

Lagan Valley Regional Park Board Meeting
Thursday 20th December 2018
The Boardroom, Titanic House, Belfast.

Attendees

Directors

Robert Wasson (Chair)	Public Director
Craig Somerville	National Trust
Stephen Pollock	Public Director
Kerrie Sweeney	Public Director
Una McKernan	Public Director
Dermot Hughes	Public Director
Jim Jackson	Public Director

Advisors

Colum McDaid	NIEA
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Secretary

Andy Bridge	Manager, LVRP
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Apologies

Directors

Andrew Halliday (Vice-Chair)	Public Director
Clr Janet Gray	Elected Representative, LCCC

Advisors

Mark Parker	Forest Service
Rosemary Petrie	DFI
Agnes McNulty	BCCC

Welcome & Quorum

The Chair welcomed all board members and opened the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were accepted as listed.

2. Minutes of last meeting

2.1 Andy Bridge informed attendees that the amendments to articles from the AGM were lodged with Companies House and Charities Commission NI.

2.2 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2.3 Actions from previous meeting:

1st Action: (outstanding from 28th June)

Andrew Halliday & Park Manager to arrange a time to meet to discuss any outstanding concerns re Health & Safety governance.

The Chair advised members that this would be discussed later in the agenda under Health & Safety

2nd Action

The Chair/Park Manager to make amendments to the paper drafted from the strategic workshop, and forward to Ross from LCCC; Agnes & Rose from BCC for advice before submission.

The Chair advised attendees that this has been done.

3rd Action

Board Members were advised that the initial meeting with an appointed fundraiser went well and a further update would be given later.

The Chair advised that an update would be given later in the meeting.

4th Action

The Park Manager to contact CNCC to obtain written notification that they will no longer be providing committee support and to confirm that we will therefore be amending our articles.

The Chair confirmed that this action is complete.

5th Action

Chair & Park Manager to follow up with individual board members regarding stakeholder management.

The Chair confirmed that this has been done.

6th Action

The Park Manager to include valuation of director's time in the quarterly updates.

The Park Manager advised that this has been done.

7th Action

The Park Manager to write to BCC raising concerns over the unsightly nature of the stalled Lagan Gateway scheme and asking whether it is proposed to make good the works on an interim basis if there is no immediate start in sight.

The Chair informed attendees that the project was now at the procurement stage, as advised by BCC following a letter sent to them by LVRP.

Action from previous meeting (27th September 2018)

The Chair asked that the Institute of Directors 'Leading Health & Safety' document previously circulated by Andrew Halliday, is resent to all directors.

The Park Manager advised attendees that this has been done.

2.4 The Chair advised that amending performance vs. budget at Board Meetings, so as to show performance vs. budget to date, as suggested at the previous meeting, has yet to be done.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Chair advised that as discussed at the last meeting, an Audit & Risk sub-committee would be set up. The Chair distributed terms of reference for the committee to board members and has been discussing with members who would be interested in joining.

The focus of this sub-committee will be ensuring appropriate audit & risk management governance. Main actions would be to have a risk session each year, and report any risks identified to board members: to make recommendations to the board for the re-appointment of accountants acting as an interface regarding the yearly accounts: to review the reserves policy/signatories and good governance.

The Chair advised that Una McKernan has agreed to chair the sub-committee. Jim Jackson agreed to join and the Chair will also be a member initially.

3.2 The Chair informed attendees that he has been discussing board training and development with Una McKernan, to ensure that board members have the relevant skills and are kept up to date with governance in the charity sector.

Una McKernan offered that NICVA charity advice staff could hold a session for board members regarding responsibility, governance and policies within the charity sector.

Una McKernan also informed attendees that she was involved in setting up a Developing Governance group, which has produced useful documentation including a handbook and a website (www.diycommitteeguide.org). These are used within board training but can be referred to at any stage.

The Chair suggested adding a training session on to the board meeting in March, to which members agreed.

Company Matters

4. Health & Safety

4.1 The Park Manager advised that there are no recent Health & Safety incidents to report.

4.2 The Chair referred to a previous action regarding a presentation from the Park Manager & Andrew Halliday regarding H&S. The Park Manager confirmed that a meeting has taken place however due to work commitments, Andrew Halliday was unable to attend the meeting today and a summary will be given to the board in March, with a report being sent to members in advance of the meeting.

Stephen Pollock suggested this should give clarity to members where their responsibilities lie within H&S in the park.

5. Finance & Strategy Sub-committee.

5.1 The Chair gave an update on developments regarding partner funding issues:

- A proposal was made to both councils for enhanced financial support, in July.
- The Chair presented at a meeting with South Belfast Working Group (BCC) on 22/10/18, which Cllr Geraldine McAteer (board director) facilitated. Rose Crozier (Director of Neighbourhood Services, BCC) attended the meeting and the proposal from LVRP was unanimously supported. This will feed into the budget setting process in BCC, however several other steps must also be cleared, including People and Communities Cttee; and Strategy and Resources Cttee; prior to budget finalisation.

