



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Lagan Canal Restoration Trust
Date:	13 April 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<u>Lagan Gateway Project</u> Members will be aware that in 2006 an offer of £1million funding was made available to Council by Ulster Garden Villages Limited (UGV) towards the reopening of the Lagan gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis, on the basis that match funding would be available.
1.2	Ulster Garden Villages initially supported the Council by providing funding of £50,000 from the £1 million offer, to establish the Lagan Corridor Officer post within the Development Department.
1.3	A letter has been received from UGV to establish Belfast City Council's intention to proceed with its proposal to develop the Lagan Corridor. The letter highlighted the decision of the Board of UGV to reallocate the £1m funding to other projects in Northern Ireland unless the Council was in a position to confirm the scale of its contribution to the project by 31 March 2011.
1.4	Members will be aware that at the February 2011 Development Committee it was recommended that The Director of Development meets with Mr Tony Hopkins Chair of Ulster Garden Villages and Mr Erskine Holmes Board Director, to discuss the future of the £1million offer towards the development of the Lagan gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis. The Director was seeking an extension to the time period granted by UGV, which would allow consideration of the prioritisation of the overall project. A meeting was held on 16 March 2011.
1.5	<u>Lagan Canal Restoration Trust</u> In November 2006 Members approved the establishment of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust and in 2008 the core funding bodies appointed a manager whose remit was to set up the Trust.

1.6	The Trust currently represents the following core funding bodies including; Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Craigavon Borough Council, DCAL and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Other Trust stakeholders include; DSD, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI), Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN), Ulster Waterways Group (UWG) , Lagan Valley Regional Park and a number of public stakeholders.
1.7	In August 2009 Development Committee committed funding to the Trust until March 2011 and the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee were appointed as Belfast City Council representatives on the Trust Board. The Board is a not for profit company limited by guarantee with charitable status.
1.8	Over the previous three year period Council has contributed core funding of £50,500 to the Trust. The Trust is now seeking the same level of funding from Council for the next three year period from 2011/12-2013/14.
1.9	With the exception of NIEA all of the key funders have committed to fund the Trust for the next three years; Lisburn City Council £112,200, DCAL £56,100, Craigavon Borough Council £22,500, and Castlereagh £11,200.
1.10	A number of key impact reports are currently being undertaken by the Trust, namely, a Business Case and Funding Strategy from Belfast to Lough Neagh and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Lagan Corridor from Belfast to Lough Neagh. These reports are considered fundamental to the possible future capital development of the project and should be completed over the 2011 period.

2.	Key Issues
	<p data-bbox="323 1279 635 1310"><u>Lagan Gateway Project</u></p> <p data-bbox="323 1346 1388 1442">2.1 The Director of Development met with UGV in March 2011 to discuss the future of the £1million offer towards the development of the Lagan Gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis.</p> <p data-bbox="323 1478 1388 1610">2.2 The Director updated the UGV on the current uncertainties surrounding the project due to the upcoming Council election, the fact that the project was not included within the current Capital Programme and the projects to be funded from the City Investment Fund had yet to be finalised.</p> <p data-bbox="323 1646 1388 1742">2.3 The Director highlighted the fact that there were numerous projects competing for these limited funds and that any bid for funding of the navigation of the Lagan would have to be considered within that context.</p> <p data-bbox="323 1778 1388 1980">2.4 An economic appraisal presented to the Committee in September 2009 identified that the “preferred option” was the development of the Lagan Waterway from the Lagan Weir to Edenderry at a cost of £8.66m. The next best option was the development of a gateway at Stranmillis incorporating the re-opening of the lock with an estimated cost of £3.26m. The UGV offer of £1m is specifically towards the re-opening of the lock.</p>

2,5	The Chair of UGV acknowledged the fact that other potential funders had confirmed that match funding was highly unlikely to be made available in the short to medium term and that the funding of these relatively ambitious projects from Council resources represented a significant challenge. He did however emphasize that his Board would still be keen to see some progress and suggested that if a more modest project was to be presented by Belfast City Council which would allow the lock to re-open the UGV board may consider 50% funding towards the project. It is estimated that such a project is likely to cost somewhere in the region of £500K.
2.6	The Chair of UGV stated that he would be prepared to go back to his board to seek an extension of the deadline for the allocation of monies subject to BCC indicating that it was prepared to consider options and that any decision would be taken within a reasonable timescale (e.g. 6 months) as there were many demands on the Trust funds. He further made the point that if the monies were to be re-allocated it was unlikely that it would transfer to another project in Belfast.
2.7	It is clear that no other funding is like to be available form any other source outside of the Council and UGV. In order for the project to proceed it would have to be considered within either the Council's Capital Programme or the City Investment Fund. The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee would therefore have to consider the merits of funding the various options from either of these funding streams.
<p><u>The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust</u></p>	
<p>The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is seeking funding of £50,500 from Council for the three year period from 2011/12-2013/14. Funding commitments have been agreed with other core funders.</p>	

