



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **Thursday, 13 September 2007**

agenda item number

from: **Cabinet Member for Environment**

REPORT FOR PERIOD JUNE/JULY 2007

1. Building Better Communities

Over the summer the project team has been developing schemes and working with community groups on ideas for new projects. We have also been looking at opportunities for raising the profile of the BBC initiative in our local communities. A number of articles have been featured in the local press and 250 new BBC Logo Roundels are being put up this month in strategic locations around the county to identify BBC schemes.

BBC has invested around £15m so far in making the county a better place to live and work. To help us shape our future programme we are asking the local community for its views on how we are doing, are we making a difference and how could we improve our service to the community. An evaluation form of the Annual Event and the BBC programme to date is also being sent out to around 450 members of the public, partners and agencies that have been involved with the work of the BBC Team. In addition, we are looking into undertaking further validation work including on street surveys and community discussion panels.

As always if any Member would like to discuss elements of the programme, the project team will be happy to help and may I also take this opportunity to remind Members to forward any new applications or scheme ideas to the project team as they come in. This year's deadline for scheme suggestion forms is the 29th October.

I was pleased to see the completion of a couple of more unusual heritage schemes recently. West Stockwith's seven historic water lanes have been restored helping to put the village on Nottinghamshire's map and boost tourism. The water lanes are narrow passages that run between houses along Main Road and lead to the River Trent. They were traditionally used by local people to collect river water for domestic use and they are now used as public footpaths.

The Linby Matchstick Man was unveiled in June. The four-metre high sculpture of a man with a dog was chosen by local residents and acts as a focal point for the Ranges recreational area. The feature is made of steel and was designed by sculptor Lewis Morgan with help from the pupils at Linby and Papplewick C of E primary school.

2. **NET Phase Two**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property and I have taken a joint report to Cabinet seeking approval for project management arrangements to support NET Phase Two. The project has now received Programme Entry Approval from Central Government and the formal Transport and Works Act (TWA) application was lodged with the Secretary of State in April 2007. This means that the project has now entered a more demanding stage with the requirement for clear and strong project management to ensure that effective decisions are made.

It is proposed that a NET Project Board is established with Members and senior officers from the City and County councils. This will be supported by an Executive Director and a Programme Director from within the City Council and these project officers will lead a joint City and County officer team.

3. **A453 Widening Scheme**

In September 2004 the Highways Agency (HA) consulted on the preliminary proposals for widening the A453. Following this consultation a contractor was appointed in 2006 and the design of the scheme was reconsidered. A formal consultation is now underway for the revised proposals. The principal changes include improved junction layouts along the route, the re-alignment of part of the A453 and the construction of a new roundabout at Mill Hill with a new link road connecting it to Clifton Lane.

The County Council supports the scheme and the improvements made, but is concerned that the revised cost estimate may exceed the approved budget and that this could jeopardize both the delivery of this scheme and also other transport projects in the county that are competing for regional funds. The County Council also requests that it is fully consulted when the Construction Environment Management Plan is produced. This plan sets out how disruption during the construction activities will be managed and controlled. The HA is also requested to support the implementation of a wider package of measures to influence modal choice in line with the recommendations in the Multi Modal Study undertaken in 2000.

I have asked Cabinet to approve the County Council's response to the consultation.

4. **Hucknall Town Centre Improvements Scheme**

I reported to Cabinet earlier this month on progress with the Hucknall Town Centre improvements scheme. Hucknall Town Centre is now in urgent need of renewal. The poor quality of the public areas together with the growth in traffic congestion is accelerating this decline. The improvement scheme aims to create a visually appealing, high quality, safe environment for pedestrians and shoppers by reducing traffic levels on High Street.

Following public consultation in 2004, three potential schemes were selected for further consideration. Each option included a pedestrianised section along High Street and the construction of a new road to deal with displaced traffic and accommodate increased traffic generated by new housing developments in and around Hucknall. The County Council and Ashfield District Council jointly selected option 3 which included the introduction of a two-way bus link and the retention of two-way traffic along a section of High Street.

Public consultation on the preferred option has now taken place. The public exhibition was particularly well attended and, in general, the scheme was supported. In view of this I have asked Cabinet to approve the next phase of the project which is to submit a Major Scheme Business Case to Government to seek funding.

5. **Draft Practice Guide to Planning Policy Statement (PPS)25: Development and Flood Risk**

I have asked Cabinet to approve the County Council's response to the consultation on the Draft Practice Guide to PPS 25 'Development and Flood risk. The aim of PPS25 is to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages of the planning process and avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

The Practice Guide provides a useful and succinct document which addresses and clarifies any potential areas of ambiguity in the PPS. Case studies are used in the guide to illustrate key principles and these are particularly useful to illustrate how PPS25 has been implemented in practice. However, there remain two areas of concern: the availability of resources to cope with the preparation and assessment of Flood Risk Assessments, particularly at the Environment Agency, and, secondly, the use of SUDS (sustainable drainage systems) and surface water management could be developed in greater detail.

6. **Site Waste Management Plans**

I have approved the County Council's response to Government consultation on proposals to make site waste management plans (SWMP) a legal requirement for construction and demolition projects above £250,000. The SWMP must detail the amount and type of

waste that will be produced on a construction site and how it will be reused, recycled or disposed of.

The County Council supports the introduction of SWMPs as a voluntary approach has not proved to be effective. The plans will improve resource efficiency and reduce fly-tipping. A named person should be responsible for ensuring that SWMPs are prepared and implemented and preparation should begin during the design stage.

7. **50 plus Nottinghamshire**

50 plus Nottinghamshire has been set up by the County Council in partnership with other local authorities to make life easier for residents aged over 50 who receive funding from the Department of Work and Pensions and I am delighted to support their new transport voucher scheme. This scheme allows eligible residents who do not use a car or who have difficulty using public transport, to remain independent by helping with the cost of taxis or Dial-a-Ride services for leisure, health and employment purposes.

8. **Transport to Health Project**

A new hotline has been set up in Bassetlaw to help people travel to health facilities such as hospitals, GP surgeries or pharmacies. National research has shown that over a 12 month period, 1.4 million people miss, decline or choose not to seek medical help because of a transport problem. To help combat this problem a number of health and transport providers have been working together to set up a one-stop contact phone number known as Transport to Health. This service will provide transport information and personalised travel plans to enable people to access health services. Bassetlaw has been chosen for the pilot area as it is a large rural district with limited public transport in some of its villages. In the long term it is hoped that the project will be expanded to cover the whole county and I wish this very worthwhile project every success.

9. **'Explore Nottinghamshire' and RouteXchange**

I was very pleased to see the release of 'Explore Nottinghamshire – a taste of what's on offer' recently. This guide details a wide variety of routes across the county and highlights points of historical interest. It provides maps and details of how long the walks are, along with other considerations such as parking, public transport links and any potential difficulties for walkers. There are routes to suit most people, from novice walkers to experienced ramblers, cyclists and horse riders. Furthermore all the routes in the guide can be reached with ease by public transport and are accessible, therefore, to most people.

And, once again, the Authority's Rights of Way team are leading the way with the launch of a unique on-line interactive forum. This allows people to give a rating to walking, cycling and horse-riding routes for

the benefit of others searching for similar routes. Users can also add their own favourite routes for other people to try. RouteXchange contains a wide variety of routes for different abilities and maps with detailed written directions can be downloaded from the site. It is hoped that the new website will entice people to try out routes and help them to choose routes suited to their ability.

Councillor Stella Smedley
Cabinet Member for Environment

[/C&D/member&seniormanagementsupport/cabinetmemberreports/councilreps/13Sept07](#)