

Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group

Monday, 13th May, 2024

CASTLE, CAVEHILL, ZOO AND NORTH FORESHORE STEERING GROUP MINUTES

HYBRID MEETING IN THE CONOR ROOM

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin and Cobain.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager;
Ms. P. Davison, Estates Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Election of Chairperson

The Working Group agreed that Councillor Nelson be elected to serve as Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in June 2024.

(Councillor Nelson in the Chair.)

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Smyth and Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th February, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation - Giant's Park Belfast Limited Update

The Chairperson welcomed representatives of Giant's Park Belfast Limited and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to the meeting.

They provided a brief overview of the Giant's Park proposed scheme located on a 250-acre (former landfill) landmark development site 3 kms from Belfast City Centre.

They explained that the vision for Giant's Park was to create a visitor experience in Belfast through a combination of commercial, leisure, sporting and mixed-use development, organised into a series of key hubs, each of which would provide a range of activities and attractions.

They presented a summary of the Master Plan and its guiding principles and explained the proposals for the logistics and distribution hub. They described the Welcome Hub and Adventure Park's vision and mission, together with the key audience groups and benefits of the proposal, which included:

- Transformation of the Wasteland into a major asset for local people and visitors;
- Job creation across the site;
- Accessibility to the City Centre;
- Unlocking the Coastline in partnership with RSPB;
- Enhancing the environment and green network;
- A visitor attraction for domestic and overseas visitors; and
- A strengthened economy adding benefits to the supply chain and local businesses.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to the height of the logistics hub, protection of the shoreline, revenue streams, community engagement, Planning timeline and accessibility of the development.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

North Foreshore – Update

The Working Group considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update Members of all ongoing developments on the North Foreshore.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 To note the updates provided.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that the North Foreshore is a significant regeneration site at over 340 acres. A number of uses for the site have already been agreed by Members as outlined below

- **Commercial Leisure Led Development – 250 acres – Preferred developer Giant's Park Belfast Limited**

- Harbour film Studio and Film Studio Extension (including Studio Ulster) – 20 acres in total – Belfast Harbour Commissioners
- AD Plant – 10 acres – Dargan Road Biogas Limited (DRBL)

The Council's Waste Transfer Station is also on the site. There are currently only two sites (one 13 acre and one 4 acre) which do not have agreed preferred uses. A site map is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 Update on Commercial Leisure Led Development

The SP&R Committee, at its meeting on 16th December 2022, approved a revised development proposal from GPBL for a mixed-use development over approximately 250 acres. This amended their previous successful bid approved by Members in August 2018, which was submitted as part of an Expressions of Interest exercise carried out by the Council. In addition, Committee approved the Council to enter into a Master Development Agreement (MDA) for the revised scheme which will require GPBL to deliver the uses identified in their submission within a prescribed timeframe.

3.3 The Steering Group is asked to note that the Master Development Agreement and all supporting documents, including Guarantees, Site Investigation Licence, Collateral Warranties, Funding Agreement, Licence to Occupy, Lease, Works Deed and Side Letter have now been agreed and signed.

3.4 Members are asked to note that this is a significant step forward in the regeneration of the North Foreshore site which is the largest regeneration site in the city. The proposed development will bring significant benefits including -

- the Council to receive £4.3m from leasing the lands to GPBL,
- the completed development will have an estimated rateable value of £2.97m.
- the developer's estimated expenditure of £98.7m on construction will secure up to 200 construction jobs in the construction/development phase
- the creation of 1082 permanent jobs when the scheme becomes operational alongside 433 additional jobs generated off site.

The Council is also working closely with the developer to ensure that the social, economic and environmental of the initiative are maximised.

3.5 Members are asked to note that Giant's Park Belfast Limited will be in attendance at today's Steering Group to present an update on their proposals. Regular updates will be brought into the Steering Group going forward and into SP&R.

