



LAGAN VALLEY REGIONAL PARK FIVE YEAR PLAN 2017 - 2022



Gerry Darby Consultancy 2017

Contents

Contents	Page 1
Glossary	Page 2
Executive Summary	Page 3
Preface	Page 4
Background	Page 5
Strategic Policy Context	Page 9
Key Stakeholder Responsibilities	Page 14
Priority Themes	Page 16
Biodiversity	Page 16
Visitors	Page 19
Community	Page 23
Landscape	Page 25
Heritage	Page 31
Health and Recreation	Page 34
Good Governance	Page 37
Action Plan Introduction	Page 39
Funding the Action Plan	Page 41
Evaluation	Page 44
Action Plan	Page 45
Appendix 1 - Shelf-Ready Projects	Page 66

Glossary of Abbreviations

AFBI	- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
AIS	- Alien Invasive Species
AONB	- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASSI	- Area of Special Scientific Interest
BCC	- Belfast City Council
BMAP	- Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
BMUA	- Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area
CAF	- Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork
DAERA	- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DfC	- Department for Communities
DfI	- Department for Infrastructure
DOE	- Department of the Environment
EFS	- Environment Farming Scheme NI
HED	- Historic Environment Division
HLF	- Heritage Lottery Fund
LCCC	- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
LVRP	- Lagan Valley Regional Park
NGO	- Non-Government Organisation
NIEA	- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NIRLCA	- Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment
NISRA	- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
ORNI	- Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland
PHA	- Public Health Agency
SEUPB	- Special EU Programmes Board
SLNCI	- Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
STLD	- Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park

Executive Summary

Lagan Valley Regional Park is a rich and varied designated landscape with a diverse range of visitors and is managed and maintained by several stakeholders. This document sets out a Five-Year Management Plan and follows the framework laid out in the LVRP 10-year Strategic Vision which focusses on 6 key themes:

- Biodiversity
- Visitors
- Community
- Landscape
- Heritage
- Health & Recreation.

The plan takes into consideration the priorities and main objectives of the wider UK and Northern Ireland Governments and the other main Regional Park stakeholder partners. Particular reference has been made to the community plans for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Belfast City Council, as well as their developing Local Area Plans. Because of the strong environmental and heritage focus of the Regional Park, particular reference has also been made to the legislative and policy requirements of the new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Department for Infrastructure.

The plan has been developed in consultation with representatives from the main stakeholder groups and public consultation. The main areas of work are considered in the context of the strategic policies of the most relevant governing bodies and past management plans. Issues relating to the management of the Regional Park, its sustainability as an organisation and ongoing partnership support for the management and protection of this special area have also been considered.

Finally, the document provides a detailed action plan with clear objectives, targets and outcomes. Several projects have been highlighted along with practical suggestions for potential funding streams in today's constrained economic climate. It is intended to be a practical working document that will help ensure that the objectives of the Regional Park are implemented on the ground and then fully evaluated.

Preface

The Lagan Valley Regional Park Five Year Management Plan (2017-2022) has been developed in partnership with the main stakeholders associated with the management and funding of Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP). These are as follows:

- Belfast City Council
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Department for Infrastructure
- Forest Service
- National Trust
- Transport NI
- Sustrans
- Wildlife Trust

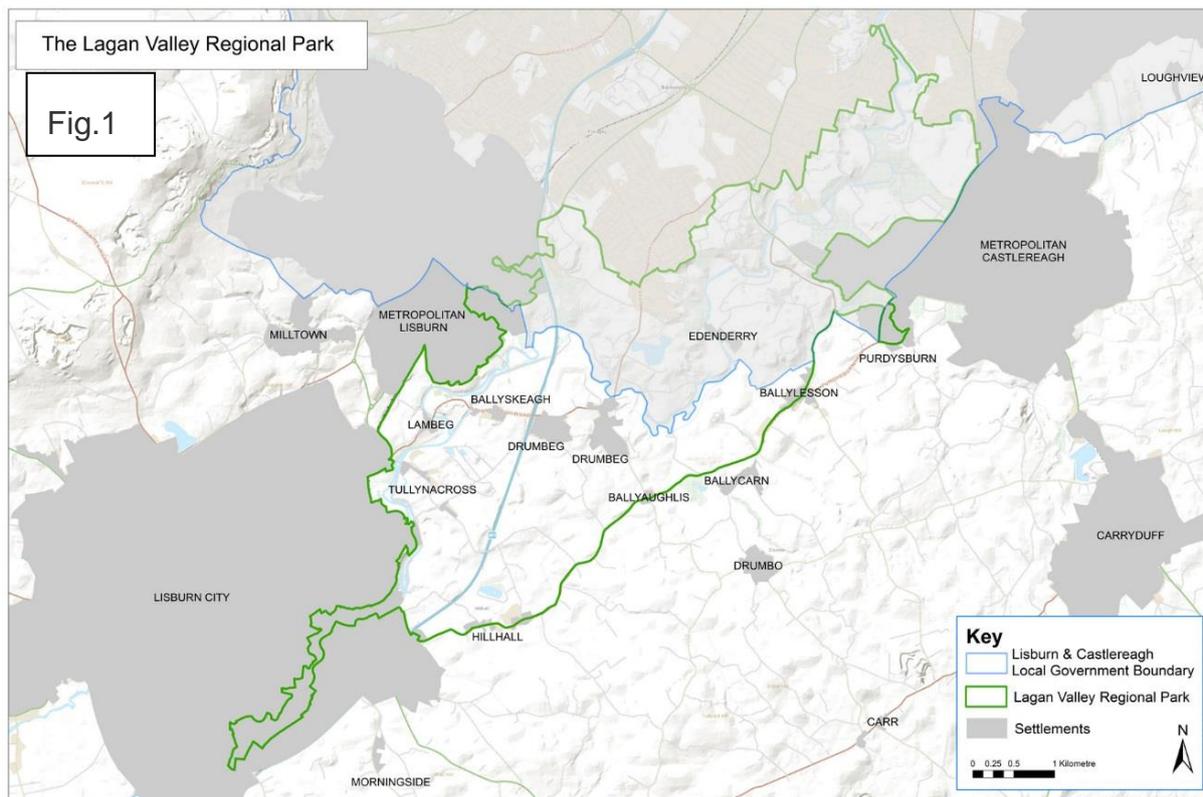


The Regional Park attracts significant numbers of visitors who enjoy and appreciate its rich beautiful landscape and the provides a valuable opportunity for local people to become actively involved in its management through an innovative volunteering scheme developed through the previous HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme (Laganscape). It also provides a professional day-to-day conservation and visitor management service, delivered on behalf of partners.

In the context of recent changes in the structure of local government, the draft Community Plans and Local Development Plans have provided opportunities for renewed and invigorated engagement with new stakeholders, the implementation of new ideas, and the reassessment of long term needs. One of the main purposes of this document is to provide a road map to ensure that these challenges met and to safeguard the long-term sustainability of the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

Background

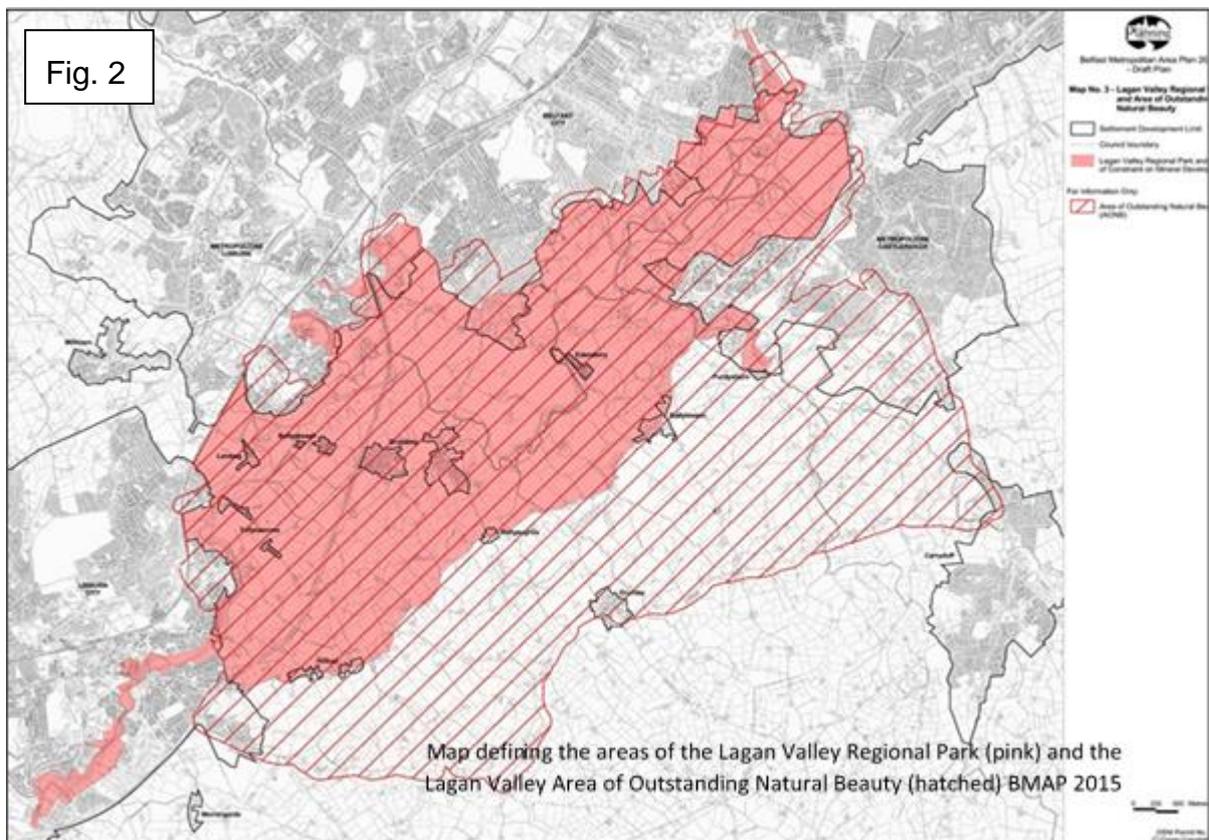
Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) covers an area of 2,116 hectares, within the local government areas of Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (See Fig 1). It is Northern Ireland's only Regional Park, representing an important biodiversity and recreational corridor connecting Lisburn and Belfast. The special qualities of the Regional Park are reflected in a range of designations, underpinning a rich natural and cultural heritage which is unique in the region, set within a historic landscape characterised by a patchwork of parks, farms, woodland and meadow, and straddled by the major urban centres of Belfast and Lisburn. In addition to the unique built, archaeological and industrial heritage, the Park provides an important green corridor, offering exceptional recreational and health benefits to local people and visitors alike.



Lagan Valley, within which LVRP is situated, was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) under the Amenity Lands Act (NI) 1965. Lagan Valley Regional Park was established in 1967 with the purpose of conserving the landscape and providing a recreational facility for the surrounding urban population (see Fig 2). It is one of nine AONBs in Northern Ireland and 49 in the United Kingdom. Under its

remit LVRP's objectives have developed in alignment with the broad objectives of AONB management:

- to protect, conserve and enhance the environment of the Lagan Valley Regional Park
- to conserve the landscape visual attractiveness, quality and features of the Regional Park
- to conserve the historic buildings, cultural heritage and promote quiet enjoyment of the Regional Park for the benefit of the general public



In addition, LVRP also undertakes a range of other duties. These include:

- To act in an advisory role to Government and other Departments
- to act as a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting the Regional Park

- to enhance facilities, engage with visitors and user groups and develop a greater understanding of the area through interpretation, education and contact with the general public

The first management plan for the Regional Park was developed in 1996 by the Department of Environment, Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), now the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). In line with best practice, subsequent management plans have been developed and implemented every five years.

The main vision, aims and priority themes of the Regional Park are laid out as follows:

Vision

“A Regional Park that offers a thriving, diverse and valued riverside heritage that welcomes exploration, learning and enjoyment whilst ensuring a sustainable environment for all.”

Our Aims

1. We will proactively conserve and manage the biodiversity in the Regional Park.
2. We will support and facilitate ongoing research and education on the area’s biodiversity and heritage.
3. We will encourage involvement of the community and develop volunteering in the Regional Park.
4. We will maintain and enhance the landscape quality of the Regional Park for the benefit of all.
5. We will proactively conserve and manage the cultural and built heritage of the Regional Park.
6. We will promote the benefits of green open spaces, within the area, for health and wellbeing.
7. We will support appropriate recreation activities, events and the development of sustainable tourism for the benefit of the region.

8. We will increase public awareness of the natural and cultural heritage throughout the region.

Priority Themes

The main themes associated with the Regional Park include.

- Biodiversity
- Visitors
- Community
- Landscape
- Heritage
- Health and Recreation



Strategic Policy Context

The development of this new five-year management plan for the Lagan Valley Regional Park reflects both the national and local legislative frameworks regarding habitat and heritage protection, and has been drafted with consideration to these policy and legislative settings. These are detailed below.

Primary Legislation

The '**Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011**', introduced new provisions and amended the 'Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985' to improve the protection of Northern Ireland's biodiversity. The Act required the DOE, now DAERA to publish lists of animal and plant species and of habitats that are considered to be of particular conservation priority in Northern Ireland.

