

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE,  
AND THE GROUP MANAGER, PLANNING**

**SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 29 JUNE TO 31 AUGUST 2015**

**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, ARTS, INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY LEARNING**

**Collingham Community Partnership Library**

2. The re-opening of Collingham Library in its new location within The Parish Hub and Library on Saturday 26 September marked the first Nottinghamshire library to become a Community Partnership Library. The Library moved from its old premises within Collingham Health Centre and reopened in its new, shared and refurbished premises after just one week of a closure period.
3. This move will initially save on building and maintenance costs and in addition the Library Service is working on enhancing the volunteer offer to increase volunteering opportunities and reduce associated staffing costs.
4. The Parish Hub building has benefited from a thorough modernisation programme and offers bright, airy and attractive accommodation. The Library Service has invested in new shelving, carpeting and furniture, all of which have increased the accessibility of library materials and enhanced the overall customer experience. In addition, and with the help of Section 106 money, over £500 of new library books have been purchased to enhance the library stock with the same level of purchasing intended for 2016.
5. On the opening day over 300 people visited the Library and since reopening several lapsed customers have returned and re-joined. There have been very many positive comments including:

*'It's so much bigger than we thought'*

*'It's so welcoming, bright and airy'*

*'The shelves are much nicer and easier to reach'*

*'The new lobby is a lovely area in which to sit and read'.*

## **COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATES**

### **The Major Oak Woodland Festival, Sherwood Forest Country Park**

6. Following hard on the heels of the successful Robin Hood Festival came a different but popular event for Sherwood Forest Country Park – the Major Oak Woodland Festival on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September.
7. This was the second year of the event, which showcases green woodworking, woodland crafts, woodland management and traditional woodcarving. The event was attended by the Chairman of the County Council, who toured the many stalls and displays set up within the woodland, including willow weaving, logging with shire horses, rustic chair making, tree leaf identification, traditional charcoal making and ancient tree walks.
8. The Woodland Festival was organised in partnership with the Sherwood Forest Trust, who secured sponsorship for the event from local construction company, Robert Woodhead Ltd. It was also attended by the RSPB, who are the County Council's chosen partner to build and manage the new Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre.
9. The event generated much positive media coverage in newspapers including the Derbyshire Times, the Mansfield Chad and others.

### **Steam Punk Picnic, Bestwood Country Park on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September**

10. Planned as a small scale event for a few enthusiasts, the Victorian Winding Engine House at Bestwood Country Park found itself the centre of this year's most surprising success for Country Parks. This was an outdoor picnic for "Steam Punks" – fans of a particular genre of science fiction where modern technology meets the Victorian steam age - with Gothic overtones!
11. Costumed enthusiasts from as far away as Newcastle arrived at the free event. The Winding Engine House volunteer group led guided tours of the restored engine house, and Friends of Bestwood Country Park ran a community café, with volunteers from the local Women's Institute group suitably dressed as Edwardian café "Nippies."
12. The event provoked considerable interest in the local media, with the Nottingham Post amongst those who sent out photographers to snap the inventive range of costumes sported by happy attendees.
13. It is hoped that the event can be repeated next year, possibly with an entrance fee to enable more activities and a dedicated parking area.

### **Rufford Abbey 1940s event on 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September**

14. Though continuing budget reductions may necessitate changes to the scale of future such events, 2015 saw fans of the annual 1940s Weekend at Rufford Abbey once again delighted by the impressive range of displays and activities on offer to the park visitors.
15. Swing dancing demonstrations, 1940s singers, an inspection of troops by "Mr Churchill", 1940s hairdos, vintage ambulances, and a simulated air raid were amongst the thrills and

spills adding colour to this major living history event. Historical re-enactors travelled from as far away as Kent to take part. With explosions and weapon firing (albeit with blanks) part of the authentic atmosphere, safety is high priority, and again the park was grateful for the support of experienced historic event specialist EventPlan, who helped to keep large crowds of visitors, from tots to veterans, safe and comfortable. An estimated 15,000 people attended the event over the course of the weekend.

## **CULTURAL AND ENRICHMENT SERVICES**

### **The Big Draw**

16. The Big Draw is the world's biggest drawing festival with thousands of enjoyable, and free, drawing activities which connect people of all ages with museums, outdoor spaces, artists, designers, illustrators - and each other. The Big Draw is for anyone who loves to draw, as well as those who think they can't! *Every drawing tells a story* is this year's theme.
17. The Arts Service approach is to use artists in settings, to support settings to self-lead using our "How To" inspiration sheets, and to find ways of using drawing for engagement to meet the needs of that setting/audience. The common output from all supported Big Draws will be the creation of simple handmade books full of drawings.
18. The drawings may be inspired by story or place or memory or emotion and will be delivered in a variety of ways depending on the artist involved and the audience participating.
19. Six award winning training sessions have been delivered by the Arts Service between July and September to encourage other groups to join in with the Nottinghamshire Big Draw, and to skill leaders in the County in using drawing to learn with their groups.
20. Throughout October artists will be working with groups and visitors across the County. The three strategic Libraries, Archives and the 10 level one Libraries are all hosting a Big Draw artist led workshop. 27 level 2 and 3 Libraries are running their own events with support from the Arts Service.
21. Killisick Children's Centre, Orston School, Co-Production mental health team and Mencap have had artists' sessions through the Service's outreach work.
22. All the drawn and made books from across the County will come together and become an exhibition that will tour the strategic Library galleries starting in November 2015.

