



Subject:	Update on 24 hour opening pilot for Forth Meadow Greenway and 5 Council Parks Sites
Date:	Tuesday 9th September 2025
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Operational Director of Resource, Fleet and OSS
Contact Officer:	Eiméar McCullough, Lead Officer - OSS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	In August this committee considered a report on the findings of the two consultation exercises on the possible extension of the opening hours of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway (FMG) and five other park sites. This report provides an update on information the committee requested following consideration of that report.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note further information in relation to the lighting schemes for 5-pilot park sites and the proposed timeframe for trialling 24hr opening of FMG.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will recall that at P&C Committee on 5 th August 2025 [see Appendix 1] officers provided an update on the key findings of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway Opening Hours (FMG) and Opening Hours Pilots (5 park sites) consultation exercises; and in relation to both - noted residents feedback, including views on opening hours preference for each greenway section/ park site, programming and further physical enhancements.

3.2	Members agreed to trial the 24 hour opening of the FMG. Members requested further information to be brought back on trialling extended gate opening hours along the Greenway for a one-year period. Members deferred consideration of the 5 Opening Hours Pilots to allow further information to be submitted on each park to the Committee. This paper is to be considered by way of update to that request.
	<u>Opening Hours Pilots (5 sites) - Next Steps</u>
3.3	Ensuring park safety through artificial lighting and additional security was highlighted by residents as a requirement to extended opening hours at all park sites (Botanic Gardens, Belmont Park, Falls Park, Ormeau Park, Woodvale Park), and in particular those currently not benefitting from lighting (Botanic Gardens, Ormeau Park, Belmont Park).
3.4	Members are reminded that the installation of any new lighting infrastructure requires significant capital investment. Further to Members discussion at August' P&C Committee, officers can confirm that artificial lighting at the park sites have been included within the 'Park Improvement Programme' which is currently a Stage 1- Emerging under the Capital Programme which has enabled feasibility monies to be allocated. This feasibility support will now allow studies to be progressed to develop costed options for each park site to include lighting and other safety measures and will be informed by ecological assessments and further engagement. There is no timetable for the work at present however officers are aware that members would like to see this work completed as soon as possible and are working with colleagues in Physical Programmes to expedite this work. Once this has been completed for each park officers will bring proposals back to members that will also include animation plans, security /patrolling measures including costings.
	<u>Forth Meadow Community Greenway Next Steps</u>
3.5	In considering optimal timeframe for trialling of extended/ 24-hour gate opening hours along the Greenway for a one-year period, Members are reminded that additional security and warden staff are currently being considered as part of Council's Park Warden Review. Officers plan to take a proposal to a future meeting of this committee on the future.
3.6	Members will recall that at P&C Committee on 10th October 2023 in seeking to promote and enhance the usage of newly established or refurbished park properties it was agreed that an 'annual programming budget of £15,000 is allocated to all new Parks' [See Appendix 2] . Taking account of the scale of the FMG and two large park sites within one of its 5 sections (Falls Park and Springfield Park / Dam) potentially 6 separate animation plans would therefore be required at a cost of £90,000.
3.7	Officers are proposing to commence the pilot in April 2026 as this would allow time to develop operational and animation plans over the coming months, and have them ready to implement in parallel to the pilot ensuring increased participation and positive and safe use of the FMG. These plans will be developed in consultation with colleagues in Community Provision to consider any additional diversionary monies are required to support sites which continue to be impacted upon by ASB. Similar to other Council parks sites at community interfaces – a 'Forth Meadow Community Greenway Gate Closure Protocol' will be in place throughout the pilot which can be activated for any of the gates in response to a security assessment by the PSNI.
3.8	At the end of the consultation period there will an opportunity to carry out a further consultation exercise to gauge community perception in advance of formalising opening hours into the Greenways By-Laws. Learning from Forth Meadow Greenway extended opening hours 1 year pilot will also help inform operational requirements to facilitate later opening hours across the 5 park sites from a park warden service and security perspective.

3.9	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> There is currently no revenue budget in place to support both the required animation of and the additional patrolling of the Greenway during the pilot phase. Growth bids for both will be submitted into the revenue estimates process for 26/27.
3.10	Lighting at the park sites have been included within the 'Park Improvement Programme' which is currently a Stage 1- Emerging under the Capital Programme. Feasibility monies are now in place to allow costed lighting options to be developed.
3.11	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u> Both consultation exercises were equality screened. There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – 8 th August 2025 P&C Committee report, Forth Meadow Community Greenway Opening Hours and Opening Hours and Opening Hours Pilots (5 park sites) – Consultation Findings Appendix 2 – 10th October 2023 P&C Committee Report - Páirc an Lonnáin