

Belfast Hills Partnership

Review of Resilience
2019

Judith A Annett Countryside Consultancy
Oct 2019



This review was made possible by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

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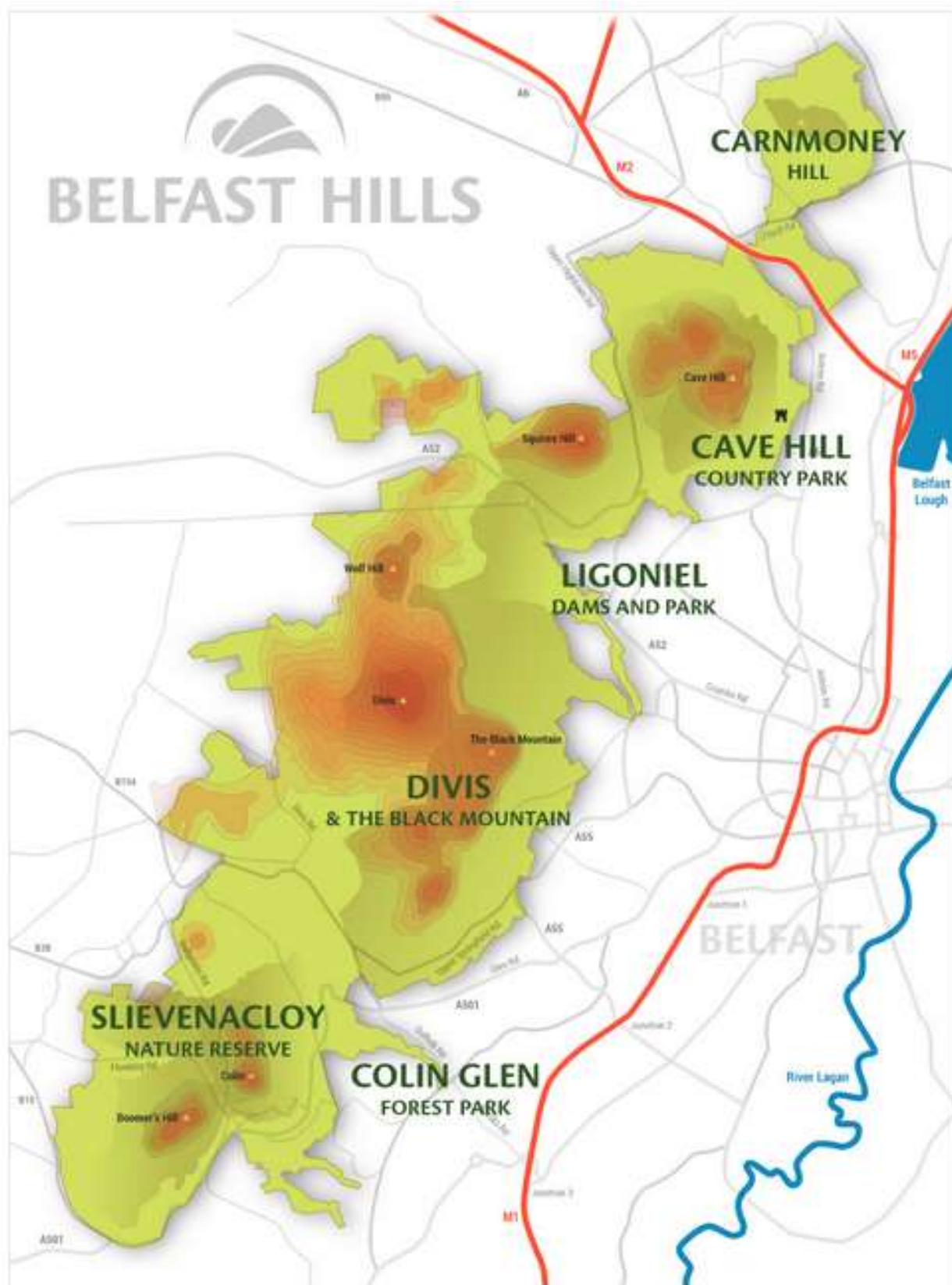
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Belfast Hills Partnership Resilience Review



Terms of Reference of this report:

This report has been produced by Judith A Annett Countryside Consultancy in response to a tender for the provision of a review of the resilience of the Belfast Hills Partnership Trust (referred to hereafter as Belfast Hills Partnership or BHP). The Belfast Hills Partnership has secured funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to undertake an evaluation of the organisation in relation to its resilience. This assesses the current condition of the organisation, how it works with its partners and how to make the most of future opportunities. Full terms of reference are outlined in Appendix 1.



Executive Summary

The resilience of the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) has been independently assessed looking at its current condition, how it works with its partners and how to make the most of future opportunities. A very brief outline of some of the key issues under each of these themes is highlighted below:

Current Condition

This assessment of the organisations ability to withstand threats, respond to opportunities and adapt to changing circumstances indicates that the Belfast Hills Partnership is currently in a strong position, with a relatively healthy bank balance (including unrestricted reserves) and a team of dedicated, skilled staff in place. Despite two major funding crises the organisation has grown enabling it to better fulfil the aims and objectives of the Partnership.

Care must however be taken to ensure that the various partners who were involved in setting up the organisation remain committed to that vision, and that the strategic vision and strategic partnership working elements are not lost in the midst of the various practical projects being undertaken on the ground.

There is no room for complacency and staff must continue to work with partners, proving BHP relevant in an ever changing environment.

Partnership Working

As the name Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) would suggest, partnership working is fundamental to everything that it does. BHP was set up to provide a coordinating mechanism and voice for the whole area. The recent decision of Lisburn & Castlereagh Council that Councilors should not act as directors of bodies such as BHP will negatively affect the strength of the Partnership, particularly if the other Councils follow this decision. Asking stakeholder bodies to recommit to the Belfast Hills Programme may help strengthen the partnership.

The Landscape Partnership Scheme (2012-2018) succeeded in both strengthening working relationships with existing partners and widening the extent of partnership working. The agreed 10 year legacy plan has provided an important agreed agenda for the hills and surrounding communities enabling work to continue on the ground. The volunteering team is integral to much of the practical works being undertaken and their continued support should be embedded within the organisation.

Within the BHP Board there is a good spread of expertise. Trustees should feel that they are able to lead and direct the charity in its purposes; for example learning from other similar organisations through study visits would be of benefit.

A wide range of issues and priorities were outlined for the Belfast Hills area during the consultations. These issues should be used to form the basis of a new landscape scale project that involves partner organisations, local people and visitors to the area in making positive differences.

To prevent competition for dwindling resources with current partners', greater joint working should occur. This could be achieved by forming a Projects Development Forum where partners jointly discuss, develop and deliver projects which meet the needs of the Belfast Hills together.

Future Opportunities

The Belfast Hills Partnership has a strong track record for successfully delivering projects. This success however should be better communicated with both partners and the wider public to enable such successes to be built upon.

There is a need to meet with other similar landscape management groups to share best practice within the group and potentially submit joint future bids.

The various consultations highlighted the need for a new project to address issues such as loss of wildlife, flytipping/littering, wildfires etc. which incorporates volunteering, training and youth education. The future viability of upland farming was also a key issue for concern; BHP should consider the development of a farming review and scheme looking at both urban fringe and upland farming in the Belfast Hills to identify opportunities and implement measures to relieve pressure on hill farmers.

The majority of funds raised by BHP are through applications for grant aid and is restricted funding. Securing unrestricted funding will provide the organisation with a greater buffer against unexpected circumstances as well as enabling grant match funding. A number of different avenues for securing funding were outlined including service level agreements, developing the Friends Group, securing local business support etc.

Working in partnership with the various statutory bodies, local landowners and businesses is a powerful mechanism for tackling issues that BHP may have no direct power or responsibility for.

The Natural Capital elements of particular relevance to the Belfast Hills are carbon storage, water quality, flood mitigation, biodiversity, food production and recreation. These benefits should be emphasized when highlighting the importance of the Belfast Hills.

A series of 28 recommendations have been produced as a result of this study (page 67) and should be used by the Board and Staff of the Belfast Hills Partnership to direct future work. Such work must be done within the constraints of staff time and financial resources.

Background -The Belfast Hills Partnership

The Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) was formally launched in 2005. BHP acts for all sides and interests in the hills. It brings together statutory bodies with a role to play in the Hills, including NIEA and the three councils of Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Newtownabbey & Antrim. These are joined by people from farming, the settlements, commercial enterprises and the recreation and environmental sectors.

All these groups have pledged to work together to solve problems and forge new initiatives to benefit the Hills.

The Partnership was the outcome of an initial proposal by the former Department of the Environment to create a second regional park in Northern Ireland (similar to the Lagan Valley Regional Park), with the proposals not having received full support from stakeholders.¹

Mission and Strategic Aims

The mission for the BHP is to

- Provide a practical and integrated management mechanism for the Belfast Hills thereby contributing to the conservation, protection and enhancement of its natural, built and cultural heritage and providing for responsible countryside enjoyment.
- Contribute to the quality of life of communities on the fringes of the Belfast Hills, to rural residents of the area and to the wider city of Belfast.

The strategic aims of the Partnership are to

- Conserve, protect and enhance the natural, cultural and built heritage of the Belfast Hills
- Encourage individuals, communities and organisations to care for the Belfast Hills
- Raise awareness of the value of the Belfast Hills and of issues relating to their protection.
- Manage existing recreational use of the Belfast Hills
- Support and assist farmers and landowners under pressure from urban development, and from inappropriate forms of countryside recreation
- Contribute to the economic regeneration of communities in the Belfast Hills and adjoining city
- Contribute to a positive image of Belfast through an attractive, well managed and functioning visual backdrop to the city.

Company Information

The Belfast Hills Partnership is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee with charitable trust status.

The Belfast Hills Partnership is a mechanism to coordinate and deliver a programme agreed between statutory bodies, local authorities, communities, nature conservation groups, farmers and landowners.

Each of the groups represented has its own stake and role in the area and carries out its own programmes of work. For example:

- The Woodland Trust manages lands belonging to Antrim and Newtownabbey around Carnmoney Hill as native species woodland, providing recreational opportunities for visitors to the site.
- Belfast City Council owns and manages extensive lands on Cave Hill and operates this as a country park with both recreational and conservation objectives, it also has an extensive network of urban edge parks and woodland.
- The National Trust owns and manages lands at Divis including important heathland areas, providing recreation, visitor and interpretation of these mountain lands.

¹ Turner S and Morrow K 1997 Northern Ireland Environmental Law. A transcript is provided in Appendix VII.

- The Colin Glen Trust owns a linear woodland leading from the urban area up into the hills and is developing a significant leisure, recreation and visitor offering on the site as well as providing outdoor learning opportunities and conservation activity.
- The Ulster Wildlife Trust owns and manages lands at Slievenacloy. These lands have Area of Special Scientific Interest status.
- A significant part of the Belfast Hills is in private hands and is farmed on a commercial basis. Other land holdings are used as landfill or recycling sites, or are old or active quarries. Some landfill sites are being capped at the end of their useful life and waste companies have significant commitments to their remediation and ongoing safety.
- Many other bodies have roles and responsibilities in the Hills such as responsibility for historic monuments, agri-environment schemes, rural development and for maintaining water and air quality and regulating waste activity.

Not all bodies are directly involved in the BHP and the majority of funding for activities in the Belfast Hills lies within the accounts of bodies other than BHP.

There are 15 Directors/Trustees representing the Statutory sector, Landowning/Managing sector and Community/User interest groups as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

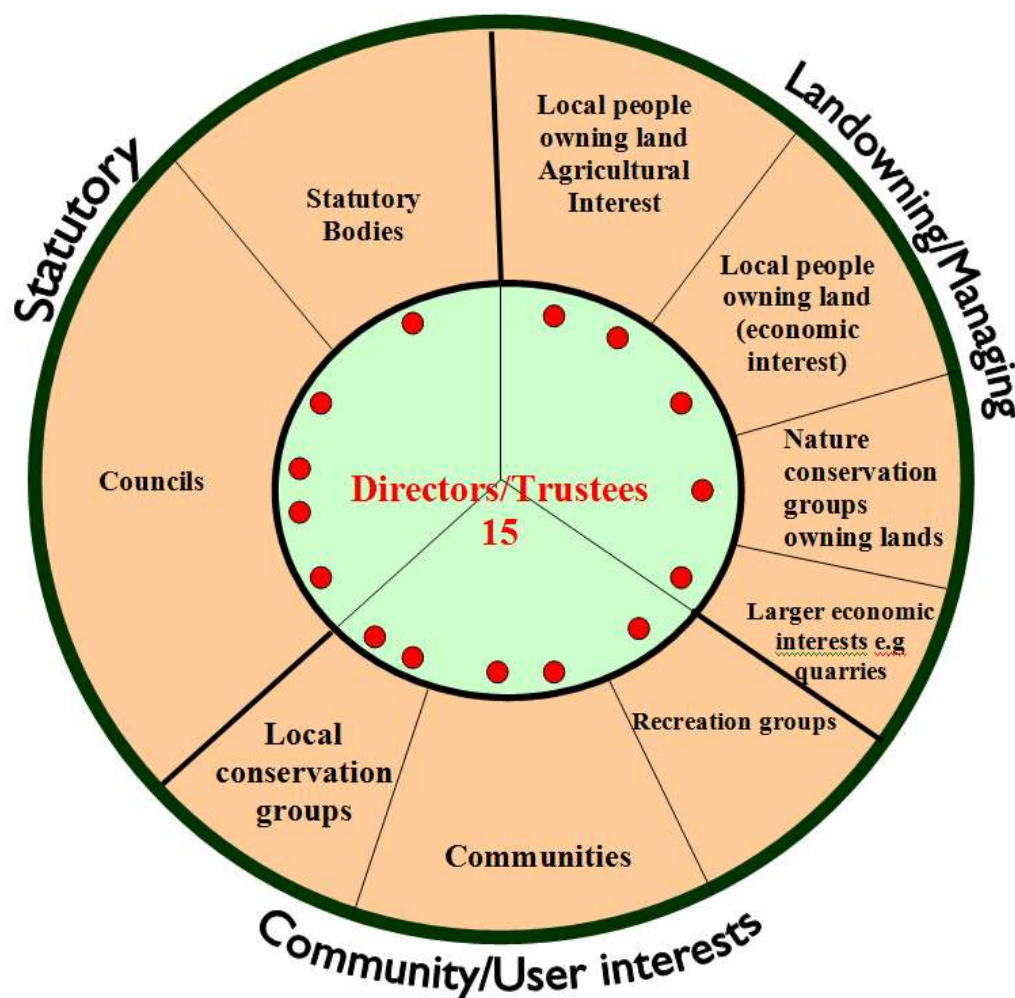


FIGURE 1 DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE MAKEUP OF THE BHP BOARD

Partnership business is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. Originally for the Board to be considered quorate at least two Board Members from each sector had to be present, however in 2007 this was altered so that generally only 6 Board Members needed to be present in total for the Board to be quorate. This demonstrates the level of trust and goodwill between the different groups that has been built up over the years.

Staffing

In 2004 the Partnership applied for core funding for its activities and hence employed three full time staff; a Partnership Manager, a Project Officer and an Administrator. In 2007 the Administrator budget was split, providing a part time Communications & Information officer and part time Administrator. These were operating from offices in Colin Glen Forest Park Centre up until May 2009 where staff relocated to the Social Economy Village on Hannahstown Hill. Funding cuts meant that staff were reduced from the equivalent of 3 to 2.5 in 2010. Despite this the Partnership managed to first secure Stage 1 (development phase) Heritage Lottery Funding for a major Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) and eventually in late 2011 Stage 2 (implementation phase) funding which has meant 4.5 additional project staff (an LPS Manager, LPS Project Officer, Outreach Officer, Volunteer Officer and an LPS Administrative Officer) employed since early 2012. This substantial change in personnel and project capacity and funding marked a clear and fundamental increase in Belfast Hills Partnership's profile and ability to deliver. Subsequent to the Landscape Partnership Scheme further funding was secured from the Big Lottery for a youth programme called Our Bright Future. This fund, along with a 10 year legacy pot from the Heritage Lottery Fund and support from the Esmée Fairbairn Trust has enabled staffing levels to remain constant, enabling high delivery and impact levels to continue.

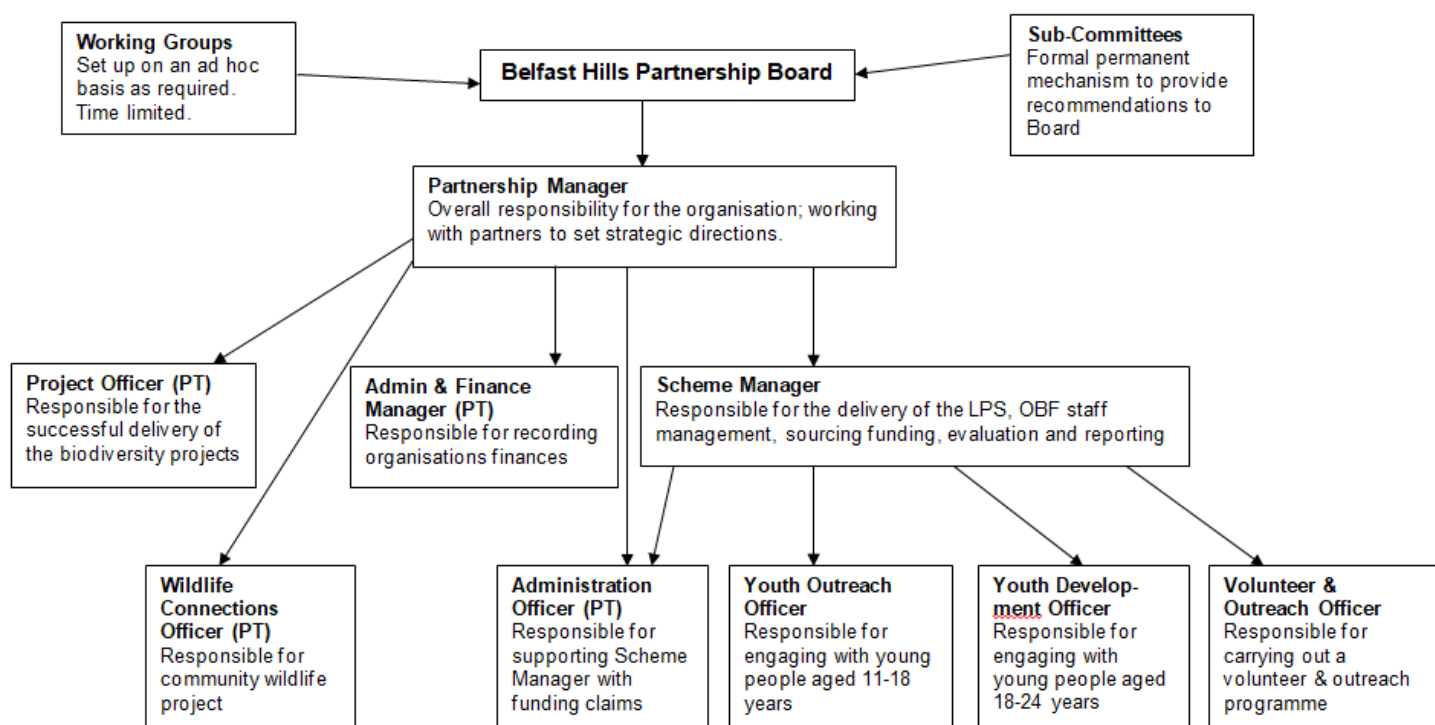


FIGURE 2 – CURRENT STAFF STRUCTURE OF BHP

Company Finances

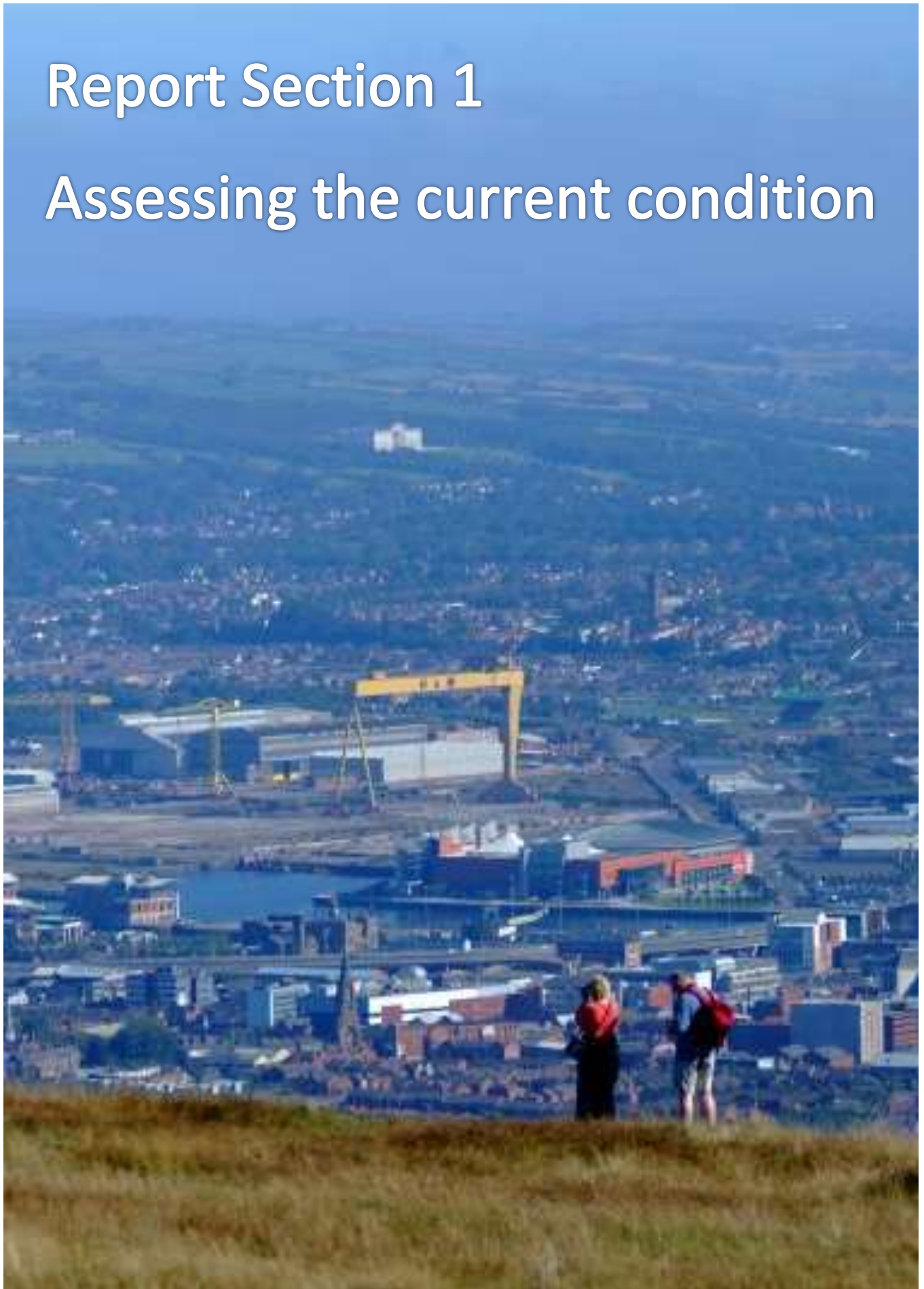
Looking at the direct income and expenditure within the Belfast Hills Partnership Accounts for the past ten years the income for the total activity of the Partnership has come from (including both core and programme funding) shows a wide range of sources (Figure3).

Organisation	Total income to BHP £	Percentage of all BHP funding over 10 years %
NIEA	£949,969.75	24.0
Belfast City Council	£382,417.00	9.6
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	£170,388.00	4.3
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	£136,895.00	3.5
National Lottery	£1,582,898.00	40.0
Rural Development Programme via DARD/DAERA	£280,061.00	7.0
National Trust	£26,500.00	0.7
Ulster Garden Villages	£20,000.00	0.5
Esme Fairbairn	£150,000.00	3.9
Landfill tax	£133,375.00	3.4
Gruntvig	£19,993.00	0.5
Other	£113,648.25	2.9
TOTAL	£3,966,145.00	

FIGURE 3 BHP INCOME FROM 2008/9 TO 2018/19

Report Section 1

Assessing the current condition



REPORT SECTION 1- ASSESSING THE CURRENT CONDITION

Terms of Reference Question 1

In which areas are we truly resilient, and which not?

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) defines the development of resilience in an organisation as:

to have greater capacity to withstand threats, respond to opportunities and to adapt to changing circumstances in order to achieve a more secure future.

Each of these aspects of BHP is considered in turn

1.1 Withstanding threats

Belfast Hills Partnership was set up as a joint initiative between Bryson House, Local Authorities, local conservation campaign groups, recreational interests, farming representatives and industry representatives to secure an agreed future for the Belfast Hills Landscape. The context for this included an earlier desire to manage the hills as a regional park (in the way e.g. that Lagan Valley Regional Park was developed) and a set of developing issues such as anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, legal and illegal dumping and a growing demand for recreation. The organisation has been successful in drawing people together, informing and providing a mechanism for the development of joint forward programmes for the hills, and where necessary campaigning for change. Due to there being no legislative basis for regional parks in Northern Ireland and the unwillingness of landowners to see the area managed as a 'park', other mechanisms were considered.

The BHP was then set up as a strategic mechanism, and as a way of coordinating effort and developing joint policies and views. Initially BHP was a recipient of core funding to undertake this strategic role with a joint funding agreement with Councils and NIEA. At the same time that BHP was developing, and preparing its memorandum and articles of association the Ministry Of Defense (MOD) decided to divest itself of the Divis lands it held above Hannahstown. The Bryson House Chief Executive John McMullan had a vision that BHP would own and manage lands (this was included in the memorandum and articles of association for the Trust) and entered into discussion with NIEA and MOD on a potential direct transfer of the lands to the Trust. In the event NIEA part funded the purchase of the lands by the National Trust from the MOD and an endowment for its ongoing restoration and management over a period of time. The National Trust then entered the Partnership and the vision at that time was adjusted to ensuring that publicly accessible lands, which Ulster Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Councils and community groups held, would be managed in accordance with a joint vision. This included land cover, nature conservation, accessibility and restoration with the input of other BHP stakeholders.

The Partnership has from these early days managed to withstand threats, including the early withdrawal of farming interest over disagreements about public access and their subsequent rejoining of the working group or Shadow Partnership just before the Partnership was formed; the burgeoning landfill pressures on the area's worked-out quarries, and the levels of anti-social behaviour towards farmers and landowners. Two major NIEA funding crises in 2009 and 2015 – 2015 almost led to the BHP's demise. It has survived 15 years of operation and has grown in terms of turnover, staffing and effort in that time.

Consultations as part of the review have generally identified that BHP is a very valuable organisation, performing a useful function and is seen as a success and a model of successful fundraising. The organisation has strong community support.

The BHP has achieved the ongoing support of local authorities through the Review of Public Administration and boundary, personnel and function changes during this period. It has worked consistently to a baseline set at the

inception of the Trust and has recently carried out an evaluation against the baseline² which includes 27 measures under 6 themes.

A more detailed summary of the baseline report is provided in Appendix 2. Below is provided a list of the 27 measures summarised by Decline/Static/Improvement in the measure.

Quality of life for communities in the Belfast Hills

1. Extent of accessible green space
2. Extent of linear access routes for walking
3. Opportunities to reach open space by public transport
4. Visual appeal, environment and amenity of home zones
5. Community safety in green space and open space

Tackling Urban Fringe Farming Issues

6. Farming statistics
7. Farming Issues
8. Support for tackling urban fringe farming issues
9. Examples of projects to resolve issues

Natural and Built Heritage

10. Habitats of the Belfast Hills
11. Species of the Belfast Hills
12. Nature conservation designations
13. Landscape Character
14. Lands with high nature conservation value, under threat
15. No. of historic monuments in the Hills with access & interpretation
16. Historic and vernacular buildings. Townlands.

Management of Countryside Recreation

17. Use of access and recreation sites & routes
18. Arrangements for management of countryside recreation sites
19. Access to the Countryside issues

Landfill Activity

20. Legal landfill sites
21. Illegal landfill sites
22. Flytipping sites
23. ARC 21

Contributing to the economic regeneration of Hills Communities

24. Economic status and relative deprivation
25. Levels of tourism and visitor activity in the hills
26. No. of tourism providers in the hills
27. Visitor attitude to the Belfast Hills

² Belfast Hills Partnership Baseline Study Update October 2018

These results clearly show strong evidence of where things have improved and where more attention and effort is required. This is a powerful tool for giving clear direction to future work and therefore also to future funding.

Question 1 Recommendation 1 - Baseline Targets

This is a challenging list of measures, many of which require original research to procure data. There would be merit in aligning evaluation with some measures that are now routinely reported on by NISRA as part of monitoring for community plans or by DAERA NI and others in monitoring against Programme for Government objectives. BHP could then identify objectives that are specific to the success of its own programmes. It is possible to obtain data on request from NISRA against the PFG and Community Planning targets based on interrogation of data within the nearest administrative boundaries contained within the Belfast Hills Partnership area.

