

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY****KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES****Purpose of the Report**

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.

**Nottinghamshire Archives****Spring and Summer events programme**

2. The latest Archives programme of events has been published. The programme is designed to both inform regular users and attract new audiences to the Archives. The programme features monthly tours of the Archives; workshops on specific record sources such as Military records, Police records, Records of Royalty, Apprenticeship records, City Council records and Electoral registers; and Archive skills workshops on Reading Parish registers and Finding Your Way around Nottinghamshire Archives. The Diamond Jubilee will be celebrated with an exhibition of records of Royalty at Rufford Abbey Country Park during the spring and early summer and the Olympics with a talk on Nottinghamshire's Sporting Heritage on 10 July.

**Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives**

3. The inaugural meeting of the newly established Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives was held on 24 March. The Friends will run as a separate body to support and raise funds for the Archives. At the meeting officers and a committee were elected, subscriptions approved and a draft constitution tabled. A programme of events is being organised leading up to the first Annual General Meeting. After the business meeting Dr Elain Harwood, Senior Architectural Investigator at English Heritage spoke on 'Archives for Researching Buildings' showing the importance of archives in understanding the built environment.

**Country Parks and Green Estate**

4. The mild weather through most of the winter and into early spring has contributed to a very good visitor throughput at our main country parks - Rufford, Sherwood and Bestwood, with a corresponding increase in income from our retail and catering outlets.

5. During the 'close' season, a number of works have been undertaken to improve our facilities. A new "Changing Places" toilet at Rufford Abbey has been installed which for the first time will make it possible for more severely disabled visitors to have proper facilities available when they use the park. The majority of the cost has been covered by a grant from the "Short Breaks" project, which aims to give young disabled people and children the opportunity for days out and short breaks.
6. An exhibition on the monastic history of Rufford Abbey, located in the Undercroft of the former Cistercian monastery, is being refurbished. In particular, opportunities for disabled visitors are being improved by means of larger, more readable text on exhibition panels, and a ramp to help wheelchairs enter the historic Frater. The exhibition will re-open at Easter.
7. The Country Parks team are working with English Heritage on longer term plans to extend and upgrade the conservation and visitor interpretation of the site, with the aim of giving visitors a better understanding of one of Nottinghamshire's most historic places. Plans are also in hand to develop new guided tours of the Abbey ruins, led by a medieval monk. All the above actions are designed to refresh and improve the overall visitor offer both to encourage existing visitors to make repeat visits and to attract new visitors.
8. At the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, an aging small children's play area, which had become very well worn and posed a safety risk, has been completely refurbished with the aid of a grant from Lafarge, and a new safety surface installed. The site also hosted its first civil wedding at Sherwood Forest in February. Damp spring weather made conditions at the forest venue somewhat muddy, but despite these challenges, the event was very successful. The bride wrote afterwards to express her thanks. In her words, "The food was lovely, the setting beautiful and the staff marvellous."
9. To assist in the development of a new vision and plan for Bestwood Country Park, a multi-agency partnership group is being set up through which all the local authorities with an interest in the park and its surroundings (Gedling, Ashfield, Nottingham City, Bestwood Parish Council), together with the highly active and influential Friends of Bestwood Country Park, can work together to bring about a range of improvements in the short and longer term.

## **Libraries**

### **Worksop Library**

10. The new café was officially opened by the Chairman of the County Council on Tuesday 28 February. The Barista Café is a social enterprise café run by Framework Housing Association that provides training and employment opportunities to potentially vulnerable local people. The café is now open 7 days a week, greatly enhancing the visitor experience. Customers to the library can now experience a fantastic range of drinks and light refreshments as part of their visit to the library, enabling them to spend more time enjoying their library visit, and making the most of this important community resource.
11. Recent events that have been put on at the library as part of its ongoing cultural programme include:

