



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Consultation on Enabling Legislation for National Parks
Date:	13 October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>In March of this year, prior to the Assembly elections, the Department of the Environment (DoENI) published a White Paper on Enabling Legislation for National Parks as a first step towards bringing forward legislation to allow for the creation of national parks in Northern Ireland. At that time the Department indicated that, following the Assembly elections, an expanded paper would be published for formal consultation.</p> <p>A new document was published at the end of August and includes the white paper as an appendix for ease of reference. This looks in more detail at the governance options for a national park and seeks answers to a number of specific questions on national park issues with a view to developing policy proposals for enabling legislation to be brought before the Assembly</p> <p>The consultation period has been extended to allow for proper consideration of this new material and responses are to be sent to DoENI no later than Monday 31st October 2011.</p>

2.	Key Issues
	<p>DoENI is currently undertaking a public consultation on Enabling Legislation for National Parks; the consultation documents are provided at Appendix 1.</p> <p>In summary, the consultation asks for responses to ten questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are your views on the proposed aims of national parks?2. What are your views on the proposed criteria for identifying areas that may be suitable as national parks?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What are your views on the proposed arrangements for consulting on a proposal to designate a specific area as a national park? 4. What are your views on the proposed management framework arrangements for national parks? 5. What are your views on the proposed duties, functions and powers of a national park management body? 6. What are your views on the proposed role of a national park management body in planning matters? 7. What are your views on the governance options? 8. What are your views on the proposed constitution of a national park management body? 9. Do you share the Department's analysis in the Partial RIA that national parks will have little or no negative impact? 10. Are there any other comments which you wish to make about the Department's proposals? <p>Following consideration by relevant officers across the council, a response has been completed in draft form for approval by Members. This is provided at Appendix 2.</p> <p>In summary, the draft response agrees with the proposals made in the consultation documents and highlights the need for both local and regional involvement in any management or governance structure that is chosen to ensure all interests are represented.</p> <p>Subject to approval by Committee, it is proposed that the final response is submitted to DoENI by 31 October with the proviso that this is subject to full council approval at its meeting in November.</p>
--	---

3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> None required at present</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> None required at present</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None at this stage.</p>

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	<p>In the consultation documents, DoENI states that it has undertaken an equality impact screening of the regulations, and has concluded that "there is no adverse impact for any of the nine categories listed under Section 75".</p>

5.	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report; and • approve submission of a final consultation response to DoENI, subject to any comments or amendment provided, by the deadline of 31 October.
6.	Decision Tracking
	<p>Policy and Business Development Manager to action submission of the consultation response by 31 October 2011.</p>
7.	Key to Abbreviations
	<p>DoENI - Department of the Environment</p>
8.	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Consultation Documents Appendix 2: Draft Consultation Response.</p>