



meeting

COUNTY COUNCIL

date

13th December 2007

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND REGENERATION

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 1ST - DECEMBER 13TH.

The following are summaries of work relating to my portfolio since my last report to Council.

Libraries

Re-opening of Radcliffe-on-Trent Library

1. "The official re-opening of Radcliffe-on-Trent library took place on Saturday 10 November following a major refurbishment. Over 500 members of the public came into the library between 9am - 1pm to see the transformation, to choose from a range of new stock, to sample a celebratory cake made specially for the occasions and (for the children) to be entertained by Zozo the clown. The refurbishment, which included the provision of new flooring, shelving and furniture, has seen a total reorganisation of the internal services with the main features being a radical improvement in stock display and the provision of a small cafe area. The public response has been overwhelmingly positive in terms of both comments and the number of people coming through the doors."

Country Parks & Conservation

Improvement works at Rufford

- 2 Scaffolding is now in place to enable work on the restoration of Rufford's Western Gates to take place. Part funded by the European Regional Development Fund with the remainder from Nottinghamshire County Council, the project aims to clean, repair and conserve this impressive Victorian landscape feature.
- 3 The gates were built in 1841, possibly to the designs of Anthony Salvin, a well-known Victorian architect who also designed nearby Thoresby Hall. They once formed the main entrance to Rufford Abbey, which was then a private estate owned by Sir John Lumley-Savile, eighth Earl of Scarborough. The imposing gates are still topped by his heraldic crest. Sadly, the intricate

wrought ironwork, pillars of white Mansfield stone and terracotta finials have all suffered the ravages of time and were badly in need of attention.

- 4 Work started on 14th November and should be completed at the end of January 2008. To protect the structure from the weather while work is taking place, the gates have been surrounded by scaffolding and shrouded in plastic sheeting.
- 5 The restoration is being carried out by local company BSSB Contract Services from Bilsthorpe with assistance from specialists in stone and metal repair.

Christmas catering at Rufford and Sherwood Forest

- 6 The Savile Restaurant at Rufford Country Park is serving its popular Christmas lunches from 24th November through to Christmas Eve. As a sales incentive, customers who booked to have the full three course meal any day excluding Sunday between 24th November and 8th December received a £5 gift voucher to spend in the Lakeside Garden Shop.
- 7 By the end of November, 1,852 advance bookings had been received for meals in the Savile and 895 people were due to receive gift vouchers.
- 8 In addition, evening dinners are being served on three Fridays during December, and festive carveries will be served at lunchtime on Boxing Day and New Year's Day. All of these were fully booked by mid-December.
- 9 Following the success of the festive Christmas dinners at Sherwood's Forest Table restaurant, these are being held again this year. In addition to a three course meal, the evenings include music from a Ceilidh band and dancing.

Aurora

- 10 For the third year running, rangers at Rufford are staging a colourful Christmas lighting event called 'Aurora' over the first three weekends in December. This offers visitors a rare chance to take an evening stroll round an illuminated trail through the park's formal gardens at the rear of the Abbey. These had been decorated with a variety of coloured lights highlighting some of the many trees, shrubs and sculptures. This year's event will have added sparkle thanks to external funding via the European Regional Development Fund. The grant enabled park rangers to invest in additional lighting effects and to commission a series of light installations. These have been produced by London-based artist Cristina Ottenello, and comprise 15 tall fabric forms on the theme of fire and ice. Tickets cost £1 per person. The trail will be open between 5 and 7pm each evening and is expected to attract more than 2,000 visitors over the six evenings.

Replacement Tree Planting

- 11 A programme of street tree replacement is about to start in West Bridgford. Just under one hundred heavy standard trees are to be planted in various

locations to replace those lost through age and other problems over the last few years.

Flood Damage Repairs to Paths

- 12 Work to repair the worst of the damage caused by the flooding to paths on various green estate sites is now complete. Further investigation to drainage systems and storm water balancing facilities on some sites is continuing to see if it is practicable to prevent a recurrence.

Habitats Forum

- 13 Bestwood Country Park recently hosted a site visit by the Sherwood Habitats Forum to learn about the history of the park as part of Sherwood Forest and discuss a range of conservation management techniques that are being trialled by park staff and the Sherwood Forest Trust. The Habitats Forum represents the interests of land managers, owners and advisors who are concerned with managing and re-creating the traditional habitats of the forest and surrounding area.

