



DISCOVER | EXPLORE | ENJOY

Annual Report 2015/16

At A Glance

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Volunteering Excellence

- Total of 3.859 volunteer hours recorded
- Lock Keeper's Cottage Volunteer Heritage Guides 830
- Industry Lighter Volunteer Heritage Guides 1,119
- Volunteer Rangers 1,019
- Volunteer Wildlife Surveyors 196
- Conservation Volunteers 695
- This equates to a minimum value of £27k to the Regional Park and greater community
- Living Heritage Cottage and Lighter open to the public 248 days

Ranger Service

- The Towpath Initiative; raises awareness of considerate use of the Towpath
- Annual Events Programme with 21 events engaging with over 400 people
- Ten volunteer rangers contributing 1019 hours of support to the Ranger Service
- 5 information stands at fairs and shows
- Over 42 km of trails and Park paths patrolled weekly
- 1,447 enquires from members of the public
- 684 bags of litter collected
- Facilitated and supported over 14 events by outside organisations





The LVRP Board

Director	Representing	Board Meeting Attended						
		June	EGM	Sept	AGM	Dec	Mar	Total
Cllr Jenny Palmer	LCCC	1	1	1	1	1	×	5
Cllr Brian Dornan	LCCC	×	×	RETIRED			0	
Cllr Janet Gray	LCCC			1	×	1	1	3
Cllr V Kamble	LCCC			×	×	1	×	1
Cllr C O'Hara	BCC			×	×	×	×	0
Ald Ruth Patterson	BCC	×	×	×	×	×	RETIRED	0
Ald C Stalford	BCC						×	0
Dermot Hughes	CNCC	1	1	1	1	×	1	5
Jim Jackson	CNCC	1	1	1	1	×	1	5
Craig Somerville	National Trust	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Rosaleen Hughes	Public (Community/Recreation)	×	×	×	×	×	×	0
Jackson Tinto	Public (Volunteering/ Natural Heritage)	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Frank Jordan	Public (Volunteering)	×	×	×	×	×	×	0
David Scott	Public (Natural Heritage)	×	×	X X RETIRED		1		
Fred Hamond	Public (Built Heritage/Recreation)	1	1	1	1	✓OB	×	5
Michael McSorley	Public (Volunteering/Community)	1	1	×	×	×	1	3
Andrew Halliday	Public (Built Heritage / Recreation)					1	1	2

OB - Observer



Chair's Report

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our former chair Cllr Jenny Palmer for being successfully elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly this year.

On behalf of all the Board and staff, I would like to thank Jenny for all the hard work and passion she has shown for the work of the Regional Park over the past years. However, this now leaves the Vice-Chair to fill in as we take a step back and assess the year's work. The small team of four staff have delivered an astonishing work load given yet another unsettling year in terms of funding and support.

The volunteer input and support is truly amazing, the added value this brings to the Park and all its partners is important not just financially but in building connections with the local community in the area. I commend everyone involved for their time and service. As a volunteer myself, I can thoroughly recommend volunteer involvement with the Regional Park and the excellent work that the Park staff does in supporting volunteers is self-evident when you see the numbers of volunteers who continue to contribute to the Park.

Last year saw us embrace the upheaval of local government changes as the new councils adjusted and bedded in. Much work has been going on in the background as the councils worked hard to ensure a smooth transition. This year has seen yet another series of changes, this time with the reshuffling and streamlining of central government as new departments emerge. As well as the changes in local and central government, the Regional Park continues to face concerns over central government funding.



It was great to see that despite limited resources the Regional Park ran 21 public events this year including walks, talks and tours engaging in over 400 people and indeed the Park has supported and helped facilitate many other events, taking talks out to clubs and organisations and supporting activities such as runs and charity walks. Through the work of the staff and volunteers a wide audience is being engaged with; and it is hoped that those people will continue to visit this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We are delighted to see that the Park consistently attracts large numbers of visitors, the towpath alone receiving almost 1.3 million visitors annually.

