LAGAN VALLEY REGIONAL PARK

LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

Landscape Strategy Report

Executive Summary

The Landscape Strategy outlines the unique characteristics of the Lagan Valley Regional Park. This report offers a summary of the Landscape Partnership Scheme in terms of the management involved and an overview of the schemes being delivered. In addition the report examines the potential risks that may affect the delivery of the LPS, while also detailing the methods in which Lagan Valley Regional Park intends to evaluate and monitor the projects during the course of the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction 5

1.1 Distinctiveness of the Lagan Valley Regional Park 7

1.1.1 Landscapes 7

1.1.2 History 7

1.1.3 Flora and Fauna 7

1.1.4 Recreation and Education 8

1.1.5 Coordinated management 8

1.2 Issues facing the Regional Park 9

1.2.1 Biodiversity Issues 9

1.2.2 Forestry & Woodland Management 9

1.2.3 Introduced Species 10

1.2.4 Conservation 10

1.2.5 Tourism 10

1.3 Aims of the Landscape Partnership Scheme 12

1.4 Management of the LPS 13

2.0 Strategic context of Landscape Partnership Scheme 14

2.1.0 Northern Ireland Draft Programme for Government (2006 – 2008) 14

2.1.2 Regional Development Strategy: Shaping Our Future, 2025 14

2.1.3 Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, 2015 (Draft Plan) 14

2.1.4 Department of the Environment (DoE) Corporate Plan, 2004-2006 15

2.1.5 Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Corporate Strategy 2004-2007 17

2.1.6 Department of Agriculture and Rural Development 17

2.1.7 Belfast City Council 18

2.1.8 Castlereagh Borough Council 18

2.1.9 Lisburn City Council 19

2.1.10 The National Trust 19

2.1.11 Targeting Social Need (TSN) 20

3.0 Elements of the LPS 21

3.1 Interpretation Development 21

3.2 Species survey and conservation 21

3.3 Habitat management and enhancement 21

3.4 Volunteer and community participation 22

3.5 Built heritage restoration 22

3.6 Urban Improvements 23

4.0 LPS Financial Details – Development phase 24

4.1 LPS market 26

5.0 Management staff – Operational Stage 27

6.0 Financial appraisal 28

7.0 Risk evaluation 30

8.0 Monitoring and evaluation 32

1.0 Introduction

The Lagan Valley Regional Park (henceforth "the Park") covers an area of 4,000 acres and extends 11 miles along both sides of the River Lagan between Stranmillis, Belfast and Union Locks, Lisburn.

Within this relatively small area, there is a vast range of landscapes, thus creating a unique environment. The river and its hinterland form the basis of the Park. The area can be categorised into five different types, namely the river corridor, the amenity parklands, the estate farmlands, the valley farmlands and settled farmlands.

Established in 1967, the Park is classified a Regional Park and represents only one of four such designations in the UK and is Northern Ireland's only such Regional Park.

The Regional Park was established with the twin objectives of:

- Conserving the landscape quality and features of the Lagan Valley; and
- Promoting its quiet enjoyment by the public.

The Regional Park overlaps with the Lagan Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty and its main features are as follows:

- Series of 18th and 19th century estates
- Parkland Golf courses
- Ornamental Grounds
- Playing Fields
- Rolling Farmland enclosed by dense hedgerows
- The Lagan Canal

The 26-mile Lagan Navigation was constructed in the 18th Century to transport bulk commodities between Belfast and Lough Neagh. It was not unusual to see 30 or 40 barges (known as "lighters") waiting to begin their journey upstream.

During the 19th Century the Lagan Navigation flourished until rail and road competition made canals unviable and by the 1950's the Lagan Navigation was abandoned with ownership passing to Government. Formerly used by horses to tow barges along the canal the Towpath allows uninterrupted access between Belfast and Lisburn and is extensively used by walkers' joggers and a range of passive recreational interests. It forms part of the National Cycle Network (Route 9) linking Belfast to Portadown and Newry.

Over recent years an upsurge of water-based recreational interest has led to renewed enthusiasm for the re-opening Northern Ireland's abandoned canals in general and the Lagan Navigation in particular.

Significant archaeological sites and industrial archaeological features

One example is the Giant's Ring - a big earthwork circle, roughly 200m across, which is considered a beautiful example of a 'henge' monument, built in about 2700BC during the Neolithic period. Similar monuments are found elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, but this is one of the finest. In the middle is a tomb made up of five upright stones and a large capstone, the bare frame of what was originally a chambered grave, covered with a cairn of stones and earth.

Nearby, archaeologists have found at least ten other burials and other settings of posts.

Giant's Ring was one of the first monuments to be taken into guardianship by the state in 1882 and is now managed by Environment and Heritage Service, Department of Environment.