Policy Framework:

Programme for Government

The draft 'Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government Framework 2016 – 2021' (currently in consultation stage), details an overall purpose which is to "*Improve wellbeing for all by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.*"

This framework is outcome-focussed and includes fourteen outcomes that are commensurate with LVRP Management objectives. Of these, the most relevant include:

- We live and work sustainably protecting the environment
- We enjoy long, healthy, active lives
- We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure
- We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit, and invest

The new LVRP plan can help contribute to these objectives, having a clear responsibility for environmental protection and enhancement of biodiversity, as well as offering an opportunity to provide social capital through enhanced recreational, health, leisure and skills offering.

Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs

Following the recent departmental restructuring, responsibility for environmental protection, including obligations under international and EU legislation, falls under the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

The key policy document “*Valuing Nature - A Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020*” identifies a number of issues relevant to the Management Plan. For example, an Ecosystem Services approach to the Regional Park is important, particularly in terms of urgent environmental management issues which have implications for wider society, such as supply of food and water, pollination and the mitigation of climate change. The document also highlights the importance of engaging with local communities and society and developing partnerships, an area in which LVRP maintains a strong and demonstrable track record.

In the context of diminishing departmental budgets and constrained funding opportunities, there is a growing need to grasp partnership opportunities, and take integrate actions to achieve common related goals.

The document also identifies the cultural, social and economic benefits of heritage, recreation and tourism and the new plan can focus on these benefits.

Department for Infrastructure

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) vision is outlined in ‘*Department for Infrastructure: Building for the Future*’ including the following strategic objectives:

- Shaping the region and promoting economic growth
- Developing our infrastructure in a sustainable way; and
- Connecting people to opportunities and services

LVRP provides a valuable supporting role to the remit of Inland Waterways, and the new plan can help develop new greenway linkages and community involvement and contribute to the management of the industrial infrastructure along the Lagan corridor. This applies in particular to the department’s ownership of the remaining sections of the Lagan Canal and Navigation and the Lagan Towpath. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan outlined a number of opportunities in its Policy OS1 for Community

Greenways and these are being further considered through Councils' community plans and the local development plans and link into the new LVRP plan.

Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland

This active Travel Strategy is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Executive's wider initiatives to improve public health and the environment. The vision set out in the strategy aims to put walking and cycling at the heart of local transport arrangements, encouraging healthier, less stressful and lower cost alternatives to the car for many shorter daily journeys. Again, the new LVRP plan must take this important area of health and well-being into consideration

Northern Ireland Changing Gear

This Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland' was published in 2015 and the 25-year strategy sets out an ambition to transform cycling in the North of Ireland with a vision to see the region become: "A community where people have the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle for everyday journeys". The new plan will highlight the importance of the cycle way which goes through the heart of the park and promote its use for both recreational and travel to work purposes.

Local Council Policy

It is also important that the new management plan reflects the priorities of the two council partners; Belfast City Council (BCC) and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC).

The draft "Belfast Agenda" sets out a new vision for Belfast in 2035, alongside a number of objectives, covering the following areas:

- Diversification and growth of the economy
- Increased visitor numbers
- Improved employability and skills
- Promoting welcome, safety and inclusion for all
- Improved education and training opportunities
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved facilities, activities and services
- Improved public transport, including sustainable transport objectives

- Improved recycling and energy efficiency
- Improved access to open and green spaces, and cultural assets

Many of these areas such as health and well-being and access will reflect the new priorities within the new LVRP plan.

The LCCC Corporate Plan 2015/17

This document identifies a number of strategic themes and priorities, including ‘Community & Culture’, ‘Strong Sustainable Economy and Growth’, and ‘Environment’, which links directly to the work of LVRP. Council priorities include providing a clean, healthy environment, maintaining parks and open spaces, promoting a more physically active and healthier community and working with partners with the aim of improving health and well-being for residents.

Planning

LVRP operates within a strong precedent of protection, governed by planning legislation from the Belfast Urban Area Plans (1969 and 2001) to the Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan (2005) and more recently the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (2015). Whilst these latter policies still form a framework for development and planning, planning powers have been transferred to the Councils and will be directed by the respective Community Plans and Local Development Plans for each of the two Councils.

The Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Area Plan 2005 identified specific aims which included the protection and enhancement of the natural and man-made heritage of the Regional Park, the conservation of its essential character, and the encouragement of responsible public use and sustainability.

The Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy 2015 identified, “the Lagan Valley Regional Park as part of the significant natural setting of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) and recognised the need to protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets”. It contains guidance that “these areas should be safeguarded, but opportunities sought where appropriate, to increase access to them for residents and tourists, consistent with protecting their integrity and value”. Again, the new LVRP plan will take into consideration these new

important planning policies and guidelines, particularly in relation to the protection of the area's landscape character.

Key Stakeholder Responsibilities

LVRP is managed in partnership by a number of organisations, with funding from LCCC, BCC, NIEA and DfI. Site management is the responsibility of the two Councils, Forest Service, National Trust and Rivers Agency within their respective areas.

Additional partners include Sustrans, Transport NI and Lagan Navigation Trust, who support the links to broader transport networks and projects. A number of partners work with LVRP to support mutual aims; these include The Conservation Volunteers, Butterfly Conservation NI, the British Trust for Ornithology, NI Badger Group, Lagan Rivers Trust and NI Bat Group.

The ability to build partnerships, build capacity and support mutual aims is understood to be a central feature of LVRP's past and future success, so that together the sum of the parts far outweighs each individual contribution.

Day-to-day management is undertaken by a team of 4 staff, who are able to respond directly to the needs of users on a daily basis, whilst providing additional support to partners. These include investigating issues and liaising with partners, developing initiatives to tackle problems, delivery of events, promotion and support for group visits.

Both councils are significant land-owners within LVRP, which plays an important co-ordinating role in linking the councils and their partners, in supporting the management of key sites. These key sites include:

- Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park (BCC)
- Barnett Demesne (BCC)
- Clement Wilson Park (BCC)
- Lagan Meadows (BCC)
- Castle Gardens (LCCC)
- Derriaghy Glen (LCCC)
- McIlroy Park (LCCC).

The Lagan Towpath and the remaining canal infrastructure is owned by the Department for Infrastructure, with responsibility to manage and maintain this corridor. The Rivers Agency manages the river system and carries out supportive maintenance of the towpath for the DfI.

LVRP provides an important supporting role in cleansing and monitoring the towpath as well as acting as an important first point of contact for the public. NIEA is the statutory regulator for Belvoir ASSI. Forest Service owns and manages Belvoir Park Forest and Hydebank Wood with support from LVRP, particularly in the area of community engagement. Other areas are owned or managed by other NGOs, including the National Trust, which owns the Minnowburn site, and the Woodland Trust which owns and manages woodland areas at Old Warren and Belvoir.

Priority Themes

From analysis of previous LVRP plans and from consultation with partners and the public, it was agreed that the following six priority themes will form the basis of LVRP's new work. The proposed actions and outcomes of the new plan will be intrinsically linked to these themes.

Biodiversity

LVRP is landscape of exceptional natural and biodiversity significance, reflected in its partial designation as an ASSI. It comprises a number of diverse habitats, each with specific management requirements.

Parkland

Parkland and wood pasture habitats with associated species, make up a large portion of the overall area, and make a strong contribution to the unique landscape character of the Park. Oak is the dominant species with beech, ash, lime, horse-chestnut, sycamore, hawthorn and occasional sweet chestnut. Belvoir Park Forest in particular supports one of the largest concentrations of open ancient and veteran trees in Northern Ireland and also contains the oldest known oak trees in Ireland, with some specimens dated to 1642. The open-grown trees and shrubs have significant amounts of standing and fallen deadwood, providing a specialist habitat for rare and less common species of invertebrates, fungi and lichens.

Wetland

There are a number of high-quality wetland habitats throughout LVRP. These include Lagan Meadows Local Nature Reserve and stretches of disused canal (including wet woodland at Aberdelghy) and the recently-created wetland areas at Morelands Meadow, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park and Minnowburn. These habitats accommodate a number of associated fauna and flora, for example, Lagan Meadows supports snipe, woodcock, grasshopper warbler, sedge warbler and reed bunting, amphibians such as frogs and the common newt, together with invertebrates such as banded demoiselle, blue-tailed and azure damselfly, orange-tip, ringlet and cryptic wood white butterfly. Flora include tussock sedge, reed mace, common spotted orchid, lady's smock and yellow flag iris.

River

The River Lagan and remnants of the Lagan Navigation run through the heart of the Regional Park, providing an important habitat for a variety of waterfowl, including moorhen, coot, grey wagtail, mallard, kingfisher, heron and dipper, and otter, which is a Priority Species. Insects, include common darter dragonfly, blue-tailed damselfly and speckled wood, green-veined white and small tortoiseshell butterfly. Common plants also include cow parsley, woody nightshade, marsh woundwort, arrowhead and water lily. All 8 species of bat found in Northern Ireland have been recorded in Minnowburn (National Trust data). Salmon, brown trout and sea trout are also present in the river. Recently salmon and brown trout were released into the catchment area by Belfast Hills Partnership and Lagan Rivers Trust respectively.



River Quality

The Lagan River and its catchment are covered by the 'North Eastern River Basin Management Plan', published by DAERA in December 2015 under the 'Water Framework Directive'. The main opportunities identified relate to reduction in levels of ammonia elements and nutrient enrichment. In addition, improvements in the percentage of dissolved oxygen and invertebrate numbers would help the overall water quality of the river. Reducing bank erosion could also help to reduce sedimentation in the river system.

The River Basin Plan sets out a series of measures aimed at improving water quality and addressing issues such as river habitat and barriers to fish migration. There are opportunities for partnership working to deliver improvements within the Lagan Catchment particularly in the areas of salmonid enhancement and the possible creation of otter holts.

Biodiversity Management Plan

Lagan Valley Regional Park works in partnership with BCC and LCCC to support their work on biodiversity and will contribute to their Local Biodiversity Action Plans. Key

themes include protecting local and national species, raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity and getting people involved through partnership.

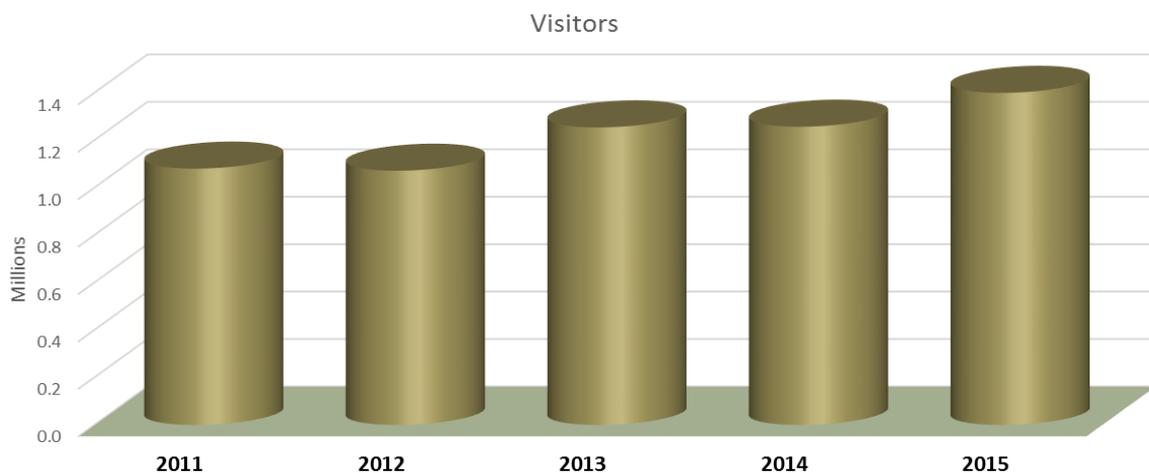
Visitors

There are several points of access for users, although not all record visitor numbers. Footfall is monitored along the towpath and some individual sites within the Park are monitored by partner organisations (see Fig 4). Thus, the records shown below represent only a proportion of the overall LVRP user numbers.

User Statistics

User numbers along the Lagan Towpath have been steadily increasing over the last ten years, reaching 1.3 million in 2015 (Fig 3). A recent survey in 2012 indicated that the majority of users are from the immediate area (63%) and then the wider urban areas of Belfast (16%) and Lisburn (10%). The main activities include walking (53%), cycling (31%), running (11%) and dog walking (5%). Data collected from LVRP and partner organisations in 2015 indicate that the most popular places for visitors are the Shaw's Bridge area and the concentration of facilities at LVRP Visitor Centre, including the barge, cafe and lock house; 227,394 people visited and used this site in 2015. The next most visited area is Belvoir Park Forest (217,000 visitors in 2015), followed by Minnowburn (119,925 visitors in 2015), whilst the importance of heritage is evidenced by high numbers of visitors to the Giant's Ring monument (115,192 visitors in 2015).

