The first meeting of the Connswater Community Greenway Stakeholder Forum took place on Friday 6th June 2008 in the Park Avenue Hotel. Stakeholders were informed of the Project Management structure and the role of the CCG Stakeholder Forum. An update on progress to date was provided as well as details of what will be achieved in the next quarter (see below). A question and answer session also took place and the issues raised along with the answers can be found on Page 3 and 4.

Construction will take place 2010–2013 and we hope to have a Design & Build Team in place June 2009.

Key Milestones; June–October 2008:
- Relocation to Project Office 274 Newtownards Road July 2008
- Ecologist Scott Wilson appointed July 2008 to develop an Ecological Management Plan (EMP) for the CCG.
- Marketing and Communications Consultants–Appointed September 2008
- Communications and Administration Officer–Appointed September 2008
- Employers Agent Team – to be appointed October 2008
- Community Engagement Officer–Secondment agreed September 2008, appointment October 2008

Working in Tandem:
Sammy Douglas and the Lord Mayor Tom Hartley cycled in tandem to celebrate the signing of the agreement between Belfast City Council and East Belfast Partnership in July 2008.
Community Engagement and the CCG

There is no universally accepted definition of Community Engagement although one definition suggests that the primary purpose of community engagement is ‘to empower people to influence decisions that shape their lives’.

The Connswater Community Greenway Project is very much a project for the people of East Belfast, by the people of East Belfast. To ensure that this remains the case and that everyone has the opportunity to fully engage with the project and to participate in both its development and delivery, the CCG Team has developed a Community Engagement Strategy, the key aims of which are as follows:-

- To actively engage with and involve a broad spectrum of society both in the locality of the CCG and further afield.
- To encourage the use of the CCG both directly and through partnership bodies for the promotion of physical and mental well being.
- Promoting ownership of the CCG within its communities.
- To promote and encourage access and learning through engagement on and off site.
- To raise the profile of the CCG locally, nationally and internationally.

These actions will be achieved through a range of measures currently being developed by the Greenway Project Team including; the provision of a dedicated Community Engagement Officer, a programme of training and development for volunteers, adoption schemes, the stakeholders forum, community events/activities grants programme etc…

Now that the project has transferred to its new office at 274 Newtownards Road we are keen to expand our engagement programme. Any individual or organisation wishing to learn more about the project or, indeed, become more involved can contact us at the CCG office – Tel: 9046 7925 or email: heather@eastbelfast.com

Community Engagement - “To empower people to influence decisions that shape their lives”

Connswater Community Greenway Walk

Some Stakeholders have expressed an interest in taking part in another CCG Walk.

Suggestions have been made that the walk could be broken down into sections.

We have organized a walk of the first stage—following the Connswater River from Victoria Park to the Hollow (where the three rivers meet) at Elm Grove Primary School- which will take place on 7 November 2008 at 2.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.

If you are interested in attending this event please contact Heather at the CCG office on tel: 9046 7925 or email heather@eastbelfast.com by 19 October 2008.

We hope you will join us on the 7th November, it would be great to see you there!!
Questions and Answers

Q. The CCG Group should ensure that they involve schools and youth groups.

A. The CCG Team are in the process of recruiting a Community Engagement Officer (CEO). The CEO will be working closely with all stakeholders to ensure full engagement with the Connswater Community Greenway including working closely with both schools and youth groups who we have identified as critical to the success of the project. In addition, once capital works have commenced, we anticipate recruiting two Education Officers to work directly with both schools and youth groups and have funding for grants to support the involvement of both schools and community groups.

Q. A schools adoption scheme should be considered.

A. A key element of the Community Engagement Strategy for the Greenway Project is to promote and encourage access and learning through engagement on and off site. We will, therefore, be actively promoting an adoption scheme involving not just schools and colleges but also local community groups and other stakeholders.

Q. There should be opportunities to ensure that older people are involved as well as the younger people in the area.

A. The success of the Connswater Community Greenway will be determined by its ability to meet the needs of everyone in the area. This will only be achieved by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the project. With the dedicated resource of a Community Engagement Officer we want to ensure that groups such as the elderly are able to contribute to the development and implementation of the CCG. Over the coming months we will be talking directly to community groups, schools, businesses etc ... to ensure that they are fully engaged with the project and would welcome and encourage anyone with an interest to contact the CCG Team at 90467925.

Q. Anti social and vandalism issues will need to be addressed.

A. Models of similar schemes both nationally and internationally have been considered to identify best practice in relation to dealing with the issues of anti social behaviour and vandalism. The CCG Team will be working closely with Belfast City Council, the PSNI and local community groups to address this issue.

Q. Have the CCG got good links with and support from the Titanic Quarter?

A. The Connswater Community Greenway is widely recognised as an opportunity to improve access and physical linkages to the TQ development for both pedestrians and cyclists. As a scheme that will complement Titanic quarter development, CCG has had a number of direct meetings with TQ Development and the Chief Executive Officer. Titanic Quarter participates on both the CCG’s Stakeholders Forum and the Multi-Agency Team.

Q. How can you ensure that local people benefit from the jobs that will be created?

A. The Connswater Community Greenway Project will have a small team of staff — Programme Manager, Community Engagement Officer, Communication and Administration Officer, two Education Officers and two Greenway Wardens. The project will, however, deliver many indirect opportunities. The enhanced urban environment, associated heritage and tourism trails, projected increase in visitors to the area, and improved linkages across east Belfast will attract further inward economic investment into the area presenting new opportunities for local people. In addition education and health outputs associated with the project including accredited training for a core of volunteers will present personal development opportunities for local people living and working along the Greenway.

We are looking with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) at how within the current legislation, we can build in opportunities for local people in the Design and Build contract.
Questions and Answers (Continued)

Q. The CCG presents a huge opportunity for capturing the stories and heritage of the area. How will these be recorded and link with the CCG?

A. Already we have been approached with ideas for recording the stories and history of the Connswater area of East Belfast. Work in this area will be further developed once recruitment of the Community Engagement Officer has been completed. It is intended that the Greenway will develop a range of cultural and heritage trails highlighting East Belfast’s strong heritage and area’s of significant importance for some of East Belfast’s most famous sons and daughters such as Van Morrison, George Best, C.S.Lewis etc.

Q. Has East Belfast Partnership spoken to the Ulster Way and Sustrans to see if the cycle and walkways can link to other facilities in the area?

A. Sustrans have been directly involved with the project since the initial stages of the application for Big Lottery funding and have played an important role in both the development and the design of the current plans for the project including consideration of establishing links to existing facilities. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency undertake a co-ordinating role in relation to the Ulster Way. We will arrange a further meeting to discuss ways in which the Greenway and Ulster Way can complement each other.

Q. Can the CCG be used to care for the wildlife in the area and protect the natural heritage of East Belfast?

A. A team of ecologists are currently undertaking the development of an Ecology Management Plan for the CCG. This will include 5, 10, 15 and 20 year objectives for the project and ensure that we protect and conserve the environment now and for future generations. We will limit the impact on existing ecosystems along the route of the Greenway and through river remediation, native planting etc.. will re-instate a valuable wildlife corridor from Belfast Harbour Estate to the Castlereagh Hills. In short it is anticipated that the Connswater Community Greenway will enhance the natural environment in East Belfast, promoting biodiversity and creating new opportunities for the care and protection of our natural environment and wildlife.

Q. The quality of the rivers will need to be addressed if the project is to be successful.

A. An integral part of the project is the remediation of the rivers, reinstating this valuable community resource to its former glory. We are currently working with both the Rivers Agency and Water NI through the projects Multi-Agency Team in relation to river remediation and improving water quality to ensure a co-ordinated approach to addressing these issues. We are also meeting with the Rivers Agency about the recent flooding and what measures can be introduced to reduce or prevent flooding in the area.

Q. DRD’s Rapid Transport proposals will need to link with the CCG. DRD and CCG are to meet to discuss co-ordination of schemes.

A. Again, through the Multi-Agency Team we are working to ensure both projects fully complement each other, maximising the benefits of both schemes.

Q. CCG needs to link with other key schemes – widening of A2, expansion of Belfast City Airport, Titanic Quarter etc….

A. The Multi-Agency Team will ensure a co-ordinated approach in relation to all major developments in the area. This team includes senior representatives from all major Statutory and Private Sector stakeholders.

Q. Security and safety will be key, cabling for CCTV should be included.

A. Initial plans and budgets for the CCG included costs associated with installing CCTV cameras along the route. However, practicalities such as monitoring, management, legal arrangements and potential locations for camera’s need to be resolved by relevant stakeholders such as the District Policing Partnership, PSNI, BCC etc…