



Subject:	Tropical Ravine update
Date:	5 th December 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Members will be aware that the Tropical Ravine in Belfast Botanic Gardens has received Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) of £2.3m to safeguard the future of the Tropical Ravine and its significant plant collection.
1.2	The Tropical Ravine will become a much more appealing and rewarding place to visit as a result of this project and will have a significantly higher profile in the Belfast (and NI) tourist product. Through physical restoration and the development of ongoing programme delivery. This will – <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ensure ongoing conservation and development of the plant collection;

1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasise linkages with the historic landscape and built heritage of the Botanic Gardens, as well as with the surrounding communities and institutions; ▪ Ensure ongoing community learning and participation. ▪ Development of appropriate interpretive material to meet a range of user needs including, public, educational and specific user groups, including sensory facilities for sight and hearing-impaired visitors, ▪ Development of a three year programme of activities based around the Tropical Ravine to encourage involvement with and engage the general public, education sector and tourists. <p>Construction of the project is now complete and the interpretation/re-planting has commenced with an official launch scheduled for February 2018.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Note the date of the opening of the venue and the arrangements to operationalise the building to make it a welcoming tourist venue and a source of education and conservation within Belfast - 9th February 2018 (to be agreed with HLF); ▪ Consider a site visit to the Tropical Ravine prior to the official opening.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The jointly funded project is now handed back to the council from contractors and work is underway to plan the educational and events programme for the year. An opening is planned (at this juncture) for 9th February.</p>
3.2	<p>An Activity Officer has been appointed prior to the reopening of the Tropical Ravine in order to undertake planning and preparation, and to recruit and train volunteers ready for the delivery of activities.</p>
3.3	<p>The previous regime of casual opening and closing of the Ravine will not be suitable post renovation. The Ravine will become a must see attraction and the health and safety of the visitors is paramount. With this in mind it must be manned at all time from opening to closing.</p>
3.4	<p>Currently it is proposed that the operating hours will be that the Ravine will be open each day from 10am to 4pm. However this will be reviewed due to levels of demand and programme of activity under development.</p>

3.5	A post of Botanic (Bot) Crew has been developed to ensure the opening and closing, cleaning and day to day operation of the facility. This resource will be supplemented with volunteers who will support events and activities and provide information on the conservation and educational elements of the Tropical Ravine. This resource will be engaged through BCCs volunteer scheme and is central to the HLF scheme and allows for training and support for our volunteers.
3.6	Part of the programme of use for the facility includes the hire of the venue for events and hospitality and it is hoped that this will generate some income and repeat visits to the Tropical Ravine. Appendix 1 outlines the outreach programme of activities being developed.
3.7	‘Friends of Botanic group’ continue to be vital to the success of Botanic Gardens and the facilities within it. They provide support and carry out activities to source grant funds not available to BCC. The Bot Crew volunteer role will be open for the Friends of group to express an interest in joining and they will be supported and trained by BCC. It is hoped that over 36 volunteers would be working with us over the next 3 years.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.8	The staffing required to operate the facility has been provided from existing revenue budgets however this will be kept under review as programmes are rolled out and events promoted.
3.9	The volunteer policy has been agreed through committee and JNCC and has a vital role in getting people active and building skills and experience.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>
3.10	There are no equality or Good relations implications.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - outline outreach programme