



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Funding for Lagan Valley Regional Park
Date:	6 December 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Agnes McNulty, Open Spaces and Active Living Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 10 September 2009 approval was given to provide an annual grant of £21,551 to £23,309 to Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) for the period April 2010 until March 2013. Members will be aware that LVRP is a partnership between Belfast City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Lisburn City Council, Department of Culture Arts & Leisure and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Belfast City Council has been one of the main partner funding organisations for LVRP since its inception in 1967.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to continue funding the LVRP for a further three years.</p> <p>Members are reminded that the former Parks and Cemeteries Sub-Committee at its meeting on 13 June 2007 agreed to support the formation of the Lagan Valley Regional Park Company and that two Councillors would be appointed as Directors to the Board. Currently these are Alderman Tom Ekin and Councillor Ruth Patterson. Members are also reminded that the LVRP Company successfully secured a total of £1.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a range of specific projects throughout the Park. A number of grassland and wetland enhancement works have been completed on Council sites and further grassland and wetland projects have been proposed for Lagan Meadows and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.</p> <p>The Council has benefited significantly from the work of LVRP through organised events, wardening by LVRP Rangers, additional signage,</p>

	<p>community engagement; education and from other partnerships developed through the LVRP. Over the last three years, the achievements of LVRP include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establishment of a Friends of LVRP group; ▪ initiation of a strategic review of LVRP to provide a management framework for the next 10 years; ▪ delivery of an annual programme of events on topics ranging from nature and heritage to conservation and recreation; ▪ provision of a Ranger Service, a key interface with the public along the towpath which in 2011 had a recorded usage of over one million users; ▪ promotion of the park as an educational resource through its new Lagan Valley Learning website; ▪ engagement of the community in environmental projects within the park; ▪ undertaken surveys of bats and butterflies and collation of information for inclusion in national databases; ▪ received a Tidy NI award for an annual river and canal clean up which was undertaken in conjunction with other partners and the scouts; and ▪ raised the profile of the Park on the nationwide programme 'Countryfile'.
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2.	Key Issues
	<p>Following an economic appraisal the option which includes the employment of an additional Promotions and Visitor Officer will be taken forward. On this basis LVRP has requested further funding commitment from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Department of Culture Arts & Leisure and the three participating Councils and is requesting a contribution from the council for the next three years as follows:</p> <p>April 2013 – March 2014 £26,360 April 2014 – March 2015 £26,680 April 2015 – March 2016 £27,370</p> <p>This contribution represents 16% of the overall costs and approximately 13.5% increase on the 2012/13 contribution.</p> <p>This will enable LVRP to continue functioning for a further three years, during which time it will help deliver a number of key projects that will complement and support Belfast City Council including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ complete a strategic review of the Regional Park and update the Management Plan for the next five years including sustaining the legacy of the Lagan Landscape project which is due to finish in 2013 ▪ organising and delivering an events programme offering a broad range of interests and activities that will enhance our own Council events' programme ▪ continue to provide a Ranger Service along the towpath which complements and supports our parks that lie within the boundary of

	<p>LVRP and develop a towpath initiative focusing on issues raised by park users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ continue to engage the local community in projects in the Park encouraging them to manage their environment as well as the associated physical and mental health benefits. <p>Funding the LVRP for a further three years will support the work being done by the Council and will enhance many other areas of work including biodiversity, education, community engagement, countryside recreation and promotional activities. If the Committee accedes to this request, it will be necessary to review and update the Funding Agreement between the Council and LVRP for the next three years.</p> <p>It is envisaged that under the Review of Public Administration, the makeup of the Regional Park partnership will change which will have financial implications. A further report will be brought to Committee if there are consequent implications for the Council.</p>
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> The contribution requested is as follows:</p> <p>April 2013 – March 2014 £26,360 April 2014 – March 2015 £26,680 April 2015 – March 2016 £27,370</p> <p>The draft revenue estimates for 2013/14 provides for this grant and provision will be made in future years.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There are no additional human resource implications at this time.</p> <p><u>Assets and other Implications</u> The work of the LVRP promotes and enhances the natural environment along the Lagan Corridor, and in particular makes a significant positive contribution to Lagan Meadows, Clement Wilson Park, Barnett Demesne, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park and Lagan Lands East.</p>

4.	Equality Implications
	There are no known equality and good relation implications.

5.	Recommendations
	It is recommended that the Committee agree to provide financial support

	to the Lagan Valley Regional Park for a further three years and the funding agreement is updated accordingly
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6.	Decision Tracking
	Officer responsible: Open Spaces & Active Living Manager

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	LVRP – Lagan Valley Regional Park

8.	Documents Attached
	None