



Subject:	Horizon 2020 Upsurge Project
Date:	11 th August 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services, City and Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager, City and Neighbourhood Services Richard McLernon, Project Co-Ordinator, Commissioner for Resilience.

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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	The purpose of this report is to update Members on a funding application which has been submitted to the EU Horizon 2020 fund and has successfully passed stage one of the application process. The project is called Upsurge and focuses on testing nature based solutions in EU cities, with the aim of sharing learning and good practice. A detailed application is being developed for submission in stage 2 by the University of Maribor, Slovenia, on behalf of a consortium of EU cities with, a final submission date of 3 rd September

	2020. The project, if successful, would commence in 2021 with a 48-month duration. Belfast has been included as one of a number of partner cities within the proposal.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the inclusion of Lower Botanic Gardens as the primary location for activity in the EU Horizon 2020 Upsurge project proposal, with an update to follow regarding the status of the application. • Authorise the project team to scan additional BCC sites with the aim of identifying satellite sites that could be incorporated into the project.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The specific Horizon 2020 call focuses on nature-based solutions. The proposal is that Belfast will test nature-based solutions developed in the city of Maribor, Slovenia, to assess if they can be implemented successfully in another city. It is proposed that Belfast will develop a site into a community garden and learning facility, where soil enhancement, food production and testing can be undertaken. Belfast City Council officers and Queens University of Belfast staff are working on the detail of the Belfast contribution and have identified a proposed primary site with the potential for linked satellite sites across the city and in the city centre.
3.2	The preferred primary site is Lower Botanic Gardens, in the area between QUB PEC car park, and Ridgeway Street, bounded by Stranmillis Embankment (see image attached). The site has been selected due to the following: size requirement (5,000m ²), proximity to partner assets (QUB), and proximity to a range of socio-economic stakeholders (QUB/UU students, minorities, Botanic Primary School, and neighbouring communities including Lower Ormeau, Ballynafeigh, and Holyland). The site facilitates vehicular access via Stranmillis Embankment and pedestrian access at Ridgeway Street. In addition, the site is in close proximity to BCC assets including the Bowling Pavilion and Botanic Gardens, with potential to utilise the project to enhance their use. Furthermore, this project is likely to support the ambitions of the local Friends of Botanic Gardens Group in developing this location.
3.3	The project will form a learning base with opportunities for digital testing of nature-based solutions, food production opportunities and educational programmes for schools, community, staff and university students.

3.4	While the focus is on the primary site at Botanic Gardens, we propose to examine the potential for satellite sites on BCC land across the city and in the city centre. This will support local community involvement in using nature-based solutions to improve local biodiversity, rewilding, and local food production.
3.5	The project aligns with the Belfast City Council aims of improving city and community resilience and aligns with the draft Belfast Resilience Strategy, emerging city and Council Climate Plans, Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, and Belfast Smart City goals.
3.6	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Upsurge project presents an opportunity to develop an underused area of land under Belfast City Council ownership, through a partnership with QUB, EU partners, and local community organisations. A project team has been established which includes Belfast City Council’s Resilience Unit, Innovation Unit, City and Neighbourhood Services, Planning, in addition to QUB representatives. The project, if successful, will act as a hub, with the potential to support rewilding, enhanced local food production, stimulation of local circular economy, and to develop community education programmes in relation to climate, digital innovation, and community resilience.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Up to 1 million euro of the project budget would be allocated to Belfast, subject to a successful application, from an overall project budget of up to 30 million euro. The funding would cover 100% project costs and overheads for project infrastructure, revenue and project management. No match funding is required. The project team will form a steering group to oversee, monitor and update on progress.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Aerial photo of proposed primary site.