



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Landslide at Cave Hill Country Park
Date:	11 September 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Fintan Grant, City Parks Manager, North Belfast.

Relevant Background Information

Hazelwood Nature Reserve is located adjacent to Belfast Zoo and forms part of the Cave Hill Country Park. There have been sporadic landslides in the area as detailed in the previous report to Committee dated 12th June 2014 and a decision was taken to close the path on advice from Legal Services following the receipt of an engineer's report on the issue attached at Appendix 1.

Parks management, in the interim have been investigating the options available and consulting with relevant stakeholders to inform a decision on the future of the path.

Key Issues

At the site in question there is an existing steep rock face which is generally covered with a thin mantle of overburden material. This overburden is approximately 0.5 to 0.75 m deep and is heavily overgrown with trees and undergrowth.

The slips are occurring at various locations and at infrequent intervals and are due to the instability of the overburden material on the steep rock face of the escarpment. The rock face itself appears to be stable so the problem is with the overburden. Due to the extent of the overburden material and the heavy undergrowth it would be impractical to remove it in order to stabilise the slope above the path. The slips will, in the engineers view, continue to occur and are more likely to occur during or after very wet periods or snowfall. These events increasing the weight of the overburden and triggering the slippage of the overburden down the rock face.

During subsequent investigations, a further engineer's report was commissioned on a pedestrian bridge that serviced the "closed path". This report recommended the removal of the bridge due to structural defects and the bridge

was removed by a contractor and a suitable fence erected on 6th August, report attached at Appendix 2.

Due to the topography of the area a suitable replacement path, to avoid the risk of landslides, is not feasible and therefore a replacement bridge will not be required. An alternative route avoiding the former bridge and the risk of slips is available as part of the sites current infrastructure but involves walking up through Hazelwood to link with the caves path and then descending down to the rear of the Zoo past the "Devils Punch Bowl". This adds an average of 30 minutes to the original journey time.

The location of the path, bridge and alternative route can be seen on the map at Appendix 3.

Resource Implications

Financial

To date the financial implication are as follows.

Removal of the bridge £3,000

Signage £500

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications.

Asset and other implications

The closure of the path as necessary to manage the risk. The closure of this path will restrict the movement of park users in this area of the Country Park and may affect their enjoyment of the asset.

Recommendations

Members are asked to agree the permanent closure of the path.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Engineers Report, Inspection of Landslip at Hazelwood
Appendix 2 Engineers Report, Inspection of Footbridge at Cavehill pathway
Appendix 3 Map of area showing location of path, bridge and alternative route