

Report on	Walking for All Project
Date of Meeting	12th October 2023
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
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Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on the proposal that Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) is currently engaging with all local councils. Their aim to apply to the Peace Plus funding programme for the placement of a "walking for all project coordinator" to be based in the Mid Ulster area.
2.0	Background
2.1	ORNI are currently working towards applying to the Peace Plus funding programme, more specifically Theme 4 – Healthy and Inclusive Communities, Investment Area 4.2 – Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion. Peace Plus is administered by SEUPB.
2.2	The proposed project, Walking for All (WFA) is to use led walks as the conduit to contributing to the creation of healthy communities in rural areas whilst also tackling social isolation and promoting enhanced social inclusion.
2.3	The project will also aim to create opportunities for sustained, meaningful and purposeful contact between people and groups of different backgrounds, and in so doing will seek to make a direct contribution to peace and prosperity.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The proposed project, Walking for All (WFA), will aim to specifically deliver on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributing to the creation of healthy communities (including individuals and entire communities) in rural areas through a health and well-being focused solution. • providing the opportunities for communities to grow together – economically, socially and culturally. • helping communities become empowered to address social exclusion ensuring all people have access to quality services and therefore achieving a better quality of life for all. • encouraging participants to socialise, gain confidence, build relationships in their local communities, interact reducing rural isolation and exclusion and contributing to more peaceful and prosperous rural areas. • building community networks both cross community and cross border resulting in vibrant, inclusive and sustainable rural communities throughout NI and the border Counties. • fostering a culture of volunteering – with the project focused on training Volunteer Community Walk Leaders, the project will help build the capacity of rural communities to develop and ultimately sustain activities in their own area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting rural enterprises e.g coffee shops and supports partnership and collaboration effort at all levels and between all stakeholders involved e.g e NGOs, County Council, County LSP and Local Communities.
3.2	<p>ORNI have stated that they see this project differing from other existing Council walking initiatives with the focus being on training up Volunteer Community Walk Leaders. Their vision is for the Walk Leaders to set up, lead and sustain their own walking groups across the Council area and they propose that these Walk Leaders will be supported at every step by Walking For All Coordinator who will be employed for the sole purpose of the Mid Ulster area should the funding application be successful.</p>
3.3	<p>ORNI have advised that the proposed project is cross border. Confirmed partners include Sport Ireland and the Local Sports Partnerships of Counties Louth, Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan. Work is progressing with all Councils in NI (except Belfast City Council) to receive partnership support.</p>
3.4	<p>ORNI have advised that their proposed model for the project includes a core staff team of Project Manager, Finance Officer, Training and Communication Officer and three Regional WFA Managers. These positions will be employed by ORNI as the lead partner in the project. In addition, ORNI feel that the key to any success of the project is to employ a local WFA Coordinator in each of the Council areas in Northern Ireland and in each of the Local Sports Partnerships in the Republic of Ireland.</p>
3.5	<p>ORNI's vision is that each of the local WFA Coordinators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake an audit of all community groups in the widest sense across the Council area (e.g sporting clubs, Mother and Toddlers groups, Age Friendly clubs, Men's Shed, Church groups). • proactively engage with these groups to recruit Volunteer Community Walk Leaders. • deliver WFA training courses to new Volunteer Community Walk Leaders. • initially lead walks with the new Walk Leaders to build their confidence and ensure quality control. • provide ongoing support to Community Walk Leaders to maintain a weekly regular walk as a minimum. <p>seek to integrate existing walking groups (Walking In Your Community and Walking for Health) into WFA and providing the necessary refresher training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organise and host local networking walks and events for walking groups. • identify and deliver 'peace and reconciliation' interventions in specific communities. • collate walking group data and case studies and share with the Training and Communication Officer to populate the WFA website. • keep records for monitoring and evaluation purposes and preparing reports for the Regional WFA Managers. • collectively report monthly to the Regional WFA Manager on targets and outputs. • report to the Project Working Group when required.
3.6	<p>Given the potential overall size of the proposed project (c.£6.5 million over 3 years), it is not possible for ORNI to act as the employing body for the intended 16 Local Coordinators. Consequently, the model proposed is that the WFA Coordinators are employed by the individual Councils and Local Sport Partnerships, but all work programmes and outputs will be line managed by ORNI, as the project's lead partner. The intention via this application is that the coordinators will be in post for three years on a three-year fixed term contract.</p>

<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9</p> <p>3.10</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the call for applications to the Peace Plus programme will take place before the end of 2023. It is anticipated that there will be a 6-9 month assessment period, so if the funding application is successful, it is not anticipated that the Coordinator posts will be in place until at least January 2025.</p> <p>ORNI have advised they propose highlighting in their application that they anticipate costs are based on a project starting date of April 2025. ORNI has sought the assistance of an economist to calculate projected costs for the period 1st April 2025 – 30th March 2028 and cognisant of increases in inflation during this period.</p> <p>There is no expectation from ORNI that after the three years Councils will have to retain the Coordinator or feel under pressure to retain/finance the post from their own existing budgets after the initial 3 year period. However, ORNI have stated they hope that the intended outputs of the project may have had such a positive impact on the work of each respective Council, that some Councils may consider extending the role post-Peace funding and/or work in tandem with the Project Manager who will be tasked with seeking further funding opportunities to extend the project beyond the initial 3 year term.</p> <p>As part of SEUPB’s requirement, a Service Level Agreement/Partnership Agreement will be expected to be put in place between ORNI as lead partner and the Council.</p> <p>ORNI is therefore seeking agreement from Council to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formally support the project by being a named partner in the forthcoming application to Peace Plus 2. Agree to act as the employing authority for the WFA Local Coordinator. 3. Providing office space and administrative support as required throughout the length of the project. 4. Offer Officer support throughout the project when required to assist the Coordinator.
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Other Considerations</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: The intention from ORNI is that this project is fully financed via their funding application, and should this be successful they have advised that they anticipated that there will be no financial commitment or outlay expected from Councils.</p> <p>ORNI have advised that the salary for the coordinator post has been independently evaluated and therefore have used these figures as part of their funding application – in addition they have costed national insurance, pension contribution, essential car users’ allowance and statutory redundancy pay. As part of the costings for the funding application, ORNI have advised that costings also include Councils receiving a flat rate of 15% towards administration and 7% towards the coordinator’s travel and subsistence. In addition, each Officer will be given a small programme budget to manage each year towards training costs, materials etc.</p> <p>Human: ORNI have advised that should this funding application be successful, then all Coordinators working in individual council areas across the project will have the same Job Description provided by ORNI. ORNI require each Council to be responsible for undertaking the recruitment process and ORNI have advised they can participate in the recruitment and selection process as an observer, subject to consideration/agreement via each Council Human Resources Department.</p>

	Risk Management: Should funding application be successful, to be considered in line with relevant Council Policies and Procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: To be considered as part of the proposed funding application.
	Rural Needs Implications: To be considered as part of the proposed funding application.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note the contents of this report and to give consideration to agreeing to ORNI request, from Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formally support the project by being a named partner in the forthcoming application to Peace Plus 2. Agreeing in principle and subject to due diligence to act as the employing authority for the WFA Local Coordinator. 3. Agreeing in principle and subject to due diligence to providing office space and administrative support as required throughout the length of the project. 4. Proportionate officer support throughout the project when required to assist the Coordinator.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A