

14<sup>th</sup> February 2013

**Agenda Item: 4**

## **REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS**

### **LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (LIS) PROGRAMME 2012/13 AND 2013/14**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides details on the current position of the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS). It outlines achievements in 2012/13 and provides details of the 2013/14 programme split for approval.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The LIS initiative was developed by Nottinghamshire County Council in 2004 to promote a wide range of environmental improvements across the County for the benefit of local communities. The initiative has been an unrivalled success with a significant number of high profile developments being delivered across the County. The programme has been widely recognised and has earned the County Council credit as well as many accolades and awards locally, regionally and nationally.

#### **2012/2013 Overview**

3. 2012/13 has built on the success of previous years with schemes being delivered under the headings; Environmental Improvements, Heritage and Conservation and Local Identity which includes play areas, skateparks, noticeboards and signage. Funding from the allocated three million county capital block has been apportioned in accordance with the demand generated by the scheme suggestion process and where possible external match funding sought to add value to the programme. Photographs and further details of the schemes delivered over the past year can be found on the County Council website at [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/environment/lis](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/environment/lis). Highlights include restoration of Calverton folk museum, creation of a labyrinth at Rushcliffe Country Park, allotment improvements in Edwinstowe, a new war memorial in Mansfield and parking bay installation in Ashfield and Worksop.
- v One of the major themes in this year's programme is the installation and upgrading of play parks. Many communities lack facilities for under 16's and LIS has worked with residents and user groups to develop parks that are user friendly for all age groups, from toddlers to teenagers. Among the areas to

benefit are Burton Joyce, Kimberley, Wysall, Mansfield Woodhouse, Walesby, Newstead and Farnsfield.

- ∇ A number of bandstands have been restored and have become a major attraction for the public to hear local brass bands and music groups perform. A £50,000 modern-looking steel bandstand has been erected in Kingsway Park in Kirkby in Ashfield and Langold bandstand has been repaired with the installation of a new roof, power, steps and a ramp.
  - ∇ LIS continues to repair and restore war memorials and we were privileged in 2012 to host Jim Flint, aged 99 the oldest and most decorated RAF war veteran, at the memorial to seven airmen in Halam, near Southwell. Jim was a Bomber Command pilot during the Second World War and said the county council's memorial to the seven airmen was a wonderful gesture. LIS has to date restored or erected 38 memorials at a cost of just over £525,000.
  - ∇ Children in Sutton on Trent now feel safer walking to school following a LIS scheme to install a footpath. Previously children were forced to walk on the road for a short distance of the route and the school had reported several accidents involving pupils.
  - ∇ Heritage schemes continue to attract media attention with some of Nottinghamshire's most iconic landmarks benefiting from LIS funding. The 200 year old North Leverton windmill has had beams and four sails replaced as well as the installation of new signage and an interpretation board detailing how the windmill works, what it produces and the role of the resident miller.
  - ∇ A 500 year old dovecote in Thoroton has been rethatched and one of the largest dovecotes in the country at Sibthorpe has seen its roof repaired and a clean up inside. Lychgates at Averham and Cossall have also been restored to former glory.
4. During 2013/14 around 200 schemes are expected to be delivered which will bring the total number of schemes completed since its inception in 2004 to almost 3500 by the close of 2013/14. The vast majority of these projects have been requested directly by local communities and in turn endorsed by County Electoral Division Members. The delivery of this number of schemes has been possible through a continued shared commitment to the programme from County Council Members and community groups who have given considerable support to the initiative.
5. The quality of our local environment is an important issue that can have knock on effects on several aspects of society. With a direct link between our local environment quality and the quality of life in communities, left unchecked, neglected neighbourhoods affect the perception of the local community which can lead to anti-social behaviour, disorder, vandalism and eventually in some cases crime. During 2012/13 all of the 54 electoral divisions have benefited from one or more schemes being delivered or developed for implementation in 2013/14. The scheme delivery for 2012/13 and the proposed delivery for 2013/14 within each district is shown below.