Fig 3. Lagan Towpath User Data 2015 (Source LVRP)



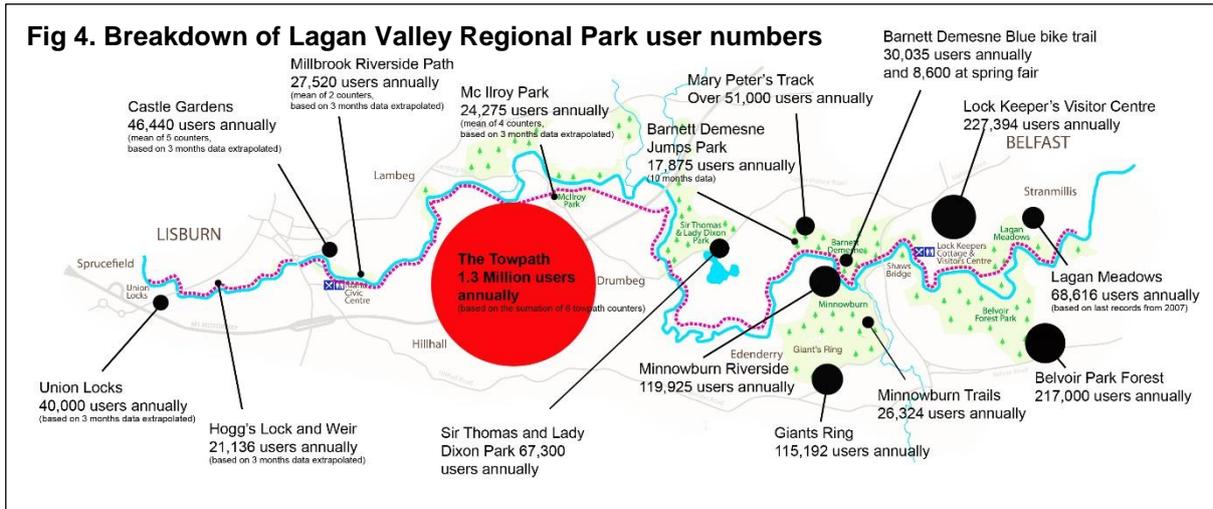
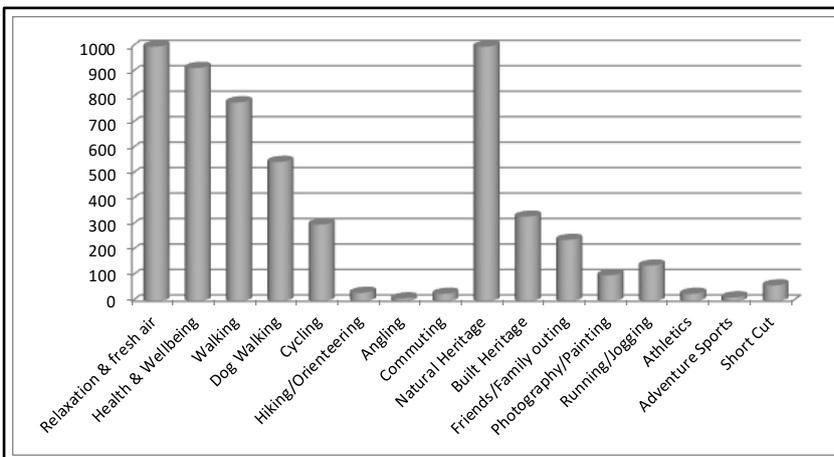


Fig.5 below details the reasons why people visit the Park. This information can help guide future priority actions. Opportunities also exist to collect and collate data from other partners across the Regional Park. This data will provide a more informed picture for all partners, supporting a connected approach to managing visitors.

Fig 5. Reasons Why People Use the Lagan Towpath 2012



Recreational Users

LVRP offers a wide range of visitor attractions, to appeal to different users types of users. The visitor offer includes public parks, demesnes, and archaeological sites (including some of national significance), a diverse and species-rich landscapes which offers potential for recreation, leisure and leaning, and open spaces of special biodiversity interest, such as Lagan Meadows Local Nature Reserve and Belvoir ASSI. Special events held in the LVRP include the International Rose Trials during Rose Week at Sir

Thomas and Lady Dixon Park and the canoe slalom at Shaw's Bridge, which has been used by the Olympic team for training.

The Regional Park delivers an annual events programme with around 30 events, engaging over 1000 people with the areas biodiversity, heritage and local interest as well as contributing to partner events such as the BCC Spring Fair and the National Trusts Gig in the Garden.

The restoration of the Lock Keeper's Cottage and Lock No. 3, funded mainly through the HLF Laganscape Scheme, has proved an immense success with visitors, which could be replicated at other locations in the Park.

The Lagan Navigation Trust has proposals to restore the Lagan Navigation which runs through the heart of the Regional Park. This would have significant potential to increase recreational activities and enhance facilities within LVRP. Plans for the Lock 1, Stranmillis Gateway project have already been developed with Belfast City Council and will form the first step towards the proposed opening of the navigation to Lisburn and eventually to Lough Neagh. There are strong opportunities to work with the Lagan Navigation Trust body.

Connectivity and Sustainable Transport Use

The towpath, which forms the main corridor through LVRP, is not just a recreational asset, but also provides an attractive commuter route between the cities of Belfast and Lisburn, providing an important sustainable transport option. Although there can be a conflict between those using the towpath for recreation and those using it as a cycle-way, which need to be balanced, opportunities exist to connect to other greenways and cycle-ways that are proposed under Community Plans and the Local Development Plans (LDPs).

Promoting and branding

Whilst many people visit the Regional Park, they may not be aware of the role and responsibility of LVRP, or of the valuable work of LVRP staff. Multimedia technology presents an opportunity to promote and highlight the work being carried out, reaching existing and new audiences, and strengthening the LVRP brand. As the Regional Park does not have a marketing and promotions officer there is an opportunity in the

new plan to recommend working closely alongside the marketing sections of the respective Councils.

Community

The character of the Regional Park is deeply connected with the communities who live in and near it, many of whom use it for recreation and economic purposes. The communities who live around the Regional Park boundary represent a varied demographic, ranging from well-educated, relatively high-income households to areas of relative disadvantage. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 identifies and ranks just under 1000 domain areas, in terms of the most to the least deprived areas.

The following areas close to the LVRP boundary are ranked relatively highly in terms of deprivation (Fig 6). Targeted development of outreach, health-based and community engagement projects in these areas would contribute to the meeting of Government targets to reduce social inequality. There are real opportunities for the new plan to help create opportunities for people from these deprived areas to get more involved in active conservation based projects that improve their health and well-being and create a greater community spirit.

Fig 6. Deprived areas in and around the LVRP (Source NISRA 2010)

AREA	RANK	TOP %
Upper Malone 2	99	10%
Minnowburn	164	20%
Hilden 1	145	20%
Ballynafeigh 3	217	40%
Lambeg 3	304	50%

One of the most recent and important factors in developing sustainable communities in and around the Regional Park is the new responsibility for community planning that has accompanied the local government reform. Under the new community planning legislation, BCC and LCCC will lead the community planning process and work with a wide range of partners, including statutory organisations, businesses, educational institutions, communities and the voluntary sector, to develop a long-term plan for

improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of both Council areas. It is imperative that the LVRP and the new plan has a strong input into these new processes, ensuring that that the Regional Park provides maximum benefit for all of the people of Belfast, Lisburn and the surrounding areas.

One of the major strengths of LVRP has been in capacity building and providing opportunities for involvement to local communities and volunteers, particularly in conservation and habitat protection. In recognition of this invaluable contribution, LVRP was awarded the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service in 2013 and is accredited with the “Investing in Volunteers” standard. The new plan should build on this innovative and strong community engagement ethos of the LVRP.



Landscape

The Evolution of the Lagan Valley Landscape

The Lagan Valley is a broad valley lying within the greater Belfast area, flanked by Antrim Hills to the north and the hills of Co. Down in the south. The valley is 3-4 miles wide and is part of a geological fault line, floored with Triassic sandstones beneath glacial deposits of sand, gravel and boulder clay, and subsequently well-draining and fertile. The River Lagan runs through the heart of the Lagan Valley.

The earliest traces of human settlement in the Lagan Valley date back at least 5000 years, as indicated by scattered archaeological remains, particularly the impressive Giant's Ring henge and megalithic tomb. There are also traces of enclosed farmsteads, known as Rathes, dating from the early Christian period and including a fine example in Clement Wilson Park.

The Plantation of Ulster ushered in a period of intensive landscape management and change, including deforestation, the development of new field structures and farmsteads, and the evolution of urban centres such as Lisburn. The relative political stability of the eighteenth century encouraged agricultural advances and subsequent economic growth, resulting in the laying out of larger demesnes and estate farmlands. In the nineteenth century, the burgeoning linen industry took hold, and the landscape was subject to considerable change to facilitate its growth. The fertile Lagan Valley was a key area of linen production, providing ideal opportunities for water power and transportation as the industrial revolution took hold, and the city of Belfast developed close by. Alongside the erection of new mills and factories, the Lagan hinterland became host to grand linen-merchant's houses and bleach greens.

The development of the Lagan Navigation had a particularly significant impact on the landscape, with the alteration of the river, the building of new canal sections and associated infrastructure including 17 locks and 14 lock houses along its length. The Navigation was abandoned in 1954 but has left a rich industrial built heritage in the valley landscape; one of the lock-keeper's cottages has been restored and today forms a focal point of the LVRP visitors centre.

The continuing increase in the population of Belfast in the 20th century also had an impact on the character of the Lagan Valley landscape, with improved housing programmes resulting in more urban character in places.

Current Landscape Character

The topography of the landscape within LVRP contributes strongly to its exceptional aesthetic value, forming a linear green corridor of diverse landscape characteristics flanked by hills at N and S. Although in close proximity to urban settlement, and effectively linking the two cities of Belfast and Lisburn, LVRP retains an open and semi-rural character, encompassing a number of individual character areas and habitat types. These include wetlands along the river, mixed woodland, open meadows, former estate parklands, and recreational areas including sports facilities and a golf courses. It also accommodates improved and semi-improved farmland with hedged medium-scale pastoral fields and numerous hedgerows, trees and the Lagan towpath which forms an important recreational route along the river. Belvoir Park includes the remains of a historic demesne and formal garden, which is partially designated as an 'Area of Special Scientific Interest' for its parkland and wood pasture habitats and associated species.

The following is an overview of landscape types within LVRP:

Parkland

- Historic demesnes
- Woodlands and trees
- Parkland golf courses
- Ornamental grounds
- Playing fields

River Corridor

- Alluvial grazing meadows
- Meandering river channels
- Riverside scrub and woodland
- Wet grassland and marsh

- Canal cuts and industrial buildings

Estate and Farmlands

- Hills
- Large arable and smaller hedged fields
- Mature beech
- Large country houses
- Scattered farmsteads
- Ornamental grounds

Towns and Villages

- Small towns and villages connected to industrial past
- Unique architecture and character to town and village buildings
- Encroachment of larger cities of Belfast and Lisburn
- Smaller, individual, historic, industrial buildings

The Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) 2015 also identified a number of important key landscape characteristics of the Lagan Valley and the Regional Park. The following abbreviated list includes some of those that relate to Lagan Valley Regional Park:

Threats to the character of the landscape

The consultation process with the stakeholders for this Management Plan, together with the 2016 Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment, identified a number of significant threats and pressures on the Regional Park:

Development and urban expansion

Urban expansion has been one of the most important factors affecting the character of the Lagan Valley and the Regional Park. Issues include:

- Expansion of urban development onto green-field sites at the Regional Park edges.
- Demolitions or alterations to listed buildings within the Regional Park
- Condition of urban open spaces including parks and gardens
- Development of structures on the adjacent hill slopes and summits.

The new plan must help address this concern, there is potential to become more actively engaged in the development of the Community Plans and Local Development Plans within the two Councils.

Changes to land management

The intensification of agriculture has also resulted in a loss of many of the natural margins of the old field systems and the loss of wet grasslands and meadows nearer the river corridor, leading to a general decrease in biodiversity. Concerns include:

- Increase in scrub and carr on wet meadows as a result of changing grazing practice
- Nitrate, phosphate and other pollution input to river system
- Loss of selected forest species through infectious pathogens

It is estimated that 43% of land in the Regional Park is used for agricultural purposes with another 18% in private ownership and the remaining 39% publicly owned land. There is a potential for greater work and engagement to be carried out by the LVRP staff with private landowners and farmers to address biodiversity loss and to set up new structures to introduce new environmental farm scheme investment. The new plan must identify new engagement structures with farmers and landowners

Visitor management

The number of people using the Lagan Towpath and visiting the Regional Park has increased significantly in recent times (20% increase from 2011 to 2015), thus creating a potential conflict between conservation priorities and user needs, which must be balanced. The new plan must help to monitor this expansion and identify new ways to manage any new excessive growth. Consideration is being given through community planning to connect it to other greenway routes and the new plan must examine new ways to dissipate and link users to other walking and cycle routes.

Invasive Species

Invasive alien species (IAS) are a significant and specific threat to the biodiversity and ecological balance of the Park. Ecological impacts include the loss of native fauna and flora, predation by animals such as mink on small mammal species, the spreading of disease such as the squirrel pox virus to red squirrels carried by grey squirrels, competition for resources such as Japanese knotweed and laurel competing with native plants. Other effects include causing human health problems such as the blistering from giant hogweed. Other species threats identified include the spread of laurel, rhododendron, bamboo and sycamore, as well as new invaders including floating pennywort, freshwater shrimp, zebra mussel, Muntjac deer and American mink. The LVRP have developed an Alien Invasive Action Plan in order to proactively manage this problem and this must be incorporated into the new plan.

Giant Hogweed



Some trees such as larch and ash are under threat from infectious pathogens. The Lagan Valley Regional Park Area Plan 2005 estimated that 12% of the total area of the Regional Park is under tree cover, with a wide variety of trees (over 120 species) dominated by beech, sycamore, oak and ash. The potential impact of pathogens on the character of this sensitive landscape is difficult to underestimate.

