



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Red Bull Fox Hunt Mountain Biking Event on Cave Hill</b>
<b>Date:</b>	11 October 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b> Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure	
<b>Contact Officer:</b> Fintan Grant, City Park Manager	

1.	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>A request has been received from Adrenaline State (Marketing and Events company) to hold a mountain biking event on Cave Hill.</p> <p>The event is scheduled to take place on 24th and 25th November.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sat 10-2 practice, (30 sec intervals)</li><li>2. Sun 10-11.30 practice, Foxhunt 2.30, podiums at 3.30</li></ol> <p>Competitors - invitational of 100 riders</p> <p>Event Concept - The event involves 100 bikers starting at the summit of Cave Hill and racing down the paths and through the forest to a finishing point within the Castle Estate. Gee Aherton (current world champion) starts slightly behind the others and chases them down. As he passes a rider, they are eliminated which is where the event name Fox Hunt is derived.</p>

2.	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>The event was scheduled to take place in Tollymore Forest but was cancelled due to the danger of spreading Larch Disease. Although there is no evidence at present to suggest that this disease has arrived in Cave Hill, we will be asking the organisers to put measures in place to ensure that cross contamination will not occur.</p> <p>Access to certain areas of the park will be restricted, during the event, to organisers and participants. The design of the course however has kept disruption to a minimum and can be changed at any time before the event where issues may arise.</p>

	<p>The event will have minimal impact on business at the castle. A wedding is planned to take place at 3pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> November and there are no functions currently booked for the main event day on the 25<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>Downhill mountain biking is illegal in the park in terms of park byelaws. The byelaw states that "<i>A person shall not ride any bicycle in a manner which is unsafe or likely to cause damage to the park or give reasonable cause for annoyance or alarm to other persons in the park</i>"</p> <p>Parks Management for Cave Hill has been engaged with mountain bikers for over a decade, dealing with issues of public safety and illegal biking within the park. Numerous near misses have been recorded between pedestrians and bikers on the paths network between the Castle and McArts Fort. This event has the potential to attract additional riders to the site for which it is not designed to accommodate nor are there the appropriate resources in place to enforce the bye-laws relating to this activity.</p> <p>Our research would indicate that events such as this usually take place in coniferous forest venues which are larger and of less biodiversity value. Environmental and biodiversity issues have been highlighted regarding the sensitivity of the habitats on Cave Hill and the significant development of the path network at the site.</p> <p>If approval is given for a small event this year (100 riders), the organisers have secured funding to make it an international event next year which could showcase the new mountain biking facility at Barnett Demesne.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the event will feature current world champion Gee Aherton.</p> <p>If committee are agreeable to the event taking place a bond will be sought from the organisers to reinstate any areas damaged during the event.</p>
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3.	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Human</u> There are no human resource implications to Belfast City Council.</p> <p><u>Financial</u> There are no financial implications anticipated. The event organiser would be required to provide a bond of reinstatement and cover the full cost of restoring the landscape.</p> <p><u>Assets</u> Careful consideration should be given to the use of the site for this event given the biodiversity value of the site and the potential impact of this type of event on the landscape.</p>

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and good relations implications</b>
	There are no equality or good relations implications anticipated.

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>It is recommended that the Committee accede to the request to hold the event on Cave Hill subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with Parks Management and on the condition that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The event organisers resolve all operational issues to the council's satisfaction</li> <li>(2) The event organisers meet with the Cave Hill Conservation Group and satisfy all requirements to conserve the site and natural habitat</li> <li>(3) The event organisers ensure that all health and safety requirements are met to the council's satisfaction, and</li> <li>(4) An appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive is completed.</li> </ul>

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	All actions will be completed by Fintan Grant, City Parks Manager

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	None.

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None.