I would like to finish by thanking the staff, volunteers and fellow Board members of Lagan Valley Regional Park for all their work, support and commitment over the past year. We can feel proud of the progress the Park has made over the last year and I am confident further progress will be made as we seek to embrace new opportunities.



Vice-Chair



Manager's Report

Challenges and opportunities are the best way to view the ever changing landscape of managing protected areas. The Regional Park has had a long and close relationship with the local councils and there is every indication that this will continue into the future.

The support of both Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has greatly helped in forging some stability for the

Regional Park.

A massive thank you goes out to all our volunteers, their level of support and dedication has been outstanding, amounting to a whopping 3,859 hours. Personally I feel it would be demeaning to value this work at

minimum wage as the volunteers range of skills and abilities and their depth of knowledge is highly varied, however if we were to value this contribution at minimum wage, it would exceed £27,000 for this year. That is an astounding contribution to the

community and environment sector in Northern Ireland. This year has seen the ranks of our Volunteer Heritage Guides swell as new volunteers come on board to open the Industry lighter to the public we are delighted to welcome our new Volunteer Heritage Guides. It cannot be underestimated the amount of work, time, effort and financial resources that are needed to continue this high level of support.

As usual, all of our team have supported and helped to develop one of the most exciting events programmes to date and we continue to provide a wide range

of services; working with

interest groups, schools and Scouts to name but a few.

Our Ranger Service continues to provide a valuable public service, dealing with enquiries about the region and providing assistance with a wide range of incidents. This year our Ranger Service has been supported by several Volunteer Rangers, who have

offered their help throughout various times of the year. Whilst it is a sad loss to the park, we are all delighted for our volunteer rangers who have gone on to full time employment and wish them all the best in there endeavours.

I would like to extent a special thank you to our small team of 4 staff. Given the limited resources we have, it is testament to the dedication and passion of our team that we manage to achieve so much throughout the year. Thank you Anne, Dan and Nichola.

I would like to acknowledge our core funders, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (now the Department for Infrastructure). I would also like to thanks the Heritage Lottery for the legacy funding we have received to contribute to maintaining the key projects from the Landscape Partnership Scheme. I would also like to thank our numerous partners who support the Park in so many other ways. The success of the Park depends on this support and partnership.

Andy Bridge

Manager



Lagan Valley Regional Park

Lagan Valley Regional Park is the key umbrella organisation developing partnership among the many stakeholders that operate in the area.

The Regional Park is Northern Ireland's only Regional Park and regularly records almost 1.3 million visitors annually, making it the most popular managed outdoor area in Northern Ireland.

The River Lagan and its surrounding valley landscapes are renowned for their natural beauty. At the heart of the Lagan Valley are the River Lagan and canal systems that form the main access and wildlife corridor bridging two of Northern Ireland's population



centres. This unique area, typified by its rolling landscapes, ornamental parklands and farmland, is one of Northern Ireland's designated Area's of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Lagan Valley Regional Park covers an area of 4,200 acres and extends 11 miles along both sides of the River Lagan between Stranmillis, Belfast and Union Locks, Lisburn.



Lagan Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

An AONB is a precious landscape where the distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the Nation's interest to safeguard it (NAAONB, 2003). The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order 1985 sets out the main purposes of an AONB:

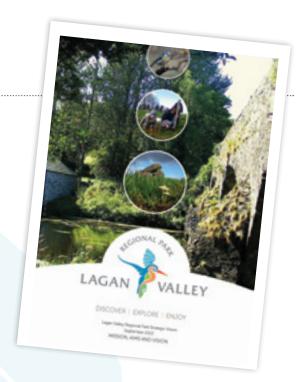
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty or amenities of the area.
- To conserve wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena within the area
- To promote enjoyment by the public
- To provide or maintain public access to the area

These form the ethos of the Lagan Valley Regional Park's Mission.



Our Vision

" A Park that offers a thriving, diverse and valued riverside heritage that welcomes exploration, learning and enjoyment whilst ensuring a sustainable environment for all."





