



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks & Leisure Committee
Subject:	Belfast Sewer Scheme – Impact on Ormeau Park
Date:	16 June 2008
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Ken Anderson, Estates Surveyor, Core Improvement Team

Relevant Background Information

The 'Belfast Sewers Stormwater Management Works Project', more commonly known as the Belfast Sewers Project (BSP), has now been underway since late 2006. The Project is aimed, among other things, at reducing the risk of flooding in inner and central Belfast due to storm water surges. The work is being carried out under NI Water's statutory powers which provide authority to carry out works on privately owned lands.

As part of the scheme NI Water have opted to lay extensive pipework across Council owned lands at the Gasworks and at Ormeau Park (including Ormeau Golf Club). The entire operation was to have been carried out by sinking a limited number of deep shafts on Council land with installation of the actual pipework being conducted underground using a variety of different technologies. The choice of machinery to be used for pipe installation was dependant upon pipe size and depth.

While the works at the Gasworks are proceeding as planned, NI Water's contractor (Morgan=est Farrans) has encountered problems within Ormeau Park and the Golf Course. Members may be aware of the situation as reported in the local media.

The pre-contract geological investigations failed to detect the presence of a substantial number of large boulders along the proposed route. In view of the presence of these boulders the proposed technology for pipe installation, at a depth of 10 metres, has been rendered ineffective. Consequently the contractor has conducted an appraisal of alternative technologies and methods for delivery of the Project at Ormeau Park and the Golf Course.

We received a definitive position from NI Water on 28 May regarding their preferred way forward. The options laid out in their appraisal were:

- Option 1. Deeper and larger bore tunnel.
- Option 2. Shallower tunnel, with tunnel size as originally planned.
- Option 3. Open Trench Excavation to allow pipe installation at shallower depth than originally planned (with pipe size as originally planned).
- Option 4. Part installation as per Option 2 and Part as per Option 3.
- Option 5. Larger bore tunnel at planned depth.

NI Water has identified a series of risks associated with each option. Of particular risk in relation to Options 1, 2, 4 and 5, is if machine failure should occur the recovery of the machine from the tunnel can only be achieved by sinking a suitable shaft from surface level at whatever location the machine failure occurs. These interventions are by their nature unpredictable in terms of frequency and location.

The contractor's (and NI Water's) preferred Option is the Open Trench technique (Option 3 above). This minimises risk of delay and increased costs but is potentially the most disruptive to Ormeau Park and the Golf Club. On the basis of this Option the contractor envisages commencement of site preparation in September 2008 with completion of pipe laying in April 2009. The contractor intends that reinstatement would be carried out on a rolling basis between February and the end of June 2009.

In terms of the remaining options, Option 5 appears to carry the least risk of unpredictable disruptions to the Park and Golf Course but is likely to cause greater delays and increased costs to NI Water. Our latest indication from NI Water is that option 5, would result in a delay of approximately 12 months with additional cost implications of up to £10m. Although the range is from £3 -10m. Additional information has been requested.

To date there has been no face to face meeting with NI water on this latest development. It is intended to hold the meeting shortly after the Committee meeting.

Officers have met with representatives from the Golf Club. Discussions have indicated that the Club members are opposed to such an approach. The Club believe that the main consideration of NI Water is cost and that a more effective and less intrusive approach could be undertaken.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following key points:

1. The Belfast Sewers Project is a major scheme aimed at reducing the risk of storm flooding in inner Belfast and the city centre. NI Water is installing new sewers using their statutory powers to carry out such

- works on private lands (this includes Council owned lands);
2. NI Water is unable to proceed with the planned method of sewer pipe installation at Ormeau Park (including at the Ozone/Tennis Centre) and at Ormeau Golf Club (leased by the Council on a thirty year lease to the Trustees of Ormeau Golf Club);
 3. A series of alternative methods of sewer installation have been put forward by NI Water and their contractor. Their preferred option is to install new sewers by 'Open Trench' excavation (option 3);
 4. The 'Open Trench' Option is the least likely to result in time and cost overruns for NI Water but will be much more disruptive to Council property and the Golf Course than the original proposal;
 5. Additional information regarding the implications of each option;
 6. Officers are seeking a further meeting with representatives from the Golf Club.

Resource Implications

Financial

The work will have financial implications. NI Water's preferred construction method (i.e. 'Open Trench') will result in temporary loss of revenue receipts from pitch bookings at Ormeau (one soccer pitch, one rugby pitch and one all weather pitch). However additional costs, or lost revenue, incurred by the Council as a result from the sewer installation works can be included in any claim for compensation which the Council may make to NI Water. It will be necessary to establish the extent and nature of the disruption. The greatest impact will be in respect of the Golf Club's finances. Compensation in this matter will be between the Club and NI Water.

Human Resources

There are no additional Human Resource implications at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

NI Water's preferred option will be much more disruptive to Ormeau Park than the technique originally proposed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that,

1. Note the contents of this report;
2. Agree that Officers meet with NI Water to highlight Council concerns and explore the options more fully and report back to the next meeting of the Committee.

Key to Abbreviations
BSP – Belfast Sewers Stormwater Management Project

Documents Attached
Appendix 1 Copy of letter received from Council's consultants RPS Consulting Engineers. Appendix 2 Map showing approximate route of proposed open trench (coloured blue) through Ormeau Park and Ormeau Golf Course. The Park area is shaded green and the Golf Course shaded yellow.