

Parks & Leisure Committee



Chaired by Councillor Gerard McCabe, the Parks and Leisure Committee is responsible for the planning and delivery of the Council's Leisure, Parks and Cemeteries functions. Its specific responsibilities include the control and management of the Council's parks and leisure provision leisure and sports development, conservation, landscaping, Belfast Castle and Malone House, crematorium and cemetery services and Belfast Zoological Gardens and a range of parks and leisure events and activities.

At the meeting of the Committee on 10 January 2012 Departmental estimates of approximately £23m were proposed for the year 2012/13.

Chairman's Message

There has been significant work over the year to work with the citizens of Belfast to create an active, healthy and vibrant city. The Parks & Leisure Department has worked towards improving the quality of life and wellbeing of citizens, encouraging healthy, safe and active lifestyles working with partner organisations and communities to realise the City's full potential.

Highlights for 2012/13 include:

The first major project to be completed as part of Belfast City Council's investment programme was the **refurbishment of the Mary Peters Track** at Malone, providing an upgraded venue for the people of Belfast, capable of attracting UK and international athletic events, such as this summer's World Police and Fire Games 2013. We have also passed the first round application for a £2.2m grant towards restoring the **Tropical Ravine** in Botanic Gardens.



Barnett Demesne in south Belfast benefited from an investment of £487,000, with the completion of a series of mountain biking and walking trails, including the only official dirt jump park in Ireland. Cycling and walking are great ways to encourage people to get active and, best of all, the trails are free for everyone to use.

Funded by Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency under the Active Belfast Programme **eight outdoor gyms have been installed in parks across the city**. Members of the community can now try a range of exercises including air walking, hip twisting and ski cross country all in one place. The outdoor gym is suitable for all fitness levels and is free to use promoting healthy living and increasing physical activity.

Over the past year we've launched **community gardens** in different parts of Belfast funded by Peace III and the Public Health Agency monies. We now have **10 community gardens** and have delivered facilitated community growing sessions to people of all age groups and abilities who come together in a spirit of social cohesion to grow their own fruit, flowers and vegetables while encouraging them to be active outdoors.



We have delivered a programme of **city wide events** including Rose Week, Spring Fair and Autumn Fair and delivered a range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities across the city including the summer scheme programmes and Active Communities programmes. A range of **Olympic activities** and sessions were also held throughout the year including 'try it' days with primary schools and senior games. The department has continued to deliver the safer neighbourhood programme of work to help tackle **antisocial behaviour** and help people feel safer in our parks and leisure facilities.

Belfast has a proud tradition of boxing and many of the city's boxing clubs continue to produce successes at a local and international level. We recently launched an **Amateur Boxing Strategy** which will consider the role and development of amateur boxing in Belfast

Through the year we have been committed to delivering a sustainable approach to service provision, contributing to a cleaner, greener and healthier environment. This year the Department achieved the highest standard of quality and management available for parks and open spaces by gaining a total of **10 Green Flags** - making us the best green flag performing local authority in Northern Ireland.

The department continues to **invest and support in our staff** and has delivered an internal bespoke World host training programme to staff. We will continue to improve our processes, deliver a proficient service and finally listen and learn from our **customers**.

Over the year we:

Encouraged people to have healthier, more active lifestyles, making the best use of our assets contributing to creating safer, healthier, engaged and more active communities

Provided a service for almost **1.8 million leisure facilities** users



Worked with **2,069** participants throughout **97** planned urban sports events, activities and programmes at the **Bridges Urban Sports Park**

Provided services to almost **6000 'Boost' members** at our leisure centres

Provided **£225,000 in Sports grants** to help clubs / organisations and elite athletes and supported the participation of an estimated **20,000** people into sport

Encouraged more than **2,000 participants** to get rowing through the 'Redgrave Rowing Project'

Delivered a 'Try it' Sports Programme engaging with **20 primary schools** and over **900 children**



Delivered a **city wide programme of events** attracting almost **100,000 people**

Hosted **Senior Activity events** across 4 Leisure Centres, attracting **almost 400 seniors**

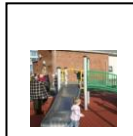
Supported **500 coaches and volunteers** through coach education training

Created a greener city playing a key role in protecting and linking the city through our parks, open spaces and greenways:

Provided residents and visitors with **48 parks and open spaces** and maintained more than **1,100 hectares of open space**



Provided and maintained quality standards for the public at **135 sports pitches, 79 playgrounds, 12 bowling pavilions, 3 cemeteries a crematorium, a golf course and an adventure playground**



Improved **park quality** so that **68%** of residents now live within 1000m of a green flag rated parks

Planted **500 new street trees** in the last year and maintained approximately **14,500 street trees** in the Greater Belfast area

Enriched the city's cultural and tourism offering

Attracted over **230,000 visitors to the zoo**



The Zoo was recognised at the **NI Tourism Awards 2012** as Winner in the Marketing and Sales Excellence Category, and Highly Commended in the Visitor Inspired Category

Hosted **770 events**, including weddings, conferences and meetings and welcomed **190,000 visitors** to **Belfast Castle** and **Malone House** properties

Promoted positive relations and shared space

Delivered a **Midnight Soccer Intervention Programme** in partnership with North Belfast Play Forum, which attracted over 3000 participants

Improved quality of life by reducing inequalities and tackling disadvantage delivering a range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities

Delivered almost **13,000 coaching hours to 20,000 participants** on the **Active Communities Programme**



Provided swimming opportunities to more than **6,000 children** in our '**Make a Splash**' scheme

Welcomed 19,500 children to our **summer scheme** programmes across 10 leisure centres

Referred **1,000 patients** to the **Healthwise** scheme