New target areas to consider which would allow funding agencies and policy setters to see the relationship of BHP work to meeting local national and international commitments could include:

- Map current land use (monitoring change)
- Identifying conservation status of lands, even those without nature conservation designations
- Increase area of lands where value of ecosystem services is known and presented to the public
- No of farmers in the hills in EFS/other schemes
- Provision of information on Belfast Hills issues to Councillors and MPs (MLAs when Stormont resumes)
- Water quality measures – rivers and ground water status
- A relevant health and wellbeing measure of the impact of the hills for high deprivation status communities
- Sustainable transport infrastructure
- Biodiversity recording coverage and levels of citizen science
- The state of a set of ecosystem services that the BHP is able to influence.
- Identifying lands with high capacity to store carbon or capture from the atmosphere.
- Effectiveness of working together across organisational and administrative boundaries.
- Volunteer hours
- No of buildings in the area on the UAHS At Risk Register

1.1.1 Current and potential threats to the BHP mission:

The status of the organisation has changed from the original intentions of co-ordination of the work of NIEA, Councils and others in the landscape, to being an applicant for funding from Councils NIEA and others. This is most apparent in BHP applications to the Natural Environment Fund which draws its funds from the NI Government plastic bag levy. This fund has an increasing number of applicants and a dwindling source, as the number of single use plastic bags purchased in shops reduces. Whilst NIEA funding for the BHP has remained broadly similar the core funding ceased at the end of year 2014/2015 and was replaced by project funding only. This has the effect of requiring a large proportion of senior staff time to be allocated towards fundraising and accounting for expenditure and away from some core BHP business. The overall amount given has remained broadly constant but there has been a reduction in real terms between 2009/10 and 2017/18. The change from a core funded approach in 2015 presents challenges to BHP in keeping core staff in place to develop and lead new projects and programmes. Of particular concern is the fact that NIEA no longer funds the strategic policy aspects of the work of BHP or project development, with the Council money alone supporting this important element of the Belfast Hills Partnership's work.

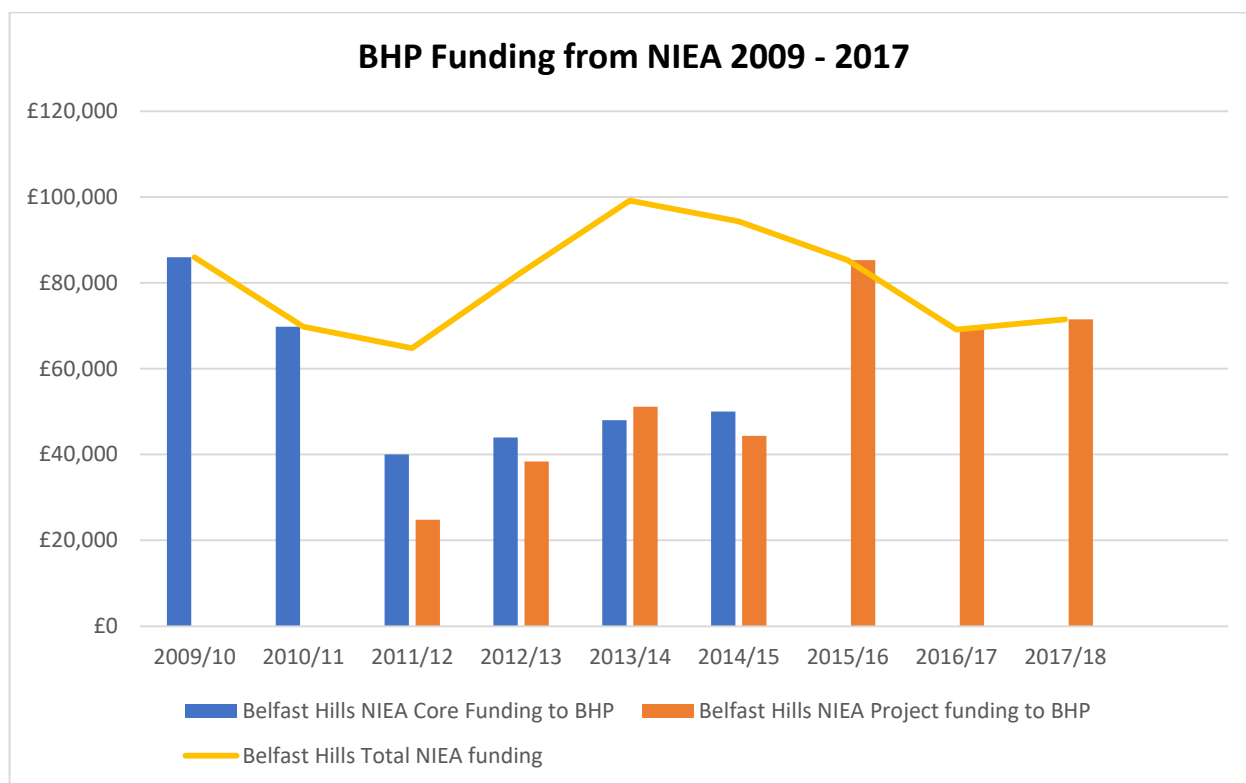


FIGURE 4 FUNDING FROM NIEA FROM 2009 TO 2018 (SOURCE NIEA)

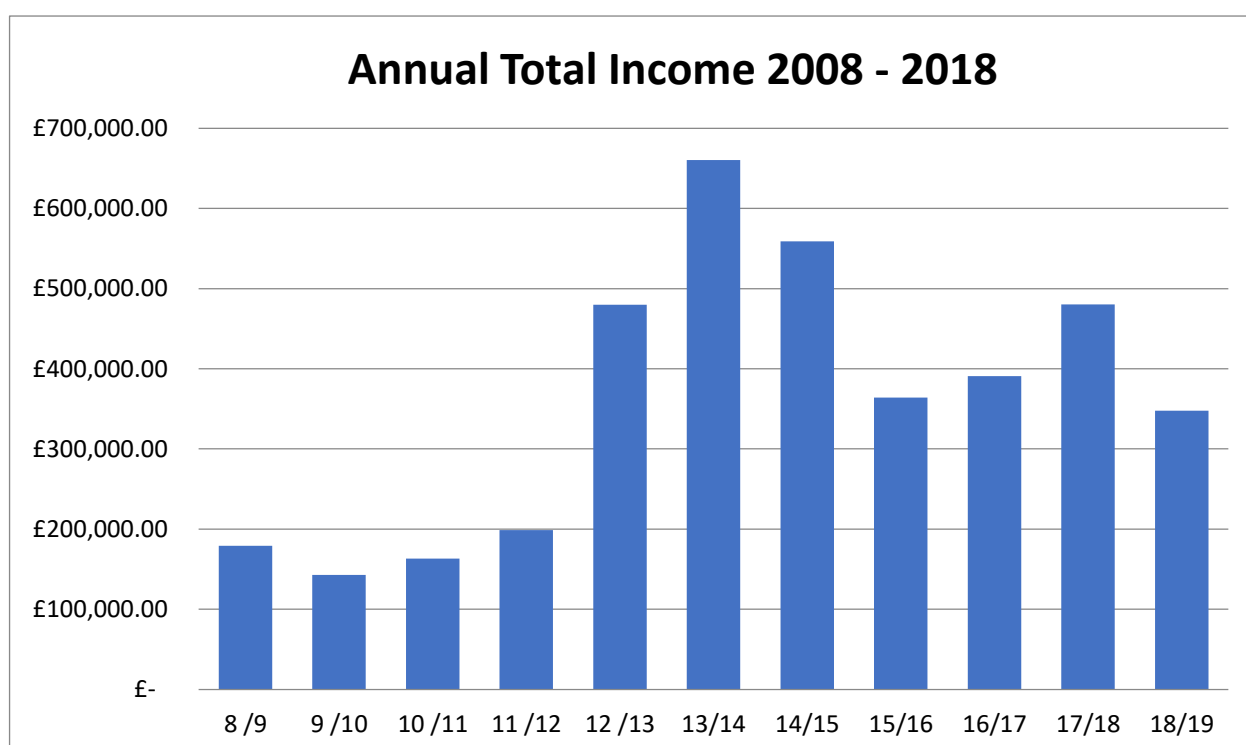


FIGURE 5 TOTAL INCOME OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS WHICH AMOUNTS TO £3,966,145.00

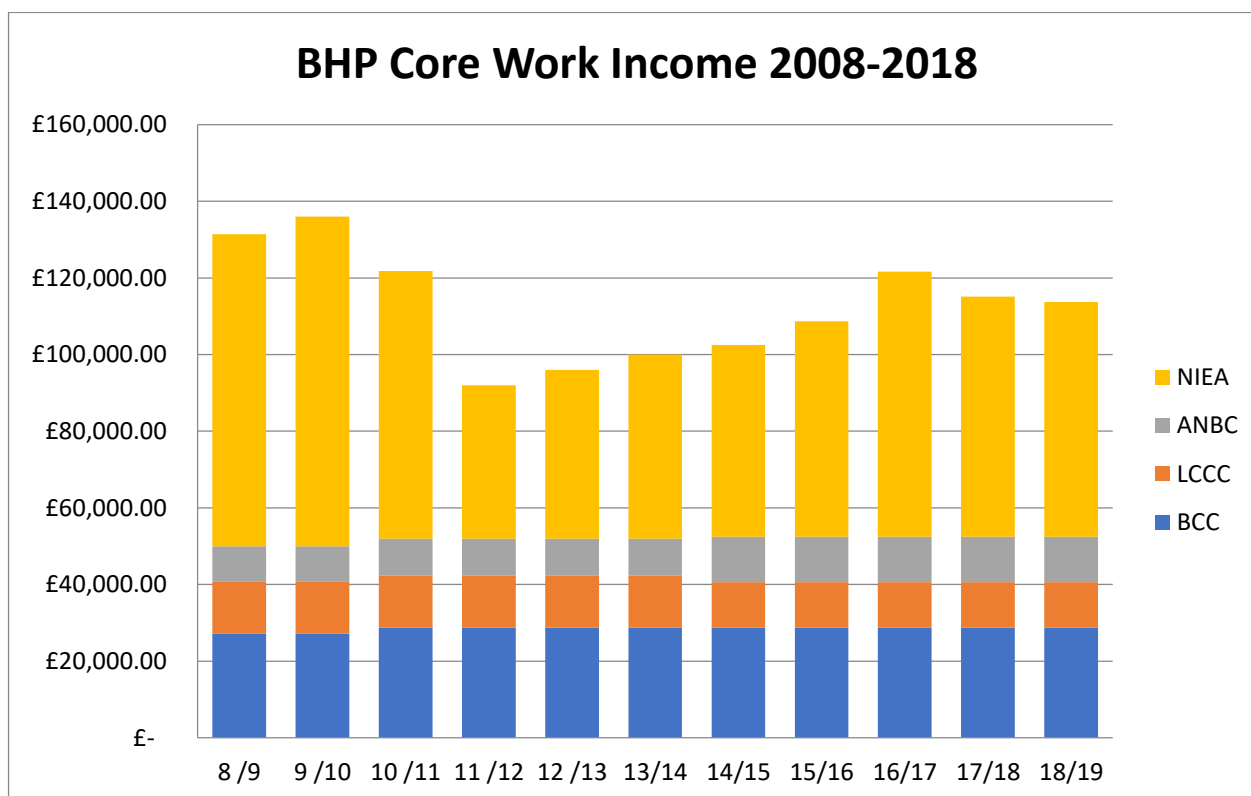


FIGURE 6 ANNUAL INCOME FROM NIEA AND COUNCILS FROM 2008 TO 2018

The funding from original BHP statutory partners has been sustained throughout the past ten years but has reduced in spending power. The contribution of NIEA over the ten years has been higher than other partners and has varied depending on opportunities for in-year funding including the Landscape Partnership Scheme where it operated as a match funder.

The contribution from local authorities has remained broadly similar and in proportion to the area of their districts included in the Belfast Hills Partnership Trust geographical boundary. The Councils have also carried out a range of works that contributes to the shared vision.

The other two sectors involved in the partnership (Landowning/Managing sector and Community/User interest groups) have not been in a situation to contribute to the work except in terms of full participation in the BHP and managing their own interest in the hills in coordination with BHP. When the situation of the grant aid to BHP programmes is examined it is evident that the waste management, farming, community and non -statutory landowning sectors have been able to contribute least financially to the work of the Partnership. Of these the contribution of the waste management sector is very small considering the tonnage of waste that is accepted by the hills and the high contribution to the acceptance of landfill volumes that the Belfast Hills makes.

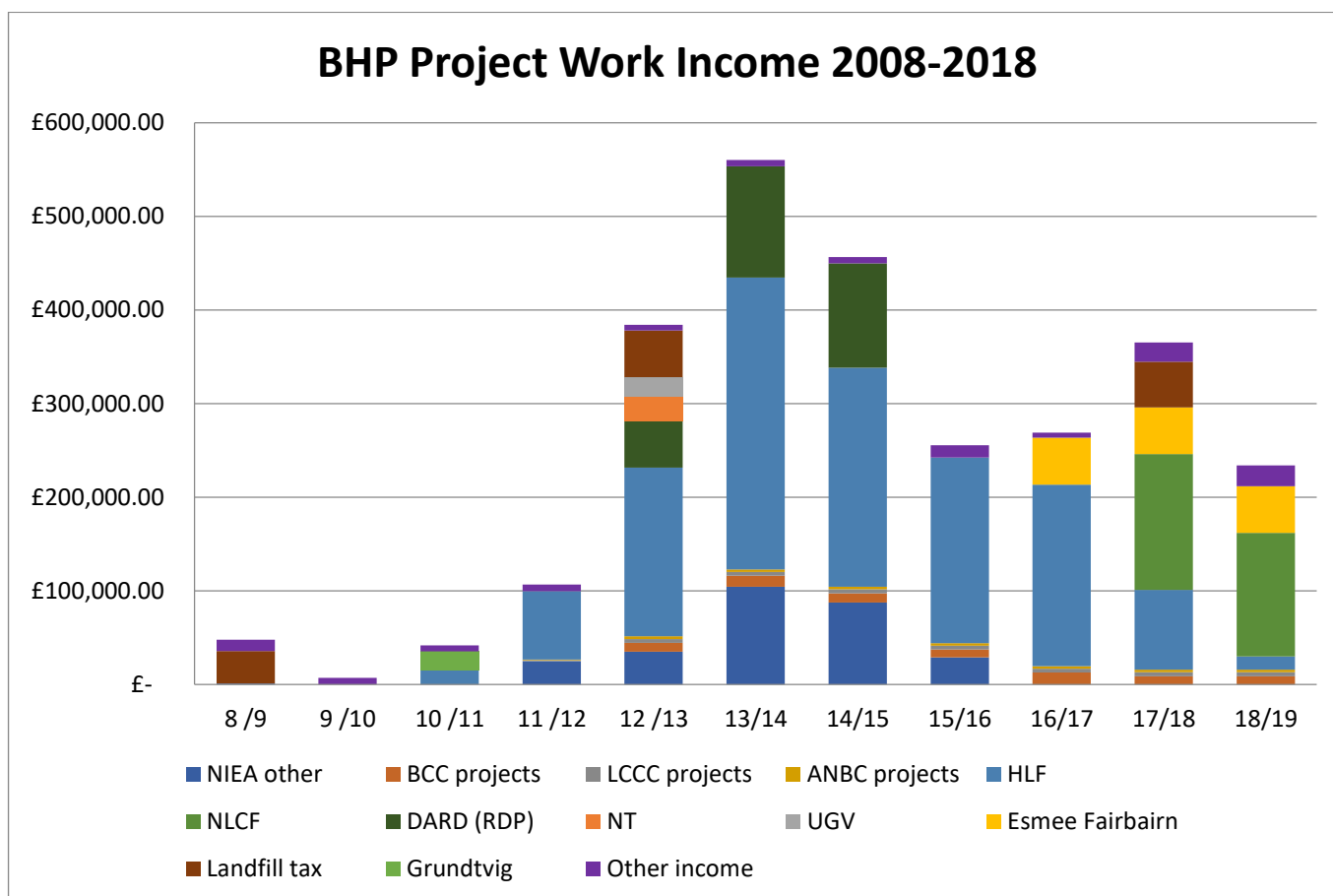


FIGURE 7 BHP INCOME 2008-18 FOR PROJECT WORK SHOWING DIFFERENT THE FUNDERS

The Heritage Lottery funded the Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership from 2011. This funding along with match funding from NIEA has been a very strong contributor to the work of and reach of the BHP itself. It is unlikely that the organisation will be able to achieve the high funding and activity levels achieved particularly in years 2012/13 to 2014/15 on an ongoing basis. It is also notable that the core funding from Councils and the regular funding from NIEA provides both a stability for BHP and the ability to apply for other funding on a match funded basis. This core or regular funding is necessary to maintain effective programmes across the range of Belfast Hills topics.

The Belfast Hills Partnership has been the crucial element in achieving these levels of funding for natural and cultural heritage of the area and has proved its capacity to lever and manage significant funding for the main charitable purpose and also for the organisations connected to BHP.

This illustrates the reliance on statutory body funding for the Partnership. It is particularly striking how little landfill tax and business funding the BHP has been awarded, given the major pressure that waste and aggregate industries place on the Hills. This is largely because the current application processes provide funding only for capital works. The strategic elements of BHP are therefore not eligible for funding. Landfill tax money has mostly been used in site improvements works, both for BHP and directly to other environmental land owning organisations in the hills.

The staff complement of the BHP has varied according to its levels of activity and the scale of funding programmes as shown in Figure 8.

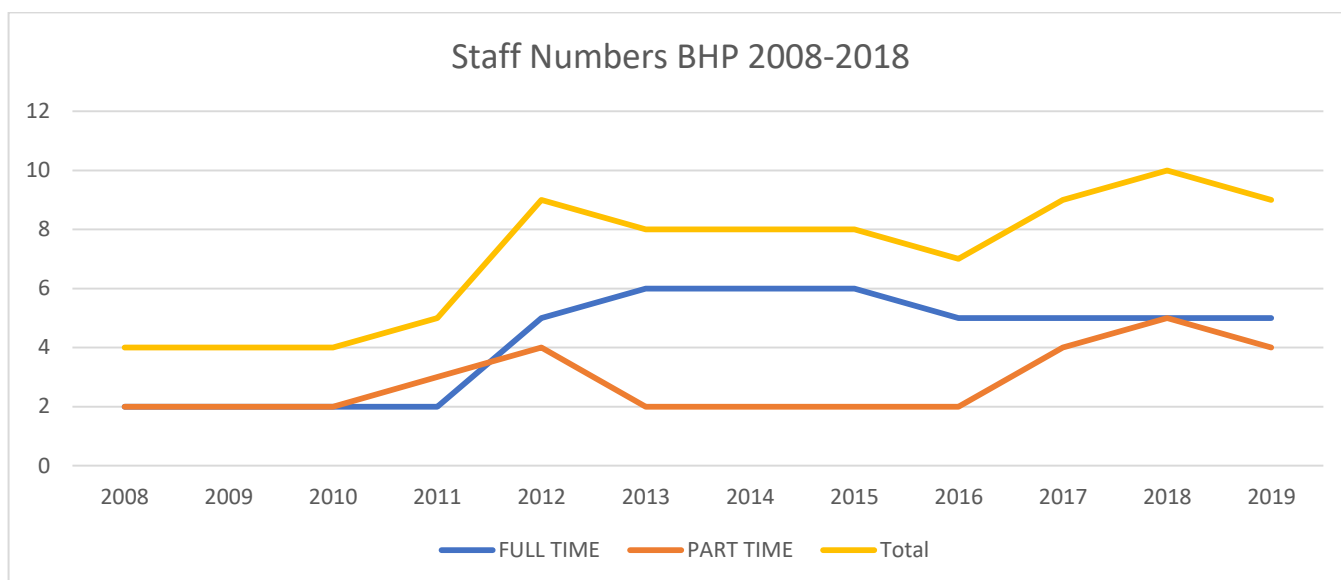


FIGURE 8 BHP STAFF LEVELS BY YEAR AT END OF MARCH

The annual 'core' funding by the key Council and NIEA partners, is capable of supporting 3 staff. Where the BHP has been successful in attracting major external funding the organisation has been able to increase its programme staff complement and consequently its efforts and achievements in the area on behalf of partners. Present staff numbers will need to be reduced unless the organisation retains its capacity to make relevant and successful grant aid applications and is able to work effectively through the legacy period of the NLHF Landscape Partnership Scheme. The success and resilience of BHP depends on being able to retain this core staff complement. The reserve retained by the BHP to provide continuity for a defined period if there is a serious financial downturn affecting the organisation is currently at a level that would allow for the organisation to continue for a period of 6 months. Maintaining a reserve within a charity is seen as both necessary and best practice.

The BHP also benefits from a motivated volunteer group. The volunteering programme has been externally assessed by Volunteer Now and has been awarded with its "Investing In Volunteers Quality Standard Award". There are a number of different volunteering opportunities including the weekly Thursday conservation team, winter tree planting group, summer survey team, monthly Saturday volunteers and site rangers. There are also *ad hoc* opportunities as the need arises, including corporate groups. There are over 300 people on the volunteering mailing lists. On average 15 people attend each conservation task. The number of volunteer days varies from year to year, however generally 360 volunteer days are achieved per annum with a value of £180,000 using the NLHF recommended rate of £50 per day for an unskilled individual. This group makes a significant difference to the ability of the organization to undertake practical works on the ground in the Belfast Hills Area.

Recently there has been an increase in the number of people wanting to volunteer for the organization raising issues about what tasks are suitable for such large groups of people, and how many people can be safely supervised during a task. Additional volunteer days may be required to cope with the demand.

Question 1 Recommendation 2 - Volunteering

The current volunteering programme within the Belfast Hills Partnership and the level of work being undertaken by the volunteers is one of the organisations strongest assets which give BHP a high level of resilience and should be expanded where possible; however it must be noted that this group does require staff management to recruit, manage and maintain this group. There has been some money set aside to support a Volunteer Officer through the Landscape Partnership Schemes 10 year maintenance pot, however this money decreases with time meaning that after 2020 further funding will need to be secured to enable volunteering to be supported at the same level as currently.

1.1.2 Delivery of programmes:

The Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) was externally evaluated in December 2018². This highlighted the success in the programme for achieving all the targets and delivering outcomes for individuals, communities, heritage, wildlife and landscape. This was a very positive report that consulted with a wide range of people involved in the programme. Some of the recommendations of the report included the need to develop new projects which build on the LPS to the benefit of the Hills, its people and wildlife; continuing to communicate effectively with others across the Hills Area and to link with other key projects that impact the Hills.

In addition to the positive delivery comments of the previous consultant caution must be expressed regarding clarity of the role of the partnership as distinct from the roles of its stakeholder members and other organisations such as Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. There is a danger that BHP as opposed to simply being a strategic umbrella organisation to unite the various interest groups in the Belfast Hills area is undertaking work that overlaps with programmes put forward by stakeholders in the area, so competing for funding and resources. Care must be taken to ensure that organisations work with each other for the greater good of the area, as opposed to competing with each other (See Q5 How do we work with current partners to prevent completion for dwindling resources?).

Within the current draft programme for Government and in Environment Fund and Environmental Farming Scheme funding measures there is a lack of inclusion of policies and priorities for protecting landscape. BHP should seek to influence the NI Environment Strategy in this regard as a coherent landscape scale approach delivers on conservation, climate, water and air quality and on well-being targets.

There is also a lack of a current coherent policy on landscape, land use, or land cover in NI. Both Wales and England have recently commissioned reports to advise on landscape policies. Some of the recommendations within these reports are relevant to NI. BHP should advocate that this should be an integral part of the forthcoming NI Environment Strategy³ consistent with the DAERA strapline *A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone*.

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland and its associated Planning Policy Statements (PPS) have had unintended effects on the Belfast Hills which have very limited protective designations. Examples include RDS Regional Guidance (RG):

- RG3: Implement a balanced approach to telecommunications infrastructure that will give a competitive advantage
- RG5: Deliver a sustainable and secure energy supply
- RG10: Manage our Waste Sustainability which underpins PPS 11 which sets a principle that waste should be disposed of close to the source

As no spatial guidance has been provided for the above points it therefore places pressure on lands surrounding Belfast and with the hills being no exception.

Conversely the RDS does contain

- SSFG5: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area and its environmental assets.

² Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme Evaluation Report December 2018

³ Currently out from DAERA for consultation from 18th September 2019 to December 2019
<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/daera-neg/esni/>

Question 1 Recommendation 3 - Security and status of BHP as the core of a statutory body, strategic mechanism of working together

Whilst currently strong the Belfast Hills Partnership is facing a number of potential threats which may in time affect its capacity to secure funding for programmes and to deliver programmes. The Trustees should ensure that Partners are aware of and recommit regularly to the strategic role of the Partnership in the hills. A memorandum of understanding as used within the Dublin Mountains Partnership between at least the Statutory Partnership members would be an appropriate type of mechanism requiring refreshment and recommitment on a regular basis.

Examples of strategic roles of BHP:

1. Drawing up strategic plans and positions for the Belfast Hills as a whole merging and agreeing actions between other bodies (e.g. visitor and environmental management, recreation, biodiversity)
2. Producing a strategic framework which strengthens and supports partner work in addressing common issues (climate action, managing anti-social behaviour, dealing with fly tipping, reducing the impacts of waste transport on the roads network and public safety)
3. Delivering programmes on behalf of Partners where this is the most effective delivery method.

1.2 Responding to opportunities

As programmes have developed the organisation has successfully applied for a wider range of funding to carry out an increasing range of programme activities within its overall vision. One of the highest profile and most effective of these is the Landscape Partnership which has engaged communities more in the heritage work of BHP and has brought innovation and community support for important aspects of heritage.

An extensive range of funding was secured by the BHP Landscape Partnership to complement and supplement the National Lottery Heritage award of £1,157,700. Other funders who supported the project included:

- Rural Development Programme – DARD (now DAERA)
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Belfast City Council
- Lisburn Castlereagh City Council
- Antrim Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Ulster Garden Villages
- Alpha Landfill Tax Credits
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The opportunity of the NLHF Landscape Partnership brought a greater contact with other funders, other communities, and the development of volunteer work teams to deliver projects on the ground. The Partnership's 10 year agreed legacy scheme which runs from 2018-2027 has set an important and agreed agenda for the Hills and its surrounding communities.

These opportunities have been key to the development of the capacity of staff to manage extensive programmes with a high financial value and corresponding rigour of accounting for the money and the impacts.

BHP has also moved forward with the Health and Social Care Trust in an innovative well-being programme for Hills communities initially focussing on introducing people in day centres in the area to the Hills and initially to gentle healthy activities. Staff are developing links with other health groups.

There is a danger of being too opportunity driven, applying for funding because it prevents job losses as opposed to being firmly rooted in the organisations Vision for the Belfast Hills area.

Northern Ireland is entering into a time of great change due to the imminent approach of Brexit. Although it is unclear what changes will occur as a result of Brexit it seems certain that farming within the hills area will be affected as farming these marginal areas is heavily dependent on grants which are currently from the Europe Union (EU). Currently 80% of our environmental laws come from the EU, these laws may be weakened, removed, or harder to enforce if we're outside the EU. The Belfast Hills Partnership has previously worked with similar organisations in the South of Ireland such as the Wicklow Mountains Partnership and the Dublin Mountain Partnership with a number of site visits to share knowledge and experiences. It is important that such positive links are not lost in the wake of Brexit.

With Brexit there may also be positive opportunities to influence local Government regarding environmental priorities, landscape scale management incentives for farmers or a new local designation for the Belfast Hills Area with associated protection for the area.

Another area of rapid change is that of digital technology. Making use of the latest apps and technology to enable people to easily explore what the Belfast Hills has to offer should be investigated. It will be important that trustees address the need to understand cyber security and the need to protect the organisation against cyber attacks.

Question 1 Recommendation 4 - Opportunities

One of the great strengths of the organisation is that due to its relatively small size and independent nature is that it can quickly adapt and change, however it is recommended that BHP needs to constantly align what it is doing with its strategic aims and objectives as outlined within its Memorandum and Articles of Association.



1.3 Adapting to changing circumstances

There has been considerable change in the policy and administrative context since the inception of the partnership. The most significant of these and to which the BHP must respond are:

1.3.1 The transfer of planning powers to local authorities and the introduction of community planning

Until 4 years ago planning powers were centralised in Northern Ireland and carried out from within a Department of Government with regional plans spanning more than one local authority area. Local authorities and others were consultees in terms of both development planning and development control. The Belfast Hills area for planning until 2014 fell mainly into the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and but since then, with RPA this has changed to 3 local authority planning areas. The BHP was extensively involved in contributing material and opinion to the BMAP and continues this role through the current process of developing local development.

The *raison d'être* for the Partnership was to develop a coordinated way of managing the Belfast hills to achieve the elements set out in its public benefit statement. Having dialogue with development planners is an important part of the BHP being able to engage in the future of the hills.

The Partnership is not a statutory consultee in terms of development planning or development control but has forged and maintained close links to enable discussion of shared objectives with the new local area planners and to make responses to consultation drafts in the same way as any member of the general public or other organisation. In contrast the Lagan Valley Regional Park Board is a statutory consultee for its area though it has a very similar role and status to the Belfast Hills Partnership.

