



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Mrs. Sara Steele

Via email: steelesara@belfastcity.gov.uk

Rivers Directorate
49 Tullywiggan Road
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Your reference: P&C 08.09.2023 SS/
Our reference:

12 October 2023

Dear Sara,

LAGAN VALLEY REGIONAL PARK FUNDING

Thank you for your letter dated 19 September 2023 regarding funding for Lagan Valley Regional Park and follow up email of 9 October 2023.

The Department is fully appreciative of the close working relationship that has existed between ourselves and Lagan Valley Regional Park. The Department understands that the withdrawal of discretionary funding of £42k from Lagan Valley Regional Park has left the park in a precarious situation however, the decision to cut all discretionary spending and, therefore the funding to LVRP, was taken at Departmental level due to overall budget cuts that have affected all Departments. This means that the Department's Inland Waterways team will not be able to enter into a new Operational Service Agreement (OSA) with LVRP.

The attached annex provides further background detail to address the issues raised in your letter.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Violeta Morosan, PPTO

Rivers Directorate

Annex

1. With regard to the lack of notice given to LVRP in relation to the withdrawal of funding, the Inland Waterways team communicated the uncertainty around funding to LVRP as early as March 2023, with further similar communications issued in June and July 2023. Despite this, LVRP continued to carry out their functions under the previous OSA which expired in March 2023, and for that we are very grateful. However, due to our current financial situation, we are not able to compensate them for this work. The Department's resource budget was only confirmed in early July and LVRP were excluded. Soon after that, the Department notified LVRP in writing that funding was not available for this financial year and that a new OSA would not be commenced.
2. The health and safety of those using the towpath remains our highest priority. Therefore, the Department will continue to carry out its maintenance function along the full length of the Lagan Towpath, including the part previously looked after by the LVRP. Inland Waterways staff have been dealing with any enquiries and complaints regarding the Towpath. Regrettably, the Department has reached the stage where it must prioritise its limited capacity on delivering the functions it is required to deliver by law, which is already facing a considerable funding shortfall.
3. Although we are not able to fund the full £42k previously provided to LVRP, the Department's Inland Waterways team have proposed an affordable reduced level of service at minimal cost, to cover litter collection and handling of enquiries by LVRP. As we transition into a new area of work, we would be happy to explore this option, and this has been communicated to LVRP on several occasions and most recently, at a meeting on 21 September 2023.
4. Unfortunately, the Department is not able to revisit the decision to withdraw the £42k discretionary funding for LVRP during this financial year, as we are faced with a considerable resource funding shortfall across all our functions.