

Garvagh Forest Trails Development (Capital Works Project to Develop trails at Garvagh Forest)	12th December 2017
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and enhancing our environment and assets Health & Wellbeing & Cohesive Community
Outcome	Improved access to recreational facilities
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation Services Coast and Countryside Manager
Cost: (If applicable)	Capital £ 541,000 / Revenue £43k p/a

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Garvagh MTB Forest Trails Project and to seek approval to progress to Stage 2 of the Capital Project Works Programme.

Background

Officers within the Leisure & Development Directorate are working on the development of a project to construct approximately 15kms of cycling and multi-use trails at Garvagh Forest. Council approval was given in October 2016 to move to stage 1, to advance on the design and feasibility of this project which will provide enhancement of the existing walking product, through the extension of walking trails by a further 5 km and the inclusion of mountain bike cycle trails. In addition, it is proposed to locate the trailhead at the current car park off the Carhill Road and to extend this to accommodate additional car parking spaces.

Council's Capital Projects Team has been engaged to progress the technical aspects of the project including preparation of the planning application and tender documentation. Doran Consulting has been commissioned to undertake an appraisal of the original trail development costs that were prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI, and Architrail is assisting with the development of a business case that has identified final project costs. A business case for the project has now been completed.

Estimated Capital Cost

The appraisal by Doran Consulting has indicated that total project costs of the initial design would be approximately £691,000.

The project costings include the following elements;

- Preliminary design.
- Site clearance.
- Trail construction.
- Site improvement works.
- Interpretation & data collection.
- Facilities.
- Trail head.

Therefore the net capital cost to Council if approved is £541,000 with the balance of the project to be met by external funding.

Revenue Running Cost

Based upon the operating costs of existing mountain bike facilities throughout Northern Ireland, it has been estimated by Doran Consulting and in discussion with other Councils who have developed similar projects; the operating costs for Garvagh will be approximately £43,000 per annum.

Funding

Two external funding streams have been identified and applications submitted.

The Sport NI Everybody Active 2020 is focused on the provision of opportunity for the population to engage in physical activity. The development of both walking and cycling trails in Garvagh Forest is well suited to this programme. Council's application has now progressed to phase 2 of the competition and the submission of a project business case to Sport NI will determine if the application is successful. Council has applied for a maximum of £120,000 at 50% of total project cost. As this programme is focused on participation in physical activity it can only fund project elements that introduce people to physical activity. The inclusion of 5 km of walking trails and blue and green grade cycle trails meet that need.

An application was submitted to the Landfill Community Fund under object D which aims to enhance public amenity of sites. This application has secured £30,000 of funding towards the project subject to match funding from Everybody Active 2020 and Council funding.

Funding source	Amount applied for	Outcome
Landfill Community Fund	£30,000	Successful -subject to securing Sport NI and Council funding
Sport NI – Everybody Active 2020 Award	£120,000	Progressed to Stage 2. Awaiting submission of business case.

This provides £150,000 of external funding towards the project leaving an outstanding amount of approximately £541,000 to be met by Council.

Business Case

A business case considering all the elements of the project development has been prepared in line with Council's own procedures. This is also required to satisfy the requirements of the Everybody Active 2020 programme (attached at **Annex A**).

Forest Service Agreements

As this project is located within Forest Service estate, it is necessary for Council to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Forest Service. Subsequently this will lead to a specific licence agreement for the project within Garvagh Forest. A number of consultations have been held with Forest Service and Council is now in a position to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and to progress the licence agreement.

Timescale

Subject to Council and funders' approval, statutory permission and agreement from Forest Service, it is anticipated that construction works can commence in June 2018 and be completed by December 2018.

Recommendation

Member's approval is sought to allow for further development of this project to:

- i. Approval of the Business Case.
- ii. Commence Stage 2 of the Capital Project Works Project.

The pro forma is based on the 10-step general appraisal guidance from the [Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation \(NIGEAE\)](#). For more detailed guidance on the economic appraisal of investments, please refer directly to that document.