1.1 Distinctiveness of the Lagan Valley Regional Park

Overview Since its inception in 1967, the LVRP has played a crucial role in safeguarding the natural beauty of the Lagan Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ("AONB"), with its associated flora and fauna and to provide opportunities for recreation in the countryside.

1.1.1 Landscapes

Geologically the Lagan Valley lies along the Southern Upland Fault, and the valley floor is composed of Triassic sandstone and marls. Much of the sandstone was used in building and characterises some of the build heritage found along the valley such as the bridge at Ballyskeagh. Elsewhere the valley is characterised by a coating of glacial drift; sand, gravel and boulder clay, flattened by glacial ice. Once the ice retreated it left behind a plain for the river to flow through, and it is from the Irish word for plain that the Lagan derives its name. The Lagan Valley is a mixture of farmland, river corridor, woodland and grassland. Much of the public amenity areas were once part of large estates that developed around farming and industry, and have been donated or entrusted into public use.

1.1.2 History

There is evidence of human settlement in the Lagan Valley for some 7,000 years. Early settlers were nomadic hunter gatherers but eventually the well drained soils were utilised for cultivation and settlement and the use of bonze and iron enabled our early settlers to shape their environment. Unique to the Lagan Valley is the giants ring site. Although chambered burial sites are not unusual in the region, this site is distinctive as it is bounded by a large earthen ring. In more recent times settlers built homes or farms on mounds, known as Motts or hill forts, there are three such structures in the Lagan Valley dating back to around the twelfth century.

The Valley's more recent history is the construction of the Lagan Navigation - a canal system that made use of the river and became a valuable system of commerce in the last two centuries.

As well as coal and building material the navigation was used to transport linen produced from locally grown flax and it is likely as a result of this transport system that the region became renown for its outstanding Linen throughout the world.

1.1.3 Flora and Fauna

The area provides an essential corridor for not only wetland species, but many other mammals and birds too. Waterfowl such as, grebe, coot, moorhen, mallard, tufted duck, as well as swans, heron, kingfisher, dipper and cormorant are frequent users of the water course. The water course also provides feeding and shelter for otter in several locations. The

broader park lands support a number of mammal and bird species, including badgers, red squirrel and several species of bat.

Recent success in seeing such a prolific presence of these species has largely been due to the coordinating influence of the Regional Park and its management. Botanically the range of species seen in our grasslands has diversified through management and again coordination has been fundamental to this. Many sites are now seeing a number of orchids, yellow iris, and a range of wildflowers. Such sites are a great asset in imparting the message of biodiversity to the general public through guided walks and similar events and would be of importance as Lowland Meadow. The Valleys large numbers of Hedgerows are of special importance to wildlife both as habitats and wildlife corridors.

Small areas of Wet Woodland have recently been identified as important and recent bird surveys have indicated that these areas may provide refuge to Greenfinch, Bullfinch, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Reed Bunting, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Siskin as well as some of our migrants such as Redpoll as well as the more typical wildfowl found on the Lagan.

1.1.4 Recreation and Education

There has always been an emphasis on recreation and education within the Regional Park, and the sheltered valley landscapes make it a peaceful place to stroll and unwind. The towpath has now been upgraded and is part of the National Cycle Network and its flat surface makes it accessible to a wide range of people. The river attracts fishers and canoeists whilst the parks throughout the Lagan Valley attract a whole range of recreational activities, from the sports fields that are part of Queens University to Mary Peter's running track. The rich array of wildlife make the area a major attraction for study and hobbyists alike.

1.1.5 Coordinated management

One of the key successes of the Regional Park has been the structure of the management group with all those involved in the funding and management having representation on the group that sits monthly. This has meant that where different organisations may have been doing different things and approaching problems from several different angles, they can in fact all work together to coordinate the way the Lagan Valley AONB is managed. This approach to the endemic species of flora and fauna and indeed in controlling the non endemic species has meant that effective wildlife conservation and management has been able to succeed where it would have failed with several uncoordinated bodies tackling the problem with differing strategies and policies.

1.2 Issues facing the Regional Park

1.2.1 Biodiversity Issues

Biodiversity, defined as the total variety of life found on earth, in Northern Ireland is affected by many issues, including climate change and pollution. These could have significant impact on biodiversity in Northern Ireland, such as increased rainfall and temperatures, which could lead to significant losses of biodiversity.

Northern Ireland has a rich and varied natural heritage including habitats and species of international, national and local significance. The work of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG) contained in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity strategy, has grouped the most important factors affected in Northern Ireland Biodiversity and these are listed below:

They considered that the **protection of special areas of biodiversity, protecting rare or threatened habitats and species and conserving genetic biodiversity were key issues in conserving biodiversity in Northern Ireland**. Central to the success of the NI Strategy is the following:

- • Improving the availability of information on biodiversity
- • Raising the general level of awareness and understanding of biodiversity, and
- • Encouraging action for biodiversity at a local level.