In April 2015, the reform of Local Government resulted in the creation of 11 new councils from the former 26. The new councils were given the responsibility of leading the community planning process for their district. The community plans are very significant as the legislation requires many statutory bodies to act in conformity with them and the new local area development plans to be the framework through which the plans are achieved. There is a close alignment between the objectives and targets in the draft Programme for Government and the community plans which is intentional. Each of the PFG targets and monitoring procedures have been aligned and the NI Statistics and Research Agency has streamlined the access to data on these main targets shared between PFG and community plans.



FIGURE 9 THE PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT OUTCOMES⁴.

⁴ Behind each outcome there is a set of indicators and reports on the state of each indicator.

The following organisations must act in accordance with the community plans in each area:

- The Local Authorities
- Tourism NI
- Sport NI
- Health and Social Care Trusts
- The NI Fire and Rescue Service
- Public Health Agency
- Housing Executive
- Invest Northern Ireland
- Police Service for NI
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- The Education Authority.

DAERA is not included in the list but frequently acts within in Community Plans in partnership with Tourism NI, Sport NI and with Local Authorities for some of its non-regulatory and rural development and local food production functions.

It is the case therefore that within the Belfast Hills area there are new policy drivers and working networks which have objectives in common with the BHP but within which the partnership is not automatically included because of its boundary being geographical rather than administrative. The missing element remains the coordination of effort and a shared vision for the landscape as a whole rather than the parts.

The significance of this for the Belfast Hills Partnership is that funding for elements of the public benefit work it intends to undertake for the environment, community well-being, recreation and exercise, is mainly routed through the new statutory structures.

Community plans now relevant to the Belfast Hills are:

- The Lisburn and Castlereagh Community Plan – Nurture and Reap the Rewards
- The Antrim and Newtownabbey Community Plan- Love Living Here, and the
- The Belfast City Council Community plan -The Belfast Agenda



FIGURE 10 THE THREE COMMUNITY PLANS THAT INCLUDE THE BELFAST HILLS.

Community plans each have separate aspirations and targets but there are commonalities with the public benefits BHP wishes to achieve for example:

- Community well-being (health and activity targets, greenspace, sustainable transport)
- Grow the economy (tourism and visitor opportunities, rural business and quality as a place to invest or live)
- Protect the environment – water and air quality, including climate, landscape, habitats and species

As each of the local area plans is at a different stage of development it is not yet possible to gauge the potential ‘fit’ of the plans to the Belfast Hills as a shared geographical region. This is the role of the Department of Infrastructure, and it will be the first time it has had such a role. The Department published guidance on its process of determining soundness of the draft development plan before publication. This includes the coherence of planning across the boundaries between Councils and the extent that plans meet the policy statements within the Regional Planning Strategy for NI.

Question 1 Recommendation 5 - Links between BHP and Planning/Community Planning

The community planning process is an important driver of policy that has proved to overlap with some of the aspirations that community consultations in the Belfast Hills have produced, this has become clearer through increased community contact and participation as a result of the Landscape Partnership. There is a more apparent link between the aspirations of the communities and the developing Local Area Plans, the actions of statutory bodies involved in community planning and the Programme for Government. As a geographical coordinating mechanism for public benefit it is important that Belfast Hills Programmes look at how to provide cohesion in the way that this work impacts on the area and add value rather than duplicating effort. One method of achieving this is to ensure that baselines and targets are seen and presented in relation to the outcomes and indicators that NISRA maintains to track the success of community and statutory body aspirations.

The BHP should arguably have more contact with community planning and local area development planning through elected representatives on the Board, through participation of community planning staff in the BHP forward planning process, and through regular contact during the current development planning stage. In doing this BHP should have regard to the legal requirement for a charity not to engage in political activity.

Question 1 Recommendation 6 - Local Plan Consistency at the boundaries

It is recommended that NIEA and the BHP engage in developing a shared picture for consistency in landscape management across local authority boundaries in the Belfast Hills.

Question 1 Recommendation 7 - Statutory consultee

It is arguable that the BHP should seek the status of statutory consultee in the community and local area planning process or make a formal link with bodies that are statutory consultees in the environment and countryside policy sector recognizing the importance of development plans to managing special landscapes (e.g. CNCC, relevant landscape staff in NIEA). This proposal is made in the light of the origin of the Belfast Hills Partnership set up by NIEA and Local Authorities to coordinate approaches to management of the hills.

1.3.2 Climate Emergency

The climate emergency announced by Government on 1st May 2019 places carbon sequestration and storage in sharper focus and should cause all bodies to review how they can contribute to reducing rises in CO2 emissions and in ensuring that carbon is not released to the atmosphere through disadvantageous land use change. Belfast Hills, in common with other upland, forest and semi-natural grassland, scrub and bog areas in NI stores a high level of carbon in vegetation and soils^{5 6} and plays an important role in maintaining air quality for Belfast.

Urban lands and lands with hard surfacing do not absorb carbon from the atmosphere and vegetated lands store varying amounts of carbon according to vegetation type. A part of the western Belfast Hills land cover and underlying soil (to a depth of 30 cm) is estimated to contain between 310 and 500 tonnes carbon per hectare whilst the majority of the upland area averages between 75 and 110 tonnes per hectare according to a recent study⁵. Belfast Hills Programmes should therefore favour land uses that increase carbon storage such as planting woodland and restoring upland bogs, and work to reduce activities that lead to carbon loss, such as removal of vegetation or urbanisation.

This is particularly relevant to the prevention and response role the BHP has played in wildfires in the past five years, in conjunction with NIEA and the NI Fire and Rescue Service. This work should be highlighted in the climate context due to wildfires releasing stored carbon.

Question 1 Recommendation 8 – Ecosystem Services Carbon Mapping

An initial step may be the production of a more detailed Belfast Hills Carbon Storage map in conjunction with RSPB, making partners and planners aware of the significance of this aspect of the hills. This should be the beginning of a natural capital and ecosystem services mapping exercise for the Hills. Other areas to consider mapping are flood mitigation, biodiversity and recreation.

Summary of Current Condition

This assessment of the organisations ability to withstand threats, respond to opportunities and adapt to changing circumstances indicates that the Belfast Hills Partnership is currently in a strong position; with a healthy bank balance (including unrestricted reserves) and a team of dedicated, skilled staff in place. Despite the various funding crises the organisation has grown enabling it to better fulfil the aims and objectives of the Partnership.

Care must however be taken to ensure that the various partners who were involved in setting up the organisation as a strategic body remain committed to that vision, and that the strategic partnership working elements are not lost in the midst of the various practical projects being undertaken on the ground.

There is no room for complacency and staff must continue to work with partners, proving itself relevant in an ever changing environment.

⁵ <https://rspb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=2b383eee459f4de18026002ae648f7b7>

⁶ Cruickshank, M. & Tomlinson, R. & Trew, S.. (2000). Application of CORINE land-cover mapping to estimate carbon stored in the vegetation of Ireland. Journal of Environmental Management - J ENVIRON MANAGE. 58. 269-287. 10.1006/jema.2000.0330..

Report Section 2

Partnership working



REPORT SECTION 2 – PARTNERSHIP WORKING (TOR QUESTIONS 2-5)

Terms of Reference Question 2

Partnership Working: How best can we maintain the working methods and outcomes of our Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) & carry these forwards in this rapidly changing world?

Partnership working is essential to the Belfast Hills Partnership Trust objectives and to the founding statutory bodies in the initiative. To date the partnership has been maintained by adherence to the current Memorandum and Articles of Association which set out the balance of stakeholder interests in making decisions.

In terms of founding statutory bodies (4 legacy Councils and NIEA) the partnership has provided a streamlined way of consulting and agreeing programmes with the Belfast Hills community, environmental groups with a direct interest, and the waste management and quarry products industry that has a significant footprint of activity in the hills. Over time, with changes in public administration, internal restructuring and movement of staff the strategic and partnership approaches seem to have weakened. NIEA sits on the Board of BHP as an observer whilst 4 Councillors have represented the 4 local authority areas within BHP until RPA. This has been reduced to three areas covering the present areas of Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Antrim & Newtownabbey. In October 2019 following its own legal advice, Lisburn & Castlereagh has announced to the BHP that it considers that Councillors should not act as directors of bodies such as BHP. This causes an immediate issue for the BHP in that the basic partnership and decision-making structure agreed at the outset depends on Council participation at a decision-making level. There is a risk that this advice will be taken by other Councils and this risk needs to be assessed as a matter of urgency. More information has been sought by the Chief Executive of the BHP (also Company Secretary) about the reason given in the legal advice.

It is the case that the BHP has become more of a funding applicant to the Councils and that Councillors make decisions about which bodies will be funded by Councils. This can present a conflict of interest but in the case of BHP it is a strategic partnership mechanism set up by Councils to achieve aspects of their work. It ought to have a different status within financial forward planning than a grant aid applicant.

Question 2 Recommendation 1 - Statutory Board Representation

Consideration should be given to holding a meeting(s) of the Trust's Statutory body directors and observers to examine the issue of whether Councillors continue to sit as Trustees on the Board, and make proposals as to how the Statutory bodies stay in partnership through BHP and retain their decision-making roles and influence going forward.

Question 2 Recommendation 2 - Increase Commitment

That stakeholder bodies are asked to make a recommitment to the agreed Belfast Hills Programme. This could be via a new signed memorandum of understanding for the programme of work. Adjustments should be made to the statutory body member/observer list to reflect current departmental responsibilities or there could be a formal subcommittee structure to allow representation by a wider set of bodies as required – e.g. to coordinate responses to issues such as road verges, water quality, environmental advice, fly tipping, and subsidies to farmers and landowners for measures to manage the natural capital of the Belfast Hills landscape.

Other local and regional partnerships and representation

In turn BHP staff sit on a variety of other bodies e.g. NIEL board, environmental committees for West Belfast Partnership, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, Ligoniel Improvement Association and on a personal level RSPB and

Colin Neighbourhood Partnership Board. This is important in being supportive of others with related objects, to avoid overlaps and to keep a good knowledge of the working context for BHP.

Question 2 Recommendation 3 - Maintain links with other initiatives in the same area

Links with bodies other than in BHP are important and should be maintained and considered in estimating core funding requirements by funding partners. Trustees should review the requirement for communication activity on an annual basis as part of an overall communications strategy for the BHP which includes key audiences, key messages and desired effects.

The Belfast Hills LPS

The LPS enabled BHP to work closely with a larger partnership than previously, with the LPS subcommittee having representatives not only from the 3 main groups on the BHP Board, but also brought in representatives from the Department for Communities Heritage Environment Division, as well as the Education Sector. This wider representation enabled relationships and support to be built up in the heritage and education areas which were relatively new to the partnership; this in turn allowed staff to achieve much more through this support, which was a combination of shared expertise and financial support.

The LPS also enhanced the working relationships with existing partners, particularly the landowning organisations as the scheme enabled over £368,000 worth of physical infrastructure such as paths, signage, orienteering trails, seating etc. to be installed on their sites. This involved close working with staff on the ground to ensure that specifications met everyone's expectations and that work on the ground went smoothly with minimal impact on the visitor experience on site. More formally this also involved signing a legal agreement agreeing the site works along with 10-year maintenance of these works. This physical provision clearly illustrated the benefits that organisations could gain from involvement in the Belfast Hills Partnership.

A generic Belfast Hills Brand that could be used by any of the partners, along with a clear map icon that showed all the hills in relation to each other was produced as part of the LPS and integrated into signage across all public sites in the hills. This Belfast Hills brand has enabled members of the public to see the connection between the various sites, helped the area gain a sense of identity which was previously lacking.

The LPS also involved closer working with a wide number of community groups. BHP has Community representation on the Board, however throughout the Belfast Hills area there are a huge number of community groups, many of which BHP had no or very limited previous contact. The LPS provided staff with the time to focus on these groups more; as part of the Development Phase of the LPS staff obtained lists of active Community Groups from each of the Council areas and sent a questionnaire to each group to assess their interest in the Belfast Hills. This resulted in a follow on community engagement meeting which the Community Directors really got behind, dividing the list of groups between them and phoning each group to encourage them to get involved.

During the LPS many of these community groups benefited from the funding a number of their initiatives, these included seating areas, art installations and a heritage leaflet. There were also a greater number of community events and talks made possible by having a full time Outreach Officer who could focus on engaging with the community sector. Following on from the LPS Community Reps have held an annual Community Meeting, inviting all local communities to hear about the work that has been happening in the Belfast Hills as well as providing a platform to express concerns about issues such as lack of new access routes across the area. Building on the community work undertaken through the LPS is a 'Wildlife Connections' project which aims to engage local communities at the fringes of the Belfast Hills to connect to their local wild spaces and make improvements for wildlife. This project is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Trust.

The requirement for match funding of the LPS meant that a wide range of new funders were engaged with during the life of the scheme. The ability of staff to deliver what they had agreed on time and on budget should encourage further investment from funders; however, it should be noted that most of these funders have very specific funding

criteria so further funding is unlikely unless the work being proposed by BHP matches their requirements. Encouragingly the Councils have continued to provide a total of £15,000 per annum post the LPS to support both the LPS legacy and the Our Bright Future programme.

The LPS 10 year agreed legacy scheme has set an important and agreed agenda for the Hills and its surrounding communities, enabling work to continue on the ground. A high proportion of this work is being undertaken by the volunteering programme. This work is currently supported by a full-time member of staff, however from 2021 the available funding is to reduce which will result in staff support for only 2 days a week. It is expected that a reduction in the ability to co-ordinate and support the still growing volunteering programme will have a serious knock on effect on ground level. BHP has a duty to make the best use of the public money it has been grant aided.

Question 2 Recommendation 4 - Including the volunteer group as a core cost of BHP

The BHP Volunteer team has shown a capacity to deliver strongly on the charitable purpose of the organisation and staff involved in animating and managing this resource should be considered as a core element when applying for funding. There would be a case for discussing the volunteer group and how it operates with partners organisations in the BHP to establish where joint objectives can be met through the maintenance and further development of this volunteer groups.



Terms of Reference Question 3

How can we best upskill and inspire Board members and partners?

Board members or Trustees carry legal joint liability for the work and finances of the Belfast Hills Partnership. As such they are important decisionmakers and require detailed information on forward programmes, progress, the financial situation, risks and uncertainties in order to be able to make good decisions. Initially the directors or trustees of the Partnership were put forward by organisations involved in the setting up of the Trust and allocated to represent a sector of interest. On becoming trustees the individuals cease to represent the direct interest of their own organisation when they sit in the BHP boardroom and rather, represent the interests of the BHP as stated in its Memorandum and Articles of Association, informed by the background knowledge they have in their sectors. Although this is pointed out as part of the induction programme⁷ that the CEO/Company Secretary provides, there is always the danger that sectoral or individual organisations may still operate as representatives of their own organisation or sectoral interest and this should be avoided through reprising and discussing trustee roles and responsibilities on a regular basis. The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action provides regular training opportunities and these can be bespoke for the circumstances. The last formal trustee training of this kind was held 5 years ago.

The BHP operates both as a cross-community organisation and with no intent to have any party-political influence. It is a partnership of stakeholder interests and as such needs to have local Government participation in order to achieve its objects. Councillors from each of the district electoral areas within the Trust boundary do act as trustees however and it is important that in common with all trustees they would be compliant with charity law on political activity and campaigning¹¹. It is important that whilst acting as charity trustees Councillors make all decisions in line with the stated public interest and benefit of BHP rather than any council or party interest.

Question 3 Recommendation 1 – Governance Training

All trustees to have initial governance training at the outset. Annual opportunity to repeat, regular reminder of the importance of understanding the governance of a charitable body.

⁷ Jim Bradley CEO BHP Pers Comm

A survey was sent out to trustees⁸ as part of this review to address their own views on capacity and training needs. The Memorandum and Articles of Association allows for 15 board members or trustees and 9 responded to the survey about their skills (the 4 statutory members were not present at the time of asking due to recent Council election) with results as follows:

Organisation Management Skills

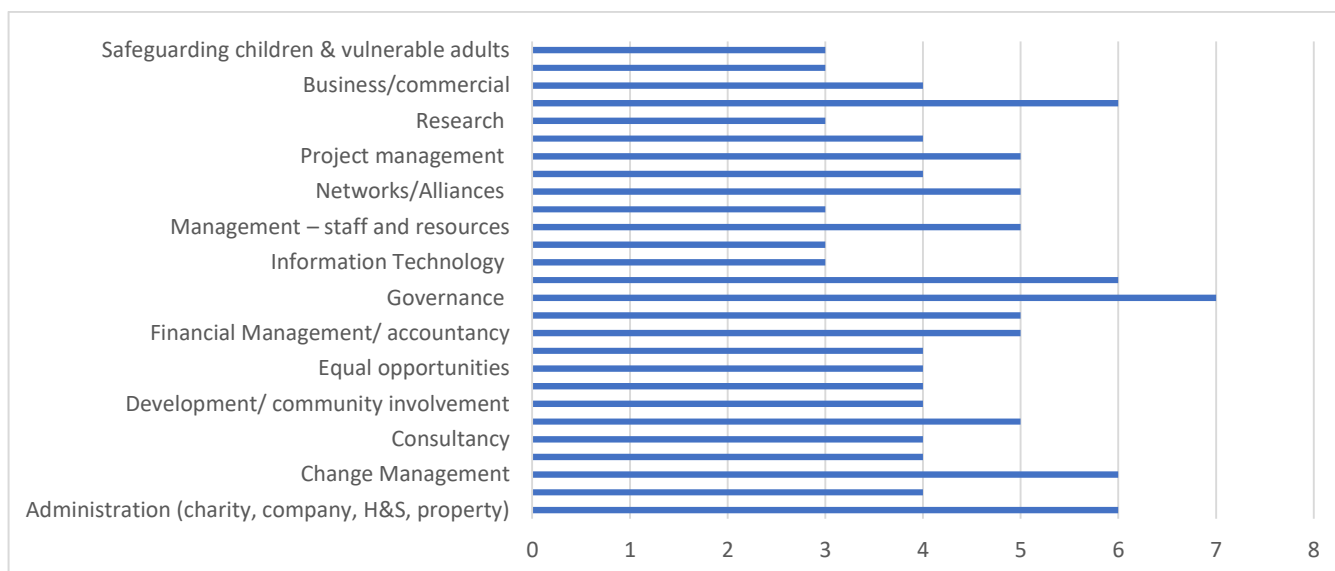


FIGURE 11 NUMBERS OF TRUSTEES RECORDING EACH SKILL LISTED

Specific topic skills related to the work of the Belfast Hills Partnership

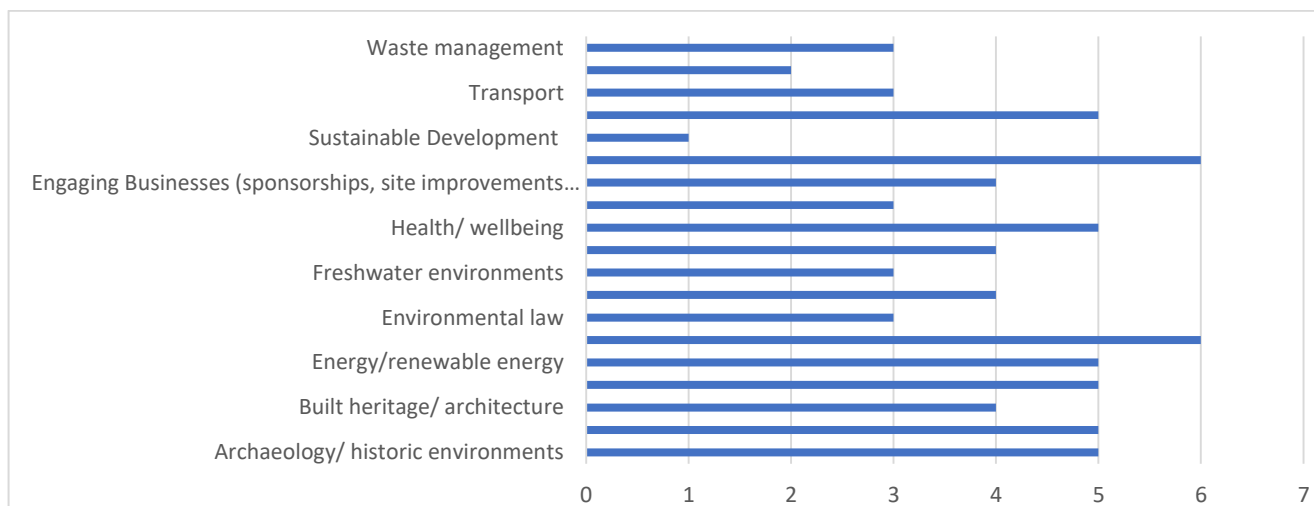


FIGURE 12 NUMBER OF TRUSTEES RECORDING EACH SKILL LISTED

⁸ See Appendix III for survey template

11 <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/media/1149/20190530-ccni-eg036-political-activity-and-campaigning-guidance-for-charities-v20-for-publicationdocx.pdf>

A full complement of people recording that they have governance skills would be desirable as all individual trustees have responsibility in this area.

Sustainable Development is an important underlying objective of the Belfast Hills Partnership and it is desirable that more trustees would record capability in this skill area. Particularly in the light of increasing public interest in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the increased extent to which they underpin or relate to public expenditure plans.

Otherwise the spread of expertise is appropriate and covers all the required skills.

The Belfast Hills Partnership has a turnover of Trustees due to the structure of the board linked to representation of different stakeholder interests. The original core of people who were involved since the Partnership began have mostly moved on. This may be viewed as both a positive aspect (in terms of new ideas and perspectives), but also as a negative aspect as the founder members who were involved in setting up the organization and who were passionate about seeing it succeed have now gone.

The trustees are jointly and individually responsible for the charitable company irrespective of how long they have been involved and considerable effort needs to be made to ensure that each trustee is aware of this and feels equipped with sufficient background information and knowledge to be able to fulfil his or her role. Meetings should also be managed in a way that provides for participation by all trustees and an effort made to ensure that all trustees are involved as far as possible in all important decisions.

The roles of the chair, trustees and company secretary are laid out in law and there is associated guidance for charities in several places. Very accessible guidance is provided by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland⁹ and by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)¹⁰ and within the Code of Good Charity Governance¹¹ The chair role does not imply any greater responsibility but facilitation skills to ensure participation by all trustees, a knowledge of charity law and ensuring that all trustees and staff comply with the principles of good governance are an important part of the job. The company secretary is no longer a strictly necessary title but the function must be performed. This includes ensuring that trustees are well briefed on the implications of their role, are motivated and have sufficient skills and knowledge to undertake their important decision role. They should also abide by the general law that Trustees and or Directors should not benefit financially from their role in managing the charity.

In the case of the Belfast Hills Partnership the Company Secretary role is taken by the chief executive. It is largely an administrative role, and because papers, information, minutes and where required, recommendations all take time and expertise to prepare. The company secretary role is also to provide a conduit between staff and the trustees or directors for motivational reasons, in explaining decisions by the board or to intervene where there is a requirement to do so in staff management or disputes.

Whilst it makes sense for the burden of board administration, preparation of minutes, agendas, preparation of briefings, accounting etc. to be undertaken by staff employed by the Belfast Hills Partnership, it is less appropriate that staff take on a company secretary / director role as they are remunerated and therefore have a conflict of interest and cannot also be trustees. For this reason, it is preferable for there to be an honorary secretary where an appointed trustee with appropriate skills can lead and advise on items that would present a conflict of interest for staff. Such an office holder could also share the work in maintaining motivated trustees and providing induction and refresher sessions, and also making sure that there is full communication between trustees and their

⁹ <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/manage-your-charity/>

¹⁰ <https://www.nicva.org/resource/charity-trustees%E2%80%99-duties>

¹¹ <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/introducing-code>

nominating bodies or sectors. Trustees must ensure that they control the work of the charity and fully understand its work however competent the senior members of staff are to make decisions and guide practice.

Question 3 Recommendation 2 – Good Governance

The Good Governance Health Check¹² should be accessed by the Directors and they should self-assess against this and produce recommendations for change. The Trustees should feel that they are able to lead and direct the charity in its purposes ably assisted by the very professional staff, rather than relying on them entirely for advice and recommendations.

In terms of upskilling and inspiring the Board it is recommended that the BHP board takes opportunities to understand how similar urban fringe, countryside recreation, waste management and farming resilience schemes have developed elsewhere. The best way of doing this is through study visits by the Board to see initiatives elsewhere.

Proposed areas that have issues and objectives in common with the Belfast Hills situation include:

- The newly formed Valley regional park type approach in South Wales at the northern fringes of Cardiff and Swansea. In addition to recreation and landscape objectives this new Government led scheme is setting out to remediate former industrial lands in the Valleys
- Regional Parks on the fringes of Edinburgh and Glasgow where Councils take the initiative in providing management of recreational and urban pressure and coordinate a management response
- The Dublin Mountains Partnership where considerable urban pressure, anti-social behaviour and both legal and illegal forms of recreation takes place. This partnership includes three local authorities and several state bodies working together within a memorandum of understanding

Question 3 Recommendation 3 – Learning from Others

Staying abreast of developments elsewhere and learning from other examples of managing urban fringe issues, including visits to initiatives elsewhere with similar objectives or which face similar issues to the Belfast Hills Partnership. Facilitate and encourage a strategic partnership approach to urban fringe issues.

¹² <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/sites/default/files/downloads/2019-02/Revised%20Governance%20Health%20Check%20Feb2019.pdf>

Terms of Reference Question 4

What are the issues facing the Belfast Hills & what are the priorities of our partners in addressing these things?

In order to identify the issues facing the Belfast Hills and to examine the priorities of organisations nominating trustees an extensive consultation programme was undertaken. This was in the form of both workshops and consultations with some individual organisations where they were not able to attend the workshop dates.

Workshop dates were as follows:

- Environmental organisations owning lands in the Hills (21.6.19)
- Trustees/Board Workshop (27.6.19 and 19.9.19)
- Staff consultation workshop (4.6.19)
- Communities workshop (27.6.19)
- Farming consultation workshop/meeting with Jim Bradley (18.9.19), email consultation with UFU and follow up meeting with Judith Annett.
- Belfast Hills Volunteers and Site Managers (6.6.19)
- Youth Consultations (6 different groups)

In addition, individual meetings were held with:

- Belfast City Council (face to face)
- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (face to face and follow up email)
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (email and telephone follow up)
- Colin Glen Trust (email and telephone meeting)
- NIEA (email and request for a meeting)
- Waste management and Quarry interests (face to face)

Summary of Consultations

4.1 Environmental Organisations owning land in the hills

What is going well with BHP?

The environmental organisations owning land in the hills felt that the BHP was doing well in terms of stimulating an all Belfast Hills approach to management. It enabled all organisations to have dialogue with other interests and particularly with farmers, making it possible to look at issues on a landscape scale.

The Partnership approach is seen to be useful in enabling joint messages around particular issues or reaching particular target groups and in coordinating styles of management and sharing issues with communities and the public. Where the partners have common issues, it is useful to be able to work to solve them, for example with industry being part of the partnership it is possible to fully understand, quarry and landfill plans and timescales and to work together on remediation. Being able to send a joint message on issues such as anti-social behaviour in the hills is also useful as is developing joint approaches on other kinds of issues such as fly tipping issues on lands.

The BHP is a useful mechanism for strategic thinking about the area and has worked on many topics. Perhaps the least effective topic attempted has been recreation and access where although many new sections of pathway have been achieved around the fringes of the Hills the vision of an upland spine route linking the summits and publicly accessible parts of the hills has never been achieved.

The conservation landowners have benefitted from BHP practical site works and funding assistance and BHP is seen as an honest broker rather than a competitor in drawing down funding for action in the Hills as a whole. The staff of BHP are well regarded and the research the organisation has done has been seen as very useful and authoritative, for example flora and fauna surveys, and research on local heritage.

The BHP is seen as having been particularly successful in developing community engagements on the fringes of the hills and around key countryside sites inside and on the edges of the Hills. Part of this engagement has led to a very effective volunteer team available for a range of work including management of wildflower meadows, tree planting, pathwork, dealing with invasive species and developing green access corridors that link communities with the Hills.

People at this workshop were very positive about the BHP and the staff citing the volunteer work, work with schools such as 'Salmon in the Classroom' and working with a range of people in a way that benefits their mental health and physical wellbeing and their employability; and connecting people with their landscape as being very good practice.

Coordinating work on detecting wildfires between land managers, the Fire and Rescue Service and dealing with the aftermath in terms of remediation and survey is seen as being a strong role for the BHP, including bringing in new research and learning on this topic.

The conservation bodies workshop identified that without the BHP there could be potential for the organisations to see each other as competitors for funding and for visitors to their site. The Partnership approach helps dampen this and encourages joint approaches to growing awareness of the benefits of managing the Hills as an entity and in encouraging visits and special interest events throughout the Hills area.

This approach was thought to need constant work and reminders to stakeholders to act as a consortium and not in competition. It was felt to be important that the Belfast Hills Partnership retain its strategic nature and activities so that whole area recreation approaches, sustainable tourism, land use and waste and community greenway and Hill gateway projects can be undertaken with all interests on board.