Addressing Threats to the Landscape and Environment

Substantial conservation work was carried out by LVRP through the HLF funded Laganscape initiative. Much of this legacy is continuing in terms of community and volunteer involvement in a variety of projects and these must be identified in the new plan also. Projects include;

- control of Himalayan balsam and Alien Invasive Species such as Japanese knotweed,
- the regeneration of ancient oak trees through community planting at Belvoir Wood,
- the monitoring of grey and red squirrel populations
- creation of wetland habitat at Minnowburn and Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park.

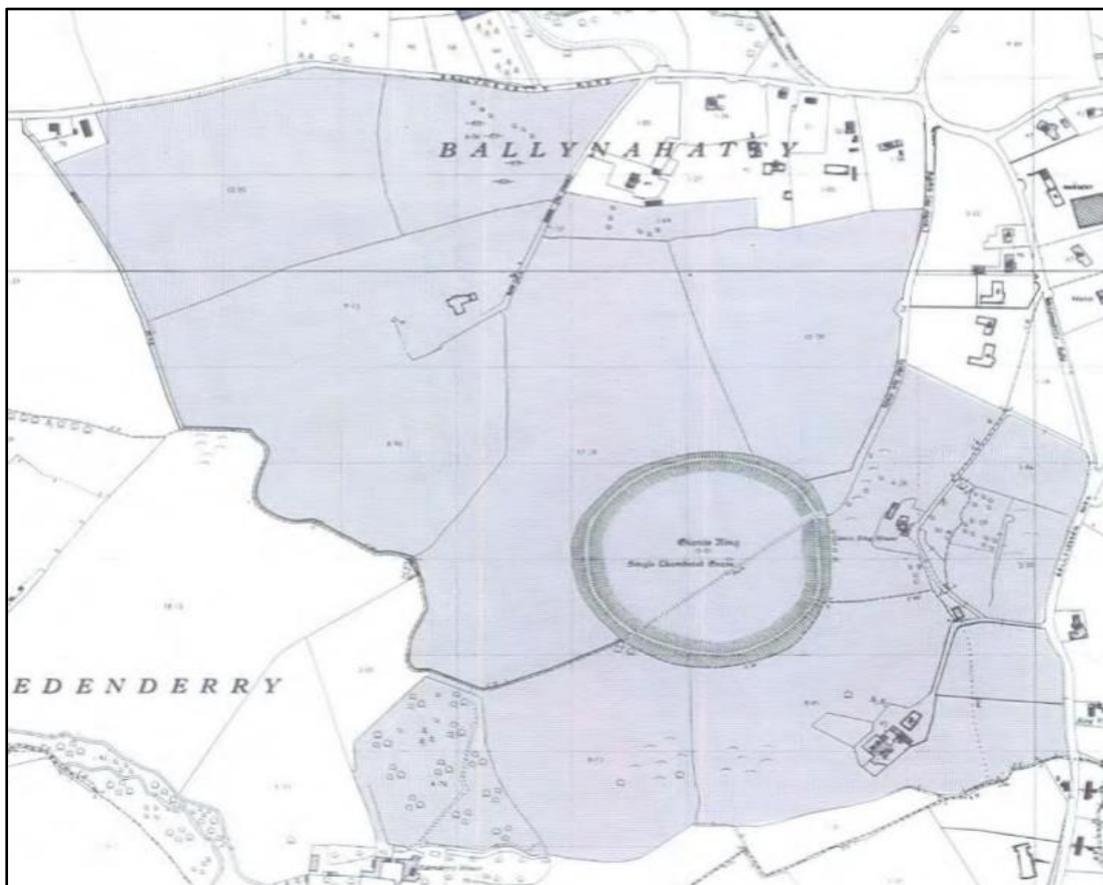
The potential exists to build on the acknowledged success of these projects, particularly the continued creation of grassland and wetland which have shown decline in the Regional Park.

Heritage

There are a number of important archaeological sites and monuments within the Regional Park which are individually significant within the landscape and in a wider national context. The Giant's Ring (Fig 7) is perhaps the archaeological jewel, comprising a large bank and ditch earthwork, with the remains of a passage tomb in the centre. It dates to about 2700BC and is set in the context of open fields, fences and hedges. The monument is designated an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest, and it is also a Scheduled Monument in State Care, under the care of Department for Communities.

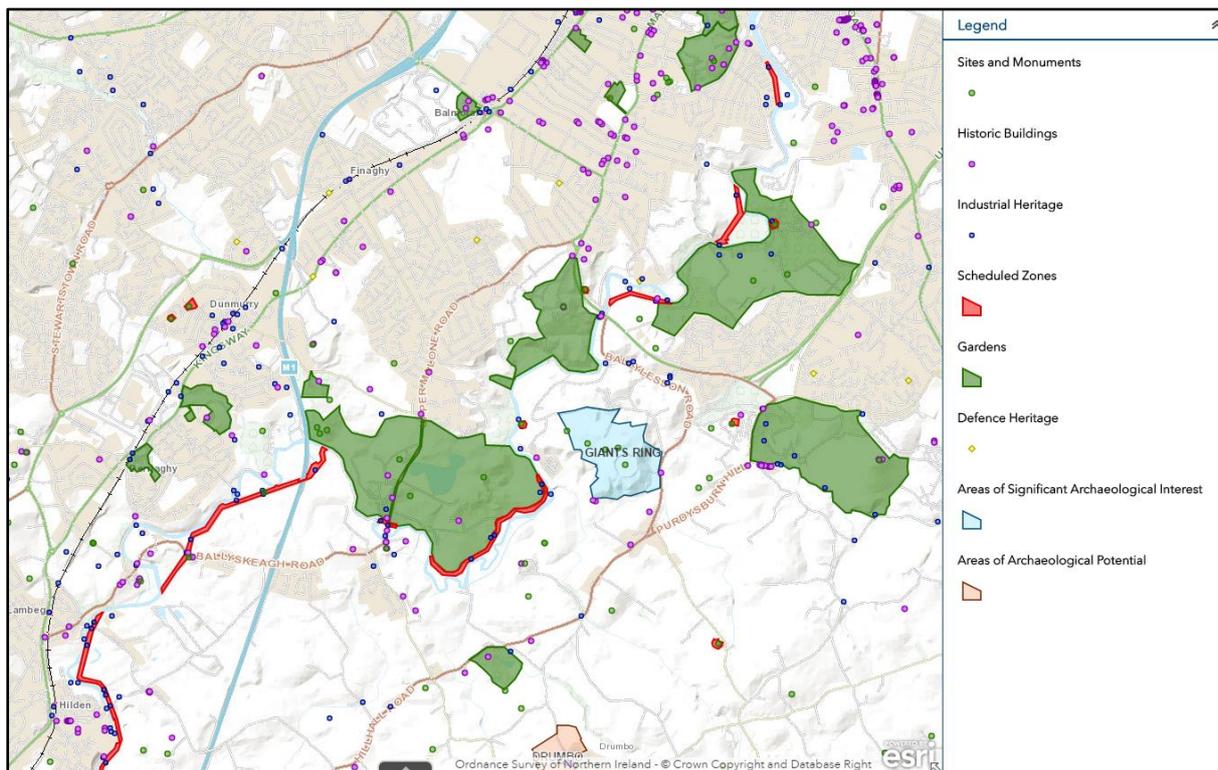
Knowledge of the monument has been enhanced by recent studies identifying a complex of related adjacent Neolithic sites. There is however room in the new plan to explore and research this fascinating area more and to involve the local community in its protection, linking with QUB Centre for Archaeological Field Studies

Fig 7. The Giant's Ring Archaeological Site. (Source DFC HED)



Other important archeological monuments within the Regional Park (Fig 8) include a motte-and-bailey in Belvoir Park Forest, several raths and Neolithic burial sites. There is potential in the new plan to develop community based archaeological investigations, in partnership with the Centre for Archeological Fieldwork, at Queen’s University, and the Department for Communities (DfC), Historic Environment Division.

Fig 8. Historic Buildings and Sites in Wider Lagan Valley Area 2015 (Source DFC, HED)



There are a number of important industrial buildings within LVRP that are listed or scheduled. In particular, nine sections of the Lagan Navigation have been scheduled. The history of the Regional Park has been well documented through the stories of local people linking heritage to the community and there are opportunities in the new plan to identify some of these buildings and see if they could be restored and used in a more modern context.

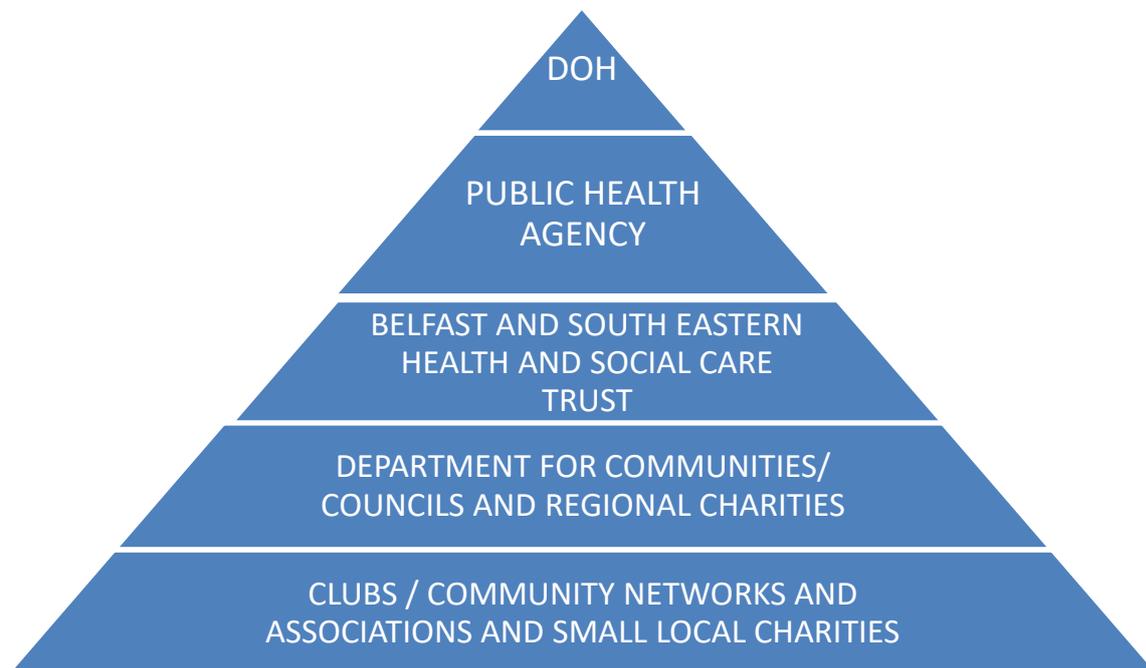
Lock and Lock Keepers House, Lagan Canal



Health and Recreation

There are strong opportunities within LVRP and the new plan to link with wider strategies for health and wellbeing, set out by LCCC, BCC and health authorities. The existing structures of health service provision in the Belfast and the Lisburn and Castlereagh areas, is illustrated in Fig 9 below:

Fig 9. Structural Hierarchy of Health Organisations in LVRP area



Any future potential LVRP health and well-being projects should take cognisance of these structures, seeking synthesis with strategic objectives and aims of the potential funding bodies identified in the section on funding in the Action Plan. Feedback from the variety of health bodies indicated opportunities to work with LVRP in developing specific well-being programmes based on encouraging access and increased use of the park. The importance of collaboration and building up a consortium of partners was also highlighted. Currently, the majority of health and wellbeing projects are administered through the Public Health Agency and the Belfast and South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, as well as the Councils. LVRP and the new plan has clear potential to play a strong contributory role in the delivery of such projects,

including opportunities for leisure, exercise and activity-focussed events that support wider health objectives. These might reasonably include the following:

- Increase connections with the community through bringing them together to work and volunteer in the Regional Park
- Increase active lifestyles by taking exercise in the Regional Park environment through conservation work and *Green Gym* type projects
- Increase people’s awareness of natural beauty of the Regional Park and habitats and species and importance of increased mindfulness
- Increase people’s knowledge and awareness of Regional Park and decrease the urban disconnection from natural environment
- Help development of some basic life and practical conservation skills through skills and apprenticeship type projects
- Connecting people with mental and physical disability to community

These indicators can be used to help identify the main objectives and outcomes associated with any follow up new health projects and actions identified within this new plan. Other potential funders to be linked with health and well-being projects include:

- Big Lottery Fund
- Peace 4 programmes
- DAERA Rural Development Programme
- Landfill Tax Funds
- Sport NI
- Esme Fairburn Trust
- Ulster Garden Villages Fund.

Both Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council have identified the importance of developing and promoting health and well-being for local people.

The Belfast Strategic Partnership supported by the Belfast Health Development Unit is made up of staff from Belfast City Council, the Public Health Agency and the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust and is responsible for the delivery of “The Framework for Action Improving Health and Wellbeing, Reducing Health Inequalities 2011 - 2015.”

The key themes of the Framework for Action are:

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Alcohol and drugs
- Early years / early interventions
- Lifelong learning
- Regenerating living places and healthy spaces

Opportunities within the new plan therefore exist for strong strategic synergies and linkages with these priority themes but in particular priority area 5: Regenerating living places and healthy spaces.

The LCCC, Leisure & Community Services Departmental Plan, October 2015 - March 2017 also identified one of its four main priority themes as Health and Well-Being. Again, the new plan should therefore link closely with this theme to create joint synergies and identify new health based actions.