1.2.2 Forestry & Woodland Management

A key area for Biodiversity in Northern Ireland that has to be considered is Forestry and Woodland Management. The historic natural vegetation of Northern Ireland was woodland and this is the habitat that many species are dependent on. However, only 6% of Northern Ireland is under tree cover. The naturally occurring woodland areas in Northern Ireland are irreplaceable and should be conserved.

Out of this concern, a number of corresponding recommendations were outlined:

- Protect, enhance and extend remaining ancient semi-natural woodland sites and provide incentives for their management
- Manage commercial woodland sustainably and promote research that could lead to improving the biodiversity value of conifer woodland
- Prepare a new woodland inventory of Northern Ireland
- Provide and distribute information and encourage woodland owners to manage their sites for the benefit of biodiversity
- Implement stronger controls over the loss of woodlands of biodiversity value

- Increase woodland cover, especially that of native broadleaved woodland, and
- Further develop a strategic approach to the implementation forest policy.

1.2.3 Introduced Species

Large numbers of non-native species, particular of flowering plants, already occur in the region. Many are able to co habit with native species having reached equilibrium, however other introduced species represent a threat to existing biodiversity. Examples of the threats these species pose are cited in the Strategy and include the predation on native species, direct competition with native species and degradation or damage to habitats. The strategy lists, among others, the following examples all of which are prevalent in Lagan Valley Regional Park:

- The grey squirrel is threatening the red squirrel
- Japanese knotweed is threatening the river habitat
- Giant hogweed is threatening the river habitat

Within the grassland surveys that have been undertaken within the park, management techniques to reduce the impacts of the above species have been identified and agreed by land managers.

1.2.4 Conservation

Biodiversity is inextricably linked to health of the planet. “Managing for Biodiversity” aims to help those manage the land to do so for the benefit of biodiversity. This is done by:

- Running short **training courses and workshops on some of the skills required to manage the important biodiversity in a more sustainable way**
- Providing example habitats across Northern Ireland of good practice in managing biodiversity
- Hosting **information sessions** for organisations that manage land, and
- Access to advice and support when managing land.

1.2.5 Tourism

Although tourism is a major industry in Northern Ireland it has the potential to attract significantly more visitors, given that the area has an abundance of outstanding natural

scenery. Among its attractions are the landscapes with semi-natural habitats, which are important for their richness in biodiversity.

Strategic plans for the integration of environmental management and conservation with the development and marketing have been produced or are currently under preparation for the areas of high biodiversity interest.

It is necessary to protect special areas for biodiversity within Northern Ireland and statutory nature conservation site protection plays an integral part in any biodiversity strategy. There are a number of different types of nature conservation designations in Northern Ireland, including Special Protection Area and Areas of Special Scientific Interest. **Lagan Valley Regional Park overlaps with the Lagan Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**.

Priority habitats and species are particularly important for the conservation of biodiversity because they are under particular threat, or they make an important contribution to biodiversity in the wider context.

Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity requires knowledge of the state of biodiversity and the issues affecting it, therefore **research and monitoring must be ongoing**.

A Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy is necessarily concerned with strategic actions at a Province-wide level. However, these must be supported at a local level, with a philosophy of 'think globally, act locally'.

1.3 Aims of the Landscape Partnership Scheme

The aims of the LPS are based in principal on those of the Lagan Valley Regional Park, which are:

- To maintain and where possible enhance the landscape quality and environments of the
- To conserve the native flora and fauna, the richness and diversity of semi natural habitats and species and the manmade heritage, and
- Provide opportunities for research, education and interpretation of the Regional Park.

In order to achieve these aims the objectives of the Landscape Partnership Scheme are to:

- Increase the public's awareness of the natural and built heritage throughout the LVRP,
- Facilitate ongoing surveys throughout the park to gain a better understanding of the flora and fauna within the park;
- Perform active management of grassland & wetland habitats;
- Increase the publics' participation and understanding in the management of the LVRP;
- Improve and enhance open space riverside area for informal recreation.

1.4 Management of the LPS

A project team will be established to deliver the Lagan Valley Regional Park Landscape Partnership Scheme. This will include provision for the following posts:

- Project manager
- Information and conservation officer
- Volunteer and education officer
- Administration officer

Job descriptions for each of the above posts are presented in Appendix C.

The LPS management team will coordinate all project activities being sponsored under the Landscape Partnership Scheme. The team will report to a Director, who will be charged with the overall management of Lagan Valley Regional Park.