File Ref: BCGJ21117

Project Title: **Garvagh Forrest Community Trails Development**

Prepared by: Jonathan Gray
(Officer Name Printed)

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(Signature)

Date: 30/11/17

1. Strategic Context

Background - Garvagh Forest Community Trails

This project fits with the aims of Everybody Active 2020, by developing new outdoor recreational trails which will increase community participation in sport and physical recreation.

The key aim of this project is to create a Community Health Hub in Garvagh Forest through the development of multi-use, walk and off-road family cycling trails detailed below:

1. Walking /Multi-use trail 6.8 km

These proposed new trails will start from the main trail head situated off the main street of Garvagh. They will be 2-way, looped and fully waymarked. This will offer options for a wide range of users from those with limited mobility to those who are more active. Of the 6.8km multi-use trail, 1.2km is suitable for users of limited mobility.

2. Family Cycling Trail 5.6 km

This cycle trail has been specifically designed to cater for a wide range of users including children and families. This is NOT a technical mountain bike trail. It includes a small 1.2km skills circuit that typically appeals to children and young people.

3. Red Trail 8.2 km

This trail is designed to cater more for experienced users and to provide the next level of challenge for beginners but without the technical rigor required for Black trails.

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4. Carpark Extension

It is proposed to locate the trailhead at the current car park off the Carhill Road. This will extend the current car parking capacity from 8 to 30 cars, to accommodate the expected increase in recreational visitors.

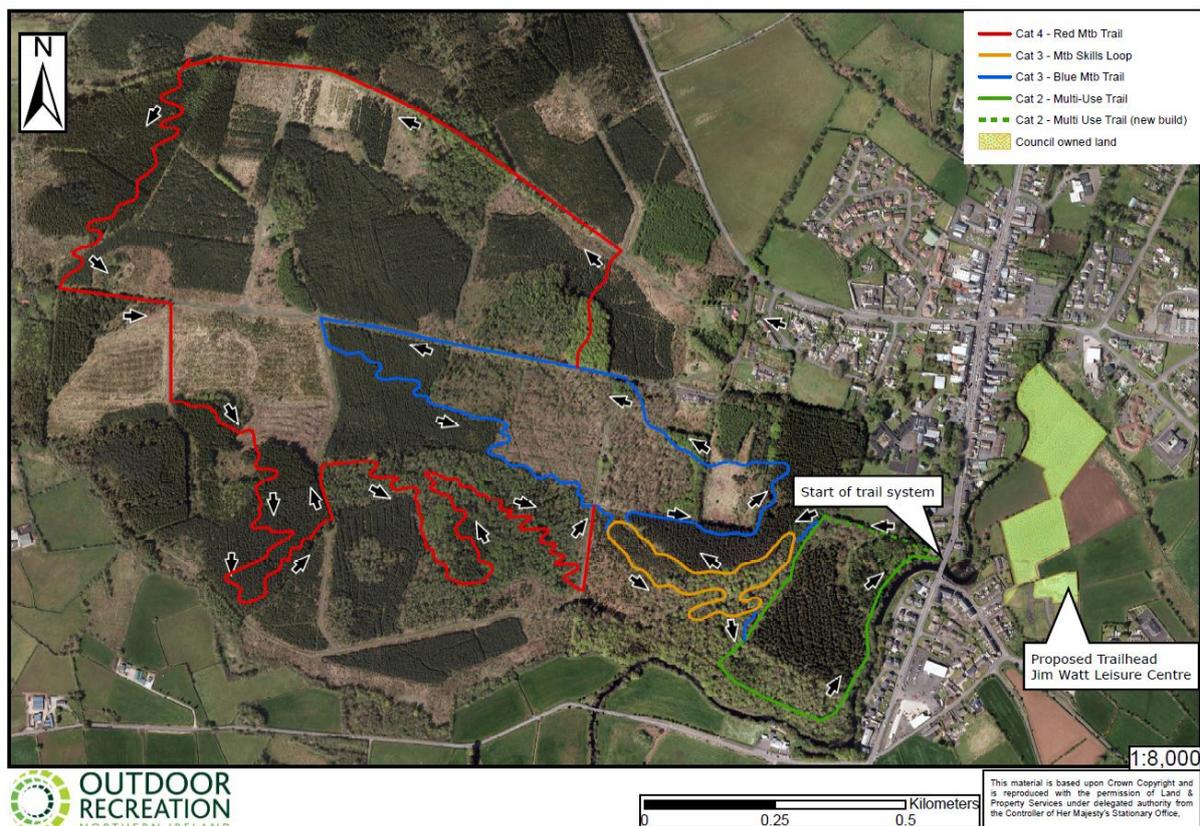
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Timescale

Subject to Council and funders' approval, statutory permission and agreement from Forest Service it is anticipated that construction works could commence in June 2018 and be complete by December 2018.

Map



2. Assessment of Need

In recent years, cycling in general has experienced a period of unprecedented growth. Within the sport, off road cycling is currently recognised as one of the fastest growing outdoor recreation activities in the UK and Ireland in terms of both participation and economic benefit.

Since 2011, 6 purpose built mountain bike trail centres and 2 local mountain bike facilities have opened across Northern Ireland; the location of each is shown in Fig.1 below.



Fig. 1: Location of Mountain Bike Trail Centres across Northern Ireland

The consistently high user numbers recorded at these centres are evidence of the popularity of mountain biking in Northern Ireland. Full details of user numbers for the year 2015 – 2016 are contained in Table 1 below.

Visitor Counter Data

MOUNTAIN BIKE SITES (NATIONAL)	2015/2016 (ANNUAL TOTALS)
Rostrevor Forest (MTB and DH Trail)	17,315
Castlewellan Forest (MTB Trail)	35,466
Castlewellan Forest (Pump Track)	28,409
Davagh Forest (MTB Trail)	17,604

MOUNTAIN BIKE SITES (REGIONAL)	2015/2016 (ANNUAL TOTALS)
Barnetts Demesne	29,945
Blessingbourne Estate	13,130

MULTI-USE TRAILS	2015/2016 (ANNUAL TOTALS)
Tober Mhuire, Crossgar (Walk & Bike)	23,069
Castle Ward National Trust (Walk & Bike)	54,776
Bunkers Hill, Castlewellan (Walk & Bike)	33,075
Castlewellan Forest (Lake Path Walk & Bike)	127,898

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It is difficult to precisely quantify how many people take part in off road cycling within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area. This is partly because the majority of enthusiast mountain bikers are not members of clubs but prefer to ride in groups with peers, however evidence points to an active off road cycling scene.

This is demonstrated by the following factors -

- At least 6 local cycling clubs with either official or unofficial off-road wings
- Club trips to other formal trail centres across Northern Ireland, ROI and Scotland
- Popularity of off road events hosted in the area e.g. Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup (Ballycastle Forest) and Trailquest
- Evidence of informal mountain bike trails in forests including Garvagh, Binevenagh, Cam, Springwell, Grange and Ballycastle.

Within the Mountain Bike Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-242, the following sites within the Council area are identified for trail centre development –

1. Glenariff Forest (National Trail Centre)
2. Binevenagh Forest (National Trail Centre)
3. Garvagh Forest (Regional Trail Centre)
4. Tardree Forest (Regional Trail Centre)

However, as yet there is no formal provision of off-road cycling within the Borough.

Based on the visitor counter data recorded elsewhere (Table 1), it is reasonably projected that the Garvagh Trails will generate in the order of 15,000 to 20,000 visits per year.

3. Objectives & Constraints

Objectives

The objective of providing the Garvagh Forrest Community Trails is to provide a facility that will lead to increased levels of participation in physical activity.

It has been proven by extensive research that increasing participation to or beyond five 30 minute sessions per week leads to a major decrease in both physical and mental ill health and a consequent increase in wellbeing.

Current rates of participation in physical activity in the Borough are about 35% and while that compares favourably with the Northern Ireland average, there is still much room for improvement with 65% of the population undertaking insufficient physical activity.

