



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Victoria Park - Control of Geese
Date:	11 August 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Stockman, City Parks Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The committee is reminded that at its meeting in December 2009 it received a report highlighting the ongoing concerns surrounding the number of greylag geese within Victoria Park and the potential threat to public safety through bird strikes on aircraft landing or taking off at George Best Belfast City Airport.</p> <p>Owing to their size even a single bird strike could cause serious damage to aircrafts departing from or arriving at the airport. The potential risk from a flock would be greater.</p> <p>There may also be a risk to public health resulting from the extensive amount of bird droppings from the un-sustainable numbers of geese contaminating the water in Victoria Park and areas of the park, particularly the car park area.</p> <p>The water quality is adversely affected by the droppings and also the decomposition of white bread thrown by members of the public whilst feeding the geese.</p> <p>At its meeting in January 2011 the committee agreed a range of measures to control grey lag geese that were based on a report commissioned by the Airport Authorities. These measures were in the most part funded by the airport.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The erection of low level wire fencing around the two islands to prevent access for the geese to safe breeding areas. This would also serve to reduce the erosion of the island caused by the geese 'puddling' around the edges.2. The erection of low level wire fencing along the edge of the lake at the car park area, to prevent the geese from having easy access to and from the water.3. Planting appropriate shrubs along parts of the lake to prevent the geese having easy access to and from the

	<p>water.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Undertaking an awareness raising campaign to dissuade members of the public from feeding the geese, particularly with white bread, by feeding the birds the public are encouraging the birds to remain within the park; in addition, bread is not considered appropriate for the birds. This could include a sign, leaflets distributed around the local area, a press release and information on our web site. Education on this issue could also be included in the Watch This Space programme with local schools and the Saturday club at Victoria Park. 5. To continue with the annual egg pricking under licence (this may prove less necessary if the geese are prevented from gaining access to the islands by the fencing) 6. Monitor the effects of these measures to assess their effectiveness. <p>Members should be aware that control of birds in the flight path to the airport is a requirement of the airport's Civil Aviation Authority licence.</p>
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2	<p>Key Issues</p> <p>Following evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures to date the airport authorities are seeking to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • replace the wire fence on the islands with chestnut pale fence which would be more effective and require less maintenance than the current fence; • to extend the fence at the car park along one side of the lake and replaced with a decorative metal fence which would match existing park fencing. • continue the campaign to dissuade members of the public from feeding the geese. <p>It is important to note that, as the lake areas of Victoria Park are an ASSI (Area of Special Scientific Interest) any of the above measures would only be undertaken after the appropriate consultation with and consent from Northern Ireland Environment Agency.</p> <p>An appropriate legal agreement is drawn up with the Airport Authority to ensure that they will meet all associated costs, and that the fence will meet Belfast City Council specifications, and that the Airport Authority will be responsible for the costs associated with the maintenance of the fence.</p>
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3	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p><u>Financial</u> The airport authority has stated that they would pay for the erection, inspection and maintenance of the required fencing.</p>
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	<p><u>Human Resources</u> No additional human resources implications are anticipated, the work would be identified as a priority action within the business plans.</p> <p><u>Asset and other implications</u> The presence of birds in the park is clearly an attraction to many visitors. However, it is important that this is balanced against the potential risk to public health and safety.</p>
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4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that the committee agree to the above bird control measures being undertaken subject to an appropriate agreement with the airport.

6	Decision Tracking
	All actions will be completed by the City Parks Manager (East) by November 2011.

7	Key to abbreviations
	None.

8	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: map of the area to fenced Appendix 2: anti goose fencing information