To focus our work over the next 10 years the Regional Park has developed a strategic vision. This is available for distribution from our office and clearly defines our six key focus areas of Biodiversity, Visitors, Community, Landscape, Heritage and Health & Recreation.

Charitable status protecting and conserving the area for all

Lagan Valley Regional Park joined all charities in Northern Ireland in re-applying for charitable status under the new conditions put in place by the charity commission for Northern Ireland. We are happy to announce that Lagan Valley Regional Park was approved and is now a registered charity; registration number NIC 103700.



Our Aims

- To conserve and manage the biodiversity in the Regional Park;
- Support and facilitate ongoing research and education about the area's biodiversity and heritage;
- Encourage the involvement of the community and to develop volunteering in the Regional Park;
- Maintain and enhance the landscape quality of the Regional Park for the benefit of all;
- Proactively conserve and manage the cultural and built heritage of the Regional Park;
- Promote the benefits of green open spaces, within the area, for health and wellbeing;
- Support appropriate recreation activities, events and the development of sustainable tourism for the benefit of the region; and
- Increase public awareness of the natural and cultural heritage throughout the region.

Partnership

Good partnerships are essential to the governance and management of the Regional Park. Working with our partners we have realised all of the goals laid out in the management plan for this year and, given the spectrum of varying aims and visions of our partners, it is thanks to the coordinated effort of our partners that we have achieved so much. In addition to the funding partners there are a number of other bodies and organisations with which the Lagan Valley Regional Park works.

The Rivers' Agency is responsible for work along the river system and they provide services such as grass cutting along the towpath in close association with DCAL. Forest Service manages Belvoir Park Forest and the National Trust manages the Minnowburn and Terrace Hill sites.

Our partners

Funding

Working together in partnership means that all partners benefit from a much greater value for their contribution as it is matched by others who contribute to the pot. The idea of synergy where the creation of a whole that is greater than the simple sum of its parts dates back to Ancient Greece, but it is being recognised and valued more today in modern business models (paper by F. Akdemir et al at the 25th Institute Project Management World Congress).

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Department for Infrastructure (Dfl)
- Belfast City Council
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Our management partners

Working together in partnership means that the benefits far outweigh individual organisations working alone.

- Forest Service
- The National Trust
- Council for Nature Conservation and Countryside (CNCC)
- Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT)
- Rivers' Agency
- The Navigation Trust
- Butterfly Conservation NI
- Transport NI



Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network (NIPAN)

The Regional Park is a member of NIPAN and through the support and facilitation of Northern Ireland Environment Link we are considering ways we can work efficiently across Northern Ireland by sharing resources, knowledge, expertise and experiences. In the interests of this collaborative approach we have developed a joint memorandum of understanding to help identify how this can work.

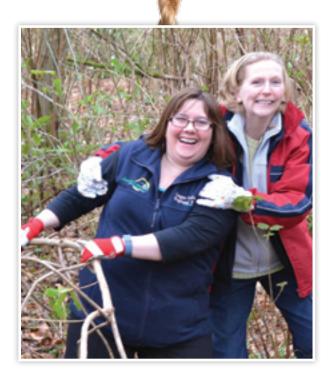
The New Councils settling in

The transition from the old council structure to the new has meant that our board structure has adjusted slightly to maintain the same level of support from the two new councils. Whereas we had two representatives from each of the three councils, we have changed our constitution so that we now have three council representatives from each of the two new super councils. The Regional Park's geographical area is now approximately split evenly between the two councils of Belfast City Council and of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. The rest of our board structure hasn't changed.

Changing Partnerships

The Regional Park has had close links with two departments within central government, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure. With the streamlining and reshuffling of central government these have now changed. Northern Ireland Environment Agency remains the same, but now sits in the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Department for Culture Arts and Leisure is now subsumed into the Department for Infrastructure.