[What are the big challenges facing the Belfast Hills Over the next 10 years?](#)

The big challenges for the Belfast Hills and the BHP were seen as ensuring that the Hills retain their nature, functions and appeal during the next ten years during which there are likely to be increases in visitor numbers and the need to think about capacity and sustainability at sites.

There is a need for constant work to reduce the potential to compete for space, publicity and resources and to collaborate, play a role in fund raising for the Hills and gateways as a whole.

The farmed landscape is important but there needs to be a big picture that ensures that Hills communities thrive and that there is still financial viability for farmers to continue their positive land management approaches to the hills and the important patterns of grazing that maintain the nature conservation value and appeal of the uplands. There is currently no big picture about farming in the Hills and this needs to be a priority. People at the workshop had seen the recent successes elsewhere through group farming schemes as part of the EFS Agri environment schemes.

The fact that the post RPA Councils were now engaged in new local development plans led to concerns that Belfast and Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Glengormley may continue to grow towards the hills and place more urban pressures on the landscape. Part of the Belfast Hills role with and for its Partners would be to ensure that the pressures on the urban fringe are identified and solutions developed and suggested to those with influence. Urban

fringe pressures on farmers and land managers remain an issue best approached as a partnership. The Partnership however is not a statutory consultee, whereas some of the conservation bodies around the table were.

The 'Living with Water' project¹³ may mean large scale infrastructure changes, and large sums of money have been mentioned but there was little information about what it will actually mean for the landowners.

Some aspects of the Hills require coordinated proactive management such as e.g. Peatland restoration, dealing with invasive species, improving water quality and retaining water quantities in the hills. There are elements of the Hills landcover that need to be retained and restored in order to conserve its natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from them. Some of the present uses of the hills are once-off services, unrenewable services.

An important part of BHP work should be collating all of the mapping that the individual partners undertake and all of the survey work to provide an important joint management database as an evidence base for partners.

The workshop felt that access work remained important into the next ten years, particularly dealing with blockages and finishing the 'spine' route.

A flood attenuation, carbon storage and resilience strategy was felt to be an important next step as was avoiding silo working.

What so you think should change?

The workshop members raised the following changes for the next ten years of the Partnership.

- Being prepared for the Belfast Hills to become an important part of a trip to Belfast
- Look at making sure everyone that needs to be involved is linked in to the Partnership
- Build on volunteering
- Providing Consultancy services to increase unrestricted funding
- A higher profile for BHP e.g. a published Annual report with a wider circulation. Members day with AGM, walk, good speakers, raising awareness
- Keep a 'state of the environment ' report for the Belfast Hills e.g. Ammonia levels, air quality, carbon capture
- Look at a wider ranging health scheme promoting use of the access and nature infrastructure for health benefits
- Work with businesses in Belfast to consider being involved in the Belfast Hills as part of Corporate social responsibility – biodiversity awards, potential to set aside ground, work days, sponsorship etc.
- Make sure Belfast Hills fits into the NI Peatland Strategy.
- Marketing, social media
- Identify effective digital methods of networking
- Future proof for 50 years not 10
- Look at the designations potential for the Hills including a geopark designation

4.2 Workshop BHP Board Members/Trustees

The BHP trustees met to consider a set of questions in a facilitated discussion. The outcomes were as follows:

¹³ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/living-water-programme-background>

Trustee concerns

The Trustees were concerned about the post-Brexit complications e.g. potential funding for farmers and the environment, and the lack of leadership on agriculture and the environment due to Stormont not sitting. It was considered there was a stagnant policy environment. Current agricultural policies and subsidies for the Hills area may lead to land abandonment in the hills. There was concern about cessation of farming and grazing.

Coupled with this there is an increasing demand from the public for access to open space and for a variety of usages putting increasing pressure on hills farmers. There are trespass incidents, dumping and nuisance and lack of police support. Farming trustees feel exposed to their responsibilities under occupiers liability legislation.

The trustees feel that despite their efforts there has been a progressive loss of habitat and wildlife in the Hills and would like to address this.

The trustees would like people to see the hills as a positive recreation and nature resource with fewer incidences of antisocial behaviour, with good disability access and a diverse range of people visiting.

BHP trustees felt there should be policies for the Hills on climate change mitigation, management of sustainable visitor management, invasive species, biodiversity and the use of former quarry sites developed in partnership.

They considered that the inflexible 'constitution'¹⁴ of the BHP sometimes restricted the effectiveness of the organisation, and flagged up major funding changes that may threaten the BHP in its present form.

What aspects of BHP did trustees feel are resilient looking forwards?

Trustees feel that there is considerable good will towards the trust and an appreciation of the work. Furthermore all of the groups which came together at the outset are still there and working in a coordinated way. However Trustees felt that this could not be taken for granted and that work with new senior staff in these bodies was necessary to retain the functions of the BHP. All of the Councils are supportive and are very important co-funders without which the stability of the organisation would be less certain and there was an important role for staff and trustees in maintaining these relationships.

Trustees have good working relationships within the Board, despite differences in opinions and the norm of proceeding by consensus has worked so that disagreements between the views of different sectors can be aired examined and worked out.

The volunteer group attached to the BHP was felt to be strong and resilient and worth building on for the future. The staff were reported by trustees to be *excellent committed employees with very competent professional leaders*.

Being a small independent charity means that the organisation can react quickly to change and trustees felt that their positive reputation with funders and good track record would stand them in good stead for the future.

What aspects of BHP did trustees feel are not resilient?

The BHP core funding is important to maintain the capacity for a Partnership to operate but many of the programmes have depended on ad hoc funding or have arisen because opportunities came along. The Landscape Partnership has been particularly positive and HLF (NLHF) and NIEA in combination have enabled the BHP to grow its staff complement, work outputs and overall income and expenditure. The legacy of the LPS is important to the Trustees and there is a desire to keep the operation at its present size. The current staff complement is effective and experienced and the trustees recognise the importance of staff retention in meeting their goals. There is therefore a desire to retain good levels of salary and conditions in order to retain skills and relationships.

¹⁴ Memorandum and Articles of Association were considered and agreed by all the founding organisations in order to maintain a balance between different interests.

The BHP is dependent on the strengths of a limited number of senior employees and the relationships and influence they have in relation to member bodies and the people BHP seeks to influence.

Some trustees feel that BHP does not have a 'stake' in the Hills for example it does not own and manage lands. Some trustees would like the BHP to grow its assets in this regard.

The organisation needs a stronger media presence and to keep its coordination role in front of funders and the wider public. Part of core funding should be the maintenance of a suitable profile and relationships with Belfast Hills and city communities.

BHP should revisit the level of core funding required to be effective in maintaining a coordinated approach to the Hills.

[Are there new trustee skills needed to be more resilient?](#)

The trustees felt that it should prioritise growing the following skills amongst their number:

- IT, media, PR and cybersecurity
- Knowledge of fundraising and the funding options
- Financial and legal skills
- Child protection procedures

They also felt they should audit board skills as part of the resilience exercise (see page 88).

[Trustee views on the Benefits and legacy of landscape partnership](#)

The LPS has achieved a greater Community ownership of the amenities of the Belfast Hills and the network of green and recreation infrastructure around its fringes. Trustees want to continue to engage and liaise with communities and closely encourage volunteering to help manage recreation, heritage and sustainable transport infrastructure sites. This volunteering programme needs to be maintained, with incentives for volunteers to stay involved or reach their potential / objectives through the programme.

Effective Partnerships have developed through LPS and need to be continued e.g. Councils and NIEA as a regular source of funding but also looking at a higher level of unrestricted funds. Given the charitable objects of BHP staff and trustees need to plan time to maintain communication between partner organisations into core costs.

[Trustee views on new roles for BHP](#)

Trustees felt that new partnership roles should include a greater emphasis on:

- Making hill farming more sustainable with the existing benefits recognised and rewarded. Advocating for more agri-environment opportunities in the hills and encouraging agritourism and diversification. This will mean working more closely with other parts of DAERA.
- Playing a role in bigger partnerships – e.g. NIPAN, ARC21, LPS scheme networking, Lagan Valley Regional Park Board networking
- Promote new Criminal Enforcement Legislation to manage visitor impacts better e.g. damage, fires, lawlessness
- Annual Belfast Hills walk
- Potential land ownership
 - Pro- no restrictions on what can do, possible revenue via events and demonstrations
 - Con- needs resources (human & financial) would be a millstone
- Consider expanding the BHP area to the whole Belfast Urban Fringe.

4.3 BHP staff consultation

Consultation responses from staff followed a similar pattern to the other workshops with a stronger emphasis on involving local people in caring for the Belfast Hills and enabling participation by schools, communities and individuals on a long-term basis with mutual benefit. This involvement would be across a range of activity including practical work, advocacy and survey work. Staff felt it was important to have a closer involvement with landowners and to engage them in managing the hills and make a closer mutual understanding between different interests and the farming community. Young people and young farmers or farm families are felt to be important to the future of the hills as a place for work, recreation and renewal and an appreciation of the heritage of the hills. Their views on the forward programme for the hills were felt to be particularly relevant.

In terms of priorities for programmes, Health & wellbeing, enjoyment of the hills, management of litter, biodiversity and local heritage were highlighted.

The way that BHP staff want to engage is in a way that enhances the life skills and prospects of young people in the area providing skills training certification and apprenticeships in countryside management, environmental education and recording in a way that makes links with potential employers.

4.4 Community Consultation

The community consultation output is best summarized within a table with topics and examples of views on each of these. The people at the community consultations were a mixture of those who had been involved in the LPS programme and those with a longer relationship to the BHP.

In terms of what BHP had done well the following topics were mentioned:

Topic	Comments
Active outreach	To schools To develop a volunteer service To people with health needs
Bringing people together to plan for and enhance green infrastructure	Paths on Divis and Cave Hill Wildflower meadows Tree planting Tree nursery Paths close to home zones Management of small parks Active volunteer resource
Keeping people informed, promoting learning	Good social media presence Events programme and links to festivals Presenting all the opportunities in the hills Excellent publications Source of good advice Sharing information and learning Good knowledge of habitats and species and recording
Developing and representing joint views on issues	Active consultee on planning & environmental issues (but not a statutory consultee) and sometimes diverse views within the BHP
Maintaining stability as an organisation	Viable and well managed

Community concerns about the Belfast Hills

Concerns expressed about the Belfast Hills by community representatives were

Topic	Comments
Recreation and Access	Need to increase public access Need to keep access information up to date. Lack of progress on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Hills Way • Greenway linkages from city to hills • Signage for hills users • BCC pathways need to be improved
Industrialisation of the Hills	Incinerator proposal close to Hills Wind turbines in the hills Black mountain quarry overran its timescale Lack of protection from exploiting mineral rights
Protective designation	No protective landscape designation on the Hills
Continued fly tipping	Former dump sites still attract waste Ongoing fly tipping problem on roads in the hills difficulty finding a solution
Biodiversity loss	Despite actions communities perceive a loss in biodiversity in Hills area Lack of woodland Gorse encroachment Ash dieback Need for more monitoring and research
Anti-social/illegal uses	Not enough detection and punishment of environmental crimes
Leadership	Although BHP provides leadership there should be a more visible approach to the issue of care for the hills and hills communities
Outdoor learning and Environmental Education	The good work done need to continue
Sustainable tourism	Importance of the development of a joint approach to tourism. In the Hills Sustainable Tourism Planning with the Councils important
Maintaining enhancing water quality/quantity	Managing river corridors

Community recommended Future directions

In terms of future directions for the Belfast Hills Partnership community interests would like to see:

- Continued environmental education effort with hills communities and visitors
- The development of more access to the hills, including developing an accessible Belfast Hills Skyline walk and links from both urban and rural communities. Signage to promote its use and help with route finding.
- Consideration given to land acquisition where this will further access, remediation or environmental protection aims
- A forward programme that responds to climate change challenges
- Protection on environmental spaces (woodland, meadows, linear routes, streams and ponds)
- Ensuring the Belfast Hills area is a safe and shared space for all communities
- Suggestion to widen the partnership to include hospitality industry, recycling companies, other interest groups

- A proposal for twinning with other cities with urban fringe uplands with a role in providing outdoor recreation space and a joint approach to management.

There were some mentions of BHP taking a role in responding to individual planning applications where these appeared to affect the work of caring for the hills and its people. Others thought that this would be divisive.

4.5 Volunteers and Site Managers Consultation

Volunteers and Site Managers were asked to outline their concerns, ideas and other suggestions with regards to the Belfast Hills. The most common concerns highlighted were littering, wildfires, invasive species, access issues, the impact of development, antisocial behavior and biodiversity/habitat loss in the Belfast Hills. Other concerns raised included the condition of paths, disturbance by dogs, lack of education and negative perceptions. In terms of BHP they expressed concerns about over reliance on funding and partnerships not working.

Ideas regarding improvements needed in the Belfast Hills included a need for greater community involvement in activities such as litter lifts and further education to reduce antisocial behavior, littering and dog related issues. Primary school education was also flagged as an area that should be focused on. Other suggestions included giving volunteers more responsibility, access to strategic plans, more volunteer rangers and increasing the ethnic diversity of the volunteers.

In terms of income generation suggestion included sponsorship from local companies, running fund raising events such as garden fetes, selling merchandise, calendar phot completion & sales and charging for events. Extension of the BHP operational area to include sites such as Monkstown wood was also raised.

4.6 Youth Consultations

Consultations were held with 6 different groups of young people, through local schools and youth clubs, there were a total of 200 young people who attended these consultations. Environmental issues that were of greatest concern to the young people were climate change, species extinction, dumping/littering, plastic pollution and deforestation. Other areas of concern were air pollution, animal cruelty, wildlife reductions and a general lack of things being done to help the environment.

Projects that the young people said that they would really like to be involved in included litter lifts, habitat creation, tree planting, recycling more and helping to create awareness campaigns.

4.7 Partner organisations consultations

The value of having a partnership to lead work in caring for the hills and their people is well accepted by funders and by the organisations in the partnership. The organisation and its staff are seen as competent and professional and particularly well informed and skilled in terms of environmental matters and working in an engaging way with communities.

BHP is also seen as a very successful fundraiser with the capacity to provide excellent leverage for funds contributed by Councils and NIEA with clear outcomes and benefits based on hard work and effective partnerships. BHP is best known amongst those who work most closely with it either through the LPS or through its liaison with other conservation bodies, communities, farmers and site managers. Its objectives and purposes are less well understood amongst those heading Council directorates with relevance to the BHP and this may have happened as a result of changes in staff following the Review of Public Administration, and the changes in areas and departments engaged in recreation, environment, biodiversity, waste, planning and community planning. The

consultations identified that the strategic role the BHP has in developing joint, synergistic approaches to managing the hills as a single landscape is the least understood part of its reputation.

The organisation is similar, and has a similar origin to the Lagan Valley Regional Park Board which is well understood and has a role as a statutory consultee in development planning for the LVRP from Belfast to Lisburn. BHP has a wider range of partners however encompassing industries such as agriculture, waste management and aggregates extraction and sets out to find consensus ways forward to protect the Hills and their communities. In the case of the Lagan Valley Regional Park however the former Department of the Environment made the non-statutory designation of regional park arguably based on developments in Scotland at the time.

This lack of any designation means that the area is poorly recognised for protection of any kind or for special attention in waste, tourism, sustainable travel, agri-environment priority.

Consultations with Councils in particular show that the BHP's profile as a coordinating mechanism and a voice for the area as a whole is valuable and needs to be placed in sharper focus, and commitments to the partnership renewed for that reason rather than it's on its capacity for carrying out environmental improvement and community engagement work.

Common themes throughout the consultations included addressing habitat and biodiversity loss, flytipping/littering, climate change, access, capacity and farming. The importance of community involvement, education and information provision was emphasized.

Question 4 Recommendation 1 – Clear Purpose

The Belfast Hills Partnership is seen by consultees in a range of different ways- some see it as an operational body in their own area, while others see it as a strategic body working to coordinate partner actions, innovating and drawing attention to the benefits of caring for the Belfast Hills and its people. It would appear that even within the key partners there has been some knowledge fade about the status of the BHP as a strategic body tasked jointly by stakeholders. Trustees and staff should ensure that all parties are fully aware of its purpose and that the membership of BHP evolves with changing circumstances and changing statutory drivers of recreation, environment, community and industry in the hills.

Question 4 Recommendation 2 – Articles of Association

Whilst there was some comment about the restrictive nature of the Articles that govern the BHP and its decisions. It is recommended that any changes are made in the light only of an informed discussion between existing and potential new stakeholders. The current structure has succeeded in keeping all important stakeholders at the table to date.

Terms of Reference Question 5

How do we work with current partners to prevent competition for dwindling resources?

The current systems of funding for recreation, nature conservation and environmental restoration are competitive in nature and several of the partners will make applications for funding measures in direct competition with the Belfast Hills Partnership. As the BHP does not own land in the area the National Trust, Ulster Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust and other local conservation groups make funding applications to the same funders and it is important that each plays to their own strengths but also, where possible, combines efforts at a landscape scale to achieve BHP community benefit objectives through coordination.

There are overlaps in effort on topics such as survey, woodland planting and management, recreational paths and access, promoting public interest in aspects of biodiversity such as butterflies, red squirrels, hedgehogs, newts and frogs, and removing and curtailing the spread of invasive species in the area, planting wildflower meadows etc. Whilst these are important for a range of partners it is essential that there is a strategic approach that ensures that all parties in the Partnership are aware of each other's forward programmes, and that they are dovetailed and add value to one another rather than competing for funding and attention.

Question 5 Recommendation 1 – Joint working with partners

It would be of benefit to both BHP and partner organisations if greater joint working occurred. The formation of a Projects Development Forum where partners discuss, develop and deliver projects which meet the needs of the Belfast Hills together (this may be in the form of joint projects or simply advice and support) should be investigated. This could result in shared staff members supported by a number of organisations as well as the production of common plans and approaches e.g. alien species

The larger conservation bodies in Northern Ireland have recently extended their teamwork agreement on landscape scale work in England and Wales to Northern Ireland. The RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust and Ulster Wildlife work closely together in Northern Ireland and this teamwork is set to increase as effective landscape scale responses to biodiversity and habitat loss come into sharper focus.

Belfast Hills Partnership should seek to ensure that if nature conservation partnership work is planned by any organisation or set of organisations for the Belfast Hills then BHP should be considered an integral part of it. This will require liaison and discussion with NIEA, funders and the nature conservation organisations.

The potential partnership required to make a difference in the Belfast Hills has extended due to changes in Councils and statutory bodies. For example:

- The NLHF Landscape Partnership forged effective links with the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities.
- The community planning process is relatively new and an important way of ensuring that community needs are taken into account. It is also an important driver of the work of other key statutory bodies in the area.
- The development planning process which is at different stages in each of the three council areas is one of the most important ways of achieving and protecting the BHP vision.
- The development of the National Outdoor Recreation Forum by Sport NI as part of the Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Strategy to represent countryside recreation interests.
- The announcement of a climate emergency should provide a sharper focus on the vegetation and soils of the Belfast Hills as an important store for carbon. Maintaining and increasing the landscape's capacity to store carbon and ensuring that land use change does not negatively affect its capacity to store carbon has therefore become a potential new objective for the BHP.
- The merging of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as part of DOE and the former Department of Agriculture in NI to form the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs enables close cooperation between conservation and farming interest and may help develop an integrated approach by the Department to areas such as the Belfast Hills.

One of the five seats for statutory bodies and councils is vacant due to local government reorganisation. This provides an opportunity to add a further statutory body.

It is always important for a charitable organisation to examine whether it would be more effective if combined with another existing organisation with the same objects. This is in order to increase the effect of charitable giving on the charitable purpose and to reduce duplication in administration. In this case BHP has a partnership purpose in order to achieve its objects and is limited in geography. Its closest similar organisations are the Lagan Valley Regional Park Management Board, the AONB partnerships in the Mourne, Glens of Antrim and Binevenagh and the legacy organisations arising from other HLF funded landscape partnerships. The trustees should consider the impact and feasibility of a wider scale landscape approach based on combining with another organisation.

Summary of Partnership Working

As the name Belfast Hills Partnership would suggest, partnership working is fundamental to everything that it does. BHP was set up to provide a coordinating mechanism and voice for the whole area. The recent decision of Lisburn & Castlereagh Council that Councilors should not act as directors of bodies such as BHP will negatively affect the strength of the Partnership, particularly if the other Councils follow in this decision. Asking stakeholder bodies to recommit to the Belfast Hills Programme may help strengthen the partnership.

The Landscape Partnership Scheme succeeded in both strengthening working relationships with existing partners and widening the extent of partnership working. The agreed 10 year legacy plan has provided an important agreed agenda for the hills and surrounding communities enabling work to continue on the ground. The volunteering team are integral to much of the practical works being undertaken and their continued support should be embedded within the organisation.

Within the BHP Board there is a good spread of expertise. Trustees should feel that they are able to lead and direct the charity in its purposes; learning from the example of other similar organisations through study visits which may be of benefit.

A wide range of issues and priorities were outlined for the Belfast Hills area during the consultations, these issues should be used to form the basis of a new landscape scale project that involves partner organisations, local people and visitors to the area in making positive differences.

To prevent competition for dwindling resources with current partners' greater joint working should occur. This could involve forming a Projects Development Forum where partners discuss, develop and deliver projects which meet the needs of the Belfast Hills together.

Report Section 3

Future opportunities



REPORT SECTION 3 Future opportunities (TOR Questions 6-11)

Terms of Reference Question 6

How do we maximise our use of current skills, experience and reputation?

The series of stakeholder and community workshops identified strong support for the work of Belfast Hills Partnership and the network of people who serve on the board, as volunteers or who have contacts with the organisation.

An internal audit of skills within the organisations was undertaken looking at the various members of staff both from a practical experience and formal qualification perspective. This clearly indicates that BHP is fortunate to have a strong team of skilled and highly motivated staff who take a real pride in the work that they undertake. BHP has gained skilled staff from other Landscape Partnership Schemes, and likewise has trained up staff who in turn have moved onto other similar projects, passing on the skill set. This has resulted in the organisations having a strong reputation for quality work, with the ability to just get on with things both on time and on budget.

The BHP is operating at a level currently that is part of the legacy of the Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme and has an important commitment for 10 years for the agreed legacy actions. It will require to retain its capacity to seek and draw down grant aid from a wide variety of funding sources to maintain its current staffing and activity levels. The success of BHP as organisation in running its landscape partnership has become a model for other similar schemes

However the BHP is relatively quiet about its achievements, partly due to constraints on core funding and apart from its excellent and comprehensive website, does not seek a high profile for publications such as its annual report or its forward plans for various aspects of the Hills.

Question 6 Recommendation 1 – Working in partnership with other similar purpose bodies, sharing learning, key skills and messages.

Belfast Hills Partnership is a member of the Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network (NIPAN) which has not convened for two years. There is also a developing network of current and former HLF Landscape Partnership schemes to discuss good practice and issues such as legacy. Several of these are also members of NIPAN. The BHP will be more effective as a member of a regular forum to discuss partnership approaches in achieving landscape scale objectives for a variety of purposes. There would be value in BHP taking the initiative to reconvene a professional network for those engaged in landscape scale schemes with multiple objectives.

Some gaps within the current skill set were identified, these included Communication/PR expertise and IT expertise, including the use of GIS software. There is also an awareness that much of its current skill set and positive relationships with the various partners are based on the current staff, if there is a turnover of staff much of this expertise and positive relationships could be lost.

Question 6 recommendation 2 – Working with member organisations to develop a communications strategy or audience development strategy.

It is important for the BHP, based on its own purposes, to identify key audiences, key messages to each audience and key mechanisms for getting the message across. Different messages will be required for Key Partners, Stakeholders, people the BHP works with practically on the ground, statutory bodies, elected representatives etc. BHP should seek a specific funding element within core costs for communication. It will be best for this strategy to be developed with BHP member organisations which have the required skills and to be devised together in a participative process.

Terms of Reference Question 7

What issues were not addressed in our work to date for the future protection and enhancement of the area?

The Belfast Hills Partnership already addresses a wide range of issues that arise within the Hills and seeks ways forward that can be agreed by the Statutory, Farming, landowning, conservation and community sectors. The partnership has a strong presence in the hills and in the communities on its fringe and is a well-respected and effective organisation. There are however always new and existing issues that need to be addressed for the future protection and enhancement of an area.

A survey was undertaken to find out what issues there were relating to the Belfast Hills that members of the public were most concerned about and felt should be addressed. This survey also enabled the public to provide suggestions of what work priorities should be. There were 129 respondents from across the Belfast Hills area and beyond. A full breakdown of the survey results including where the respondents were from and how often they use the Belfast Hills may be found in Appendix IV.

The number one area of concern was the loss of wildlife & habitats, followed closely by fly tipping & littering. The next areas of concern were wildfires, access to the hills and the aesthetic appearance of the hills. The BHP Board were also asked for their top issues – they varied a little from the view of the general public with flytipping & littering being the number one area of concern, followed by loss of wildlife & habitats. Access to the hills and the future viability of upland farming were ranked of equal importance. When responding to the question about work priorities for BHP both the public and BHP Board had improvements for wildlife as the number one priority, followed by volunteering & training opportunities and youth environmental education.

Question 7 Recommendation 1 – Work areas

A new project should be worked up which seeks to address issues such as the loss of wildlife and landscape quality due to the impact of humans on the area via flytipping/littering, wildfires etc. This should include maintaining access and improving the aesthetic appearance of the Belfast Hills area. This should incorporate volunteering, training and youth environmental education; supporting local people to take real ownership of the area and the work being undertaken.

To date the Belfast Hills Partnership has not owned any land in the Belfast Hills. The BHP land acquisition policy states

“The Belfast Hills Partnership Trust (The Partnership) recognises that in order to achieve its objectives it may become necessary to purchase lands, or to lease or receive donations or gifts of lands or property to avoid their use for inappropriate purposes, to secure their enhancement, or to buffer sensitive areas. The Partnership will place particular priority on acquisitions where the site and feature is considered by the Partnership to be at risk, and which would safeguard the area’s most important natural or cultural heritage features.

The Partnership will not seek to compete with or displace the activities of other organisations with an interest in the Belfast Hills but will rather seek to provide a forum for the development and co-ordination of sustainable land-use policies for the hills.

The Partnership will not enter into the ownership of land or property or will refuse a donation or gift of land or property where it appears to the directors or to expert opinion to represent a significant ongoing liability or where ownership or holding of the land or property would otherwise represent a significant risk or burden to the organisation.”

Question 7 Recommendation 2 – Land ownership

Within the current economic climate there may be more land available for sale within the Belfast Hills Partnership's operational area, careful consideration should be taken regarding the benefits of safeguarding areas of the hills through ownership of the land versus to ongoing costs and liabilities of land ownership.

It is arguable that the strategic reach of the Partnership has been limited in recent years by the changes in public administration and in personnel. This appears to have placed the BHP into the new role as grant applicant to Councils and NIEA rather than being seen as a partnership mechanism. The founding statutory bodies are members of the Partnership and have the responsibility to appoint the directors for the statutory sector. During the consultation some Directors within relevant parts of Local Authorities in particular were unaware of the full role that the Partnership was set up to undertake and viewed the Partnership as another land management and conservation organisation such as the Woodland Trust.

Question 7 Recommendation 3 – Strategic role

BHPs strategic role should be re-emphasized, revisited and strengthened by reaching a stage where the current Directors in local authorities have a full knowledge of the BHP and its agreed purpose and the role of their organisations within it. An important first step will be to ensure that the current position where Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council have been provided with legal advice that Councillors should not sit as Directors/Trustees of BHP is questioned. It appears from reading the Memorandum and Articles of Association that it is the founding organisations that are members of the BHP and can therefore nominate trustees/directors, and that therefore creating a separation between Councils and the BHP is not technically possible. The Trust should take its own legal advice to ascertain whether it is the organisations that are the Partnership members or the Trustees themselves.

Other issues that should potentially be taken forward in a cross-organisation way in the hills are:

- Tourism and recreation
- The retention of farming and farm families as an important part of the economy and fabric of the hills
- Public safety
- The impact of heavy levels of industrial traffic on biodiversity and roadside appearance

Question 7 Recommendation 4 – Involvement of other bodies and issues

In order to address these issues a new set of statutory bodies will be required to work with the Partnership and the BHP should consider amendments to its structure to allow e.g. ARC 21, Department of Infrastructure (roads or Sustainable Transport), Tourism NI (or tourism within BCC) and Sport NI (or the National Outdoor Recreation Forum) to play a part in strategic decision making for the Hills. One statutory body directorship is currently unfilled due to the merging of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Councils. The directorship to be nominated by the Quarry industry is currently also vacant and would allow for an ARC 21 inclusion.

Mechanisms of drawing sectors together on new topics could include:

- A Visitor and Environmental Management Plan for the Hills
- A public transport plan for people to take healthy recreation in the hills (could be part of Visitor and Environmental Management Plan)
- A commercial routing plan for lorries bringing waste to the Hills and a protocol developed with the industry and the regulator for the conduct of waste and transportation into and around the hills
- 'Retaining farming in the Belfast Hills Study' – undertaken between the BHP and DAERA
- 'Retaining the services that the Belfast Hills Provide to Belfast' study and action plan (could link to farming study) based on identifying and maintaining ecosystem services.