Good Governance

The highest tier of the Regional Park's governance is a Board of Directors that are responsible for the development of the LVRP vision and strategic objectives. Operationally, the Management Committee is responsible for the implementation and co-ordination of the management. There are four staff members carrying out the day to day management and maintenance duties of LVRP.

LVRP's strategic vision identifies four clear guiding principles that underpin all governance and activities. These are:

- i) Partnership and Inclusivity
- ii) Conservation and Protection
- iii) Value for Money and Transparency
- iv) Sustainability

Whilst governance is not included as a section in the action plan, certain elements are critical to the continued structure and good governance of LVRP:

Committee and Board meetings need to be held regularly and the provision of company secretariat to Lagan Valley Regional Park Limited are an essential part of governance. In order to service the company and charity, regular filing needs to be provided to Companies House and to Inland Revenue as well as updates to key company documentation; Articles of Association, Memorandum of Association and Terms of Reference for directors.

Appropriate staffing structures and HR support including the provision of accommodation and all related overheads are acknowledged as essential to the operation of the Regional Park.

Sub-groups and focus groups must be set up and maintained as needed and where appropriate to focus on particular issues or to tackle specific problems.

Effective financial management systems are required including book keeping, filing accounts, banking, regular reports, procurement and purchasing and the engagement of an accountant to deliver an external audit to an appropriate professional standard and providing abbreviated accounts in accordance with company and charities law.

Charitable Status should be maintained so that the Regional Park is in a position to apply for funding and support above and beyond its historic sources.

Political awareness of the Regional Park is important. The functions and achievements of the LVRP must be highlighted and there is a need to develop political support from local politicians and senior official contacts. This is an important role for the Board and the Park Management both in terms of local and central government.

Strong leadership is needed to provide good direction. The Chairperson and Board represent the highest tier of governance in the Regional Park and they must be actively engaged with other partner and funding bodies and this structure must be maintained and serviced.

Action Plan Introduction

The following six themes were agreed after a detailed policy and needs analysis and feedback from partners, funders and stakeholders after consultation. They reflect the key focus areas set out in the Regional Park's ten-year strategic vision. The Regional Park's aims (originally 8 in number) have been condensed into six strategic aims to align with the six themes. More specific detailed and costed actions, targets and outcomes under each of these themes are detailed in the action plan. This is the main working tool associated with the new plan. Specific new potential shelf ready projects are also detailed in appendix 1

Theme One: Biodiversity

Strategic Aim 1: To proactively manage, protect and improve the biodiversity in the Regional Park

The Regional Park has a rich mosaic of habitats from wetland, park woodland, river, and meadow. It also contains a variety of important species in need of protection. Some of the habitats and species are under threat from a variety of issues including development pressures and invasive species and there is a need to take practical action to support the rich biodiversity.

Theme Two: Visitors

Strategic Aim 2: To manage and monitor visitors to the Regional Park and support events and sustainable tourism

The monitoring and management of visitors is fundamental to the daily running of the Park, but wider tourism based projects will now also be considered. The theme includes areas such as gathering user data, monitoring usage, access, and providing signage and interpretative information. It is also important to enhance awareness of the Regional Park and AONB status of the wider area through promotion and publicity.

Theme Three: Community

Strategic Aim 3: To encourage involvement of the community and to develop volunteering in the Regional Park

This is probably one of the most important themes, strongly linked to the corporate objectives of the two Councils and wider social objectives. The theme seeks to maximise community involvement, volunteering and community skills development, and tackle social disadvantage.

Theme Four: Landscape

Strategic Aim 4: To proactively protect and celebrate the character of the Regional Park and AONB Landscape

It is important to monitor and protect the landscape character of LVRP in a holistic manner, working with planners through the Community Plans and Local Area Plans, and continuing to assess any potential impacts on this unique and special place. The landscape value of the Regional Park and the Lagan Valley AONB should be considered in the whole.

Theme Five: Heritage

Strategic Aim 5: To protect and celebrate the rich historic and cultural legacy of the Regional Park

The landscape of the LVRP is significantly enhanced by its built, archeological and cultural heritage. One of the most important ancient monuments in Northern Ireland is the Giant's Ring. The industrial heritage of the Lagan Valley has left a unique legacy in terms of the Lagan Navigation, the parks, demesnes and large houses that remain. Much of the character of the small towns and villages within LVRP has also been shaped by this legacy, and should be protected.

Theme Six: Health and Recreation

Strategic Aim Six: To promote the benefits of green open spaces, within the area, for health and wellbeing and to support appropriate recreational activities

Increased use of the facilities in the Regional Park, as a tool for improving physical and mental health, should be a priority. Stronger links with the Councils, Public Health Agency and Health Trusts should be developed. The recreational potential of LVRP is closely linked with health objectives and positive use of open greenspaces.

Funding the Action Plan

The future financial sustainability of the Regional Park has an impact on its ability to carry out all of the objectives and outcomes identified in the action plan. There is a need primarily for the Regional Park Manager and the Board to identify and apply for other potential project funding streams on top of the main funding it receives. Whilst Brexit may close many EU opportunities, it is important to remember that there is still a two-year window and that it is very unlikely that funding will also just be immediately turned off but rather reduced in a tapered fashion. There are also opportunities to apply for development grants or management fees associated with the running of programmes.

The Regional Park completed delivery of a large HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme in 2014. It has also delivered projects through the Rural Development Fund and Challenge Fund which represented an important additional investment. Together these sources have greatly multiplied the value of the co-funders contributions. The Regional Park continues to seek other funding sources and has been proactive in considering options for diversification.

Funding Considerations

Many grant programmes cannot be availed by Council's and are specifically targeted towards smaller community based NGO type organisations and charities. The LVRP therefore has an opportunity to attract investment into their Council Districts. There is a potential to look at other funding streams outside traditional sources whilst developing their potential to support the remit of the Regional Park. It is important to note that the Regional Park has a proven track record in applying for and successfully managing major funding streams such as the HLF Lagscape Scheme. The following is a list of potential funding streams for consideration.

- 1) Parts of the Regional Park are eligible for Rural Development Funding. The Lagan Rural Partnership Local Action Group may offer opportunities for areas such as small-scale tourism development and events, business innovation and skills development, or a new community service centre provision.

2) Rural Development Programme under the Environmental Farm Scheme Landscape Group Initiative may support projects developed through an LVRP forum of landowners and farmers or simply help individual large farms with priority landscapes.

3) There is also the potential to set up and develop a farm based supply group under the Agri-Food Co-operation Scheme, within the Rural Development Programme. Examples could include a new wild food or traditional cattle supply chain.

4) Main stream Interreg funding opportunities exist either individually or in partnership with other bodies.

5) The EU Peace IV programme may not at first appear to relate to the work of the Regional Park. However, the areas of natural, built and cultural heritage have all strong cross-over appeals to both side of the community and there are opportunities to be explored here. Priority areas include Shared Education, Children & Young people, Shared Spaces and Services and Building Positive Relations at a Local Level.

6) There are opportunities to develop relationships with the Department for Communities to engage with disadvantaged community groups on a variety of proposals that will address health and education inequalities. Programmes the LVRP could link into include, the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP).

7) The conservation elements of the Regional Park, relating to habitat creation and management, could support proposals either under the NIEA Natural Environment Fund, a HLF Landscape type scheme - Stage 2, or an integrated landscape based Environmental Farm Scheme. One potential large-scale project may also include working in close partnership with the Forestry Service to develop and implement the ASSI Management Plan for Belvoir Park with a focus on working closely with the local disadvantaged communities.

8) Another potential larger project would be to work with DfC, Historic Environment Division (HED) to broaden the Giant's Ring Conservation Management Plan and include a wider research survey and community based archaeological excavation. The built, geological, archaeological and cultural heritage of the Regional Park has potential for investment and project development. The Historic Environment Division

within the Department for Communities intends to open up a new Environment Heritage Grants Programme that could be availed of by the LVRP.

Community Change NI Funding Review

In July 2015 the LVRP carried out a funding review facilitated through Community Change NI and a range of suggestions from all partners was recorded with those projects with most potential identified. Opportunities were identified in the three areas of restricted funding, unrestricted funding and charitable donations. These included:

1) There are a number of trusts that could present potential opportunities for a range of projects to be delivered. Examples were identified in the funding review above and include Esme Fairburn Trust, Ulster Garden Villages, Garfield Weston Foundation and the landfill tax Alpha Plus Programmes. Likewise, the two Councils have smaller event grant schemes which LVRP would be eligible to apply to.

2) Other options for income generation identified in the funding review are small business proposals and projects. Suggestions included a tree and plant nursery, car park charges, renting out restored small buildings, tour guides, event charges, campsite, bike hire and additional service level agreements with partners.

3) Charitable donations could come through gift aid, legacy giving, online giving, crowd funding and donation boxes. Merchandising LVRP products also has a potential to bring in small funding through the sales of badges, books, activity packs, postcards and membership schemes.

4) Another opportunity for the Regional Park is to develop links to business either through sponsorship or charitable activities. This might involve businesses representation on the Regional Park's board of directors, recruiting business directors and working with Business in the Community to explore further linkage options.

Evaluation

A mid-term evaluation should be carried out in the summer of year three, identifying how outcomes and outputs have been achieved and reviewing how the actions have been implemented to identify any areas where efficiency can be improved. Recommendations for any consequent changes and improvements would then be made. A full detailed final evaluation will be carried out in the summer of 2021. This will follow partner guidelines and will focus on the effectiveness of all of the projects and the full five-year management plan as a whole and will make reference to future maintenance and legacy requirements of the Regional Park. The action plan will be used as the main working tool for gathering information and monitoring progress on a day to day basis.

Lagan Valley Regional Park Heritage Guides



Action Plan

The following Action Plan details the objectives to be delivered over the five-year period from 2017 to 2022. Outcomes, timescales, partners and estimated costs associated with the plan are shown and will act as the main working tool for staff, committee and board members. In relation to actions involving Belfast City Council, it will be necessary to obtain prior Committee approval. Lead partners who have a key role in delivery of each action are shown in bold, while the others will provide a supporting role. All of the objectives have quantifiable targets to assist in monitoring and the evaluation of outcomes. Each of the six themes has an accompanying strategic aim, supported by the relevant objectives in that section. At the end of each section are a number of stand-alone projects (shaded light brown) that sit outside the Action Plan for day to day work of LVRP staff. They have been listed as projects that could be delivered if additional funding sources are sourced. Ten of these have been further selected and developed into 'shelf-ready projects' – see Appendix 1

Theme One: Biodiversity						
Strategic Aim 1: To proactively manage, protect and improve the biodiversity in the Regional Park						
Objective	Targets	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead Partner in Bold	Cost	
1.1 Maintain recently-created species-rich grasslands	Two grassland sites at Minnowburn and Lock Keeper's Cottage	Species-rich grasslands created through HLF and Challenge Fund will be maintained	Annual maintenance 2017 - 2022	LVRP, National Trust	Staff and volunteer time	

1.2 Maintain established species-rich grassland sites	All sites within the Regional Park Main sites are STLD, Barnett's Demesne, Clement Wilson, Lagan Meadows, Lagan Lands East, Minnowburn, Mclroy Park, Jubilee Park	Grassland areas are well-maintained	Annual maintenance 2017-2022	LVRP, BCC, LCCC, National Trust	Staff time As per land owners' lease agreements and maintenance schedules
1.3 Maintain meadow lands	Continue grazing regimes as per lease agreements; main sites are Lagan meadows and Moorlands meadow	Traditional meadow landscapes will be preserved	Annual seasonal grazing regimes	BCC	As per BCC lease agreements
1.4 Maintain areas of wetland habitat	Continued maintenance of wetland sites; Main sites are STLD and Morelands meadow	Wetland areas will be retained and protected from natural succession	Annual scrub / vegetation clearance	LVRP, BCC	Staff time Volunteer time
1.5 Maintain open water in ponds	Bi-annual clearance of Canadian pond-weed / other vegetation from Belvoir Pond; Annual clearance of encroaching vegetation from Minnowburn Pond	Open water in ponds will be maintained for wildfowl and aquatic animals	Belvoir Pond: bi-annual Minnowburn Pond: annual	LVRP, National Trust	Staff time Volunteer time
1.6 Maintain 3 giant bird tables	Continued maintenance at LKC STLD Park Mclroy park	Provision of winter food source for birds	Cut annually in August; Re-seed in winter if required	LVRP, LCCC, BCC and volunteers	Staff time £700 per annum for seed and plugs

1.7 Implement Invasive Species Action Plan	As per Invasive Species Action Plan	Biodiversity and ecosystem quality will be improved	As per Invasive Species Action Plan	LVRP , all partners and volunteers	Staff and Volunteer time
1.8 Continued monitoring of LVRP animal species	Carry out weekly surveys for the following species: butterflies, bats, bees, squirrels and birds	Annual Species Database for dissemination to partner organisations	Seasonal monitoring as per each animal group	LVRP , BTO, CEDAR, BCNI, NIBG, BCC, LCCC	Staff time
1.9 Support Waterways College	Establishment of Conservation Skills course as part of the Waterways College	Knowledge and skills of volunteers will be increased	First course 2019; Annual delivery thereafter	Lagan Navigation Trust , LVRP	Staff Time Link with Lagan Nav Trust
1.10 Educate and engage children in conservation principles and respect for the natural environment through engagement and activity programme	4 bushcraft events per year	Children will have a deeper understanding of the importance of biodiversity through memorable experiences	4 bushcraft days per year	LVRP	Staff Time
1.11 Belvoir Park Forest Community Regeneration Project Preservation and regeneration of veteran oak trees in Belvoir park forest	Grow 500 oak whips and plant over 5 years	Veteran oak gene pool will be regenerated; local communities will be engaged through collection and planting of acorns	2017 – 2022 with collection limited to mast years	LVRP , Forestry Service, BCC, Woodland Trust	£12,500