Provision of the Garvagh Forrest Community Trails will also have a positive economic effect as they will lead to an increase in footfall in the village. This is particularly true as the trailhead and associated car parking is within the village itself so trail users will have the village facilities within easy reach of where the Trails start and finish.

Constraints

A number of constraints / risks exist in relation to the successful delivery of the project objectives;

- Availability of Council funding
- Availability of external funding
- Ability to deliver project - Delivery team capacity
- Ability to deliver projected visitor numbers - Design quality
- Ability to deliver projected visitor numbers – Promotion and management of the trails

These constraints and risks are examined further in this Short Business Case together with, where relevant, the mitigations and controls that will be put in place to manage them and ensure that they do not prejudice the delivery and success of the project should both Council and external funding be approved.

4. Identify and Shortlist the Options

Option 1 – Do nothing

While this option is considered as a baseline, it does not achieve any of the stated objectives of the project.

Option 2 – Trail Mix A

1. Walking /Multi-use trail 6.8 km

These proposed new trails will start from the main trail head situated off the main street of Garvagh. They will be 2-way, looped and fully waymarked. This will offer options for a wide range of users from those with limited mobility to those who are more active. Of the 6.8km multi-use trail, 1.2km is suitable for users of limited mobility.

2. Family Cycling Trail 5.6 km

This cycle trail has been specifically designed to cater for a wide range of users including children and families. This is NOT a technical mountain bike trail. It includes a small 1.2km skills circuit that typically appeals to children and young people.

3. Red Trail 8.2 km

This trail is designed to cater more for experienced users and to provide the next level of challenge for beginners but without the technical rigor required for Black trails.

4. Carpark Extension

It is proposed to locate the trailhead at the current car park off the Carhill Road. This will extend the current car parking capacity from 8 to 30 cars, to accommodate the expected increase in recreational visitors.

Option 3 – Trail Mix B

This option is the same as Trail Mix A with the addition of 4.4 km of Black Trails.

Black grade trails are only suitable for expert mountain bike users, used to physically demanding routes. An advanced level of off-roading skill and technical ability is required and these trails are only suitable for very active people used to prolonged effort.

While Garvagh Forrest presents significant opportunity for the construction of Black Trails, there is considerable additional cost to both construct and maintain them.

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Option Number	Description	Short listed / Rejected (S) or (R)	Reason for Rejection
1	Status Quo	S	Baseline option.
2	Trail Mix A as described above	S	N/A
3	Trail Mix B as described above	S	N/A

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5. Monetary Costs & Benefits

Estimated Capital Cost

Outline design cost estimates by Doran Consulting show that the total project capital cost estimate for Trail Mix A is £691,000

The addition of the Black Trails to make Trail Mix B brings the total cost estimate to £856,000

The project costings include the following elements;

- Preliminary design
- Site Clearance
- Trail Construction
- Site Improvement Works
- Interpretation & data Collection Facilities
- Trail Head

The detail of the cost estimate is as follows;

Description	Doran		
	Quantity	Rate	Amount
Preliminaries (To Include D&B Micro Design)		10%	£90,000.00
Site Clearance	7604	£2.50	£19,009.17
Trails			
Black Trail (Expert Users)	4400	£37.50	£165,000.00
Red Trail (Experienced Users)	8200	£30.00	£246,000.00
Blue Trail (Beginner / Intermediate)	4400	£20.50	£90,200.00
Skills Trail (Controlled Training / Practice)	1200	£35.00	£42,000.00
Multi-Use (Category 2 - On Existing Forest Roads)	1300	£2.95	£20,000.00
Multi-Use (Category 3 - On Existing Forest Roads)	5500	£2.95	£20,000.00
Walking Trails	0	£0.00	£0.00
Site Improvement Works			
Improvement Works to Pyramid Area	1	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Interpretation & Data Collection			
Trail Signage (Interpretation & Waymarker)	1	£8,500.00	£8,500.00
Visitor Counters	1	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Facilities			
Bike Wash	1	£9,500.00	£9,500.00
Trail Head Car Park			
General Site Clearance	1400	£2.50	£3,500.00
Tree Felling	17	£500.00	£8,500.00
Earthworks	2000	£35.00	£70,000.00
Kerbs	155	£15.00	£2,325.00
Surface Overlay	402	£12.00	£4,824.00
New Pavement	1000	£40.00	£40,000.00
Retaining Wall	60	£130.00	£7,800.00
Alterations to Existing Entrance / Boundary Wall	1	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
White Lining	1	£3,500.00	£3,500.00
Picnic Tables	6	£500.00	£3,000.00
CAPITAL WORKS TOTAL			£855,658.17
Annual Maintenance	25000	£1.50	£37,500.00