2.0 Strategic context of Landscape Partnership Scheme

It is necessary to take account of the particular aims and objectives of key interest groups within the Park, in order to identify the context within which the aims and objectives of the Landscape Partnership Scheme have been established. To follow is a summary of the main findings of the various plans, surveys, strategies and policies which affect the management of the Regional Park:

2.1.0 Northern Ireland Draft Programme for Government (2006 – 2008)

The objectives and associated planned outcomes of selected relevant governmental departments are detailed below:

One of the key spending initiatives detailed in the document is that of the environment and energy. Estimated expenditure of £5 and £10 million for 2006-07 and 2007-08 respectively, accelerate actions in accordance with the Government's sustainable development strategy and promote the development of renewable energy sources.

2.1.2 Regional Development Strategy: Shaping Our Future, 2025

Shaping Our Future 2025 sets out a Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland up until 2025, this will act as a guide to the future development of Northern Ireland. The Vision is to *"create an outward looking, dynamic and liveable region and to sustain a high quality of life for all".*

It provides an overarching, strategic framework, to help achieve a strong spatially balanced economy, a healthy environment and an inclusive society. It will influence the future distribution of activities throughout Northern Ireland. It aims to meet four objectives of sustainable development, including the following two of significant relevance to LVRP:

- Effective protection of the environment, and
- Prudent use of natural resources.

There is a recurrent theme of sustainability which runs through the RDS. This reinforces the ethos of LVRP, which seeks to promote sustainable development of the Lagan Valley region.

2.1.3 Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, 2015 (Draft Plan)

This is a development plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area, an area which relates to the Council Areas of Belfast City, Lisburn City, Carrickfergus Borough, Castlereagh Borough, Newtownabbey Borough and North Down Borough. In total this is a Plan Area of approximately 960 square

kilometres, with a population of 646,550 (Northern Ireland Census 2001), approximately 38% of the total NI population.

The purpose of the Plan is to inform the general public, authorities, developers, and other interested bodies of the policy framework and land use proposals that will be used to guide development decisions within the BMA over the Plan period.

Key Theme	Priority Outcome	Associated PSA Targets
Building Equality and Community Cohesion	Regenerated urban neighbourhoods and strong communities	By 2010 [the Government] aims to close the gap between the quality of life for people and marginalised groups in the most deprived neighbours and the quality of life in the rest of Northern Ireland.
Better Public Services	Improved Infrastructure (Investment Strategy)	To increase compliance with Waste Water Discharge Standards set by the Environment and Heritage Service to 80 per cent by December 2005.

The plan amends the LVRP boundary to now cover an area of 2,120 hectares, with a designation as an Area of Constraint on Mineral Development and is part of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the Park contains two Local Landscape Policy Areas, seven sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance, one Area of Townscape Character and two historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes.

2.1.4 Department of the Environment (DoE) Corporate Plan, 2004-2006

The DoE aims to *"improve the quality of life in Northern Ireland, now and for the future, by promoting a better and safer environment and supporting effective and efficient local government".*

The objectives set out to enable facilitation of this aim include the following:

- To protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and built heritage, and
- To improve the quality of life of the people of Northern Ireland by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.

The DoE is responsible for four agencies, namely: The Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), The Planning Service, Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency, and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland.

EHS takes the lead in implementing the Government's environmental policy through a diverse range of activities, all of which support the key aims of sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change. The overarching aim of EHS is to *"protect and conserve the natural and built environment and to promote its appreciation for the benefit of present and future generations".*

EHS work to achieve this aim by working towards certain objectives:

- Protecting and improving the quality of air, land and water,
- Conserving biodiversity and the countryside,
- Protecting, recording and conserving historic monuments and building,
- Producing, using and disseminating accurate, high quality environmental information, and
- Working in partnership with others towards shared environmental aims.

Within its remit, EHS has activities and statutory duties in each of the following fields:

Field	Activities and Duties
Natural Heritage	Works to conserve the natural environment of Northern Ireland. Concerned with both wildlife species and their habitats and rural landscapes on a broader scale.
Environmental Protection	Seeks to preserve the quality of air, water and land. Units within this field include air quality, noise, climate change, industrial pollution, radiation, waste, water and drinking water quality.
Built Heritage	Seeks to identify record and protect the built, buried and underwater remains of human activity, from prehistoric times until present day.

LVRP contains a diverse range of natural and built heritage and it is with the help of EHS that the conservation and protection of this area will occur.

2.1.5 **Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Corporate Strategy 2004-2007**

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)'s Vision, as set out in the current Corporate Strategy for the three years to 2007 is *"a confident, creative, informed and vibrant community".* The document goes on to state the Mission of DCAL as being to *"protect, nurture and grow our Cultural Capital for today and tomorrow".*

The attempting to fulfil its vision, the goals of DCAL include the following:

- • To enable as many people as possible to experience and appreciate the excellence of our cultural assets,
- • To ensure the sustainable management of our cultural infrastructure,
- • To develop and deliver quality cultural products and services, and
- • To encourage respect for and celebration of diversity.

