

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 16 DECEMBER TO 26 JANUARY 2012

1. The following are summaries of work relating to my portfolio. This report reflects the wide range of initiatives being undertaken, all of which help improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people.

ACLS: Rowdy Robots

2. The Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) has been working hard with its delivery partners to identify new ways of engaging parents and carers in family learning activity. Rowdy Robots courses have proved to be an excellent way of achieving this. The courses have been funded by both the Big Lottery and the Skills Funding Agency resources that have been secured by ACLS.
3. These courses are particularly aimed at getting fathers, grandfathers and male carers engaged in family learning. It involves making circuits, switches and spinning toys using stored energy, and at the end the learners make and take home a moving robot.
4. William Lilley School in Stapleford is one venue where the programme has run successfully; the Head Teacher felt the activity had been one of their most successful initiatives to get dads involved and children learning. One dad at the school commented that he had difficulty getting one of his sons to read, but that his reading had improved as a result of the course.

Country Parks and Green Estate Services

5. Christmas and New Year 2011 was a busy time for both Rufford Abbey Country Park and Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, both of which open to the public every day of the year except Christmas Day.
6. In early December, the Chairman of the County Council opened the seasonal festivities by attending the St Nicholas Grotto at Sherwood and a week later, switching on the Aurora Winter Illuminations at Rufford Abbey, which was subsequently attended during the six nights of operation by 5,464 visitors.
7. Leading up to Christmas, the children's Santa grottos at Rufford and Sherwood Forest were enjoyed by more than 5,000 visitors, the best ever figures for this traditional seasonal offering.

8. Festive lunches at both sites were well booked, despite the difficult economic climate, with 4,416 Christmas meals served.
9. Mild weather on Boxing Day and 27 December saw the Rufford Abbey car parks full to capacity, but car park staff were able to direct the overflow to our Sherwood Forest site, which is traditionally somewhat quieter. Site managers observed many large family groups meeting up at the parks for walks in the fresh air and even picnics.
10. A new Rufford Development Group is being established to consider the short and longer term future for the site. It is acknowledged that during the next few years, there is a need for significant investment to the site to ensure that it is still in good shape to attract visitors. The Group will comprise landscape, tourism and conservation specialists together with representatives from the local community.
11. Similarly, a new multi-agency group is being set up to look at the needs of the Bestwood Country Park. It is recognised that this Park has some superb physical attributes and assets but that these need to be promoted and developed in new and different ways to maximise community access and use.

Economic Development

Work clubs

12. I am pleased to report that the roll out of Nottinghamshire Work Clubs is continuing successfully and two new work clubs have opened in Hucknall and Arnold libraries.
13. A Shaping your Future event is being held at the Hawtonville work club to highlight the opportunities available through the work club.

Broadband and Business IT

14. My Deputy, Councillor Girling, attended the official opening of Timico's purpose built, £5m state-of-the-art data centre in Newark on 18 January 2012. Timico are a fast-growing privately owned internet service provider, employing almost 200 people and recently received the accolade of overall winner of the 2011 Newark Business Awards. During the afternoon I had the opportunity to hear from a panel of high profile speakers from leading technology companies sharing their insight into how IT trends, including mobilisation and virtualisation will change the face of business as we know it.

Nottinghamshire Tourism

15. On 13 December, I attended the last meeting of the year of the Experience Nottinghamshire Strategic Board. Experience Nottinghamshire continues to be our main tourism promotions and marketing delivery partner, and the County Council contributes £118,000 a year to its running costs. The Chief Executive gave an overview of the various campaigns that will be launched nationally to promote the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games. Nottinghamshire will be able to benefit from these campaigns and use the associated brands to attract more visitors to the County. Experience Nottinghamshire will also receive additional funding from Visit England to deliver specific promotions in Ashfield, Bassetlaw and Mansfield. We are currently in

discussions with Experience Nottinghamshire about how to expand this offer across the whole County.