Heritage projects

- 14 Work is currently underway on new Building Better Communities (BBC) bids for community projects in North Muskham, Southwell and Jacksdale all involving strong community interest and a range of heritage projects.
- 15 A second phase of investigation of the churchyard at Bramcote has taken place, with volunteers working alongside the County Council's community archaeologists to locate buried grave slabs, survey them and, where possible, record the names and dates of those buried there.
- 16 Work is due to start on part two Mansfield Woodhouse's Little Big Dig in the New Year when we will be attempting to locate traces of the Great Fire that more or less destroyed the town in 1304.

Greenwood Community Forest: Report 2006/7

17. Greenwood Community Forest has produced a report detailing its achievements over the Greenwood area as a whole whilst making reference to links with other teams and initiatives within Nottinghamshire County Council. The report focuses on 2006/7 but also gives a longer-term perspective where appropriate. It also includes summary information about Greenwood's work to:
 - create a more attractive landscape whilst conserving and enhancing biodiversity;
 - encourage more active and healthier communities with the desire and skills to get positively engaged in their local environment;
 - help stimulate a woodland economy that supports the woodland resource.

- 18 2006/7 saw the implementation of a broad range of projects to meet these aims, with highlights including: Further delivery of tree planting and habitat creation via community and landowner grants; Increasingly active community engagement via Greenwood's network of Friends' groups and a busy events programme; A second year for Park Life, which saw a significant growth in the number of events to encourage increased use of parks for health benefits.

Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grants

- 19 The Greenwood team has received 25 applications from schools and community groups across the Greenwood area. Following an evaluation process, twenty schemes have been short-listed and offered grants of up to £250 along with advice and support from the Greenwood team. The grant scheme is important for improving biodiversity on school grounds and within local communities. Fruit tree planting is linked to healthy eating projects within schools. The trees also provide valuable shade for children for use at playtimes and during lessons in the warmer months. The grant scheme raises the profile of Greenwood with schools, groups and the general public through press and media coverage.

National Tree Week

- 20 National Tree Week which ran from 21st November to 2nd December saw many events taking place across the Greenwood Community Forest area.
- 21 In Mansfield, 270 schoolchildren planted over 3,000 trees. The Crescent Primary School pupils planted trees at Bull Farm Park in an event organised by Mansfield District Council and the Greenwood Community Forest Team. The children, aged from three to eleven planted native species including silver birch, oak, Scots pine and hawthorn. Arts workshops will be taking place with the school in February 2008 and will be linked to the Trailblazer project
- 22 In Bulwell, a new 30-acre woodland which lies within the Greenwood Community Forest got a helping hand from employees of IKEA (Nottingham) who planted 1,000 trees during National Tree Week. The project is part of a long-term planting scheme at Highwood Cemetery which is being developed by Nottingham City Council. The new community woodland is being planted as part of the multi-faith cemetery, which will link up with nearby Sellers Wood Local Nature Reserve creating a green corridor for wildlife from the city and a gateway into the Greenwood Community Forest.

Arts

- 23 The Annual Readers Day in November is the high point of the City and County libraries and arts reader development work. The fourth annual readers day took place at County Hall on 3rd and was fully booked (at 100) within days. A further 25 places were added pushing the event to its absolute capacity, with fifteen workshops and two plenaries over the day. The day was probably the best yet with audience response forms concentrating on the good organisation, value for money, the range of good speakers and, in particular, the presentation by Miranda Seymour.

- 24 Continuing our work with our colleagues in Libraries we are working with West Bridgford Library with a view to making the new library a recognised venue. Two crime fiction events were held successfully and a "books cafe" has been set up, meeting monthly with a regular and expanding following. The West Bridgford project will continue while the library is being rebuilt.
- 25 Our close association with Libraries will continue this year in preparation to the Literature Development post becoming a joint post between the services when the Arts Council funding ceases in April.
- 26 Across the County our village halls have been busy hosting performances on the Village Venture Touring Circuit. This winter they will enjoy shows as diverse as Arcadian music from Prince Edward Island, Canada; comedy and clowning from Circus Berzercus and traditional English folk carols from Coope, Boyes and Simpson.