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Funding

Two external funding streams have been identified and applications submitted.

Sport NI – Everybody Active 2020

The Sport NI Everybody Active 2020 is focused on the provision of opportunity for the population to engage in physical activity. The development of both walking and cycling trails in Garvagh Forest is well suited to this programme.

Council's application has now progressed to phase 2 of the competition and if approved by Council, the submission of this Project Business Case to Sport NI will determine if the application is successful.

Council has applied for a maximum of £120,000 at 50% of total project cost. As this programme is focused on participation in physical activity it can only fund project elements that introduce people to physical activity. The inclusion of 5 km of walking trails and blue and green grade cycle trails fully meet that requirement.

Landfill Community Fund – Object D

Application was submitted to the Landfill Community Fund under object D which aims to enhance public amenity of sites. This application has secured £30,000 of funding towards the project subject to match funding from Everybody Active 2020 and Council funding approval.

This provides £150,000 of external funding towards the project leaving an outstanding amount of approximately £541,000 to be met by Council if Option 2 is selected and £706,000 to be met by Council if Option 3 is selected.

Revenue Running Cost

Based upon the operating costs of existing mountain bike facilities throughout Northern Ireland and discussion with other Councils who have developed similar projects the operating costs are estimated to be £37,500 per annum.

In addition, there is a requirement for the trails to be inspected weekly and this adds £6,000 to the revenue costs giving a total of £43,500 per annum.

Monetary Benefits

As a generally free to use facility, the Garvagh Forrest Community Trails will generate no direct income.

Where paid events are held, the revenue generated will be needed to pay the events cost and is therefore not reckonable as a monetary benefit in the context of this business case.

As with other facilities of this type, the benefits are non-monetary and accrue in the areas of health, wellbeing and visitor numbers as discussed further in the next section.

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Option Number	Total Capital Expenditure £	Total Annual Recurring Expenditure £	Total Annual Benefit £	NPV £
1	£0	£0	£0	£0
2	£691k	£43.5k	£0	£885k
3	£856k	£45.0k	£0	£1,056k

6. Non-Monetary Costs & Benefits

In this section, the greatest benefit is scored as 5 and no benefit is scored as 0 with intermediate benefits scored between 0 and 5 accordingly.

Option 1

Option 1, by definition, involves doing nothing and therefore has no benefits.

Option 2

Health benefits for Option 2 score 4 out of 5 as it delivers a high level of health benefit but perhaps not the highest as it does not provide the greatest amount of facilities – i.e. omits the Black Trails. However the Black Trails are likely to attract a small number of users who are already very active and therefore the health value of the additional participation is considered to be low. The proxy to measure the health benefits is the number of users and that is to be measured by having counters installed on various key sections of the trails as part of the project. The initial target is to have 15,000 visits to the facility per year and this must be measured and reviewed on an annual basis.

Additional footfall benefits for Option 2 score 4 out of 5 as it delivers a high level of additional footfall benefit but perhaps not the highest as it does not provide the greatest amount of facilities – i.e. omits the Black Trails. However the Black Trails are likely to attract a small number of users and therefore the additional footfall benefits are considered to be low. The proxy to measure the additional footfall benefits is the number of users and that is again to be measured by having counters installed on various key sections of the trails as part of the project. The initial target is to have 15,000 visits to the facility per year and this must be measured and reviewed on an annual basis.