Our Aims (continued)

Funding Workshop

Given the uncertainty over government funding into the future the Regional Park arranged for a workshop to be delivered through Community Change with the key object of exploring the broader sector and to see if there are any options for fiscal diversification. The workshop was facilitated by James Laverty a leading advisor for many years on funding in Northern Ireland who helped to guide our ideas and suggestions. The workshop enabled us to capture all suggestions and ideas from our partners and stakeholders and get a better understanding of how funding works in the broader sector. It has enabled us to develop a guide to those funding sources that are our most prudent options to explore.



This year the Forest Service hosted the annual Institute of Chartered Foresters Conference and Study Tour and we were pleased to help host one of the site visits to Belvoir Park Forest, setting the broader context of the forest's management and the surrounding linkages to the Regional Park.

Canals and River Restoration Conference

The Regional Park was invited to present at the UK's annual conference held in Birmingham this year entitled 'Getting it on the Map'. We were able to demonstrate our new heritage trail and signage and lead a workshop on trial development. This was a great opportunity to promote the Regional Park to a wider audience and shows that the signage and trail projects were of a high enough standard to attract interest across the UK.



Tackling antisocial activity

It's never a very nice thing to have to manage activity that is detrimental to a community and special area, but this year saw an unexpected upsurge in intravenous drug use, in part of the Regional Park, raising obvious concerns for staff and public alike.

One of the key advantages of being a co-ordinating organisation is that we were able to contact all of the leading stakeholders and managers into a focus group and from this each of us could offer support and actions to work together to tackle this issue. Thanks to all those partners involved, especially the PSNI, we were able to manage this problem and will continue to monitor the situation.



Visitor Centre

A Heritage and Social Hub

Lock Keeper's Cottage

The opening of the Lock Keeper's Cottage and the Industry Lighter has been managed by Lagan Valley Regional Park for several years now and coupled with the Lockeeper's café the site is a thriving hub of activity; the only place where a visitor can step back in time and see several restored features all on the same site. The Lock Keeper's Cottage was restored through Heritage Lottery and local council funding; the lock and old bridge were restored through Heritage Lottery and Central Government funding and the Industry Lighter was restored through European and local council funding.

In managing the opening of the cottage and lighter the Regional Park manages a pool of volunteer heritage guides. At the start of 2015 the barge had only recently been opened to the public and we were operating with 21 heritage guides. Throughout the year however the Regional Park has recruited a further 11 heritage guides who provide a living history of these features and the old Lagan Navigation.

When you visit the cottage and lighter the Heritage Guides will provide you with a tailored interpretation of this living history offering as much or as little information as you wish. Many of our Heritage Guides have been with us for several years and have built up an astonishing wealth of knowledge not only about these features and the Lagan Navigation of old but also the cultural heritage connecting communities with their past. The tables below clearly identify the amount of time our guides give to help us open these facilities to the public throughout the year.



LOCK KEEPER'S COTTAGE - 2015				
Month	Number of Heritage Guides	Hours Open	Number of Visitors	
January	14	81	620	
February	14	82	857	
March	15	110	880	
April	13	82	1024	
May	18	89	813	
June	17	99	1144	
July	14	100	1217	
August	14	90	1426	
September	17	92	1026	
October	14	110	1102	
November	17	107	546	
December	14	77	443	
TOTALS FOR 20	15	1119	11098	

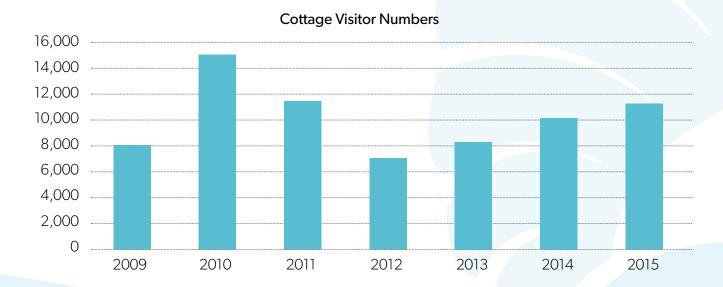
THE INDUSTRY LIGHTER - 2015				
Month	Number of Heritage Guides	Hours Open	Number of Visitors	
January	4	28	156	
February	6	50	449	
March	14	70	780	
April	11	80	972	
May	11	84	621	
June	11	82	644	
July	8	47	352	
August	11	68	849	
September	11	72	824	
October	9	92	791	
November	11	82	365	
December	11	75	391	
TOTALS FOR 20	15	830	7194	



