



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Cavehill Country Park - Community Survey</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 March 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Pete Murray Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>In October 2011 Millward Brown was commissioned to conduct a community engagement exercise on behalf of Belfast City Council, following a number of reports of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity acted upon residents neighbouring the Cavehill Country Park. The purpose of this survey was to establish clear and robust data which would contribute to making the park a more pleasurable and safer space for park users and the local community.</p> <p>The conclusion of the report states: It is clearly evident from the survey that antisocial behaviour is an issue in Cavehill Country Park and the surrounding area. (See Appendix :1 Millward Brown Cavehill Community Engagement Report).</p> <p>This committee report will highlight the recommendations emerging from the community consultation exercise and illustrate the various actions that have been implemented or proposals to be implemented.</p>

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>The Executive Summary of the Cavehill Community Engagement Survey Report makes the following recommendations:</p> <p><u>Issues in the local area</u> The majority of all incidences focus around groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs in the park or near to residents' houses, general public drunkenness and rowdiness, and acts of vandalism.</p>

- The PSNI and council should target these types of anti-social behaviour. There are opportunities to target youths through schools, youth clubs and social media to educate and inform of the impacts and consequences associated with anti-social behaviour.
- There are also opportunities to target off-licences and taxi drivers to try and prevent the alcohol from getting into the hands of under-age drinkers.
- More council and police presence at key times such as late night weekends and school holidays would be welcome. There is also an opportunity to put strategies in place to combat the known peak times such as St Patrick's Day, July holidays and end of school term.

#### Reporting anti-social behaviour

There are clear issues regarding the reporting of anti-social behaviour in the area. Residents and park users are utilising a number of different channels and there is often uncertainty about who to contact and who is responsible. Another issue is that in many cases residents and park users are not reporting instances of anti-social behaviour at all.

- There is a clear opportunity for the council and PSNI to put in place clear processes and procedures regarding informing residents about how they should report incidences of anti-social behaviour and what they can expect in terms of follow up.
- There is an opportunity to promote a specialist ASB hotline or website for the area to ensure all reported incidents are logged, tracked and followed up.
- The council and PSNI need to ensure that all residents are informed about the importance of reporting all incidences of anti-social behaviour. Only incidents that are reported can be investigated and only if all incidences are reported can they be sure that sufficient resources are issued to deal with the problems.

#### Communication and engagement with the local community

Residents, park users and stakeholders all demonstrated a willingness to engage and work together going forward. The residents do not feel included in the council's attempts to address anti-social behaviour issues in the area. Stakeholders also acknowledge that more could be done to engage with local residents in tackling anti-social behaviour.

- There is a clear opportunity to get input from residents and provide a forum for their suggestions on how to tackle anti-social behaviour. By

making themselves more available and more accessible, council staff will reap the benefits of working even more closely with residents to tackle the issues. One of the key gripes for residents is the lack of follow up; a quick phone call or face to face chat with a concerned resident can improve satisfaction.

- Another opportunity is to inform residents and park users about the processes and procedures in place to deal with under-age drinking or those caught committing anti-social acts. The stakeholders alluded to the complexities of the by-laws and the current policy on underage drinking (i.e. to confiscate alcohol and issue warnings) and the process of dealing with repeat offenders. Educating the residents will improve their understanding as to why seemingly frivolous issues are not always clear cut.

#### Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour

There was a clear lack of awareness amongst both residents and park users regarding the entire range of steps and initiatives that have been introduced by BCC to tackle the anti-social behaviour issue.

- There is an opportunity to educate and inform residents and park users as to all the measures that have already been taken and also of any future initiatives.
- There is also an opportunity to inform residents and park users about the success of the initiatives and provide them with statistics about how much alcohol has been confiscated or inform them about educating youths through schools or youth schemes etc.

#### Tackling anti social-behaviour moving forward

There was a clear understanding that resources are limited; however there remains a strong demand for an increased council and PSNI presence especially during late weekend hours when incidences are most likely to occur.

- There may be an opportunity to reallocate some resources to ensure coverage at some of the key times over the problem times. A possibility could be to ensure some of the Park Rangers are on call over the weekend and holiday periods when anti-social behaviour tends to peak in the area.

Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park was clearly not a feasible solution for the clear majority of residents, park users or stakeholders.

- In all likelihood locking the gates would create more trouble for residents as youths may begin to access the park through their property. The risks to public safety if the police or rescue services could not get immediate access in an emergency situation were also clearly highlighted. There was however an opportunity to demonstrate to residents the usefulness and effectiveness of the improved CCTV system which is now in place.

There is a clear willingness and need for a more joined up approach to tackle anti-social behaviour in the area, while it was also accepted that any one measure or initiative is unlikely to work on its own.

- There is a clear opportunity for the council to engage with residents, park users, the police, local politicians, community leaders and relevant stakeholders such as the Cavehill Conservation Group to work together via meetings, forums and the sharing of knowledge and resources to try and tackle the problems caused by anti-social behaviour.

#### Departmental response to the survey's recommendations

The executive summary within the Millward Brown report suggests a number of actions which respond to the concerns raised by Residents, Park Users and Stakeholders. Many of the suggested actions are already being implemented through the Departmental Improvement programme, interdepartmental working arrangements or the Safer Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour programme.

The following initiatives and projects are already in place or will shortly be implemented in response to the Millward Brown recommendations:

- **The Park Warden Pilot (Presence in Parks):** This pilot will improve the Parks and Leisure Departments ability to educate Park users and enforce the byelaws across all of Belfast's Parks
- **Promotion of the Parks Warden Pilot:** The communications plan to support public awareness of this work will be implemented between April – October 2012
- **The development of a Parks and Leisure Customer relations system (CRM system):** The Parks and Leisure Department have developed an ASB recording and reporting system which will support Park Wardens to respond directly to reports of ASB.
- **Interdepartmental working arrangements:** The joint working arrangements between the Health and Environmental Services Department and the Parks and Leisure Department will continue to develop to enable more effective joint patrols to reduce alcohol consumption in designated areas.
- **Support for the Cavehill Conservation group:** this group has been recognised as the Friends group for Cavehill Country Park and through further consultation and negotiation could provide a reference point for residents to report or receive information regarding antisocial behaviour.
- **Development of an annual Cavehill Residents Engagement forum:** to support further communication between stakeholders, residents, park users, PSNI and BCC.

	(For more detail see Appendix 2, Table 1: Millward Brown recommendations and BCC response)
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<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	Resources for implementing the recommendations will be facilitated through the Departmental Improvement Programme and the agreed Antisocial Behaviour Programme budget 2012-13.

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and good relations implications</b>
	All of the interventions and operations proposed in this report will be developed be in line with existing policies and procedures

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Members are ask to note the contents of this report and, Members are asked to approve the action plan to meet the needs identified through the survey.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	The outcome of the proposed responses and any recommendation emanating from the proposed Cavehill Country Park annual residents forum will be communicated to the committee through the Safer Neighbourhoods Antisocial behaviour programme reports in February, June and October.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	ASB: Antisocial behaviour BCC: Belfast City Council CCTV: Closed Circuit Television CRM: Customer relationship management system PSNI: Police Service for Northern Ireland

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1: Millward Brown Ulster Cavehill Community Engagement Report  Appendix 2: Park Warden Pilot briefing paper.