

Funding this strategy



Funding

We will support open space in the city through meeting the ongoing cost of maintaining existing sites. We will also provide more money to support development work. However, we are not in a position to fund the cost of a major improvement programme across all open spaces on our own. The success of this strategy will depend on getting independent funding.

During consultation we have had discussions with a range of funding organisations in the city, including Heritage Lottery, the Big Lottery, Department of Social Development and Belfast Regeneration Office, Sports Council, Arts Council, Community Safety Partnership and many others. In some cases we will be able to directly approach a funding organisation, in others local community groups will have to apply for funding.

Potential sources

Belfast City Council

We currently spend around £12million a year on providing and maintaining parks, playgrounds and open spaces in the city. We have agreed to commit an extra £8million to help deliver this strategy. We will release this money to support schemes to regenerate open spaces that have been successful in attracting independent funding.

Government departments

All government departments who responded to the consultation document supported the strategy. Discussions have taken place to make this strategy consistent with relevant government strategies and schemes. Through this strategy, we will work with our partners to help deliver wider government policies such as Neighbourhood Renewal.

National Lottery

This strategy has created a high degree of interest from a range of lottery distributors.

An assortment of open space across the United Kingdom has benefited greatly from lottery funding over the past 10 years, including projects across Northern Ireland. For example, the Millennium Commission funded the redevelopment of six local parks under the successful 'Belfast 2000 City with a Landscape' programme.

We acknowledge the positive contribution which lottery funding has made to open space across the UK, and continues to make to all areas of Belfast. We are dedicated to developing partnerships with all lottery distributors to progress small, medium and large-scale environmental projects.



The total amount of parks, playing fields and open space in Belfast would cover almost 4000 football pitches





Private-sector investment

We need to explore and assess the full potential of public private partnerships and private finance initiatives. Where there is potential to improve open space with the support of private investment, we will work to make sure that we uphold our strategic themes.

Trusts and foundations
(supporting community and voluntary-sector investment)

This strategy recognises the vital role which local community groups play in supporting local parks and open spaces. So, where possible, we will support funding applications to local, national and international trusts and foundations which aim to improve open space.



The Cave Hill Visitor Centre at Belfast Castle has approx. 1000 visitors per month





We have 18 sites of high archaeological importance within our open spaces



Roselawn Cemetery has 3 lakes which have attracted significant numbers of wildfowl, such as buzzards, kestrels, pheasants, badgers, foxes, rabbits and hares



How do we deliver the strategy?



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To help us deliver this strategy, we need a new organisational structure between Parks and Amenities and Grounds Maintenance, including revised arrangements for managing sites and involving the community. This will make sure that:

- resources are focused on community needs and opportunities for independent funding are improved;
- management boards and plans are introduced for individual open spaces across the city as a basis for supporting communities to take control of their open spaces;
- effective partnerships are set up within the city to support a more co-ordinated approach to open-space issues in the city; and
- an effective framework for managing performance is introduced within the service.

Using resources

We currently spend about £12million a year on developing and maintaining open spaces. Also, £1million will be made available each year to help us develop the strategy over the period 2006-2014.

It is vital to get funding for open space. To succeed, we will have to make detailed applications in relation to each open space or a number of open spaces. Funding will be awarded on the merit of individual applications. This strategy will support these and set the strategic context for all future applications.

Management plans

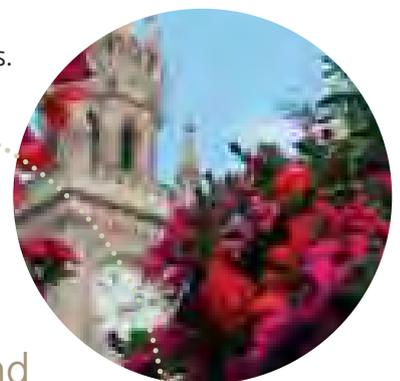
We will make improvements through the overall management of our open spaces.

We will do this by introducing district management plans for clearly defined areas within Belfast. District management plans will be supported by detailed management plans for all individual sites within that district, developed with our partners and consistent with all of our strategic themes. Developing and introducing these plans represents government best practice and will be essential for helping to get funding from independent organisations.