Visitor Centre (continued)

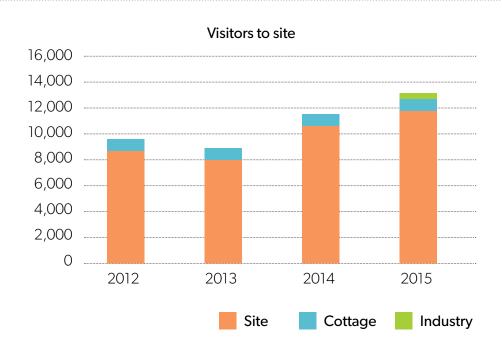
Visitors to the Lock Keeper's Cottage

The Lock Keeper's Cottage opened in 2008, shortly after the restoration was complete and we have been recording visitor numbers to the cottage since 2009. The year 2010 saw a concerted effort to launch the cottage and to promote it and could account for the particularly high number of visitors. As we moved into 2012 and 2013 the Landscape Partnership Fund, that funded the restoration, was coming to an end and there were no longer any dedicated staff to focus on this facility and there was a period where existing staff simply kept the fires lit, so to speak. Following this there has been a commitment from both council and Heritage Lottery Fund to the legacy of the project and we have been able to include some consistency to the management of the site. This is the first full year that the lighter has been open to the public and we will record visitor numbers each year as we have for the cottage.



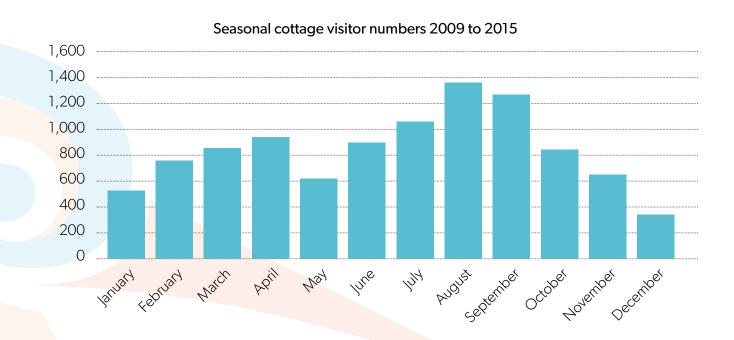






Seasonal trends

We can also show how visitor numbers change over the course of the year using the data collected over several years and as expected there is a drop off during the winter months and an odd dip around spring time.





Visitor Centre (continued)



The Lock Keeper's Cottage

At the Lock Keeper's Cottage you can expect a cosy welcome to a piece of Northern Ireland's living history. This is where the Lock Keeper and his family lived and looked after the lock. Join our Heritage Guides for a remarkable snap shot of life on the Lagan Navigation. The cottage is open most weekdays and occasional weekends.

The 3rd Lock

Known as McCleave's Lock, the third lock was restored in 2008. Where possible, the original stonework was kept during the restoration process with new stone being added where necessary. The lock gates had to be specially constructed to old plans from the Lagan Navigation, making it a fully functioning restored lock.

The Industry Lighter

Barges on the Lagan Navigation were called 'lighters' and the Industry was built in 1920 by Portadown Foundry. Used on the canal for part of its early life to transport a range of goods on the Lagan Navigation, much of its latter days were spent as a sand barge on Lough Neagh. The Industry will be open to visitors to look around and our Volunteer Heritage Guides will be on hand to provide more information and try to answer any questions visitors to the site may have.



