



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Outdoor Urban Sports (Skate Park) Facility for Belfast
Date:	16 June 2008
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
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Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that discussions to construct a purpose built outdoor Urban Sports (Skate Park) in Belfast have been ongoing for some six or seven years with limited progress. Members may also recall that a report was brought to the previous Community & Recreation Committee at its meeting on 16 January 2007 which identified a potential way forward to progress this project and identified potential options to secure the necessary funding required. The relevant extract from the minutes of that meeting is attached at Appendix 1.

At that time there was unanimous cross-party support for this project to progress as it was seen as a facility that would target a particular market of young people for which there is currently a lack of adequate provision across the City. In supporting this project it was also highlighted that this would be the first of its kind in Northern Ireland and therefore it could potentially bring great prestige to the City from not only Northern Ireland but across the UK and Europe in relation to urban sports provision and events.

Members should be aware that the project has now been referred to as an Urban Sports Park rather than a Skate Park because within the design we have now included scope for the other sports of BMXing, in-line skating and parkour (free running) to be incorporated into the final design to maximise the utilisation of the facility.

The Committee agreed the recommendations contained in the previous report of 16 January 2007 which approved that the Council would meet a minimum shortfall of £80k and this has been included in the Capital Programme. Committee approval was also given to submit applications to both the Sports Council's Building Sport Programme and the Landfill Tax Credit Fund to secure the deficit funding.

Key Issues

Since the last Committee report the following progress has now been made:

- We have been successful in our Landfill Tax Application and we have managed to secure £50k subject to compliance against their term and conditions.
- A 21 year lease has been secured at a peppercorn rent from Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC the landowners) for the Nelson Street site to commence when the funding has been secured.
- Outline planning permission has been granted for the site for use as an Urban Sports Park.
- Belfast Urban Sports (BUS) has now been officially recognised as a legitimate organisation and they have also now obtained registered charity status.
- A comprehensive public consultation exercise has been completed in relation to the proposed Urban Sports Park plans with the potential users and their views were incorporated into the specification which was put out to tender.
- A full economic appraisal of the project has been completed by BDO Stoy Hayward.
- An extensive procurement exercise has been completed which has attracted interest from world class companies from as far away as North America and a preferred 'design & build contractor' has been identified subject to securing the required funding and getting committee approval.

Funding options explored

An application was made to the Sports Council's Building Sport Programme and while the application was initially successful; subsequently due to Central Government's decision to redirect funding towards the 2012 Olympics the money was removed from the Building Sport budget and all applications therefore were put on hold.

As a result of this set-back we were forced to explore other potential sources of funding. Members will be aware that the Peace III Programme commenced a call for applications in February 2007 in relation to pipeline projects to be funded via the Programme's capital measure (Measure 2.1 – Creating Shared Public Spaces). The Skatepark was the only project to succeed in this process and since this time officers within the Parks and Leisure and Development Departments have been progressing this bid via a further two stages of application. A final bid will be presented to the Managing Authority, the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) for consideration on 17 June 2008. This application is seeking £370 000 out of a total project cost of £500,000 to enable capital developments, employment of a dedicated Sports Development Officer and Programmes costs to ensure the facility is used not only by all communities but by those within the Border Counties of Ireland. Members should note that the overall project cost as part of this application has been increased to £500k to comply fully with the Peace III criteria.

Subsequent to commencing this application we were invited to meet with the former Sport Minister Edwin Poots in April 2008 alongside the other Building Sport short listed applicants to put our case and to attempt to secure funding for

the previously short-listed projects. The outcome of this meeting was that we were informed that additional funding has now been secured from the UK Treasury to support some of these short listed projects if completed by March 2009.

Since this time we have therefore 'hedged our bets' and actively pursued both potential funding streams and we have continued to work closely with both the SEUPB (Peace III) and Sports Council to progress this project. We are also now at a fairly advanced stage in relation to our Sports Council application and we have now received a formal stage two letter. The Sports Council have indicated that they will be prepared to fund the project up to a maximum of £250k but they are likely to qualify this by placing some specific criteria around match funding, provision of a two year fixed term Sports Development Post (for which no provision of revenue funding has been provided for at this stage) and the inclusion of a toilet block provision on the site which our Project Manager has ascertained would cost in the region of £15k-£20k. It should be highlighted though that while we do see the benefit of including such facilities our benchmarking work has highlighted the potential for anti-social behaviour to arise around such facilities and we need to bear this in mind. This will be the subject of further discussion with Sport NI.

Timescales

If the required funding is secured for this project then our aim would be to commence construction on-site in October/November 2008 with an expected completion date of February/March 2009.

Resource Implications

Financial

It had been highlighted in the previous Committee report that the estimate for constructing the Urban Sports Park would be in the region of £250K. As a result of the recent tendering exercise it has been subsequently highlighted that the final 'design & build' figure will actually be in the region of £387K. If we are successful in securing the Peace III funding we will not require any additional funding other than the £80k previously agreed by Council and included in the Capital Programme.

If however we are not successful with our Peace III application and we pursue the Sports Council option there will be a shortfall in the region of approximately £75k. *(This figure is based on the following assumptions, a total project cost of £410k including £20k for a toilet block provision, less the 50% match funding from Sports Council £205K, £50k from Landfill Tax Fund, £80k already included in BCC Capital Programme leaving a shortfall of approx £75K).*

Human Resources

There will be a requirement to make provision for a 2 Year Fixed Term Urban Sports Development Officer to support this project. If we are successful in securing the Peace III funding provision has been made for this element. If however we do not receive the Peace III funding and we need to go down the Sports Council funding route no provision has been made for this and we would

therefore have to make provision for this in our revenue estimates. It is likely that this post would attract a notional grade of SO 2 which with on-costs would equate to approximately £32k per year for two years. It would be our intention to look at all alternative sources of funding for this post prior to the final 09/10 revenue estimates being considered and agreed.

Asset and Other Implications

We are currently in the advanced stages of agreeing the final 21 year lease subject to final sign off from our Legal Services Department and the Estates Management Unit have been fully involved in this.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that Committee agree to revise the proposal to the Capital Programme to include an additional £75k to progress the construction of the Urban Sports Park if Peace III funding is not secured and the 50% Sports Council Funding is secured. This would be subject to the Capital Programme's 'gates' process and approval by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- Members are asked to approve in principle that provision can be made in the Department's revenue estimates for £32k per year over two years to accommodate the creation of an Urban Sports Development Officer post should the Council be unsuccessful in securing the Peace III funding.

Key to Abbreviations

BUS – Belfast Urban Sports

NITHC – Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Extract from minutes of Community and Recreation Committee
January 2007