1.12 Support All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and Local pollinator projects	<p>Targets in line with BCC Bee-licious project and LCCC's Local Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>Deliver one public awareness event per year</p> <p>Plant 100m2 of wildflowers for pollinators</p>	People will be more aware of importance of pollinators	2017-2022	LVRP, BCC, LCCC	Staff and Volunteer time
1.13 Update the baseline study of woodland habitat in LVRP	<p>Survey of woodland types within LVRP;</p> <p>Assess and evaluate changes from the 2005 Area Plan;</p> <p>Include recommendations for woodland regeneration and connectivity</p>	LVRP will have updated information to ensure informed management decisions in relation to woodland habitats	2018	LVRP	Staff time; Student placement
1.14 Retain Green Flag status of sites in LVRP: STLD Barnett's Demesne Lagan Meadows and Castle Gardens	Ongoing targets set in partnership with BCC and LCCC	Green Flag status will be retained	Ongoing 2017 - 2022	LVRP, BCC, LCCC	Staff time
1.15 Prepare LVRP Habitat Map to provide important baseline information and updated habitat mapping	<p>Mapping of all habitats within LVRP;</p> <p>Assess and evaluate changes from previous habitat mapping/studies</p>	LVRP will have clear baseline information, and a tool to identify and track habitat changes	2020	LVRP, NIEA, BCC, LCCC	<p>Option 1: Staff time and student placement</p> <p>Option 2: Ecologist £25,000</p>

	1.16 Establishment of Management Committee grassland and wetland sub-group	<p>Sub-group to oversee the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review past studies on grasslands and wetland habitats and review management of these sites 2) Make recommendations for enhancement projects 3) Engagement with landowners / farmers through EFS scheme or other means 	<p>Stakeholders and landowners will be better informed</p> <p>Grassland and wetland habitats will be better managed and protected</p>	<p>Set up sub-group in 2017</p> <p>Review completed 2018</p>	<p>LVRP, BCC, LCCC, National Trust, Dfl</p>	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Costs to be identified by sub-group</p>
	1.17 Improve resources for birds and pollinators	<p>Linear wildflower patches with mixes for birds and pollinators to be planted along towpath; one 10m2 patch for each km.</p>	<p>Habitat and resources for birds and pollinators will be improved</p>	<p>Sites identified 2019; Planting 2020</p>	<p>LVRP, Dfl, Rivers Agency</p>	<p>Staff time; Volunteer time.</p> <p>£2,000 seeds £3,500 plugs £430 tools</p>
	1.18 Build an outreach programme with local schools to raise children's awareness of biodiversity	<p>Pilot project with schools within LVRP; Identify appropriate projects in partnership with each school to promote biodiversity on the school grounds, with focus on pollinators, wildflowers and minibeasts.</p> <p>Schools are:</p>	<p>Children will have a deeper understanding of the importance of biodiversity through involvement and memorable experiences</p>	<p>Engage with schools 2020; Project delivery 2021</p>	<p>LVRP, School staff</p>	<p>Staff and volunteer time</p> <p>£220 for Tools Options: £30 minibeast hotels £15 per m wildflower areas</p>

		Belvoir Primary School St Joseph's Primary School Seymour Hill Primary School				£20 pollinator homes
	1.19 Set up Golf Clubs' Biodiversity Group	Identify opportunities to enhance biodiversity-led management practices and potential projects to increase biodiversity	Biodiversity of 0.5ha of golf-club land at Belvoir, Malone, Aberdelghy, and Dunmurry will be enhanced	2019 set-up; Bi-annual meetings	LVRP , Golf clubs in LVRP	Staff time
	1.20 Support the development of a management plan for Belvoir ASSI	Support NIEA as required to develop an ASSI management plan and associated projects	Belvoir ASSI will be managed in line with designation criteria	Timescales to be set by NIEA	Forestry Service , LVRP, NIEA, BCC , Woodland Trust, Golf Club	Staff time
	1.21 Raise awareness of biodiversity importance of hedges through volunteer programme	Two hedge laying events per year to include: 1) Planting out gaps in hedges 2) Training in hedge-laying 3) Hedge maintenance 4) Removal of invasive species and garden escapees	Quality and biodiversity value of hedges will be improved, and volunteers will have new skills and knowledge	Bi-annual, beginning 2017	LVRP , BCC, LCCC, DfI,	Staff time; Volunteer time; £450 hedging tools; £700 per day for training; £14 per m for hedge laying; £8 per m for tree planting
	1.22 Investigate a pilot into improving grass habitat on road verges in Regional Park	Review and liaise with Transport NI Enhance 3 km of grass verge on roads	Enhance biodiversity and ensure natural landscape character	2019 Identify road verges	LVRP , Roads Service, LCCC, BCC	Staff time £3200 for seeds

		Liaise with Councils and other partners regarding ongoing maintenance once established	of the Regional Park is maintained			£2309 for plugs Costs associated with ongoing cutting and maintenance of patches
--	--	--	------------------------------------	--	--	---

Theme Two: Visitors						
Strategic Aim 2: To manage and monitor visitors in the Regional Park and support events and sustainable tourism						
Objective	Targets	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead Partner in Bold	Costs	
2.1 Improved and more widespread monitoring of public use through counters	Collect data from 9 existing counters: 7 towpath counters 1 visitor centre counter 1 Giants Ring counter; Collate data from partner organisations within LVRP Disseminate data through publications and presentations	A comprehensive data set of public use, which will assist the ongoing management and promotion of LVRP	Annual monitoring	LVRP , Dfl, all partners	Staff Time £1,200 data collection per year	
2.2 Collection of visitor feedback	Conduct user surveys every 3 years using existing questionnaire, reviewed as appropriate	Knowledge of visitor base will be updated, visitor needs and potential management issues relating to visitors will be better understood	Survey 1: 2017 Survey 2: 2020	LVRP	Options: 1) Staff and volunteer time 2) Staff time and student time 3) £3,400 per contractor-led survey	
2.3 Improve user-safety on the towpath	Post 1 Facebook and twitter safety-use comment per month;	The towpath will be a safer environment for all users, with	Ongoing, 2017 - 2022	LVRP , Dfl, BCC, LCCC	Staff Time	

		Release 1 safety press release per annum	promotion of the Towpath Code			
	2.4 Promote considerate use of the towpath by all users, through the Towpath Initiative	One week of events and activities aimed at all user groups, to be held annually, taking into account relevant guidance and recommendations from the One Path Initiative Target groups are: Walkers Cyclists Dog owners	Users will have better awareness of the Towpath Code, and the importance of the considerate use of shared space	Annually during summer months	LVRP , DfI, BCC, LCCC, Sustrans, PSNI, local cycling and walking clubs, Transport NI	Staff time
	2.5 Ensure, through ongoing partnership and co-ordination, good standards of access for visitors	Ongoing monitoring of 42 km (17km-towpath, 25km-other trails) access paths, through Ranger Service	Landowners and stakeholder organisations will be supported in delivering their respective inspection and maintenance regimes for paths and trails. Maintenance issues will be reported in a timely manner.	Weekly patrols by Ranger Service	LVRP patrols and reporting on towpath All partners to maintain their sections	Staff and Volunteer time; £350 for tools Estimated combined value of partners' maintenance programmes is £150,000
	2.6 Provide new shelter and toilet	Erection of shelter and toilet facilities, and improved parking at Minnowburn	Visitor facilities at Minnowburn will be improved	Capital project 2018	National Trust	National Trust £160,000

	facilities at Minnowburn					
	2.7 To maintain a clean towpath for all visitors	Twice weekly patrols and litter lifts along towpath; Twice weekly litter lifts and bins emptied from Drumbridge and Lockview car parks	The towpath will be a clean and pleasant environment for visitors	Ongoing twice-weekly checks and litter lifts.	LVRP , Dfl	Staff time; £400 equipment and bags
	2.8 To maintain interpretation signs and information boards	1 annual survey, clean and repair of LVRP signage	Visitors will have access to clean and well-maintained visitor information	2017 – 2022 Yearly assessment and repairs	LVRP	Staff time; £2,000 Repairs
	2.9 To maintain good relationships with visitors and the public, on behalf of LVRP and all partners	To act as first point of contact and record all queries / complaints / feedback / incidents received. To disseminate information annually among partner organisations	Standards of customer service will be maintained and enhanced There will be ongoing efficiency savings for partner organisations in terms of public interface	Ongoing, 2017- 2022	LVRP for all partners: BCC, LCC, Dfl, DfC, Forest Service, National Trust, Lagan Canal Trust	Staff Time
	2.10 To update and reprint towpath leaflet	Print 12,000 copies	Visitor information will be updated and improved	2022	LVRP , Dfl – updates from all partners	£2000
	2.11 To update and reprint promotional/visitor information leaflet for	Print 5,000 copies	Visitor information will be updated and improved	2018	LVRP with BCC	£1100

	the lock keeper's site to include the Industry lighter					
	2.12 Maintain website to ensure availability of up-to-date information	Monthly update for current events, news and information; Annual review of information and amendments as appropriate	People will have access to improved and current information about LVRP and its activities	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP	Staff time; £650 per year for hosting and site maintenance
	2.13 Explore options for linking the towpath to other greenways identified in Local Development Plan	Link with BCC and LCCC regarding path connectivity; Identify 2 new routes and work up feasibility and costs	Connectivity will be improved within the region, and sustainable transport network will be expanded	2020	LVRP, LCCC, BCC, DfI, DfC	Staff Time
	2.14 Maintain management and access to the Lock Keeper's Cottage and the Industry lighter	Continue to work with BCC under existing SLA to open the Lock Keeper's Cottage and Industry lighter to the general public five days per week and monthly weekend openings	Visitors will have continued access to vibrant 'living heritage' assets, increasing opportunities for engagement and enjoyment	Ongoing, in accordance with SLA	LVRP	Staff time and volunteers
	2.15 To promote the Lock Keeper's site	Work with BCC to promote the attraction to visitors and tourists through articles in City Matters, What's On and other publications; 2 articles per year	There will be increased awareness of visitor offering at the Lock Keeper's site	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP, BCC	Staff time

	2.16 To provide heritage tourism package for the Lock Keeper's site	Facilitate 5 tour requests per year	New audiences will be developed and tourism within the region will be enhanced	5 tours per year, beginning 2017	LVRP	Staff time and volunteers
	2.17 Work with BCC to secure designation of Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area	Designation of Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area	Lagan Meadows will be a recognized area for peaceful contemplation, designated under the Environmental Noise Directive and of the Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006	Establish and promote in 2017	LVRP, BCC	Staff time
	2.18 To provide an outdoor activity leaflet for LVRP	Prepare 5,000 printed leaflets, also to made available as a web-based resource	Visitors will be better informed about outdoor activities in LVRP	2018	LVRP, BCC, LCCC, DfI, DfC, ORNI, Forest Service	Staff time; £2,200 for design and print
	2.19 To deliver phase II of signage strategy	Targets as per phase II of signage strategy	Wayfinding, interpretation, and brand-awareness of LVRP will be improved, and there will be consistency across	Seek funding 2020; Delivery 2021	LVRP	£90,000

			the visitor experience			
	2.20 To redesign LVRP website, to be compatible with new media	Redesign and launch of new website	Accessibility of website will be improved, encouraging new audiences and keeping people informed.	2022	LVRP	£6,000
	2.21 To publish 'By the Banks of the Lagan II', expanding on the original publication to continue the story of Lagan heritage up to Lisburn	Secure funding; Launch publication of 'By the Banks of the Lagan II'	In-depth knowledge of the Lagan heritage will be expanded and more accessible, and will capture valuable oral testimony of people who lived and worked along the Lagan	Seek funding 2018; Research and write from 2019-2020	LVRP, Ben Simon (author)	Staff time; £38,000 inclusive of author's fee and publication costs

Theme Three: Community						
Strategic Aim 3: To encourage involvement of the community and to develop volunteering in the Regional Park						
Objective	Targets	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead Partner in Bold	Costs	
3.1 To maintain the Investing in Volunteers accredited standard for the award-winning LVRP Volunteer Programme	Continue to manage 4 established volunteer roles with associated support functions, to include: 1) Saturday Conservation group 2) Heritage Guides 3) Volunteer Rangers 4) Wildlife monitoring/surveying	The community will have continued opportunities for involvement, increasing skills and experience, strengthening the reputation of LVRP, and increasing knowledge for the future	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP , BCC, LCCC, Dfl, National Trust	Staff Time	
3.2 To upskill volunteers in conservation management and heritage	At least 1 opportunity for accredited training per year; 2 opportunities for non-accredited training per year	Volunteers will have new skills and experience, with accreditation where possible, leading to increased opportunities for employment	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP , LCCC, BCC, training organisations	Staff Time; £3,000 per year	
3.3 To engage people through a vibrant and varied events programme	Delivery of an annual events program to engage with a wide range of the general public on local heritage and biodiversity;	People will have increased knowledge and awareness of local	Ongoing 2017-2022	LVRP , BCC, LCCC, Dfl	Staff and volunteer time £2,200 per year design	