16. Subsequent to the meeting, it was announced that Derek Brewer has secured a new job as Chief Executive of the MCC at Lords in London. Derek has been the Chairman of the Experience Nottinghamshire Strategic Board for the past year and will be hugely missed when he departs for Lords in the spring. He has made an outstanding contribution to both Experience Nottinghamshire and the wider economic, sporting, and cultural priorities of the County and I would like to take this opportunity to record my personal thanks to Derek for his commitment to Nottinghamshire.

Mansfield Central Library

17. The refurbished Mansfield Library re opened to the public on the 3 of January followed by a family fun weekend on the 7 and 8 January. The official opening by the Chairman took place on 10 January.
18. The library has already proved popular with over 8,000 visits in the first week with a significant increase in new members. The feedback from customers and the wider community has been overwhelmingly positive.
19. In line with the strategy for Nottinghamshire's libraries the County Council approved at the December meeting, this £3.4M investment in making our largest library fit for the future is a significant step forward in meeting our aspirations to provide the best library service we can.

Conservation

Local Nature Partnerships

20. I am pleased to report that we were successful in obtaining funding from the second round of DEFRA's capacity building funds for Local Nature Partnerships. Work is now underway with our partners in Lowland Derbyshire to hold a series of discussions with representatives from the environmental, health and business sectors. The capacity building project will be completed by June 2012 and the eventual aim is to form a multi-sectoral Local Nature Partnership for Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Biodiversity Offsetting

21. Discussions are now underway with DEFRA and the District Councils to set up the biodiversity offsetting pilot project for Nottinghamshire. It was originally proposed to focus on the Sherwood area, to align the project with the bid for a Nature Improvement Area. We are, however, able to widen the focus of the pilot project to the whole County and the discussions are currently proceeding on this basis. The pilot project will run for two years from April 2012.

Workshop Priory

22. In December, representatives from the Prince's Regeneration Trust and the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment ran a three day series of public meetings and

workshops with stakeholders to consider the future of Worksop Priory and its surrounding environment. Worksop Priory and the Gatehouse are both Grade 1 listed buildings and the Gatehouse has been identified as a high priority for action on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register. The County Council has supported work to restore the Priory Gatehouse through the Local Improvement Scheme programme. LIS also provided match funding to draw down more than £250,000 of Coalfield Regeneration Trust funding for the Priorswell Centre, which has now been successfully removed from the Heritage at Risk register and is in active community use.

Community Archaeology

23. Winter, when the vegetation has died back, is the best time to carry out topographic surveys and in January the Community Archaeologists have carried out two topographic earthwork surveys; one in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust and the other with FARI, an archaeological community group from Farndon. The former aimed to provide a better understanding of a set of apparent water-meadows at Girton, while the latter recorded historic earthworks on the edge of Farndon village ahead of a planned excavation by the community group.
24. The second half of January has seen a series of community consultation workshops held across the Trent Vale area, bringing together people with an interest in producing a Community Archaeology Handbook. This handbook will draw together the experiences of existing groups and projects and the huge amount of amateur expertise in the County, with the aim of helping groups and individuals through the process of carrying out their own heritage projects in the future.
25. While working with local people to survey and record the graveyard at Laneham, the 'wedding cheeses' in the church tower were brought to the attention of the Community Archaeologists. It used to be a tradition to pay your wedding bell-ringers with a cheese and in Laneham and East Drayton the bell ringers have created memorial plaques out of plaster in the church tower. They are circular, painted to resemble a cheese, and marked with the initials of the couple who were married along with the date. They date from the 1770's onwards. It seems this tradition was initiated by the vicar, Edward Wallas, and we are now in the process of helping the local group to trace other places where he was incumbent to find out if this was a practice he invented in Nottinghamshire, or if it was a tradition he brought with him from elsewhere.

Improving the County's Biodiversity

26. I am pleased to report, with my colleague Councillor Richard Butler, that the County Council's Local Improvement Scheme programme has been helping people to increase wildlife in their local areas. The Friends group at Brinsley has created a pond which will give local children the opportunity to try out pond dipping; a play group and youth club have planted trees and created a woodland nature area in Arnold; and the Edwinstowe allotments have newly laid hedges.

COUNCILLOR JOHN COTTEE
CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY