



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Lagan Valley Regional Park Funding</b>
<b>Date:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jacqui Wilson, Business Manager

1.	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 6 December 2012 approval was given to provide an annual grant of £26,360 to £27,370 to Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) for the period April 2013 until March 2016. Members will be aware that LVRP is a partnership between Belfast City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Lisburn City Council, Department of Culture Arts &amp; Leisure and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Belfast City Council has been one of the main partner funding organisations for LVRP since its inception in 1967.</p> <p>The Council has benefited significantly from the work of LVRP through organised events, use of LVRP Rangers, additional signage, community engagement; education and from other partnerships developed through the LVRP. Over the last few years, the achievements of LVRP include;</p> <p>Annual events program last year ran 33 events engaging with over 800 people.</p> <p>2014 - Coca Cola clean coast award winner for our 'My River' Initiative Coordinating volunteers, groups and promoting awareness of benefits of a clean river to the local community.</p> <p>2013 - The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for volunteer and community groups Highest standard possible for volunteer groups for the overall program, the work, welfare and motivation of our volunteers.</p> <p>2012 - 2015 - Investing in volunteer's accreditation by the UK volunteering forum.</p> <p>2013 – CBC Mayors Award for volunteering supporting volunteering for a large group.</p>

	<p>2013 – Brighter Belfast Environmental Awards winner for Nature Conservation for the ‘Lagan Initiative’.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the funding position of LVRP due to Local Government Reform and due to other financial constraints.</p>
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<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>The Review of Public Administration has resulted in the Regional Park funding moving from a split between three councils (Belfast City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council and Lisburn City Council) to a split between two Councils: Belfast City Council and the new Lisburn and Castlereagh Council. A request for BCC to increase its level of funding from £27,370 to £41,055 has been received. This contribution would represent an increase from 18% of the overall costs and to 27% for 2015/16.</p> <p>LVRP have also highlighted that other funding streams are potentially under threat due to central government cuts; i.e. from the NIEA funding which is currently 34% of the overall contribution.</p> <p>They have highlighted that if this funding is cut by 50% or cut completely the funding requirement requested from the Council would increase to 36% and potentially up to 44%.</p> <p>This core funding to LVRP will help deliver a number of key projects that will complement and support Belfast City Council including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ complete a strategic review of the Regional Park and update the Management Plan for the next five years including sustaining the legacy of the Liganscape</li> <li>▪ organising and delivering an events programme offering a broad range of interests and activities that will enhance our own Council events’ programme</li> <li>▪ continue to provide a Ranger Service along the towpath which complements and supports our parks that lie within the boundary of LVRP and develop a towpath initiative focusing on issues raised by park users</li> <li>▪ continue to engage the local community in projects in the Park encouraging them to manage their environment as well as the associated physical and mental health benefits.</li> </ul> <p>Funding the LVRP 2015/16 will support the work being done by the Council and will enhance many other areas of work including biodiversity, education, community engagement, countryside recreation and promotional activities. If the Committee agrees to this request, it will be necessary to review and update the Funding Agreement between the Council and LVRP. However the future arrangements for the partnership will have to be reviewed in line with the funding available and the key activities aligned to the resources available. The long term funding of the partnership may not be sustainable and BCC should assess the merits of continuing in this partnership against the operational requirements of the areas transferring that fall within this arrangement.</p>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Currently there is an amount of £27,370 within the departmental estimates for 2015/16 which is yet to be approved. However due to the impact of Local Government reform an increased amount of £41,055 has been requested which has not been provided for in the estimates. The report highlights that this level of funding could be required to be increased to up to £66,555 depending on other funding available. This level of funding is not currently available nor would it be sustainable for the department.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
	None

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Committee are asked to note the contents of the report and to agree the level of funding that should be provided for 2015/16 for the LVRP subject to the relevant agreements being amended where necessary.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	The Open Spaces and Active Living Manager will be responsible for carrying out the decision of the Committee. An assessment of the longer term funding arrangements will be carried out and a report brought to Committee at a later date.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	<p>BCC – Belfast City Council</p> <p>LVRP – Lagan Valley Regional Park</p>

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None