| <b>2012/2013</b>  | <b>Environmental Improvements</b> | <b>Heritage &amp; Conservation</b> | <b>Local Identity &amp; Play</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Ashfield          | 10                                | 10                                 | 9                                | 29           |
| Bassetlaw         | 8                                 | 20                                 | 24                               | 52           |
| Broxtowe          | 12                                | 6                                  | 6                                | 24           |
| Gedling           | 5                                 | 6                                  | 4                                | 15           |
| Mansfield         | 9                                 | 8                                  | 5                                | 22           |
| Newark & Sherwood | 9                                 | 16                                 | 35                               | 60           |
| Rushcliffe        | 15                                | 17                                 | 18                               | 50           |
| Countywide        | -                                 | 1                                  | 2                                | 3            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>     | <b>68</b>                         | <b>84</b>                          | <b>103</b>                       | <b>255</b>   |

| <b>2013/2014 (proposed)</b> | <b>Environmental Improvements</b> | <b>Heritage &amp; Conservation</b> | <b>Local Identity &amp; Play</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Ashfield                    | 3                                 | 12                                 | 6                                | 21           |
| Bassetlaw                   | 11                                | 13                                 | 15                               | 39           |
| Broxtowe                    | 8                                 | 6                                  | 6                                | 20           |
| Gedling                     | 7                                 | 5                                  | 10                               | 22           |
| Mansfield                   | 7                                 | 13                                 | 10                               | 30           |
| Newark & Sherwood           | 6                                 | 13                                 | 13                               | 32           |
| Rushcliffe                  | 4                                 | 6                                  | 22                               | 32           |
| Countywide                  | 1                                 | 1                                  | -                                | 2            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>               | <b>47</b>                         | <b>69</b>                          | <b>82</b>                        | <b>198</b>   |

6. Given the local impetus behind all projects, they have been and are being well received and make a real difference to local communities. Consequently, significant positive publicity is generated in the local media. A number of schemes have caught the attention of TV and radio this year including the unveiling of the Olympic bench in Tollerton, two new trails in Newark – the Curiosities trail and the Victorian trail, a booklet commemorating the county’s Victoria Cross holders, and perhaps the most unusual scheme of the year, a defibrillator installed in a phone box in Normanton on Soar in association with the Community Heartbeat Trust and BT.

Other schemes to receive publicity from the 2012/13 programme include:

- a) A community orchard, hedge and wildflower planting and an archaeological dig at Bleasby Glebe Field.
- b) The removal of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed from the banks of the River Meden and Maun.
- c) £40,000 shop frontage improvements in Watnall Road in Hucknall which has been welcomed by retailers and shoppers alike.

- d) Memorial gates restored at the entrance to Yeoman Hill Park in Mansfield Woodhouse.
- e) The county's only outdoor Boccia court and multi use games area unveiled in Gamston.
- f) A garden paradise created at Conway Gardens sheltered housing complex in Retford – LIS working in association with A1 Housing.
- g) Working in association with Burton Joyce and Bulcote History Society, LIS designed a leaflet detailing the best walks and pubs in the area incorporating the villages of Lowdham, Caythorpe, Lambley and Hoveringham.
- h) Skateparks continue to grab attention and this year has seen work carried out on new parks in Ravenshead, Stapleford, Awsworth, Clarbrough, Blyth, Mansfield, and Radcliffe on Trent.
- i) LIS contributed to Bassetlaw District Council's efforts to plant 6,000 trees during the Queen's Jubilee year by funding efforts in the village of Gateford. Local schoolchildren joined forces with the local councillor for a morning's planting.
- j) Regular walkers and dog walkers along the Nottingham Canal in Trowell now have the pleasure of six newly installed benches along the 2 mile route.
- k) A Jubilee archway has been unveiled at the entrance to Brinsley Recreation Ground – a local artist worked closely with local schoolchildren.
- l) The demand for allotments continues and LIS has created new sites at Calverton, Ruddington and Annesley.
- m) LIS contributed £25,000 towards repair work at Newark Castle.
- n) Bird and bat boxes have been installed in Prospect Hill Wood in Worksop.
- o) Working in conjunction with Pleasley Vale Residents' Association, a walled kitchen garden and orchard have been restored in the hamlet.

### **2012/2013 Environmental Improvement Schemes**

- 7. A range of local schemes worth approximately £1.5m have been delivered within this heading including small environmental improvements in key community areas such as shopping parades or routes to local facilities, additional street lighting and the creation of car parking in dense residential areas. These projects have all been delivered by the County Council's Highways Operations.