We will start to prepare district and site management plans early in the new financial year, and they will form the basis of a framework for managing performance which will lead to improvements.



The cost of Parks and Open Spaces per Head of Population in 2004 was £17.94



Effective partnership

It is evident that improvements to our open spaces will be most effective if:

- there is a co-ordinated effort with other statutory organisations , for example, DoE Planning Service and DRD Roads Service; and
- there is greater involvement with the local community.

Effective partnership needs shared goals with a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. This will be central to the way we deliver the strategy.

Managing performance

Within Parks and Cemeteries Services, we will support the strategy by:

- producing a business plan for the section outlining priorities and actions each year;
- preparing management plans for identified 'districts' within the city;
- preparing management plans for individual open spaces within each district which we will review every year and revise in line with changing priorities, resources and opportunities; and
- introducing individual performance management to make sure that people have individual goals.



We have had a parks environmental programme for schools for over 20 years





Monitoring and reviewing

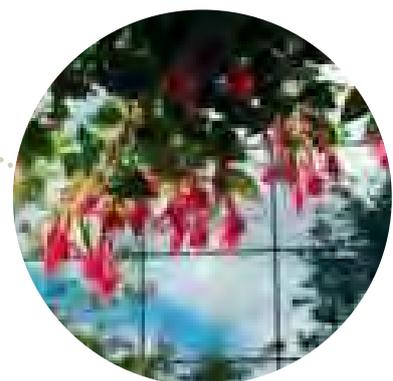
Monitoring and reviewing our strategy is a crucial part of delivering it.

We have identified a set of performance standards, which are included in this strategy, and we will present a report to committee every year. This will show our progress and highlight any changes we need to make to our plans as we take account of changing circumstances.

Information collected during year 1 will form the starting point against which we can measure performance improvement. Where appropriate, we will set targets every year based on an assessment of performance and agreed priorities for the year.

The yearly review of the strategy will include:

- recommendations for amendments where necessary and appropriate;
- priorities and actions for the coming year, and the resources needed; and
- performance measures based on agreed standards.



There is 1 recreational facility for every 1,849 of Belfast's residents

Performance measures



Themes	Performance measures			
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Percentage of residents satisfied with the maintenance of historic features in parks and open spaces 2 Number of open spaces which are working towards the Green Flag standard 3 Level of spending in parks and open spaces 4 Number of open spaces with management plans 5 Number of projects where natural heritage (biodiversity) is the main focus 			
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Percentage of residents satisfied with the maintenance of outdoor sports facilities 6 Percentage of residents satisfied with the maintenance of open spaces 7 Percentage of residents satisfied with the maintenance of cemeteries 8 Hectares of open space accessible for every 1000 people 9 Number of playgrounds that pass independent safety inspections 10 Percentage of young people under 16 satisfied with play facilities 11 Percentage of users who rate parks and open spaces as important for health benefits 		
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Number of reported incidents of antisocial behaviour in open spaces 13 Estimated cost of work carried out to tackle vandalism in open spaces 14 Percentage of residents who consider open spaces to be safe places to visit 	
				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15 Number of friends' groups that exist for open spaces 16 Number of local management arrangements in place 17 Number of people going to events in open spaces 18 Number of visits to our revised website

Action plan



Strategic Theme

Our heritage

Protecting and improving open space that supports and promotes our natural, built and social heritage