Within its remit, DCAL is responsible for developing policy, service delivery, administration and monitoring many services, including Inland Waterways and Fisheries, Visitor Amenities, Arts and Creativity, Museums and Libraries and Sport and Leisure.

2.1.6 **Department of Agriculture and Rural Development**

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is another department of the Northern Ireland Government. It details its Purpose Statement as being *"to promote economic growth and the development of the countryside in Northern Ireland. It will assist the competitive development of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors of the NI economy, being responsive to the needs of consumers for safe and wholesome food, the welfare of animals and the conservation of the environment".*

DARD has four main aims, two of which are relevant to LVRP, that is:

- To protect the public, animals and property, and
- To conserve and enhance the rural environment.

Within DARD there are several organisations, including the Forest Service and the Rivers Agency. The Forest Service's aim is to encourage the growth of Northern Ireland's forest and to manage them in a responsible and environmentally efficient manner. Sustainability in management and development is a strategic goal which underpins all of the Agency's business planning processes. The activities of the Forest Service include planting for the future,

environment, plant health, training, recreation and education. The forested areas of LVRP would benefit from a sustainable approach to their management and development.

The Rivers Agency is an Executive Agency within DARD, whose stated aim is to "i*mprove social conditions and to support economic development in Northern Ireland through reducing risk to life and damage to property from flooding from rivers and the sea and preserving the productive potential of agricultural land".*

2.1.7 **Belfast City Council**

Belfast City Council's Vision for Belfast is *"of Belfast as a modern, welcoming city with a quality of life to rival the best in the world – a city that is never content to stand still, but improves over the years. In short, we believe in a better Belfast".*

In delivering this vision, Belfast City Council has a number of objectives, one of which is the improvement of quality of life, now and for future generations. In recent years, the council has taken a more pro-active role in the development of the city, including improvement in public spaces, in order to improve the quality of life for the people of Belfast.

The Parks and Amenities Section is an integral part of the Community and Recreation Department of the Belfast City Council. Its mission statement is to provide *"high quality services which contribute to the quality of life, good health and the establishment of an attractive environment through managing and maintaining the City's parks and amenities in a sustainable manner".*

Several of the Belfast Parks which are catered for by the Parks and Amenities Section fall under the remit of LVRP. These include:

- Barnett Demesne
- Clement Wilson Park
- Lagan Meadows
- Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.

Similar to the ethos of LVRP, the Belfast Parks Section of Belfast City Council aims to provide a recreational area for the people of Belfast, with a strong theme of sustainability present in both.

2.1.8 **Castlereagh Borough Council**

Castlereagh Borough Council maintains a number of dedicated park areas and informal open spaces. These range from small, local areas, to large, well-structured facilities.

The Council is particularly supportive of the 'Forest of Belfast' initiative and, in conjunction with this, has planted hundreds of new trees throughout the Borough. The Council is in the process of developing its Corporate Strategy, which will include intentions around the Park.

2.1.9 **Lisburn City Council**

Lisburn City Council's mission is to *"be a first class public service organisation in a city that is recognised as the premier place in Northern Ireland to live, work, visit and play".* Lisburn City Council has core values of customer focus, quality, openness, accountability, innovation, fairness and equality and sustainability.

Lisburn City and hinterland contains a number of parks, nature trails and towpaths. LVRP is partially located in Lisburn City, thus Lisburn City Council has an important role in the development and management of the Park. The council has a designated Lagan Corridor Programme Manager and has developed a framework for the development of the area.

2.1.10 **The National Trust**

The National Trust is a government-independent charity, which has worked to preserve and protect the countryside, coastline and buildings of Northern Ireland since 1936. This is carried out in many ways, including through practical caring and conservation, through learning and discovery and through encouraging millions to visit and enjoy their natural heritage.

The organisation relies on income from membership fees, donations and legacies, as well as revenue from its commercial operations. The tasks carried out by the National Trust include looking after nature reserves, farmland, archaeological remains and forests and protecting and opening historic houses and gardens, as well as industrial monuments and mills.

The National Trust provides access to many countryside sites, which contain a vast array of biodiversity. The conservation of biological diversity is central to the principle of sustainable development, which the National Trust wholly embraces on all its sites.

The Trust owns land within LVRP and thus has a role, both in management of their own land holdings and advising on wider management issues within the Park.

2.1.11 **Targeting Social Need (TSN)**

New TSN was announced in the "Partnership for Equality" White Paper published in March 1998. Its aim is to tackle social need and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by targeting its efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in greatest social need.