Option 3

Health benefits for Option 3 score 5 out of 5 as it delivers the highest level of health benefit because it provides the greatest amount of facilities – i.e. includes the Black Trails. However the Black Trails are likely to attract a small number of users who are already very active and therefore the health value of the additional participation is considered to be low – thus this option scores only 1 mark better than Option 2. The proxy to measure the health benefits is the number of users and that is to be measured by having counters installed on various key sections of the trails as part of the project. The initial target is to have 15,000 visits to the facility per year and this must be measured and reviewed on an annual basis.

Additional footfall benefits for Option 3 score 5 out of 5 as it delivers the highest level of additional footfall benefit because it provides the greatest amount of facilities – i.e. includes the Black Trails. However the Black Trails are likely to attract a small number of users and therefore the additional footfall benefits are considered to be low – thus this option scores only 1 mark better than Option 2. The proxy to measure the footfall benefits is the number of users and that is to be measured by having counters installed on various key sections of the trails as part of the project. The initial target is to have 15,000 visits to the facility per year and this must be measured and reviewed on an annual basis.

The magnitude of the additional footfall benefit can be estimated by considering additionality and average spend. Given the size of the local population, it is estimated that in the region of two thirds of the visits to the facility (10,000 of the 15,000) will be from beyond the Garvagh area and therefore represent additionality to the immediate area. Research shows that “all day” visitors to similar facilities spend an average of £14 per person per visit in the immediate vicinity of the facility. It is expected that the majority of visitors to the Garvagh Community Trails will be 2 – 3 hours rather than all day so it is considered reasonable to reduce the £14 to £5 per person per visit giving an increase in local spend of £50,000 per year and a total impact of £80,000 per year based on a standard multiplier of 1.6 for this type of local spend.

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Cost or Benefit Detail	Measurement Steps	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
		Cost	Benefit	Cost	Benefit	Cost	Benefit
Health Benefits	Number of visits per year to the facility		0		4		5
Additional footfall benefits	Number of visits per year to the facility		0		4		5
Total Option Scores:			0		8		10

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7. Assessment of Risks & Uncertainties

A high level assessment of the Project Delivery risks together with the risk ratings and mitigation / management measures is set out in the table below.

Risk Detail	Risk Probability (1, Low – 2, Medium – 3,High)			Countermeasure
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	
Availability of Council Funding	N/A	2	3	Project will be unable to proceed without the external funding that has been applied for. Short Business Case will be presented to Council for approval. Option 3 is much more expensive with little additional return.
Availability of External Funding	N/A	1	3	LCF funding has been approved and Everybody Active submission has been made. Short Business Case to be submitted to Sport NI. No funding available for Option 3 Black Trails
Ability to deliver the Project to cost and time – Delivery Team Capacity	N/A	1	1	A competent and experienced internal delivery team is in place. If the project proceeds, a competent and experienced Integrated Client Team will be appointed. Council's rigorous and proven Project Management System will be applied.
Ability to deliver projected visit numbers – Design Quality	N/A	1	1	A competent and experienced internal delivery team is in place. If project proceeds, a competent and experienced trail designer will be appointed.
Ability to deliver projected visit numbers – Promotion and management of the Trails	N/A	1	1	If Council approve the project, it must be a condition of both internal and external funding that a comprehensive Trail Promotion and Management Plan is approved prior to the award of the construction contract.
Overall Risk Level	N/A	1	3	

8. Option summary & Recommendations

The option summary and recommendations are set out below.

Summary Table

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Total Capital Cost (£)	£0	£691k Gross £541k Net	£856k Gross £706 Net
Total Recurrent Cost (£)	£0	£43.5k pa	£45k pa
Total Project Cost (£)	£0	£885k NPV	£1,056k NPV
Non-Monetary Benefits Ranking	N/A	2 nd	1 st
Risk Assessment (1, Low – 2, Medium – 3, High)	N/A	1	3

Preferred Option:

Option 2 is the least cost option that meets the project objectives. It ranks as the lowest risk and although Option 3 scores higher in terms of non-monetary value, it is only marginally so and at much greater cost. Accordingly, Option 2 is identified as the preferred option.

