



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Young Adult Association Areas in Falls Park, Musgrave Playing Fields and Botanic Gardens.
Date:	6 December 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Pete Murray, Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator. Ext: 3564

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Members will be aware that complaints and concerns are raised by residents of Belfast and councillors regarding antisocial behaviour (ASB) in park areas across the city as a result of young adults (aged 14 to 16 years) gathering to socialise or consume alcohol.</p> <p>There are pilot interventions designed to reduce ASB currently taking place in parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tackling sectarian attacks in Ballysillan playing fields• Supporting local youth activity programmes in Reverend Robert Bradford park and• Enhancing fencing to reduce trespass in Woodlands playing fields. <p>An increasing amount of resources are directed towards dispersing and diverting young adults who gather in parks before and after closing time, however there is no evidence that these interventions are changing the habits of young adults who wish to gather in parks.</p> <p>This report will present proposals designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide a long term alternative to increasing staff presence at night,• manage groups of young adults who continue to access parks in large numbers or trespass after closing regardless of any increase in staff numbers,• reduce damage largely created by young adults,• tackle the high risk activities young adults participate in

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create attractive, defined and visible young adult association areas within parks • create areas that can be easily accessed day or night by local youth outreach services, Park Wardens or PSNI

2.	<p>Key Issues</p> <p>The following table profiles incidents largely created by young adults trespassing, causing damage, or involving substance misuse in parks across the city:</p> <p><u>Table 1</u></p> <p><u>Incidents of damage, trespass and substance misuse in parks (2012)</u></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Location</th> <th style="text-align: right;">Number of incidents</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Falls Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">82</td></tr> <tr><td>Botanic Gardens</td><td style="text-align: right;">80</td></tr> <tr><td>Woodvale Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">44</td></tr> <tr><td>Ormeau Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">38</td></tr> <tr><td>Musgrave Playing Fields</td><td style="text-align: right;">32</td></tr> <tr><td>Waterworks</td><td style="text-align: right;">28</td></tr> <tr><td>Cavehill Country Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">15</td></tr> <tr><td>Belfast Castle Estate</td><td style="text-align: right;">6</td></tr> <tr><td>Orangefield</td><td style="text-align: right;">3</td></tr> <tr><td>Belmont Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">2</td></tr> <tr><td>Greenville Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">1</td></tr> <tr><td>Dunville Park</td><td style="text-align: right;">1</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Although some of these parks have significant numbers of incidents, the parks have different assets and characteristics. Of the six parks which are at the top of the table; Falls, Botanic, Ormeau and Musgrave are parks regulated by closing times, they currently have yards where vehicles are stored and they have buildings which are valuable assets. Woodvale is closed and under development and Waterworks is open to pedestrian access from Westland Road.</p> <p>The proposals request approval to create open young adult association areas which are designed to be distant from residential buildings to reduce noise nuisance, therefore the areas which have been identified to immediately benefit from the proposals are Falls park, Botanic gardens and Musgrave playing fields.</p> <p>These parks have similar profiles caused by young adults gathering in large numbers.</p> <p><u>Falls Park</u></p> <p>The issue of trespass and damage in the park has become a regular occurrence, and several discussion have already taken place with local councillors to explore appropriate actions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As there are no explicit areas where young adults can socialise, they inevitably gravitate towards playgrounds and regularly leave glass and litter behind. During the summer evenings youths gather preventing families from accessing the play equipment. 	Location	Number of incidents	Falls Park	82	Botanic Gardens	80	Woodvale Park	44	Ormeau Park	38	Musgrave Playing Fields	32	Waterworks	28	Cavehill Country Park	15	Belfast Castle Estate	6	Orangefield	3	Belmont Park	2	Greenville Park	1	Dunville Park	1
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2. Park staff spend a significant amount of time clearing up glass and rubbish in playgrounds, causing upset to park users due to the high demand from children and young families.
3. The playground is not visible from the road and therefore the PSNI will not know if there is any reason to enter the park to patrol.
4. Serious damage was caused to the bowling pavilion, the playground and service yard after the park closed at night.

Although there has been an increase in staff resources to respond to or control these issues, the damage and upset continues.

Musgrave Playing fields:

This area suffers from the same issue of youths gathering and causing nuisance and damage. It is proving expensive to maintain a staff presence and there is still damage being caused by youths to the fabric of the park including recent additions such as the therapy gardens.

1. Large numbers of youths gather around the interior of the park. The park has suffered damage, for example, trees are being burnt in the Grovelands area of the park and bottles are broken onto paths.
2. Youths are gathering around the playgrounds during the evenings and causing damage to the therapy garden.
3. The interior of the park and the therapy garden is not visible from the road.
4. Staff spend a significant amount of time clearing up the glass, damage and rubbish the following day.

Botanic Gardens

The gardens are frequently subject to very large groups gathering, usually when the sun is out.

1. Crowds gather on the great lawn and openly drink, leave litter and play boisterous football, rugby or frisbee games. There is no doubt that this activity upsets and displaces families and older people.
2. Groups of youths gather at the bandstands and they in turn attract older more hardened drinkers.
3. Member of staff have raised serious concerns about lone working & safety in the park when the crowds gather.

A number of actions have been identified to reduce the impact of antisocial behaviour and respond to the complaints from local residents. Each of the park areas have hotspots near assets that staff are trying to protect from potential damage. Due to sheer numbers gathering, and risks involved in ejecting large groups from the parks, there are few options to manage drinking and rowdy behaviour. It is impractical to exclude all young adults, therefore it is proposed that in Falls, Musgrave and Botanic, a defined area is created near to an entrance, which is visible to PSNI and is attractive to young adults. It is also proposed to enhance existing playgrounds and park facilities to encourage more families and older people to use the parks.

(See Appendix one: Proposed location of young adult association area in Falls Park; Appendix two Proposed location of young adult association area in Musgrave playing fields and Appendix three: Proposed location of

	<p>young adult association area in Botanic Gardens)</p> <p><u>Young adult association areas</u> The areas are to be secured from the rest of the park and will contain natural seating, adventure activities, robust outdoor games and soft grass, bark or sand surfaces. It is envisaged that these areas will be developed and supervised in conjunction with local youth service providers, community representatives and PSNI. Each of the sites selected to locate the young adult association areas are visible from a public road. As the areas are to be secured from the rest of the park and have their own entrance, they will have permanent open access. This will enable young adults to come and go as they please, allow youth providers access to appropriate activity areas outside regular park opening hours and allow PSNI to freely enter and patrol.</p> <p><u>Enhancement of existing facilities</u> Seating and picnic tables will be placed to create more attraction for families and older people in existing playground formal garden and bandstand areas. Further appropriate use will be supported through performances by formal dance clubs, brass and silver bands or children's entertainers during periods of peak usage.</p>
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p>The approximate costs are illustrated below and are proposed to be drawn from the ASB programme budget for 2012-2013 and existing departmental budgets.</p> <p><u>Falls Park</u> Fencing and landscaping: £8000 Adventure elements, basic rain shelter & natural seating: £10,000 Optional Lighting: £1000 Crown lift trees: £2000 Extending play and picnic facilities in playground: £4000. £25,000</p> <p><u>Musgrave Park</u> Fencing youth area: £5000 Fencing around playground and therapy garden: £7000 Adventure elements, basic rain shelter & natural seating: £10,000 Optional Lighting: £1000 Crown lift trees: £2000 £25,000</p> <p><u>Botanic Gardens</u> Active leisure elements at PEC: £15,000 Crown lift trees reduce shrubs: £6000 Picnic tables seating: £4000 £25,000</p>

	<u>Total £75,000</u>
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4.	Equality and good relations implications
	Much of the antisocial behaviour programme work spans activities related to reducing interface or internal community tensions and bringing youth together to take part in positive programmes and activities. All of the programme work is in line with the council's equality and good relations policies and procedures.

5.	Recommendations
	Members are asked to approve the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the playground footprint and create a young adult association area in Falls Park • Erect a fence around the therapy garden and playground and create a young adult association area in Musgrave playing fields • Enhance family friendly activities in the formal gardens, bandstand and great lawn and create a young adult association area in the Queens University Physical Education Centre area of Botanic Gardens.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Regular ASB programme updates will be brought before the Parks and Leisure committee and the development of the young adult association areas will be profiled through these reports.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	ASB: Antisocial behaviour PSNI: Police Service for Northern Ireland PEC: Queens university Physical Education Centre

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Proposed location of young adult association area in Falls Park Appendix 2: Proposed location of young adult association area in Musgrave playing fields Appendix 3: Proposed location of young adult association area in Botanic Gardens