



Subject:	Request for agreement to use Lower Botanic Gardens by Friends of the Field
Date:	9 th January 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director, City Operations
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager (OSS Portfolio Lead) & Mura Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, Climate Team, City & Organisational Strategy

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime 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

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Committee for the use of part of Lower Botanic Gardens by Friends of the Field for a new agroecology community garden as part of the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> l) Approve in principle the use of part of Lower Botanic Gardens as an agroecology community garden by Friends of the Field, in conjunction with the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project. This is subject to a further report on the terms of the agreement being brought back to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background
3.1	The UPSURGE Project is a Horizon 2020 research collaboration with Queen’s University Belfast involving five cities across Europe aiming to test nature-based solutions for climate action. The aim of the project, which runs to August 2025, is to develop a climate demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens to test different nature-based solutions and support learning on how adaptive practices in the use and management of green spaces can support pollution alleviation, citizen health, and climate resilience. The project helps to deliver on the Belfast Resilience Strategy which aims to transition the city to an inclusive net-zero emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation.
3.2	As part of the development of the demonstrator project, an agroecology community garden is being developed on site which will test, among other things, how community growing spaces are developed and contribute towards climate action. The Climate Team has been working with a range of stakeholders since 2022 to codesign the spaces and develop relationships with interested groups and organisations. As part of this, Friends of the Field and Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens are two groups that have been engaging with the Council and helping shape the plans on site.
3.3	A request has been received from Friends of the Field to enter into an agreement with Belfast City Council for the establishment of the community garden at Lower Botanic to act as a hub for sustainable practices, innovative garden-based learning, environmental conservation and fostering community engagement.
3.4	Friends of the Field, as part of the project, will manage a volunteer-run community garden guided by the principles of permaculture and environmental sustainability. The garden will serve as a valuable resource for the community, promoting healthy eating habits, physical activity, and environmental stewardship. In their request they

	<p>outline how the project aligns with the objectives of the EU funded UPSURGE project, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deploying community gardens using recycled materials that are bio-receptive and support plant growth; - Repurposing and regenerating an underutilised urban area into a vibrant community agroecology hub; - Fostering citizen engagement and contributing to the success of the UPSURGE project as an EU Regenerative Lighthouse. <p>3.5 The community garden will serve three core purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growing, teaching and learning 2. Enhancing community development and climate resilience 3. Improving the environment and biodiversity <p>3.6 The group has committed to developing the gardens and believe they have the necessary experience in project management, horticulture and fundraising to ensure the garden's operational success.</p> <p>3.7 The area requested by Friends of the Field is an area of fenced ground to the northern end of the site, encompassing 1,626 m2 as shown in Appendix 1. The group is requesting initially that the agreement runs for one year, with the option to renew. Friends of the Field have been successful in securing funding to run community gardening activities on the site, with the main infrastructure associated with the gardens funded via existing UPSURGE budget.</p> <p>3.8 The proposed community garden will be positioned within the area reported to the Climate and Resilience committee in March 2023.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.9 None. Project funded via the Upsurge budget.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u></p> <p>3.10 There are no equality or good relations/rural needs implications associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	Appendix One: Map outlining the area requested by Friends of the Field.