3.6 Update Film Studio Expansion

Members will be aware that the Belfast Harbour Film Studio is currently located on the North foreshore site. The development was taken forward by the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. (BHC). The film Studio opened in 2017 and has already been the filming location for a number of key productions including The School for Good and Evil, The Northman, Lift and How to Train Your Dragon.

3.7 In 2022 the Council agreed a further option with BHC for an expansion of the Film Studios. Phase 2A is due to be completed by the end of July 2024. This latest phase will deliver a further workshop to the north of the existing studio site and two new studio buildings to the south, one of which is a Screen and Media Innovation Lab known as Studio Ulster. This studio is an Innovation Pillar Project within the Belfast Region City Deal and will be operated by the University of Ulster and industry partners to establish a centre of excellence for research, development, and innovation for virtual production.

3.8 BHC hold a 5-year option agreement from July 2022 on an adjacent site to the south which has been earmarked for a planned Phase 2B. This additional phase has planning permission for further studios, workshops and a vendor village.

3.9 Update AD site (Environmental Resource Park)

In August 2018 SP&R Committee agreed preferred developer status for Dargan Road Biogas Limited (DRBL) a subsidiary company of Energia Renewables for the development of an AD plant on a 10 acre central site on the North Foreshore. This went forward for planning in June 2019 but was not recommended for approval. Last year DRBL successfully appealed refusal of their planning application.

3.10 DRBL are currently negotiating terms with Council officers for what is expected to be a 25-30 year lease to facilitate the development of the plant. The proposed facility will break down biodegradable material to produce biogas which can then either be supplied directly to the gas mains or converted to electricity using the existing Combined Heat and Power engines located on site and supplied to the electricity grid. The Steering Group will be kept up to date with progress.

Remaining sites - 4-acre site and 13-acre site

3.11 Currently there are two sites which do not have agreed uses (see map at Appendix 1). These are currently being marketed through the Council's letting agent for the site. Council has recently received a number of interests in both of these sites. More information on these proposals is being sought and further detail will be brought into the Steering Group and Committee in due course for consideration.
Update on ongoing Capital Works

3.12 Members are asked to note that there are also a range of recently completed/ongoing/planned capital works for the North Foreshore site including

- Recently completed - The storm drain installation for the Western part of the site is complete.
- Underway – tender documentation is currently being finalised for works to the landfill gas ring main (required for the Western lands) and the pumping stations. Tenders are due to go to market in June 2024
- Planned - An upgrade of NIE power supply is required and a draft quotation with NIE is in place. Discussions around timelines and cable routes across third party lands are ongoing

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Developments are being taken forward on a site by site basis.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.”

During discussion, in response to a Member’s question in relation to the longevity of the site and its developments, the Estates Manager clarified the details of the a Master Development Agreement in relation to the Commercial Leisure Led Development – Giant’s Park Belfast Limited. She explained further the potential uses of the remaining sites.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the contents of the report.

Presentation - Belfast Zoo Update

The Client Manager provided a recap of the Vision Masterplan for Belfast Zoo.

She explained the drawbacks and challenges of its location and fragmented sites and the need to diversify the offering at the zoo to attract a wider audience. She highlighted its assets and opportunities, including the heritage and history of the zoo, its uniqueness and space.

She described the strategic vision for the Zoo, together with the short and long term goals. She pointed out the need to continually re-imagine what a zoo can do and its wider prospects.

The Client Manager provided an overview of the recent investments and achievements including: The new Kingdom of the Barbary Lions; New water facility at sea lion pool; New bird house; Changing places - new disabled toilets; Improved fibre network; Improvements to enclosures; Structural survey Floral Hall; New picnic area; and Five new art pieces.

She provided a comparison to other Zoo facilities and outlined recommendations and next steps.

During discussion, the Working Group highlighted the need for a broader range of attractions at the zoo, the regeneration of the Floral Hall, alternative funding models and improved accessibility.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the update provided.

Chairperson