8. New areas of work that have been developed during 2012/13 that will be prevalent in next year's programme include:
  - § Nottinghamshire's Famous Sons and Daughters, a web based interactive project showcasing hundreds of accomplished individuals who were born or lived in Nottinghamshire.
  - § From the 'Trent to the Trenches' – a project in collaboration with Nottingham City Council in the run up to commemorating the start of the First World War. This project will see over 100 volunteers from around the county pulling together to undertake research and assist in the development of the initiative.
  - § Nottinghamshire's Roll of Honour – Working with an extensive network of trusted volunteers countywide to create a web based historical casualty record honouring all the county's war dead. Approximately 12,000 individuals are thought to have lost their lives from the towns and parishes of Nottinghamshire.
  - § Skate and BMX parks.

### **2012/2013 Heritage and Conservation Community Schemes**

9. These community projects fall in to three main categories: projects that enhance the natural environment, heritage restoration projects and improvements to both physical and intellectual access to the County's environment. In addition to meeting local needs and aspirations, the projects help to increase the County's biodiversity and green spaces, protect and restore some of the most important heritage assets and enhance the County's tourism offer. The projects are largely delivered by the County Council's conservation specialists, supporting and working in partnership with local groups and organisations, District and Parish Councils. Physical and intellectual access improvements have been delivered through the creation of heritage trails, the provision of interpretation boards, pathway improvements across open spaces and the creation of outdoor classrooms.
10. The natural environment projects delivered in 2012/13 have ranged in size from planting native trees on local green spaces and the creation of community gardens and orchards to the restoration of pond networks and water meadows. A new area of work this year was the provision of support for volunteer groups to enhance biodiversity and reduce flood risk by removing invasive non-native species such as Himalayan Balsam along the County's rivers. Many conservation community schemes are developed and delivered through the efforts of volunteers and the invasive non-native species projects were no exception, benefiting from around 400 hours of volunteer effort.
11. This year's projects have also helped to restore a wide variety of the County's heritage assets, ranging from clocks to pinfolds and bandstands and from the restoration of listed community buildings to a contribution to the restoration works at Newark Castle. War memorials have again formed an important

element of the programme, with 7 memorials created or restored across the County.

### **2012/2013 Local Identity Schemes**

12. Around a hundred local identity schemes have been completed this year. These schemes are very low cost and have offered an opportunity to every Parish Council, Parish Meeting or Town Council within Nottinghamshire to submit a request for either a notice board or seat to be provided within the local community. This initiative is extremely popular with seats and notice boards being supplied and installed. This work is undertaken by Malcolm Lane & Sons, a local firm having been successful in winning the tender process. In addition, a further strand to this programme has seen the successful scheme delivery and installation of 17 fingerposts and 65 village signs.
13. Working closely with end users of facilities and undertaking community consultation the LIS programme often enables horizons to be extended and schemes to be embraced and supported especially in terms of on-going maintenance. This has regularly acted as a catalysts to other community activities. Our play park schemes programme clearly demonstrates many of these elements, managing expectations, using quality design and materials combined with community engagement and well managed delivery.
14. Skateparks and BMX tracks are growing in popularity providing a healthy and creative outlet for many different user groups and spectators. The demand for these types of schemes continues to gather pace across the county and LIS has responded. They can bring all corners of the community together and create an opportunity for our youngsters to develop their social and life skills in an environment they feel comfortable in. A key part of our delivery involves working closely with the user groups and Parish / Borough Councils to ensure we design and deliver a scheme that the whole community can be proud of; this year has seen 6 bespoke facilities delivered with another 4 programmed for delivery by the end of the financial year. We deliver from small local facilities to high end specialist facilities and can specify a number of materials for construction that will meet most user / owners expectations. These schemes continue to attract external funding as well as the support and recognition from the user groups themselves. This year has seen volunteers groups give circa 1700 hours to this area of our programme..

### **2013/2014 programme**

15. The LIS programme strives to improve local areas by making a positive impact with small scheme investments making a tremendous difference. This can also lead to many additional community benefits. The development of the programme commenced at the end of October following the scheme application closing date of the 29 September 2012. Applications were of a high quality and a good variety, reflecting the continuing popularity of the initiative. The programme will focus on schemes which are driven by local communities and

strengthen local accountability. This is considered to be very much in step with the current localism agenda.

