



<b>Subject:</b>	Alexandra Park - Creation of Outdoor Classroom
<b>Date:</b>	12th May 2015
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Fintan Grant, City Parks Manager

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	<p>Members may be aware that the Alexandra Park Steering Group was established as a stakeholder advisory group to deliver the Peace III funded “Reconciling Communities through Regeneration” programme in Alexandra Park and that they have worked with the Council on regeneration projects within the park.</p> <p>The Steering Group has proposed the development of an outdoor classroom in the park, located in an area that sits behind the peace line, between the fence and the recycling yard, which is not currently accessible to members of the public. The creation of the outdoor classroom will require the removal of a section of the peace line.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the proposed project and to seek approval to undertake a public consultation exercise in relation to it.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>Members are asked to approve the carrying out of a public consultation exercise on the development of an outdoor classroom in Alexandra Park and the removal of a section of the peace line to facilitate this.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Alexandra Park steering group was established as a stakeholder advisory group to deliver the Peace III funded “Reconciling Communities through Regeneration” programme</p>

in Alexandra Park. The programme was developed and managed by Groundwork NI and had 4 key objectives:

- To develop key skills for peace and create opportunities for inter-group dialogue, cross community relationship building and networking;
- To work strategically with the Peace III clusters;
- To build positive relationships at a local level in order to achieve positive change; and
- To begin to address contested physical space issues with the aim of regenerating physical spaces and removing physical manifestations of segregation.

Participation for the steering group has been widely encouraged and sought and the main participants to date have been:

- Belfast City Council;
- Groundwork NI;
- North Belfast Community Development & Transition Group;
- Intercomm;
- PSNI;
- North Belfast interface Network ;
- Challenge for Youth;
- Department of Justice;
- Newlodge Arts;
- Youth Justice agency; and
- Non-affiliated residents from Parkside, Dunmore, Newington, Castleton, Mountcollyer and Camberwell Terrace.

Successes to date are regeneration works within the park that include a nature trail, installation of seating, interpretive panels on history and wildlife in the park, the development of a picnic area and the installation of fishing stands, full refurbishment of the two playgrounds and the installation of an outdoor gym. A programme of successful events has been delivered in the park, the most significant in September 2011 to mark the opening of the gate installed within the peace line.

Council officers continue to work closely with the steering group to ensure continued development and improvements within Alexandra Park.

### 3.1.1 Proposed project

The Steering Group has requested that the Council consider the development of an

outdoor classroom within the park. The area which has been suggested currently sits behind the peace line between the fence and the recycling yard as outlined by the hashed area in Appendix 1. The area is approximately 80m x 80m in size and currently is not accessible to members of the public. This is considered as dead space and in order to develop this area a section of the peace line will need to be removed. The area of fence which is to be removed is also outlined in Appendix 1.

The key stakeholders who are represented on the Steering Group are eager to see the area evolve in to a shared space and initial feedback from local schools and community organisations is that they are keen to re-landscape the area to include an outdoor classroom.

At this stage detailed designs for the outdoor classroom have not yet been developed and further consultation and engagement needs to be carried out on what it should comprise.

Based on early discussions and projects elsewhere it is likely to include:

- Bird feeding stations and bird nesting boxes
- An area for growing food
- Wildflower sections
- Mini beast hotels
- Hedgehog houses
- A wildlife pond
- Classroom effect tables and chairs.

### 3.1.2 Funding

Members should note that there is currently no budget available for the creation of the outdoor classroom and that until a detailed design is developed we are not in a position to estimate the cost. The Department of Justice will pay for the cost of removing the section of the peace line but at this point they are not in a position to provide any further funding to this project. There is potential for us to seek funding from other sources such as Peace IV however there is a risk that we would not be successful and that it would not fit in with our timeline for development.

### 3.1.3 Consultation

Due to the nature of this project and the fact that it involves removal of a section of the peace line it is proposed that a public consultation exercise be undertaken. This would involve consulting with key stakeholders in the area and local residents through the holding of several information sessions. These would be independently facilitated and be

<p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p>held at different times and locations to maximise attendance. The meetings would be advertised through the Council's normal communications channels and posters would be put up in the park and other venues in the area. Where applicable one to one meetings would be held with organisations such as the local schools and those whose premises are situated directly beside the park.</p> <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Based on previous experience a maximum of £5,000 has been set aside from existing departmental resources for the carrying out of the public consultation exercise.</p> <p>There is currently no budget available for the creation of the outdoor classroom and at this stage we are not in a position to estimate the cost.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The consultation on the development of an outdoor classroom in Alexandra Park will be undertaken in line with the Council's Equality Scheme.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – Map of the area</p>