

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 17 December 2009

agenda item number **7a vi**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY**

### **REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009**

1. The following are summaries of work relating to my portfolio. This is a very comprehensive report reflecting the wide range of initiatives being undertaken which improve and enhance people's lives.

#### **COUNTRY PARKS AND CONSERVATION**

##### **Bestwood Country Park**

2. Bestwood Country Park Rangers have successfully engaged with 'Remedi', which is part of the authority's Children and Young People's youth offending service, to help re-open the washroom facilities on the car park site at Bestwood Lodge Drive. The repairs were made possible by joint funding from the country park and the Council's Building Better Communities Scheme.
3. Bestwood Country Park continues to be a popular venue with organised groups and recently played host to the 'Red Hill Runners' annual 5km run with some 250 runners taking part.

##### **Nature Conservation Unit**

4. The Nature Conservation Unit has successfully secured £35,081 of funding from the SITA Trust, subject to the satisfaction of various conditions, for the delivery of two habitat management projects. The SITA Trust is an organisation which operates under the Landfill Communities Fund and distributes funding for environmental projects.
5. Ransom Heath near Rainworth is earmarked to receive £10,192 of funding for the clearance of scrub and the reestablishment of healthland vegetation. Calcareous grassland is amongst the rarest of Nottinghamshire's habitats, but it is present on both the Linby and Teversal Trails. £24,889 of funding will enable scrub to be cleared and the management of the grassland on both sites. Details on the SITA Trust can be found at: <http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/about-us>

## **Daneshill Energy Forest**

6. I am pleased to report that the County Council won praise from Mr Paul Hill-Tout, the Director of Forestry Commission England, during his visit to Daneshill Energy Forest. Mr Hill-Tout was viewing experimental plots currently being monitored to assess eucalyptus growth rates. He acknowledged that the authority is very much at the forefront of the industry in recognising the potential of short rotation forestry as a sustainable energy resource for the future. The eucalyptus being grown at Daneshill will be processed for use in County Council wood fired boiler systems currently in use in schools around the county.

## **Greenwood Community Forest Partnership**

7. The Greenwood Events Programme continues to encourage hard to reach groups in disadvantaged areas to access and respect green spaces in their community. Events in October included community tree and bulb planting activities in Broxtowe and encouraging young people to be involved in the Brierley Forest Visitor Centre tenth anniversary activities. The Greenwood Team also led a successful promotional campaign to maximise involvement in the 2009 Japanese Knotweed survey.

## **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES**

### **60<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

8. Nottinghamshire Archives 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations concluded with a Civic Reception at County Hall on 16 November kindly hosted by the Chairman of the County Council. The event was attended by many present and former members of staff, volunteers and users of the service.

### **W E Gladstone**

9. 2009 is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Gladstone, who was MP for Newark for fourteen years. His Nottinghamshire connections will be celebrated in a collaborative exhibition between Nottinghamshire Archives and the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections. *Gladstone the Grand Old Man of Nottinghamshire* will be on display at the Weston Gallery at Lakeside Arts Centre from 11 December 2009 to 21 March 2010

### **'In Grandmother Gell's Kitchen'**

10. On 30 November I was very pleased to launch the latest Libraries and Archives publication at Rufford Abbey Mill. 'In Grandmother Gell's Kitchen' is taken from a collection of eighteenth century recipes held at Nottinghamshire Archives. The editor, Carol Barstow, has published both transcripts of the original recipes and modern equivalents which we hope readers will be inspired to try.

## **LIBRARIES**

### **Gotham Library**

11. One of the smallest libraries in the county has been given a makeover thanks to the close working relationship between the trustees of Gotham Memorial Hall and the County Library Service. The trustees have spent several years raising funds to improve the Hall and the local community has now benefited from improved facilities including a new library. Good interior design, new furniture and, perhaps most importantly, many new books, have created a library that is a much brighter, more attractive and welcoming place to visit. The library was officially opened on Saturday 28 November. Customers old and new were unanimous that the new library was a tremendous improvement and this is evidenced by a 40% increase in issues during the first three week period.

### **Kimberley Library**

12. In November, Kimberley Library hosted a display of unique maps of the local area produced in the 1970's by the Soviet military. The maps are produced in fascinating detail, including the height of bridges, the depth of rivers and the width of roads and they show key strategic sites such as Nottingham Castle, Rolls Royce factory at Hucknall, Nottingham Prison, military installations and other government buildings. The maps were discovered in Latvia after the end of the Cold War and were bought by local historian, Roger Grimes. It is believed that the maps would have been used to assess the feasibility of driving tanks through the area, should an invasion take place and the display has generated a considerable amount of local interest.

### **Library Survey**

13. A large scale survey of all adult library users in Nottinghamshire took place in November. All visitors to smaller libraries and a sample of visitors in busier libraries were asked questions about library staff, stock and buildings. The results are expected next Spring and will be used to inform improvements to services, including refurbishments and staff training and procedures.
14. The survey will be repeated for children next year.

### **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Readers' Day**

15. Readers' Day is an annual event organised jointly by the City and County Councils to celebrate reading. It generally includes readings by celebrated authors, discussion sessions on featured authors, book stalls, book swaps and displays. This year's event, held on 21 November at County Hall was completely sold out. It featured prize-winning author Helen Dunmore, the award-winning poet Tom Warner and the comedian and writer Hardeep Singh Kohli.

## **SPORTS SERVICE**

### **Step into Sport Leadership Academies**

16. As part of the Step into Sport volunteering programme, two leadership academies were held in November at which over 80 young people received training in leadership skills with the overall aim of running inter-school sports competitions for younger pupils. They took part in practical sessions on how to deliver a range of sports and also attended sessions on marketing, event management and project planning. These were designed to give them a range of skills to deliver competitions and to benefit them in future volunteering placements. Feedback from the programme was extremely positive with the majority of young people wanting to continue their volunteering and keen to attend further events in the future.

### **Grant Aid**

17. The Sports Service will shortly begin its grant programmes for clubs and individuals. This year the renamed 'Rising Stars' programme will support talented young athletes from across the county with grants of up to £500 to support their training and competition expenses. The new 'Shining Stars' fund will also ensure that we are able to support our elite athletes who are performing on the international stage and bring pride and honour to the county. The programme will, with the assistance of National Governing Bodies and UK Sport, identify the very best and most deserving local athletes and provide them with tailored support.
18. In addition we will launch a more streamlined version of our fund to support local clubs and organisations which provide community projects and deliver sporting activities for young people.

### **European Swimming Success**

19. I am delighted to report that the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) European Swimming Championships which took place in Reykjavik saw more success for Nottinghamshire athletes on the international stage. The British team finished the championships with 39 gold, 32 silver, and 23 bronze medals to top the medal table.
20. Kirkby in Ashfield's Nova swimmer Sam Hynd came away with 3 gold medals and 1 silver. Sam also competed at the World Short Course Championships held in Brazil at the end of November. His Nova team mate, Charlotte Henshaw, won her first gold medal at a major international competition and finished fourth in two further events. At the DSE National Swimming Short Course Championships held in November at Sheffield, Charlotte broke the SB6 100m Breaststroke, World Short Course record.

## **National Governing Body Engagement**

21. Relationships have been formed with two additional National Governing Bodies, the English Lacrosse Association and Baseball/Softball UK, bringing the total to 32 sports organisations with which the sports service now has a relationship. Part of the sports service's role is to broker relationships with national sports bodies and to encourage and support them to work in Nottinghamshire.
22. Officers from the sports service also recently pulled together clubs and individuals from Cycling, Gymnastics and Triathlon to look at local issues and challenges currently affecting these sports. All three sports are hoping to have finalised plans by the end of January. This will take the number of sports with county plans to eight within Nottinghamshire. This forms part of our efforts to empower the voluntary sports sector to administer and promote their sports more effectively for the benefit of Nottinghamshire residents.

## **Safeguarding training**

23. The sports service lead the county safeguarding group and as part of this work nominated officers from each local authority in the county attended a two day CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) risk assessment training course. Attendees included a mix of senior sports and human resources officers. The aim of the course was to give officers information to support them in their work on risk assessment and CRB checks with regard to recruitment. The sheer number of children involved in sport and the diversity of settings where sport takes place make safeguarding in sport a high priority.
24. We have also initiated a working group to implement a minimum operating standard of safeguarding for leisure facilities in the county. A pilot training course for leisure facility staff was recently organised by our sports service staff and will be repeated in the future.

## **ECONOMIC REGENERATION**

### **Making the Connection**

25. I am pleased to report that Councillor Girling attended the last day of a pre-employment training course in November, which was organised by Making the Connection, the County Council's high-profile employer solutions service. The training programme has been designed and delivered on behalf of Laing O'Rourke, a major national construction company, for their new manufacturing site on the edge of Worksop.
26. This is the third training course delivered on behalf of the company. 45 people successfully completed the course earlier in the summer, 19 of whom have been successful in obtaining employment with Laing O'Rourke. The company were so impressed with the training and the calibre of the candidates that they asked Making the Connection to deliver another course.

27. Everyone who has completed the course is guaranteed an interview with the company, and the project team expect to see at least another 10 people gain jobs.

### **Future Jobs Fund**

28. I am delighted to report that Enable (Nottinghamshire's voluntary sector learning and employment consortium) has recently secured over £6 million of investment for the county from the government's Future Jobs Fund (FJF). The Council's Economic Regeneration Service undertook much of the work in preparing the business case and Enable presented the bid on behalf of the Nottinghamshire Partnership.
29. Starting in January 2010, the project will create up to 960 jobs in the county over an 18 month period, mainly targeted at young people who have been out of work for more than nine months. Over 25s from 'hotspot' areas will also be able to access the opportunities. The jobs will be for a minimum of six months and each job will offer training and advice on future career prospects. Other innovative measures include a contribution to a credit union account for participants provided that they are able to match the contribution over the course of their job opportunity. Over 45 partner organisations in the county have pledged jobs to the scheme so far, ensuring a wide range of opportunities in different sectors and across the whole county area.

**Councillor John Cottee**  
**Cabinet Member for Culture and Community**