



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Clement Wilson Pedestrian Footbridge
Date:	16 June 2008
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Walker, Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager

Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of the Committee the deteriorating condition of one of the entrance routes to Clement Wilson Park; to outline to Members the options; and to seek authority to take an appropriate course of action.

Clement Wilson Park is located in the South of the City and stretches from New Forge Lane towards Barnett's Demesne. The Park has two entrances, one of which is located at the end of New Forge Lane. The entrance takes the form of a narrow bridge, which crosses the Lagan River. At the time of its construction the anticipated life duration of the bridge would have been 10 years; the bridge has been in use for over 50 years. Appendix A contains some photographs showing the bridge.

Council Officers had noted a deterioration in the structural integrity of the bridge, with the degree of vibration having increased when crossed by relatively small groups of 5/6 walkers. In addition, the bridge has been used as an access point for medium sized vehicles, such as those used by staff maintaining the park.

As a result of the concerns of Officers, an engineering report was commissioned from RPA Consultant Engineers, using the Council's adopted framework for commissioning of consultants. The brief related to the load carrying capability and consequent stability, of the bridge. A copy of the consultant's report is available upon request. In summary, the bridge is in need of urgent remedial action.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following key points:

1. The bridge forms part of the Lagan Valley Regional Park towpath; an 11 mile off road route connecting Belfast to Lisburn.
2. User figures for 2007 indicate that over 400,000 visitors used the Park, which is heavily used by both cyclists and walkers, both socially and as a commute route to work;
3. A engineering survey and risk assessment of the bridge concluded that the bridge should be closed to all vehicles and that access to pedestrians should be restricted pending remedial works;
4. Two options have been identified – a) Repair work could be carried out at a cost in the region of £65k; or b) Replacement of the Bridge at a cost in the region of £125k;
5. Consultants have recommended replacement as the best option, as it will provide a more robust structure with a longer life expectancy;
6. Committee is asked to note that there is a third and a fourth option – C) leave the bridge as is and let it deteriorate; or D) demolition.
7. It is the view of Officers that Options C) and D) are not considered viable. Option C would carry public safety risks and Option D would remove an access point to the Park and would be likely to attract adverse publicity from users of the park.
8. Officers would recommend that options a) and b) be subject to further consideration.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of remedial work is provisionally estimated in the region of £65-125k depending on the agreed solution.

Human Resources

The closure of the bridge will have implications for Council staff undertaking grounds work in the park and will impact on users of the park.

Asset and Other Implications

The closure of the bridge will detract from the asset.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Agree to the closure of the bridge to vehicles with immediate effect;
2. Agree to the erection of a sign to caution members of the public and to restrict numbers of people using the bridge at any one time, subject to discussion with the Director of Legal Services;
3. Agree that the preferred option is to reinstate the bridge and that the works be put forward to the Council's Project Management Unit for consideration for inclusion in the Capital Programme, subject to Gateway and further investigation to enable Officers to obtain detailed cost options in regard to repair and replacement options;

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Photographs of bridge

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