



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Update on the 'Walk-ability' partnership project with Queens University Belfast (QUB)
Date:	16 January 2014
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks & Leisure
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1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the KESUE project, approved by Committee in February 2012.</p> <p>The KESUE project was led by QUB and part funded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) knowledge exchange programme, in conjunction with Belfast City Council (BCC) and a number of key partners across Belfast and Northern Ireland (NI).</p>

2	Key Issues
	<p>The main aim of the KESUE project was to extend the 'walk-ability' research to cover the entire BCC area.</p> <p>The objectives of the project were specifically to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the real walkability network (RWN) and the walkability model as a policy-support tool for increasing physical activity across Belfast;• Identify further opportunities for implementing the walkability model in other settlements across NI; and• Disseminate the use of GIS based walkability tools in other UK cities. <p>The KESUE project was completed over a period of 12 months.</p> <p>The Council has gained valuable experience and knowledge of the purpose and the potential of GIS based walk-ability models. For example, the research was used to inform park management policy, evaluating the potential benefits of maintaining 24 hour access within the parks that make up the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG).</p> <p>The results and analysis of the KESUE project were presented via workshops in NI, Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Great Britain, where other local authorities and government agencies recognised BCC's involvement as progressive and forward thinking.</p> <p>There are a number of ways in which the research could be applied in the future, including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a comparative ‘walk-ability’ measure/ indicator, to provide an overall assessment of how conducive a neighbourhood is to walking. This will feed into future developments around local area planning; • Application of a citywide walk-ability index as part of an active travel strategy for the Active Belfast programme; • Investigation of the impact of interface barriers in terms of accessibility and connectivity, and the impact of opening and closing gates on service provision; • Assessment of the benefits of new infrastructure projects, e.g. at the impact of new footbridges such as the Sam Thompson Bridge in East Belfast. <p>The KESUE project has highlighted the real value of collaborative and integrated partnership working between the education sector, the Council and other statutory agencies in promoting healthy cities.</p> <p>A final workshop has been organised for the KESUE project in Belfast which will take place on 17 February 2014, giving BCC the opportunity to showcase some of the excellent case study work generated. A final recommendations report will be prepared following this workshop.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
	<u>Financial</u> None
	<u>Human Resources</u> Ongoing officer time.
	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	None at present.

5	Recommendations
	Members are asked to note the content of the report and support the final workshop on 17 February 2014.

6	Decision Tracking
	None

7	Key to Abbreviations
	KESUE - Knowledge Exchange, Spatial Analysis & Healthy Urban Environments ESRC - Economic & Social Research Council QUB – Queens University Belfast CCG – Connswater Community Greenway

8	Documents Attached
	None