



<b>Subject:</b>	Funding to the Belfast Hills Partnership and Lagan Valley Regional Park
<b>Date:</b>	7 August 2018
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Agnes McNulty, Open Spaces & Active Living Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to provide core funding to the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) and Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) in 2018/19.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	It is recommended that the Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Note the contents of the report;</li><li>▪ Approve annual funding of £36,900 to the BHP and £41,055 to LVRP in 2018/19, subject to the relevant funding agreements being updated as per existing revenue budgets.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
	<u>Belfast Hills Partnership</u>
3.1	The BHP brings together a divergent range of partners from local government, environmental groups, quarry and farming representatives and local communities with the joint aim of

protecting this valuable resource on the perimeter of North and West Belfast. The Council has supported BHP since its inception in 2003/4 and the Parks & Leisure Committee at its meeting on 14 April 2011, approved its annual funding of £36,900. Provision has been made in revenue budgets at this level since then.

3.2 This partnership has in turn generated much needed investment in the landscape and infrastructure within our parks. This ranged from the construction of new paths in Ligoniel and Cave Hill Country Park and an orienteering course in Belfast Castle Estate to heritage interpretation, visitor counters, habitat mapping and numerous events.

3.3 During 2018/19, BHP will undertake a number of actions including:

- Undertake surveys for priority and protected species between April and October 2018;
- Undertake surveys for priority habitats between May and September 2018;
- Monitor wildfires and their severity, primarily in Cave Hill Country Park;
- Liaise with Park Managers in the preparation of habitat management plans and work with Volunteers on habitat management or creation projects for priority species and priority habitats;
- Provide senior management and support for the Landscape Partnership Scheme project and the Belfast Hills' projects of 'Our Environment Our Future' and Wildfire Connections;
- Continue to monitor and control invasive terrestrial and aquatic alien species as agreed with the Community Park Managers; and
- Raise awareness and promotion of the Belfast Hills through events, talks, leaflets and website

#### Lagan Valley Regional Partnership

3.4 The LVRP is a partnership between Belfast City Council, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, the Department of Communities and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Belfast City Council has funded LVRP since its inception in 1967 and, along with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, are its main funders. The People & Communities Committee at its meeting on 12 May 2015, approved funding of £41,055 for 2015/16 and provision has been made in revenue budgets at this level since then. The NIEA provides funding to LVRP but at a reduced level and there remains uncertainty around central government funding. As LVRP remains heavily dependent on funding from both Councils, a consultant has been commissioned to identify and secure external funding to ensure its sustainability. Belfast City Council has recently been approached seeking a review to increase funding for

3.5	<p>2019/2020. Officers will meet with Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council officers to discuss and a further report will be brought to committee.</p> <p>The Council has to date benefitted from the work of LVRP in countryside recreation, biodiversity, promotion, events, additional signage and community engagement. A five year management plan has been developed for LVRP and during 2018/19, the LVRP will undertake a number of actions on Council sites including to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proactively manage, protect and improve the biodiversity in the Regional Park;</li> <li>▪ Manage and monitor visitors to the Regional Park and support events and sustainable tourism;</li> <li>▪ Encourage involvement of the community and to develop volunteering in the Regional Park;</li> <li>▪ Proactively protect and celebrate the character of the Regional Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;</li> <li>▪ Protect and celebrate the rich historic and cultural legacy of the Regional Park; and</li> <li>▪ Promote the benefits of green open spaces, within the area, for health and wellbeing and to support appropriate recreational activities.</li> </ul> <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.6 £77,955 has been allocated in the revenue estimates for funding to BHP and LVRP and both organisations will be required to sign a Funding Agreement.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.7 There are no known implications</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None