The Belfast Hills Partnership already works on aspects of water catchment management and could extend this work as a critical part of developing the new North East Area River Basin Management Plan and the Lough Neagh River Basin Management Plan.



Terms of Reference Question 8

How do we specifically make our upland farming more resilient?

Farmers in the Belfast Hills have expressed a concern in this review that, whilst many of the issues the Belfast Hills Partnership works to address are important to them, the most pressing need is for farms and farm families to be economically viable and to be able to live and work on the farm.

Total Income from Farming (TIFF) in Northern Ireland fell by 24% from £467m in 2017 to £360m in 2018. Two factors have combined to create this situation, increased costs of inputs from other countries linked to the lower value of sterling and the increases in labour costs. The current uncertainty about what measures will replace the current EU subsidies on farming represents a threat for Belfast Hills Farmers where more difficult growing and management circumstances combine with urban fringe pressures to create a justification for special measures for farming in this area.

In responding to this consultation the Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) emphasized the need for a balanced approach between rural and urban issues, so farmers can farm in a sustainable manner which benefits the environment. The UFU stated that if there are no viable farmers in the Belfast Hill areas, this will have a detrimental effect on the natural landscape, impacting on biodiversity and if there is an abandonment of land and destocking, the risk of wildfires and land abuse will increase.

Many UFU members have concerns that the current environmental schemes are not fully delivering for farmers. The UFU stated that it is vital that current and new board members of the BHP have a good transfer of knowledge, education, and understanding while also working to maintain a strong relationship with the local farming community. The UFU ask that ownership of farmland is recognised and respected within the Belfast Hills. The UFU state that going forward the BHP needs to be lobbying for support mechanisms that deliver good outcomes for all and future schemes need to be built in partnership with the local farmers.

Question 8 recommendation 1 – Helping relieve pressure on farmers & farming families

The Belfast Hills Partnership should consider the development of an urban fringe and upland hill farming review and scheme to identify opportunities and implement measures to relieve pressure on farmers and farm families created by urban impacts. This review should include issues such as succession, market links between city and farm and the potential for a demonstration urban fringe mixed farm project.

The Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) was introduced in 2017 to replace the Countryside Management Scheme. A number of BHP staff have been trained and have undertaken EFS surveys on farms from 2017-19, however not in the Belfast Hills area. The Belfast Hills Partnership has been unable to find out how many of the farmers in the area are Environmental Farming Scheme applicants or are engaged in measures to farm the land sustainably.

Environmental incentive payments to farmers in Northern Ireland via the Environmental Farming Scheme has 3 main programmes:

- The Wider Scheme, a broad scheme for most farmland across Northern Ireland
- The Higher Scheme, a scheme focusing on land of High Nature Conservation Value
- The Group Scheme, currently focusing on 4 areas where Groups of farmers are working together to maximise value of their EFS Higher schemes.

Currently EFS is designed to encourage and fund a number of land management options to provide for:

- Climate change mitigation,
- Protection of statutory nature conservation sites,
- Improvement of water quality,

- Improvement of soil stabilisation; and
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

All these programme areas are identified as Public Good management outputs.

Farmers who enter the voluntary scheme are funded to complete capital works, non-productive investments and area-based management options to deliver the targets outlined above. For the EFS Wider Scheme, farmers choose from a list of options to deliver the scheme on their land. The Higher Scheme recognises a range of options are required, and a farm plan is prepared by an independent farm planner who agrees a bespoke site-specific management plan for the land which is delivered and monitored by the farmer. This aspect of the scheme is new, with DAERA itself having undertaken the farm planning in previous schemes.

There is no landscape or climate element to the current programme, though the group scheme offers great potential to retain important landscape features, and carbon storage capacity as a byproduct of nature conservation measures such as rewetting drained wetlands or tree and hedge planting.

Participation in a group scheme led by the Belfast Hills Partnership on behalf of farmers would be beneficial, in terms of public good with retention of the land uses that benefit nature and nature's services. Moreover, it would promote the restoration of lands where the nature conservation is close to qualifying as an Area of Special Scientific Interest or where the lands have been impacted negatively by wildfires. However, the threshold for qualifying for the higher scheme is quite high and the Belfast Hills has currently only one area designated as ASSI. Working with DAERA to design a special scheme for the hills that focuses on retaining and enhancing land uses that store carbon and which focusses on climate alongside nature conservation would provide an incentive for more farmers to engage.

A farm resilience scheme was included in the Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership scheme¹⁵. It proved popular in the Glens area because it focused on improving the capacity of the farm to shelter stock, to retain biodiverse and effective boundaries and to benefit from available grant aid to farmers for tree planting, riparian buffers etc. The scheme focused on the viability, productivity and income of farm businesses and was aimed at retaining people and agricultural management in the area.

Question 8 recommendation 2 – Ensuring strong policy Linkages between UFU and BHP

The UFU as an organisation is a nominating member for 2 directors to the Belfast Hills Partnership. The farming directors of the BHP have been good attenders and very interested and engaged in the work of the Partnership. It is important to the resilience of BHP that the UFU remains engaged with the organisation in a way that allows for discussion of wider policies. The company secretary should ensure that close links are retained at a policy level in all organisations that nominate directors so that the strategic role of BHP in the area is more effectively taken forward.

One example that could involve a joint approach between the BHP and UFU would be to examine the potential for the designation of an area related to the outskirts of Belfast and particularly the Belfast Hills as an Area of Natural Constraint for farming. The justification of this would be the effect of natural constraints in conjunction with Urban Fringe Pressures. The Belfast Hills does not hold this designation (it was previously a Less Favoured Area) and therefore farmers in the area cannot receive support for this locational disadvantage at present.

¹⁵ <http://www.heartoftheglens.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Glens-of-Antrim-Resilient-Farm-Project-Report.pdf>

Terms of Reference Question 9

What opportunities are there for income generating activities?

The Belfast Hills Partnership was set up as a fully funded body with a core purpose of interest to NIEA and the Councils. Core funding was provided until 2014 to fully fund a core of staff to carry out Belfast Hills work. This meant that staff were fully available to work on agreed programmes. In 2019 however the BHP has grown considerably and has a number of staff that are funded on a programme basis with salaries paid from grant aid applied for by the organisation. The organisation has 10 staff at present, up from 4 in 2008. The complement of 4 staff is sufficient to run the cooperation and integration function of the organisation. A larger complement is required to achieve a wide range of outputs, changes in behaviour, information, education and alleviation of issues that are intended in the public benefit statement.

The majority of the funding raised by BHP is through applications for grant aid and is therefore restricted funding tied to the achievement of programme elements. The fundraising effort at present occupies considerable staff time where this could otherwise be providing public benefit services.

The organisation has a lower level of unrestricted funding than some comparable sized organisations having no membership base and no current fundraising programme aimed at individuals or businesses. In the year 2017/2018 BHP had an income of £135,882 in unrestricted funds and £344,531 in restricted funds. This represented an improved ratio on the previous two years.

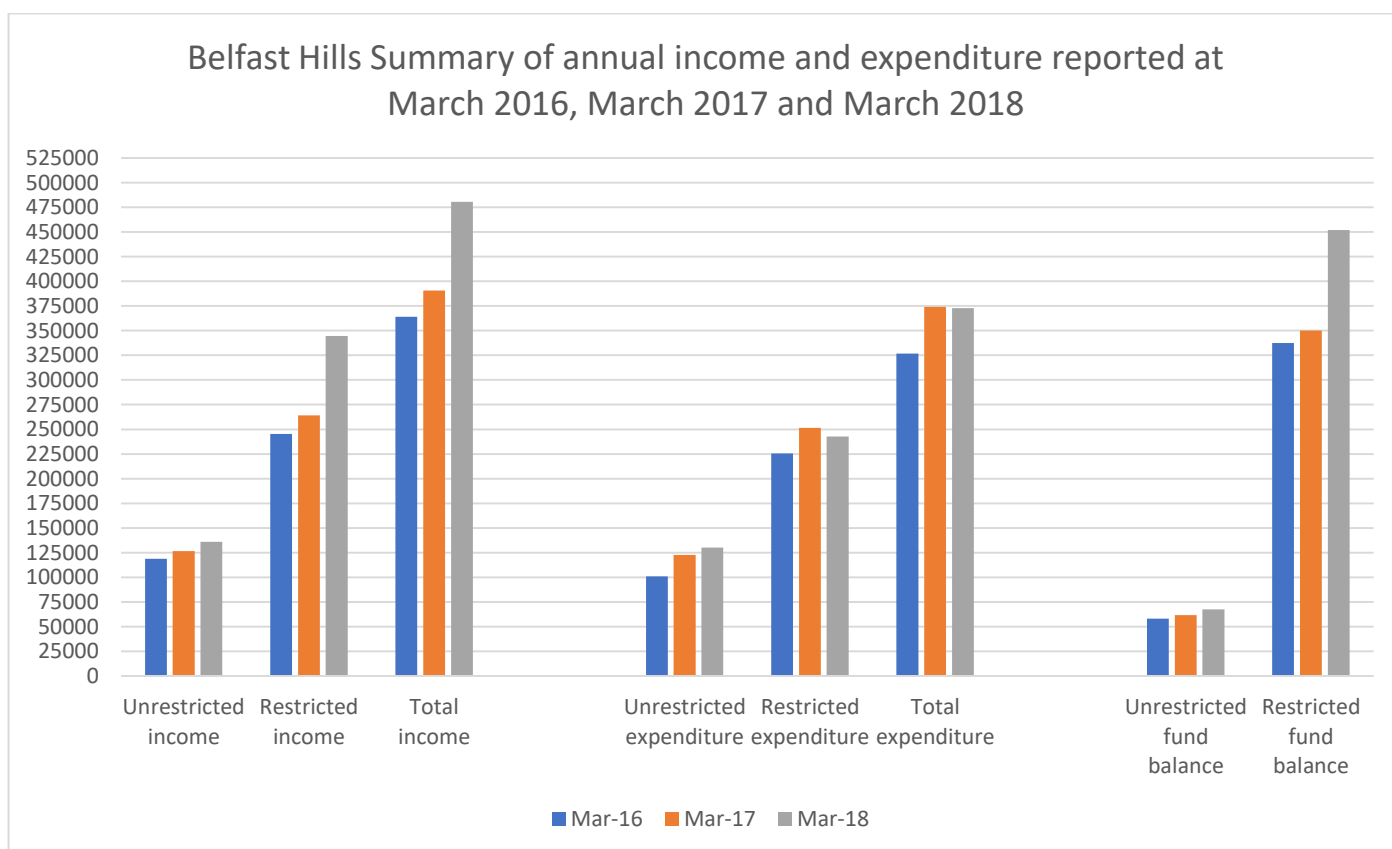


FIGURE 13 RISE IN BHP INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OVER 3 YEARS AT MARCH 2016-2018

The policy of BHP is that unrestricted fund balance or the reserve of the charity should allow the charity to continue through a period of six months of unexpected austerity. The unrestricted fund balance currently meets the requirement of this policy.

Nevertheless, an important aspect of making the BHP more resilient means growing the reserve and the level of unrestricted funding. Unrestricted funding allows charities to make its own decisions and to use funds to match grant aid offered by others at various percentages as well as providing a buffer against unexpected circumstance. One way of growing unrestricted income is through membership levies. This is not currently allowed for in the Memorandum and Articles of Association as the only members as such are the nominating bodies. An example of an organisation that seeks to balance its income between restricted and unrestricted is the Ulster Wildlife which records the following sources of income in its accounts:

- UW Membership income and gift aid contributions
- Legacies and In-Memory Gifts
- Corporate support and
- Other gifts & donations

These totaled £412,388 in the 2017-2018 accounts. As the majority of this income was unrestricted this was the sum that the charity was able to spend on its charitable objectives. In addition the UWT has a modest consultancy income.

Whilst this comparison is useful for the Belfast Hills Partnership it must be remembered that the origin of the Belfast Hills Partnership is very different and a key role is creating a joint approach to managing the Belfast Hills for both its wildlife and its people. It has a limited and defined set of members many of which contribute by carrying out their own programmes in the Hills. The large membership income would not therefore be available to the Belfast Hills Partnership. Where there is potential however is in corporate financial giving, corporate in kind contributions and alignment with BHP through corporate social and environmental responsibility statements and actions.

As part of this resilience study BHP staff held a variety of events and training courses with a range of costs associated with running the events. These included a photography workshop, a bilberry picnic walk, mindfulness walk, moth ID training, habitat condition assessment course etc. The events were advertised as free events but participants were asked to share anonymously what they would have been prepared to pay for the event/course before having taken part in the event, then what they thought the event/course was worth after having completed it. There was quite a range of monetary values placed on the same events, with some people only wanting to attend free events, while one individual said they would have paid £30. On average people valued the events at either £5 for a basic walk or £10 where other elements such as transport or external trainers were involved. An interesting point was raised that training courses should always be free for volunteers as it was simply providing them with more in-depth understanding of a topic which they would then use as part of their volunteering role.

The average value of the event/course given was multiplied by the number of attendees at each event/course to provide a total value. This was then compared to the cost of running the event. Very consistently across all events/courses the value given was lower than the actual cost of the event/course. Losses ranged from £43 to £574 and were generally associated with levels of staffing required for events.

The events programme was very popular and every single event/course was fully booked well in advance of the event date. Frustratingly there were however a number of individuals who either failed to show up or cancelled at such last minute that it was not possible to fill the space in the timeframe. The administration in trying to fill spaces last minute is also time consuming and was not considered in the estimated costs associated with running events.

Question 9 Recommendation 1 - Events

A very clear rational needs to be in place for running events/courses, as they are labor intensive and costly to the organisation. When BHP started running events in the hills there were very few other events in the area available to the public, while now there are a wide range of regular events being provided by partner organisations. Even fairly high event prices are unlikely to cover staff time costs but may prevent low income families from coming along. However having to pre pay a small event charge could be advantageous as it may put people off from not showing up at events which they had booked on.

An internal exercise by BHP staff during this study in considering potential new sources of income produced the following table. Each potential activity is colour coded with green indicating a good source of income, orange indicating that the activity may only break even covering staff costs, while red indicates the activity may in fact cost the organisation money. Some activities have more than one colour associated with them indicating that the level of income depends on the success of the activity. The level of income potential is indicated by £ symbols, with the greater number of £'s indicating the higher anticipated income.

Potential Activity by BHP	Potential Income / Expenditure scale	Level of income
Consultancy work	Green	££
Feasibility/research studies	Orange, Green	££
Assisting Partners e.g. local area mapping, management plans	Orange, Red	£
Grant applications	Orange	££££
Contract work e.g. spraying invasive species, health walks, EFS	Green	££
Service level agreements	Green	£
Environmental education services e.g. geology talk, Longstone	Orange, Green	££
Wills & donations e.g. Stephen Clarke Foundation	Green	££
Street collections	Red	£
Friends Group	Green	£
Tourism	Orange, Green	£
Hosting external staff e.g. Buglife	Orange, Red	££
Pilot Agri environmental scheme	Orange, Green	£££
Events programme	Orange, Red	£
Big events/conference facilities	Orange, Green	££
Merchandise sales e.g. OS map	Orange, Green	£
Corporate Involvement	Green, Orange, Red	££

FIGURE 14 POTENTIAL INCOME SOURCES

Caution should be applied when considering activities that could be undertaken by the Belfast Hills Partnership to provide additional income to the organisation. There are activities such as consultancy work and contract work that although have potential to raise considerable funds and expertise, will take staff time away not just from the Belfast Hills Partnership Area but also from the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation. New activities must therefore be tested against the financial benefits and against the organisations objectives.

Question 9 Recommendation 2 – Growing the income.

Options for increasing unrestricted funds which can be used for the general purposes of the charity and therefore which increase both resilience and effectiveness include:

- Asking for a higher contribution to unrestricted funds from all sectors in membership to reflect the fact that costs have increased over the life of the Partnership or securing the participation of an additional relevant statutory source e.g. in recognition of the waste management, tourism, recreation and agri-environment and rural development role played by the charity
- Providing a more active 'Friends of the Belfast Hills' Organisation with a membership donation and with the capacity to support the work of the BHP in practical or financial ways. The current Friends group is relatively inactive
- Increasing the payments to the BHP from landfill tax sources or contributions from industry in the Belfast and its Hills in recognition of the important landscape setting for business or through corporate social responsibility commitments
- Appointing a fundraiser with specific giving targets (although the giving market is crowded and the charity message may not appear as a high priority to general givers)
- Seek specific Corporate Social Responsibility policies in relation to the Belfast Hills from businesses in the Hills and in the wider NI area particularly where businesses own and manage lands in the hills or where the waste stream ends up in the Hills (this could be taken forward through Business in the Community NI as a part of its work towards developing a circular economy or work towards Business and Biodiversity awards)
- Creation of a general Good Works Fund for developers e.g. wind turbine projects / Companies CSR monies to put money into – unrestricted but only practical works, volunteering support etc.
- Developing a communications strategy to ensure that the charity's key messages reach a wider set of people who can help achieve the mission

Options for increasing restricted funds with the potential for a contribution to core costs include:

- Development of a fly-tipping fast response service on behalf of Councils and the Waste regulator within a service level agreement
- Development of a strategic recreation management capacity and activity and a ranger service function for the hills on behalf of local authorities within a service level agreement
- Working with others to raise the profile of the Hills as a green lung for Belfast and as a source of horticulture and food products
- Raise awareness of the contribution the Belfast Hills makes to Natural Capital / Ecosystem Services e.g. reducing the effects of climate change and seeking a major Programme to promote land uses that keep carbon locked in soil and vegetation
- Seek greater recognition of the peacebuilding potential of the hills through youth outdoor learning projects
- Build on the reputation of the Belfast Hills Partnership and its capacity to bring people together to work on hills issues
- Develop a Belfast Hills Visitor Vision and Strategy and identify the role of the Belfast Hills Partnership in its delivery (engagement with Sport NI, Health Trusts and Tourism NI in addition to the Councils)

Options for increasing the asset base of the organisation:

- Purchase of nature conservation or amenity lands in the hills to solve strategic recreation issues (this could also be achieved through giving a higher profile to the potential of legacy and memorial giving to the charity)
- Identification of high net worth individuals with links to the Belfast Hills and work with them to identify potential opportunities for giving to specific projects that meet the strategic needs of the hills.
- Development of a business sponsorship prospectus for the Hills – potentially with Business in the Community NI – identifying financial and in-kind sponsorship opportunities. Including the greening of businesses in the hills.

Terms of Reference Question 10

How do we manage difficult and visible issues for which we have little power, influence or responsibility?

As the consultations highlighted there are still a large number of issues within the Belfast Hills that local people are concerned about and do need to be addressed, however many of these issues do not occur solely in the Belfast Hills but are part of a wider problem; for example the loss of wildlife and habitats, with the NI Environmental Statistics report 2019 showing a constant decline in the percentage of terrestrial area under favourable management, with only 0.18% classified as favourable in 2017/18.

Flytipping and littering is a visible issue along the road verges of the Belfast hills and in a number of laybys. The removal of such material is within Councils remit, along with searching for evidence of the perpetrators identity and, where possible, prosecution. Litter picking along the roads has in the past been undertaken by Council staff, however with new Health and Safety concerns Council will not send their staff onto roads where there is no footpath unless a road closure has been organized. Volunteer teams could not be used to clean up the roads in the hills unless the Council arranges the road closure (the Council has a statutory right to apply for road closure, while BHP does not).

Due to the upland nature of the Belfast Hills, and the proximity to Belfast there will be an ongoing demand for the construction of high structures such as communication masts, wind turbines. The presence of high structures is driven by a combination of public policy on renewables and demand for good signal strength in terms of mobiles, television and broadband. The RPA has placed the responsibility for the next set of local development plans with local authorities, with a level of oversight from Department for Infrastructure. As Councils are also members of BHP there are opportunities for influence and teamwork on solving issues and protecting the special qualities of the Hills.

The underlying geology of the Belfast Hills means that mineral extraction was another issue of pressure on the Belfast Hills, however extraction in the hills is becoming less financially viable and is likely to cease completely. Extraction of aggregates has left quarry holes which are now being used as landfill sites or used as commercial recycling centers. Due to the presence of commercial operations in the Belfast Hills there is a large number of HGVs along the minor roads in the Belfast Hills; this is expected to be an issue for the next 30 years, with ongoing road safety issues, as well as the deterioration of the road verges and the aesthetic appearance of the area. The Belfast Hills Partnership members include representatives of the aggregates and waste industries, so amelioration can be discussed and voluntary agreements and codes of practice developed. However the BHP is not a statutory consultee on planning for the Hills and can comment only in the same way as the general public. Councils are also responsible for waste within the ARC 21 partnership and because to their membership of BHP it should be possible to influence forward planning for waste management.

With the close urban population to the Belfast Hills there are many associated problems such as trespass, graffiti/vandalism, wildfires, drink & drug use as well as other forms of antisocial behavior. These are common to other urban fringe sites across the UK. There are opportunities for the partnership to continue its work in support of communities, landowners and the Police Service of NI to address these issues through its actions and to encourage the public to care for the hills and their people. The BHP has taken the opportunity to contribute to the early detection of wildfires and to train staff in wildfire monitoring management and the restoration of sites where wildfires have taken place with the aim of reducing the negative effect of fires on nature and the economy.

The future viability of farming in upland areas generally is under question; to a large extent this is due to the reduction in the subsidy paid to farmers in what is termed as Area of Natural Constraint (ANC). In 2018 this ANC payment was reduced by £10 million with the prospect that this subsidy may cease to exist. Although farmers are members of the BHP through Ulster Farmers Union representatives on the Board, there is no current vision about the future of farming in the hills and a need for a special scheme to address the additional pressures on farmers on

farming in the hills and on the urban fringes. The Environmental Farming Scheme criteria currently place farmers in the hills at a disadvantage.

In the light of the above issues it is possible to feel powerless, however because of the nature of the Belfast Hills Partnership the Council, statutory bodies and the Quarrying & Waste sector who have power and influence regarding the above issues are working together already to care for the Belfast Hills, their wildlife and people.

Landscape policy in Northern Ireland, which is led by DAERA, is now dated and does not reflect the current responsibilities of Government departments or the new priorities in maximizing ecosystem services from upland areas that store carbon and reduce the incidences of downstream flooding by retaining rainfall in upland peat areas. BHP should work with others to develop and secure an updated strategy and policies.

Question 10 Recommendations – making the most of strategic contacts and members to influence the management of the Hills

More should be made of the existing policy links with the Councils, potentially through an annual meeting with a range of relevant staff to develop joint projects to tackle issues such as flytipping/littering together, with BHP providing man power through volunteers, a positive social media marketing campaign and a schools and community education programme. Inputting into the Council Development plans will also influence the future placement of high structures and the ability of companies to extract minerals from the area.

The Councils have statutory powers to safeguard current public rights of way and public paths and to develop new paths and open country access through agreement or the making of orders; balancing the needs of the public with the views of landowners. It has proved difficult to achieve consensus within the Belfast Hills Partnership on long term recreation and access objectives. Working with Councillors and council Access Officers to look strategically at access in the hills will be important e.g. reopening Glenside Community Woodland and achieving long distance paths & links. Updating the Belfast Hills Recreation Strategy via a working group would help bring focus to this issue.

It may be of value to form a working group looking at the industrial use of the Belfast Hills, with agreed 'green routes' in the area where HGVs do not go. Strengthening links with local businesses should be undertaken, potentially using Business in the Community as a partner in this process.

Continued support to the Belfast Hills Farmers in explaining issues to DAERA regarding loss of ANC and other such grants to ensure the viability of farming in the uplands, including potential future EFS scheme payments for landscape scale management of their upland sites. As this is an issue wider than just the Belfast Hills reconvening the NI Protected Areas Network (NIPAN) may be of benefit. This could coordinate action on landscapes and make the case for land uses that have high carbon sequestration; provide attenuation of flooding, and landscape and heritage features to be conserved as part of environmentally sensitive farming rather than solely lands with high nature conservation value.

BHP has proved itself on a regular basis as being an excellent educator, undertaking activities such as the John Muir Award in the Belfast Hills area to help transform the mindset of young people about the value of their natural environment. As much of the antisocial behavior issues are associated with young people, continued efforts are required looking at issues such as flytipping, littering, wildfires and vandalism.

Another role for BHP is to continue reporting and lobbying about issues, highlighting the problem to those who do have the power to affect change and challenging them to act; while offering to help where and how it can.

Terms of reference Question 11

Does a Natural Capital approach really bring benefits in practice to new projects?

The Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) defines and explains natural capital accounting as follows

'Natural capital accounting is a coherent and integrated approach to the assessment of the environment through the measurement of natural assets such as ecosystems, and the measurement of the flows of services from these assets into economic and other human activity.'

The scope of natural capital accounts may vary from specific land cover types, such as forests, to larger integrated areas such as river basins, and includes areas that may be considered relatively natural and those that may be heavily influenced by human activity, such as agricultural or urban areas.

Natural capital accounting goes beyond other approaches to environmental analysis and assessment through the explicit linking of the natural assets to economic and other human activity. The links are seen both in terms of the services provided by the assets and in the impacts that economic and other human activity may have on the assets and their future capacity to deliver services.

While natural capital accounting does consider the environment and the economy to be different systems, they are analysed jointly reflecting the fundamental connections between them.

The use of an accounting framework enables the stock of assets and the flows of services to be defined in relation to each other and in relation to a range of other environmental, economic and social information. A prime motivation for natural capital accounting is that the separate analysis of the environment and the economy does not clarify the vital nature of the relationship between humans and the environment in which we live. The standard approaches to the measurement of the economy focus largely on economic and other human activity that is reflected in the activity of markets.

Natural capital accounting aims to shed light on the non-market activity that relates to ecosystems and integrate this information with relevant market related data. It is expected that individual, social and business decisions concerning the use of the environment may be better informed by developing information sets based on recognition of the relationship between ecosystems and economic and other human activity'.

The contribution of natural capital accounting is to ensure that Gross Domestic Product is not the only measure of the health of the economy since it does not record all of the resources used in production. It does not account for the impacts of production on natural resources such as soils, water, air quality, land use changes, effects of pollution etc. and is restricted to the part of production. It is important we take a balanced approach to producing natural capital accounts; which entails creating stock and flow accounts of specific habitats or services. This means we are able to focus development on key accounts where the policy interest lies. All these specific accounts are then amalgamated into a national UK natural capital account which provides a "quick overview" of UK natural capital. The ultimate goal of the ONS-Defra project is to incorporate UK natural capital into the UK Environmental Accounts by 2020.

Natural Capital is predominantly hidden, partial or missing from the nation's balance sheet. However, by providing valuations of the UK's natural capital, decision makers can better include the environment in their plans to allocate resources to develop, and promote the growth of, the economy.

Natural capital includes both Biotic and Abiotic factors. Abiotic factors refer to non-living physical and chemical elements in the ecosystem. Abiotic resources are usually obtained from the lithosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere. Examples of abiotic factors are water, air, soil, sunlight, and minerals.

Biotic factors are living or once-living organisms in the ecosystem. These are obtained from the biosphere and are capable of reproduction. Examples of biotic factors are animals, birds, plants, fungi, and other similar organisms.

The UN WCMC presents the following useful diagram to explain these different factors and the extent to which they are renewable.

