



Subject:	Forthmeadow Community Greenway Opening Hours Consultation and Opening Hours Pilots (5 park sites) Consultation – Key Findings
Date:	5th August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Director Resources, Fleet and Open Spaces & Streetscene
Contact Officer:	Eiméar McCullough, Lead Officer - OSS

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	
Sometime in the future	
Never	

<b>Call-in</b>
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Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To update Members on key findings of two community consultation exercises - Forthmeadow Community Greenway Opening Hours Consultation, and Opening Hours Pilots (5 park sites) consultation exercise and agree next steps.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note key findings for both consultation exercises and consider and approve next steps as follows.</p> <p><u>Forthmeadow Greenway</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note resident feedback and opening hours preference for each section/site</li> <li>- Note comments on programming or further physical enhancements to the FMG</li> <li>- Consider trialling alternative gate opening hours (24/7 or other) for any of section/sites within the Greenway for a one-year period; or alternatively agree to officers formalising standard dawn-to-dusk opening hours into the Greenways By-Laws</li> </ul> <p><u>Opening Hours Pilots</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note resident feedback on each of the 5 park sites, including combined feedback on Falls Park from both consultation exercises</li> <li>- Note the need for artificial lighting and additional security to ensure park safety were highlighted as barriers/concerns to extended opening hours across all five park surveys.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	Members will recall that at P&C Committee on 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2025 [see Appendix 1] officer's updated on planned consultation exercise into residents views on the opening hours of the Forth Meadow Greenway, as well as a separate consultation exercise - Opening Hour Pilots at 4 park sites (Botanic gardens, Falls Park, Ormeau Park and Woodvale Park). The inclusion of a further site, Belmont Park, was agreed at this time.
3.2	Since its construction the Forthmeadow Community Greenway, as well as the 5 Park sites that are the focus of the Opening hours consultation follow Council's standard 'dawn (7.30am at earliest) to dusk (10pm at latest)' opening hours pattern with times changing throughout the seasons as daylight lengthens or shortens. This report sets out the findings of both consultation exercises on extending Greenway gates/ parks opening, and sets out associated recommendations for Member's further consideration and agreement.
3.3	<p><u>Forthmeadow Community Greenway Opening Hours Consultation</u></p> <p>Officers ran an open survey on Council's Your Say platform from 15<sup>th</sup> January to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and held three drop-in sessions in late January at Highfield Community Centre, Springfield Park (Dam) and Falls Park Bowling Pavilion. The aim of the consultation was to capture residents' views on 24 hour /7 day a week (24/7) opening of 14 gates across the Greenway that connect on to its main lit spine, as well as any other suggestions relating to the opening hours of individual gates. It was also an opportunity to get view on concerns/ barriers to supporting and suggested programming/activities and further physical improvements required to facilitate extended hours of use.</p>
3.4	

