



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Tropical Ravine Heritage Grant Application
<b>Date:</b>	16 September 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ian Nuttall, Funding and Monitoring Officer

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the status of the proposed application to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a Heritage Grant to allow the restoration of the Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens, as agreed in the departmental plan 2010/11.

### Relevant Background Information

The Parks and Leisure Committee agreed to a review of Botanic Gardens to explore how it might be better integrated with the other physical developments in the area. This was to include commencing an application for appropriate funding to refurbish the Tropical Ravine.

Heritage Grants is HLF's main programme offering grants of more than £50,000 for projects relating to the national, regional or local heritage of the UK, with aims which relate to learning, conservation and participation. To be eligible, projects must demonstrate how they will:

- help people learn about their own and other people's heritage;
- conserve heritage for present and future generations; and/or
- help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

The Heritage Grants programme has a two stage application process. The first round submissions are accepted by HLF on a quarterly basis. If successful at the first round stage, HLF allows applicants up to two years to develop a full application – during which grant assistance may be awarded to cover certain development costs.

Applicants to the Heritage Grants programme are expected to contribute as much as they are able to project costs. In any case, if applying for a grant of £1 million or more, applicants must provide at least 25% of costs (with at least 5% of the total costs of the project coming from the organisation's own resources,

either in cash or in kind).

Following the decision of the Committee, discussions with HLF have indicated that a project in Botanic Gardens including the restoration of the Tropical Ravine would be an appropriate candidate for application to the Heritage Grants programme.

### **Key Issues**

Following discussions with HLF, a working group of relevant officers was established to commence the application process. In March this year, a pre-application form was submitted. This included the following aims:

- To realise the potential heritage value of the Tropical Ravine including development of linkages with other areas of Botanic Gardens and the surrounding institutions;
- To engage the local community and relevant stakeholders in determining the approach taken;
- To restore the unique Victorian features of the Tropical Ravine House, both external and internal;
- To incorporate similar construction methods to those used in the original building, in particular the roof structure;
- To improve and extend the educational potential of the Ravine, providing programmes and information for the wider community including the general public, education sector and tourists, so promoting local Victorian heritage and global natural heritage (both of which aspects would complement information in the nearby newly refurbished Ulster Museum); and
- To provide a valuable cultural tourism feature within the Botanic Gardens.

An initial estimated project cost of £3,000,000 was proposed – of which the Council would be required to provide at least £750,000 as a match contribution.

The pre-application submission formed the basis of a meeting with representatives of HLF. At this meeting, they advised the undertaking of a building condition survey of the Tropical Ravine, investigating the heritage value of both the building and the plant collection, and consulting with key stakeholders to agree in principle appropriate programming activities.

Work is underway to procure appropriately qualified architectural services to undertake the first of these steps. The specification for invitations to quote for this work is provided in Appendix 1. The key initial required output will be a report recommending options (with costs) for repair/improvement to the Ravine ranging from remedial action and the restoration necessary to meet the requirements of an HLF Heritage Grant.

It is expected that this work will be initiated by early October. Once completed and reviewed, the report will form the basis of the full application to HLF.

### **Resource Implications**

#### Financial

The total cost for project will be determined as part of the building conditions survey. It is expected that the Council will make a match contribution likely to be

in the region of £750,000. In part this would be met 'in kind' (for example, through the time of existing officers), however it is likely that a contribution would be necessary from the Capital Programme and a Preliminary Strategic Business Case has been submitted for approval through the Gates Review process. A further report on the match contribution will be brought to Committee in due course, and will be subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in accordance with the agreed governance arrangements for the capital programme.

Officers will also seek grant-aid support from HLF to cover the costs of technical and professional services for the development of the full application.

#### Human Resources

There will be no additional human resources required at this stage.

#### Asset and Other Implications

A successful Heritage Grant application would protect and enhance the Tropical Ravine as a valuable Council asset.

### **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

### **Decision Tracking**

Report on the match contribution of the Council to the HLF application - by Funding and Monitoring Officer in November 2010.

### **Key to Abbreviations**

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund

### **Documents Attached**

None.