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	As highlighted above the “preferred option” as set out in the September 2009 was a Lagan Navigation project from the Lagan Weir to Edenderry at a cost of £8,660,949. The ‘next best’ option was the development of the Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway with an estimated cost of £3,261,860.
3.2	The lesser alternative of opening the lock only is estimated to cost around £500K. This smaller scale project which would need to be scoped and fully costed before it could be considered by Council. It is estimated that this would cost somewhere in the region of £5000.
3.4	The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is seeking funding of £50,500 from Council for the three year period from 2011/12-2013/14. The cost to Council for one year is £16,800 and is included within the current 2011/2012 budget

Lagan Canal - Key Outputs to date

Belfast:

- A Topographical and River Survey has been completed for Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway.
- A Scoping Study was completed for the Lagan Gateway Project from the Lagan Weir to Edenderry (First Phase)
- An Economic Appraisal was conducted for the stretch of river from Lagan Weir to Edenderry. This study confirmed the feasibility of re-opening the Lagan Navigation.
- The Lagan Steering Group was established to exchange advice and information between stakeholders.
- A three dimensional model of the proposed development at Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway has been completed.
- A virtual (computer generated) model completed. This allows detailed examination of the project through 360 degrees. This interactive 3D environment will allow the user to navigate around in real-time and assess views from any location. It is compatible with use on the Council Website and is being used as a marketing and promotional tool.
- Interpretative signage has been installed beside Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway and includes interpretation of the Lagan Navigation, the history of the area, the river and canal.
- Held 2 successful Lagan boat rallies including the rally to coincide with Belfast Tall Ships event
- DSD has installed interpretative signs based on the Council's signage template. They link areas along the Lagan from Belfast Harbour to Stranmillis.
- Funding Research undertaken and liaison with potential funding bodies ongoing
- A workshop was held in June 2008, in Enniskillen to raise awareness of the potential to establish a single inland waterway with a maritime connection at either end linking the East and West coasts of Ulster to form new water based tourism products. (East-West Project) This workshop attracted support from Alderman Jeffrey Donaldson MP, MLA and Tánaiste, Mary Coughlan TD. The overall aim was to raise awareness and buy-in from stakeholders especially Central Government and Waterways Ireland.
- A reciprocal meeting was held in December 2008 at Lisburn City Council. Alderman Jeffrey Donaldson MP, MLA and Tánaiste, Mary Coughlan TD. Pledged their support for the East West project.
- New web pages have been constructed highlighting the Lagan Corridor Navigation and the proposed development at Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway.

This web page has been added to Belfast City Council's website
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/lagan

- A site meeting was arranged for members of the Development Committee, in June 2008. Representatives from DSD, DCAL, Lagan Valley Regional Park Board, Lagan Trust Manager and Belfast City Council Officers visited the Lagan Lookout to Locks 1, 2 and 3 via the Tow Path.
- Waterways Ireland arranged a best practice visit for officers and steering group members in June 2008, for the Lagan Steering Group to Ballyconnell Lock in Co Cavan. The purpose of the visit was to view the operation of the lock and gain an understanding and insight into the benefits of canal restoration.
- DSD has currently undertaken a major refurbishment of the Lagan Weir worth £2 million. DSD have also commissioned a feasibility report on the redevelopment of the Lagan Lookout, and an economic appraisal on two proposed bridges over the lower Lagan. They have also undertaken dredging work of the tidal stretch of the Lagan from the Lagan Weir to Stranmillis Gateway Lock 1.
- Belfast Activity Centre - based in Barnett's Demesne, completed the building of a boat house at Shaw's Bridge in 2010, and rebuilt canoe steps and reinstated the slipway. (Cost approximately £270k)
- DCAL through the Lagan Navigation Trust conducted a Business Case for the re-opening of the Lagan Navigation from Stranmillis to Union Locks, Lisburn. This study confirmed the feasibility of re-opening the Lagan Navigation.
- Lock Keepers Cottage – Castlereagh Borough Council
The Lock keeper's cottage (Lock 3) grade B1 listed building has been refurbished and the new visitor centre, café, toilets and Interpreted space is opened. Canoe pontoons and moorings at the lock are currently being installed.
DCAL restored the Lock and gates at Lock 3.
- Lagan Valley Regional Park worked in partnership with Castlereagh Borough Council in the development and refurbishment of the Lock 3 project. This has included towpath improvements, extension and interpretation signage.
- Lisburn Council operates a Lagan Corridor Programme. They re-opened lock 12 as part of the new Island Civic Centre. They have created a strategic framework – identified nodes for development along the canal which includes improvements in towpaths, interpretive signage, land purchase, and potential links to developments such as the Maze complex. These nodes pass through various eligible areas identified under the NISRA rural classification 2005.
- Received funding from NITB for the restoration of a Lagan barge "Lighter" for their proposed canal/waterways museum at Oxford Island. They have also developed a canal leaflet for the Craigavon section of the Lagan Canal.

- Lagan Canal Restoration trust Established. Partnership members recruited and structures formalized. Registered as company limited by guarantee and recognised as a charity
- Stakeholder workshops organised to inform the strategic way forward
- Identified key necessary pre-restoration tasks steps, action plan developed & delivery initiated
- Vision document developed and distributed
- Landownership database being developed and Geographical Information Systems database being developed
- Website launched
- Delivered program of events including, Walks, Lectures, Exhibitions and Community Events
- Secured funding from the Rural Development Program to develop the Guide to the Lagan Canal, Past, Present and Future.