

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE****SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 16 SEPTEMBER TO 10 NOVEMBER  
2013****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee on a range of initiatives being undertaken to improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people.

**Information and Advice****LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY LEARNING****Turf Cutting ceremony at Nottinghamshire Archives**

2. On 15 October the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor John Allin, with Councillor John Knight, Chairman of the Culture Committee, and Councillor David Kirkham, Chairman of the Finance and Property Committee, cut the first sod of the £2.5 million extension to Nottinghamshire Archives. They were joined by Professor John Beckett, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Archives Users Group, Archives staff, the contractors Morgan Sindall and members of the County Council Design team.
3. The extension will provide additional archive storage for the next twenty years, including specialist storage for photographs and digital media, and improved public and learning facilities.

**National Poetry Celebrations at West Bridgford Library on 5 Oct 2013**

4. Nottinghamshire Libraries celebrated National Poetry Day with a series of special poetry workshops and events aimed at children, young families and members of the Asian community in West Bridgford Library.
5. Children's author Debjani Chatterjee ran a poetry session for children and a family creative writing workshop for children and their families where she shared her experience of growing up in different countries and love of writing poetry. The events provided opportunities for 17 children and their families to enjoy poetry and learn poetry writing techniques.
6. An event for adults in the evening provided the opportunity for local poets to showcase their talents as they recited their poetry in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu to an audience of 38 people. This event was an opportunity to promote the Asian book collection which

includes poetry titles, the Library Service in general and to launch West Bridgford Library's Asian Language reading group.

7. Feedback for both events was very positive. Comments included:

*"Captivating speaker. Got children to participate" (children's event)*

*"Wonderful exposure to poetry by a poet for children" (children's event)*

*"Such events should be organised regularly for developing community cohesion" (adult event)*

8. An on-going programme of poetry events is part of the Library Service's strategy to promote reading for pleasure. For children, poetry can play a significant part in helping them develop a love of language and a love of reading. Poems can stimulate imagination, expand their vocabulary and help to develop creative thinking.

### **Storysaurus Week in Nottinghamshire Libraries: 21 – 26 October 2013**

9. Dinosaur roars were heard throughout our libraries during October half term as children and their families attended a range of 'Storysaurus' activities. The week began in grand style with the Dinosaur Dome at Mansfield Library. This 30 minute 3D show was repeated throughout the day and attracted 200 children and 100 adults. Children were also able to take part in the craft activities where they could make a Diplodocus Doorhanger, a Fridgeosaurus, a flying Icarosaurus and take part in our Dino Hunt with the chance of winning a book and a jar of dinosaurs. Dinosaur themed books were also available to borrow.
10. Family Fun sessions were held during the rest of the week at Kirkby, Hucknall, East Leake, West Bridgford, Bingham and Worksop libraries where children participated in dinosaur themed storytimes, craft activities and Dino hunts.
11. The dinosaur theme was very popular and was successful in encouraging more boys to attend the half term activities. Dinosaur book displays were provided across the week and were sought after. Attendances were good with a total of 597 children and 322 adults across the week.
12. Feedback was positive with comments including:

*"Me and my two children aged 8 and 4 really enjoyed the Dome experience"*

*"Even as an adult I learnt some new facts about dinosaurs"*

*"A well organised event with helpful and friendly staff. A lovely atmosphere for the age groups concerned"*

*"Excellent use of library!! Warm and welcoming. Geared up for the children. Good ideas to keep them occupied!!"*

