

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES**SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 9 JUNE TO 17 AUGUST 2014****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee on a range of initiatives being undertaken to improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people.

Information and Advice**LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY LEARNING****ACLS Adult Learners Award Event – Rufford Abbey Country Park**

2. On 12 June, the Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) held its annual Adult Learners Week Awards Ceremony as part of the National Festival of Learning organised by The National Institute for Adult Continuing in Education (NIACE). The event took place in the marquee at Rufford Abbey Country Park on a beautiful sunny afternoon and was attended by over 150 people from across the County. Awards were presented by the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Pauline Allan, and by the Leader, Councillor Alan Rhodes, to ACLS learners and tutors, nominated by ACLS Provider organisations for their outstanding achievement.
3. Those attending took part in a variety of ‘taster’ sessions including clay pot making, funded by the Arts Service, jewellery making, junk modelling, sugarcraft and knitting. They were also treated to live music provided by the Co-production team and an exhibition of ACLS learners’ work.

Southwell Library Poetry Festival

4. Almost 500 people attended events at this year's Southwell Library Poetry Festival. Highlights included a children's poetry tree activity; the Poetry Doctor handing out poetry prescriptions; the wonderful Elaine Feinstein in conversation, and readings from the acclaimed Helen Mort. Visitors included travellers from as far afield as New Zealand, who came to most events. Comments included: "Inspires me to find out more. Long may the Poetry Festival continue." "Thank you. An inspiration for me to think about poetry in a totally new way".

Summer family events in libraries

Summer safety events

5. This summer has seen a series of family summer safety events in Nottinghamshire libraries, attracting over 1,400 people into our buildings. Events were held in Mansfield, Worksop and West Bridgford libraries, with partners in attendance including East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS), Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, Nottinghamshire Police, the Heritage Ambulance Service, Nottinghamshire County Council Road Safety and Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership.
6. Families had the opportunity to try out lots of things, from sitting in a fire engine to learning cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Customers enjoyed the opportunities that were available to them: "After being on the EMAS stall, my granddaughter then showed me how to do CPR on a dummy". Partners and the library services were able to reach new audiences, with the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service commenting that "It was a good day, we were able to engage with so many children and parents in regard to fire safety, it's venues like this that allow us to meet and educate families/individuals that are normally on our hard to reach list, if those children we spoke to can remember at least one safety message they could possibly be preventing a fire or saving a life one day."
7. Future partnership events with the East Midlands Ambulance Service for learning CPR will take place in Spring 2015 at Mansfield, Worksop and West Bridgford Libraries, and 'Cuppa with a Coppa' events at West Bridgford are being trialled from January.

Mansfield Town Football Club Summer Football Spectacular

8. Over 400 people attended Mansfield Library on Friday 15 August. The event, run in partnership with Mansfield Town Football Club and Mansfield Town Football in the Community, saw past and current players come and meet customers; an inflatable football pitch on the Studio Floor; mini goals and a speed radar goal checker. Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership ran an activity for children to design a Mansfield Town football shirt, whilst library staff engaged in reading and local history related activities. The library was buzzing with families, including lots of boys and their dads, who really enjoyed their unusual day in the library.

Library Management System Seminar - 8th August 2014 at Westminster City Archives

9. Peter Gaw, Group Manager, and Nick London, Team Manager, Library Resources, presented to a national seminar on the leadership and development of the new five East Midlands library authority consortium to procure and deliver a single library management system. Nottinghamshire County Council has led the project which will be implemented across five authorities between November 2014 and May 2015. This project has a national profile as a new generation of consortium approaches to maintaining the resilience of business critical systems, reducing costs and enabling an improved customer offer across boundaries.
10. The seminar also included presentations from the Tri-Borough project (covering Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea) followed by the South Australian Public Library Network (SAPLN).

COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATES

11. The summer season is traditionally the busiest time of year for the Country Parks Service.
12. At Rufford Abbey Country Park the annual Earth & Fire Ceramic Fair (20th to 22nd June) organised by the County Council's Arts Service proved well supported, with over 100 potters from Britain and Europe exhibiting their wares at outdoor stalls. The event is one of the premier ceramic events in the country. There are further details about the event later in this report.
13. The following weekend (28th and 29th June) saw a major living history event at Rufford Abbey, depicting life during the Great War 1914-18. Historical re-enactors from all over the country travelled to take part and the event was opened by the Chairman of the County Council. Spectators were able to mingle with costumed soldiers, sailors and civilians, watch displays such as infantry drills and cavalry charges, listen to period songs and music, and even see the Abbey undergo a zeppelin raid! An estimated 4,000 people visited during the weekend. The free event formed part of Nottinghamshire's 'Trent to Trenches' commemorations.
14. At Bestwood Country Park, a number of smaller events helped to engage local people with the mining heritage of Bestwood Winding Engine House, such as 'Mini Miners' Saturday for mums and under-fives, and 'Miners' Music' – a free performance by Bestwood Black Diamonds brass band and the chance for budding musicians to have a go themselves. Gentle health walks led by the park rangers also continue to be popular with those recovering from illness or taking their first steps on the road to better fitness.
15. A report on the Robin Hood Festival at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, which takes place on 4th to 10th August, will be brought to Committee in October.
16. Meanwhile, away from the hurley-burley of events, other important country park work continued, such as the creation of a new volunteer warden scheme for Cotgrave Country Park. Growing out of the park Friends Group, the scheme will train local people to help keep this large and well used site safe and well cared for. Volunteering opportunities are a key part of our new approach to service delivery endorsed by Re-defining your Council.

CONSERVATION

Rufford Abbey Excavation 2014

17. The excavation took place on the lawn of the Abbey with the aim of investigating the precise location of the west and north walls of the medieval church. As a 17th century house had been built over the location, it was also expected to find the remains of later walls and evidence of their demolition which was known to have happened in the 1950s. The volunteers gave a total of 770 hours to the excavation over the two weeks.

7-11 July 2014 Field School

18. The first week of excavation was run as a field school to train people in basic excavation and recording techniques. Each day consisted of a teaching session on a different aspect

of archaeology followed by practical experience on site. A total of ten participants attended and learned how to look for changes in soil colour whilst digging, recognise artefacts such as pottery and animal bone, how to draw plans and sections and how to record features through photography.

19. In this week the group uncovered the foundations of substantial walls with some facing stones still *in situ* at a depth of only 30-40cm. Feedback from the week has been excellent and several of the participants returned the following week to continue their work.

14-18 July 2014 General Excavation

20. A total of 12 volunteers per day continued the excavation following on from the field school. All volunteers worked together to uncover more of the walls and find dating evidence. There was only one piece of medieval pottery found with the rest of the material dating from the 17th century onwards. It was deduced that the walls belonged to the post-medieval house but medieval masonry from the Abbey buildings had been re-used within them. Two human teeth were found beneath a demolition layer – it is possible that the house foundations had clipped a medieval burial underneath the church. A large number of visitors to the country park were interested in the excavation and asked questions, capably answered by the trained volunteers. The excavation generated a lot of positive publicity including East Midlands Today, the Nottingham Post and local radio.
21. All places were filled within two weeks and it proved so popular that there will be a further two weeks excavation on a different part of the site from 20 - 31 October.

The Graveyard Shift – Recording the Graveyards of Nottinghamshire

22. The County Council's archaeologists are currently working in partnership with the Nottinghamshire Local History Association (NLHA) and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to develop a project to record the graveyards of the County. NLHA is leading the proposals to engage communities across Nottinghamshire in exploring, recording and enhancing the natural and human heritage of their graveyards. This would be the first time that such a comprehensive recording project has been undertaken in this country. Funding would be sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help to engage and train volunteers and create a programme of activities and experiences. A report on the project will be brought to Committee in October.

