



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Connswater Community Greenway Consultation.
Date:	12 June 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Stockman, City Park Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>At the Parks and Leisure Committee meeting on the 14th of February 2013 it was noted that proposals regarding opening and closing of gates and lighting of the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) will be brought forward to Committee after the completion of the proposed 'Connswater Community and Stakeholder Engagement Approach and Plan'. The community and stakeholder engagement has now been completed and a report submitted for review and analysis. (See Appendix 1)</p> <p>Meaningful engagement has been one of the principles of the Greenway from its initiation to the current development stage. The main issue to be addressed by the engagement was to identify if the community were supportive of the spine of the Greenway remaining open and lit at night.</p> <p>Members are reminded that the Connswater Community Greenway is an investment to create a continuous and connected 9km linear park from the hills to the lough, following the courses of the rivers, connecting the green and open spaces. Included in the partnership funding was the funding for lighting to enable the main greenway route to remain open and lit, with bridges, crossings and pathways lit to facilitate increased accessibility.</p> <p>The benefits of the engagement work already undertaken is reflected in the high level of awareness of the project and in a desire for those consulted to continue to be informed and engaged - 68% of residents said they are 'very interested' or 'interested' in the CCG, with this rising to 97% for stakeholders.</p>

2.	Key Issues
	<p>Arising from the report and analysis, key issues have been identified below:</p> <p>There was overwhelming support for the key principles of access and lighting. Both the resident (94%) and stakeholder (88%) surveys recorded overwhelming support for the proposal to have the Greenway open 24 hours a day with it being lit during the hours of darkness along the main spine and throughout general areas of the Greenway;</p> <p>Open Access along the Spine</p> <p>There was a very positive response to the issue of increased access opening up the linear park. Approximately nine out of ten (91%) respondents in the resident survey are either 'very supportive' or 'supportive' of the Greenway being open 24 hours a day, with 10% either 'unsupportive' or 'very unsupportive'. Overall 87% of stakeholders are either 'very supportive' or 'supportive' of the Greenway being open 24 hours a day. The vast majority 75% of residents believe that opening the Greenway 24 hours a day will help promote positive use (70% of stakeholders shared this view).</p> <p>Lighting</p> <p>Providing lighting from dusk to dawn again received a very positive response from those consulted. It was seen as a cornerstone of increased access and contributing to a greater sense of personal safety and security. More than nine out of ten (94%) survey respondents are supportive of the main spine and general areas of the Greenway being lit 24 hours a day, with 6% unsupportive.</p> <p>Respondents living beside or a few streets from the Greenway recorded a significantly higher level of support (97%) for this proposal compared with those living further from the Greenway.</p> <p>More than nine out of ten (94%) stakeholders are supportive of the main spine and general areas of the Greenway being lit from dusk to dawn. A large majority - 85% of residents believe that if the Greenway is lit 24 hours a day that this will improve people's sense of personal safety (82% of stakeholders shared this view).</p> <p>Anti Social Behaviour</p> <p>This was identified as a potential area of concern. Not specifically linked to the Greenway or additional access rather to existing concerns with activities in specific locations which give rise to concerns. To address this provision of additional lighting, improved access and mitigating actions by PSNI and Council were identified as offering potential solutions.</p> <p>Environmental Concerns</p> <p>The Greenway is perceived as offering positive benefits to the local environment and as a opportunity to improve access to and awareness of the local environment within Parks. Related to this the Greenway is perceived as offering a great resource to be exploited by local schools, clubs and societies.</p>

	<p>Health and Safety Concerns While the Greenway will offer additional access to lakes and rivers, this is not perceived as being a major source of concern. There was a view expressed that the normal health and safety checks would be put in place prior to and following the development phase.</p>
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p>Financial The cost of the providing lights to be lit during the hours of darkness along the spine is included in the planned capital and revenue costs for the Greenway.</p> <p>Human Resources If gates along the main spine of the Greenway are not to be open and closed there is a saving in resources of Warden time, which can be reallocated to other priorities e.g. anti social behaviour.</p> <p>Assets The provision of lights and gates along the spine has already been planned. These issues only affect how these assets are utilised.</p>

4.	Equality Implications
	None identifiable at present

5.	Recommendations
	It is recommended that Committee give approval for the spine of the Connswater Greenway to have open access for pedestrians and cyclists 24 hours a day and that it is lit from dusk to dawn.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Decision to be implemented by the Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure as part of the CCG programme.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	CCG – Connswater Community Greenway

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1. Connswater Community Greenway Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Draft Report May 2014)