

Report on	Parks Service Progress/Update Report
Reporting Officer	Head of Parks
Contact Officer	Nigel Hill

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 of the progress being made regarding activities and associated to Parks Services and highlight events or consultations that will be occurring in the future
2.0	Background
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council recognises the important role that Parks, Countryside recreation and play has in today's society and the ease of accessible, open space can have on basis quality of life issues and the health and wellbeing of the local community. The facilities and programmes provided in Mid Ulster are designed to maximise participation from all sections of the community and provide opportunities to maximise quality outdoor experiences for our residents across
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Blue Flag Application 2018</p> <p>The application for the 2018 Blue Flag awards are to be completed and returned to Keep NI Beautiful by the 16th December. The Blue Flag Award is the definitive international beach award recognised in 49 countries, owned and run by the independent non-profit organisation Foundation for Environmental Education. The programme is designed to raise environmental awareness and increase good environmental practice amongst tourists, local communities and beach and marina operators. With its emphasis on improving environmental impacts, Blue Flags can now be awarded to marinas and even individual boats. The Blue Flag works towards sustainable development of beaches and marinas through strict criteria dealing with Water Quality, Environmental Education and Information, Environmental Management, and Safety and Other Services.</p> <p>The Parks Service have been informed that The National Jury met on the 24th January 2018 to make the final decisions on the Blue Flag Award and that the Council application has been approved for recommendation to the International Blue Flag Jury. The International Jury will make their assessment in April and announce their final decisions in May 2018.</p>

The Jury praised the applicant on the level of detail and information provided with the Ballyronan Marina application. The Jury would also like to commend the Marina Operator on their collaboration with local conservation groups, as this is a key component of improving environmental awareness. The Jury were pleased with the Environmental education activities proposed, but feel that the marina users would benefit from more activities relevant to the different categories of the award such as water quality and preventing pollution.

3.2 **Managing Allotments Development Training**

Parks staff have undertaken specific training in relation to the development of public allotment. The Managing allotments training covered the Allotments Act (NI) 1932 & made attendees aware of the duties and obligations, placed on them by law, regarding the provision of allotments. (Appendix 1).

Community Gardens – when considering setting up a community garden the desire has to come from the community. Best practice shows that it then works best when set alongside individual allotment plots. This ensures that there is a natural progression of skill. People like to start collectively but once they feel confident enough they can get their own allotment plot. Others topics were covered, such as an Amnesty Day - to encourage allotment holders to clear out of date chemicals out of their sheds, dealing with conflict, waiting lists, sizes of plots, peer-to-peer support, rent versus capacity, introduction of water charges in NI, competitions, inspections, handbook for allotment holders with advice and guidance, allocating an identified space within the plots for a shed/green house.

The attendees were all Council employees from across Northern Ireland making the most of a good opportunity to share best practice examples.

3.3 **Outdoor Recreation & Your Community Seminar**

An Creagan was the venue for a funding seminar focused on community projects taking place within NI, with presentations from various partners. The clear message was that all activities and capital build taking place has to be a desire of the community with any potential funding projects there has to be a clear evidence that the project has a need and has community support. The Parks Service Development Officer attended in order to gather relevant information to better inform and assist with future project applications.

3.4 **Parks Calendar of Events 2018-19**

The Parks Service have created a schedule of events planned for the forthcoming summer season in conjunction with various partners and organisations. Currently 30 events are registered and will be delivered across a range of council managed venues over the summer months and will be promoted in conjunction with council's marketing and communications team. The calendar may be subject change dependent on contributing circumstances outside of council control and weather conditions. (Appendix 2)

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial: N/A</p> <p>Human: N/A</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
	Presented for member information purposes.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix 1 Allotments Act (NI) 1932</p> <p>Appendix 2 Parks Service Events Calendar 2018-19</p>