## **CONSERVATION**

### **Greenwood Community Forest Partnership visit**

23. The Greenwood team, supported by Broxtowe Borough Council and the Friends of Brinsley Headstocks, hosted a visit by Anthony May, Chief Executive, to Brinsley Headstocks on 5 October. This is one of a number of greenspace sites within Greenwood Community Forest and was chosen to illustrate a range of activities that have been delivered to support the aims of the Community Forest. Anthony looked at

trees planted as part of a millennium initiative before going on to admire Brinsley's unique tandem timber headstocks and the site's newest addition – a tree carving to celebrate the area's heritage and future. This stimulated a wide ranging discussion that included:

- the role of tree planting in regeneration
- the importance of community engagement and the value of Friends groups
- the need to improve access for all
- the value of greenspaces for health.

### **Community Tree Planting Grants**

24. Greenwood's Community Tree Planting Grant is running again this year and applications are welcomed from Ashfield, Broxtowe and Gedling boroughs and Mansfield, and Newark & Sherwood districts. The deadline for applications is Friday 6 November 2015 and the Greenwood Team offers free advice and funding for planting of up to £250. The grant allows schools and community groups to play a part in creating the Community Forest, providing areas of shade, creating or enhancing a wildlife area, or screening unsightly areas with native trees and hedge plants.

### **Nottinghamshire Sports Heritage 2015 and Sports Heritage Conference**

25. This celebration took place between 26 September and 4 October 2015. It featured a series of sporting heritage events that took place across the County in sports clubs, museums, heritage sites, libraries as well as many other places. Nottinghamshire County Council Heritage Tourism has been involved in this event from its inception in 2014 and Nottinghamshire is the only place in the country offering a co-ordinated county-wide approach. To this end, the County Council has been selected to host the first ever 'Impact of Sporting Heritage' Conference in February 2016.

### **Human rights – Rebellion and freedom project**

26. Transform Training, a local voluntary organisation which provides support for vulnerable and disabled teenagers, has been helped to submit a Young Roots Heritage Lottery bid. If the project is successfully funded, it will take place in 2016 and the outcome will be the production of a Heritage Trail based on the County's heritage of fighting for rights and freedoms, from the legend of Robin Hood, through the English Civil War to more recent disputes.

### **Apprenticeship**

27. A new apprentice, Holly Batley, started work on 5 October. Although the Conservation team regularly hosts student placements, Holly is the first ever apprentice and will be working with the heritage specialists at County Hall. Hosting an apprentice is a relatively new approach for the heritage sector in this area and, as a result, both Holly and the County Council's Heritage Tourism Officer have been asked to speak about this experience at the Youth Heritage Conference being held in November.

## **Sherwood Landscape Partnership Scheme**

28. The Project Development Manager for *Miner to Major*, the Sherwood LPS, started in post at the beginning of September. Over the next 18 months, Beki Howey will be working with partners to develop and submit the Stage 2 funding application to Heritage Lottery Fund. If successful, the scheme will provide c. £3.5m of funding to enhance Sherwood's natural, built and cultural heritage, improve access and engage communities over five years.

## **Rufford Abbey**

29. Following the successful summer excavation at Rufford, the Community Archaeologists are now preparing to work with volunteers over the next few months to clean and catalogue the finds. Ahead of this, staff and volunteers have helped to reinvigorate the seminar room at Rufford, and this is the space that will be used for the finds processing. Specialist opinion has been sought on some of the finds from last year. One of the finds was a delicate piece of metalwork and specialist analysis of this find is eagerly awaited, but early indications are that it could be something very rare indeed. Watch this space!

## **Skylarks Experimental Archaeology Site**

30. This is a project in partnership with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and two work days in September prepared the site for the Skylarks Natural Heritage Festival on 12<sup>th</sup> September. Despite a mid-day torrential downpour the event was fairly well attended and the Community Archaeologists and volunteers put on a great display of Iron Age life with food, wool spinning, dyeing and firing pottery. We have also been in discussions with two re-enactment groups who are interested in getting involved in the site and helping to celebrate the fascinating cultural and natural heritage of the area. In addition we recently received training, from Carla Phillips of Travellers Through Time, on the ancient textile technology of naalbinding and will be able to pass on these skills in future workshops at the Skylarks site.

## **Besthorpe Church**

31. The local community has been carrying out small-scale archaeological investigations at the church at Besthorpe village. This curious 18<sup>th</sup> century church is the only one in the County to be oriented north-south instead of the usual east-west. Beneath it are the remains of the original medieval church, which are the subject of the investigation led by local archaeologist Sam Gorin. The Community Archaeologists were brought in to provide a training session for the local volunteers on archaeological drawing and recording.

## **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.

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