	25 events to be delivered each year Dissemination of levels of engagement through LVRP Annual Report	heritage and biodiversity; Opportunities for partnership will be created			and print costs; £460 per year support equipment
3.4 Expand and promote curriculum-based educational programme through Lagan Valley Learning website	Expand access and use of Lagan Valley Learning website through schools; Target 5 schools per annum Circulate details in e-zine for schools	More schools will be engaged, and children will have learned about the natural and cultural heritage of LVRP through active and engaging curriculum-based activities	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP , schools	Staff time; £360 per year for web hosting; £300 per year website maintenance
3.5 Increase engagement with various media to disseminate as widely as possible the work and successes of LVRP and increase brand-awareness	1) Press release to local papers following key achievements and awards 2) Weekly Facebook posts 3) Feature LVRP or projects in TV and Radio, at least one per year	People will be more widely aware of the profile of LVRP, its successes, and the range of work that is carried out	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP	Staff Time
3.6 Encourage more co-ordinated marketing through setting up a joint marketing group with BCC and LCCC	Set up a marketing group and agree common promotion actions; Meet quarterly to review progress;	LVRP will be more effectively and consistently promoted through partnership between the two Councils	Ongoing 2017-2022	LVRP , BCC, LCCC, NI Tourism	Staff Time

		LVRP activities / events to be featured in Council publications throughout the year				
	3.7 Develop an outreach project to improve access to LVRP for socially disadvantaged communities	Develop and pilot a project: Connecting with Nature; Host 5 groups from areas of social need	Outcomes will be in line with DfC and PHA targets on addressing social need, and health & wellbeing; Access to LVRP open space and activities will be more inclusive	2019	LVRP, DfC, DfI, BCC, LCCC, Public Health Agency	Staff costs; £1,200
	3.8 Develop a heritage-focused cross community project in line with SEUPB	Seek funding under new SEUPB Peace Programme; Develop cross community project Our Remarkable Trees, involving groups from 3 intergenerational, religious and ethnic backgrounds	DfC will be supported in the development of cross community relationships and social legacy-building	Seek funding 2018; Proposed implementation 2020	LVRP, SEUPB, 3 Groups	Staff costs; £25,000

Theme Four: Landscape						
Strategic Aim 4: To proactively protect and celebrate the character of the Regional Park and AONB landscape						
Objective	Targets	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead Partner in Bold	Cost	
4.1 To protect the designated landscape from inappropriate development	Respond to all planning consultations within 30 days; (minor applications dealt with directly, major applications referred to LVRP Board)	The special landscape qualities of LVRP and the AONB will be protected for future generations	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP	Staff Time	
4.2 To contribute to the preparation of BCC and LCCC Local Development Plans, ensuring appropriate representation of LVRP	Provide representation to senior planners and stakeholder consultations during the respective LDP development phases	The special landscape qualities of LVRP and the AONB will be protected for future generations	2017-2018	LVRP, BCC, LCCC	Staff Time	
4.3 To provide a photographic record of the changing landscape within LVRP	Identify appropriate fixed-point locations throughout LVRP; To deliver 4 fixed-point seasonal photographs per year.	An important legacy record of the changing landscape will be created and archived for future generations	Ongoing 2017-2022	LVRP, NIEA	Staff time; £800 Camera	

Theme Five: Heritage						
Strategic Aim 5: To protect and celebrate the rich historic and cultural legacy of the Regional Park						
Objective	Targets	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead Partner in Bold	Costs	
5.1 To continue active management of the Giants Ring Scheduled Monument in State Care	Chair and facilitate bi-monthly meetings of the Giants Ring Stakeholder group Input to HED Conservation Management Plan for Giant's Ring	The Giant's Ring will be better managed and protected, and its cultural value better understood; Access to the monument will be improved, and it will be a safer place to visit and enjoy	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP , Giants Ring Stakeholder Group: HED , PSNI, National Trust, BCC, Local Stakeholders	Staff time	
5.2 To promote the cultural heritage of LVRP through public talks	Hold 3 talks throughout the year on a variety of heritage topics Possible topics include: Built heritage Famous People Changing Landscapes Archaeology through the ages	The unique history and heritage of LVRP will be celebrated and promoted, and knowledge will be increased	Ongoing, 2017-2022	LVRP , DfC, DfI QUB, CAF, University of Ulster, Lagan Navigation Trust, NIEA	Staff time; £800 venue and speakers per year	
5.3 To prepare an inventory and baseline survey of cultural heritage assets throughout LVRP	A mapped inventory of cultural heritage assets, with brief condition rating	LVRP will have a tool to better understand heritage assets, and inform future management actions	2020-21	LVRP , HED, QUB, University of Ulster, Archaeologist	Staff time; £3000 Desktop and field study	

	5.4 To prepare an archaeological survey of major state care and scheduled sites in LVRP	Partner with HED and Queens CAF to get summer students to survey main sites; Train 10 volunteers to do field survey	The archaeological heritage of LVRP will be better protected and understood; training opportunities will be provided	2019	LVRP, Suggested partners: HED, CAF (QUB), University of Ulster, DfC	Staff and volunteer time; £5,000 study
	5.5 To enhance outreach through delivery of a Community Archaeology project	Targets will be set in line with professional advice from specialist partners	Local communities will be engaged in the understanding and preservation of archaeological heritage; opportunities for improved interpretation and outreach will be provided	2020	LVRP , Suggested partners: HED, CAF (QUB), University of Ulster, DfC,	Staff and volunteer time; £60,000

Theme Six: Health and Recreation						
Strategic Aim 6: To promote the benefits of green open spaces, within the area, for health and wellbeing and to support appropriate recreational activities						
Objective	Targets	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead Partner in Bold	Costs	
6.1 Support LCCC C-SAW initiative to encourage isolated groups to access open green spaces in LVRP	Deliver a pilot of 3 walks in first year; If successful, 3 walks per year in subsequent years	LVRP will have provided support to LCCC's Safe And Well initiative (C-SAW); isolated groups will have supported access to open green space, with associated health & wellbeing benefits	Pilot 2017; Ongoing 2018-2022 if successful	LCCC , LVRP	Staff time	
6.2 To review and update LVRP Recreation Strategy	Review and update LVRP Recreation Strategy, and set new targets as appropriate	Recreational facilities and access in LVRP will be improved	2018	LVRP , ORNI, Dfl	Staff time	
6.3 Improve knowledge of wider recreational use through data capture	Data-capture relating to activities organised by outside groups; Collation and dissemination of these data via Annual Report	LVRP will have wider knowledge about the profile of recreational use across LVRP, to inform future management and maintenance	Annually, 2017-2022	LVRP with all partners supporting by providing details of events for LVRP to record	Staff time	

	6.4 To develop therapeutic walking routes in LVRP with a focus on improved mental health and emotional wellbeing	<p>Develop partnerships with PHA and Health Trusts;</p> <p>Identify three therapeutic walking routes that meet the criteria of the Take Five initiative</p> <p>Monitor use, with a target of 100 new users over five years</p>	The PHA and Health Trusts will be supported to deliver mental and emotional health objectives; LVRP will have new users	Partnership meeting 2017; Identify routes 2018	LVRP , Suggested partners: BCC, LCCC, DfI, PHA, Health Trusts	Staff time; Partners' staff time
	6.5 Implement 'Green Gym' type programme of conservation projects with specific physical activity projects linked to PHA and Health Trust Programmes	<p>Develop partnerships with PHA and Health Trusts;</p> <p>Identify 10 small projects over 5 years;</p> <p>Engage at least 30 people with mental and physical health issues over the lifetime of the project</p>	The PHA and Health Trusts will be supported to deliver physical health objectives; LVRP will be assisted in meeting conservation and objectives	Partnership meeting 2017; Activity programme 2018-2022	LVRP , Suggested partners: BCC, LCCC, PHA, Health Trusts	Staff time; Partners' staff time

Appendix 1- Action Plan - Shelf projects

This is a list of potential priority projects that could be started relatively quickly but would be additional to the day to day tasks of LVRP staff and would need additional funding. The numbers in the project titles relates to the numbering in the action plan.

1.18) Project Title: Golf Club Forum

Theme

Biodiversity

Background

The remaining parks and demesnes in the Regional Park area have not only left a legacy of public parkland spaces but have also resulted in a number of quality parkland golf clubs. These include Belvoir Golf Club, Malone Golf Club, Aberdelgy Golf Club, Dunmurry Golf Club and Balmoral Golf Club. Whilst these clubs are in private ownership they are also of high landscape character value and so efforts should be made to engage with the associated management teams.

Project Description and outputs

The LVRP manager or new project officer should meet individually with each golf club manager to develop a working relationship and gain an understanding of the landscape and biodiversity quality of the course and what measures the club are using to conserve its main parkland features and identify improvements to existing biodiversity practice. A possible joint forum of all clubs should be created with a remit to conserve the conservation features of the regional park, identify potential practices and projects to increase biodiversity and promote and improve the profile of the club. There is potential for a win-win benefit to both parties.

Targets

Create a golf forum that meets 2 times a year

Improve biodiversity of 0.5ha of land

Outcomes

Improve the biodiversity of Regional Park

Conserve the natural features of the regional park

Improve relationships with local businesses and develop further partner projects

Timetable

2017 - 2021

Partners

LVRP, Golf Clubs

Cost

Only cost would be staff time of manager or project officer of possible max 10 days a year

Further Information and Links

https://www.auduboninternational.org/resources/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/Golf%20and%20Environment/G_E%20-%20Environmental%20Management%20Guidelines%20for%20Golf.pdf

<http://www.sgeg.org.uk/documents/Publications%20and%20Case%20Studies/SGEG%20Env%20Case%20Study%20-%20Nature%20-%20Grassland%20Management%20-%20Coatbridge%20GC.pdf>

<http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/duty/do-it/open-spaces/golf-courses/>

1.20) Project Title: Belvoir Park ASSI Management Plan

Theme

Biodiversity

Background

Belvoir Park ASSI is of special scientific interest for its parkland and wood pasture habitat and associated species. Belvoir ASSI largely lies within the area of the original Belvoir Estate and is owned and managed by Forest Service as a commercial forest and recreational park, by Belvoir Park Golf Club as a golf course and by BCC in Morelands Meadow as an open pasture. The site was only recently declared an ASSI in 2015 and covers 103 ha.

Project Description

There is an opportunity to work closely with the Forest Service, BCC, NIEA and the golf course to develop a joint working management plan to protect and improve the main conservation objectives of the ASSI whilst improving it as a recreational facility. Funding for the project should be sought from the DAERA Rural Development Programme Woodland and Forestry Planting Programme, The Forestry Service NI, the Heritage Lottery, and the NIEA Challenge Fund. Potential projects within the programme could include:

- Provide an updated habitat and species survey
- Provide tree planting and regeneration plan
- Plan the retention of large dead branches, fallen deadwood and the remains of old trees in situ, and link to fungi, lichens and invertebrate's conservation
- In parts of the park investigate the introduction a grazing scheme working in partnership with local farmers to maintain the open parkland and wood pasture habitat.
- Through volunteering establish of a steady supply of new generations of trees through planting of appropriate species
- Develop a seed collection and nursery associated with the ancient trees of the Park

- Establish a formal invasive species removal programme through use of trained up LVRP volunteers
- Restore parts of boundary wall for built heritage reasons
- Identify ways to provide invertebrate, small bird, bats and small mammal habitats within the wall
- Put together education programme with local schools and local community associations
- Put together series of tree walks and talks for Belvoir Park Forest
- Provide improved physical visitor facilities at Belvoir Park Forest including shelter and toilet facilities (under agreement/licence with Forest Service)
- Develop further visitor information and pathways

Outcomes

- Increase biodiversity of the Regional Park
- Retain park and landscape character of the Regional Park
- Maximise existing resources available in Regional Park
- Develop strong partnership with Forest Service, private sector and local communities
- Enhance landscape character of area
- Attract private sector investment and start new businesses

Target

- Set up Liaison Group
- Preserve all ancient trees
- Plant 500 trees per year over 5 years
- Remove 3 ha of invasive species from Regional Park
- Attract investment
- Set up or assist two/three new businesses that can operate within the ASSI conditions
- Involve 200 volunteers over 5 years
- Improve 3 km of paths

Time table

2017 – 2021

Partners

LVRP, Forestry NI, Woodland Trust, LCCC, BCC

Costs

Survey and plan	£20,000
Planting	£70,000
Visitor facilities	£200,000
Path improvement and signage	£130,000
Wall preservation	£30,000
Nursery	£30,000
New ranger	£200,000
Total estimated Cost	£680,000

Further Information

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dae/Belvoir-ASSI-citation-documents-and-map.pdf>

http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/CSM_woodland.pdf

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/woodland-woodpasture.pdf>

https://www.royalparks.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/41767/richmond-park-management-plan.pdf

1.21) Project Title: Filling the Gaps

Theme

Biodiversity

Background

There are many hedges throughout the park that need managed and maintained. In particular, there are a number gaps and spaces that have developed and need repaired whilst some hedges have been successfully laid and are being maintained well. There is an opportunity to fill gaps and repair many hedges through planting with native species mixes, whilst the well maintained and laid hedges can be used as demonstrations to showcase the benefits of laid hedges and to continue to lay more sections.

Project Description

Identify hedge gaps and improve with volunteers. Also, hold two hedge laying and repair training events a year.

