



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast Hills Funding
<b>Date:</b>	14 April 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Agnes McNulty, Open Spaces and Active Living Manager

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 10 September 2009, approval was given to provide an annual grant of £28,720 to the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) for the period April 2010 until March 2013. Members will be aware that BHP brings together a range of partners from local government (Belfast, Antrim, Newtownabbey and Lisburn councils), environmental groups, local business, quarry and farming representatives and local communities to promote the hills and to take steps to protect this valuable resource on the perimeter of North and West Belfast.</p> <p>The work of the BHP and its members over the last number of years has meant that accessible open space on the hills has increased with additional walking routes being established and estimated visitor numbers to the Belfast Hills currently are 600,000 to 700,000 (does not include Belfast Zoo).</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to highlight the recent success of the BHP in attracting £1.17m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the development of a major Landscape Partnership Scheme within the Belfast Hills. The proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme will support the delivery of 30 different projects across the hills to mitigate threats to the landscape and take advantage of opportunities to enhance community involvement, improve access and provide training to volunteers. The success of the BHP in drawing down this level of funding will raise the profile of the Belfast Hills as an important part of the Belfast visitor offering within the city.</p> <p>Whilst the funding will cover a range of capital schemes and support some 'revenue initiatives' such as training of volunteers, the BHP has contacted the council to request some additional financial support to meet core staff costs and project costs relating to additional work carried out in the council area. BHP has indicated that they may require some small capital funding however they have not made any specific proposals at this time.</p> <p>The BHP is seeking an additional funding commitment from the participating councils and has already secured £94,000 from the Northern Ireland</p>

	<p>Environment Agency (NIEA). BHP is requesting a contribution of £2,050 in the year 2011/12 and £8,180 per year towards core staff costs over the next four years from Belfast City Council. This being in addition to the annual grant already agreed. BHP is also asking the council to extend the period of funding until the end of March 2016.</p> <p>If committee accedes to this request, potential works scheduled for council properties such as Cave Hill Country Park and Ligoniel Park include path improvements, new path works, community biodiversity projects, heritage interpretation, installation of visitor counters and junior orienteering routes. In the wider context, this project will help encourage local people to get involved in managing their environment through volunteering opportunities, consultations and events as well as the associated physical and mental health benefits. A list of potential projects is attached as Appendix 1.</p>
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<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>The main issue for the committee to consider is whether it wishes to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. provide an additional £2,050 in the year 2011/12;</li> <li>2. increase the annual grant paid to the BHP from £28,720 to £36,900 with effect from 1 April 2012; and</li> <li>3. extend the funding period from March 2013 until March 2016.</li> </ol> <p>It is proposed that given the level of funding achieved it would be beneficial for the council to increase its financial support to the BHP during the next 5 years in support of the works.</p>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>										
	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There will be an additional revenue contribution required as outlined above for the 2011/12 financial year. If agreed appropriate provision will be made in the 2012/13 estimates and in subsequent years.</p> <p>Proposed funding schedule:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Dec 2011 – Mar 2012</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£30,770</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2012 – Mar 2013</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£36,900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2013 – Mar 2014</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£36,900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2014 – Mar 2015</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£36,900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2015 – Mar 2016</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£36,900</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>There are no additional human resource implications at this time.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>The work of the Belfast Hills Partnership greatly enhances the natural environment around North and West Belfast, and in particular makes a significant positive contribution to Cave Hill Country Park. This project will draw down over £1.5 million into this area.</p>	Dec 2011 – Mar 2012	£30,770	April 2012 – Mar 2013	£36,900	April 2013 – Mar 2014	£36,900	April 2014 – Mar 2015	£36,900	April 2015 – Mar 2016	£36,900
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<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and good relations implications</b>
	None.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>It is recommended that the committee agree to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. provide an additional £2,050 in the year 2011/12;</li> <li>2. increase the annual grant paid to the BHP from £28,720 to £36,900 with effect from 1 April 2012; and</li> <li>3. extend the funding period from March 2013 until March 2016.</li> </ol>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	Officer responsible: Open Spaces and Active Living Manager. Actions to be completed by end of May 2011.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	<p>NIEA – Northern Ireland Environment Agency  BHP – Belfast Hills Partnership</p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1: Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme Outline