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	
<p>1</p> <p>Protect and improve the overall heritage value of our open spaces</p>	<p>Develop a working register of natural, built and cultural heritage in open spaces.</p> <p>Produce an action plan that will protect, improve and promote individual parts of our heritage.</p> <p>Consider heritage issues within individual management plans for open spaces.</p> <p>Work with key funding organisations to achieve common aims.</p> <p>Apply for funding to support the improvement of our heritage in open spaces.</p> <p>Develop an interpretation strategy for our priority heritage assets.</p> <p>Identify an independent champion for open-space issues in the city.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities for a mobile interpretation facility for open spaces.</p> <p>Improve the on-line marketing of open spaces through our revised website.</p> <p>Improve front-line staff training on open-space heritage issues.</p> <p>Develop plans for heritage tours of open spaces in Belfast.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to promote tourism in open spaces in the city.</p> <p>Set up a departmental review group to monitor progress under the heritage theme.</p>	<p>P&C Dev. Mng</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng</p> <p>Area Man./ Estates Mng.</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng/ P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>Comm. & Cult. Officer</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng</p> <p>Head P & C</p> <p>Marketing & Events Officer</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng.</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng</p>	
<p>2</p> <p>Improve and promote the cultural heritage of our open spaces</p>	<p>Review the allotments in the city in light of increased demand.</p> <p>Develop more events in open spaces to help the local community to celebrate cultural heritage.</p> <p>Work with partners to increase the amount of public art in open spaces.</p> <p>Develop a genealogy database to educate people and promote Belfast's culture.</p> <p>Encourage other council departments to use open spaces for more civic events.</p>	<p>P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>Berv. Serv. Mng</p> <p>Area Mng / Estates Mng</p>	

Strategic Theme

Our heritage

Protecting and improving open space that supports and promotes our natural, built and social heritage

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>3</p> <p>Protect, improve and promote built heritage in our open spaces</p>	Fully develop working partnerships with all historical societies in Belfast City Council area.	Area Mng / Estates Mn	2009
	Investigate using historic buildings in open spaces to promote heritage, for example, Wilmont House.	P&C Serv. Mng	2008
<p>4</p> <p>Protect, improve and promote natural heritage in our open spaces</p>	Review existing biodiversity in the city, focusing on priority habitats and open spaces.	Con.& Prom. Mng	2007
	Produce and put into practice a local biodiversity action plan for the city.	Con.& Prom. Mng	2008
	Improve working relationships with independent environmental groups, for example, Northern Ireland Conservation Volunteers, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Ulster Wildlife Trust.	Con.& Prom. Mng/ Zoo Manager	Ongoing
	Produce a plan with our partners that will protect and promote a wider range of tree species within the city.	Pks Dev. Mng.	2008
	Map native woodlands and individual trees of significance throughout greater Belfast.	Pks Dev. Mng	2010
	Produce a health and safety audit of all the trees we maintain.	Pks Dev. Mng	2010
	Produce a template to help manage funding for trees every year.	Pks Dev. Mng	2007
	Produce a long-term plan to promote education of local and worldwide biodiversity issues.	Zoo Manager	2007
	Improve the role of zoological gardens in protecting local and exotic wildlife.	Zoo Manager	Ongoing
	Develop a plan to use fuels from renewable sources in the zoological gardens.	Zoo Manager	2008
Audit and improve access to zoological gardens to encourage more visitors.	Zoo Manager	2008	

Strategic Theme

Our heritage

Protecting and improving open space that supports and promotes our natural, built and social heritage

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	
<p>5</p> <p>Improve people's understanding and appreciation of heritage associated with open spaces</p>	<p>Improve marketing and communication of heritage assets in open spaces.</p> <p>Use 'City Matters' to regularly promote the heritage value of open spaces.</p> <p>Develop environmental education programmes and heritage packs for local schools in line with the national curriculum.</p>	<p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>Zoo Manager</p>	
<p>6</p> <p>Improve access to our open spaces</p>	<p>Work to protect and extend the urban forest in the Belfast metropolitan area.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to improve access to the countryside.</p> <p>Create a new walking route in and around Belfast.</p> <p>Investigate access to public places in the Belfast Hills in partnership with local landowners.</p> <p>Review and improve general on-site signs for all open spaces.</p> <p>Record problems with our open spaces and accessibility within the city to help future council planning of open spaces.</p> <p>Review opening times for open spaces.</p> <p>Put into practice an improvements programme under the Disability Discrimination Act audit recommendations.</p>	<p>P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>Con.& Prom. Mng</p> <p>P&C Dev. Mng/ P&C Serv. Mng LPDU Mng</p> <p>P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>LPDU Mng</p>	
<p>7</p> <p>Improve the management of our open spaces</p>	<p>Review maintenance budgets for open spaces to make sure there is effective and efficient service delivery.</p> <p>Review all our open spaces in terms of value to local communities.</p> <p>Develop a customer profile and information database to influence planning.</p> <p>Prioritise open-space heritage schemes for Heritage Lottery funding.</p> <p>In partnership with all stakeholders, produce management plans for each site based on our strategic themes and principles, and review them every year.</p>	<p>P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>LPDU Mng</p> <p>Mrkt. & Comm.Manager</p> <p>Policy Dev. Mng / Head P & C</p> <p>Area Mng / Estates Mng</p>	