Events Programme

Every year the Regional Park runs an exciting and extensive series of events aimed at getting people involved in the Regional Park's local heritage, its landscapes and its biodiversity or just to get out and about with good company and a healthy walk. This year due to restricted resources we cut out a few events from our programme but still managed to deliver 21 events engaging with over 400 people and children.



Discovery Mornings

Our series of seasonal walks with the ranger attracted 57 people, popular among walkers who enjoy a leisurely guided walk with a little insight into the joys and issues we face during our day to day management.



Heritage Walks

Our heritage based walks: Industry along the lagan, In the Valley of Giants, Secret Garden, Lagan Valley by Bus and the Secrets of the Stone Age attracted 127 people. These walks help to interpret the range of heritage features that can be found in the Regional Park, telling the story of our heritage from our early Stone Age settlers, through the Norman Invasion, the Irish Uprising and the more recent and fascinating industrial heritage of the Lagan Navigation.



Biodiversity Walks

Our wildlife walks focussing on birds, bats, butterflies, bees, fungi, wildflowers, woodland and trees attracted 156 people. These walks are important in informing people about the importance of our biodiversity and how it relates to our lives and what measures we take to manage and protect it.



Family Events

Family focused events brought 62 children along with their parents into the Regional Park this year to enthuse them from an early age on how exciting our natural environment can be from dipping a net in the pond and discovering all the wee beasties that thrive there to mucking in and building shelters from natures resources in our Bushcraft events.



The Stone Tapes

A 3D sound installation by Augustine Leudar

In addition to our own events the Regional Park also supports a range of other organisations who come into the area to run events. This year we supported an interesting event at the Giant's Ring where a ring of powerful speakers were set up within the henge and a 3D soundscape was played through the afternoon and evening.

The soundscape itself was a gradual progression over several hours from sounds that evoked our past connection with the landscape and the ancient features to a spookier soundscape as the henge monument was shrouded in dusk.

Going down into the ring from the banks was like being immersed in a sea of sound. The event attracted over 500 visitors.



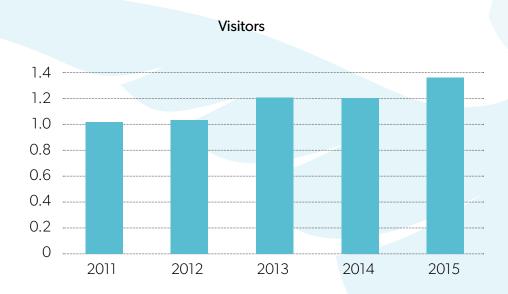
Lagan Valley Regional Park



The towpath forms a cultural, social and biodiversity link between the cities of Lisburn and Belfast, two of Northern Ireland's largest population centres. It is a quality section of the Ulster Way, a 'quality medium distance walk' under walk NI and it is part of the national cycle network. This year saw user numbers of 1.3 million for the towpath alone, easily making

Lagan Valley Regional Park the most visited outdoor attraction in Northern Ireland.

Obviously the towpath is just one path through the Regional Park, albeit the main corridor, so the actual usage of the whole Park is likely to be much bigger.



The Ranger Service

Effectively, whilst out patrolling in the Park the ranger is a mobile interpretation point for members of the community and visitors alike. The Ranger Service informs and educates visitors through direct public contact and through promotion at public events and fairs.



Volunteer Rangers

As well as our two staff rangers, you may well also meet one of our volunteer rangers whilst out and about in the Park. Our Ranger Service has been supported and greatly enhanced by the help of ten volunteer rangers this year who have given their time and hard work throughout the year. We would like to extend a big thank you to Mark, Alec, Melanie, Paul, Genevieve, Ronnie, Derek, Richard, Eamonn, Frank and Gary who have contributed 1019 hours to supporting the Ranger Service this year.

We especially would like to wish Mark and Melanie best wishes in their new jobs and whilst we were sad to see them leave, we were delighted that they have gone on to better things and hope that some of the experience and training received whist volunteering in the Park has helped.

