



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Alexandra Park
Date:	14 April 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Ricky Rice, City Park Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>In late 2008, Groundwork NI (GWNI) was awarded £998,000 through the EU Peace III Programme under the Building Positive Relations at a Local Level. The overall programme is operational across Northern Ireland as well as counties Cavan, Leitrim and Donegal and aims to reduce sectarianism and racism through regeneration.</p> <p>The programme, entitled 'Reconciling Communities Through Regeneration', runs until August 2011. Developed and managed by GWNI, it has 4 key objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. to develop key skills for peace and create opportunities for inter-group dialogue, cross community relationship building and networking;2. to work strategically with the Peace III clusters;3. to build positive relationships at the local level in order to achieve positive change; and4. to begin to address contested physical space issues with the aim of regenerating physical spaces and removing the physical manifestations of segregation. <p>As part of this regional programme, GWNI proposed Alexandra Park as a specific project. This was done following consultation with representatives from the Tiger's Bay, Mountcollyer, Parkside and Newington areas as well as some preliminary discussion with council officers.</p> <p>This is in addition to ongoing council and departmental project work around the park such as the People in Parks youth intervention work through the Park Manager and antisocial behaviour programme. It also complements other ongoing work by the council in relation to good</p>

	<p>relations, community safety and the proposals within the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan for the area and dovetails with proposals that the council is developing regarding the planning and promotion of shared space in the city.</p> <p>A steering group was developed in 2009 that expanded the number of community representatives interested in working to improve usage and develop regeneration proposals for the Park. Regeneration proposals have been developed by this steering group which also has representation from Belfast City Council, Department of Justice, OFMDFM and the PSNI. The regeneration proposals were approved at the meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee meeting on 11 November 2010.</p> <p>Alongside ongoing discussion and dialogue with the community representatives, GWNI also conducted a survey to gauge residents' opinions on enhancing access at the existing peace line and the side entrance to the park at Alexandra Park Avenue.</p> <p>It has been proposed that there would be a negotiated opening and closing time of 9am – 3pm Monday to Friday on a pilot basis. There was unanimous support for these proposals from within the steering group and various community groups and residents completed the survey during February and early March 2011.</p>
--	--

2.	Key Issues
	<p>To move this forward a survey was carried out by Groundwork NI in February 2011 and the consultation results are attached as Appendix 1.</p> <p>The following are extracts from the consultation results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The results show that 71% of targeted residents completed the survey door to door.</i> • <i>In relation to the first question asked, of those that completed the survey 135 or 92% of respondents highlighted that they would like to see increased access on a pilot basis at the interface wall while only 4 % or 6 respondents would not like to see access enhanced at this site. The remaining 1% responded that they were ‘Not sure’.</i> • <i>In relation to the second question asked, of those that completed the survey 130 or 91.5% of respondents highlighted that they would like to see increased access at Alexandra Park Avenue while only 5 % or 7 respondents would not like to see access enhanced at this site. The remaining 3.5% responded that they were ‘didn’t know’ or were ‘not worried’.</i> <p>The Department for Justice (DOJ) would be willing to meet the cost of purchasing and installing a gate within the wall structure. This could remain ‘locked’ until such time as the communities feel sufficiently confident to pilot ‘opening hours’.</p>

	The DOJ is the owner of the wall and can take action to make any alterations to the wall as desired however the preference would be that this is done in line with council and community knowledge and support.
--	---

3.	Resource Implications
-----------	------------------------------

	<p><u>Financial Implications</u> The cost of the acquisition and installation of the gate will be met by NIO.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There are no additional human resource implications, the opening and closing can be accommodated within existing work schedules.</p>
--	--

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
-----------	---

	The Alexandra Park project has been developed with the full involvement of the good relations team, local communities and all relevant stakeholders and is completely in line with the council's responsibilities in this area.
--	---

5.	Recommendations
-----------	------------------------

	It is recommended that the committee agree to the proposed installation of a gate in the wall during the forthcoming summer period to enable the proposed pilot regarding access to be undertaken.
--	--

6.	Decision Tracking
-----------	--------------------------

	Officer responsible: City Park Manager Decision of the committee to be communicated by May 2011.
--	---

7.	Key to Abbreviations
-----------	-----------------------------

	<p>GWNI - Groundwork NI</p> <p>RCTR – Reconciling Communities through Regeneration</p>
--	--

8.	Documents Attached
-----------	---------------------------

	<p>Appendix 1: Copy of the Groundwork NI Alexandra Park Consultation</p> <p>Appendix 2: Outline map of Alexandra Park</p>
--	---