- The Chair & Stephen Pollock met with Cllr Jim Rodgers, Chair of the Strategy & Resources Cttee. Again, this was a positive meeting.
 - The Chair & Stephen Pollock met with the Mayor of LCCC
 - LCCC Leisure & Community Development Committee have considered our funding request - The Chair advised that Ross Gillanders would give an update later in the meeting.
 - The Chair advised that he and the Park Manager met with Helen Anderson & Mark Wright from NIEA; they have confirmed that they will no longer be providing core funding to organisations and only project related funding is available. LVRP has completed the pre-application stage for such funding and has received a letter confirming they will be considered for the next stage pending amendments to the current application.
- Colum McDaid (NIEA) advised members that LVRP need to improve on the quality of the application to be considered for funding and has given the Park Manager advice on how to improve the application, as it needs to be more specific in all areas relating to the project that funding is being applied for. Colum McDaid advised that stage 2 of the application should be around 6 weeks however this is not guaranteed.
- Craig Somerville suggested that a sub-committee for biodiversity would be useful in providing support to the Park Manager for the NIEA application. The Chair advised that this would be discussed later in the meeting. It was confirmed that potential finding was 20K however this would have to be match funded.

Ross Gillanders joined the meeting at 3.40pm

- The Chair advised that a meeting was scheduled with the Heritage Lottery Fund for a resilience grant of up to 10K, however it will be the New Year before this will take place.
- The Finance & Strategy sub-committee met on 16th November to discuss funding issues
- A meeting took place on 23rd November with LVRP staff to brief them on the park's financial position and to answer any questions.
- The Chair advised that the annual thank you event for LVRP volunteers took place on 5th December; funding issues were briefly covered.
- The Chair & Park Manager met with the director of Andras House (Crowne Plaza/Ramada) and have arranged to meet again on 15th January to discuss a possible partnership with the park.

5.2 The Chair asked Ross Gillanders to give board members an update on the position of LCCC regarding funding. In summary:

- The element of LVRP's request seeking repair to reserves was highly unlikely to be accepted.
- The element requesting annual funding increase to £80k has been included in estimates, and has to work its way through the various budget setting processes. It is not certain what the outcome will be.
- If BCC do not similarly agree to an increase, this will put any LCCC increase at risk. While LCCC are the employing council for LVRP staff, LCCC and BCC funding have up to now been aligned, and LCCC's position is that this should continue.

5.3 The Chair updated the meeting on recent developments with BCC:

- Rose Crozier had, just prior to the board meeting, advised that enhanced funding was categorised in BCC as a 'growth request' and all organisations who have applied for such funding, have been rejected.

5.4 It was agreed that:

- Further clarity should be sought from both councils regarding enhanced funding
- The Finance & Strategy sub-committee should progress necessary actions, including political support, and should keep Board members informed
- Escalation into a public campaign might be needed as a last resort, however this would not be progressed without first calling an emergency meeting of the full Board.

5.5 The Chair emphasised the crucial role at this stage of Councillor board members in ensuring that we get the necessary political support for increased funding.

5.6 The Park Manager presented the finance summary for the first half of the financial year, April – September.

5.7 Finance Summary/Funding applications

5.7.1 The Park Manager updated the meeting on the work by Karen Gallagher, fundraising consultant Karen Gallagher will in January define priority actions over the following 3 months.

5.7.2 The Park Manager advised that a final submission is being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for an oral history project. A meeting has taken place with LVRP volunteers to discuss the project and to gain interest for their support. The original figure for funding was 90k however HLF advised that the figure was reduced to 50/60k.

5.7.3 Kerrie Sweeney noted that projects like these are potentially at risk should councils not increase their funding and that this can be used when arguing a case for the park.

5.7.4 The Park Manager advised that the funding application to the Assets Recovery Scheme through the Dept of Justice was unsuccessful.

5.7.5 The Park Manager attended the NI Environment Links AGM, which was also attended by HLF, who informed guests of their awards for all funding which will launch in Spring 2019. LVRP will hopefully be eligible to apply for funding through this scheme.

Reports

6. Park Manager's Report – Due to time constraints, the Park Managers Report & Planning applications were not tabled at the meeting.

Action: The report will be circulated to members by email.

Planning

7. Planning Applications received for consultation this quarter.

Action: The Planning applications report will be circulated by email

7.1 The Park Manager attended the final consultation on the 'Belfast Open Spaces Strategy', a more focused strategy to come out of the Green & Blue Infrastructure plan.

8. Any other business

8.1 Dermot Hughes advised attendees that a bio-diversity sub-group could be useful, in terms of applying for funding especially. It would increase board members knowledge of the park and the bio-diversity within the park. The management of bio-diversity within the park could be better and the sub-committee could support this.

The Chair asked if Dermot Hughes could progress this idea as a working group rather than a board sub-committee and Dermot agreed to chair the group.

8.2 The Chair advised that there would be a Dropbox folder set up by the next meeting so that board members can access and share documents.

The meeting ended at 5.10pm

The next board meeting is scheduled on Thursday 28th March at 3pm – venue TBC