What We Do

- Over 684 bags of litter collected
- Over 1447 public enquiries dealt with
- 6 public information stands
- 42 km of paths and trails patrolled weekly (that's over 2000km annually!)
- Responded to 22 incidents ranging from basic maintenance issues fed back to partner organisations to unauthorised use of chain saws in the Park
- 21 public events delivered; promoting biodiversity, heritage, health and the Regional Park
- Carrying out and facilitating survey work and transects for butterflies, badgers, otters, squirrels and bats
- Delivering 14 additional events for outside organisations and groups









TOTAL	1019
September - December	180
July - August	508
April - June	160
Jan - March	171
Quarter	Hours

Bushcraft Events

One of the key things to come out of our funding workshop was the possibility of exploring new income generators. Our Ranger Service has started to deliver bushcraft events to groups of children and parties. These events are a great opportunity to engage with children and teach them about our natural environment and how it relates to their lives in a practical way. There are lots of fun activities for the children to get involved with and these events are ideal for birthday parties and groups.



Public Interface



The Park Office is prominently positioned on the towpath at the Visitor Centre with the key attractions of the Lock Keeper's Cottage, the Industry Lighter, the lock and the café. The office is a primary interface for the public in dealing with enquiries and providing information and education. This year the Park Office dealt with over 1100 general queries.

These contacts may be in person, via email or by phone and account for around 40% of admin time. We also received enquires about volunteering, student projects and placements, planning, site security, directions, wildlife and heritage to name a few.

All of these queries require some form of follow up; whether it is site visits, investigation or contacting a relevant organisation. These range from reports and queries about wildlife and heritage, directions, access issues and recreation to complaints about litter, dog fouling, toilets, maintenance, fallen trees and vandalism.

This valuable service and the vast experience and expertise that our staff have developed over the years means that we are dealing with complaints and enquiries that would otherwise have to be fielded by the councils, DCAL or the Environment Agency and is one of the many ways of delivering cost effective services through partnership.



Volunteering

The Regional Park as an organisation has six key focus areas in its 10 year strategic vision, one of which is community and as such we envisage 'a park with people at its heart'.

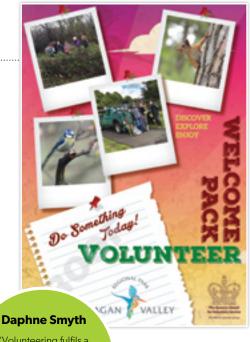
We want a park that is people focused, a place where everyone is welcome to visit, get involved and discover the park on our doorstep. It is a place that connects the hearts of two of Northern Ireland's largest population centres and has strong links with community. The Park has a great sense of cultural connectivity and links to its past. We believe the Park is a fantastic resource and will continue to develop events and other ways for people of all backgrounds and abilities to get involved. A thriving park with community at its heart presents a great economic asset to the region, where tourism can benefit all.

Volunteering has become an integral part of our organisation and we strive to operate our volunteer programme to the highest possible standard. As such this year we have endeavoured to review and revise our volunteer information and policies, simplifying where appropriate, and refining to ensure they are appropriate to take the programme forward into the future.

Volunteer Welcome Pack - Volunteer welcome pack gets a new look

Running in tandem and often informed by the Investing in Volunteers assessment process was the revision and reprint of our Volunteer Welcome Pack. This pack helps us to standardise our approach to welcoming volunteers and makes the induction of volunteers as simple and straightforward as possible whilst covering the basics.

The packs are now available in a handier A5 folder and contain an information booklet outlining what Lagan Valley Regional Park does and what volunteers can expect from us and what we expect from volunteers and other useful information; there is the main volunteering policy on a handy sheet; there are three forms, the registration form, the diversity monitoring form and a feedback form for volunteers who, for whatever reason, decide not to volunteer with us anymore and there are the four roles that we offer, clearly outlined with loads of information about what volunteers can expect to do in each of the roles. We have printed 400 packs, which we expect to keep us going until our next review in 2021.



