



Subject:	Strangford Playing Fields – Update
Date:	7 th February 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes Lynne Wilson, Project Sponsor

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 provide Members with an update on the proposed project at Strangford Playing Fields to create an accessible pathway around the Park.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the update and agree to receive a deputation from Glenveagh Special School at the March meeting of the People & Communities Committee.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Background</u> Strangford Avenue Playing fields is situated across the road from Glenveagh Special Education school. Glenveagh shares a campus with 3 other special education needs schools: Harberton Special School, Fleming Fulton and Oakwood School. Together the

	<p>schools service significant pupil numbers. Many also are from outside the immediate area and travel in daily into the school.</p> <p>Breakdown of School Demographic</p> <table> <tr> <td>Glenveagh School</td> <td>190 pupils aged 8-19 years old. (20% wheelchair users)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Harberton</td> <td>300 pupils aged 4-15years old</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oakwood</td> <td>70 pupils aged 4-8 years old</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fleming Fulton</td> <td>100 pupils aged 5-18 years old (all physical disabilities)</td> </tr> </table>	Glenveagh School	190 pupils aged 8-19 years old. (20% wheelchair users)	Harberton	300 pupils aged 4-15years old	Oakwood	70 pupils aged 4-8 years old	Fleming Fulton	100 pupils aged 5-18 years old (all physical disabilities)
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3.2	<p>Outdoor space at the school campus is extremely constrained particularly given the large number of attendees at the schools and the special needs. Strangford Playing Fields is the closest alternative site for outdoor recreation. Glenveagh School is the closest in proximity to the park, with the Drummond Park entrance directly opposite their school gate.</p>								
3.3	<p>However, the schools have indicated that they currently cannot use the park to its full potential due to accessibility limitations around the pedestrian entrance and due to the absence of a suitable accessible bit-mac pathway for their pupils who have physical disabilities and who are wheelchair users. The Playing Fields is also widely used by local residents however the lack of a pathway around the Playing Fields also constrains their access limiting the full potential of the Playing Fields as a key local asset.</p>								
3.4	<p>The school have invested in a pool of adapted inclusive bikes but have nowhere to ride them on the school campus and have limited storage. The school has enquired if the currently disused pavilion within the Playing Fields could be considered as a storage facility for the adapted bikes, alongside the proposed pathway project, enabling easy access to the park and removing the transportation barrier.</p>								
3.5	<p>Recently a make-shift trail has been created by Belfast City Council parks staff. This trail has been formed by cutting the grass shorter in a loop around the perimeter of the park through the trees, with bark laid in areas. The purpose of this trail was to provide walkers and runners a scenic route around the park. It also aims to protect the pitches by encouraging recreational use around the perimeter. The feedback on the temporary pathway has been very positive however, the current grass terrain of the trail presents a barrier to people with disabilities from enjoying the park fully and is not suitable surface for inclusive bikes or wheelchairs. These constraints have an adverse impact on a significant number of children with a disability across the school campus.</p>								
3.6	<p>Officers have therefore been investigating the potential for a permanent path network around the Playing Fields which will benefit both residents and the schools.</p>								
3.7	<p><u>Project Development to date</u></p> <p>Members are asked to note that Glenveagh school presented a proposal for a new accessible path and entrance to Strangford Park at Belfast Healthy Cities convention in 2017. This proposal was brought to the South Belfast Area Working Group in March 2018. The Working Group agreed that officers would look at the amenity of the site at Strangford Avenue</p>								

	Playing Fields in terms of ensuring it was suitable for all local stakeholders and that a report would be submitted to the Area Working Group in due course.
3.8	In January 2019 the South Area Working group received an update with sketch drawings/ plan and costings of the potential trim trail (1100m long x 2.0m wide). This proposal and estimates were developed internally by council officers as a desktop exercise and no survey or site investigation work was undertaken.
3.9	In September 2020 Belfast City Council submitted an application to Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Fund to support the proposed project. Unfortunately, the proposed costings were outside the shortlisting criteria and funding was not secured. As part of this application, letters of support were obtained from adjacent schools, Disability Sport NI, Age Friendly and Engage with Age.
	Current Status
3.10	<p>In May 2022 a feasibility study was completed which outlined 3 options. In addition to a suitable pathway, the feasibility study also looked at an option to re-open the currently dis-used old pavilion as a storage facility of adapted inclusive e.bikes. Architect plans and associated costings have been produced for each of the 3 options.</p> <p>The recommended option is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trim Trail 562m bit-mac pathway, of minimum 2 metres wide. • Entrance gates works at Drummond Park entrance to improve accessibility • Pavilion access works (£2k PC Sum) • Pavilion refurbishment • Link Trail 130m
3.11	In November 2022 a further application was submitted to DfC Access and Inclusion Programme. Unfortunately this was also deemed ineligible. Council officers have also approached other funders including DfC's community empowerment division. However to date no eligible funding has secured. Council officers however are continuing to look at potential funding sources and exploring this with partners. Members will be aware of the pressures on the Council's capital financing and there is no Council budget secured for the project. Any council capital funding would be required to go through the Council's three stage approval process as agreed by Members.
3.12	Members are asked to note the update and to agree to receive a deputation from Glenveagh Special School at next month's People & Communities Committee
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.13	No budget secured. Officers from Physical Programmes are exploring potential funding sources and continuing discussions with partners.

3.14	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u> This project supports equality as it aims to enhance accessibility of a council amenity to all its users.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None