



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Belfast Zoological Gardens - opportunities for Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships
Date:	5 December 2013
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Mark Challis, Zoo Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Sun bears are among the zoo's most popular species. Sun bears are kept by only two other UK zoos, and as such at times receive a lot of visitor focus. Their paddock is overlooked by the Mountain Tea House, and throughout the year a significant proportion of zoo visitors will have purchased food in the Tea House and sat on the new patio and watched the bears.
1.2	During summer 2013, following an approach from a consortium of construction companies working on the A8 dual carriageway, namely Lagan Construction, Ferrovial Agroman and Costain, work was undertaken enhancing the paddock for the zoo's pair of endangered Malayan sun bears.
1.3	The work included new outdoor climbing structures, wobble feeders (which require the bears to shake the tree trunks to get their food to topple out), tree trunks, bark pits, tunnels, a running waterfall and hammocks to relax in, as well as some landscaping.
1.4	A wide range of play and behavioural enrichment equipment is vital to the welfare of the bears, which are intelligent and inquisitive. Prior to the work, there was a limited number of such pieces of equipment for the bears in the paddock, and those items that were in place had become old and were in a poor state of repair. There was limited budget available in zoo budgets to immediately undertake improvements.

1.5	While the zoo covered the cost of crane hire, all other staff, plant and materials costs were provided by the companies. Staff from the companies and the zoo worked together closely to design the new enclosure furniture and develop the week long programme of works.
1.6	Following the enhancements, the female bear, which came to Belfast Zoo with a history of antisocial and repetitive behaviours, has become significantly more relaxed. We have not observed any repetitive behaviours from her since the work was undertaken. Moreover, she has become significantly more receptive and accepting of the male bear, to the extent that within weeks of completion of the work, mating behaviours were observed. If successful, this would represent the first captive breeding of this species in the UK and Ireland.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	The zoo was approached by construction and engineering companies willing to undertake work to enhance animal enclosures in the zoo.
2.2	There is an ongoing need for such work throughout the zoo, not only to renew aging structures but also to provide new and interesting items of enrichment for our animals.
2.3	Given the specialist nature of the work, in terms of both equipment and personnel, this work is expensive to procure. While finances for such work are available through annual zoo budgets, there is significant scope for such work throughout the zoo, often beyond that for which we have adequate budget availability.
2.4	Companies, through their Corporate Social Responsibilities, do appear keen to develop partnerships and support the zoo. The zoo's conservation, welfare and education roles, and our links to the community via our visitors and Friends of the Zoo group, make us an attractive proposition and site for companies wanting to fulfil their Corporate Social Responsibilities.
2.5	Further, it would appear likely that there are opportunities to extend this support via similar work in the zoo, and perhaps at other Parks facilities.
2.6	<p>In order to explore such opportunities, it is proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● we develop a list of suitable enclosure work in the zoo for potential partner engineering and building contractors to undertake, that would enhance the lives of the zoo's animals, via landscaping and the provision of play and other enrichment equipment; ● we seek expressions of interest from contractors with the capacity to assist the zoo with such work for animals in the zoo; ● we develop a package of marketing materials so that companies providing such assistance may receive appropriate credit for their work,

	<p>including signage at the animal enclosures, press releases and links to the zoo's website and other social media outlets, and branded partnership certificates and other materials, which also could be retrospectively applied to those companies that assisted at the sun bear enclosure; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depending on the uptake, the Department will develop a policy for future Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships throughout the Department.
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The partnership described above, and the proposed extension of the programme, has the potential to generate significant financial savings.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>There will be some work required to further develop this programme. However, in the initial stages, there is adequate HR available.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>The partnership described above has allowed for the renewal of the climbing and other fixtures in the sun bear enclosure. This has provided for significant additional value to this asset. There appears to be considerable scope to extend this partnership arrangement, and to provide excellent marketing opportunities to both partners.</p>

4.	Equality Implications
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5.	Recommendations
5.1	<p>The committee is asked to note the above report and to approve the plan in paragraph 2.6, ie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop a list of suitable enclosure work in the zoo for potential partner engineering and building contractors to undertake, that would enhance the lives of the zoo's animals, via landscaping and the provision of play and other enrichment equipment; • to seek expressions of interest from contractors with the capacity to assist the zoo with such work for animals in the zoo; • to develop a package of marketing materials so that companies

	providing such assistance may receive appropriate credit for their work, including signage at the animal enclosures, press releases and links to the zoo's website and other social media outlets, and branded partnership certificates and other materials, which also could be retrospectively applied to those companies that assisted at the sun bear enclosure.
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6.	Decision Tracking
6.1	The majority of initial actions from the above will be carried out and managed by zoo staff. Depending on the uptake from companies, a further report will be brought to Committee in 2014.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	none

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Photographs