



Subject:	Cave Hill Mountain Biking Pilot – update and proposed new MOU
Date:	6th February 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officers:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Eimear McCullough, Lead Officer - OSS, CNS

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	To update Members on the outcome of the now complete Cave Hill Mountain Biking Pilot and seek Members agreement to a new 3-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the outcome of the Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot- Agree to a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BCC and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club, to be settled by Legal Services.

3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	At People and Communities Committee Members on 5th December 2023, Members agreed to a 2-month extension to an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BCC and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club (see Appendix 1). This MOU had originally been put in place on the agreement of P& C Committee in November 2021 to facilitate a Mountain Biking Pilot Project in Cavehill Country Park. The Pilot focused on a partnership approach to the maintenance, management, and inspection of the 'The Middle' - the first official mountain bike trail in Cave Hill Country Park which was formally opened for public use in October 2023 after construction by hand to temper environmental impacts.
3.2	The purpose of the recent 2-month MOU extension was to enable existing management arrangements with the Club to remain in place until the Pilot's evaluation was complete. This report outlines the key findings of that evaluation and officer's recommendation to put in place a new 3-year MOU with CMC to be settled by Legal Services.
3.3	Officers have now evaluated the pilot project using its agreed evaluation framework (see Appendix 2) and the findings are set out below.
	Evaluation Findings
3.4	The definition of success for the pilot project was pre-defined in an evaluation framework which set out a number of outcomes relating to partnership, operations, visitor safety and visitor satisfaction.
3.5	The evaluation exercise has confirmed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both BCC and CMC are content with the partnership working arrangements put in place to support the project. - The MOU had been adhered to in full. - The Middle's Trail Management Plan had been operationally delivered through the Pilot period. - Health and Safety records held by the Council have shown that there has been no increase in reported incidences or near miss collisions between mountain bikers and pedestrians within Cave Hill Country Park (no incidences/near miss collisions at all recorded during 2-year Pilot period). - According to a consultation exercise on the pilot project carried out via the Council's Your Say Belfast platform visitor satisfaction was not adversely impacted by the opening of the Middle Trail. A total of 78% of respondents to the survey during the first month of the trail's official opening, agreed that their visitor experience within the Cave Hill Country Park had 'improved' since its introduction. This increased to 90.1% of respondents when the survey was repeated during the Pilot's last month.
3.6	Finally, there has also been anecdotal evidence that there has been more use of the new Middle Trail by mountain bikers at the expense of the other existing informal trails in the Country Park.
	Next Steps
3.7	Officers are in the process of updating the project Oversight Board (CMC; Belfast Hills Partnership; Cavehill Conservation Trust and BCC) regarding the evaluation findings and the new MOU.

3.8	<p>The new MOU will also permit the Council to explore the viability of including further established trails at Cave Hill Country Park with CMC through similar partnership arrangements. Note that the formalisation of any further established trails will be brought back to Committee for consideration.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u> There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – 5th December 2023 P&C Report – ‘Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot update’ Appendix 2 – Project Evaluation Framework Template</p>