

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2010

1. The following are summaries of work relating to my portfolio. This report reflects the wide range of initiatives being undertaken, all of which help improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people.

COUNTRYSIDE AND CONSERVATION

National Water Sports Centre Campsite Improvements

2. I am pleased to announce a major refurbishment of the campsite facilities at the National Water Sports Centre to be completed by next spring. £220,000 will be spent on essential works to improve drainage and access roads, create 50 extra electrical hook-up points and a new playground to attract families. These essential works will bring the campsite up to the standard of its world-class water facilities making it one of the region's best camping destinations.
3. Funding will come from a special budget reserved for repairs and maintenance that came from Sport England when the operation and management of the centre passed to the County Council in 2009. Future plans are also being proposed to upgrade the campsite shower blocks which, when combined with the other campsite developments, would expect to attract 18,000 extra visitors each year, bringing in an additional profit of £48,000.
4. Options for a new visitor centre at the white water course are also being developed. These would include new changing facilities, café, offices, shop, reception and wet suit hire. The current facilities are over 30 years old and no longer meet customer expectations. It is estimated that a new visitor centre will increase the amount of all course users to more than 50,000 per annum. Combined with the increase in anticipated visitor spends at the café and shop, the new centre would deliver additional annual profits of £300,000.
5. These developments follow in the wake of the extended and improved water ski facilities which are due to open in April of next year.

Country Parks

6. I am always pleased to report on the imaginative range of activities provided by our officers at the county's country parks and a number of family entertainment events were staged around the October half term this year.
7. Rufford Abbey Country Park held a Halloween Trail in the woods with more than 700 families participating. At Sherwood Forest, the annual torchlight walk through the forest led by park rangers proved to be so popular that timed tickets had to be sold and extra walks were put on over the Halloween weekend. Some 550 tickets were sold.
8. "Seed Hunt Sunday" at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre was also a great success over the half term break. Park rangers took groups of children inside the Major Oak enclosure to collect acorns, which the children will grow into oak seedlings with a view to future planting elsewhere in the Sherwood Forest area.
9. On Thursday 25th November, Rufford Abbey Country Park underwent an all-day inspection for the Visit England "VAQAS" quality award (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) and passed. For the third year running the County Council run park and visitor attraction is thus certified as a quality assured tourist attraction, in this national scheme run by the official national tourist board".

LIBRARIES

Under fives sessions at Worksop Library

10. I am pleased to report that the first sessions at the new Worksop library have been very successful. More than 95 children with their families attended the Rattle, Rhyme and Roll session which is designed to introduce young children to music and rhyme. A session with the Bookstart bear attracted 95 children plus parents and carers and a visit from the Gruffalo attracted a further 100 children and their families.
11. These sessions encourage new families to visit the library, increasing new library memberships and book issues. More importantly, these weekly sessions promote early reading and singing amongst young children, which are important to good child development.

Storybook Dads

12. Each year 160,000 children in the UK suffer the trauma of the imprisonment of a parent and one of the biggest difficulties for those imprisoned is keeping in touch with their children. Storybook Dads is a national project run by the Library Service in HMP Ranby that allows men in prison to read a bedtime story to their children. They record a story to which music and sound effects are added and which is then transferred onto a CD and sent home to their children. In the last 12 months, 117 Storybook Dad CDs have been recorded of which 56 were for

Nottinghamshire families. Feedback from families and the prison service has been very positive.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES

Rufford Abbey Charter

13. Nottinghamshire Archives has been successful in purchasing at auction an important mediaeval charter of Rufford Abbey. Dating from the 1180s, this is one of the earliest documents held by the Archives. It records the grant of land in Eakring to one of King Henry II's serjeants. The purchase was funded with grants from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and from the Friends of the National Libraries.

BBC Turn Back Time

14. In support of the current BBC series on the history of shopping and the High Street, the Archives held a workshop on 4 December. Archivist, Peter Lester, highlighted the range of sources available at Nottinghamshire Archives to research the history of shops. Nick Tomlinson from Picture the Past then gave a presentation with images of shopping in the past from the award winning photographic website.

Libraries, Archives & Information Publication

15. I was very pleased to launch the latest local history publication at the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre, Ruddington on 4 December. 'An Outline History of the Railways of Nottinghamshire' by Michael Vanns covers 170 years of railway history in the county and is extensively illustrated with over 70 rarely seen photographs of Nottinghamshire railway heritage.

SPORTS SERVICE

Commonwealth Games

16. Nottinghamshire's athletes put in some fine performances in last few days of the Commonwealth Games. Cotgrave badminton player, Nathan Robertson, who carried the English flag at the opening ceremony, achieved a bronze medal in the mixed team competition and silver in the mixed and the men's doubles competitions.
17. In hockey, the women's team, including Helen Richardson, won a bronze medal. The men's side, which includes Ali Wilson and Adam Dixon who are funded through our Shining Stars scheme, just lost out on penalties in the fourth place play off.
18. Newark's Stephanie Pywell tied for 6th place in the high jump competition and Bassetlaw pole vaulter Emma Lyons finished seventh overall with a jump of

4.10m. The 23-year-old had three close attempts at 4.25m, which would have been a season best and was the height achieved by the bronze medal winners. Notts Gymnastics Club's Jordan Lipton, competing for the 5th placed Scottish team came 13th in the individual competition. She also made the final of the bars competition in which she finished 5th.

