The Stakeholder Forum

The second meeting of the Connswater Community Greenway Stakeholders Forum took place on 17 October 2008 at the Park Avenue Hotel. Following introductions from Sammy Douglas a series of presentations were made with Wendy Langham (CCG Programme Manager) providing an update on the current position regarding the CCG Programme, Sean Brannigan (CCG Community Engagement Officer) outlining details of the programme’s Community Engagement Strategy and Dr Paul Lynas outlining details of the Ecological Management Plan and baseline study. Presentations were followed by a question and answer session and the issues raised along with appropriate answers can be found on page 4.

The Forum continues to be very well supported and represents a significant opportunity for the CCG Team to update our Stakeholders whilst also providing our stakeholders with a Forum in which they can raise issues or concerns that may arise as the project develops, directly with the CCG Project Team. To date the Forum has proved invaluable in terms of focusing attention on key issues such as provision for elderly users etc… and we are grateful for your continued support.

Progress update

The project remains on course for construction to begin in early 2010 with completion by 2013.

Key Milestones; October 2008 to January 2009

- Launch of Greenway Outreach Centres and official office opening—Oct. 08
- Employers Agent appointed
- Community Engagement Officer Appointed—Dec. 08
- Project Evaluator Appointed
- Ecological study completed - Jan. 09
- Archaeologist appointed - Jan. 09

Official Opening and Launch of Outreach Centres.

First Minister Peter Robinson, ably assisted by young people representing the Greenway Outreach Centres, officially opens the Connswater Community Greenway Project Office at 274 Newtownards Road on 24 October 2008. Outreach Centres can be located on the CCG Map overleaf.
Ecological Management Plan

As previously reported, Ecologists Scott Wilson were appointed in July 2008 to develop an Ecological Management Plan for the Connswater Community Greenway. Ensuring that we protect existing natural habitats and wildlife whilst creating new habitats and reintroducing wildlife to the river corridors and parks are key elements of the project. To ensure that we are in a position to measure the projects success against these key elements, Ecologist Dr Paul Lynas of Scott Wilson has produced a Baseline Ecology Report. This report identifies the main species and habitats which currently exist within the CCG affected area and includes details of protected and rare species and habitats along the route using surveys, research and consultation. The range of surveys carried out included the following:

- Habitat Survey; designed to provide a record of the semi-natural vegetation and wildlife habitat
- River Corridors Survey; a detailed description of the key habitat features present within and adjacent to the river channels
- Bat Roost Potential and Activity Surveys; bats and their roosts are fully protected under a number of laws and this survey was carried out to ensure that works do not impact on either the bat population or their roosts
- Aquatic invertebrate Surveys; the variety and number of aquatic invertebrates in a water sample can indicate the quality of water it is taken from. The Northern Ireland Environmental Agency already survey the Connswater River therefore surveys were carried out on both the Knock and Loop Rivers.
- Mammal Surveys; during both the habitat and river corridor surveys special attention was paid to the potential presence of protected mammal species such as the badger, otter and red squirrel using standard survey procedures.
- Invasive Species Surveys; the location and extent of invasive species along the route has been mapped.

Preserving, restoring and enhancing habitats for native plants and animals will require significant planning and management and Scott Wilson will use this baseline data to inform a management and maintenance plan and enable accurate monitoring and evaluation of this element of the CCG programme.

Key tasks for the next quarter
January - April 09
- Community Activity Small Grants Programme to be available,
- Preparation of Contract documentation required for Design and Build Team
- Outreach Centres developed and operating,
- Stakeholders Forum,
- Stakeholder and community engagement across East Belfast
- Agreed Marketing and Communications Action Plan for 2009/2010,
- Appointment of CCG independent legal advisors,
- Draft CCG Ecological Management Plan
- Evaluation workshop and agreement of CCG Evaluation Framework
- Archaeologist report and mitigation strategy
- UK Living Landmarks visit

Ongoing Activities
Land Assembly
Being undertaken by BCC in accordance with agreed programme and budget;
Flood Alleviation
Working with Rivers Agency to address flooding in the CCG area on the Connswater, Knock and Loop Rivers.
Water Quality
Northern Ireland Environment Agency and NI Water are working to address Combined Sewage Outlets along the CCG rivers and are working closely with the CCG to progress this in tandem with the CCG works programme.
Invasive Species
Working with BCC to manage invasive species in the CCG area.
A number of key points were raised for consideration by the Programme Management Team at the Stakeholders Forum of 17 October 2008 and the points are addressed below in the form of Questions and Answers.

**Q.** Are there any plans to set up smaller meetings in the area to update local groups unable to attend the Stakeholders Forum?

**A.** Now that the CGG Project Team have a full time Community Engagement Officer on board and Greenway Outreach Centres have been identified, we plan to deliver a range of initiatives with our Outreach partners aimed at both informing and engaging with communities along the CCG route. Activities will range from public meetings to presentations and feedback sessions with small interested groups. Anyone interested in hearing more about the CCG or wishing to become more involved with the project should contact Sean Brannigan, CCG Community Engagement Officer either by phone on 90467930 or by e-mail to sean@eastbelfast.com.

**Q.** How does the proposed E-way impact on the CCG at Holywood Arches?

**A.** The Connswater Community Greenway has established a Multi-agency Team comprising representatives from all major statutory and private sector organisations to ensure a co-ordinated approach in relation to all developments in the area. In addition CCG have been meeting with DRD to discuss the proposals for the new E-way and both the impacts to and synergies between the two projects ensuring that both projects fully complement each other, maximising the benefits of both projects.

**Q.** How can individuals become involved with the project, learn more about the project or provide their views, opinions or ideas on the Connswater Community Greenway?

**A.** As part of the CCG Community Engagement Strategy we have established a number of Greenway Outreach Centres along the CCG route. These Greenway Outreach Centres are predominantly located in community centres and, through these we will provide information and updates on the CCG as a whole as well as information on the CCG in their area. The Greenway Outreach Centres will present an opportunity for local people to ask questions or provide feedback on the CCG programme. They will also provide opportunities for local people to become directly involved with the CCG either through volunteering or by promoting/raising awareness of the CCG through activities associated with the Connswater Community Greenway area. You can also contact the CCG Team directly requesting information, visits, presentations or assistance with CCG related events by contacting Sean Brannigan at 90467930 or;

In writing to 
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By E-mail to sean@eastbelfast.com