Sports

Swimming successes

- 27 The Nova Centurion Women's 4x200m Freestyle team set a new British Club Record at the Midlands Short Course Swimming Championships in Braunstone on 4th November.
- 28 The quartet of Rebecca Adlington, Sasha Matthews, Jessica Sylvester and Katherine Wyld set a time of 7:54.39 - the fastest club time in the world this season and 13 seconds inside the previous British Record of 8:07.11 set by a Loughborough University team in 2000.
- 29 Head coach Bill Furniss was delighted with the result. Nova are now ranked number one club in the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA) world rankings this year.
- 30 At the other end of the competitive spectrum, the Sports Disability Unit ran a fun swim gala on 17 November at Hucknall Leisure Centre (Ashfield). Thirty seven club swimmers with a range of disabilities took part. All competitors were under the age of nineteen and more than twenty of them had not been involved with swimming before.
- 31 Sam Hynd (Mansfield) was once again named Junior Disabled Sports personality of the Year at the BBC East Midlands sports awards held on 26 November after another amazing season of improvement that has shown him to be a real contender for a place at the Beijing Olympics. Sam has been supported by the County Council from an early age as part of the Nova programme.

Sports Review of the Year

- 32 Preparations are well underway for the events being held over two nights in January celebrating the achievements of participants, coaches, clubs and volunteers. Nominations closed on 26 November with over 160 applications taken across the thirteen categories. This year will see the junior event move to Kelham Hall (Newark) and we hope we will be able to hold the event in other parts of the county in following years. We are supported this year by sponsorship from both Sport England and Sport Nottinghamshire highlighting the status as a key date in the Nottinghamshire sporting calendar.

Photography project

- 33 We will shortly begin a project with South Nottinghamshire College that will see its photography students produce a range of sporting images for our marketing and website promotion. We have chosen to work with college students in the hope of uncovering some new ways of thinking and some new talent. In turn, we will be able to provide their work with some exposure and introduce them to our other partners. Sport England East Midlands are supporting us and in turn commissioning a related project of their own. There will be five projects based around our key areas of work. The students will work with us as clients, gaining valuable experience of working in a business environment to produce a range of what we hope will be striking and innovative sports images. We will also be staging exhibition to showcase the work of the project in early 2008.

Regeneration

Sherwood Growth Zone Partnership

- 34 I am please to report the County Council's commitment to regeneration of the former coalfield in the Mansfield and Ashfield area has resulted in some significant good news for these communities. In my capacity as a County Council representative on the Sherwood Growth Zone Partnership with the cabinet member for Finance, Councillor Baron, we have been working to bring forward plans for the development of County Council-owned land at Rushley Farm, at the junction of the A60 and the Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR).
- 35 The Growth Zone Partnership is committed to improving skills levels and providing high quality employment opportunities for local people. To that end, we have been working with partners to bring forward proposals for a new West Nottinghamshire College and an adjoining technology park - a Departure from existing local plans. I am pleased to announce that outline planning permission has now been granted by the district councils in Ashfield and Mansfield, to enable our proposals to go ahead. This was subject to further consideration by GOEM, as is usual practice when a Departure is granted. I am delighted to now confirm that GOEM has completed its

considerations and has given the “green light” for the County Council and the college to proceed with their plans.

- 36 When completed, the new college alone will represent over £70m of investment in the regeneration of the area and the technology park will add value to this investment by providing unique opportunities for local students to move from the world of education to high-quality employment. The development is expected to begin in the summer of 2008, with completion anticipated in 2012.

Economic Regeneration

- 37 I am delighted to confirm continued support for social enterprise activity. Over recent weeks I have supported a request for pre-development funding towards the Manton Colliery Athletic Club. Manton is one of the County's most deprived communities and is currently the focus of wider support led by the Economic Regeneration Team. This award will allow the Club take a step further towards achieving its re-development plans amounting to some £1.1Million of investment in the community.
- 38 In further support of our most disadvantaged communities across Nottinghamshire I have approved a package of adult learning support designed to address worklessness and to better prepare people for work - particularly the long-term unemployed - by raising essential adult skills. A portfolio of practical, targeted measures is being developed which can provide opportunities for excluded adults in deprived communities and will include :
- Core IT skills
 - Job preparation skills
 - Health and Safety
 - Food Hygiene
 - Financial literacy
- 39 This support will be commissioned via the Adult and Community Learning Service's established and respected processes.
- 40 Finally, I have approved further funding from the Economic Regeneration Budget to provide vocational learning and practical support to ex-offenders, delivered by the Probation Service. It is widely acknowledged that access to training and employment represents a vital step in tackling re-offending. The two projects focus on firstly getting the critical initial support in finding and keeping training and employment and secondly, on securing driving skills essential to most jobs across the County. Together the projects represent significant additional, constructive support to the work of the Nottinghamshire Probation Service's Education Training & Employment Team.

Councillor Steve Carroll
Cabinet Member for Culture and Regeneration