Strategic Theme

Healthier places

Providing a network of open spaces that you will enjoy going to and that will improve the quality of your life

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>1</p> <p>Increase the number of people who use open spaces as a form of leisure and recreation</p>	Develop links between council leisure-centre programmes and open spaces close by.	Area Mngs	2008
	Develop links with health agencies and hospital trusts in relation to health walks in parks.	P&C Dev. Mng	2008
	Improve play facilities in open spaces.	P&C Dev. Mng/ P&C Serv. Mng	Ongoing
	Investigate increasing the range of sports facilities in open spaces, for example, basketball, multi-sports units, hockey and so on.	P&C Dev. Mng/ P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Review the balance of sports facilities for men and women in open spaces in the city.	P&C Serv. Mng	2007
	Investigate the potential role of play workers in open spaces to support seasonal events.	Pks Mng Dev/Outr	2006
	Develop greenways for safe walking and cycling across the open-space network, in partnership with key organisations.	P&C Dev. Mng	2010
	Develop specific activity programmes in open spaces aimed at children and young people, and elderly people too.	Con.& Prom. Mng	2007
	Develop an outdoor-play strategy.	P&C Dev. Mng	2008
	In line with increased demand, review the existing sports pitches in the city.	Con.& Prom. Mng	2007
<p>2</p> <p>To promote the positive contribution that open spaces make to our health and wellbeing</p>	Attract funding for developing more multi-sports facilities for young people in open spaces.	LPDU Mng	Ongoing
	Work with partners to extend the national cycle network in the city.	Con.& Prom. Mng	2010
	Use 'City Matters' to regularly promote the health benefits of open spaces.	P&C Dev. Mng	Ongoing
	Contribute to the Healthy Cities Partnership to produce a Belfast City Health Profile.	P&C Dev. Mng	Ongoing
	Contribute towards the City Health Development Plan.	P&C Dev. Mng	Ongoing
	Contribute to the Investing for Health Partnership.	P&C Dev. Mng	Ongoing
Support the council in becoming a key partner in Belfast in the European Partnership Initiative.	P&C Dev. Mng	Ongoing	
With our partners, develop educational programmes that highlight the health benefits associated with open spaces.	P&C Dev. Mng	2008	

Strategic Theme

Healthier places

Providing a network of open spaces that you will enjoy going to and that will improve the quality of your life

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	
<p>3</p> <p>Provide facilities for burying and cremating people who have died</p>	<p>Provide alternative burial and cremation facilities for the city.</p> <p>Produce a promotional plan that will encourage cremation.</p> <p>Produce a pilot scheme for columbarium units (units for storing cremated remains) in cemeteries closed to burials.</p> <p>Produce a report outlining the resources needed to buy back unused graves.</p> <p>Identify partnerships with the private sector to build and manage a new crematorium.</p> <p>Prepare plans for redesigning and extending the 'Garden of Remembrance'.</p> <p>Prepare a report outlining the resources needed to build a second funeral church at Roselawn Crematorium.</p>	<p>P&C Dev. Mng</p> <p>Berv. Serv. Mng</p> <p>Berv. Serv. Mng</p> <p>P&CServ. Mng / Berv. Serv. Mng</p>	
<p>4</p> <p>Improve how we communicate internally and externally on issues related to open spaces</p>	<p>Review communication within the service.</p> <p>Review the information currently available.</p> <p>Develop a marketing and communication plan for open spaces.</p>	<p>Mrkt. & Comm.Manager</p> <p>Mrkt. & Comm.Manager</p> <p>Mrkt. & Comm.Manager</p>	

