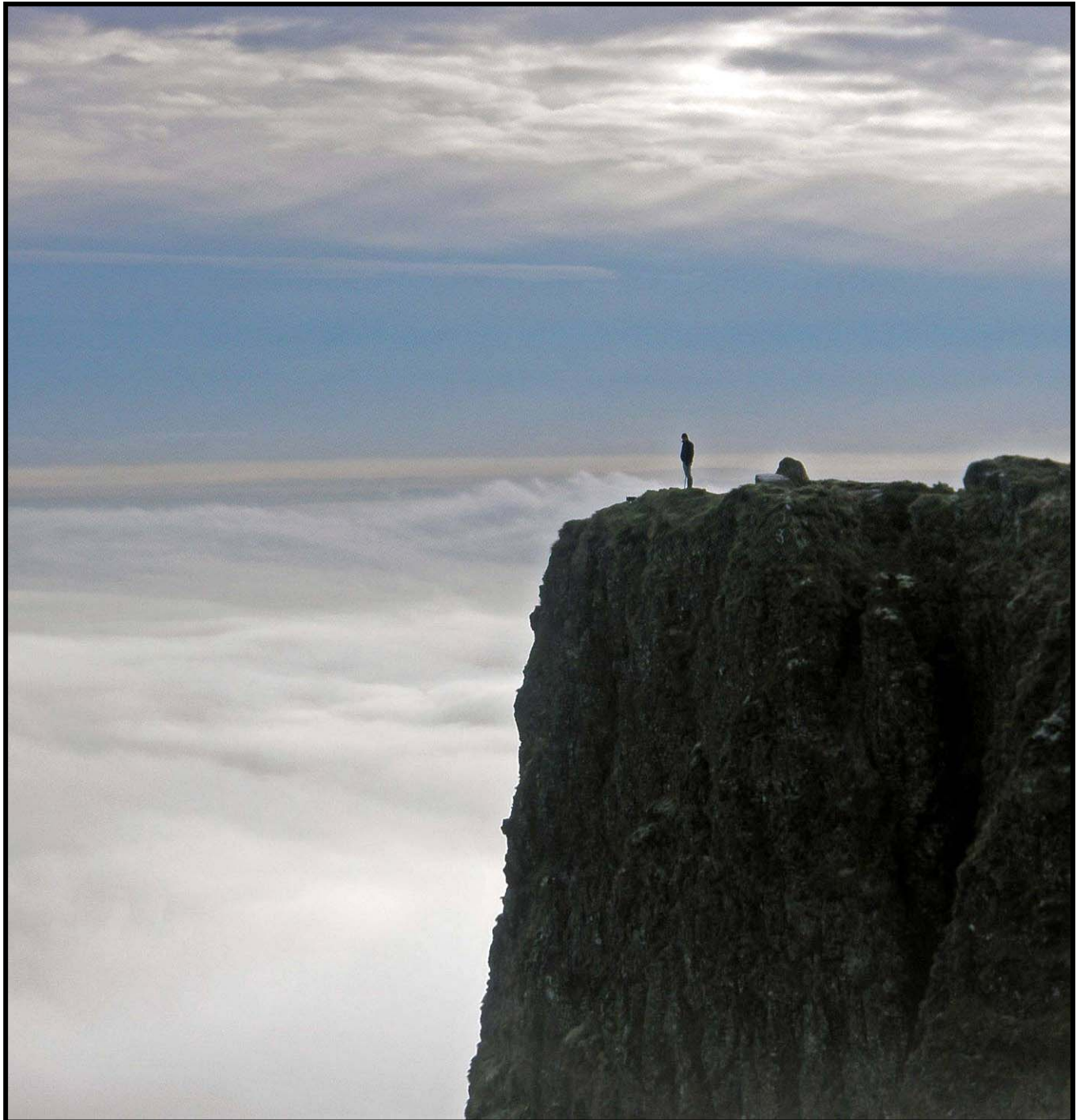




Belfast Hills
Partnership

Annual Report
April 2007 to March 2008



McArts Fort, Cave Hill, Feb 08

COMPANY INFORMATION

Directors

G Best
J Blaney
C Calvert
G Campbell
J Crilly
M Dobson
T Duffy
T Enright
C Hamill
M Lucas
J McMullan – Co-opted
Treasurer

E Rainey
J Rodgers
T Russell
I Simpson

Independent Chair
K Patterson

Company Secretary
J Bradley

Company Number
NI053189

Charity Ref no
XR70288

Auditors

FGS McClure Watters
Thomas House
14-16 James St South
Belfast
BT2 0HW

Bankers

First Trust Bank
2/4 Finaghy Road North
Belfast
BT10 0JA

Solicitors

Cleaver Fulton Rankin
50 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7FW



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This past year has been the first year of our second 3 year funding cycle, so I'd like to begin by thanking all of our funders for their continued support and, not withstanding possible changes in local government, I hope that they will continue to support the work of the Partnership.

