

Report on	Master Plan/Business Case - Maghera Walkways
Date of Meeting	Thursday 14th October 2021
Reporting Officer	N Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	A Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Committee on the appointment of Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) to develop a Master Plan/Business Case for the potential development of lands between Mullagh Road / Tobermore Road as an outdoor recreational green space for the Maghera area.
2.0	Background
2.1	In April 2021 approval was sought to appoint a suitable qualified consultancy team to carry out a feasibility study into the development of lands at Mullagh Road, Maghera. Minute Ref D065/21 (App 1 refers).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Following Council approval a quotation exercise was carried out. Quotations were sent to six companies. One company submitted a return and was successful in the award of the tender.
3.2	The successful company was ORNI with a tender price of £14,325.00
	<p>Methodology</p> <p>ORNI proposes the following approach to complete the project within the 19-week timescale, commencing Monday 27th September 2021 with a completion date 31st January 2022.</p> <p>Step 1 – Project Foundation</p> <p>Project Inception Meeting - ORNI will convene an inception meeting with relevant representatives from MUDC to provide the opportunity to gain further insight into the vision and objectives of the project and the practicalities of the site. ORNI understands the study area for this project is adjacent to an ongoing Council project to redevelop the former Maghera High School Site as a new mixed-use Enterprise Centre and Business Park. In addition, ORNI, understands there has been some previous opposition to this proposal due to a demand for a public green</p>

space. The project initiation meeting will allow for confidential discussion regarding the relationship between the ongoing business park project and this project.

Strategic Context – ORNI will undertake an examination of the strategic context within which the site would operate. As part of this process, a detailed examination of the Plan's contribution to local and national policies will be undertaken. This will include but not limited to:

- NI Government / Departmental Strategic aims and policy objectives
- Mid Ulster District Council – Corporate Plan, Community Plan, Outdoor Recreation Strategy, Parks and Play Strategy.

Step 2 – Current Position - It is essential ORNI understands the current position of the site to identify deficiencies and begin to develop recommendations to improve the current situation. This will provide the foundation for future steps.

Desk Research – ORNI will undertake desk research of any existing studies and information relating to the site. It is envisaged this will include:

- Public vs private land ownership
- Land use / management
- Constraints e.g. it is evident the site falls within a flood risk area
- Statutory designations – Built and Natural Heritage
- Plans for adjoining business park and Maghera Development Framework 2018
- Formal and Informal Recreation via external sources such as Strava Global Heat Maps and specialist activity websites / forums

Fieldwork – Informed by the aforementioned desk research, ORNI will undertake fieldwork to identify and assess:

- Deficiencies in current provision
- Opportunities for development / positive control points
- Access points
- Supporting infrastructure carrying capacity e.g. approach roads, car parking, visitor services
- Current recreation offering e.g. trail network, signage, waymarking, interpretation
- Topography/ Ground Conditions
- Risks – e.g. Invasive species e.g. Japanese knotweed, anti-social behaviour, informal activity, dumping / hazardous material

Consultation – ORNI will undertake consultation at two levels

a) Key agencies and stakeholders – This consultation will further inform the findings from desk research and initial fieldwork. For example, consultation may be required as follows:

- **Council staff (and appointed planners)** – re proposals for the business park
- **NED / HED** – re natural and built heritage designations respectively
- **DfI Roads** – re access roads, new entrances, pedestrian crossing points
- **Council Planning Dept** – re all of above

b) Assessment of need – The objective of this step is to identify the type and need for intervention at the site. This will ensure that proposed solutions are appropriate for the volume, needs and motivations of those who are most likely to

engage with the site. ORNI believes projects of this nature can only be sustainable in the long-term if it is fully embraced by the local community. It is envisaged an indicative list of topics for the survey will include:

- Views on strengths and deficiencies in current position
- Identification of proposed interventions (facilities / activities / initiatives)
- Discussion around the anticipated demand and potential target audiences for proposed facilities and services

Key consultation tactics will include one-to-one consultation with Council staff / Cllrs, key stakeholders / local community representatives, online public meeting (due to COVID restrictions on gatherings) and an online survey. A summary review will provide the key themes identified through consultation.

Step 3 - Analysis and Initial Findings – ORNI will analyse the findings from the aforementioned steps and draw of international best practice and emerging trends in outdoor recreation to prepare an initial options presentation. This will include a SWOT analysis, consultation feedback, proposed vision, proposed priority visitor segments and spatial concept plan. The latter is a GIS map(s) outlining the interdependence of the key components e.g. recreation, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, linkages to Maghera town. This presentation and facilitated discussion will allow the Council to provide feedback on the key components prior to ORNI working these up in detail within the development plan.

Step 4 - Concept Development - Following agreement on initial options, ORNI will undertake further investigations (including further fieldwork and consultation) to undertake a technical assessment of key components envisaged to be (as a minimum) core visitor hub area(s), outdoor recreation activities / trails), educational and social activities, traffic flow and parking.

This will be presented in a detailed Spatial Masterplan (which will demonstrate their interdependence) and be supported by commentary. To inform the preparation of costs, ORNI will avail of extensive database of benchmarked costs gained from previous similar projects. Many of ORNI's costed projects have externally verified by CPD or independent Quantity Surveyors and have been found to be accurate.

Rather than providing distinct 'either or' options, the development plan will include phased options with each phase building upon the other to deliver the vision over a timeline e.g. 3-5 years. Phases / options may include i.e. Do Nothing (Status Quo), Do Minimum, Phase 1, Phase 2 etc. The phases will be presented to provide short, medium and long-term options with benefits and outcomes clearly presented. Each component and therefore phase will be individually costed. Phasing will also be guided by an appraisal of current and forecast external funding opportunities. Recommendation of local business / social economy options to use the site will also be proposed.

Step 5 – Final Report - Prior to submitting the final draft report, ORNI will deliver a presentation of final recommendations and facilitate discussion. MUDC will be provided the opportunity to further comment on draft reports, and these will be reflected as appropriate in the final report.

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: £14,325.00 from existing capital programme budget allocations
	Human: Existing staff resources will work alongside appointed consultancy team. No additional staffing resource required.
	Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Will be developed as part of the project and in conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: Will be developed as part of the project and in conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	This interim report is provided for members information at this stage. A further report will present the completed Master Plan/Feasibility Study on completion of the final recommendations as projected for January 2022.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	App 1 – D065/21 Master Plan/Business Case – Maghera Walkways