



Subject:	Lagan Gateway update
Date:	13 th April 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Jacqui Stewart, Asset & Facilities Management Coordinator Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager Sabine Kalke, Project Sponsor

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	To update Members about the Lagan Gateway project and particularly about future management arrangements of the navigation lock and artwork on the bridge piers combined with UK Youth for Nature campaign.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• agree to explore the option of entering a Service Level Agreement or similar with the Lagan Navigation Trust to operate and manage the navigation lock and associated areas after completion of the project

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree to develop an art piece on the bridge piers as part of the UK Youth for Nature high-profile national campaign (involving more than 10 UK cities)
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>The Lagan Gateway project proposes a number of structural improvements and development works at Stranmillis including the development of a navigation lock, an iconic foot and cycle bridge, the refurbishment of the existing weir and high quality landscaping with associated path connections. The project will create a connection both on the water and on land by building a navigation lock and a pedestrian/cycle bridge.</p> <p>The key objectives identified for the Lagan Gateway are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the navigation of the Lagan and create a gateway to Lagan Valley Regional Park and beyond • improve the access, safety and quality of green and open space around the Lagan • increase the pedestrian and cycle facilities and links into Belvoir Forest Park • improve health and well-being through providing a better living environment and enhanced exercise and recreation opportunities, accessible by all • realise the potential of the Lagan and its surroundings as an asset for current and future generations <p>The project will result in improving connectivity and linkages in the area and improve biodiversity and natural habitats (removal of contaminated soil and invasive species etc). The area is partly a heritage site and the project will aim to educate and inform visitors of its significant economic and environmental history. The proposed Greenway connection will ease the pressure on the existing towpath on the Stranmillis side; the new Greenway connection will take a high number of users from the towpath and bring them onto the other side of the Lagan and into Belvoir Forest Park, which is underused.</p> <p>The total investment in the project is £5.2m, with £2.15m coming from the Council's Belfast Investment Fund. Other partners are Ulster Garden Villages, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure Rivers, the Department for Infrastructure and the Lagan Navigation Trust. Other partners are Ulster Garden Villages, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure Rivers, the Department for Infrastructure and the Lagan Navigation Trust.</p>

	<p>Phase 1 of the project is nearing its completion; the first section of the bridge has been lifted into place in February and the installation of the last bridge sections are planned for April 2021. The navigation lock will be completed in summer this year.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Operation/maintenance of the navigation lock</p> <p>Once the navigation lock is completed it will become a Council asset and need to be operated and maintained. It is part of a wider programme that the Lagan Navigation Trust is pursuing – to open the whole navigation from Belfast to Lough Neagh and create a working waterway, which serves collaborations and local businesses playing a role in the economic and social regeneration of this heritage asset along 27 miles of the Navigation. It is the first lock reopened in the Belfast area and will set a precedence for the further development of navigation locks. The Lagan Navigation Trust, as the custodians of the Lagan navigation expressed an interest to operate and maintain the lock and surrounding area as they aim at opening all 27 locks along 27 miles in three local government areas (Belfast City Council, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Armagh City, Banbridge, Craigavon Borough Council). The Trust’s remit is geographically specific - the Lagan Navigation and its stated purpose is to reopen the Navigation. They have civil engineers and waterways users on their Board with expertise in education, major charitable investment and Local Government expertise at both Director and elected member levels. To support their work, the Trust established a new charity, The Waterways Community, specifically to work with waterways in terms of animation, health and wellbeing, educational and cultural services related to those waterways. This is the driver for delivery of a working waterway on the Lagan. Council officers are currently working with the Chief Officer and Board (BCC has representatives on the Board) of the Lagan Navigation Trust on an appropriate agreement (Service Level Agreement or similar) to ensure that the navigation lock of the Lagan Gateway project is being operated and maintained expertly. Specifically the management will be looking at the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how to address security concerns ▪ how to prevent inundations during surges ▪ potential role of a lockkeeper in operating and maintaining the lock and carrying out works such as opening and closing the gates, providing assistance with launching /tying up boats at the site, ensuring that there is free-flow of water and removal of debris such as branches, cleaning of the gates and management of stop logs <p>Currently the Council contributes to the core funding of the LNT – one potential mechanism being considered is ‘divert’ this into project funding i.e. the operation of the navigation lock on behalf of the Council.</p>

3.3

Art piece on bridge piers as part of UK Youth for Nature campaign

The piers of the bridge at Stranmillis have been covered in graffiti a number of times. Though anti-graffiti paint has been applied to the piers, it is a laborious (and costly) task to remove the graffiti by the contractor. A number of longer term solutions have been explored and options have been assessed. A number of options have been ruled out including planting and the installation of panels as the bridge will require regular inspection. It is therefore recommended that artwork/murals are progressed and a number of ideas were proposed including nature murals reflecting the natural surroundings or maritime theme reflecting the river or a combination.

At the same time, UK Youth for Nature, the UK's leading youth-led network calling on the politicians and governments of the UK to take urgent action and tackle the loss of nature, approached the Council. To draw a link between COP15 and COP26, they are aiming to create a connected pathway of wildlife murals from London to Glasgow (2+ per city) that highlight biodiversity decline and the impacts of climate change on nature. Priority locations (at this time) are: London, Exeter, Bristol/Bath, Cardiff, Birmingham, Norwich, Nottingham, Liverpool, Belfast, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. The UK Youth for Nature team will work with local partners to identify appropriate walls and contact and secure local artists. The topic of the design will be on biodiversity - any key habitats or species that are iconic that are disappearing from the area, to evoke people's imaginations.

They have approached the Council about the potential of using the bridge piers for the Belfast part of the campaign. The work will be carried out by a local Belfast artist/collective of young artists. Members are asked to agree that the Council works with UK Youth for Nature Team on taking forward this proposal. In agreeing this Members are asked to note that the Council will have the opportunity to agree the artists involved and so quality assure this aspect of the work. Officers from the PP Department have recently taken forward the delivery of the Entries projects in the city centre which have included a number of high quality murals and a similar approach to choosing the artist(s) will be undertaken for this project.

In addition if the proposal is agreed then Members are asked to note that the Council will need to make a financial contribution towards the costs of the project to cover the costs of paint/materials and artists costs. These costs would be taken from the existing project budget.

Benefits for the project and city as a whole:

- Reputation as supporting a green youth movement
- Environmental credentials
- Community involvement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-cost quality art piece • Positive media attention • Potential to cooperate with other biodiversity groups/organisations • Be part of a wider UK network • International recognition (UN climate conference in Glasgow in 2021) <p>Members are asked to agree the proposal of developing an art piece on the bridge piers as part of the UK Youth for Nature high-profile national campaign (involving more than 10 UK cities).</p>
3.5	<p>Other</p> <p>Members are asked to note that other issues have been raised in relation to ASB in the area. Members are asked to note that the Council’s community safety team are aware of this and additional patrols are being carried out on the area. In addition we have installed mobile CCTV to monitor the bridge which will alert the contractor if there are any issues. Officers are also looking at longer term mitigation measures including the installation of permanent CCTV and are working with DFI on this. We have also had a request in terms of looking at the installation of night time gates on the Bridge. Members are asked to note that gates on the bridge were not part of the original design/scope and would not be in keeping with the ethos of the Bridge which was to open up access to the area. Given this at this stage we are not looking at the installation of these as there is no evidence that these are required as the Bridge has not yet opened. This will be kept under review.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.6	<p>Additional financial or resource allocations for the operation/management of the navigation lock are being explored at the moment; once these are being established a report will be brought back to committee.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.7	<p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – UK Youth for Nature Proposal