Nottinghamshire Sports Awards

19. Nominations are now open for the annual Nottinghamshire Sports Awards. Nominations are invited in 13 categories, recognising achievements of both adults and young people in playing sport as well as coaching, and volunteering. A new award for this year is Junior Coach of the Year which acknowledges the commitment of those aged 19 and under to developing their sport. There is also a breakthrough award which will celebrate the successes of our Rising Stars grant recipients.
20. The public will have the opportunity to vote this year on a new award for the sporting achievement of the year. This will involve an on-line vote from a range of 12 outstanding sporting achievements. The closing date for nominations was 3 December 2010. The Sports Awards will be held on Monday 21 February 2011 at the new theatre on the Becket School site in West Bridgford.

National Governing Bodies (NGB)

21. Nottinghamshire won gold at the first East Midlands Gymnastics Association multi discipline competition. Teams from the Notts School of Gymnastics for Boys, Notts Gymnastics Club, Notts General Gymnastics Club, Notts Acro, and Elevate Trampoline Club took part in 5 different gymnastics disciplines. The Sports Service is also putting on courses for safeguarding training and courses for judging qualifications to support the structure of the sport.
22. In basketball 11 candidates have now attended training to achieve their UKCC Level I Coach award with a further 16 people attaining their England Basketball Level 1 referee award. We have trained 20 Level 1 table officials and 19 volunteers from the basketball community have attended a safeguarding course. This depth of qualified officials will help to sustain the club and competition structure for basketball in the county.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION

The Economic Regeneration Service Project visits

23. I am pleased to report that Councillor Keith Girling and I recently visited a number of the projects supported through the Economic Regeneration Service including the Wheels to Work bike shop. This project provides local people with a loan of a moped to access work or learning opportunities when no other means of transport is available and often where people are living in rural areas. They also run the Ignition fund which helps with bus pass, train vouchers etc. Since its

launch the project has helped over 400 people to travel to jobs, training and education opportunities.

24. We also visited Creative Careers in Mansfield. This project is aimed at young people aged 13 -19 years from Ashfield and Mansfield who are, or who are at risk of becoming without employment, education or training. It offers young people a practical and detailed insight in to the range of opportunities available in creative industries, of which Mansfield has a wide range.
25. We completed the tour with a look at some Financial Inclusion projects including an activity which is used at the financial capability sessions around the county, to help people become more aware of money management and make appropriate financial decisions. We then had an update on the current position and future plans for the advice sector and Nottinghamshire Credit Unions.

Business Engagement

26. Councillor Keith Girling attended the launch of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire GreenTech Business Club in November. The club aims to bring together the area's burgeoning green business sector and to support its economic growth by providing local supply chain and networking opportunities and the chance to share the experiences of business leaders in the sector.
27. Councillor Girling supported the 2010 Enviro-Entrepreneurs Week, which was hosted at BioCity in Nottingham. This was a three-day "master class" in business management skills for local entrepreneurs in the environmental low-carbon sector. Councillor Girling participated in a "Dragons' Den" event, where panels of local business leaders and experts offered advice as to how best to translate good ideas into sustainable business opportunities.
28. I am pleased to report that the third meeting of the Nottinghamshire Business Engagement Group (NBEG) took place at County Hall on Friday 19 November. Councillor Keith Girling chaired the meeting which included a presentation by East Midlands Business (EMB) relating to a recent survey undertaken by them of established companies and new and pre-start businesses. The survey covered a range of business 'barometer' related issues. It is pleasing to report that this survey and a recent quarterly economic survey by the Chamber of Commerce show that there appear to be good signs of economic growth in the county. The EMB survey suggested that finding and retaining customers was the top priority for businesses.
29. Another topic discussed by NBEG was the Local Enterprise Partnership. It was agreed that NBEG should be a strong local business voice into the LEP, and in the first instance this could be achieved by inviting Peter Varnsberry of Laing O'Rourke, who is to be the Nottinghamshire business representative on the LEP Shadow Board, to be a member of NBEG. Peter could then report progress to NBEG members and seek feedback from them on key issues for reporting back to the Shadow Board.

30. NBEG also considered the fact that many businesses are not fully aware of the LEP or the Regional Growth Fund and that there is a job to do in terms of promoting it in a way which businesses understand. The value to business of the LEP needs to be quantified and explained much more widely if the LEP is to succeed in harnessing the potential of the area for business growth and innovation. As LEPs are to be strongly influenced by business's needs this will be an important job for the Shadow Board.
31. Since my last report Councillor Keith Girling has also attended a number of business network meetings and events in his role as Business Engagement Champion, this includes an event organised by the Chamber on 16 November relating to the LEP.

Making the Connection – Tesco Gateways

32. As previously reported, Making the Connection (MtC) is the Economic Regeneration service's flagship project delivering tailored recruitment and skills solutions to employers and communities across Nottinghamshire. MtC has recently worked with Tesco during the build and opening of two new Stores, one in Beeston and one in Bulwell. MtC and partners coordinated the delivery of eight pre-employment Gateways. These Gateways were based on the SkillSmart retail syllabus approved by the Sector Skills Council and the resulting job outcomes have been significant.
33. 105 people were selected for the Beeston Gateways and all course graduates received guaranteed interviews. A total of 66 of this group have so far achieved employment, 43 with Tesco and 23 with other local retailers. This means that Making the Connection is continuing to achieve above a 60% success rate in employment from its Gateway processes. In addition, 93 people from the City and County gained employment at the Bulwell store.

Councillor John Cottee
Cabinet Member for Culture and Community