



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>North Foreshore Giant's Park – Site Disposal</b>
<b>Date:</b>	25 January 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Susan Quail, North Foreshore Manager

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that the Council has previously agreed that the North Foreshore should be developed for waste management, bio-economy and recreational uses. The regeneration bio-economy proposals comprise the development of an environmental resource park to create an innovative “Green Technology Business Cluster” for Belfast. This would have the benefit of diversifying the economy to encourage investment and job creation.
1.2	The development of a green technology business park at the North Foreshore is included within the Investment Programme 2012 – 2015 and Members will be aware that the Council has submitted a £8 million European Regional Development Fund Application to develop the infrastructure for this environmental resource park. Invest NI and DETI are currently assessing the application, and the Council expects a decision in the Spring 2013.
1.3	The Council has already commenced the regeneration of the North Foreshore with the development of a waste transfer station; a landfill gas electricity generation power plant and an agreement for lease with arc21 / NWP for an in-vessel composting facility.
1.4	Within the area reserved as an environmental business park area the Council also approved the release of a Development Brief for the disposal of a site for a commercial anaerobic digestion facility. An independent financial due diligence exercise on the submissions received is currently underway. In addition, and following Committee approval on 24 August 2012, a Development Brief has also been issued for a commercial leisure and cultural development on land to the west of the North Foreshore site and submissions are due back for this on 24 January. Reports will be brought back to Committee on both these proposals in the near future.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The proposals for an environmental resource park and the creation of a cleantech cluster is generating a lot of interest from private companies and investors wishing to invest in new cleantech technologies, particularly in the production of renewable energy. The recent release of the Development Brief for the anaerobic digestion facility generated further queries for potential cleantech renewable energy investment and development opportunities, particularly from the biogas renewable energy sector.

2.2	There is an opportunity to capture this cleantech investment interest and promote the development of the environmental technology renewable energy business cluster. In order to test the market and harness the interest that has been recently expressed, it is proposed to release on the open market a further Developers Brief for the disposal (by way of lease) of a 3 acre site for a cleantech use utilising biogas renewable energy technology. A location plan with the indicative site is attached at Appendix 1.
2.3	This site disposal exercise provides the opportunity to create a renewable energy production hub within the environmental resource park. It would create a unique selling point for the development of a cleantech environmental technology cluster. In particular the availability of renewable heat would be attractive to potential cleantech companies locating in the environmental resource park as it would reduce their carbon footprint and deliver their corporate environmental objectives. These new cleantech environmental businesses are modern clean facilities that conform to current environmental standards and policies.
2.4	A renewable energy hub at the North Foreshore would demonstrate council leadership in promoting the development of the cleantech environmental technology sector to build the City's resilience in an era of growing energy insecurity, increasing energy cost and fuel poverty.
2.5	The Council currently generates c 3 mw renewable energy for export to the local grid, and makes a contribution to meeting NI renewable energy targets. The existing North Foreshore Sub Station has sufficient spare export capacity of 7 mw to the local grid network, which could permit the operators of a biogas renewable energy facility to make the connection to the local grid.
2.6	The Development Brief will require interested parties to submit detailed bids clearly outlining the proposed use; funding sources and financial details; a development programme; proposed lease terms and the financial return to the Council, by way of rent or otherwise. The submission bids will be subject to an evaluation and due diligence process which would include a financial evaluation to test the robustness of the bids and ascertain the ability to fund and deliver a sustainable development in this current economic climate
2.7	Following exposure to the market by way of Development Brief and the subsequent evaluation of bids a report will be brought back to Committee.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Financial</u> The Development Brief will require the bid submissions to specify the financial return to the Council for the lease of the land and this will be brought back to Committee for approval.
3.2	<u>Assets</u> The development of this site represents a regeneration opportunity for Belfast and has the potential to create economic and social benefits
3.3	<u>Resources</u> Staff resource, primarily from Property & Projects and Legal Services.

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	None

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members give approval to the release of a Developers Brief for the disposal (by way of lease) of a site at the North Foreshore for a cleantech use utilising biogas renewable energy technology. A further report will be brought back to Committee following receipt and evaluation of any submissions.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 – site location map