New TSN runs through all spending programmes across all of the Northern Ireland government departments. It is not a separate programme with a dedicated budget, but a general approach to programme development and delivery involving all departments which directs effort and resources towards those in greatest need. New TSN policy aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion by:

- Promoting employment and employability amongst the most disadvantaged,
- Tackling other areas of inequality such as health, education and housing, and
- Including Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI), establishing formal arrangements for Departments, working together to tackle social exclusion in vulnerable groups such as people with a disability, minority ethnic groups etc.

The LVRP area encompasses nineteen wards, within which there is one designated New TSN area, Old Warren. Conserving and developing LVRP will ensure that a suitable area is available for the people in this area for recreation.

3.0 Elements of the LPS

The programmes delivered under the Landscape Partnership Scheme are grouped together under six schemes, which are noted in section 3.1 – 3.7.

3.1 Interpretation Development

The goal of interpretation development is to ensure that adequate information is provided to all users of the Regional Park. Through the construction of an interpretation and visitor centre, at the Lock Keepers Cottage, Lagan Valley Regional Park aims to provide a quality environment for people to live in and visit. In addition to the development of a designated centre, the Park will provide a variety of interpretative leaflets, interpretative signage along the tow path and access to a historical record collection about the area.

The 6 projects developed under this scheme include:

- Signage
- Promotional material
- Eco-trail development
- Interpretative display for Lock Keepers Cottage
- Sensory information
- Website

3.2 Species survey and conservation

During the development phase a series of baseline surveys were undertaken to ascertain the species present in the Regional Park. These surveys aimed to facilitate more informed management decisions.

The projects developed under this programmes will be:

- Red Squirrel conservation group
- Otter conservation
- Badger conservation
- Bat conservation
- 10 key bird species

Details on each project are provided in the Programme Development Report.

3.3 Habitat management and enhancement

LVRP intends to carry out active management of grassland and wetland habitats through structured projects which will aim to prevent the loss or degradation of the habitats. To this

end, a grassland survey has been undertaken, which has prioritised 29 sites throughout the Regional Park as sites worthy of grassland enhancement.

The projects developed under this programmes will be:

- Grassland and wildflower management
- Wetland management
- Ancient Tree project

3.4 Volunteer and community participation

In an effort to ensure the long term sustainability of the Park, as well as an attempt to encourage ownership of the Park by its users, the LVRP has partnered with a range of organisations to develop opportunities for involvement. A total of 9 programmes will be delivered through the Volunteer & Community Participation Scheme, which aims to increase the numbers and interest levels of volunteers – both for individuals and groups.

The 9 projects developed under this scheme are:

1. Conservation volunteer projects
2. Educational Resource Pack
3. Student Placements
4. Village projects
5. 'Getting Involved' initiative
6. LVRP Newsletter
7. Photo competition
8. Art Campaign
9. 'Name our Kingfisher' competition

3.5 Built heritage restoration

The restoration of the Lock Keeper's cottage, and the link with the adjoining restored and operational Lock, will provide the Park with a destination, indoors and accessible to all, it will provide the base from which courses, volunteers, etc will be organised.

The projects developed under this programmes will be:

- Restoration of Lock Keepers Cottage
- Restoration of No.3 Lock

3.6 Urban Improvements

Lagan Valley Regional Park in consultation with Lisburn City Council has identified the need to improve access to the riverside at two key locations in the Lisburn area, namely Millbrook and Huguenot.

It is expected that these projects will encourage members of the public to get involved in both their natural and built heritage. This scheme complements much of the work that is currently being undertaken by Lisburn City Council through the Lagan Corridor Strategy. It will see the re-instatement of two bridges at Hilden and riverside landscaping and provision of informal recreation area at Millbrook. In addition the project aims to create a fishing pond, restore riverine habitats and improve access for the entire area.

4.0 LPS Financial Details – Development phase

The following table outlines the costs incurred during the development phase of the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Scheme		Costs
1. Interpretation Development		
Collection of local history & folklore (Stranmillis to Shaw's Bridge)		
Review of interpretation strategy		
2. **Species Surveys & conservation**		
Park wide bird surveys - RSPB		
Red squirrel surveys – LVRP staff		
3. **Habitat management & enhancement**		
Grassland surveys		
Preparation of site specific management plans (31 sites)		
4. **Volunteer & Community Participation**		
Purchase of equipment for community groups		
5. **Built Heritage restoration**		
Inspection & Structural assessment of Lock No. 3		
Design development for the restoration of Lock No.3		
Preparation of plans for restoration of Lock Keeper's Cottage		
6. **Urban Improvements**		
Preparation of plans, drawings and implementation report		
Public consultation		
7. **Project Management**		
Development officer salary & on-costs		
Administrative officer		
Training		

Office furniture		
Stationary		
Room hire		
Telephone costs		

4.1 LPS market

One of the primary goals of the Landscape Partnership Scheme is to '*increase the public's participation and understanding in the management of the Regional Park'*.
To facilitate this aim it is first necessary to identify the current users and non-users of the Park.

