



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Alexandra Park
<b>Date:</b>	11 August 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Paula Irvine, Outreach Manager, North Liam McKinley, Community Park Manager

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Groundwork NI is a not-for-profit organisation, set up in 1991, which undertakes community-led regeneration projects.
1.2	<p>In late 2008, Groundwork NI was awarded £998,000 under the European Regional Development Fund Peace III Programme, Priority 1.1 Building Positive Relations at a Local Level, to deliver the <i>Reconciling Communities through Regeneration</i> (RCTC) programme. RCTC is run across Northern Ireland as well Counties Cavan, Leitrim and Donegal, with the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To develop 'key skills for peace' and create opportunities for inter-group dialogue, cross-community relationship building and networking;</li><li>- To work strategically with the Peace III clusters (ie the eight council groupings tasked with delivering Priority 1.1) ;</li><li>- To build positive relationships at the local level in order to achieve positive change; and</li><li>- To begin to address contested physical space issues with the aim of regenerating physical spaces and removing the physical manifestations of segregation.</li></ul>
1.3	<p>In consultation with the council and the local community, Alexandra Park was chosen as a specific project within RCTC, with a budget allocation of £50,000 towards physical regeneration works. In November 2009, a community/inter-agency project steering group (the Steering Group) was established, including representatives from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Belfast City Council;</li><li>- Groundwork NI;</li><li>- North Belfast Community Development &amp; Transition Group;</li><li>- Intercomm ;</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PSNI;</li> <li>- North Belfast Interface Network;</li> <li>- Greater Newington Residents Association;</li> <li>- Challenge for Youth;</li> <li>- Friends of the Grove;</li> <li>- Department of Justice;</li> <li>- Youth Justice Agency; and</li> <li>- Non-affiliated residents from Parkside, Dunmore, Castleton, and Mountcollyer.</li> </ul>
1.4	In November 2010, Committee approved regeneration proposals made by the Steering Group including development of a nature trail, installation of seating and interpretive panels on the history and wildlife within the park, and development of a picnic area. Site work was completed earlier this year with the assistance of an additional £50,000 secured from the Alpha Programme (the Landfill Communities Fund distribution body).
1.5	In February this year, following discussion with community representatives, Groundwork NI conducted a survey to gauge residents' opinions on enhancing access at the peace line running through the park and the side entrance at Alexandra Park Avenue. The survey responses were in favour of enhanced access. In April, Committee agreed to the installation of a gate in the peace wall, to be funded by the Department of Justice, to be opened on a pilot basis.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Peace III funding for RCTC is due to finish in December 2011. Groundwork NI has requested funding from the council to continue its involvement in Alexandra Park for a further year, up to December 2012. A proposal by Groundwork NI is provided at Appendix 1.
2.2	Should funding be granted, this would afford an opportunity for continuity in the partnerships and community relationships which have been developed through RCTC, and progression of established initiatives. In particular, the programme has been instrumental in developing the forthcoming peace line arrangements, and continuity is likely to be a key factor in ensuring effective community engagement once access through the new gate is made available.
2.3	It is recognised that, without proper management, there is potential for overlap between the work of Groundwork NI and the role of council officers, in particular the Community Parks Manager and Community Parks Outreach Manager. Should funding be granted, it is therefore proposed that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All Groundwork NI's activities are planned in consultation with (and where appropriate delivered with the direct involvement of) relevant officers, and are in line with existing Departmental policy and planning, including the outreach plan for the park;</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The principle of 'additionality' is applied, so that any work delivered through the project would not be possible or as effective without Groundwork NI's involvement;</li> <li>3. Funding is provided on an output basis, paid incrementally against successful completion of distinct, pre-determined activities for which costs have been agreed - rather than as an overall contribution to 'core funding' of Groundwork NI; and</li> <li>4. Groundwork NI's continuing involvement is agreed as a medium term measure limited to December 2012. To ensure sustainability beyond this period, appropriate planning will be undertaken for mainstreaming any ongoing activities through the work of officers and/or formal establishment of a Friends Group in the park.</li> </ol> <p>2.4 It is proposed that provision of funding would allow delivery of a programme of activities which complements and augments the current work of officers in Alexandra Park, and meets council and Departmental aims with regard to good relations, anti-social behaviour and shared space. It is expected that key activities could include shared space events, community engagement around access through the peace wall, and development of education materials, protocols and training to ensure future achievement of benefits.</p> <p>2.5 Following further consultation with the two main sections of the community, it has been agreed that the gate in the peace wall will be constructed in time for a trial opening period from September to December this year, from 7.30am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday. During this period, the new arrangements will be closely monitored and reviewed. In particular, officers in conjunction with PSNI will measure the impact on levels of anti-social behaviour and conflict in the immediate area. Subject to the results of this review and further consultation, it is proposed that the opening will later be extended for a further trial period.</p> <p>2.6 To mark the opening of the gate and to celebrate the wider success of the recent regeneration activities in Alexandra Park a community event will take place on Saturday 17 September 2011. The formal opening of the gate is planned for Friday 16 September.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>An accurate figure for the amount of funding required by Groundwork NI would be determined following agreement of a fully costed action plan. However, based on figures provided by Groundwork NI for typical project costs, it is estimated that the council would be required to provide around £11,000 from revenue budgets. This expenditure would be subject to approval of a business plan to be prepared by officers, as required by the council's Policy and Guidance on Revenue Appraisal.</p> <p>It is expected that Groundwork NI, in conjunction with the Steering Group, would seek additional sources of external funding, as required.</p>

	There is no expected cost to installing the new gate in the peace wall, as this will be funded by the Department of Justice.
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.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	There are no implications at this stage. However, equality and good relations factors will be taken into account in any activities delivered at Alexandra Park through the project.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Agree in principle to providing funding to Groundwork NI on the basis described in this report and Groundwork NI's proposal, subject to requisite approval of a business plan.</li> <li>(ii) Note the details of the celebratory event, on which further information will be provided with formal invitations in due course.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
November 2011 Committee – outcome of work with Groundwork NI to prepare a costed action plan for project delivery to December 2012.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
None.	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1: Proposal for Ongoing Groundwork NI Involvement in Alexandra Park.	