'Volunteering fulfils a need to give something back. I enjoy the company, the outdoors, the fitness and a sense of achievement'



Policy Review

As part of the development for the new Volunteer Welcome Pack our policies about volunteering had to be reviewed and updated to keep us up to date with the changing guidance and regulation. Our Welcome Pack has our overarching policy regarding volunteering in the Park and our full list of policies are referred to when a new volunteer enrols with us. If anyone needs to refer to the full list they are available on our website under volunteer resources and from our office.



Volunteering (continued)

Web site Volunteer Resources

We are always open to suggestions from our volunteers and welcome your input and views and this year we have expanded the volunteering tab on our website. The tab now has 4 pages to access. The first page you go to which is a general introduction to the roles and volunteering in the Park has been updated. The first page 'Meet the Volunteers' remains unchanged, there is a new page called 'Volunteer Resources' with all polices and information on the cottage and lighter, another new page has quarterly updates, a way of us letting you know what has been happening and of updating you all of news and events, and the last page has our updated Volunteer Welcome Pack available electronically.

Mayor's Award for Volunteering 2016

Volunteering in the Lagan Valley Regional Park has a long history of excellence and high standards, and this year we are proud to announce that our Heritage Guides were nominated for the Mayor's Award (LCCC) for Volunteer Team of the Year.

Investing in Volunteers Accreditation

The Regional Park was initially awarded the 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation as part of the Laganscape HLF funded programme, however the Park and its partners are committed to continued support of this investment far into the future.

'The Investing in Volunteers' accreditation is a UK-wide standard that is awarded to organisations who involve volunteers in their work and shows to others that the standard of volunteer management is of a high standard.

We have been working on the assessment process and whilst this is a considerable investment in terms of time and effort, it enables us to measure how effective we are in our management of volunteers within the organisation.

It serves as a guide to give the organisation a thorough check up from board level and strategy, through management and staff and of course has a massive volunteer involvement.

Volunteer Training and Investment

This year's training sessions included seed collection and storing and wetland management. In addition 4 volunteer rangers joined 2 of our staff to complete City and Guilds qualifications on herbicide treatment. Congratulations to Gary, Genevieve, Mark, Derek, Nichola and Dan for achieving NVQ level 2: PA1 and PA6 Pesticides. We hope we can put this into action in future management of our three key invasive plant species Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed. Each year our Heritage Guides are invited to a meeting, keeping them up to date with changes and news relating to the cottage and lighter.



spending your time constructively and it's good to know you're helping the environment and the local community'



Carol Laird



This year's reward days or best practice study trips were to the Belfast Hills where Lisa gave us a tour of all the conservation work going on in the Hills and Clotworthy house where we saw how they promote and interpret their local heritage. These trips, a great way of saying thank you to our volunteers, are not only a great chance to socialise and have a bit of craic, they are also an important way of promoting ourselves and getting a better understating of how things are done in other areas.







Volunteering (continued)



T-Shirts

Everyone is looking fantastic in the new tee-shirts! Our new logo looks well and it is a great way of promoting the Park as well as our volunteering opportunities.

We have had three hundred printed in all shapes and sizes so if there are any of our volunteers out there who haven't got one yet, just call in and pick one up.

especially when it's dry. I volunteer because I like to be outside as much as I can and the exercise is good. I have walked the forest and towpath for 30 years and wanted to be able to keep them in good condition'



Wildlife in the Lagan Valley

Lagan Valley Regional Park Rangers play a key role in protecting the numerous species of wildlife in the Park.

We would like to say a big thank you to all of our Volunteer Wildlife Surveyors. Species that are surveyed include, badgers, bats, otters, butterflies, squirrels and recently the elusive pine marten has been added to the list. Many of our events focus on our furry and feathered friends creating opportunities to educate the general public on the importance of conservation of the ecosystems, habitats and landscapes in the Park and creating a safe environment for wildlife to thrive.



