



Subject:	System for Observing Play & Recreation in Communities – Update (SOPARC)
Date:	12th May 2015
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Karen Anderson-Gillespie, Policy and Business Development Manager – Leisure Transformation Programme (LTP)

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
	<p>Officers have been working in partnership with Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) to pilot the use of the SOPARC technique using a 3 phase approach to implementation, approved by the Parks and Leisure Committee in June 2013.</p> <p>Over the last 18 months the Council has successfully progressed to Phase 2 of the SOPARC pilot using the technique to effectively measure, analyse and encourage levels and characteristics of usage and activity within Council parks and open spaces. Internal capacity has been built with all park wardens trained to carry out observation surveys. Likewise, the Friends’ groups have shown great interest in the pilot. The data collected to date evidences the value that outdoor leisure has for the people of Belfast and how it contributes to the achievement of local outcomes such as enabling active, healthy and happy people and communities.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the SOPARC project.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to note the content of the report and the ongoing development of the SOPARC pilot project.</p>

3.0	Main report
	<p><u>What is the SOPARC technique?</u></p> <p>As part of the SOPARC technique an observation survey is carried out. It records the number and characteristics of individuals in an open space in a systematic way. The SOPARC technique requires an observation survey to be carried out in each site for up to 1 week, 4 times a day and 4 times a year to enable seasonable variation and profiling. A tablet based app has been developed for data capture and processing and all park wardens across the city have been trained in how to conduct a survey.</p> <p><u>Why evaluate the usage of parks?</u></p> <p>As well as measuring value for money, performance and outcomes, by collecting and analysing this data we can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the delivery, marketing and promotion of programmes and activities • Contribute to community involvement criterion of Green Flag management plans • Enable effective resource allocation (i.e antisocial behaviour (ASB), litter and dog fouling) • Inform local area working and planning. <p><u>The SOPARC implementation: 3 phase approach</u></p> <p>A 3 phase approach is currently being implemented across the city.</p> <p><u>Phase 1: Grove Playing Field Pilot (complete)</u></p> <p>Grove Playing Fields was chosen as the perfect test bed for the pilot as part of Phase 1. It is a Green Flag accredited park with a variety of facilities including a newly installed dog enclosure. A detailed profile was created for Grove Playing Fields, raising some valuable questions and insights and enabling us to evaluate the success of the dog enclosure.</p> <p><u>Phase 2: City-wide pilot (January – June 2015)</u></p> <p>Phase 2 was rolled out to 4 Green Flag standard parks, one from each area of the city, including Waterworks park, Botanic Gardens, Knocknagoney Linear park and Falls park. Detailed analysis including headline figures for each park can be found in Appendix 1. In summary, over the course of the week across the four parks surveyed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a total of 8,556 people were observed using the parks = average of 407 users p/hr. • 54% of users were male and 46% female. • the largest group of users were adults who accounted for 73% of those observed in the park. The smallest user group represented were seniors who accounted for just

	<p>3%. Children and teenagers accounted for 9% and 14% of users respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% of those in the park were engaged in walking activities, 9% engaged in vigorous activities and the remaining 4% sedentary. • Friday was the busiest day of the week accounting for 21% of weekly usage. Thursday and Sunday were the least busy days of the week accounting for just 9%. • the busiest time of day was the afternoon (39% of total usage) with lunch close behind with 38%. Morning was the least busy time of day accounting for 23% of total usage. <p><u>Phase 3: Green Flag parks projects (June 2015 – ongoing)</u></p> <p>Following successful implementation of Phase 2 the pilot will be mainstreamed across all the Green Flag accredited parks across the city.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The SOPARC pilot is included within existing budget.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relation implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Phase 2 SOPARC Pilot Analysis Report.