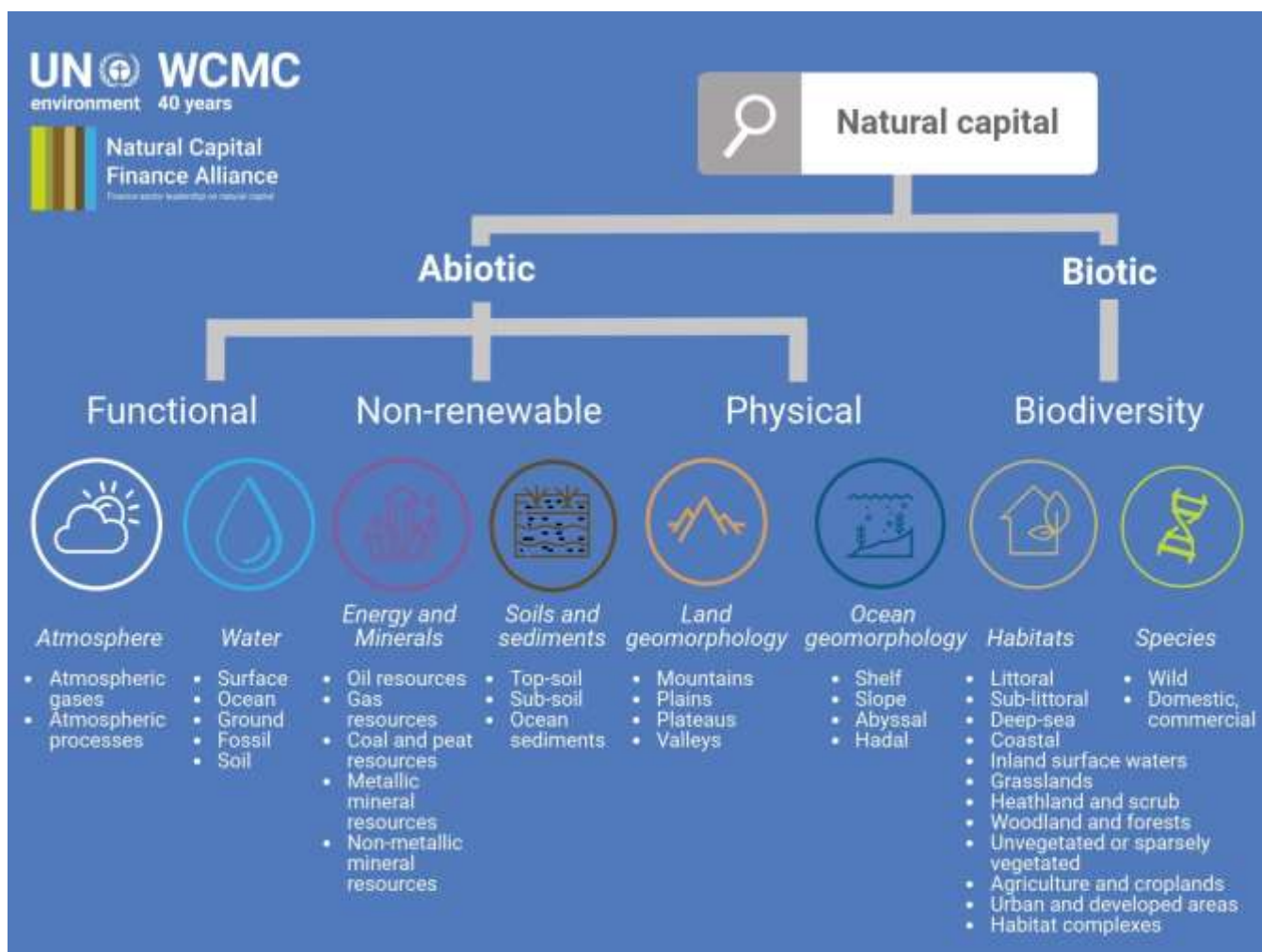


FIGURE 15 BREAKDOWN OF NATURAL CAPITAL (UN-WCNC)

The work of the Belfast Hills Partnership has been designed to address the majority of the factors described above. Most of its work has been orientated towards biotic factors such as Biodiversity (habitats and species). BHP has also worked with industry to reduce impacts of businesses on the natural capital in the Belfast Hills.

The natural capital laid out in the UN WCMC diagram then produces flows of services that are referred to as ecosystem services. The key in taking a natural capital approach is to conserve the natural capital but maintain the flows of services that arise from them on a continuous basis.

The NI Ecosystem Assessment 2011 (as part of an exercise across the UK) explains these services for Northern Ireland and makes an estimate of how much of each type of land or water resource is present in Northern Ireland. However monetary natural capital value/natural capital accounting is only one of several natural capital concepts. For example in Scotland they have Natural Capital as a National Performance Indicator in the National Performance Framework but rather than focus on monetary values this indicator reflects changes in the capacity of Scotland's terrestrial habitats to provide benefits to people and human wellbeing. The NCAI model combines habitat quality (38 indicators) and quantity / land cover change of 7 broad habitat types with a matrix of the potential of each habitat type to deliver a range of ecosystem services i.e. using habitat extent and quality to determine whether Scotland natural capital is increasing or decreasing.

In England Natural England and CEH collaborated to map aspects of natural capital. This project provides publicly available maps of natural capital, underpinning the provision of ecosystem services. This developed a suite of ten maps, of different aspects of natural capital, to contribute to our understanding of where England's natural capital is: Soil Nitrogen, Soil Carbon, Soil pH, Soil Phosphorus, Soil Bacteria, Soil Invertebrates, Head Stream Quality, Carbon in Vegetation, Nectar Plant Diversity for Bees, Plant Indicators for Habitats in Good Condition. The maps are at a 1km resolution.

The Partnership coalition (Defra; Env Agencies; Local Councils, Universities; Institutes; Research Bodies; Consultancies, Business Groups) developed a Natural Capital Planning Tool; developed to give local authorities, planners and developers a fit-for-purpose, easy-to-use tool to hand which enables them to effectively and efficiently implement environmental net-gain.

[Taking a Natural Capital Approach to caring for the Belfast Hills and its people.](#)

Taking a natural capital approach to the Belfast Hills involves identifying the services that the land cover currently provides for people and nature and judging land-use change and projects against whether it creates a gain, maintenance or loss of natural capital.

As explained above there are several types of natural capital with some being renewable, some that can be depleted whilst providing services and some only available for one-time use. The UN WCMC diagram represents the different types of natural capital and the extent to which they can be renewed or restored.

The areas of Natural Capital of particular relevance to the Belfast Hills are considered in the table below, with the extent to which BHP has the potential to make a positive impact, with green suggesting high impact, orange some impact and red no/limited impact.

Examples of Natural Capital	Examples of Ecosystem Service provided	Relevance / fit to Belfast Hills	Potential Positive Impact by BHP
Upland Peat, Woodland, wetland, new native woodland planting	Carbon Storage	Green	Green
	Carbon Sequestration	Green	Green
	Air Quality	Yellow	Red
	Recreation & wellbeing	Green	Green
Upland peat and wetlands	Water Quality	Green	Yellow
	Retention of flood water	Green	Yellow
	Flood/Erosion Mitigation	Green	Green
Farmland	Food Production	Green	Yellow
	Economy	Green	Yellow
	Biodiversity	Green	Yellow
Uplands	Wind Energy Production	Yellow	Yellow

FIGURE 17 RELEVANCE OF NATURAL CAPITAL ASSETS TO THE WORK OF THE BELFAST HILLS PARTNERSHIP

The Belfast Hills area is particularly important for carbon storage (or sequestration) due to its land cover type. In Figure 16 the soil and vegetation in the areas coloured red is estimated by RSPB^{16 17} to contain between 310 and 500 tonnes of carbon per hectare. Quarrying, vegetation removal or any change of use of the red and orange areas will lead to a loss of some of that carbon to the atmosphere and reduce the capacity of the area surrounding Belfast to contribute to managing the air quality of the cities of Belfast and Lisburn. The climate emergency should lead to a presumption towards retaining carbon that is stored in soils or vegetation or increasing their storage capacity and a presumption against changing land uses that reduce the capacity of lands to store carbon. At present this is not widely discussed in the Belfast Hills area and is in most cases an invisible process. Land in the hills therefore which may be viewed as unproductive through the farming lens or even the recreation lens can however provide essential services to humans in the form of air quality and removal of CO₂, this is particularly valuable on the fringes of Belfast

Similarly the Belfast Hills plays a role in moderating downstream water quality and water quantity, retaining and slowly releasing water from high rainfall events. Drainage in the hills has reduced the service provided by the upland peat areas. Mapping the areas that provide this function now, and those that previously held back water will be important in mitigating flooding in Belfast, Lisburn and Newtownabbey.

There is a link between high nature value areas (natural capital) and ecosystem services. These services are often unseen or unrecognised. It will be important for BHP to explain the importance of the habitats of the Belfast Hills to the city and to seek to enhance their capacity to continue to provide services to humans.

¹⁶ Cruickshank, M. & Tomlinson, R. & Trew, S.. (2000). Application of CORINE land-cover mapping to estimate carbon stored in the vegetation of Ireland. Journal of Environmental Management - J ENVIRON MANAGE. 58. 269-287. 10.1006/jema.2000.0330..

¹⁷ <https://rspb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=2b383eee459f4de18026002ae648f7b7>

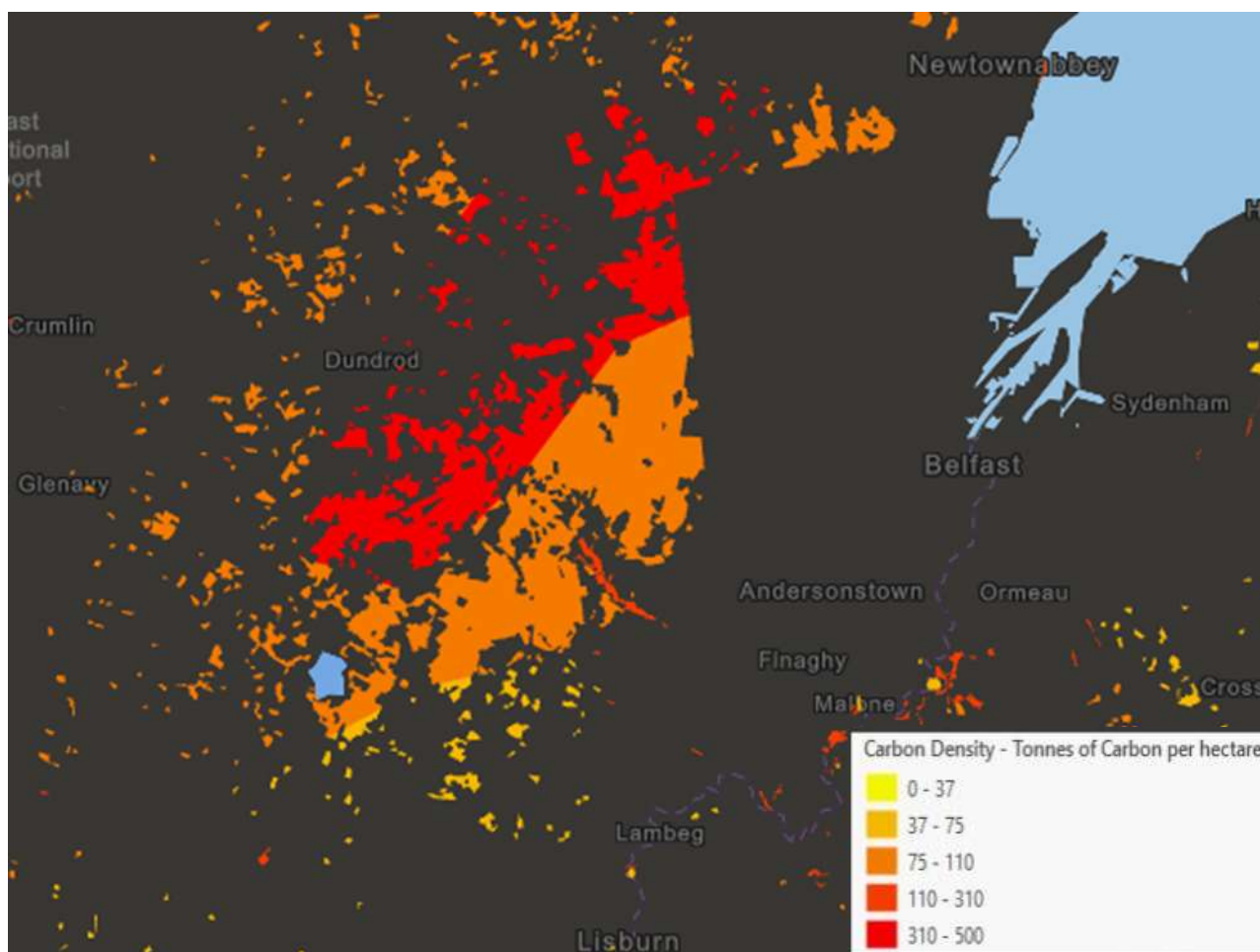


FIGURE 16 CARBON STORAGE MAP PRODUCED BY THE RSPB.

Question 11 Recommendation 1 - Natural Capital

The Belfast Hills Partnership should seek to retain the land cover types in the hills that provide the most valuable ecosystem services to the surrounding area. Mapping of land cover/use and monitoring change on a regular basis is the key to retaining natural capital, together with identifying the services the land cover and soil types provide.

Moving to agri-environment schemes that compensate for the retention of non-economic land uses by farmers in order to provide public goods such as carbon sequestration and storage, flood attenuation, biodiversity, recreation and well-being services will be an important outcome for farmers in the hills.

Identifying land uses that can produce more than one kind of service is also key- for example, new woodland planting can provide carbon uptake, recreation, wellbeing and in time a renewable economic asset; upland pathways that do not affect biodiversity or water retention enable land to provide an additional service.

Summary of Future Opportunities

The Belfast Hills Partnership has a strong track record for successfully delivering projects, however this success should be better communicated with both partners and the wider public to enable such successes to be built upon. There is a need to meet with other similar landscape management groups to share best practice within the group and potentially submit joint future bids.

The various consultations highlighted the need for a new project to address issues such as loss of wildlife, flytipping/littering, wildfires etc. which incorporates volunteering, training and youth education. The future viability of upland farming was also an issue for concern; BHP should consider the development of an urban fringe farming review and scheme to identify opportunities and implement measures to relieve pressure on hill farmers.

The majority of funds raised by BHP are through applications for grant aid so is therefore restricted funding. Securing unrestricted funding will provide the organisation a greater buffer against unexpected circumstances as well as enabling grant match funding. A number of different avenues for securing funding were outlined including service level agreements, developing the Friends Group, securing local business support etc.

Working in partnership with the various statutory bodies, local landowners etc. is a powerful mechanism for tackling issues that BHP may have no direct power or responsibility for.

The Natural Capital elements of particular relevance to the Belfast Hills are carbon storage & sequestration, water quality, flood mitigation, biodiversity, food production and recreation. These benefits should be emphasized when highlighting the importance of the Belfast Hills.

Summary of Recommendations



Summary of Recommendations

Assessing current condition

1. In which areas are we truly resilient and which not?

Question 1 Recommendation 1 – Aligning Baseline Targets with NISRA data

The current Base Line Targets are a challenging list of measures, many of which require original research to procure data. There would be merit in aligning evaluation with some measures that are now routinely reported on by NISRA as part of monitoring for community plans or by DAERA NI and others in monitoring against Programme for Government objectives. BHP could then identify objectives that are specific to the success of its own programmes. It is possible to obtain data on request from NISRA against the PFG and Community Planning targets based on interrogation of data within the nearest administrative boundaries contained within the Belfast Hills Partnership area.

Question 1 Recommendation 2 – Supporting the Volunteering Programme

The current volunteering programme within the Belfast Hills Partnership and the level of work being undertaken by the volunteers is one of the organisations strongest assets which give BHP a high level of resilience and should be expanded where possible. However it must be noted that this group does require staff management to recruit, manage and maintain this group. There has been some money set aside to support a Volunteer Officer through the Landscape Partnership Schemes 10 year maintenance pot, however this money decreases with time. This means that after 2020 further funding will need to be secured to enable volunteering to be supported at the same level as currently.

Question 1 Recommendation 3 – Partners recommitting regularly to the strategic role of BHP

Whilst currently strong the Belfast Hills Partnership is facing a number of potential threats which may in time affect its capacity to secure funding for programmes and to deliver programmes. The Trustees should ensure that Partners are aware of and recommit regularly to the strategic role of the Partnership in the hills. A memorandum of understanding as used within the Dublin Mountains Partnership between at least the Statutory Partnership members would be an appropriate type of mechanism requiring refreshment and recommitment on a regular basis.

Examples of strategic roles of BHP:

1. Drawing up strategic plans and positions for the Belfast Hills as a whole, merging and agreeing actions between other bodies (e.g. visitor and environmental management, recreation, biodiversity)
2. Producing a strategic framework which strengthens and supports partner work in addressing common issues (climate action, managing anti-social behaviour, dealing with fly tipping, reducing the impacts of waste transport on the roads network and public safety)
3. Delivering programmes on behalf of Partners where this is the most effective delivery method.

Question 1 Recommendation 4 – Responding to opportunities in accordance with BHPs strategic aims

One of the great strengths of the organisation is that due to its relatively small size and independent nature it can quickly adapt and change. It is however recommended that BHP needs to constantly align what it is doing with its strategic aims and objectives as outlined within its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Question 1 Recommendation 5 – Increasing links between BHP and Planning/Community Planning

The community planning process is an important driver of policy that has overlapped with some of the aspirations that community consultations in the Belfast Hills have produced. This has become clearer through increased community contact and participation as a result of the Landscape Partnership. There is a more apparent link between the aspirations of the communities and the developing Local Area Plans, the actions of statutory bodies involved in community planning and the Programme for Government. As a geographical coordinating mechanism for public benefit it is important that Belfast Hills Programmes look at how to provide cohesion in the way that this work impacts on the area and adds value rather than duplicating effort. One method of achieving this is to ensure

that baselines and targets are seen and presented in relation to the outcomes and indicators that NISRA maintains to track the success of community and statutory body aspirations.

The BHP should arguably have more contact with community planning and local area development planning through elected representatives on the Board, through participation of community planning staff in the BHP forward planning process, and through regular contact during the current development planning stage. In doing this BHP should have regard to the legal requirement for a charity not to engage in political activity.

Question 1 Recommendation 6 – Ensuring Local Plan Consistency at the boundaries

It is recommended that NIEA and the BHP engage in developing a shared picture for consistency in landscape management across local authority boundaries in the Belfast Hills.

Question 1 Recommendation 7 – Seeking Statutory Consultee status

It is arguable that the BHP should seek the status of statutory consultee in the community and local area planning process or make a formal link with bodies that are statutory consultees in the environment and countryside policy sector. This recognises the importance of development plans to managing special landscapes (e.g. CNCC, relevant landscape staff in NIEA). This proposal is made in the light of the origin of the Belfast Hills Partnership set up by NIEA and Local Authorities to coordinate approaches to management of the hills.

Question 1 Recommendation 8 – Undertake Ecosystem Services Mapping

An initial step may be the production of a more detailed Belfast Hills Carbon Storage map in conjunction with RSPB, making partners and planners aware of the significance of this aspect of the hills. This should be the beginning of a natural capital and ecosystem services mapping exercise for the Hills. Other areas to consider mapping are flood mitigation, biodiversity and recreation.

Partnership Working

2. How best can we maintain the working methods and outcomes of our BHP Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) and carry these forward in this rapidly changing world?

Question 2 Recommendation 1 – Retaining Statutory Board Representation

Consideration should be given to holding a meeting(s) of the Trust's Statutory body directors and observers to examine the issue of whether Councilors continue to sit as Trustees on the Board, and make proposals as to how the Statutory bodies stay in partnership through BHP and retain their decision-making roles and influence going forward.

Question 2 Recommendation 2 - Increasing Commitment of Stakeholders

That stakeholder bodies are asked to make a recommitment to the agreed Belfast Hills Programme. This could be via a new signed memorandum of understanding for the programme of work. Adjustments should be made to the statutory body member/observer list to reflect current departmental responsibilities or there could be a formal subcommittee structure to allow representation by a wider set of bodies as required – e.g. to coordinate responses to issues such as road verges, water quality, environmental advice, fly tipping, and subsidies to farmers and landowners for measures to manage the natural capital of the Belfast Hills landscape.

Question 2 Recommendation 3 - Including the volunteer group as a core cost of BHP

The BHP Volunteer team has shown a capacity to deliver strongly on the charitable purpose of the organisation and staff involved in animating and managing this resource should be considered as a core element when applying for funding. There would be a case for reviewing the volunteer group and how it operates with partners organisations in the BHP to establish where joint objectives can be met through the maintenance and further development of this volunteer groups.

3. How can we best upskill and inspire Board members and partners?

Question 3 Recommendation 1 – Increasing Governance Training for Trustees

All trustees to have initial governance training at the outset. They should have an annual opportunity to repeat this and regular reminders of the importance of understanding the governance of a charitable body.

Question 3 Recommendation 2 – Undertaking Good Governance Health Checks

The Good Governance Health Check¹⁸ should be accessed by the Directors and they should self-assess against this and produce recommendations for change. The Trustees should feel that they are able to lead and direct the charity in its purposes ably assisted by the very professional staff, rather than relying on them entirely for advice and recommendations.

Question 3 Recommendation 3 – Learning from Others

Trustees should stay abreast of developments elsewhere and learn from other examples of managing urban fringe issues, including visits to initiatives elsewhere with similar objectives or which face similar issues to the Belfast Hills Partnership. This should facilitate and encourage a strategic partnership approach to urban fringe issues.

4. What are the issues facing the Belfast Hills & what are the priorities of our partners in addressing these?

Question 4 Recommendation 1 – Communicate the purposes of BHP clearly

The Belfast Hills Partnership is seen by consultees in a range of different ways- some see it as an operational body in their own area, while others see it as a strategic body working to coordinate partner actions, innovating and drawing attention to the benefits of caring for the Belfast Hills and its people. It would appear that even within the key partners there has been some knowledge fade about the status of the BHP as a strategic body tasked jointly by stakeholders. Trustees and staff should ensure that all parties are fully aware of its purpose and that the membership of BHP evolves with changing circumstances and changing statutory drivers of recreation, environment, community and industry in the hills.

Question 4 Recommendation 2 – Consider Changes to Articles of Association carefully

There was some comment about the restrictive nature of the Articles that govern the BHP and its decisions. It is recommended that any changes are made in the light only of an informed discussion between existing and potential new stakeholders. The current structure has succeeded in keeping all important stakeholders at the table to date.

5. How do we work with current partners to prevent competition for dwindling resources?

Question 5 Recommendation 1 – Enhancing joint working with partners

It would be of benefit to both BHP and partner organisations if greater joint working occurred. The formation of a Projects Development Forum where partners discuss, develop and deliver projects which meet the needs of the Belfast Hills together (this may be in the form of joint projects or simply advice and support) should be investigated. This could result in shared staff members supported by a number of organisations as well as the production of common plans and approaches e.g. alien species

¹⁸ <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/sites/default/files/downloads/2019-02/Revised%20Governance%20Health%20Check%20Feb2019.pdf>

Future opportunities

6. How do we maximise our use of current skills, experience and reputation?

Question 6 Recommendation 1 – Working in partnership with other similar purpose bodies, sharing learning, key skills and messages.

Belfast Hills Partnership is a member of the Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network (NIPAN) which has not convened for two years. There is also a developing network of current and former HLF Landscape Partnership schemes to discuss good practice and issues such as legacy. Several of these are also members of NIPAN. The BHP will be more effective as a member of a regular forum to discuss partnership approaches in achieving landscape scale objectives for a variety of purposes. There would be value in BHP taking the initiative to reconvene a professional network for those engaged in landscape scale schemes with multiple objectives.

Question 6 recommendation 2 – Working with member organisations to develop a communications strategy or audience development strategy.

It is important for the BHP, based on its own purposes, to identify key audiences, key messages to each audience and key mechanisms for getting the message across. Different messages will be required for Key Partners, Stakeholders, people the BHP works with practically on the ground, statutory bodies, elected representatives etc. BHP should seek a specific funding element within core costs for communication. It will be best for this strategy to be developed with BHP member organisations which have the required skills and to be devised together in a participative process.

7. What issues were not addressed in our work to date for the future protection & enhancement of the area?

Question 7 Recommendation 1 – Developing new projects to address problems & opportunities

A new project should be worked up which seeks to address factors such as the loss of wildlife and landscape quality due to the impact of humans on the area via flytipping/littering, wildfires etc. This should include maintaining access and improving the aesthetic appearance of the Belfast Hills area. This should incorporate volunteering, training and youth environmental education; supporting local people to take real ownership of the area and the work being undertaken.

Question 7 Recommendation 2 – Land ownership opportunities considered

Within the current economic climate there may be more land available for sale within the Belfast Hills Partnership's operational area. Careful consideration should be taken regarding the benefits of safeguarding areas of the hills through ownership of the land versus ongoing costs and liabilities of land ownership.

Question 7 Recommendation 3 – Strengthening the Strategic role of BHP

BHPs strategic role should be re-emphasized, revisited and strengthened by reaching a stage where the current Directors in local authorities have a full knowledge of the BHP and its agreed purpose and the role of their organisations within it. An important first step will be to ensure that the current position where Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council have been provided with legal advice that Councillors should not sit as Directors/Trustees of BHP is questioned. It appears from reading the Memorandum and Articles of Association that it is the founding organisations that are members of the BHP and can therefore nominate trustees/directors, and that therefore creating a separation between Councils and the BHP is not technically possible. The Trust should take its own legal advice to ascertain whether the organisations are the Partnership members or the Trustees themselves.

Question 7 Recommendation 4 – Widening Statutory involvement in BHP

In order to address these issues a new set of statutory bodies will be required to work with the Partnership and the BHP should consider amendments to its structure to allow e.g. ARC 21, Department of Infrastructure (roads or Sustainable Transport), Tourism NI (or tourism within BCC) and Sport NI (or the National Outdoor Recreation Forum) to play a part in strategic decision making for the Hills. One statutory body directorship is currently unfilled due to the merging of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Councils. The directorship to be nominated by the Quarry industry is currently also vacant and would allow for an ARC 21 inclusion.

8. How do we specifically make our upland farming more resilient?

Question 8 recommendation 1 – Helping relieve pressure on farmers & farming families

The Belfast Hills Partnership should consider the development of an urban fringe and upland hill farming review and scheme to identify opportunities and implement measures to relieve pressure on farmers and farm families created by urban impacts. This review should include issues such as succession, market links between city and farm and the potential for a demonstration urban fringe mixed farm project.

Question 8 recommendation 2 – Ensuring strong policy Linkages between UFU and BHP

The UFU as an organisation is a nominating member for 2 directors to the Belfast Hills Partnership. The farming directors of the BHP have been good attenders and very interested and engaged in the work of the Partnership. It is important to the resilience of BHP that the UFU remains engaged with the organisation in a way that allows for discussion of wider policies. The company secretary should ensure that close links are retained at a policy level in all organisations that nominate directors so that the strategic role of BHP in the area is more effectively taken forward.

9. What opportunities are there for income generating activities?

Question 9 Recommendation 1 – Having a clear rational for events

A very clear rational needs to be in place for running events/courses, as they are labor intensive and costly to the organisation. When BHP started running events in the hills there were very few other events in the area available to the public, while now there are a wide range of regular events being provided by partner organisations. Even fairly high event prices are unlikely to cover staff time costs but may prevent low income families from coming along. However having to pre pay a small event charge could be advantageous as it may put people off from not showing up at events which they had booked on.

Question 9 Recommendation 2 – Options for growing the income.

Options for increasing unrestricted funds which can be used for the general purposes of the charity and therefore which increase both resilience and effectiveness include:

- Asking for a higher contribution to unrestricted funds from all sectors in membership to reflect the fact that costs have increased over the life of the Partnership or securing the participation of an additional relevant statutory source e.g. in recognition of the waste management, tourism, recreation and agri-environment and rural development role played by the charity
- Providing a more active 'Friends of the Belfast Hills' Organisation with a membership donation and with the capacity to support the work of the BHP in practical or financial ways. The current Friends group is relatively inactive
- Increasing the payments to the BHP from landfill tax sources or contributions from industry in Belfast and its Hills in recognition of the important landscape setting for business or through corporate social responsibility commitments
- Appointing a fundraiser with specific giving targets (although the giving market is crowded and the charity message may not appear as a high priority to general givers)
- Seek specific Corporate Social Responsibility policies in relation to the Belfast Hills from businesses in the Hills and in the wider NI area. This could be particularly where businesses own and manage lands in the hills or where the waste stream ends up in the Hills (this could be taken forward through Business in the Community NI as a part of its work towards developing a circular economy or work towards Business and Biodiversity awards)
- Creation of a general Good Works Fund for developers e.g. wind turbine projects / Companies CSR monies to put money into – unrestricted but only practical works, volunteering support etc.
- Developing a communications strategy to ensure that the charity's key messages reach a wider set of people who can help achieve the mission

Options for increasing restricted funds with the potential for a contribution to core costs include:

- Development of a fly-tipping fast response service on behalf of Councils and the Waste regulator within a service level agreement
- Development of a strategic recreation management capacity and activity and a ranger service function for the hills on behalf of local authorities within a service level agreement
- Working with others to raise the profile of the Hills as a green lung for Belfast and as a source of horticulture and food products
- Raise awareness of the contribution the Belfast Hills makes to Natural Capital / Ecosystem Services e.g. reducing the effects of climate change and seeking a major Programme to promote land uses that keep carbon locked in soil and vegetation
- Seek greater recognition of the peacebuilding potential of the hills through youth outdoor learning projects
- Build on the reputation of the Belfast Hills Partnership and its capacity to bring people together to work on hills issues
- Develop a Belfast Hills Visitor Vision and Strategy and identify the role of the Belfast Hills Partnership in its delivery (engagement with Sport NI, Health Trusts and Tourism NI, in addition to the Councils)

Options for increasing the asset base of the organisation:

- Purchase of nature conservation or amenity lands in the hills to solve strategic recreation issues (this could also be achieved through giving a higher profile to the potential of legacy and memorial giving to the charity)
- Identification of high net worth individuals with links to the Belfast Hills and work with them to identify potential opportunities for giving to specific projects that meet the strategic needs of the hills.
- Development of a business sponsorship prospectus for the Hills– potentially with Business in the Community NI – identifying financial and in-kind sponsorship opportunities. Including the greening of businesses in the hills.

10. How do we manage difficult and visible issues for which we have little power, influence or responsibility?

Question 10 Recommendations – Making the most of strategic contacts and members to influence the management of the Hills

More should be made of the existing policy links with the Councils, potentially through an annual meeting with a range of relevant staff to develop joint projects to tackle issues such as flytipping/littering together, with BHP providing man power through volunteers, a positive social media marketing campaign and a schools and community education programme. Inputting into the Council Development plans will also influence the future placement of high structures near the hills and the ability of companies to extract minerals from the area.