It has been a good year with much progress being made across the hills by both this Partnership and our partners.

- Congratulations to the National Trust for securing further parts of the Black Mountain which will be protected for the future.
- The designation of new Local Nature Reserves in the hills by Lisburn City and Newtownabbey Borough Councils of the sites at Slievenacloy and Carnmoney Hill. This is also a great sign that the nature conservation value of the Belfast Hills is getting the recognition it deserves.
- The Partnership's own Biodiversity booklet and CD-ROM have also made a great contribution to this recognition and remains very popular with the general public.

Another document produced and distributed in the year was the Access Code. Tailored specifically for Belfast Hills, this reflected the real partnering work that is now going on within the Partnership by interest groups that in the past were not always in agreement.

As well as successes during the year, there have also been some ongoing and long term issues.

For instance, concerns for personal safety have been raised right across Northern Ireland including many of our local parks and open spaces. Imaginative and proactive approaches have been taken at Cave Hill and Colin Glen to tackle these difficult issues. In dealing with antisocial behaviour we are trying to make sure that we all feel

safe as we use all these wonderful resources.

We need to take a similar approach to the prevention and control of a particular threat to our hills, namely wild fires, many started deliberately and causing major damage to our important habitats and wildlife.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Partnership were revised to order to streamline changes to the Board and the method of re-election of trustees. The new Articles reflect the growing confidence between all the interest groups represented at Board level.

A number of new policies were worked up and agreed such as

- Financial Reserves Policy,
 - Volunteering Policy and
 - Publicity Procedures Policy,
- all aimed at improving how we handle these aspects of our work.

With regards to staffing, we are still having problems securing administrative staff but have benefited by the efforts of Ruby Kirkland, a long term volunteer in our office whose assistance has proved indispensable, and I offer the Board thanks to her for all the time and effort given. We have also filled the part time post of Communications and Information Officer which has proved very positive in raising the profile of our achievements which may have in the past gone unsung.

Other positive news in the hills has been the array of sightings and wildlife records reported either directly by staff or indirectly by wildlife enthusiasts and visitors. Dark green fritillary butterflies, bird's nest orchids, Irish hares and barn owl sightings have all been reported and recorded. These sightings are extremely important in targeting specific management of the hills but also in generally raising the profile of the hills in terms of their unique importance.

Finally, many of you will be aware that this is my 4th year as Chair, a position I assumed on the understanding that this was to be for a year.

I have enjoyed these years and indeed learned much about the beauty and importance of the hills. I feel however that it is time some new blood was introduced and in January I informed the Board of my intention to retire at the next AGM. This therefore will be my last Chairman's Report. I am prepared to continue for a short period until a new independent chair is appointed.

I would like to express my thanks to many people.

Firstly I would like to thank the Board members for their encouragement to me and their tolerance and support for me over the past years. Their enthusiasm and knowledge of the hills made my job both easy and rewarding. It has been great to see the Partnership grow in confidence and understanding.

Secondly to all the partnership staff, Jim Bradley without whom the Partnership would be very much the poorer, his

knowledge, skill and enthusiasm have made the Partnership the success that it is. We are, I'm sure, glad to see Lizzy back with us, her work has been exemplary, her advice and reports on planning issues have been vital in that important aspect of the partnership's work. When Andrea joined the team the promotion of the Partnership's work took on a new dimension. Her work has raised the profile of the Partnership in the public arena and I believe the Belfast Hills Partnership is generally accepted as the first point of contact for all matters relating to the Hills.

To Jim, Lizzy, Andrea and all the volunteers and observers on behalf of the Board I say thank you for all your hard work over the past years.

Finally I commend the work of the Partnership and wish all who are involved the best of good fortune in the future. I'm sure the future is bright and the years ahead will lead to even better things for the Belfast Hills Partnership.

I commend this report to the meeting.

K.J.G Patterson FRICS



PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S REPORT

Introduction

The Partnership continued to make significant progress this year, achieving most of our targets across many work areas despite ongoing difficulties in recruiting administrative staff.