CULTURAL AND ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Funding Success for Performances in Village Halls

23. Run by the Arts Service, Village Ventures, the rural touring scheme for Nottinghamshire, works with local volunteer promoters to bring high quality performance from professional companies and artistes to village halls and other community venues across the County.
24. Supported by our district council partners, over 100 performances take place every year. As well as co-ordinating the Village Ventures scheme, the Arts Service also runs similar schemes, under contract, for both Lincolnshire and Leicestershire.
25. Following our application to Arts Council England, the three schemes were awarded further funding as a National Portfolio Organisation. Arts Council England's assessment

of our application stated: *Excellence is shown through the programming selections and choice of partnerships. Work from regional, national and international companies ensure promoters are given a wide variety of excellent work to choose from. Audience and promoter feedback is extremely positive, and is used to inform programming choices and develop new strands of work.* The funding award of £395,602 over three years will contribute to continued development of the programme, including support to the network of over 600 volunteer promoters.

26. The 2013/14 season came to an end in June with a series of performances to mark the Centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. 'Standing in Line' was the true story of a local soldier who died at Passendale, told through songs and poetry of the period and 'The Thankful Village' examined the effect of the Great War on rural communities.
27. The new season brochure is available from local libraries across the County and to download from our website.

Open Studios Notts 2014

28. The Arts Development Team created the first Open Studios Notts event in 2012 and has continued to support its development as an artist led initiative. The now annual event in May and June sees over 100 artists across the County opening their studios to the public to give a first-hand look at the creative process. Visitors have grown from 2,000 in 2012 to 4,500 in 2014. In addition over 3,000 people visited the Open Studios exhibition at Rufford where people could see work from participating artists. The voluntary steering group of artists are currently collating the feedback from this year's event and planning Open Studios Notts 2015.

Special schools enjoy a creative celebration at Rufford

29. A two year creative programme for special schools across the County culminated in a day of celebration at Rufford Abbey at the beginning of June.
30. Following the success of a craft based programme of artist residencies in 2013, the schools worked with dancers and musicians for 2014. The artists worked with 500 young people in eight schools to address a particular objective with staff and pupils. For example, Foxwood Special School in Broxtowe wanted to increase their skill in delivering dance to achieve better outcomes for their pupils. Dancer Debbi Hedderwick worked to:
 - inspire students' creativity through idea development and communicative movement
 - increase students' confidence in their physical ability, communication skills and imagination
 - develop learning (particularly social and emotional) through kinaesthetic processes
 - develop collaborative skills - working together, sharing ideas, communicating with partners, dancing together with trust and confidence
 - create work that responded to the students' ideas.
31. All the participants came together at Rufford to share the work they had created. To provide an exciting setting for their performances an inflatable dome by the internationally acclaimed local company Architects of Air was erected in the sculpture garden. The pupils were able to enjoy a truly inspirational space and share the work they had created with their peers.

Record visitor numbers flock to Ceramic Fair

32. The Earth and Fire International Ceramics Fair has been held in the grounds of Rufford Abbey for 20 years growing from a market with 35 potters to what it is today where over 100 of the very best studio potters from across the UK and Europe come to sell their work and share their skills.
33. The event is held in high esteem with potters and visitors alike...*the most innovative inspirational event that I have ever visited with the most fantastic ideas and work (visitor 2014) ...as ever, a fantastic event. Great fun, wonderful people and incredibly well organised. And this year the weather was great too! I will be back again if selected (exhibitor 2014).* This year we welcomed over 7,000 visitors to enjoy the delights of all things clay, enjoying a full programme of demonstrations and talks from the professionals who shared their skills and showcased their talents to the eager audience. 100% of visitors surveyed rated the event as excellent.
34. In the festival spirit, the three days also encompassed the 'Potters Games' that challenged the exhibitors to fight it out in skilful rounds of 'blindfold throwing', 'animal consequences' and 'relay throwing' for the rewards of winners' and losers' medals (clay of course) and to lift the Rufford (world) Cup on Sunday.
35. The next generation of potters are supported through the campus stands showing graduates work and 'one year on' stands which give a stepping stone for those graduates from last year who are developing their practice and perhaps looking for their first solo event.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That the update on a range of initiatives being undertaken to improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people be noted.

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