Option 2 – Trail Mix A

1. Walking /Multi-use trail 6.8 km

These proposed new trails will start from the main trail head situated off the main street of Garvagh. They will be 2-way, looped and fully waymarked. This will offer options for a wide range of users from those with limited mobility to those who are more active. Of the 6.8km multi-use trail, 1.2km is suitable for users of limited mobility.

2. Family Cycling Trail 5.6 km

This cycle trail has been specifically designed to cater for a wide range of users including children and families. This is NOT a technical mountain bike trail. It includes a small 1.2km skills circuit that typically appeals to children and young people.

3. Red Trail 8.2 km

This trail is designed to cater more for experienced users and to provide the next level of challenge for beginners but without the technical rigor required for Black trails.

4. Carpark Extension

It is proposed to locate the trailhead at the current car park off the Carhill Road. This will extend the current car parking capacity from 8 to 30 cars, to accommodate the expected increase in recreational visitors.

If the external grant aid applications are successful, the estimated net capital cost to council of Option 2 is £541k. This is equivalent to the level of underspend in the 2016 / 17 Capital Grants Programme and therefore the revenue provision for that level of loan charges is already in place without any further effect on the District Rate. Members had previously indicated that they wished to consider using this provision to deliver the Garvagh Forrest Community Trails.

If Members approve the project, the estimated annual running costs of Option 2 are £43.5k per year. While the broader economic benefits of the project are forecast to exceed this at between £50k and £80k per year, it is of note that this economic benefit is indirect so the £43,5k per year has to be found from within Councils annual revenue budget.

9. Monitoring & Post Implementation Review

If the project is approved, it is recommended that a Trail Promotion and Management Plan be put in place.

The Trail Promotion and Management Plan should contain Key Performance Indicators in relation to the number of annual visits to the site and other projected benefits.

Appropriate and robust visit number counters must be maintained in working order throughout the site and must be read regularly to ensure their continuing operation.

Performance against Visit Number targets and the other relevant KPI's in the Trail Promotion and Management Plan must be monitored and reported annually to measure the success of the project and fulfil the requirements of good practice in respect of Benefits Realisation and Post Project Evaluation.

10. Management & Evaluation Considerations

This project is not considered to be novel, contentious or high risk and accordingly no special management or evaluation conditions are recommended beyond Council Project Management procedures currently in place.

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Appendix A – Option Costs NCP

Option 2 Trail Mix A							
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Totals
Capital Costs							0
	690658	0	0	0	0	0	690658
							0
(a) Total Capital Costs	690658	0	0	0	0	0	690658
Revenue Costs							0
	0	43500	43500	43500	43500	43500	217500
							0
							0
							0
(b) Total Revenue Costs	0	43500	43500	43500	43500	43500	217500
(c) Total Cost (= (a)+(b))	690658	43500	43500	43500	43500	43500	908158
(d) Discount Factor (@3.5%pa)	1	0.9662	0.9335	0.9019	0.8174	0.842	
(e) NPC (= (c)x(d))	690658	42029.7	40607	39232.7	35556.9	36627	884711.5

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Option 2 - Trail Mix B							
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Totals
Capital Costs	855658						0
							855658
							0
(a) Total Capital Costs	855658	0	0	0	0	0	855658
Revenue Costs		45000	45000	45000	45000	45000	0
							225000
							0
							0
							0
(b) Total Revenue Costs	0	45000	45000	45000	45000	45000	225000
(c) Total Cost (= (a)+(b))	855658	45000	45000	45000	45000	45000	1080658
(d) Discount Factor (@3.5%pa)	1	0.9662	0.9335	0.9019	0.8174	0.842	
(e) NPC (= (c)x(d))	855658	43479	42008	40585.5	36783	37890	1056403