



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Tropical Ravine Heritage Grant Application
Date:	9 June 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Ian Nuttall, Project Officer

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	A first round application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on 16 February 2011 for a Heritage Grant to fund a project in Botanic Gardens focusing on the restoration of the Tropical Ravine, with associated programming in line with HLF's objectives.
1.2	The application was for a grant of £3,912,800 towards a total project cost of £5,217,072, requiring a partnership contribution for the balance (£1,304,272) to be made from the capital programme, subject to progression through the gates review process.
1.3	In addition, the submission requested a development grant of £156,500 to fund preparation of the second round (final) application – a process for which HLF allows a maximum of two years, during which comprehensive consultation, design and planning would take place.
1.4	The first round application was prepared with specialist assistance from Hall Black Douglas and Purcell Millar Tritton architects, and in consultation with the Ulster Museum, Queen's University Belfast, the Lyric Theatre, the Friends of Botanic Gardens, and local schools.
1.5	<p>In summary, the application proposed the following:</p> <p>Capital works including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Provision of a new roofing system incorporating a lantern ridge with gallery slung beneath to allow staff access and viewing area;– Restoration/replacement of walkways and windows, restoration of brickwork detailing, internal landscaping, water features and theatrical lighting arrangements;– New boiler and heating systems and new environmental controls to ventilation, heating and humidity;– Development of access and user space, including an extension to

1.6	<p>provide new space for interpretation and visitor groups and enhance connectivity to Ulster Museum, and low level access to the Ravine with a lift to walkway level;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvements to physical linkages with other areas of the gardens and the surrounding institutions, including immediate hard landscaping, paths, paving, seating, lighting, signage, and refurbishment of existing shrubberies; - Development of the plant collection, including replacement and replant of specimens, as necessary; and <p>Programming activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of knowledge and expertise on the plant collection through research and recording, including comprehensive cataloguing and preparation of a policy and strategy for development of the collection; - Development of knowledge on the history of the Tropical Ravine through linkages with a range of external sources; - Development of a programme of training and education for staff and volunteers working in the Ravine; - Development of appropriate interpretive material to meet a range of user needs including, public, educational, scientific, and specific user groups, for example including sensory facilities for sight and hearing-impaired visitors; and - Development of a five year programme of activities including partnership activities with the surrounding institutions, such as shared interpretation and scheduled visits to the Ravine aligned with the Ulster Museum's education programme, use of the Ravine as a theatrical outreach venue, development of a volunteering programme for tours, and programming of evening events showcasing recreation of the historic interior lighting effects.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Heritage Grant applications for more than £1,000,000 are determined every two months by the HLF Trustees (rather than by Regional Committee), thus competing at the national level for available funds. The Ravine application was considered by the Trustees at their meeting on 24 May 2011. On 25 May, HLF advised officers that the Trustees had decided not to pass the application at this stage but would be prepared to consider a re-submission following appropriate revisions to the application.</p>
2.2	<p>It should be noted that re-submission is regularly required in the case of larger applications, and should not necessarily be viewed negatively. Officers will be working to ensure revisions are made with the aim of re-submitting as soon as possible.</p>
2.3	<p>From HLF's initial comments, the principal aspects to be addressed include, in summary, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Third party confirmation of the importance of the plant collection in the Ravine;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further assurance on the long term maintenance of the building and the collection; - A clearer focus on the core elements of the project; and - Better demonstration of value for money. <p>2.4 A meeting between officers and HLF has been arranged for 6 June 2011, when it is expected that more detailed feedback will be provided. However, it is anticipated that the council may be required to do the following in advance of re-submission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce the value of grant requested through an increased partnership contribution (subject to council approval) and/or reduction in the scope of the proposed project; and - Undertake full economic appraisal of the proposed project (it was originally expected that this would take place following a first round pass). <p>2.5 Should the re-submitted first round application be successful, it is expected that second round development would take place over the following 18 months, for submission around the end of 2012. During this period, key activities would include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progression of the Gates Review process; - Progression of a listing query with NIEA; - Preparation of design work to RIBA Stage D; - Development of an Integrated Conservation Management Plan; - Audience development planning and development of an Interpretive Plan; - Detailed research including heritage and technical botanical aspects of the plant collection and the history of the Ravine; - Stakeholder consultation on proposals; - Agreement and scoping of partnership programming; - Training needs analysis and development of a training plan; - Detailed costing and financial planning; and - Communication planning. <p>If the second round application is successful, it is expected that project delivery would begin around mid 2013, with completion of capital works over the following 24 months and delivery of programming activities thereafter.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> It is likely that economic appraisal will be required at an estimated cost of £10,000.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> There will be no additional human resources required at this stage.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None at this stage.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	There are no implications at this stage. However, should the application progress, Equality and Good Relations factors will be taken into account in the development of the project.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee is asked to: (i) Note the update provided; and (ii) Authorise officers to undertake the next steps as advised by HLF on 6 June 2011, including economic appraisal to support the application.

6	Decision Tracking
	December 2011 Committee – progress on/outcome of the first round Heritage Grant application re-submission.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects NIEA – Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

8	Documents Attached
	None.