Publications

Our upgraded Belfast Hills Walking Guide and our Access Code were printed using EHS funding and private sponsorship from Jackson Sports.

We also produced a Biodiversity Booklet and CD Rom using EHS funding and private sponsorship from RPS Planning and Environment Ltd which has proved very successful in terms of both demand and resultant publicity.

We continued to distribute our Newsletters which have proved essential in highlighting a range of current issues and developments in the hills.

External Research

This year saw the first of hopefully a series of biodiversity research projects in the Belfast Hills, namely detailed surveys of Irish hare and Upland Heath habitat across Slievenacloy, Divis and the Black Mountain and Cave Hill. Even at the early stages of this research it was clear that vital new information would be forthcoming from these.

Our postcard campaign to gain sightings of key species has been very useful in reports of barn owl and Irish hare sightings but none of Marsh Fritillary butterfly as yet.

Access Projects

We made key path improvements including drainage works at Glenside Community Woodland using funding from Cemex Ltd. We produced a plan of potential access routes between Colin Glen Forest Park and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. This along with the purchase of new lands on the Black Mountain by the National Trust has led to the route being extended to include the Upper

Colin Glen right up to Divis Mountain. Funding is being sought by a range of partners, including BHP, to upgrade and sign this exciting link in 2008-2009.

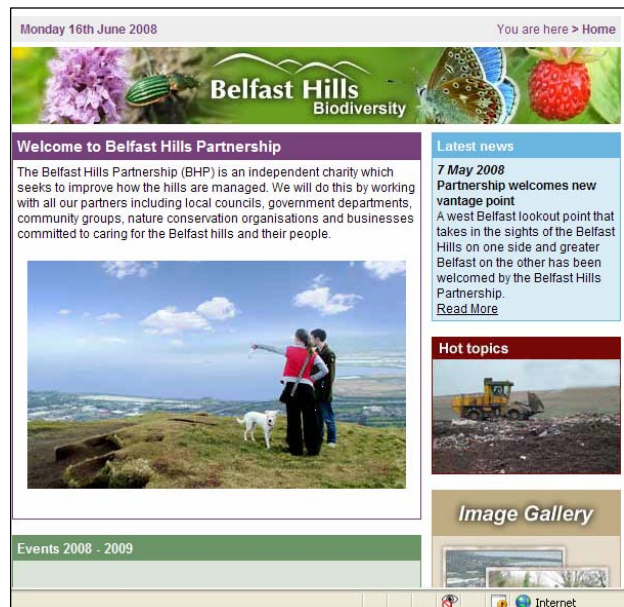
Planning and BMAP, Consultations

We made representations at the Site-specific Stage 2 of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan Public Inquiry on sites such as at Hannahstown Hill, Lagmore and Carnmoney Hill. We responded to 25 planning applications in and adjacent to the hills and also to consultations on PPS 19, arc21 waste treatment site selection and Water Matters.

Publicity

We attended a number of public events such as the Spring Fair and the Balmoral Show distributing our publications to high numbers of the public. We also continued our series of walks and events in the Belfast Hills including a very successful sponsored walk on Divis which raised over £1000.

Having a new staff member in the post of Communication and Information Officer has meant substantially more profile in the press. We also carried out a major revamp of our website including interactive maps and photo gallery.



Waste Management

As well as responding to a number of waste planning applications and consultations, we have been liaising with the EHS's Land and Resource Management concerning monitoring and enforcement of illegal sites in the hills. We continue to pass on any reports of illegal activities to EHS received from local residents or visitors to the hills.

Volunteering

Unfortunately we were not able to secure further funding for a volunteering programme but did carry out volunteer tree planting and clean-up events. We also passed on a total of 29 contacts to our partners managing sites in the hills and advertised many partner volunteer events.

Site Manager Liaison

We continue to hold these useful meetings with those managing the public sites in the hills. Through this we have managed to update our fire site maps for the Fire and Rescue Service; fires have been an ongoing major concern to managers in both early summer 2007 and early spring 2008 and an issue about which we have been liaising with Mourne Heritage Trust.

Policies

Previous policies have proved very useful in guiding our work this year. New Policies were finalised and agreed for the key areas of Volunteering and Financial Reserves.

Other Projects

We continue to work on the detail of a joint venture proposal to manage a disused quarry for its high biodiversity and access potential. Site risk assessments have been completed and it is hoped progress on this is made in the near future.

