Estimated costs are between £7m - £9m</p>
3.7	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p> <p>None at the present. As this is a project of DRD the capital costs will be fully funded by the Department.</p> <p>However, Members should be aware that there might be cost implication around BCC maintenance and operational activities post transfer April 2016. There could be also additional spending to make improvements to Ormeau Park to facilitate access through the park and wider connection to East Belfast.</p>
3.8	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications</p> <p>None at present. This is a DRD project and therefore primary responsibility for consideration and addressing equality and good relation implications sit with DRD.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
4.1	<p>None</p>