



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **Thursday, 13 December 2007**

agenda item number

from: **Cabinet Member for Environment**

REPORT FOR PERIOD SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

1. Building Better Communities

On the 26th November we hosted a visit from the Beacon Assessment team which went very well. Many of the volunteers we have worked with over the years joined us at here at County Hall to discuss their projects with the Assessors and told them how BBC had made a difference to their community. Round two of the 'Better Places' bid will take place in London on the 11th January.

I was very pleased to see that the Blidworth War Memorial was completed in time for the Remembrance Day ceremonies. The memorial was part funded by the BBC initiative, along with contributions from local community groups, County Councillor Yvonne Woodhead, and the district and parish councils. It commemorates all the local soldiers who have died in service since World War I.

The Prospect Estate shopping precinct in Worksop is also due to undergo a £110,000 improvement scheme funded by BBC and Bassetlaw District Council. The works will include resurfacing, improved lighting and litter bins, improved access for disabled shoppers and the removal of the high wall in front of the shops to open up the space and improve visibility. This will make a positive difference to the shopping experience of local people.

There is also work underway to improve the community green space at Plantation Hill in Kilton, Worksop where local school children will be working with local artist, Hilary Cartmel, to create a community sculpture. There will also be new seating, bins and mature tree planting for the green space.

Sunday the 9th December will see the launch of the 'Dear Santa' BBC Community Gift Competition. Trax FM, Mansfield 103.2 and Trent FM will be running a campaign to raise awareness of BBC and all residents of Nottinghamshire will have the opportunity to win £5000 for improving their local environment by putting forward their community gift ideas.

Application forms will be available in Library's, County Contact Centres and on-line. The seven best ideas (one per district) will be chosen in the New Year for inclusion in the year five programme.

Thank you to all those who have supported and encouraged applications from your wards for inclusion in the year five programme. Over 140 applications have been received and I will be looking at these over the next week with a view to having an agreed programme ready to start delivery at the beginning of the next financial year.

2. **The Rail White Paper**

The Government last reviewed national rail policy in 2004 with the focus on restructuring the industry in order to control costs and improve reliability. The Government has now recognised that significant growth is occurring across the network and the new focus is, therefore, on capacity. Delivering a Sustainable Railway White Paper was published in July 2007 and although the Government is not inviting responses, I thought colleagues would welcome a breakdown of the main points and how these may affect rail travel in the County.

The white paper outlines three goals for the railway industry:

- to increase capacity and ease overcrowding
- to improve the quality of services to meet increased demands and attract new users
- to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions

The Department for Transport (DfT) wants to address overcrowding by focusing on existing routes with a programme of train lengthening, rather than on infrastructure investment. This focus on existing routes is consistent with the case for a Sunday service on the Robin Hood Line (RHL). However, it means that the DfT is unlikely to support proposals for extending the RHL to Ollerton or a new Bingham park and ride.

£200m has been committed to developing a Strategic Freight Network (SFN) which will identify acceptable routes avoiding congested parts of the network. Routes to Toton are likely to be included in the second phase of this work and this could put Toton at the heart of the SFN.

Money will be made available to upgrade around 150 "intermediate" stations and this could be an opportunity to bid for improvements at Mansfield, Newark and Beeston.

The White Paper's emphasis on growth and additional capacity is backed up by investment of £10bn. This is very welcome and could benefit regional rail networks and major urban areas. However, the predicted 3% growth per annum is significantly below current levels.

One of the long distance services used to help model future requirements in infrastructure enhancement was the Midland Main Line service to London. Council officers have been promoting line speed improvements on this line for the past 18 months and the investment announced in the White Paper now makes this scheme a real possibility.

3. **Beacon Bid: Improving Accessibility**

I am delighted to report that the County Council in partnership with the City Council has been short listed for Beacon status for their work to improve accessibility. A key element of our part of the submission has been the funding of the bus service linking Nottinghamshire residents to employment opportunities at Robin Hood Airport in Doncaster. Other initiatives included the Transport to Health pilot scheme in Bassetlaw and the 50 plus Transport Voucher pilot scheme which help older residents remain independent.

Being short listed for Beacon status recognises all the efforts we are making in the county to ensure that services and employment opportunities are accessible to everyone.

4. **Materials Recycling Facility**

I was pleased to attend the start of works ceremony for the new materials recycling facility (MRF) in Mansfield recently. The new facility will cost £14 million and will have the capacity to sort 85,000 tonnes of Nottinghamshire's recyclable waste each year, contributing significantly towards the county's recycling targets. It will also boast a visitor centre where people can find out more about recycling and other waste issues.

The facility will also provide a welcome economic boost to Mansfield. Many jobs will be created during the construction and around 40 permanent full-time staff will be employed.

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