3.5	<p>The consultation was promoted through Council's social media pages and communications to a range of stakeholders including local resident groups, environmental groups, community groups and elected members. In addition to the erection of posters (that included QR codes linking to the survey) in the local community facilities and at entrances to the Greenway, at Member's request, an additional leaflet drop took place within residential areas in proximity to the Greenway. Whilst only two of the drop-in sessions were well attended, the online survey inviting views on 24/7 opening of 14 gates on the Greenway that connect directly onto its lit spine/pathway, attracted 156 responses.</p>								
3.6	<p><u>Findings</u></p> <p>Consultation feedback confirmed community preference for existing operational hours pattern to be retained for all sections, with the exception of Glencairn Park to Forthriver Linear Park Section (Forthriver Crescent and Forthriver Road gate) where views on 24/7 opening were mixed. The overwhelming reason given by respondents for not supporting of 24/7 opening was anti-social behaviour and safety concerns.</p>								
3.7	<p>14 alternative suggestions were made in relation to opening the various sections of the Greenway 24/7. These included retaining existing dawn to dusk opening (5), and closing later in the evening [during wintertime] 9pm (4), 9/10pm (1) and 8pm (3). 85 comments on programming or further physical enhancements were received ranging from cycling, (dog) walking/ running groups to enhanced lighting to improve safety and exercise/outdoor gym facilities.</p>								
3.8	<p>An overview of the consultation findings for each section are summarised in the table below, and a detailed analysis of feedback on each gate within is within '<b>Appendix 1 – Forthmeadow Greenway Consultation – Detailed Analysis</b>'</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Section Gates Consulted Upon</th><th>Consultation Finding</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Section 1 - Glencairn Park to Forthriver Linear Park</b></td><td>Overall respondents were <b>not opposed</b> to both pedestrian gates consulted upon remaining open 24/7 (over 56% in favour or undecided for each gate); however out of those recorded as living in close proximity to this Section (5 minutes' walk or less away) – half (50%) were against Forthmeadow Crescent gate remaining open 24/7.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Section 2 - Ballygomartin Road to Springfield Road</b></td><td>Respondents overall, and those living in close proximity to the section, were marginally <b>against</b> the two pedestrian gates consulted upon in this part of the Greenway remaining open 24/7. (48% of respondents overall &amp; 56% of those living 5 mins walk away from the Section were against)</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Section 3 – Springfield Park (Dam) to Falls Park</b></td><td> <p><u>Springfield Dam</u></p> <p>Respondents overall, including those living in close proximity to Springfield Dam, were <b>against</b> the three pedestrian gates and one vehicular gate within the site remaining open 24/7.</p> <p><u>Falls Park</u></p> <p>Respondents overall, including those specifically living in close proximity to Falls Park, were <b>against</b> the two pedestrian and one vehicular gate consulted on within the Falls Park site remaining open 24/7.</p> <p><i>Note: Falls Parks gate opening hours were subject of both consultation exercises.</i></p> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Section Gates Consulted Upon	Consultation Finding	<b>Section 1 - Glencairn Park to Forthriver Linear Park</b>	Overall respondents were <b>not opposed</b> to both pedestrian gates consulted upon remaining open 24/7 (over 56% in favour or undecided for each gate); however out of those recorded as living in close proximity to this Section (5 minutes' walk or less away) – half (50%) were against Forthmeadow Crescent gate remaining open 24/7.	<b>Section 2 - Ballygomartin Road to Springfield Road</b>	Respondents overall, and those living in close proximity to the section, were marginally <b>against</b> the two pedestrian gates consulted upon in this part of the Greenway remaining open 24/7. (48% of respondents overall & 56% of those living 5 mins walk away from the Section were against)	<b>Section 3 – Springfield Park (Dam) to Falls Park</b>	<p><u>Springfield Dam</u></p> <p>Respondents overall, including those living in close proximity to Springfield Dam, were <b>against</b> the three pedestrian gates and one vehicular gate within the site remaining open 24/7.</p> <p><u>Falls Park</u></p> <p>Respondents overall, including those specifically living in close proximity to Falls Park, were <b>against</b> the two pedestrian and one vehicular gate consulted on within the Falls Park site remaining open 24/7.</p> <p><i>Note: Falls Parks gate opening hours were subject of both consultation exercises.</i></p>
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3.9	<p>Section 4 - <b>Bog Meadows Nature Reserve</b></p>	<p>Respondents overall, including those living in close proximity to the section, were <b>against</b> the two pedestrian gates and one vehicular gate in this section remaining open 24/7 (59% against); however the 31 residents recorded as living in close proximity to this section (5 minutes' walk or less away) – were marginally in favour or undecided (52%) about the Donegall Road (Broadway) pedestrian gate remaining open 24/7.</p>
<p><u>Opening Hours Pilots Consultation (5 park sites)</u></p>		
3.10	<p>Officers ran an open survey on Council's Your Say platform from 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025 to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025 and held five drop-in engagement sessions - one at each of the park sites throughout March and April. The aim of the consultation was to capture residents' views on extending opening hours of the parks. Similarly to the previous consultation exercise, it was also an opportunity to get views on concerns/ barriers to supporting, suggested programming/activities and further physical improvements required to facilitate extended hours of use.</p>	
3.11	<p>The consultation was promoted on Council's social media pages and through communications to a range of stakeholders including local resident groups, environmental groups, community groups and elected members. In addition to the erection of posters in the local community facilities and at entrances, (all included QR codes linking to the survey) - a leaflet drop took place within residential areas in close proximity to each of the park sites and banners were erected within the parks.</p>	
3.12	<p>The 5 online surveys inviting views on extending opening hours at each of the park sites attracted a total of 1678 responses overall, which are broken down as follows: Botanic Gardens (652), Ormeau Park (593), Woodvale Park (308), with smaller levels of interest for both Belmont Park (51) and Falls Park (47) - however the combined number of responses for Falls Park across both consultation exercises was 203.</p>	
3.13	<p>Consultation feedback has confirmed community support for extended park opening hours at Botanic Gardens (70% in favour, 4% undecided), Ormeau Park (70% in favour, 3% undecided), and Belmont Park (71% in favour 6% undecided). Across these sites the most favoured opening hours pattern was overwhelmingly 24/7 opening however there were a number of concerns were raised in relation safety and ASB and the need for more security to facilitate extended use. The need for artificial lighting to ensure park safety was highlighted as the main physical barrier to extended opening hours across all park surveys. Concern over the impact of artificial lighting on wildlife was a theme across all park surveys, with the need for ecological assessments and use of wildlife/bat friendly lighting suggested by a number of respondents.</p>	
3.14	<p>Although there was support for Fall Parks' opening hours being extended, this was not in line with the views of the majority of overall respondents for both consultation exercise including to the more detailed Forthmeadow Greenway (FMG) consultation. Overall circa 58% of the 203 respondents for both consultation exercises were against changes to opening hours of specific gates/ park in general. There was no clear support for extending the opening hours of Woodvale Park (65% against) at this time with the main reason being ASB concerns. Detailed analysis of all park surveys are found in <b>Appendix 3 – 'Parks Opening Hours Consultation – Detailed Analysis (5 sites)'</b>, and an overview of Falls Park's finding in <b>Appendix – 4 'Falls Park Combined Analysis'</b>.</p>	
<p>The requirement for artificial lighting to facilitate extended park use and ensure safety during darker hours was raised a total of 956 times across all surveys. Members are reminded that the installation of any new lighting infrastructure would require significant</p>		

3.15	<p>capital investment, and that any requests for lighting schemes to be considered for any sites must be directed through to Council's Capital Programme for progression through standard stages. This will also be an opportunity for ecological assessments to be carried out in respect to potential gate/route options, and for wildlife friendly lighting options and any associated path improvements that may be required to be explored.</p> <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There is currently no revenue budget in place to support any potential animation and patrolling of the Forthmeadow Community Greenway or any of the pilot parks should their opening hours be extended. There is currently no budget in place to fund any requests for lighting schemes at the park sites or any other physical enhancements along FMG. These would be required to be taken through the Council's capital process.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u></p> <p>There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report. Both consultation exercises have been equality screened.</p>
4.0	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 P&amp;C Committee report, Update on two planned consultation exercises - Forthmeadow Community Greenway Opening Hours and Opening Hours Pilots (4 park sites)</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> - Forthmeadow Greenway Consultation – Detailed Analysis</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> - Parks Opening Hours Consultation – Detailed Analysis (5 sites)</p> <p><b>Appendix 4</b> - Falls Park Combined Analysis</p>