



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Council response to the Consultation on a Ten Year Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 March 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Anne Reid Countryside Recreation Officer Elaine Black Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform Members of the recent consultation exercise for the draft ten year outdoor recreation action plan which forms part of the implementation of "Sport Matters"<sup>1</sup> and;</li><li>• Seek retrospective approval for the draft officer response which was submitted on 24 February 2012 subject to committee amendment and approval.</li></ul> <p>A steering group<sup>2</sup> led by Sport Northern Ireland has been drafting a new 10 year Outdoor Recreation Action Plan. The draft action plan will supersede Northern Ireland's first Countryside Recreation Strategy which was launched in 1998.</p> <p>The steering group is seeking opinion on the draft vision, aims, themes and actions within the action plan and intend that it will also <i>"fit into a range of other government strategies and corporate plans, as the issue of outdoor recreation is both broad and cross cutting."</i></p> <p>"Outdoor Recreation" is defined as non motorized sporting and recreational activities that take place in the natural environment and that</p>

<sup>1</sup> Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019

<sup>2</sup> Sport Northern Ireland in partnership with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure Inland Waterways Branch and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board have established a steering group which has been drafting a new 10 year Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.

	<p>generally do not require a dedicated pitch or building. In Belfast this would be the urban countryside of the Belfast hills etc along with the sea way around the Titanic quarter and along the North and eastern shores.</p> <p>The draft vision in the action plan is <i>“to continue to develop, manage and promote a dynamic culture of sustainable outdoor recreation in NI”</i>.</p> <p>Appendix 1 is the draft consultation document. Appendix 2 outlines for Members the existing Departmental, regional and local organisations which all work in this policy area and Appendix 3 is the draft written response which has been submitted in order to make a return within the timeframe allocated. The Department is aware that this may be amended by the Committee.</p>
--	---

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>Officers felt it was important to provide a comprehensive response to the consultation as outdoor recreation provides an opportunity to be active mainly through free activities in public spaces. In the current economic climate it could be considered to be a primary affordable pathway to promote an Active Belfast and provide opportunities to address health and wellbeing for citizens.</p> <p>In general officers felt that the document contained the necessary requirements to support existing outdoor recreation however also thought that it could go further in its ambition, reflecting the tone and commitment of the Council’s Investment Programme and emerging partnerships developed to help get people more active in the city, notably outdoors.</p> <p>In summary the action plan needs to be more benefits-driven e.g. it should outline how people can be well, more active and how employment and revenue opportunities could be developed within the current economic climate whilst improving environmental sustainability;</p> <p>The officer response also outlines that Council involvement in the steering group or wider engagement could be strengthened or formalised to ensure connectivity with emerging partnership approaches such as the Active Belfast Partnership etc.</p> <p>The draft response also highlights that there is a need for issues specific to Belfast to be achieved in a revision of the ‘Access to the Countryside’ (NI) Order 1983 in terms of taking into account the ‘urban countryside’ and issues around the urban fringe.</p>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
-----------	------------------------------

	<u>Financial</u> None.  <u>Human Resources</u> None  <u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None.
--	---

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and good relations implications</b>
	No implications anticipated.

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Members are asked to;-  (i) Note the contents of the report and (ii) Approve the draft officer response subject to any additional comments or amendments committee would like to add.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	None.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	CAAN: Countryside access and activities network in NI (reference appendix 2)  NIEA: Northern Ireland Environment Agency (reference appendix 2)

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1: The Key Issues for the Development of a New 10 Year Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland consultation document  Appendix 2: Illustration of the existing organisations linked to outdoor recreation  Appendix 3: Belfast City Council's response to the draft 10 year outdoor recreation action plan.