



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Regional Development Programme – Cave Hill Paths
Date:	15 September 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Anne Reid, Countryside Officer Fintan Grant, City Parks Manager (North)

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in August 2010 it was informed that an application had been submitted to the Rural Development Programme for funding to promote access and recreation within the Belfast Hills. The purpose of this report is to update Members' on the current position.</p> <p>The current position is that the council in partnership with BHP, UWT and NT has submitted applications in August 2010. These applications related to Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013, Axis 3 – Improving the quality of life in rural areas and diversifying the rural economy; one application has been made under the sub heading Axis 3.3, Encouragement of Tourism Activities, and the other under Axis 3.6, Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage.</p> <p>The application submitted under Axis 3.3, Encouragement of Tourism Activities was submitted in April 2011 for approximately £250,000 is currently being considered. Belfast City Council will benefit from £65,000 of this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a new pedestrian path to be constructed through the quarry area which will link the Estate Trail to the Cave Hill Trail. Currently this is a well used desire line for visitors to the site wishing to reduce the time and distance of their walk. A new pedestrian path incorporating steps in some of the steeper gradients would allow for easier movement throughout the site and prevent erosion.• Develop a new path through Ligoniel Park. This will create a new walking route linking Ligoniel Dams, Ligoniel Park and Cave Hill Country Park and provide a quality walk through sections of Belfast Hills.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the sport of orienteering within Cave Hill Country Park (CHCP) by creating new routes. • Erect data counters to establish user numbers for CHCP. <p>The application submitted under Axis 3.6, Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage, has been successful and approximately £56,000 has been awarded. Belfast City Council will benefit from £34,000 of this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £30,000 will upgrade the pedestrian path from McArt's Fort down to the cattle grid on the eastern side of the Cave Hill. This is the final stretch of pathway which will complete a continuous network from Belfast Castle around the Estate Trail to the summit of Cave Hill. With the increasing number of tourists and visitors to the site, a new single track would guide walkers to the summit, prevent erosion and enhance the area. • £4,000 has been set aside to create heritage interpretation panels; these will be located at Ballyhagan fort and Carrs Glen. <p>Members should note that these projects are included in the Cave Hill Country Park Action Plan 2007-2011 and would contribute to achievement of the 2010-2011 plan, specifically with respect to contributing to the protection and promotion of Belfast Hills and Lagan Valley Regional Park, and maintaining the path infrastructure within our parks and open spaces.</p>
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2.	Key Issues
	<p>The key issues for the Committee to note are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The application under Axis 3.3 is under consideration, with a decision expected in the autumn 2011; 2. The application under Axis 3.6 has been successful and as a result the Council will be able to upgrade the path network and erect interpretation panels within its estate; 3. To draw down the funds the council is required to enter into a deed of dedication with DARD/RDP which will require the Council to retain the land for which grant aid has been sought for a period of 10 years; with associated management costs and a potential claw back clause should the Council default on the agreement; 4. In advance of the deed of dedication DARD/RDP require that the Council enter into a Development Management agreement as the vehicle for the delivery of the deed of dedication upon practical completion of the works. 5. Although the works are being funded externally owing to their nature they are considered to be capital and should be included within the capital programme and subject to the Gates Review process; 6. The committee will be required to make recommendation to Strategic Policy and Resources for inclusion in the capital programme.

3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> This scheme is on the capital programme subject to the receipt of grant funding.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the maintenance liability will be minimal and the paths will be included as part of the ongoing inspection regime. The budget for maintaining the area exists within current revenue estimates.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There are no additional human resource implications.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> Completion of these projects would build linkages across the hills and attract greater numbers of visitors to the area. Interpretive signage will provide information on the wealth of history attributed to the area.</p>
4.	Equality Implications
	There are no equality implications.
5.	Recommendations
	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the content of the reports; 2. Agree that the council enter a deed of dedication for a period of 10 years through an appropriate development agreement in line with the requirements of DARD/RDP subject to approval to same from Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and 60; 3. Agree to recommend to Strategic Policy and Resources that the schemes be included on the Council's capital programme.
6.	Decision Tracking
	The decision will be implemented by the Countryside Officer.
7.	Key to Abbreviations
	<p>DARD: Department of Agriculture and Rural Development RDP: Rural Development Programme BHP: Belfast Hills Partnership UWT: Ulster Wildlife Trust NT: National Trust</p>
8.	Documents Attached
	None.