- Two jazz evenings in association with Jazz Steps – people who attended the first jazz evening last year told us how much they enjoyed it and that there was nothing like this happening in Bassetlaw.
- Comedy club – continuing with the hugely successful series of comedy nights that is increasing in attendance numbers, reaching out to new audiences and demonstrating how libraries are multi-use cultural and community venues
- Horrid Henry Day and Spot the Dog story hullabaloo special sessions for children
- For learners there have been a number of courses run by North Notts College; creative crafts, IT and Italian for Beginners
- Author events – Karen Maitland, Margaret Dickinson, Robert Goddard, Charles Dickens 200<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration
- Random - An indoor Youth Festival run on 10 March for the young people of Bassetlaw – involving live bands, street dance workshops, busker’s stage, silent disco, and double-dutch skipping. The project reached out to over 500 young people across the district through 5 Young People's Centre's, 3 Youth Clubs and 2 mobile units with between 200-300 taking part in the event.

## **Horrid Henry**

12. Over 1500 children took part in ‘Horrid Henry’ fun days during half-term week in February. Thirteen libraries across the County hosted Horrid Henry themed days between 11 – 18 February with the aim of inspiring and encouraging children to read, and providing them with an opportunity to meet one of their favourite storybook characters. The character of Horrid Henry, created by children’s author Francesca Simon, made his first appearance at Mansfield Library on Saturday 11 February, attracting an audience of 300 children. As well as meeting Horrid Henry, children took part in various craft activities and listened to Horrid Henry stories.

## **Economic Development**

### **Nottinghamshire Business Engagement Group**

13. The Nottinghamshire Business Engagement Group, which is chaired by Councillor Keith Girling, met on the 15 February to hear presentations about the Government’s Business Coaching for Growth programme and the emerging County Council and City Council’s economic growth plans and strategies.
14. Mick Burrows gave a presentation to NBEG members outlining the state of Nottinghamshire’s economy. He highlighted some of the key challenges and how the County Council is involved in growing the economy.
15. Nottingham City Council recently launched its draft Nottingham Economic Growth Plan and has entered into consultation with partners and local businesses to develop it fully.

16. The Government's new Business Coaching for Growth programme is being delivered by a consortium, which includes Pera (based at Melton Mowbray) and Oxford Innovation (who manage the innovation centres in Nottinghamshire on our behalf). The programme provides a range of support including workshops, mentoring, access to finance and networking opportunities to high growth businesses.

### **Supporting Construction SMEs**

17. My Deputy, Councillor Keith Girling, attended the Nottinghamshire Construction Forum on 8<sup>th</sup> March, to tell small and medium businesses from across the county what we were doing to help support them, particularly through our procurement of goods and services.
18. A large part of our support has been through added value to the database commissioned by SCAPE, who is the managing agent for EMPA, the East Midlands Property Alliance, of which we are a member. The database, developed and maintained by a local company called Firefly-Online, allows local SMEs to become registered to be subcontractors for contracts awarded to larger companies through our framework agreements. Through our Economic Development service, we have funded further development of this, enabling Firefly to directly contact and help SMEs who had initially failed the registration process. I am delighted to report that after great success of the pilot project, which has seen an extra £1 million brought into the Nottinghamshire economy, we are able to continue our support in 2012.
19. This further funding will help more Nottinghamshire SMEs achieve registration and become eligible for public sector work. It will also help us obtain information from the large contractors about who they subcontract to and why, which we can use to advantage more Nottinghamshire firms.

### **Inward Investment**

20. In January my Deputy, Councillor Keith Girling, attended the Newark Business Club, where a presentation was given about the cross-county work of the City Council's Invest in Nottingham team. Since last June, the team has included a half-time officer from our Economic Development team, working on inward investment for the county.
21. The presentation explained how the inward investment model works since the UKTI role of working with foreign investors and businesses was passed from emda to a consortium, headed by PA Consulting and the British Chamber of Commerce. The presentation also identified how Newark in particular is being promoted through the Invest in Nottingham website as a "development opportunity", building on its Growth Point status, excellent infrastructure links and robust and varied local economy. This work should add value to our work with the Newark Town Partnership and other local stakeholders, to ensure that Newark faces a period of growth, albeit in a stagnating global economy, with confidence and grounds for optimism.

