



Subject:	Belfast Zoo Proposal NI Bat Group
Date:	11 May 2016
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officers:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director John Fisher, Education Officer, Belfast Zoo

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Proposal for the continued use of Belfast Zoo by the Northern Ireland Bat Group for a range of activities, some outside normal opening times.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree: <ul style="list-style-type: none">that the Council continues its partnership with the Northern Ireland Bat Group to include activities as outlined in the main report and use of facilities as appropriate.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background <p>The Northern Ireland Bat Group is a volunteer organisation which works closely with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. It is licensed to work with bats and to carry out voluntary calls on behalf of Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and engage with the public for the conservation of bats. They also work closely with local councils, wildlife organisations, community groups, planning authorities, and government and non government organisations</p>

Key Issues

3.2

The service that the Northern Ireland Bat Group provides is educational and advisory and includes:

- Advice to householders and other bodies who are dismayed at discovering a bat roost. They provide advice on how to deal with it both safely and legally within the framework of bat protection legislation.
- Developing strategies with local neighbourhoods and communities for bat habitat conservation.
- Visiting schools, community groups and conservation organisations delivering bat talks and advice.
- Dispelling myths and allaying fears about bats.
- Providing licensed bat carers who look after sick and injured bats, ultimately with the aim of releasing the bats back to wild.

3.4

The Northern Ireland Bat Group and Belfast Zoo have been working in partnership for the last fifteen years. Working in partnership with the Zoo has allowed the group and the Zoo to work with many people from all sections of the community. The aim of the partnership is to empower local people in their neighbourhoods and communities to protect and save both local habits and wildlife.

3.5

The partnership includes:

- The setting up and running of a Young Bat Workers Club for seven to twelve years old. The aim is to educate young people on the importance of bat conservation providing young bat conservation workers of the future. The Young Bat Workers Club was developed in partnership with the Zoo's education department and features in the Zoo's educational programme. It is featured both on the website and accomplishes one of the main Zoo objectives with regards to education. It should be noted that the Young Bat Workers, as the first club of its kind, has been commended by the Bat Conservation Trust (one of the most respected conservation organisations in the UK).
- Running bat walks in the Zoo. For the first ever Bat Walk Evening in the Zoo, the Zoo paid an international bat expert from the National Trust. However, at no expense to the Zoo, the NI Bat group have continued to provide this service.
- Whilst other organisations are charged a fee, Belfast Zoo is not. This is due to their ongoing positive partnership. If Council requires that a fee must be paid, then the Club would be happy to donate the fee to a conservation cause of Belfast Zoo.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending the Zoo’s Native Species event. The NI Bat Group has been at every single Native Species event. • Giving talks at the Halloween event “Boo at the Zoo”. • Both Belfast City Council and Belfast Zoo provide the contact details of the NI Bat Group when dealing with queries from the public when finding injured bats. • Giving advice to BCC and Belfast Zoo when dealing with bat roosts in Belfast City Council properties. • Giving talks to the Friends Junior Zoo Clubs. • Providing, free of charge, bat roosting boxes for the whole Zoo site. • Working closely with Belfast Zoo’s Native Species group.
3.6	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are Health and safety issues regarding the Bat Group using Zoo grounds outside normal opening times. These should be covered by an operational presence at all times and subject to the appropriate risk assessments. This can be facilitated within existing budgets. However the situation will be monitored to ensure there is no financial impact.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality issues. The groups referred to are open to all members of the community.</p> <p>Abbreviations - Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>