Outcomes

- Increase biodiversity of the regional park
- Enhance landscape character of park area
- Develop skills of volunteers

Target

- Hold two training events
- Restore 200 m of hedge

Time table

2017 – 2021

Partners

LVRP, Volunteers, LCCC, BCC, DfI, TCV, CAFRE

Costs

Hedging tools £450

Hedging whips £1,200

Training per day £700 (2 days)

Total £2350

Further Information

<http://www.ydmt.org/get-involved-details-introduction-to-hedgelaying-23138>

<http://www.hedgelaying.org.uk/>

<http://www.hedgelaying.ie/>

1.22) Project Title: Road Verges, A Biodiversity Resource For Everyone

Theme

Biodiversity

Background

Within the park, semi-natural grassland, more so than other habitat has been in major decline due to agricultural intensification and urban creep. The only area left in Northern Ireland of any significant semi improved grassland is in Fermanagh and Tyrone. However, there is a considerable area of road systems networked throughout the park, with associated grass verges. These verges have a potential to bring back some semi natural grass areas and provide a greater level of biodiversity if managed differently. Outside the main public parks within the Regional Park, road verges represent a vital repository for this natural feature, and can potentially create new natural corridors. There is therefore an opportunity of reclaiming the Regional Park's previous natural floral diversity within a present day urbanised or intensively farmed landscape. See pilot project carried out by Envision and the Roads Service NI (Transport NI).

Project Description

LVRP staff work in partnership with Transport NI and the Councils to survey, identify, map and prioritise specific verged area and set up a working group. After discussion and agreement LVRP staff could enter into a service level and management agreement with Transport NI not to cut the grass at certain times and not leave cuttings.

Outcomes

- Increase biodiversity of the Regional Park
- Maximise existing resources available in park
- Develop strong partnership with Transport NI and the Councils for future projects

- Enhance landscape character of area

Target

- Set up Liaison Group
- Create small site and maintenance plan
- Enhance 1 ha of grass verge on roads to semi natural grassland

Time table

2017 – 2021

Partners

LVRP, Transport NI, LCCC, BCC

Costs

Staff time of 30 days

Consultant survey and site identification £4000

£3200 for seeds,

£2309 for plugs

Sustainability

£2200 annual maintenance costs for service level agreement

Costs savings from reduced maintenance costs of Transport NI

(Apply to challenge fund)

Further Information

<https://nmni.com/Documents/UM/CEDaR/Road-verge-pilot>

https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/...Road-Verges.../Guidance_sheet_road_verges

<http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/species-and-habitats/roadside-verges>

3.7) Project Title: Connecting with Nature

Theme

Community

Background

The new draft “Northern Ireland Executives Programme for Government Framework 2016 – 2021”, identified its overall purpose as to: “Improve the wellbeing for all by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.” Addressing the issues associated with social disadvantage and inequality are therefore a priority for regional and local government and the Lagan Valley Regional Park can play its part in helping to implement this policy.

Project Description and outputs

The basis of this proposal is to engage with 5 groups of people from more disadvantaged areas around the park and in the wider Belfast area to develop links with the natural world and inform them of the huge health, learning and recreational benefits that are available within the park. The project will target a number of specific wards and housing estates that are within the top 20% of disadvantaged communities that live close to the park. These include Upper Malone 2, Minnowburn, Hilden 1. Estates could include Seymore Hill, Belvoir Park and Taughmonagh. Five outdoor walks and talks will be held outside and include areas such as local history, foraging, nature identification, nature senses, and woodland trees.

Outcomes

- Develop links with the Regional Park and social disadvantaged groups
- Use the park as a learning resource
- Improve the well-being of people who live beside the Regional Park
- Enhance landscape character of the area through conservation volunteering
- Reduce social inequality and improve community relations

Target

- Engage with five disadvantaged groups
- Engage with 50 people
- Hold five walks and talks
- Recruit 5 volunteers from 50 participants

Time table

2017 – 2021

Partners

LVRP, LCCC, BCC, DC, South Belfast Partnership

Costs

Costs 20 days of staff time

Further Information

<http://www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/flagship-projects/natural-connections/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/22691839/>

<http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2011/05/26/why-we-must-reconnect-with-nature/>

3.8) Project Title: Our Remarkable Trees

Theme

Community Engagement

Background

The Lagan Valley Regional Park has some of the oldest trees in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Trees have a strong spiritual, religious and cultural connections with people and there is an opportunity to develop this often lost connection and link with the cultural traditions of people who live in Northern Ireland.

Project Description and outputs

The project will connect with three different groups from different religious and cultural traditions in Belfast. The three groups include a Protestant, Roman Catholic and East European group. The basis of the project will be to:

- Talk on the trees of the Lagan Valley Regional Park providing an explanation of their importance to history of Ulster and Ireland and the connection with wider ancient European forests
- A walk in the various parks and forests to have a “meeting with the remarkable trees”
- Each group will identify their own tree or group of trees and its significance to their religion or cultural background. Eg Oaktree to ancient Irish traditions, the ash tree to hurling and sport, the yew tree to cemeteries and its importance as a symbol of eternal life, the clearing of ancient oak forests in the plantation of Ulster, building of ships from oak as part of Royal Navy ships, importance of wider European forests, importance of foraging in Eastern Europe and food traditions, the creation of demesnes and land ownership issues in Ulster etc.
- A presentation will then be carried out by each group on the importance of some cultural and spiritual aspect of trees in the park that relate to each of the group’s own cultural heritage tradition.
- There will then be a joint discussion and identification of a possible joint project that crosses cultural and religious divide and that all participants could become

involved with eg making of cross or other item or object with spiritual significance, the planting of new trees from ancient tree seeds, creation of ancient spiritual oak grove, planting of new yew trees in park cemeteries etc

- Final joint celebration and promotion by all three groups of the trees of the Regional Park and their joint recognition.

Outcomes

- Develop cross community links between different cultural traditions and communities
- Link local communities to Regional Park and build positive relations at the local level
- Increase our understanding of the past
- Develop Regional Park as a shared public space
- Develop the Regional Park as a cultural and spiritual resource
- Improve the well-being of people who live beside the park
- Promote the park and its ancient trees

Target

- Engage with 3 groups from different cultural traditions who live near the Regional Park
- Engage with 100 people
- Progress joint final tree project (To be determined by groups)
- Recruit 5 long term volunteer's participants
- Gain three press releases and radio/to interview about project

Time table

2018

Partners

LVRP, LCCC, BCC, South Belfast Partnership, SEUPB

Costs

Costs 20 days of LVRP Staff time

Engagement of consultant to manage and deliver project over 6 months £25,000

(Examine and possibly apply to SEUPB Peace programme)

Further Information

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4206e.pdf>

<http://www.forestryfocus.ie/social-environmental-aspects/cultural-heritage/trees-and-folklore/sacred-and-magical-trees/>

http://www.livingtreeeducationalfoundation.org/trees_ireland.html

<http://www.satmya.ie/the-ancient-trees-of-ireland/>

5.4) Project Title: The Archaeology of the Lagan Valley Regional Park

Theme

Heritage

Background

The Lagan Valley Regional Park has in the past focussed mainly on the conservation of natural heritage of the park. However, the landscape character of the park has important built heritage and significant archaeological and monumental heritage features. Most of these scheduled and non-scheduled sites have been identified and many have been researched and recorded by the Historic Environment Division. However, there has never been a specific record of the monuments that exist within the boundary of the Regional Park and this is an important need that should be addressed so that future potential conservation measures and partnership arrangements can be developed.

Project Description and outputs

The project will employ a consultant to gather the existing data on all of the monuments within the Regional Park boundary and identify other potential important sites that are not recorded but may be of significance. This will involve gathering data from the Historic Monuments Division of the Department for Communities but will also involve research and consultation with landowners, Queens University Centre for Archaeological Research and other relevant stakeholders. The project will also involve local volunteers and skill them up to carry out important field survey work and research existing data sources and identify a follow up research project that will require some sort of excavation.

Outcomes

- Record built heritage of Regional Park as tool for future conservation
- Promote the park and its archaeological heritage
- Increase our understanding of the Regional Park's heritage

- Increase skills and knowledge of local volunteers
- Identify potential future archaeological excavation site

Target

- Train 10 volunteers
- Carry out 5-day training course
- Recruit 5 volunteer's participants
- Gain two press releases about project

Time table

2019

Partners

LVRP, LCCC, BCC, DC, QUB CAF, Local Volunteers

Costs

Costs of 10 days of LVRP staff

Engagement of consultant to manage and deliver project over 6 months £10,000

Train volunteers £3000

Further Information

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/archaeology-guidance>

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/our-projects/xarch-exploring-archaeology>

<http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/our-projects>

5.5) Project Title: The Big Lagan Dig

Theme

Built Heritage

Background

The Lagan Valley Regional Park has in the past focussed mainly on the conservation of its natural heritage. However, the landscape character of the Park has important built heritage and significant archaeological and monumental heritage features. Following on from the gathering and recording of all data information and field surveying in the “Archaeology of the Lagan Valley Project” there may be a need to carry out further intrusive research at a targeted site to carry out further archaeological excavation.

Project Description and outputs

The project will work with the Queens University of Belfast, Centre for Archaeological Research to carry out an archaeological excavation and will involve 10 local volunteers in the actual excavation working in partnership with students from the centre. QUB will oversee and arrange all licencing and recording.

Outcomes

- Promote the Regional Park and its archaeological heritage
- Increase our understanding of the Regional Parks’ built heritage
- Increase skills and knowledge of local volunteers

Target

- Train and involve 10 volunteers in excavation
- Carry out dig and produce archaeological gazetteer
- Gain two press releases about project

Time table

2019

Partners

LVRP, LCCC, BCC, DC, QUB CAF, Local Volunteers

Costs

Costs for QUB involvement and equipment and training £15000

Further Information

<http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/get-involved/community/>

<http://belfasthills.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Divis-Archaeology-Ireland-Article.pdf>

<http://www.heartoftheglens.org/projects/community-archaeology/>

6.4) Project Title: 5 steps in the Park

Theme

Health and Recreation

Background

The Belfast Strategic Partnership identified the need to reduce health inequalities in its document, “The Framework for Action Improving Health and Wellbeing, Reducing Health Inequalities 2011 - 2015”. It highlighted the importance of engaging with disadvantaged groups in areas such as mental health and emotional wellbeing and lifelong learning. There are opportunities to use the natural resources of the Regional Park to link with these disadvantaged communities to help them learn about the natural world and improve mental and emotional health problems. Recent research has also found that contact with the natural environment can offer considerable mental and physical health benefits and has a quantifiable health value.

Project Description and outputs

The project will involve developing linkages with the Public Health Agency, and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to bring disadvantaged groups who live nearby into the park to become involved in a series of events geared at improving the participant’s mental health and well-being. Participants will be identified by the Public Health Agency and the local health trust using Public Health Agency staff and resources to deliver the five steps to well-being programme. The focus will be on improving people’s mental health but within a natural environment. The focus of the events will be on being active, mindfulness, learning connecting with other people and giving and sharing. In effect the project is trying to persuade the PHA to provide the “Take Five courses” tailored to the environs of the Regional Park.

Outcomes

- Promote the Regional Park as a health resource.
- Improve the mental health and well-being of local residents from disadvantage areas.

Target

- Link with PHA and BCC regarding provision of existing mental health and well-being services within LVRP
- Involve 100 people over 5 years
- Gain two press releases about project

Time table

2017 - 2021

Partners

LVRP, LCCC, BCC, PHA, BHSCT

Costs

Costs of LVRP staff to co-ordinate 10 days per year

Costs of PHA staff delivering courses 10 days per year

Further Information

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Take%205%20Leaflet%20LR%2005_16.pdf

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/health-and-social-wellbeing-improvement>

<http://www.choosetolivebetter.com/>

6.5) Project Title: The Green Gym

Theme

Health and Recreation

Background

The Belfast Strategic Partnership identified the need to reduce health inequalities in its document “The Framework for Action Improving Health and Wellbeing, Reducing Health Inequalities 2011 - 2015”. It highlighted the importance of engaging with disadvantaged groups in areas such as physical health. There are opportunities to use the natural resources of the park to link with these disadvantaged communities to help them learn about the natural world and improve their physical health through carrying out real conservation and invasive species removal work.

Project Description and outputs

The project will involve developing linkages with the Public Health Agency, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to bring disadvantaged groups who live nearby into the Regional Park to become involved in a series of planned conservation work geared at improving the participant’s physical health and fitness levels. Participants will be identified by the Public Health Agency and the local health trust and the groups of people will be linked to any planned volunteer conservation work to be carried out throughout each year. The focus of the conservation work events will be on active physical work.

Outcomes

- Promote the Regional Park as a health resource
- Improve the physical health of local residents from disadvantaged areas

Target

- Link with PHA and BCC regarding provision of existing mental health and well-being services within LVRP
- Involve 100 people over 5 years
- Create 10 new full time volunteers

- Gain two press releases about project

Time table

2017 - 2021

Partners

LVRP, LCCC, BCC, PHA, BHSCT

Costs

Costs of LVRP staff to co-ordinate existing conservation work 20 days per year

Costs of PHA staff delivering courses 10 days per year.

Further Information

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Take%205%20Leaflet%20LR%2005_16.pdf

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/health-and-social-wellbeing-improvement>

<http://www.choosetolivebetter.com/>