We having had ongoing meetings with EHS concerning drafts of our Landscape Audit which we may expand to include historical aspects such as townlands linked with our community history projects.

Belfast Hills Partnership researched the potential viability of carbon offset projects in

the Belfast Hills. This showed that there would be issues and problems with such projects in upland areas at a time when current thinking on carbon offset has been changing rapidly. It was decided not to pursue any projects until further notice.



2007-2008 Key Outputs

- Production of Access Code leaflet and reprint of Walking Map
- Production of Belfast Hills Biodiversity Booklet and CD-ROM
- 2007-2008 Newsletters and Event programmes produced
- Website upgraded
- Irish hare & Upland Heathland Surveys funded and initiated
- Glenside Path and Drainage Improvements
- Divis to Dixon Project initiated
- Key Representations made at BMAP and to planning applications and consultation
- New Volunteering and Financial Reserves Policies produced
- New Communications and Information Officer and improved press coverage
- Improved Fire Maps for Public Sites

Jim Bradley
Partnership Manager

BELFAST HILLS PARTNERSHIP 2008-2009 WORK PLAN

Introduction

These work areas arise from the 2007-2010 Business Plan and represent primarily the project work to be carried out beyond our core functions such as our ongoing event programme, planning responses, board meetings, administration, volunteer work etc.

In keeping with our sustainable development initiative model, these have been grouped under the three headings of Environmental, Economic and Social. There is a fourth heading of Corporate for those work activities specifically aimed at best management of the Partnership in support of delivering the three key work areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Biodiversity

1. We will complete the survey projects on upland heath and Irish hare by June 08 and begin initiating recommendations where possible.
2. We are seeking funding for and begin a Colin River Invasive Species Project to be carried out 2008-2010.

3. We will carry out an invasive species project at Cave Hill in conjunction with Belfast City Council staff.
4. We will help publicise the Alpha Programme grant opportunities for biodiversity work in the hills and will assist in such projects when required.

Land Management

1. We anticipate agreement with Cemex on our joint venture proposal in the coming year. This will then require substantial planning and detail of management arrangements prior to initial paths, fencing and other infrastructure being put in place. Third party agreements for site management must also be completed.
2. Site Managers meetings will continue to discuss common areas of interest or concern.
3. More senior management from our nature conservation partners will be asked to meet to work up potential joint projects in the Belfast Hills which BHP staff can then initiate.



Landscape

1. We will complete a further draft of the Landscape Assessment begun in 2007 and use it as a basis for ongoing work in the Belfast Hills.
2. We will investigate possible ways to link the Landscape Assessment of the Belfast Hills and the community history projects highlighted below.

ECONOMIC

Agriculture

1. New Countryside Management Schemes have just been launched with relevance to the Belfast Hills. BHP will play a role in disseminating information about these schemes
2. We will also produce Information Sheets which complement existing information on how to manage key habitats such as upland heath, upland hedges and boundaries, existing or new woodland plantations etc.

Waste

1. We will lobby Roads Service concerning key roads which are being impacted by current legal and illegal waste traffic and also future road improvements to cater for new developments we are aware of.
2. We will continue to lobby for improved waste management planning and encourage planning at an across the Belfast Hills level.
3. We will investigate the potential for carrying out health impact assessments of waste management operations as a mechanism to allay concerns and improve systems.

SOCIAL

Access & Recreation

1. We will continue to play a supporting role to assisting with the Colin-Dixon Link work being carried out in conjunction with Lisburn and Belfast City Councils and input from National Trust and Colin Glen Trust.
2. We will carry out a path drainage



improvement project at Cave Hill in conjunction with Belfast City Council staff.

3. We will initiate a recreation audit within our own resources prior to consideration of future directions for recreation in the Belfast Hills.

Events

1. We will continue to run our events programme but will carry out a detailed review of our past programmes prior to any 2009-2010 programme.
2. We will hold a number of seminars such as on biodiversity issues as funding permits.

Community

1. We will work with key local community groups mapping out and publicising key access routes within local areas to the agreed access points into the hills, as well as publicising our Access Code.
2. We will link the above to a long term Hills for Health programme publicising the role of the Belfast Hills in local community health and local promotion via our events.
3. We will initiate a history project gathering an information bank with links to local history groups. There is also the potential to play a major role in a proposed palaeoecological study of Belfast this coming year.
4. We will continue to build up community involvement via volunteering for our partners and for BHP, and initiate a Friends group subject to Board approval.