An Access and Audience Development Plan (AADP) was completed. The Plan was derived from a series of phases including:

- Consultation with stakeholders,
- Review of organisational plans and policies which addresses audience development,
- Completion of a 3 month user survey, interviewing over 360 individuals
- Review of Lagan Valley Regional Park's strategies and plans.

The Access and Audience Development Plan identified current audiences in terms of their gender, age and employment status. In addition, the Plan examines users' frequency of use, travel methods and purpose of their visit.

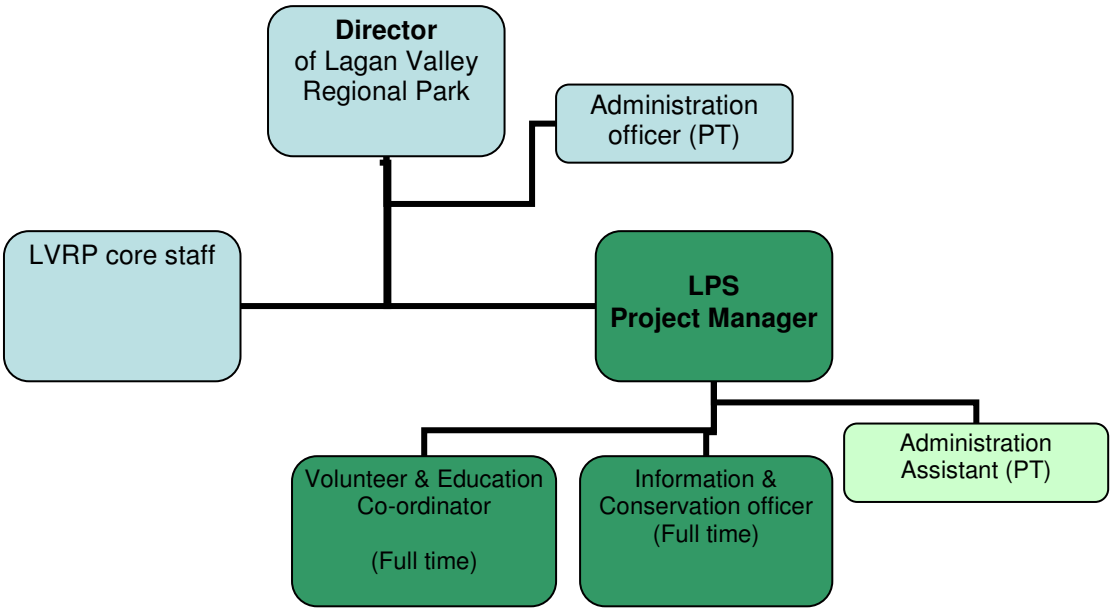
The AADP identified potential barriers which may limit or reduce the involvement of particular groups. Seven target audiences were identified from this process that the management group considered to be unrepresented or under-developed. These include:

- Local residents
- Businesses
- Disabled users
- Young people
- Community groups
- Recreational users
- Ethnic minority groups

These users are the target audience for many of the projects being delivered through the Landscape Partnership Scheme. Lagan Valley Regional Park recognises the need to continue catering for the existing users while also trying to increase opportunities for others to get involved.

5.0 Management staff – Operational Stage

The following schematic outlines the management structure which will be adopted to deliver the range of projects as detailed in the Programme Development Report.



It is anticipated that a Director for Lagan Valley Regional Park will be appointed prior to the commencement of Stage 2. All existing staff and the additional staff arising from the Landscape Partnership Scheme will report to the Director.

As the role of the Director will involve management and supervision of the staff being employed through the Landscape Partnership Scheme, we have provided for 10% of the Director's post to be funded through the LPS. Details on salary scales are presented in Appendix R.

Job descriptions for each of the Landscape Partnership Scheme positions are presented in Appendix C.

