



Subject:	Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields
Date:	9 th February 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager (East)

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 the results of the resident survey carried out amongst households surrounding the currently closed Knockbreda Park pedestrian entrance to Cherryvale Playing Fields and to present options as to next steps.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: i. Note the results of the residents' survey ii. Consider options and agree next steps.
3.0	Main report
	<i>Background</i>
3.1	Following a request from Councillor Long, at People and Communities Committee on 3 rd March 2020, the Committee agreed to commence a consultation process with the immediate

<p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>neighbours and stakeholders regarding the potential re-opening of an entrance gate into Cherryvale Playing Fields from Knockbreda Park. An initial 100 surveys were posted to households within the immediate vicinity of the gate. (See Appendix 1 Survey Questions)</p> <p>This existing gate has been closed for 20+ years. It is Council Officers' understanding the gate was previously closed due to concern from residents regarding anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the gate at the time. A recent report concerning ASB in the Playing Fields now shows a record of 12 incidents over a 24 month period.</p> <p>At the People and Communities Committee meeting on 11 August 2020, Councillor De Faoite requested that officers arrange a site meeting to allow Elected Members the opportunity to meet with various user groups to discuss any relevant issues regarding the Playing Fields. A site meeting was held on the 3rd September 2020 and involved Elected Members, representatives from Friends of Cherryvale and various sports users of the facility. Belfast City Council Officers provided an update on works that were taking place within the Playing Fields. Officers also provided an update that 100 households within the immediate vicinity of the gate had been sent a questionnaire asking for their views concerning the potential re-opening of the gate.</p> <p>At a further People and Communities Committee meeting, on 8th September 2020, Councillor Kelly requested the survey be widened to incorporate additional residents. Following discussion it was subsequently decided to extend the survey scope to a 400 metre radius (i.e. approximately within a 5 minute walk) from the gate. This is the distance Fields in Trust set as a standard to access a local park on foot. Extending the survey to include all households within a 400m radius of the gate resulted in a total of 1378 households being sent a survey to complete (see Appendix 2 Map showing households). Of those issued, 509 surveys were returned (36.9%).</p>
<p>3.5</p>	<p><i>Survey Results</i></p> <p>An analysis of the responses was undertaken and a summary of the findings is attached (see Appendix 3). Key findings from the survey responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 459 or 90.2% of all respondents stated that they use the playing fields with 50 respondents, or 9.8%, stating they do not use the facility.

- The survey asked: 'Would you be in favour of the gate being opened during regular park opening times?' Over 89% of respondents who expressed a preference were in favour.
- Respondents were offered the opportunity to comment on their answer.
 - Concerns were raised in relation to traffic management and parking issues and around potential ASB and noise/disturbance.
 - The positive comments in relation to the reopening of the gate related to improving access.
- It should be noted that 21 respondents who were in favour of reopening the gate also expressed concerns. Traffic management and parking were mentioned in 17 and 15 responses respectively. Concern around ASB issues was mentioned in five responses and potential for noise and disturbance was also mentioned five times. The suggestion for a trial period was mentioned twice.
- Of the houses closest to the playing fields who were in favour of reopening the gate (14 out of 21 houses), three made comments: one mentioned concerns around traffic management and parking; the other two referenced the benefits of easier access.
- Of those respondents who use the playing fields (459 people) 83% are in favour of the gate being reopened, with 9% not being in favour.
- Of those respondents who do not use the playing fields (50 people) 36% are in favour of the gate being reopened, with 12% not being in favour. The largest percentage of responses indicated no preference (44%).
- Two thirds of the responses from the houses closest to the gate are in favour of the reopening of the gate but as outlined in the summary document there are concerns expressed in the comments.

Options/Next steps

3.6 Considering the survey results, officers have identified two potential options for Members consideration:

Option 1: Gate remains closed: the survey results overwhelmingly supported the re-opening of the gate. However, concerns have been expressed by both those in favour and those against reopening the additional pedestrian access. Respondents have cited issues in relation to traffic management and parking and the potential for increased ASB/noise and disturbance complaints.

Option 2: Gate is re-opened: the majority of survey returns (89% of those indicating a preference) would support this option. However there are several factors to note:

- a. Although there is overwhelming support for the gate re-opening there were also concerns raised, in particular regarding traffic management, parking and concern for attracting ASB and noise/disturbance (due to accessing of the playing fields).

Officers have met with Road Service officials to discuss any implications on traffic, parking and crossings in regards to the gate. The Road Service have stated that no additional lighting is required. Parking restrictions lines would not be added prior to the gate opening; however, this would be monitored and if lines are required there would be no cost to the council. It may also be that a traffic island is required to assist in crossings; traffic lights have previously been requested by the residents and an assessment completed by the Road Service, however, the installation of traffic lights is on a waiting list. At present DfI see no immediate works required to be completed if the gate is opened for pedestrians but are of the opinion that regular assessments of the area would be required.

- b. To allow the re-opening, a new gate and path would need to be installed at an approximate cost of £7,500. This does not include any measures outside the playing fields' boundary and would be subject to a more detailed assessment.

It is likely these essential works ie installation of a new gate (replacing the old one in existence) and upgrading of the existing footpath (which may require clearing of vegetation in the area) will be considered as permitted development in line with the council carrying out its functions. However, if appropriate, a formal opinion can be obtained through a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development (CLUD).

If additional works were required in the future, such as the addition of new lighting to the footpath or widening of the footpath (to improve accessibility), it is likely that a full planning application would need to be submitted.

c. Operational considerations: Officers suggest that any additional access gate would follow the current arrangements in place with our Park Warden team, who are responsible for opening and closing our parks. This team currently work on an annualised-hours basis which provides us with the flexibility to have these officers working for longer periods in the summer months. While this work pattern facilitates longer opening during the summer period, it means that shorter operating hours in the winter months leads to earlier closure times for parks linked to dark nights. Our current staffing resource cannot facilitate extending the opening times of the city parks, however, in a recent committee report councillors were advised that officers are investigating this issue as part of our wider Parks Improvement Programme. In doing so, we are progressing two key initiatives to help inform future park management and opening arrangements namely:

- 24 hour pilot opening hours at Woodvale, Falls & Ormeau parks in Spring 2021
- A feasibility study to consider options, concept and pricing for the lighting of parks.

Until these works have been completed, and subsequently considered by Committee, it would be difficult for us to deviate from current Council policy in relation to park winter opening hours. Continuing this may help address ASB concerns, however they would also restrict access to the Playing Fields and there may be demand from clubs using the 3G pitch to open this gate outside normal hours.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.7

If the gate were to be re-opened, the capital cost to install a new gate and path has been approximated as £7,500. This cost has not been currently budgeted for.

Operational arrangements can be accommodated within existing budgets. Additional opening hours would incur additional costs.

3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality and rural proofing screening is underway, in line with council’s equality, good relations and rural needs requirements, to identify positive or adverse impacts of any decision to re-open the gate.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Survey questions.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Map of surveyed households</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Summary of survey responses</p>