Communications

1. We will design a new Map Guide.
2. We will redesign the general Belfast Hills Partnership leaflet.
3. We will create a bank of high quality mounted photographic prints for exhibition and display.
4. We will begin loading up information on a Geographical

Information System (GIS) computer mapping system such as access routes, local history, biodiversity for eventual public access via reports, website or at BHP offices.

5. We will initiate research on visitors and tourists to the Belfast Hills public sites, both via external tourism bodies and our partners, to encourage awareness of the visitor/tourism role of the Belfast Hills and its potential.

CORPORATE

1. We will identify new office accommodation for BHP suitable for our work over a minimum of the next three years.
2. We will build a vision of the future sustainable development of the Belfast Hills and the Belfast Hills Partnership.
3. We will facilitate research by internal and external partners to gather key information and raise awareness of the Belfast Hills.
4. We will recruit and put in place a new Chair and any new members in post.



BELFAST HILLS PARTNERSHIP FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Summary for the year ending 31 March 2008

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
	£	£
Income		
EHS	81,000	71,549
Belfast City Council	27,135	20,000
Lisburn City Council	13,500	10,000
Newtownabbey Borough Council	7,125	5,250
Antrim Borough Council	2,170	1,600
Project Grant Aid	15,689	3,000
Other	4,265	10,606
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Total Income for year	150,884	122,005
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Expenditure		
S&W	84,547	81,872
Rent/Room Hire/HLP	7,958	7,980
Insurance	1,489	1,759
Travel and subsistence	1,884	1,823
Support Services	21,438	12,913
Office Costs	9,418	7,465
Recruitment	1,453	2,387
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TOTAL EXPENDITURE	128,187	116,199
	<hr/>	<hr/>
SURPLUS	22697 *	5806
Closing balance of funds as at 31/03/07	38,441	
Funds Held By Belfast Hills Partnership 31/03/08	61,138	
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This Summary is based on the External Audit Reports for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 carried out by FGS McClure Watters.

* Includes £19891 agreed carryover of funds for Office Costs

PARTNERSHIP STAFF & DIRECTORS

Staff

Dr Jim Bradley - Partnership Manager
Dr Lizzy Pinkerton - Hills Project Officer
Andrea McKernon – Communication and Information Officer (PT)
Admin Officer Post (PT) – Mechelle Hammond
Volunteer Admin Assistant – Ruby Kirkland

Independent Chair

Ken Patterson

Directors

The Directors on the Board and the bodies they represent are as follows:

COMMUNITIES / USERS

Communities

Timothy Duffy - Colin Glen Trust
Jim Blaney - Glen Road Environmental Action Group

Local Conservation Groups

Terry Enright - Black Mountain Environment Group
Cormac Hamill - Cave Hill Conservation Campaign

Recreation Groups

Eric Rainey - The Duke of Edinburgh Council

LANDOWNING / MANAGING

Farmers

George Campbell - Ulster Farmers Union
Ian Simpson - Ulster Farmers Union

Local Economic

Tracy Russell - Belfast Hills Waste Management Operators

Quarries

Gordon Best - NI Quarry Products Association

Nature Conservation

Mike Dobson - The National Trust

STATUTORY

Cllr. Mel Lucas - Antrim Borough Council
Cllr. Jim Rodgers - Belfast City Council
Alderman Cecil Calvert - Lisburn City Council
Cllr. Janet Crilly - Newtownabbey Borough Council

Treasurer

John McMullan (co opted director)



BHP MISSION & OBJECTIVES

The mission for the Belfast Hills Partnership is

- To provide a practical and integrated management mechanism for the Belfast Hills thereby contributing to the conservation, protection and enhancement of its natural, built and cultural heritage and providing for responsible countryside enjoyment.
- To contribute to the quality of life of communities on the fringes of the Belfast Hills, to rural residents of the area and the wider urban & rural environment.
- To work in partnership with others towards the realisation of the Belfast Hills vision, within a Belfast Hills Sustainable Development Initiative.



Core funded by:
Antrim Borough Council
Belfast City Council
Environment and Heritage Service
(Department of the Environment)
Lisburn City Council
Newtownabbey Borough Council



The strategic aims of the Partnership are to

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

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Email: info@belfasthills.org www.belfasthills.org



Belfast Hills Partnership

Has been kindly supported in 2007-2008 by:



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment

www.doeni.gov.uk



LISBURN
CITY COUNCIL



A Member of the Bryson Charitable Group