6.0 Financial appraisal

The following table outlines the breakdown of costs for each scheme and projects being delivered during the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Scheme	Programmes	Costs	Totals
Interpretation Development	Signage		
	Promotional material		
	Eco-trail development		
	Sensory information		
	Lock Keeper's Cottage interpretation		
	Website Development		
Species Survey & Conservation	Red Squirrel conservation		
	Otter conservation		
	Badger conservation		
	Bat conservation		
	Bird Conservation		
Habitat Management & Enhancement	Grassland and wildflower management		
	Wetland management		
	Veteran Oak study		
Volunteer & Community Participation	Conservation focussed volunteer projects		
	Educational Resource Pack		
	Student Placements		
	Village projects		
	'Getting involved' initiative		
	LVRP Newsletter		
	Photo competition		
	Art Campaign		
	Name our Kingfisher		
Built Heritage	Lock Keeper's Cottage Restoration		
	Lock No. 3 restoration		

Scheme	Programmes	Costs	Totals
Urban Improvements	Millbrook Riverside Project		
	Hilden Riverside Project		
Project management Costs	Staff salaries (Appendix R)		
	Vehicle		
	Trailer		
	Rent, Rates & Electricity		
	Office equipment		
	Stationary		
Total for programme and overhead costs			

7.0 Risk evaluation

Risks are discussed under 3 separate topics- financial, market and management.

Identified Risk	Ranking	Impact	Measures to mitigate risk
Financial			
Unsuccessful Application There is a risk that the HLF application will not be successful	Low	This would jeopardise the whole project and would require that the LVRP rethink their proposed funding structure. It would result in an inability to undertake the projects as detailed in the Programme Development Report.	The Park has recruited an experienced project manager to collate the Stage II application. The Park has kept open communication channels with HLF to ensure that the proposed project is aligned to their expectations.
Risk that the project costs will overrun beyond current estimations	Medium	The ability of the various elements to be delivered on budget would be impacted, with cost over runs in capital projects impacting negatively on the revenue costs.	The costs are based on experience and the final HLF application will be supported with applicable quotations.
Risk that the Park will not be capable of recruiting staff that are funded for a fixed short tem period	Low	This would delay the delivery of the project until suitable staff is recruited.	The Park will seek to use the resources and best practice experience of its management board to attract the staff.
Risk that the supporting Councils (Lisburn, Belfast and Castlereagh) will not be in existence due to the forthcoming RPA outcome	High	The impact of the Park of the RPA is unknown, but discussions with Councils have indicated that support for the Park is evident regardless of the title of the guise of the Councils.	None.
Risk that partner organisations will be able to provide the intended level of contribution in kind	Medium	The role of the numerous identified partners varies and as such the impact of non performance by any party is different.	The elements have been developed in conjunction with the identified partner organisations and as such there is buy in and support from all parties.
Market			
Lack of volunteers Insufficient volunteers are attracted onto the Landscape Partnership Scheme initiatives such as the volunteer rangers' project.	Medium	Inability to deliver the range of projects detailed in the Landscape Partnership Scheme.	Ensure all campaigns are well promoted and advertised. Review the needs and involvement of volunteers regularly.

Identified Risk	Ranking	Impact	Measures to mitigate risk
Target audiences not attracted	Low	Unsuccessful delivery of Landscape Partnership Scheme	Ensure adequate promotion of all events and volunteering opportunities. Continue with ongoing consultation with user group representatives
Management			
Loss of staff 5 year contract may result in staff moving on towards the end of their contract.	Medium	Potential for projects to be left incomplete	Ensure a team orientated approach to the delivery of project which would minimise the impacts of 1 member of staff leaving. Both the Director and Project manager have roles to play in terms of securing future funding which may provide extensions to contracts.
Problems with contractors Contractors will be involved in the Lock Keeper's Cottage project and Urban improvement schemes	Low to medium	Delays the successful delivery of projects	Ensure that all tendering procedures employed by Castlereagh Borough Council are adhered to. Ensure contractors have experience in the respective fields
Work overload on Partners There is a potential that partners are unable to commit to the Landscape Partnership Scheme owing to their own work commitments.	Low to medium	Undermines the partnership	Ensure that aims and objectives of organisation involved in the LPS are met through projects. Minimise the number of meetings and workshops over the LPS Stage 2.

8.0 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the Landscape Partnership Scheme will be an ongoing process and will be both quantitative and qualitative. Each of the reports prepared for the Stage 2 application (Programme Development Report, Training Plan) present targets. These will be used as indicators to measure the success of the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Programme Development Report

- Design and erection of signs (69)
- Provision of 2 leaflets and 1 booklet
- Development of an eco-trail in Castle gardens
- Provision of Braille on at least 10 signs
- Number of volunteer hours (300 annually)
- Planting of 18,000 oak trees throughout the Regional Park
- Development of a 15 volunteer rangers and 5 specialised guides
- Delivery of 500 educational resource packs to schools
- Facilitation of 4 student placements
- Completion of the Lock Keeper's Cottage development by mid-2008
- Planting of the following trees / shrubs in Year 1 of the LPS
  80 Scots pine, 30 Yew, 200 Hawthorn whips, 20 dogrose whips, & 30 Blackthorn whips

Training Plan

- Mentoring by LVRP rangers of 15 volunteer rangers
- Involvement of 40 members of the public at events annually
- Training of 3 staff in boat handling