### **Nottinghamshire Local Broadband Plan**

22. Excellent progress is being made with the Nottinghamshire Local Broadband Plan. On 2nd February 2012 the Government's Broadband Delivery UK Office (BDUK) - who is investing £530 million to improve broadband services across the UK - gave a very

informative and balanced presentation on the BDUK programme to the County Council Cabinet and neighbouring local authority partners. The Leader and County Council Cabinet colleagues found it inspiring and it helped to explain some of the misconceptions that have come across when talking about the programme and the investment required.

23. The County Council has carefully considered its position and has confirmed that it will underwrite the project to the value of £868,000 – this being the value of the Council's current European Regional Development Fund bid, which is in the final appraisal stages. The Nottinghamshire Local Broadband Plan was submitted in advance of the Secretary of State's deadline of end of February 2012 and approval is expected by the end of April 2012. The County Council's new dedicated broadband page [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/broadband) includes a copy of the Plan, a video of Councillor Girling sharing details on the Plan and an interview with a local award winning firm who are participating in the internet revolution.
24. I am hugely excited about the opportunities that will flow from the investment in broadband infrastructure. The importance of broadband lies less in the technology itself, than in its ability to create greater access to information and communications for communities. A discrete team of County Council officers continues to develop the best and most future-proof proposals and will ensure that we get the best possible broadband solutions for Nottinghamshire's residents and businesses. This includes exploring ways that will create social and economic benefits for users of the new infrastructure and the public sector as a whole, to ensure that the Council can rebuff any criticism of being slow in its superfast broadband roll-out process.
25. Given the procurement process is not anticipated to conclude until the end of December 2012, as an interim measure, advanced discussions are underway to pilot other technologies such as satellite and wireless in some of the County's most challenging broadband unserved and underserved communities.

## **20<sup>th</sup> Nottinghamshire Sports Awards**

26. The county council's annual celebration of sporting excellence in the county took place at the Becket School on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February.
27. Around 300 people attended this year's event and attendees included sports stars from the world of professional and amateur sport. Winners of the 15 categories were announced on the night, they were;

### **Club of the Year**

Phoenix Amateur Boxing Club

### **Community Coach of the Year**

Michele Harrop

### **Disabled Sportsperson of the Year**

Richard Whitehead

### **Junior Disabled Sportsperson of the Year**

Oliver Hynd

**Junior Sportsperson of the Year**

Beth Vernon

**Junior Team of the Year**

Jack Smith & Ashley Cowley

**Performance Coach of the Year**

Angela Weiss

**Roll of Honour Inductees**

Derek Pickering

Peter Fendley

Peter Viles

**Sporting School of the Year**

South Wilford Primary School

**Sportsperson of the Year**

Rebecca Adlington OBE

**Team of the Year**

Beeston Hockey Club (Men's 1st XI)

**Volunteer of the Year**

Ray Walker

**Young Coach of the Year**

Daniel Edson

**Young Volunteer of the Year**

Abdulrahman Mohammed

**Outstanding Achievement of the Year**

Hayley Turner

28. The awards were presented by Nottinghamshire broadcast presenter Andrew James who took the chance to interview a number of sporting celebrities from across the County. The County Council Chairman and the Council Leader were both in attendance at the event which celebrated not only the annual achievements of individuals and teams but also fantastic efforts made by volunteers in sport who keep Nottinghamshire at the top of the sporting tree. The event highlighted the opportunities for people to get involved in sport using the Olympics and Paralympics as motivational factors during 2012.

**Councillor John Cottee**

**Cabinet Member for Culture and Community**

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