16. The proposed programme reflects the nature of requests received rather than following a prescribed split as recommended by the Members Reference Group, effective from the April 2010.
17. The review of the initiative was marked by a change in focus. LIS now concentrates on smaller community projects which 'add value' to the local environment. The funding is not intended to supplement that of routine maintenance work, which will continue to be funded from existing designated budgets, where criteria for maintenance work is met. The re-focussing of the programme to these new priority areas has led to the delivery of a significant number of smaller community projects.
18. The current scope of the LIS programme focuses, proceeds and functions on the following criteria, as agreed by The Members reference group.
  - a). The LIS programme's effective, flexible and unique formula will continue to support a wide range of projects under the broad headings of,
    - i. Better neighbourhoods (landscaping, footway improvements, conservation of local distinctiveness, and general refurbishments),
    - ii. Better countryside (safeguard biodiversity and strengthen rural character),
    - iii. Better business (regeneration of local shops and businesses),
    - iv. Better leisure and tourism (promote the attractiveness and accessibility of places of interest).
    - v. Better awareness (promotion of local 'pride of place').
  - b). Project selection has been re-prioritised to focus on a number of areas considered to have been under-represented to date. The areas that will be promoted are;
    - i. Rural initiatives (e.g. village distinctiveness / village gateway projects),
    - ii. Market Town projects that improve the centre's attractiveness and economic viability.
    - iii. Projects that develop greater local pride and responsibility for the environment. (e.g. conservation projects, heritage projects and the development of pocket parks),
    - iv. Projects that support wider local community involvement and accessibility, (e.g. skateparks, local identity, and play schemes),
    - v. Projects that encourage economic and cultural regeneration and tourism.
  - c). The LIS initiative will continue as a countywide programme to improve the environment of Nottinghamshire through the development of local improvement schemes that have been promoted by the community and are endorsed by local Members

19. In line with this direction the 2013/14 £3m programme (shown as appendix one), subject to scheme development and design will be split between the following headings:

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Heritage and Conservation      | 25% |
| Local Identity Projects & Play | 45% |
| Environmental Improvements     | 30% |

20. Each of the schemes is subject to the necessary consultation, statutory undertakings and other issues arising from feasibility studies, detailed scheme investigation, design and consultation. These processes will inevitably require a number of changes to have to be made to the programme as detailed in the attached appendix. Schemes will be added to this programme as required to ensure spend of the programme's annual budget. These additional schemes will be brought back to Committee for formal approval. If delivery timescales necessitate the relevant emergency procedures will be used and any decisions taken will be reported back to Committee for information.

### External Funding

21. At the inception of the initiative a key target was to draw in third party funding that otherwise would not have been invested in the County. External investment has been secured this year from Waste Recycling Environmental (WREN), English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, SITA UK, Balfour Beatty Plc., District, Town and Parish Councils, Community Trusts and Private contributions. The external funding secured thus far is as detailed below.

| Year         | External Funding |
|--------------|------------------|
| 2004/5       | £1.1m            |
| 2005/6       | £2.8m            |
| 2006/7       | £.75m            |
| 2007/8       | £3.0m            |
| 2008/9       | £2.7m            |
| 2009/10      | £1.3m            |
| 2010/2011    | £1.4m            |
| 2011/2012    | £.98m            |
| 2012/2013    | £.83m            |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>£14.86m</b>   |

Every effort will continue to be made to draw in additional funding in the future. This will require the consideration of new funding sources such as accessing social funds as identified by private organisations.

### Statutory and Policy Implications



22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and users. Where such implications are material they have been brought out in the text of the report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

23. It is RECOMMENDED that Committee approves the 2013/14 programme set out in paragraph 19 and detailed in the attached appendix.

### **COUNCILLOR RICHARD BUTLER**

Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability

#### **Legal Services' Comments (SLB 25/01/2013)**

Environment and Sustainability Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report; it is responsible for the Local Improvement Scheme.

#### **Financial Comments (TMR 28.01.13)**

The financial implications are set out in the report.

#### **Background Papers Available for Inspection**

None

#### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All