The Councils have statutory powers to safeguard current public rights of way and public paths and to develop new paths and open country access through agreement or the making of orders; balancing the needs of the public with the views of landowners. It has proved difficult to achieve consensus within the Belfast Hills Partnership on long term recreation and access objectives. Working with Councillors and council Access Officers to look strategically at access in the hills will be important e.g. reopening Glenside Community Woodland and achieving long distance paths & links. Updating the Belfast Hills Recreation Strategy via a working group would help bring focus to this issue.

It may be of value to form a working group looking at the industrial use of the Belfast Hills, with agreed 'green routes' in the area where HGVs do not go. Strengthening links with local businesses should be undertaken, potentially using Business in the Community as a partner in this process.

There should be continued support to the Belfast Hills Farmers in explaining issues to DAERA regarding loss of ANC and other such grants to ensure the viability of farming in the uplands, including potential future EFS scheme payments for landscape scale management of their upland sites. As this is an issue wider than just the Belfast Hills reconvening the NI Protected Areas Network (NIPAN) may be of benefit. This could coordinate action on landscapes and make the case for land uses that have high carbon sequestration; provide attenuation of flooding, and landscape and heritage features to be conserved as part of environmentally sensitive farming rather than solely lands with high nature conservation value.

BHP has proved itself on a regular basis as being an excellent educator, undertaking activities such as the John Muir Award in the Belfast Hills area to help transform the mindset of young people about the value of their natural environment. As much of the antisocial behavior issues are associated with young people, continued efforts are required looking at issues such as flytipping, littering, wildfires and vandalism.

Another role for BHP is to continue reporting and lobbying about issues, highlighting the problem to those who do have the power to affect change and challenging them to act; while offering to help where and how it can.

11. Does a Natural Capital approach really bring benefits in practice to new projects? If so how in practice do you calculate it? Are there examples of successful projects?

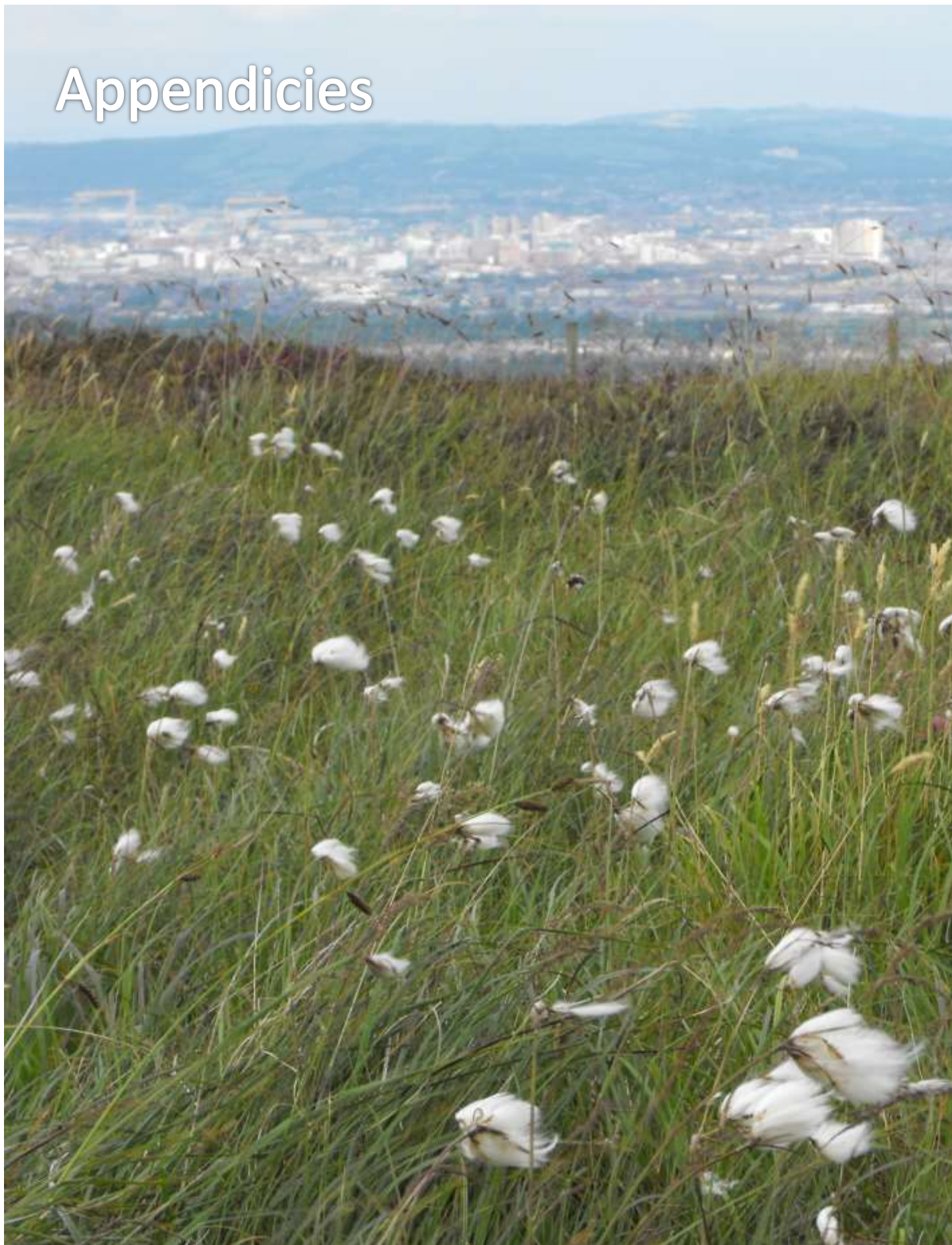
Question 11 Recommendation 1 – Retaining and maximizing Natural Capital of the Belfast Hills

The Belfast Hills Partnership should seek to retain the land cover types in the hills that provide the most valuable ecosystem services to the surrounding area. Mapping of land cover/use and monitoring change on a regular basis is the key to retaining natural capital, together with identifying the services the land cover and soil types provide.

Moving to agri-environment schemes that compensate for the retention of non-economic land uses by farmers in order to provide public goods such as carbon sequestration and storage, flood attenuation, biodiversity, recreation and well-being services will be an important outcome for farmers in the hills.

Identifying land uses that can produce more than one kind of service is also key- for example, new woodland planting can provide carbon uptake, recreation, wellbeing and in time a renewable economic asset; upland pathways that do not affect biodiversity or water retention enable land to provide an additional service.

Appendices



APPENDIX I

Terms of reference of the Resilience Study

The consultant must address the following questions:

Assessing current condition

12. In which areas are we truly resilient and which not?

Partnership Working

13. How best can we maintain the working methods and outcomes of our BHP Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) and carry these forward in this rapidly changing world e.g. digital change, Brexit?
14. How can we best upskill and inspire Board members and partners?
15. What are the issues facing the Belfast Hills & what are the priorities of our partners in addressing these things?
16. How do we work with current partners to prevent competition for dwindling resources?

Future opportunities

17. How do we maximise our use of current skills, experience and reputation?
18. What issues were not addressed in our work to date for the future protection and enhancement of the area?
19. How do we specifically make our upland farming more resilient?
20. What opportunities are there for income generating activities?
21. How do we manage difficult and visible issues for which we little power, influence or responsibility?
22. Does a Natural Capital approach really bring benefits in practice to new projects? If so how in practice do you calculate it? Are there examples of successful projects?

Role of the consultant

Working closely with the senior managers of the Belfast Hills Partnership the Consultant will be expected to:-

1. Hold 1 planning and 3 update meetings with senior managers and produce a detailed timetable of ongoing tasks
2. Hold 8-10 consultation meetings with the staff, board, partners and wider community regarding the above issues (BHP staff will book rooms, invite relevant groups & take notes).
3. Undertake desk research on
 - (a) best practice/relevant examples of similar organisations demonstrating true resilience, producing 4 case studies which are to be included in the final report.
 - (b) the Natural Capital approach along with details of how to apply it to the various habitats present in the Belfast Hills.
4. Produce an initial draft interim report and recommendations to present to the Board; then produce a final report detailing summaries of all the open consultation responses and recommendations along with desk research findings.
5. Give a final presentation of findings and recommendations to the BHP staff and Board and funders.
6. In addition we would ask that they outline any other relevant additional roles/information that the consultant can provide to add value to the project

Consultees

The Belfast Hills Partnership Trust Board (workshops and individual questionnaire)

The Belfast Hills Partnership Staff

The Belfast Hills volunteers and Site Managers

Belfast Hills Communities (workshop)

Belfast Hills Farmer representatives and UFU (meetings and written response)

Conservation bodies holding or managing lands in the area (workshop)

Belfast City Council (meeting)

Lisburn and Castlereagh city council (telephone meeting)

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (meeting)

Northern Ireland Environment Agency (consultation email, meeting)

Colin Glen Trust (telephone meeting)

Youth Consultation (series of workshops)

Appendix II

Belfast Hills Baseline Study Summary

Below is given a table outlining the various Baseline Measurements, Assessments and Key Indicators as suggested in 2004 by Judith Arnett. Highlighted in black are updated information provided by current BHP staff in consultation with various bodies.

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
<i>Quality of life for communities in the Belfast Hills</i>			
1	Extent of accessible green space	Well served for open space, but not for all communities. There are few accessible sites within the uplands or the rural parts of the area where there are increasing populations. 27% of the Belfast Hills is now publicly accessible	Km ² of accessible open space. 2004 = 2964 Acres 2008 = 3444 Acres 2018 = 3388 Acres (loss of Glenside Community Woodland)
2	Extent of linear access routes for walking	The Belfast Hills fringe area on the city sides of the hills is well served for linear walks in amenity park, woodland and parkland environments. The potential for a long distance walk from Divis Mountain to Cave Hill Country Park remains unfulfilled. A long distance walk between Ligoniel Park and Carnmoney Hill opened in 2013 with the negotiation of access through Water Service Land. The Divis to Dixon link however has been lost due to the closing of Glenside Community Woodland.	Km of walking routes: 2004 = 62.66km 2008 = 82.86km 2018 = 89.06km No. and length of long distance walks. 2004 = None, 0km 2008 = 2, 22km 2018 = 2, 24km
3	Opportunities to reach open space by public transport	Public transport services (bus) are available to reach almost all of the municipal and country parks that fringe the Belfast Hills, this information is available on the Belfast Hills Partnerships website.	No. of opportunities to access upland areas by bus. 2004 = 10 buses 2008 = 10 buses

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
		There is public transport access to all Belfast Hills Sites except Slievenacloy Nature Reserve. Public transport to the hills should only develop when secure routes have been agreed and there is proper access management in place.	2018 = 11 buses No. of access related car parks, particularly in the uplands. 2004 = 4 public car parks 2008 = 9 public car parks 2018 = 14 public car parks (1357 spaces)
4	Visual appeal, environment and amenity of home zones	Perception of declining amenity due to landfill, heavy traffic, development.	Level of satisfaction with home zone environments Extent of community participation in consultation and decisions on policies affecting them 2004 Planning Consultations/responses = 0 2008 Planning Consultations/responses = 28 2017 Planning Consultations/response = 8 (reflecting less applications of concern being submitted)
5	Community safety in green space and open space	Not possible to distinguish within crime statistics. So liaison with local police essential in deriving estimates. Crime figure for Partnership area should be possible if postcodes are researched.	Recorded crime in the Belfast Hills area 2004 ward crime incidents = 6005 2008 ward crime incidents = 5240 2018 ward crime incidents = 3386
Tackling Urban Fringe Farming Issues			
6	Farming statistics	Small number of farms in the hills 19 with an estimated 40 employed, but very important in terms of land management and community structures. Economic data is not available for BHP area only, but instead is given for the 15 electoral wards that include parts of the hills	No. of farm businesses in the area 2004 farm businesses = 189 2008 farm businesses = 175 2017 farm businesses = 165 No. employed in farming 2004 farm employees = 397 2008 farm employees = 372 2017 farm employees = 367

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			<p>Gross margins or other economic indicators</p> <p>2004 ESU (European size unit) = Majority 0-40</p> <p>2008 ESU(European size unit) = Majority 0-40</p> <p>2017 ESU(European size unit) = Majority 0-40</p> <p>No. of livestock in the hills</p> <p>2004 cattle 14733, sheep 7987, pigs 14, poultry 28577</p> <p>2008 cattle 14978, sheep 7678, pigs 1056, poultry 136209</p> <p>2017 cattle 16386, sheep 6783, pigs 26, poultry 81210</p>
7	Farming issues	High level of issues of concern including farm security, personal security, disease, access, landfill proximity, fly tipping on the farm. Levels of concern likely to discourage continuation with farming.	<p>No. of farmers in the area</p> <p>2004 farm businesses = 189</p> <p>2008 farm businesses = 175</p> <p>2017 farm businesses = 165</p> <p>Measures to assist farmers with security and crime pressures</p> <p>Unknown</p> <p>Measures to assist farmers with unwelcome recreation pressure</p> <p>2004 = None</p> <p>2008 = In discussions with USDT to develop a programme to educate young people living on the urban rural fringe about the farmers in the hills with the aim of reducing antisocial behaviour and nuisance recreational visits.</p> <p>2017 = None</p>
8	Support for tackling urban fringe farming issues	Farm Watch	<p>Special support scheme to address urban fringe issues</p> <p>RDP scheme in 2009 & 2018 for farm diversification</p>
9	Examples of	NFU survey of urban fringe issues. GB Fly Tipping Forum report.	Contacts with other areas with a problem. Joint resolution of

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
	projects to resolve issues	Rural White Paper.	issues. 2004 = None 2008 = Best practice visits with Wicklow Uplands Council. Research undertaken by student into areas with similar areas across Europe in 2007. 2018 = Ongoing meetings with Council Waste Enforcement Officers. ARCS grant application.
<i>Natural and built heritage</i>			
10	Habitats of the Belfast Hills	Rich array of habitats including nationally important habitats but little survey information. Irregular and partial monitoring.	Area & quality of each priority habitat 2009-2015 Deciduous woodland 15% increase Conifers 31% decrease Uplands constant Open water 23% decrease No. of farmers in countryside management scheme (CMS) Unknown Other landowners engaged in nature conservation on their lands Unknown
11	Species of the Belfast Hills	Wealth of biodiversity interest including priority species within UK and NI Biodiversity Strategies. Need for monitoring of species and for BHP participation in BAPs for key species.	Careful consideration of future long term monitoring programmes to include: No. of LBAP species being monitored Population trends of those species Mechanisms and programmes of protection/enhancement
12	Nature	No. European sites, 1 ASSI, 4 LNR, 50 proposed SLNCl.	No. and integrity of ASSI sites.

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
	Conservation Designations		<p>2004 = 1 2008 = 1 2018 = 2</p> <p>Integrity- see pg 40 for full details</p> <p>No. and integrity of (local) nature reserves.</p> <p>2004 = 2 2008 = 4 2018 = 4</p> <p>N.B. No official measure of integrity carried out</p> <p>No. and integrity of SLNCI.</p> <p>2004 = Proposed 50 2008 = Proposed 50 (BMAP still in draft form) 2018 = 50</p> <p>N.B. No official measure of integrity carried out</p>
13	Landscape Character	<p>4 main LCA in BHP area. All with distinctive landform and features. Considerable threats and loss of character incl. Features which impose on the skylines e.g. quarries, landfill sites and telecoms masts.</p> <p>In 2007 work commenced to examine the landscape of the Belfast Hills in greater detail, mapping areas such as park land, hedged fields, conifer plantations, woodland etc.</p> <p>In 2011 an extensive examination of the landscapes across the Belfast Hills, including their historic use was documented. This report identified the main issues of the landscape as well as suggestions of how to address these. This was the foundation for the Landscape Partnership Scheme from 2011-2018.</p>	<p>No. of telecommunication masts and No. of telecommunication masts and other structures on hill tops and open slopes.</p> <p>2004 = no data 2008 = 8 masts, 2 landfill nets 2018 = 11 masts, 1 landfill net, 5 wind turbines</p> <p>Retention of hedgerows.</p> <p>2004 = no data 2008 = 322 km hedgerows 2018 = 327 km hedgerows</p> <p>Engagement of communities and industry in programmes to enhance and interpret landscape.</p> <p>2004 = None to date</p>

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			<p>2008 = None to date</p> <p>2018 = Major Landscape Partnership Project undertaken from 2011 to 2018. Legacy works still ongoing.</p>
14	Lands with high nature conservation value- under threat	A high proportion of lands of nature conservation interest are not protected by designation. Threats occur frequently. To raise the profile of the Belfast Hills a series of Press Releases, Social Media posts etc have been produced outlining both their value and some potential threats to its wildlife.	<p>No. of incidents leading to loss of nature conservation lands or value.</p> <p>Detailed fire data is provided for 2012-2017. Weather conditions are the greatest fact in fire number.</p> <p>Availability and accessibility of nature conservation information (surveys, monitoring reports) for all lands within the Belfast Hills.</p> <p>2004 BHP press releases = 2</p> <p>2008 BHP press releases = 25</p> <p>2017 BHP press release = 5, e, newsletters = 12, Social media posts 2-3 times a week, training courses, weekly volunteer activities</p>
15	No. of historic monuments in the Hills with access and interpretation	<p>14 scheduled monuments in the BHP area.</p> <p>Multiple historic sites on private lands, no access.</p> <p>Secure access also to multiple public sites; range of onsite and off-site interpretation/information available.</p>	<p>Information about historic monuments in the Belfast Hills which are accessible to the public.</p> <p>2004 = 1 source</p> <p>2008 = 4 sources</p> <p>2018 = 7 sources</p> <p>No. of sites accessible to the public.</p> <p>2004 = 2</p> <p>2008 = 3</p> <p>2018 = 8</p>
16	Historic vernacular buildings. Townlands and	<p>14 listed buildings/features in the Belfast Hills area.</p> <p>Belfast Hills Townlands leaflet produced.</p>	<p>No. of listed buildings/features</p> <p>2008 = 2</p> <p>2018 = 14</p>

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			Presentation of built heritage interest and townlands. 2008 = No easily accessible public information 2018 = Range of leaflets, maps & online info
<i>Management of countryside recreation</i>			
17	Use of access and recreation sites and routes	There is relatively little information about the usage of sites and pathways in the Belfast hills area and this should be an important area of effort for the Partnership. Visitor surveys, visitor attitudes surveys, and recreational user surveys will all be important in managing recreational use. A more detailed assessment of facilities for access and recreation is required.	No. of visitors at key recreation sites. 2003 = 787,826 2007 = 875,935 2017 = 972,375 Attitudes of visitors to the countryside and the recreational provision. Between 2009 and 2015 there was shown to be a 54% increase in overall site satisfaction on Cave Hill No. of incidents of nuisance recreation reported to PSNI etc In 2018 all site managers reported that incidents on sites were significantly reduced
18	Arrangements for management of countryside recreation sites	Multiple agencies managing BH sites with varying levels of management and maintenance. Potential to combine countryside work and volunteer teams, user research and surveying. No overall survey and management at BH level.	No. of sites with active management 2004 = 6 2008 = 6 2018 = 9 No. of staff deployed 2004 = 8 dedicated staff plus various contractors, volunteers and work teams 2008 = 11 dedicated staff plus various contractors, volunteers and work teams 2018 = 8 dedicated staff plus various contractors, volunteers and work teams Extent of monitoring and accessibility of results

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			<p>Some question as to application of monitoring to drive change</p> <p>Public awareness of the state of the Belfast hills</p> <p>2004 = unknown</p> <p>2008 = Victoria St Clair questionnaire results indicate that those individuals who have visited sites in the Belfast Hills are more supportive of the Polluter Pays Principle and paying for positive management of the hills.</p> <p>2017 = unknown</p>
19	Access to the Countryside Issues	<p>The Belfast Hills needs a strategic approach to access to the countryside which addresses the concerns of landowners and prioritises the solution of current issues before moving on developing new agreed access. This process should be fully inclusive and involve extensive engagement with farmers and landowners.</p> <p>Improving access to the Belfast Hills requires a coordinated approach between the Councils, government departments, a variety of independent bodies and the local communities.</p>	<p>Strategic access and recreation plan on a Belfast Hills basis</p> <p>Respected arrangements and codes for managing countryside access issues</p> <p>Belfast Hills Partnership is known as an effective contact point for landowners with access problems.</p> <p>2004 = No access code or recreational plan.</p> <p>2008 = Access code for the Belfast Hills. Recreational audit completed. Recreational plan 2009. Walking Map and Guide shows public access.</p> <p>2018 = Belfast Hills Recreation Development plan (2010) produced, majority of actions have been carried out by the LPS. New recreation plan needed.</p>
Landfill Activity			
20	Waste management	<p>Estimated the 8 landfill sites in the Belfast Hills are licenced to take 71% of the total tonnage of waste for NI.</p> <p>Traffic a big issue.</p>	<p>No. of landfill sites</p> <p>2004 = 16 legal landfills</p> <p>2008 = 18 legal landfills</p> <p>2018 = 8 legal landfills</p> <p>Annual tonnage of landfill received in the Hills</p>

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			2004 - 2,490,000 tonnes/year allowed 2008 - 2,940,000 tonnes/year allowed 2018 - 1,375,700 tonnes/year allowed (100,000 tonnes/year composting material also excepted in hills)
21	Illegal landfill sites	Target of zero.	No. of permanent illegal landfill sites 2004 = 4 2008 = 2 2018 = 0
22	Fly tipping sites	BHP has revisited the 52 sites monitored by Belfast Hills Watch scheme. 75% now inactive due to early clear up and vigilance. Problem persists with tyres on upland farmlands. Some of the Councils are putting up signage and hidden cameras to catch perpetrators.	No. of fly tipping sites - target 0 2004 = 65% inactive sites 2009 = 77% inactive sites 2017 = 75% inactive sites
23	ARC 21	On the basis of the BHP Belfast Hills Waste SEA produced in 2005, BHP responded to the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy in 2005 and the Draft arc21 Waste Management Plan 2006-2020 in 2006. BHP sought specific information from arc21 concerning traffic routing of municipal waste in the Hills in late 2006 and was referred to the local councils. Arc21 also contacted BHP seeking consultation input specifically on waste facility site criteria in 2007 and possible MBT facility positioned adjacent to the hills in 2009.	BHP level of engagement in strategic planning for waste in the area. BHPs level of engagement has increased substantially with regard to waste planning. This may be reflected by arc21's positive statements relating to considerations about landscape, road users and neighbouring residents.
<i>Contributing to the economic regeneration of Hills communities</i>			
24	Economic status and relative deprivation	Upper Springfield amongst the 11 most deprived communities in NI. Collinbridge in Newtownabbey one of the least deprived. Several communities are almost single identity in terms of religion. Low level of access to a car or van.	Level of deprivation Relative socio-economic differences between communities where 1% is most deprived and 100% least deprived.

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			<p>2001 = average of 37.2%</p> <p>2017 = average of 45.1%</p>
25	Levels of tourism and visitor activity in the hills	Belfast Hills visitor surveys undertaken in 2009, 2015 and 2017.	<p>No. of visitors.</p> <p>2003 = 787,826</p> <p>2007 = 875,935</p> <p>2017 = 908,501</p> <p>Attitude of visitors to key dimensions of the Hills and their opportunities.</p> <p>Between 2009 and 2015 there was shown to be a 54% increase in overall site satisfaction on Cave Hill</p>
26	No. of tourism providers in the hills	The Belfast Hills Partnership provides tourist information through its Walking Map and Guide and website information. BHP is a member of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureaux and has a section in the www.gotobelfast.com and www.discovernorthernireland.com website. Most of the public sites within the Belfast Hills are in Walk NI's literature and website. BHP supplies accommodation providers close to the Belfast Hills with information. The Belfast Hills also regularly features in Belfast's 'What's on' guide.	<p>No. of tourism providers and indicators of the throughput to their services.</p> <p>2004 = 3 B&Bs, 1 hotel</p> <p>2008 = 7 B&Bs, 2 hotels, 2 restaurants, 1 hostel. Various activity providers (see BHP recreational audit).</p> <p>2017 = approx. 177 home rentals/B&Bs, 2 hotels, 2 restaurants, 1 hostel</p>
27	Visitor attitude to the Belfast Hills	Belfast Hills visitor surveys undertaken in 2009, 2015 and 2017.	<p>No. of visitors satisfied with aspects of the Belfast Hills, e.g. access arrangements, information, management etc.</p> <p>Between 2009 and 2015 there was shown to be a 54% increase in overall site satisfaction on Cave Hill. Survey rated various aspects of the site as well as collecting demographic information from the people undertaking the survey</p> <p>Level of appreciation of the Belfast Hills amongst general city visitors.</p> <p>Some research carried out by QUB student among</p>

No	Baseline measure	Assessment	Key indicators
			residents living near/in the hills about the importance of the Belfast Hills in relation to the polluter pays principle.

This study sets out a baseline picture for most aspects of the Belfast Hills that the Belfast Hills Partnership Trust would like to address within its programmes and activities.

Appendix III

Belfast Hills Partnership – Board Members and Observers Skills Audit

Name _____

1. What kind of expertise do you consider you bring to the Board? Give an indication of your level of expertise:

Blank – not my area of interest or expertise; ✓ - some knowledge; ✓✓ - good hands on current experience; ✓✓✓ - considerable expertise/extensive experience

	Your expertise level	Comments on your experience (optional)
Administration (charity, company, H&S, property)		
Campaigning/ advocacy/ lobbying		
Change Management		
Conflict resolution		
Consultancy		
Customer / Membership Care		
Development/ community involvement		
Disability		
Equal opportunities		
Facilitation		
Financial Management/ accountancy		
Fundraising (all sources)		
Governance		
Human Resources/Training		
Information Technology		

Legal		
Management – staff and resources		
Marketing (inc events)		
Networks/Alliances		
Policy development and implementation		
Project management		
Promotion/Media/PR		
Research		
Strategic Planning		
Business/commercial		
Systems		
Safeguarding children & vulnerable adults		
Other (please give details)		

2. Belfast Hills related expertise

Blank – not my area of interest or expertise; √ - some knowledge; √√ - good hands on current experience; √√√ - considerable expertise/extensive experience

	Your expertise level	Comments on your experience (optional)
Archaeology/ historic environments		
Biodiversity (specific habitats or species groups)		
Built heritage/ architecture		

Climate change (mitigation or adaptation)		
Energy/renewable energy		
Environmental awareness and education		
Environmental law		
Food/ agriculture		
Freshwater environments		
Governance (NI policy, government structures)		
Health/ wellbeing		
Land Management/ Ecosystem services		
Engaging Businesses (sponsorships, site improvements etc.)		
Planning		
Sustainable Development		
Tourism/ recreation/ leisure		
Transport		
Quarrying		
Waste management		

3. What other experience or skills do you feel you offer?

4. Are there any areas of the charity's work you have a particular interest in and/or would like to become more involved in?

Appendix III Survey Information

Copy of survey and results provided below



BELFAST HILLS SURVEY 2019

Hi there

We're trying to find out what issues and possible improvements in the Belfast Hills people care about most so that we can put most of our efforts into these work areas. Please take 2 minutes to fill in the simple questions below:

Rank up to 3 of the below issues by importance starting with 1 being most important

Issues concerned about		Rank
LANDSCAPE	Fly tipping & littering	
	Aesthetic appearance of area e.g. roadsides	
BIODIVERSITY	Loss of wildlife and habitats	
	Wildfires	
FARMING	Future viability of upland farms	
	Fly grazing (abandoning livestock to graze in someone else's field)	
ACCESS	Access to the hills	
	Trespass	
ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	Graffiti/vandalism	
	Drink/drug use in area	
OTHER	Industrial/business use of the area	
	Traffic levels/road safety	
	Write in your own issue if not in the list above:-	

Rank up to 3 of the below topics by importance starting with 1 being most important

Want to see more of		Rank
INVOLVING PEOPLE	Volunteering & training opportunities	
	Youth environmental education	
	Healthy Activity events	
	Creative/arts events	
	Wildlife/heritage events	
BIODIVERSITY	Improvements for wildlife	
VISITOR FACILITIES	Car parking	
	Public transport to public sites	
	Signage to sites	
	Signage on sites	
	Facilities such as toilets, seating, bins	
OTHER	Industrial/business use of the area	
	Heritage sites	
	Write in your own proposed improvement if not in the list above:-	

Tick one

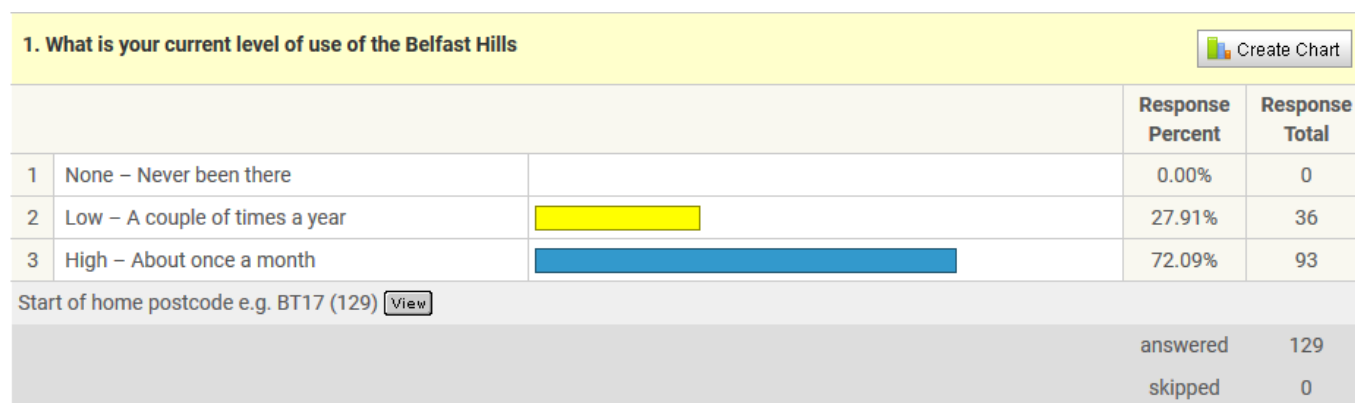
Current level of use of the Belfast Hills	
None – Never been there	
Low – A couple of times a year	
High – About once a month	
Start of home postcode e.g. BT17	

Other comments or suggestions

If you want to be added to our mailing list to hear about events and activities in the Belfast Hills area please provide your e-mail address

Thank you for your time

Survey Results



2. Rank the below issues by importance starting with 1 being most important

Item	Total Score 1	Overall Rank
Loss of wildlife and habitats	1299	1
Fly tipping & littering	1283	2
Wildfires	1034	3
Access to the hills	961	4
Aesthetic appearance of area e.g. roadsides	956	5
Graffiti/vandalism	841	6
Drink/drug use in area	766	7
Future viability of upland farms	723	8
Fly grazing (abandoning livestock to graze in someone else's field)	617	9
Industrial/business use of the area	555	10
Traffic levels/road safety	482	11
Trespass	467	12
¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	128
	skipped	1

3. Rank the below areas of work by importance with 1 being the most important

Item	Total Score 1	Overall Rank
Improvements for wildlife	1128	1
Volunteering & training opportunities	1081	2
Youth environmental education	1061	3
Public events	953	4
Car parking	697	5
Facilities such as toilets, seating, bins	696	6
Heritage sites	649	7
Public transport to public sites	625	8
Signage to sites	622	9
Signage on sites	551	10
Industrial/business use of the area	253	11
¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	126
	skipped	3

Appendix IV Case Studies

Case Studies – Belfast Hills Partnership Resilience Review

The purpose in providing case studies for this review is to identify organisations that demonstrate good resilient practice either in the whole of their practice or in certain elements of their practice relevant to the Belfast Hills Partnership activities.

