



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject	Evaluation Report of Environmental Based Youth Development Camps
Date:	11 December 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Ricky Rice, City Parks Manager. South and West Belfast

1. Relevant Background Information

Committee is reminded of a report presented to Committee on 12 June 2014, which received approval to proceed with 4 environmental based youth development camps across the City.

The item was discussed at July 2014 Council meeting and an evaluation report was requested after the completion of the camps.

The camps took place during July and August 2014. The camps were aimed at various age groups with a maximum of 15 per camp and run over 5 days. Each camp had the following objectives:

- To develop skills and knowledge of the local environment
- To develop personal skills and complete different adventurous activities
- To build new relationships, both within a team environment and across the City.

Each camp had different aspects and projects based both on local opportunities and options to visit and experience other parts of the City and develop and learn new skills. A typical day of activity included a walk through a forest or up a glen or mountain and an opportunity to learn new skills such as compass reading, basic navigation, lunch on a mountainside, learning about the local fauna and the natural local history.

	<p>The anticipated benefits of the youth development camp were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in leisure activities and assist in reducing childhood obesity. • Reduced potential of anti social/community behaviour by engaging and educating the youths of Belfast on the positives that our parks and open spaces have to offer. • Increased awareness of our youth on the importance of enhancing biodiversity in our city and surrounding area. • Increased capacity for participants as “Young leaders” by developing leadership skills, decision making skills, team working skills and hazard awareness/avoidance skills.
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2.	<p>Key Issues</p>
	<p>An independent evaluation report was commissioned and a report was submitted to the department in October 2014. The report, Appendix A, provides an overview of how the aims and objectives of this unique style of Environmental Youth Development Programme were met.</p> <p>Each of the camps had a range of objectives and outcomes because they were based in different parks of the city with different age ranges of children/youths, facilities, volunteers etc.</p> <p>As a pilot, the Council worked through a number of avenues to recruit participants to the programme, including BELB’s Area Youth Projects, some schools and established youth providers.</p> <p>The report concludes that all of the programme’s original aims were met, and in particular highlighted that new relationships were built between Parks staff and young people and relationships restored, where there had been conflict and anti social behaviour. Young park users are now on first name terms with park attendants, wardens, supervisors and managers. Some quotes from young people include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I really enjoyed the parkies being with us; nicest men ever; good banter off them; they have a hard job getting people out of the park at closing time.</i> • <i>The young people in East picked up on the enthusiasm of the Outreach Manager; she communicated her love of the job to them.</i> • <i>I met the park wardens; I thought they would have been boring but they’re not.</i> • <i>It was good for the young people to see a woman in the role of Community Park Supervisor in South Belfast; she was a good role model’.</i> <p>The report also indicates there are a large number of positive outcomes from the camps and highlighted a number of key impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people developed new interests, new knowledge of things to do in parks and open spaces including cycling, woodwork, pond

dipping, walking, photography

- Young people reported the programme changed their attitude to park staff and changed their awareness of and increased sense of belonging in parks alongside other park users.
- Young people gained an interest in and understanding of the natural environment which is present on the doorstep – flowers, trees, birds, pond life.
- In terms of team-building and leadership skills, the young people learnt to work as a team and gained experience and training as youth mentors, as well as hazard awareness / avoidance skills.

The report (pg 22) makes 9 recommendations including:

1. **Train and up-skill Parks Staff.** The enthusiasm and professionalism of Parks Department staff, including attendants and wardens, as demonstrated by their success in engaging with young people and their passion for the natural environment, should be harnessed and developed through a citywide programme of training and up-skilling
2. **Sustain the learning.** The learning impacts of the youth development camps should be sustained. Outreach Managers have a range of ideas and plans for activities at school holidays and weekends to sustain and build on the impact of the learning achieved through the camps. These include (a) Saturday clubs enabling pathways and progression such as Wilderness Clubs, Green Teenz, Junior Ranger Corps and Conservation Corps.
3. **Widen access to the camp experience.** Ways of resourcing more young people to benefit from the camp experience should be identified such as School holiday camps throughout the year and increasing the number of summer camps in each area.
4. **Ensure Council gets recognition.** The concept of the city summer camp should be promoted, ensuring that Belfast City Council, and their partners, are recognised for this initiative. The Council should publicise the uniqueness of their camps, 'run by your Council, in your local area in the green spaces on your doorstep, by your local Council workers'.
5. **Recruitment.** Recruitment of young people should be started in May/ June.

The implementation of the camp across the city demonstrated that the model for the camps is flexible. The same aims and benefits can be achieved in different local contexts and with young people from a range of backgrounds, interests, ages and confidence.

3.	Resource Implications Each of the 4 camps had different requirements based on local area needs. As indicated in the report the total cost of the camps was £20,589. This is lower than the estimated amount of £28,000 referred to in the June 2014 report and, as stated in the evaluation report, some of the equipment purchased has already been used for other groups and activities and will continue to be 'recycled' for any further activities or camps.
4.	Equality Implications
	There are no equality implications concerning this report.

5.	Recommendations
	<p>Committee is asked to note the evaluation report and authorise officers to develop the recommendations contained within the report and in particular to explore options to widen access for younger people to this unique style of Environmental Youth Camp whilst taking into account any financial implications.</p> <p>The recommendations at page 21 of the report and listed under headings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train and up skill our Parks staff to reduce external costs 2. Sustain the learning 3. Sustain the positive engagement 4. Widen access to the camp experience 5. Link with mainstream education 6. Ensure Belfast City Council gets adequate recognition 7. Recruitment of young people 8. Learning from the experience 9. Leadership of the camps. <p>If permission is granted to proceed with the recommendations then Committee will be provided with a further Committee report for any proposed Environmental Youth Camps which are planned for 2015.</p>

6.	Decision Tracking
	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director, Parks and Leisure Department to bring forward a report in April 2015

7.	Key to Abbreviations.
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix A - Evaluation report concerning 2014 Environmental Based Youth Camps.