



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Parklife Education Programme (formerly Watch This Space)
Date:	12 June 2014
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks & Leisure
Contact Officer:	Agnes McNulty, Open Spaces & Active Living Manager Michael Culbert, Community Parks Outreach Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 15 September 2011, it had approved the future direction for the Parks' Educational Programme - 'Watch This Space', subject to a tender exercise being undertaken. The tender was awarded to the Ulster Wildlife Trust (now called Ulster Wildlife) for a three year period which is due to end on 31 March 2015.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ update Members on the progress of Parklife;▪ seek approval of a tender exercise for 3 years (with an option to extend for a further 2 years) for the delivery of the Parklife programme, to include extension into the transition areas following Local Government Reform;▪ seek approval to organise a 'Green Teenz' pilot project.
1.2	<p>Existing Programme</p> <p>The Parklife programme is designed to establish the Council's parks as a valuable teaching resource and encourage greater use of parks for outdoor learning. It has 3 elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. A co-ordinated education programme of supervised and unsupervised visits;ii. The establishment and management of a resource bank;iii. The agreement, development and delivery of a capacity building plan for Parks' staff over the lifespan of the contract. <p>It was considered an opportune time during the contract to rebrand</p>

	<p>'Watch This Space' to Parklife Education Programme as this name was more appropriate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="331 309 1385 674">i. Parklife is delivered to 24 schools and 6 community groups on a city-wide basis. Five supervised sessions are provided to schools and topics covered range from park history and bird identification to tree maths and healthy parks. Saturday Clubs are organised on a monthly basis in Falls, Ormeau, Victoria and Woodvale Parks and are mainly attended by families. Interactive activities are also organised at various Parks' events throughout the year including the Spring Fair, Rose Week and Summer Fun Days. In the first two years of the programme, a total of 6,501 school children participated in Parklife and 3,334 of these children visited their local park during that time. <li data-bbox="331 712 1385 1115">ii. A resource bank is being developed to facilitate unsupervised visits to parks. The resources have clear links to the curriculum such as science, literacy and numeracy. They are themed around the seasons, link in with the school terms and are generic for use in most of the parks throughout the year. The resources are clearly structured and include learning objectives, preparation required, park activities, helpful hints and suggested follow-up activities either in the classroom or school grounds. The games and interactive activities are designed to get children learning in a practical and fun way whilst encouraging physical activity in parks. The resources will soon be made available to the public through the Council's website. <li data-bbox="331 1153 1385 1659">iii. As part of Parklife, six Parks' Staff have been trained as Educational Facilitators which has involved shadowing Ulster Wildlife's staff during school sessions and then developing, leading and delivering one session to a school group in a park. Each of the Facilitators was required to plan and develop a topic in their individual area of expertise which included making/ planting window boxes, a demonstration of garden tools/equipment and pond dipping. It is intended to build on this going into year 2 of their training so that the Facilitators will work alongside Ulster Wildlife's staff and carry out some of the practical delivery of the programme and Ulster Wildlife will undertake the support work. A further six Parks' staff have started their training to become Educational Facilitators. Notwithstanding the need to ensure normal operational cover, the involvement of staff is a very positive contribution to Parklife.
--	--

2.	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Future Delivery of Parklife</p> <p>The use of an external provider such as Ulster Wildlife has demonstrated the added value that the Trust has brought to Parklife through their wealth of experience in delivering environmental education, their network of other Trusts and their ability to use additional guides to support the programme.</p> <p>It is proposed to establish a contract for 3 years (with an option to extend</p>

2.2	<p>for a further 2 years) for the delivery of the programme and Parks and Leisure Committee in April 2014 gave approval for the director to go out to tender for this programme. It is proposed that the Parklife tender will build on the existing programme and have 3 elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a co-ordinated education programme of supervised and supervised visits; ▪ development of the resource bank to facilitate unsupervised visits; ▪ capacity building of Parks' staff, in particular new Parks Wardens. <p>The involvement of Parks' staff in the delivery of Parklife and the proposed Green Teenz project will be facilitated through time off in lieu arrangements.</p> <p>'Green Teenz'</p> <p>As the Parks Section has been delivering an educational programme since 2007, it has become apparent that there is an opportunity for our Outreach Managers to engage with those older children mainly the 12 – 14 age group, who have been involved in or have left Parklife/Saturday Clubs. It is proposed that for this age group, a pilot project 'Green Teenz' is set up which will be a natural progression from Parklife and will build on the knowledge and experience they have already gained from it.</p> <p>Green Teenz will be a city wide project which will commence in September 2014, offering 12 places to this age group, to meet on a monthly basis, for a ten month period. The project will be managed by the Community Parks Outreach Manager (S/West), will require assistance from the Park Wardens involved in Parklife and Environmental Experts will be employed to deliver specialist training.</p> <p>Preference will be given to children who are or have been involved in Parklife and remaining places will be filled on a first come, first served basis, advertised through social media and existing networks. Topics covered will include wildlife recording, management of invasive alien species, hedgerow management and trail maintenance etc.</p> <p>The Outreach Manager will compile a detailed project schedule which will be designed to provide participants with an insight into environmental conservation and habitat management within our parks and open spaces.</p> <p>The cost of the project is envisaged to be £3,500 to cover delivery of specialist training and bus hire to transport children to various parks throughout the city. The pilot project will be internally evaluated in June 2015.</p>
-----	---

3.	Resource Implications
	<p>Financial</p> <p>Parklife – Up to £80,000 per annum is allocated in the revenue estimates to include transferring areas under LGR.</p> <p>Green Teenz - £3,500 is budgeted across three operational areas.</p>

	<p>Human Resources Parklife is managed by staff from the Open Spaces & Active Living Unit and Parks' staff will be involved in the delivery of the programme. Green Teenz will be managed by the Community Park Outreach Manager (S/West) and will require assistance from the Park Wardens and other Officers to deliver the project.</p> <p>Assets None</p>
--	---

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

5.	Recommendations
	It is recommended that Committee approve the proposed Green Teenz project for a ten month period from September 2014. A report will be brought back to Committee in August 2015 to update members on the progress of the pilot project.

6.	Decision Tracking
	<p>Officer Responsible Parklife – Open Spaces & Active Living Manager Green Teenz – Community Park Outreach Manager (S/West)</p>

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	None