No single organisation has all of the elements that the Belfast Hills Partnership requires for resilience in the way that it operates. Thus four case studies are discussed below and their relevance to the BHP are drawn out.

Case Study 1

The Scottish Regional Parks – Pentland Hills Regional Park

The Pentland Hills Regional Park is an important greenspace close to the city of Edinburgh (although further from the urban population than the Belfast Hills). It can be easily reached by bus from the city and, although predominantly a farmed landscape, it provides valuable environmental, social and economic benefits to the city and on a wider basis in Scotland.

The enabling legislation for the creation and designation of Regional Parks is the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967, section 48A, and in it, Regional Parks are defined as:

'large areas of countryside, parts of which are available for informal countryside recreation'.

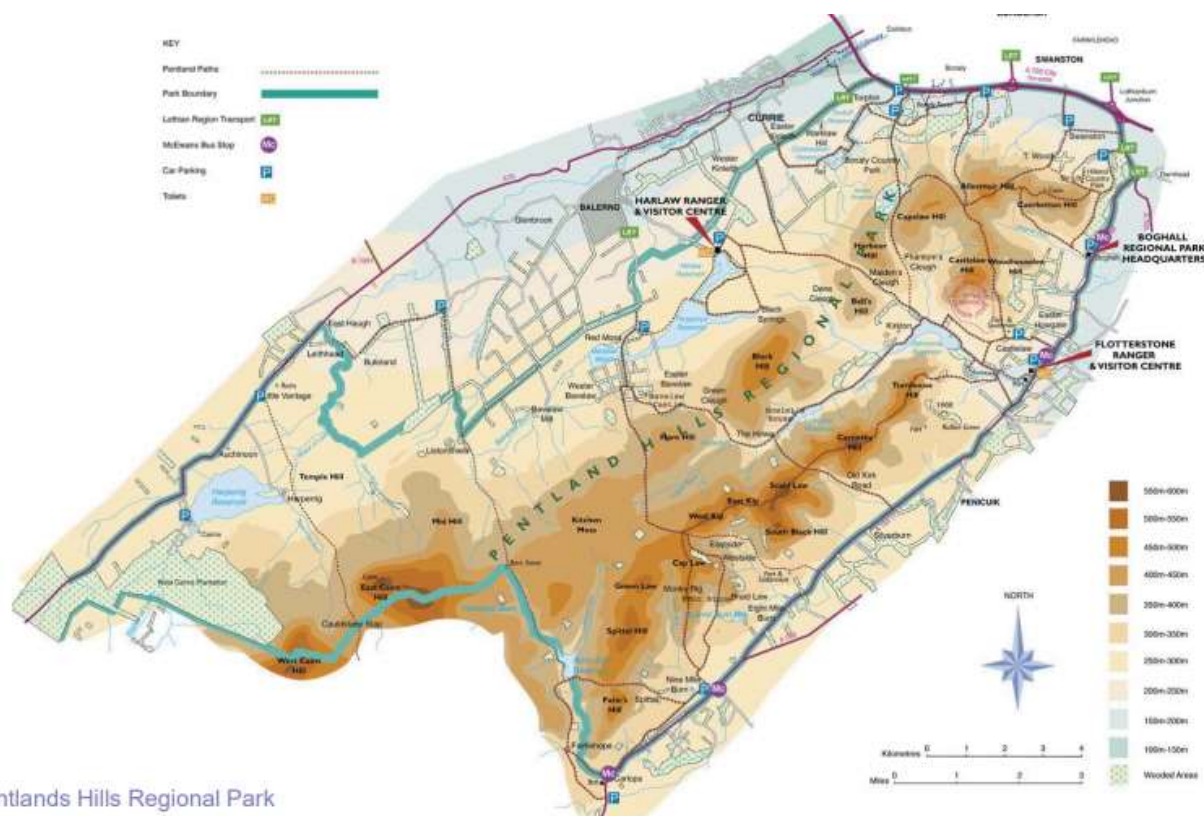
In a policy statement on the Regional Parks of Scotland by Scottish Natural Heritage, it states that the aims of Regional Parks should:

"facilitate both the appropriate understandings and enjoyment of the countryside and the integration of this with the other uses of the area, such as farming, forestry and other development, with the context of maintaining and enhancing a quality natural heritage setting".

The Pentland Hills Regional Park was designated in 1986 and is a partnership between local authorities and Scottish Water.



The land within the Pentland Hills Regional Park belongs to over 30 landowners and farmers. Most of the land is privately owned, with the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council, West Lothian Council and Scottish Water owning and maintaining small sections. It is jointly designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) (similar to Areas of High Scenic Value in NI) and rises to Scald Law (567m). Sheep farming is the dominant land use with other agriculture taking place on lower sections. Livery is becoming a source of income for many landowners, with more and more farmers leasing land for horses.



e 1.1 - Pentlands Hills Regional Park

The area has a forward programme of work and publishes an annual report. It is managed by a Joint Local Authority Committee and the work is fully core funded by Councils with a contribution from Scottish Water. The Regional Park has a consultative forum which contributes to strategic documents and is consulted on issues and programmes. The priorities identified by the Consultative Forum in 2017 were:

- The Enjoyment of the Hills;
- The Economy of the Hills;
- Landscape, Natural and Cultural Heritage;
- Future Public Involvement and Partnership

The Pentland Hills has a ranger service which deals with enhancing recreation opportunities, visitor management and assists landowners who have problems with visitors. Examples are the erection of agreed signage at lambing season and where illegal access or nuisance is taking place. The area receives around 600,000 visits.

The Regional Park contains four country park sites, woodlands accessible to the public, access to open hills and a network of 100k of walking, cycling and riding routes.

A report prepared by Greenspace in 2012 identified the social return from the collective investment by partner local authorities who provide countryside and visitor management services in the area. The benefits that were measured are those that were made possible by the provision of a management service and were identified following consultation with those who were directly affected. The Social Return on Investment (SROI) method used enables the social, environmental and economic benefits a service or activity delivers to be calculated. SROI Benefits identified in the study were:

- Individuals can access the health and wellbeing benefits of outdoor physical activity in a maintained and safe natural environment, to gain information about the natural and cultural heritage of the park and are supported to enjoy it responsibly with respect and understanding for the environment.
- Members of community groups can gain additional benefits because of more prolonged contact with the countryside and visitor management service. Individual members can take part in social activities and

events, become more confident and as a result take part in additional activities and assume new roles within their communities.

- Progression to other opportunities, both paid and unpaid, is possible as individuals gain new practical skills such as building and map reading, enhance their communication techniques and experience working with others.
- Providers of community-based projects can access expert advice and assistance which allows them to improve the quality of the activities they offer.
- Voluntary rangers, who play a vital role in supporting and sustaining the park, gain individual benefits. They gain new practical and environmental skills, which result in improved employability or volunteering opportunities, have more social contacts and are more confident in dealing with challenging situations. By providing a service to the community, volunteers have improved self-esteem and gain a sense of worth and purpose as they feel valued by the community.
- Schools and other learning providers can provide outdoor learning opportunities and by being supported to engage directly with their environment pupils and students are able to participate in unique learning experiences.
- Landowners benefit from the systems which are in place to support and manage visitors. The Regional Park service responds to incidents and offers professional advice and because of this, landowners can devote less time to dealing with conflict. Landowner management activities are supported as the infrastructure of the park is well maintained and kept in a reasonable condition.
- Agencies and service providers reported that service delivery is improved, and their costs reduced as a result of enquiries and issues being dealt with by Pentland Hills management service.
- The structure and focus of the Regional Park allow funds to be secured from external sources to maintain or improve the infrastructure and amenity of the Pentland Hills.
- Local businesses and the local economy gain additional revenue as a result of visitors to the park.

The study found that every public pound invested generated around £9 of benefits. By applying a sensitivity analysis, or varying any assumptions made in the calculation, the value of the benefits derived ranged from £7 to £13 per public pound spent.

Lessons for the Belfast Hills Partnership from the Pentland Hills Model

The Pentland Hills Regional Park Management System is made possible through the establishment of a joint local authority committee and is linked in to local democracy. Councillors drive the committee and staff are local government employees on varying types of contract. This provides a secure base from which to develop, agree and implement 10-year plans between local authorities.

The Pentland Hills have a measure of protection as a landscape, economic and recreational resource through planning policies connected to the planning designation 'Area of Great Landscape Value', each of the local authorities provides this designation to its area of the Pentland Hills and this allows for a consistent approach to the landscape between planning authorities.

Case Study 2

Burren Beo Trust, County Clare

Burren Beo Trust is a charitable organisation set up to draw attention to the special natural and cultural heritage of the Burren Landscape in County Clare and to support and foster sense of place, learning and sustainable visits and local economy.

The organisation does not own lands in the area but rather coordinates actions towards maintaining the farming, community, conservation and heritage of the area that will keep the outstanding interest of this upland and coastal limestone landscapes. The Burren has an unparalleled flora with arctic alpine species coexisting with maritime and acid upland species. Part of it is owned by Government and managed as a National Park (IUCN Category 2¹⁹) but the majority is in private ownership. The area requires an active agricultural community with specific winter grazing practices similar to transhumance to maintain its distinctive flora.



Burren Beo Trust is a landscape charity with both individual and corporate supporters and runs a series of visits and programmes that draw people from all over Ireland and elsewhere. The key principles of the charity are:

Connect - We engage with local and visiting communities, old and young, to generate a sense of informed pride in their heritage and landscape.

¹⁹ IUCN Category 2 definition Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

Conserve - *We promote the Burren as the ultimate learning landscape as a means of future sustainable management of the region.*

Share - *We develop and share knowledge of best practice in active community stewardship, place-based and community-based learning.*

The Burren Beo Trust has fewer than 10 directors and a turnover of £168,582 in 2018, up from 139,080 in 2017. At the end of 2018 it had reserves of €86,550 up from €55,147 in 2017.

The annual cost to be an individual member is €40 Euro with a range of family deals, this gives access to a membership programme of free talks and visits. Annual business membership costs are:

- Business friend €180;
- Silver business friend €360;
- Gold Business Friend €600

(option of a monthly payment at all levels)

Other ways of giving to the Trust for its programmes include benefactor status for individuals and businesses, gifts in wills and gifts in memory. The benefits to a business becoming a benefactor or partner to the Burrenbeo Trust are presented as:

- **Enable community stewardship and people's connection to place to thrive:** *your partnership provides us with essential financial support to continue our programmes.*
- **Contribute to a range of pioneering projects:** *community education and volunteering programmes as developed by the Trust.*
- **Enhance your corporate image, brand values and ethos:** *display your commitment to heritage, landscape and community – and stand out in a crowded market.*
- **Reach new audiences:** *access like-minded people who are committed to conservation.*
- **Spread the word:** *enjoy joint promotional and media opportunities.*
- **Inspire your employees:** *show them that you are a proactive and conscientious business linked to the conservation of heritage and landscape.*
- **Create a ripple effect:** *Offer your team membership of the Trust at a 10% discount.*

In terms of partnerships a rudimentary sponsorship prospectus is provided on the website for information, with a detailed and personalised follow-up with businesses showing an interest. All giving is tax efficient.

ANNUAL GIVING LEVEL	LIKELY USE BY BURRENBEO TRUST
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€250	Design and production of merchandise for organisation
€500	Young Burren Ambassador Bursary Support the future of Burren through this bursary
€1000	Áitbheo Secondary Place-based education course for teenagers that delivers local Place Heroes
€2500	Áitbheo Primary Place-based education for primary school children that delivers Young Place Heroes
€5000	Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers Training and upskilling of up to 300 conservation volunteers
€7500	Event Sponsorship Examples include the Winterage Weekend which highlights farming and biodiversity or Working for Wellbeing weekend to actively work towards a healthy community and landscape
€10,000	Burren as a Learning Landscape Invest in the development of a model to build thriving communities & landscape
€25,000	Place-based Learning Nationwide Develop a model to build thriving communities & landscape nationally

The 2018 report contains the following information about sources of income to the Trust:

Grants from statutory bodies and charitable foundations (2018: 39%). In 2018 we applied for 22 different grants. We were successful with 12 applications. Grants ranged from €280-€16,000.

Membership (2018: 23%). Membership fees bring in roughly one quarter of the yearly necessary income to fund the organisation's programmes.

Events (2018: 14%). Burren Beo Trust runs various events through the year that have an entry cost such as walks, talks, Burren Wild Child, Winterage Weekend, Burren in Bloom etc. These all raise necessary funds for the Trust and cover the cost of these events.

Donations (2018: 10%). Various individuals or businesses supported the Trust in general or specific programmes.

Training and education courses (2018: 12%). Burren Beo Trust carried out fieldtrips for 5 primary schools, a conference and training courses on place-based learning.

Merchandise (2018: 2%). The sale of Burren Beo Trust fieldguide

Lessons for the Belfast Hills Partnership from the Burren Beo Trust

The Burren is a well-known and well-loved landscape and the Burren Beo Trust keeps this in the public eye through a regular programme of walks and talks promoted to its membership and further afield. Its publications and events are of a high quality and interest both local people and visitors. The website is of a high quality.

Opportunities for engagement, membership and giving are kept to the fore. There is a membership benefit and membership is presented as an important way of supporting sustainable use and communities in the Burren.

The Trust has corporate member opportunities and encourages members and visitors to support corporate members by using their services.

The Trust encourages donations of over €250 from businesses and links the level of giving to different levels of benefit to the landscape and communities. The BHP could develop a similar campaign for corporate giving aimed towards Belfast, Antrim and Lisburn businesses and their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. It would need to be made clear that business funding would not replace statutory funding but would enable the BHP to add value to its programmes. This discussion could also be opened to any businesses that dispose waste to the Belfast Hills.

Case Study 3

The John Muir Trust – Managing Lands for People and Wildlife

The John Muir Trust (JMT) is a charitable body registered in Scotland which protects remaining wild lands and provides education and work opportunities for its members and through its John Muir Award aimed at young people.

The charity has raised money for the purchase of wild lands in Scotland and works with communities and crofters to manage them for the benefit of place and people. The Trust has also assisted community buy outs of the large estate lands on which their crofts and tenancies depend and to develop community based, high engagement management models for these lands.

Lands owned by the JMT include estates at Ben Nevis, Schiehallion, Sandwood, Quinag and Glenlude. The JMT has also taken over the management of the Glenridding Common in the Lake District (England).

The Trust has both an individual and a corporate membership system and elects its directors at its AGM. It organises and manages the John Muir Award, a way of young people and adults engaging in conservation and exploration of wild land and receiving recognition for this. The Belfast Hills Partnership is one of many organisations using this award within its programmes.

The membership cost level is £42 for individuals. JMT has over 11,000 individual members.

The corporate membership packages are bronze, silver, gold and peak levels for giving for between £300 at bronze level up to £5000 plus at peak partner level which brings a tailored package and associated publicity and benefits.

In terms of donations and legacies the total for financial year 2018/2019 totalled over £1.6 million.

Lessons for the Belfast Hills Partnership from the John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust is a champion for retaining wild landscapes and has a particular following amongst people who enjoy wild places wherever they live in the UK. Although it was formed prior to the Land Reform Acts in Scotland it has benefitted from a community land movement in Scotland.

The JMT has demonstrated the benefit of entering the debate on the value of wild landscapes and recreation spaces and the role that people living in wild landscapes play in their management and sustainable development. It demonstrates its ideals through the acquisition and safeguarding of large tracts of wild land in Scotland and more latterly England. It has been influential in its work on landscapes and the John Muir Award and is a thought leader.

The management of upland landscapes and how they provide benefits to urban communities and to the people who live in them is relevant to Northern Ireland and policy on landscapes has not been brought up to date. Belfast Hills Partnership can become a thought leader on landscapes and in identifying the importance of the Belfast Hills Landscape to the city.

The John Muir Trust communicates well through its publications and journals and has been able to mobilise the corporate sector towards giving towards landscape and sustainable management issues and solutions. BHP should consider a method of engagement with industry in safeguarding the Belfast Hills and contributing towards managing urban impacts on people and wildlife in the Hills.

Case Study 4

The Pure Project, South Dublin Hills and County Wicklow

The PURE project is a regional waste management project in the South Dublin Hills and County Wicklow. Illegal dumping in the landscape was part of the founding reason for the Belfast Hills Partnership. It has been a cause for serious concern and a problem for many communities. DAERA NI and Belfast Hills Partnership, working with ARC21 the regional waste management partnership that includes Belfast have managed to reduce the number of illegal waste dumping sites in the hills. Fly tipping however remains a problem and the approach to managing this in the Belfast Hills is not unified or timely. Dumping is illegal, unsightly and unnecessary. It causes serious problems to habitats, species, and human health. It pollutes water courses, damages soil nutrients, encroaches on habitat space, kills insects and animals, and is a threat to both the people who live in an area and to recreational users. It is also inconsistent with the standards of countryside management expected by visitors to scenic areas.



PURE (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) was officially launched in September 2006. The PURE project is a regional partnership initiative, the first of its kind in Ireland. It has been running for 13 years and incorporates local authorities including Wicklow County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Dublin City Council, as well as Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Fáilte Ireland, and a number of

non-statutory organisations represented by the Wicklow Uplands Council, to halt incidents of small-scale illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin upland regions. It is funded by Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

On a monthly basis, the PURE project collects over 30 tonnes of illegally dumped rubbish from the upland areas comprising anything from a single black bag left on a roadside to tonnes of illegally dumped rubbish in a forest. There is a low-cost telephone number to report any dumping and it is dealt with quickly so that others do not follow suit.

The Pure initiative was originally funded on a pilot basis but has had its funding from the DCCAE renewed every three years since based on successful evaluation reports. The scheme is currently funded until the end of 2019.

The initiative has also introduced The Pure Mile which aims to foster a greater appreciation and awareness of rural roadscapes and verges. The scheme is in the form of a competition and encourages communities and groups living in rural areas to adopt a mile stretch of road (approx. 1.6 km), and keep this area litter/rubbish free, research information about their local wildflowers, trees, animals, built/social/cultural heritage, history, and the folklore. Eligible groups include:

- Community or residents group
- Primary and Secondary School Students, e.g., a class project on their local area, a clean-up project, a natural or built heritage feature, a social history project, etc.
- Special Interest Groups, i.e. walking groups, cycling groups, scout groups
- Workplaces

Lessons for the Belfast Hills

The Belfast Hills still has a fly-tipping problem regardless of the many opportunities to dispose of waste at official sites around the edges of the hills. This problem contributes, in combination with heavy industrial traffic, to a loss of the visual appeal of the area, to pollution and loss of biodiversity in the greenspaces and verges. Although staff report waste dumping in the normal course of their work the response is not always swift and there are health and safety issues in working on narrow roads with high traffic levels. A scheme based on the learning from the PURE project could be piloted in the Belfast Hills in partnership with ARC21 and the waste regulator. Both an immediate response and a planned engagement with communities adopting their own mile of the Belfast Hills could be attempted. Such an initiative should have a high profile to raise awareness of the problems and solutions and official waste collection procedures.

Appendix VI

BHP Visions for the Belfast Hills – Optimistic and Pessimistic (prepared in 2016)

BELFAST HILLS VISION November 2016 PESSIMISTIC

Those directly involved in the Belfast Hills can see the pressures and threats to the hills that develop over long periods and often powered by external drivers, regional, national and even global. If we don't act we could find that:-

Our most pessimistic Belfast Hills Vision is that:-

- Further species decline & loss of our **Wildlife** with substantial loss of ash trees, wildlife corridors, spread of invasive species and substantial drop in water quality. There would be poor wildlife management due to farm abandonment and lack of resources for those bodies managing for wildlife.
- Our **Landscape** would suffer from inappropriate siting of renewable energy sites, large wildfires, lots of fly tipping and dumping and deforestation due to harvesting of conifers and loss of broadleaf woodland due to Ash Dieback.
- Our local rural and urban **Communities** will be in conflict over access and impacts with a lack of understanding of ownership and management. There will be more anti-social behaviour, littering and fly tipping.
- Due to loss of support, **Farms** will close or carry much less stock with consequent loss of wildlife and landscape. There will be no opportunities for farming families to pass on either livelihoods or local farming skills and knowledge. Those farms that do survive will face increased antisocial behaviour and urban fringe pressures.
- **Access** will be poorly managed and maintained, with little signage or public transport, honey pot areas overused and suffering from erosion and litter, while recreation users will come into conflict with local residents and landowners over e.g. parking, dogs, livestock.
- Either poorly planned **Quarrying** will increase with more lorries and landscape impacts, or will decline with loss of rural jobs and little or no opportunities for positive use such as biodiversity or access due to liability concerns. Instead they will end up being used for fly-tipping, illegal dumping, scramblers or other inappropriate or dangerous uses.
- Similarly, poorly managed **Waste** managed sites will have unnecessary negative environmental impacts. Lack of proper monitoring and enforcement leading to cowboy operators opening illegal sites up to the scale of Mobuoy, while well run sites close with the loss of local rural jobs.
- Given recent RPA changes, there is the distinct possibility that **Planning** changes will lead to 3 very different local development plans that do not work together nor take into account the specific needs and issues faced by the uplands in the Belfast Hills.
- Our **Communication** systems will not be adequate leading to a lower profile and poor image of BHP and lack of understanding of our role.
- Our **Politicians** are either not aware of or interested in the Belfast Hills
- The **Belfast Hills Partnership** will have lost funding, political interest and capital while suffering due to not managing expectations properly and not communicating our successes and the potential of the Belfast Hills. Our board will be divided and driven by personal agendas in the absence of good positive leadership and partnership.

BELFAST HILLS VISION November 2016 OPTIMISTIC

In 5-10 years, the Belfast Hills will be playing a positive role in the health, recreation, farming, conservation and commercial sectors in the Belfast metropolitan area. It will have a growing and stronger Partnership with a cohesive, mutually supportive Board, seen as best practice and taking on NI pilot projects for government and beyond.

Our aspirational Belfast Hills Vision is that:-

- More **Wildlife** and species will be identified, monitored and better managed for conservation. This management will be of high quality, integrated, with clear targets and priorities, giving greater recognition to aspects such as water quality and wildlife corridors
- We will have a distinctive Belfast Hills **Landscape** under conservation management with more robust connections and good quality mixed woodland
- **Local Communities** will have better communication and interaction with all partners, a can do attitude in taking on long term responsibility for projects, social events and annual walks across the hills
- **Farming** in the hills will be a viable career with increased public awareness and value placed on farming in the hills. There will be lower levels of trespass and antisocial behaviour and more opportunities for sustainable diversification e.g. tourism, wind farms, solar farms
- In terms of **Access and Recreation**, there will be more urban and rural high quality greenways, increased awareness of the health benefits the hills afford us and opportunities for a broad range of sport and leisure activities such as park runs, orienteering, geocaching.
- Our **Quarries** be visually improved with active community engagement in site restoration including access, recreation and a range of good facilities with at least one up to an “Eden project” standard
- Belfast Hills will be seen as best practice for **Waste** operations with greater awareness, interest and concern leading to higher percentage of household waste recycled and more people employed in new generation waste management in the hills
- We will have high quality and detailed **Planning** in terms of new local development and community plans, with strong urban greenways, while both our rural and urban areas will have appropriate development limits, **Designations** and associated protections and policies
- Our **Communication** will ensure that we get our key messages across to a wide audience clearly, that we have a good image and reputation within the media, and that all of our partners and sectors fully hear our messages and understand our work
- Our **Politicians** will be actively engaged, invited up to and regularly visit the hills, thereby understanding, appreciating and most importantly supporting our aims and objectives
- And finally the role of **Belfast Hills Partnership** and all its partners in seeking better management of the Belfast Hills will be widely understood, with high quality long term sustainable and succession planning in place to ensure the continuance of our work well beyond 5-10 years.

Appendix VII Regional Parks

Transcript from (Turner S, 1997)

All P 401 - Country and regional parks.

Country and Regional Parks are established in areas that are attractive by virtue of their land and wildlife; however, they are not statutory designations.

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The Regional Park concept is specifically designed to protect and enhance open spaces located on urban fringes; thus far only one has been established in Northern Ireland namely the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

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It should also be noted that the DOENI has proposed the Belfast Hills as a site for a second regional park and is currently preparing a local plan for this area. (1997)

Appendix VIII

ANCs (Areas facing natural or other specific constraints) source EU

Why support farmers in Areas facing Natural or other Specific constraints (ANCs)?

The Rural Development Framework provides for payments to farmers located in areas facing natural constraints such as difficult climatic conditions, steep slopes, or soil quality. These payments should mitigate the risks of land abandonment and thus a possibility of desertification, loss of biodiversity, and valuable rural landscape.

In order to be able to grant ANC payments to farmers, EU Member States designate contiguous areas where such disadvantages are observed. The area designation is based on objective bio-physical criteria laid down in the respective Rural Development legislation (Article 31 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013).

Which areas are designated as ANCs?

Member States may designate three different categories of ANCs, as described below:

1. Mountain areas:

All areas above an altitude at which agriculture is significantly impeded;

All areas below the afore-mentioned altitude, where a significant proportion of the land is affected by steep slopes preventing the use of standard machinery;

All areas north of the 62nd parallel.

2. Areas, other than mountain areas, facing significant natural constraints:

The designation of this category of ANCs takes place in two steps: First, the areas are delimited according to the set of biophysical criteria. Second, in order to better target ANC support, Member States have to "fine-tune" their area designations. "Fine-tuning" means in practice to exclude from ANC support those sub-areas where the natural constraints have been overcome due to human activities. The designation of areas is done at local administrative units, representing larger entities than single plots of land or single farms. The designation is ready only once both the designation according to bio-physical criteria and the so-called fine-tuning are completed.

Step 1: Delimitation applying Biophysical criteria

Areas can be designated as ANCs if at least 60 % of the agricultural area meets the thresholds defined for the following criteria:

Low temperature ;

Dryness;

Excess soil moisture;

Limited soil drainage;

Unfavourable texture and stoniness;

Shallow rooting depths;

Poor chemical properties;

Steep slopes.

Step 2: Fine-tuning

"Fine-tuning" shall ensure the ANC's support is not granted in sub-areas where natural constraints, which ANC's support aims to compensate, have been offset by human intervention and/or technical progress. Examples for this could be the use of drainage, irrigation or greenhouses but also planting vines in stony or steep areas.

As the delimitation based on the biophysical criteria, also fine-tuning takes place at the level of LAU2s or other local units and not at the level of individual farms.

3. Areas affected by specific constraints:

As a third category of ANC's, Member States may designate up to 10% of their territory as "areas affected by specific constraints" in order to capture further needs, such as specific requirements to conserve or improve the environment, to maintain the countryside, to preserve the tourist potential of the area or to protect coastlines.

Areas may also be eligible for payments under this category if they face certain criteria, established by Member States, reflecting specific constraints. Member States may designate this ANC's category also on the basis of a combination of the biophysical criteria mentioned in the previous section.