## **Chatterbooks Reading Groups in Nottinghamshire Libraries: November 2013**

13. November saw a series of monthly Chatterbooks reading group meetings taking place in three Nottinghamshire libraries. Organised by The Reading Agency, a national charity that promotes reading, Chatterbooks reading groups take place all over the country in libraries, schools and community venues and provide an opportunity for children aged 8 – 11 years to get together to talk about books they are reading.
14. There are currently three Chatterbooks groups which run in Mansfield, West Bridgford and Worksop libraries. Each month children talk about books they have been reading followed by a reading related activity. A range of books is also available for children to borrow and a librarian is on hand to advise children on their reading choices when required. The emphasis is very much on fun and sharing. Children are involved in the decision making process about how the sessions will work and what books to read and discuss.
15. Support from The Reading Agency includes staff training and core packs of Chatterbooks branded materials which include a bag, bookmark, reading diary, wristband and pen that are given to each new member.
16. The Mansfield and Worksop groups have been running for a couple of years and are targeted at primary aged children in years 5 and 6. Favourite subjects for discussion have included Roald Dahl titles, short scary stories and poetry. Activities have included designing book covers, playing book bingo and acting out short story scenarios. The West Bridgford group was formed earlier this year and is aimed at children aged 10 – 12 years, supporting them through the transition from primary to secondary school. Favourite activities so far have been First Impressions, a game that involves matching book openings to titles, and Book Bingo.
17. Through attending the groups there is usually a noticeable increase in children's confidence and skills in talking about the books that they read. Most children already love reading when they join the group but usually gain in confidence from participating. Children have also enjoyed discovering new books from friends and talking about books they have read in a group situation. All participants have reported either a continuation or increase in the amount of books that they have read after coming to the sessions.
18. Recent research has shown that reading for pleasure is more important to children's successes than education or social class. Chatterbooks reading clubs help children build a lifelong reading habit.

## **Readers' Day**

19. The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Readers' Day, jointly held with Nottingham City Libraries, took place at County Hall on Saturday 2 November 2013. The sell-out event saw 150 readers gather together to listen to authors and participate in workshops ranging from a history of whistling in literature to writing historical fiction set in China. Highlights included the chance to listen to the acclaimed locally born screen writer Billy Ivory, writer of the television series Truckers and the film Made in Dagenham, and authors Bernadine Evaristo and Dorothy Koomson. Participant feedback was excellent.

## **COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATE**

### **Autumn Events in Country Parks**

20. Autumn visits to Rufford Abbey Country Park traditionally peak during the October half term period. Despite dire (but thankfully un-realised) national predictions of storm conditions on the weekend of 26 October, this year proved no exception. A high number of families took part in seasonal activities such as the October “One Sky One World” Kite Festival and family drumming sessions. Rufford’s popular annual “Halloween Trail” took place over the last two weeks of October and attracted some 2,000 participants. At the same time the County Council’s Arts Service held its annual “Big Draw” campaign at Rufford Craft Centre Gallery with around 3,000 people taking part.
21. At Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, families enjoyed a variety of events themed around nature, with the annual “Fungal Foray” soon fully booked, and new short courses on offer teaching traditional woodland crafts such as spoon carving and basket weaving. “Seed Hunt Sunday” attracted over 200 participants, with children taking home acorns from Sherwood’s veteran oaks to grow into saplings and later return for planting. A large scale evening Halloween event called “Sinister Circus” took place in the woods, aimed in part at engaging youngsters in safe organised activities rather than “Trick or Treating.”
22. Bestwood Country Park hosted a series of autumn events for the Nottinghamshire Fungi Group including displays at the Dynamo House by Nottingham University students. Its success raised the suggestion that this become an annual event at Bestwood. A hedge laying weekend event taught this countryside management skill to a group of enthusiastic learners. To quote from a thank you email to the County Council afterwards “I left the course with great confidence, and a big sense of achievement - thank you.”

### **Country Parks Volunteering**

23. Volunteering programmes in country parks this autumn included cutting hay from Rufford Abbey’s “Blue Butterfly” standard meadow area, with the help of around a dozen volunteers. Whilst carrying out this grassland management, a species of fungus (Devil’s Finger Fungus) was found which had never previously been recorded at Rufford Country Park, highlighting the benefits of such biodiversity projects.

### **Rufford Abbey Conservation Plan**

24. Work commissioned recently to compile a Conservation Plan for Rufford Abbey and its historic landscape is now underway, and heritage consultancy MRDA has visited the site several times to carry out surveys. A volunteer from Nottingham University has also been found to assist with this by the cataloguing of onsite maps and plans, and the County’s Historic Buildings Officer is developing links with a University of Nottingham PhD student working on the three dimensional modelling of historic buildings and landscapes, all of which will usefully feed into the conservation plan work.

### **Green Estates**

25. Work has been taking place at Manton Pit Woods to install a new car park and to restore footpaths and trails. A number of very productive meetings have taken place with the

local community and the Green Estates team are anticipating being able to organise an official opening of the new works in Spring 2014.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) That the update on a range of initiatives being undertaken to improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people be noted.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and**  
**Culture**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Derek Higton  
Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture  
T: 0115 9773498  
E: [derek.higton@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:derek.higton@nottsc.gov.uk)

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