Strategic Theme

Safer space

Creating and maintaining open spaces
where we can all feel at ease

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>1</p> <p>Make our open spaces safer places to visit and enjoy</p>	Build safety into the design of parks and open spaces. Where appropriate, introduce measures such as closed-circuit television, lighting and improved visibility.	LPDU Mng/ Area Mngs	2009
	Carry out a safety audit of our open spaces in the city to identify problem 'hot spots'.	Area Mngs/ Est. Mng	2006
	Develop a park-ranger service for our open spaces.	P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Investigate increasing staff presence in open spaces on weekends and evenings.	P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Investigate using outside security and volunteers in key open spaces.	P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Prepare an antisocial behaviour template for open spaces.	P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Improve front-line staff training on how to manage confrontation.	HR/Admin. Mng	2007
	Work to support Belfast Education and Library Board in providing an outreach service that promotes the value of open spaces.	Area Mngs/ Est. Mng	Ongoing
	Produce good-practice guidelines for designing open spaces.	LPDU Mng	2007
<p>2</p> <p>Create a positive image of our parks and open spaces</p>	Review the enforcement of council byelaws and regulations for open spaces.	P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Improve community ownership of open spaces.	Area Mngs/ Est. Mng	2008
	Measure people's views of safety in our open spaces every two years.	P&C Dev. Mng	Strategy period
	Increase the use of outdoor sporting facilities in open spaces through crime diversion projects, for example, midnight football in Waterworks.	P&C Dev. Mng	2008
	Develop partnerships within Belfast City Council and with neighbouring local councils to identify areas of joined-up working.	Area Mngs	2008

Strategic Theme

Safer space

Creating and maintaining open spaces where we can all feel at ease

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	
<p>3</p> <p>Develop partnerships to support the improvement of public safety in open spaces</p>	<p>Develop appropriate communication with Belfast Community Safety Partnership, including the Police Service Northern Ireland Community Safety Unit.</p> <p>Work with the community safety co-ordinators to improve safety in open spaces.</p> <p>Develop ways to update members and existing friends' groups regularly on levels of community safety in open spaces.</p> <p>Produce a programme of action to highlight continued problems associated with antisocial behaviour in open spaces.</p> <p>Develop a project plan with all of our partners to improve the appearance of the public realm.</p>	<p>P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>Area Mngs/ Est. Mng</p> <p>Area Mngs/ Est. Mng</p> <p>P&C Serv. Mng</p> <p>Pks Serv. Mng/ P&C Dev. Mng</p>	

People & Community

Helping local people to take control of their open spaces

Objectives	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
1 Increase the levels of awareness and appreciation of the importance and benefits of open spaces to the local community and neighbourhood	Develop dedicated programmes which will increase the awareness and appreciation of open spaces within local communities.	Pks Dev Mng	2008
	Develop partnerships with other council departments and independent agencies to promote the benefits of open spaces.	Head P&C / P&C Dev. Mng	2010
2 Increase the level of community involvement in open spaces	Develop a model of community involvement in designing and managing open spaces.	P&C Dev. Mng	2007
	Arrange more community-based events in local parks and open spaces.	Con.& Prom. Mng	2008
	Provide better education and promotion of open-space issues to council staff and members.	P&C Dev. Mng	Ongoing
	Develop working partnerships with the local media to promote the benefits of open spaces to local people.	Mrkt. & Comm.Manager	2007
	Increase levels of sponsorship for corporate events in local parks.	Mrkt. & Comm.Manager	Ongoing
	Promote a campaign for responsible use of open spaces based on an anti-litter campaign.	Mrkt. & Comm.Manager	2008
	Develop a system to help local community groups to manage open spaces.	P&C Serv. Mng	2006
	Increase the range and number of local management agreements for open spaces.	P&C Serv. Mng	2010
	Set performance measures for local management groups.	P&C Serv. Mng	2008
	Develop a method for delivering more community tree-planting schemes.	Pks Dev. Mng	2007
	Develop partnerships with the Planning Service to protect existing city trees and promote responsible hedge management.		
	Develop and introduce outreach programmes for a range of groups who use open spaces.	Area Mnngs/ Est. Mng	2008
	Investigate developing employment and training schemes that will help us deliver this strategy.	P&C Dev. Mng	2007