



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee.
<b>Subject:</b>	Conservation Volunteers Big Green Weekend
<b>Date:</b>	15 September 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) is a charity which was set up in 1959, and has a successful history of environmental conservation volunteering throughout the UK and around the world. Conservation Volunteers is the Northern Ireland operating name for BTCV.
1.2	Conservation Volunteers are the leading environmental volunteering charity with 28 years of experience of working with people across NI each year to enhance and protect our natural environment. To date they have worked with over 21.000 people in the region. The head office is in Belfast where they deliver a busy timetable of Conservation Action Team tasks, Environmentally Active Citizens and Green Gym projects. With Belfast City Council being a major land owner they have worked in partnership with the Council on a number of projects in recent years.
1.3	Their most significant project is the Ballysillan Community Garden and Allotment project, engaging people in North Belfast who have experienced long term health and social disadvantage in regular practical tasks for personal, community and environmental benefits. They also work on small projects in Ormeau Park completing seasonal projects with the Saturday Green Gym Project, Victoria and Orangefield Parks, and Cregagh Glen through the Connswater Project. In 2008 their Conservation Action Team completed access repair, drainage improvement and a native planting project on a section of Cavehill.
1.4	Conservation Volunteers have requested the use of Ormeau Park for a Big Green Weekend event in Belfast. The Big Green Weekend, 21st - 23rd October, is a new event which encompasses BTCV Green Hero Awards, showcases their UK and international work and provides a platform to engage with new people and raise funds. The letter of request is attached at Appendix 1.

1.5	The weekend kicks off with the Annual Green Hero Awards, RBS Bishopsgate London. On Saturday and Sunday there will be 9 UK volunteering events in key locations (London, Chester, Manchester, Kent, Belfast, Edinburgh, Essex, Leeds, Hull) and 9 European volunteering events (Greece, France, Romania, Holland, Italy, Estonia, Bulgaria, Iceland, Germany) celebrating 'all things green'.
1.6	Green Hero Awards are the annual UK wide awards recognising outstanding contribution made by individuals and groups across 7 categories. This year Conservation Volunteers are delighted that the Ballysillan Community Garden and Allotment Project has won the Partnership of the Year Award. This award recognises the contribution of Belfast City Council, Ballysillan Allotment Holders, Salvation Army and Belfast Conservation Volunteers Team in getting this project off the ground, overcoming a number of hurdles to make it a success in just 18 months. Working together this partnership has established a valuable community resource within the heart of North Belfast.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>Big Green Weekend Belfast Event - Ormeau Park Sunday 23 October 12 - 3pm will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a family fun day with a combination of volunteering opportunities (identified in partnership with the Park manager), environmental education activities, information stands and product stalls.</li> <li>• a bulb planting activity offering people a taster of what's involved with environmental volunteering, helping them to connect with their local park and green space.</li> <li>• the event will help to continue building relationships with Belfast City Council as Conservation Volunteers plan to use this as the first of a series of volunteering events in our City parks offering follow-up opportunities over the next 6 months to help sustain interest.</li> <li>• a number of external organisations who have a link to environmental issues and sustainable living will be involved in the event including DOE Rethink Waste providing composting at home demo and prizes, cycle skills and bike safety for kids, Conservation Volunteers Allotment holders with their local organic produce, Healthy Eating Model Health Trust Dietetic Services, local produce cooking demo from Avoca Head Chef and TidyNI recycling demonstration.</li> <li>• the event will be free to enter with a number of stalls selling related products for fundraising purposes, e.g. window, nesting and herb boxes. These stalls will also have an interactive element where Conservation Volunteers will have prepared templates which people can pay to make their own, seed harvest workshops and environmental education activities for children.</li> <li>• this application will be supported by an event plan and will be subject to the organisers working with council officers and meeting all statutory and legal requirements</li> <li>• organisers will also be required to reinstate all council property to its original state after use.</li> </ul>

2.2	<p>There are a number of important Green Hero dates over the next two months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friday 30 September - BTCV media team will be at Ballysillan to film the project. This will be edited to a 3-5 minute clip to bring the project to life at the National Awards, linked into BTCV's website, blog and facebook, and available to partner organisations for their use.</li> <li>• Friday 7 October - 3.00 - 4.30pm. Conservation Volunteers Annual Awards at Clandeboye Estate. Every year BTCV recognise the commitment and training achievements of volunteers across Northern Ireland, as well as presenting their Green Hero Awards.</li> <li>• Friday 21 October - BTCV National Green Hero Awards, RBS Bishopsgate London. All National winners attend this celebration.</li> </ul> <p>Conservation volunteers would be delighted if the Committee Chair and Director or their nominees were available to attend the above events.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> The cost of attendance at the events would be in the region of £400 and is provided for in revenue budgets.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Human Resources</u> There are likely to be some additional staffing and planning implications which should be able to be accommodated through our normal event management process.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> Organisers will reinstate Council property to its original state after use.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	<p>The partnership working and planned events raises the profile of environmental volunteering in local green spaces. It is especially aimed at families and will build partnerships to ensure these opportunities are sustained and are as accessible as possible.</p>

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>The Committee is asked to note the request from the Conservation Volunteers and grant approval subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• final agreement on the specifics of the event with Parks management</li> <li>• an event management plan for all activities planned including health and safety requirements;</li> <li>• an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee is asked to note the key dates outlined in September and October 2011 and agree that the Committee Chair and Director or their nominees attend as appropriate.</p>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Parks section Officer responsible: Community Park Manager and City Park Manager. Actions to be completed by: October 2011.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BTCV British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	
<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - Letter from Conservation NI	