



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Draft Rural White Paper Action Plan Consultation
Date:	9 June 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In March 2011, the Council received an invitation from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to respond to their draft Rural White Paper Action Plan consultation (attached as appendix 1). DARD is seeking responses by Monday 13 th June 2011.
1.2	It was agreed that the Parks and Leisure Department would coordinate preparation of a response on behalf of the Council. The Policy and Business Development Unit has prepared a draft response following a request for input from relevant officers across the Council.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The purpose of the consultation is to seek views from the public and other interested parties on the contents of the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan. Full details of the consultation are available in the consultation section of DARD's website www.dardni.gov.uk
2.2	Respondents are required to complete a questionnaire which asks for views on the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The vision for rural areas and associated key policy priorities as set out in the white paper▪ How realistic and meaningful the proposed actions are and their effectiveness▪ What the key challenges or priorities for rural areas over the next five years are▪ What further measures should be included▪ Which other issues the white paper should focus on

2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the white paper ▪ How should its success be measured. <p>Overall the council's response highlights that we believe that the main strengths of the document are that it is inspirational, takes a thematic approach and is cross departmental but that it lacks detail around the proposed actions and how they will be delivered to achieve its vision. Our response states that in principle with the actions that are set out in the document and in question 5 we give detailed views around the actions relating to the increase in rural tourism opportunities and increased sustainable recreational use of the countryside.</p> <p>A copy of the draft consultation response is attached as Appendix 2.</p> <p>Subject to approval by Committee, it is proposed that the final response is submitted to DARD by 13th June with the proviso that this is subject to full Council approval at its meeting in July.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> None required.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> None required.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None at this stage.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	There are no equality and good relations implications.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to approve the draft consultation response subject to any comments provided.

6	Decision Tracking
6.1	The Policy and Business Development Officer will submit the response with any agreed amendments to DARD by 13 th June 2011

7	Key to Abbreviations
7.1	DARD – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

8	Documents Attached
8.1	Appendix 1 – Consultation document Appendix 2 - Draft consultation response