

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE
AND THE GROUP MANAGER, PLANNING****SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 8 OCTOBER TO 4 NOVEMBER 2012****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****Readers Day 2012**

2. Readers' Day, an event run jointly by the library services of Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council, took place on 3 November at Nottingham City Council's Loxley House. A sell out audience of over 150 people enjoyed a varied programme of talks, readings and workshops throughout the day. Highlights included Joanne Harris, best-selling author of 'Chocolat', and Marina Lewycka, renowned author of 'A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian', who both entertained the audience brilliantly. Audience feedback was excellent.

Roald Dahl Week in Nottinghamshire Libraries 20 – 27 October 2012

3. Roald Dahl's favourite character the 'Big Friendly Giant' reached his 30th birthday in 2012 and Nottinghamshire libraries celebrated with a week of Dahl themed events at six libraries. The target audience was children aged 4-11 and their families/carers. The free events aimed to increase visits to libraries and issues during schools' half term holiday.
4. The week was launched at Mansfield and Worksop libraries with performances of the 'BFG' show by Anthony Pedley, who was the first actor to perform the role live on stage. This quality performance was enjoyed by family audiences with 35 children at Mansfield and 55 at Worksop. We received some very positive comments such as:
 - *Fantastic event to encourage children to use the library*
 - *A magical experience*
 - *It's great to see high quality events like this at Worksop library.*
5. Family Fun days were run at Beeston and Retford libraries on Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 October with Dahl themed story times and craft activities and

competitions. Beeston saw a massive turnout of over 100 children and Retford attracted 55 children throughout the day.

6. Imaginative Theatre company completed our week at Arnold and Bingham libraries on Saturday 27 October with their innovative performance of 'George's Marvellous Medicine', followed by concertina crocodiles and dream catcher craft activities.
7. Roald Dahl books were available at all these events and were extremely popular – most children discovered a Roald Dahl book they hadn't borrowed before and went home with happy memories.

Children's Laureate visit to Mansfield Library

8. Children's Laureate Julia Donaldson visited Mansfield Central Library on 11 October as part of her national tour of libraries. Mansfield was selected to host the event from 100s of applications to be one of only 24 libraries on the English and Welsh leg of the Children's Laureate Libraries Tour this autumn.
9. Schoolchildren from High Oakham Primary School in Mansfield were invited to attend the event which saw best selling author Julia and her husband Malcolm bring some of her hugely popular stories to life through dramatisations and songs. The 57 children aged 7 - 8 also gave a performance of their own; Vegetable Attack in the Dining Room which was a poem adapted by teachers and which featured characters from some of Julia's books such as the Gruffalo.
10. The event attracted press attention with reports by BBC East Midlands, Radio Nottingham, ITV Central and Mansfield Chad.

COUNTRY PARKS

Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre

11. Following the decision by Policy Committee on 17 October 2012 that Discovery Attractions should be the preferred bidder to design, operate and fund a new visitor centre/attraction, there was a 10 day standstill period which acted as a 'cooling off' time to enable both bidders to reflect on the outcome and request any information as to the evaluation of their bids.
12. The standstill period ended at midnight on 28 October and on October 30, after intensive media work in conjunction with Discovery Attractions, the formal announcement into the public arena was made. At the same time, the staff working at Sherwood were briefed.
13. It is very pleasing to note that both the initial responses from the media and public as well as more recent views have been very positive.
14. The next stage of the process is to complete the contractual fine tuning prior to contract signature and it is anticipated that this can be completed before the end of December.

15. Thereafter, Discovery Attractions will be preparing a planning application which will be considered by Newark and Sherwood District Council. This could take between 6 – 9 months, i.e. September 2013
16. At this time, Discovery Attractions estimate that the first phase of the new centre will be open for summer 2014 and there will be a seamless transfer from the old to the new, with no loss of service. Plans for the full opening of the main attraction are scheduled for spring 2015.
17. The Committee will receive regular reports on progress with the project over the coming months.

GREEN ESTATE

Seasonal Canine Illness (SCI)

18. The former Communities and Environment Standing Committee presented a report to Cabinet on 14 March 2012 on the presence and effect of Seasonal Canine Illness in Nottinghamshire. Though the precise cause cannot be verified, the current theory being investigated is the presence of harvest mites. Furthermore, cases have occurred at several woodland sites across the County.
19. Amongst the recommendations from the report was that the County Council should monitor developments during the course of the year and report back to the Standing Committee's successor towards the end of 2012. The mantle for monitoring SCI now lies with the Culture Committee.
20. The Country Parks and Green Estate Service has led work to co-ordinate a Nottinghamshire response to SCI. To this end, key landowners and woodland operators attended a briefing meeting in April to plan and agree how any response would be made to any outbreak. This work included having a common, consistent and comprehensive approach to SCI so that if a dog contracted the illness anywhere in the County, the same procedures would apply.
21. The key national agency with the specialist, technical and veterinary expertise is the Animal Health Trust (AHT) and it has provided press briefings, signage posters and information which have been displayed around the key sites, including the National Nature Reserve at Sherwood.
22. Prior to the time of the year in which SCI is found to happen (late August to the end of October), appropriate briefings and warnings to dog owners were sent out, together with advice and guidance on what to do if a case was suspected and how it should be reported to the AHT.
23. As at 5 November, there have been the following suspected 'cases' in the County:

Study area	Case	Control
Clumber Park	26	105
Sherwood Forest	24	66

24. A 'case' is where a dog owner completes a survey questionnaire reporting that their dog showed symptoms of SCI – vomiting, lethargy, diarrhoea – and then reports this to the AHT and usually contacts their local vet, who has been briefed on SCI.
25. The AHT, for research purposes, compare the 'cases' with the 'control' examples, which is where owners complete the same survey questionnaire, the only difference being that their dog has not experienced the SCI symptoms. From the AHT perspective, a robust research sample ideally requires a four fold increase in control returns.
26. In 2012, there has been a significant increase in reported cases from previous years, largely due to greater public awareness and reporting, which is an action the County Council has been promoting.
27. In respect of the location of 'cases', the Sherwood Forest area includes a swathe of woodland areas north of the City of Nottingham up to Clumber Park. It is pleasing to note that there have been no reported fatalities in Nottinghamshire.
28. Once the SCI period has ended, the AHT will be preparing a report on cases that have occurred throughout the country and will be able to provide an update on their efforts to diagnose the cause and find a remedy.

Ash Tree Dieback (*Chalara Fraxinea*)

29. At the Culture Committee meeting on 30 October, a request was made for further information on the potential impact of the ash tree dieback fungus, *Chalara Fraxinea*.
30. From a tree management perspective, responsibility and expertise for all tree matters within the County Council now lies primarily within Highways Management reporting to the Transport & Highways Committee and any decisions to be taken in respect of this matter will be so referred.
31. All highway trees are logged on a database so all ash trees can be readily identified and inspected. However, such comprehensive information is not available for much of the rest of the County Council's estate, except where site surveys have been carried out for particular purposes in the past. The protection of any tree from any disease relies on the outbreak being controlled as close to source as possible as soon as possible. Therefore all members of the Forestry section will afford a higher level of vigilance in terms of inspecting ash trees with regard to this specific disease outbreak.
32. The Culture Committee remit includes country parks and green estate sites and a particular consideration will be kept for signs of the disease as staff carry out routine site inspections. However, given that many ash trees have already started to shed their leaves this autumn, it will be difficult to assess whether trees are infected until spring or early summer next year.
33. There are no ash trees present within the Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve and relatively few within Rufford Abbey and Bestwood Country Parks. Cotgrave Country Park and other green estate sites have significant woodland populations of ash and these will be much more difficult to inspect due to their size and scattered locations.

34. Ash is not a hugely important tree for Nottinghamshire in woodland terms. From the 1979-82 Woodland Census, as a rough estimate there were 600 ha of woodland where ash is a principal component. This equates to approximately 4% of the area of broadleaved woodland, and very roughly 100,000 individual trees within the countryside (excluding urban areas). It is unlikely that these figures will have changed significantly over the intervening years.
35. The Forestry Commission will be responsible for coordinating surveys of ash trees within the rest of the County and will be able to provide an up to date County breakdown of any suspected infections. Indeed, the Forestry Commission has undertaken an emergency national survey and is due to report back on 7 November. A verbal update will be provided to the Committee.
36. All suspected infected trees are to be reported to the Forestry Commission or DEFRA and they will confirm presence of Chalara and instruct necessary remedial action, which is likely to be fell and burn in situ. There is a ban on transport of any infected material but whether that will include trunks of felled trees remains unclear.
37. Advice on the identification of the disease is freely available to the general public from the Forestry Commission's pest and disease web page www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara. This guidance will assist the community in being able to report outbreaks direct to the appropriate government body.
38. Furthermore, the Council's Conservation Service can assist the process by disseminating information to our community contacts via Greenwood and the Biodiversity Action Group so that people likely to be out and about in the County are able to identify/ report any suspected cases to the right channels.
39. In conclusion, the combination of trained Forestry officers/inspectors, Country Parks and Green Estate staff, and reports from the community should hopefully contain any identification and eradication of a minor outbreak.
40. However, if this turned into a major outbreak, then the County Council, in consultation with the Forestry Commission and major land and woodland owners would need to consider a more robust strategy, which might entail greater resource implications.

CONSERVATION

Greenwood Community Forest

41. The team has undertaken a number of green space access audits on behalf of Greenwood's District Council partners. These audits consider both physical and intellectual access to the sites and make recommendations for improvements where necessary. Surveys of Arnot Hill Park and Brierley Forest Park were completed in October.
42. The Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grant scheme, which was established in 2000, has helped schools and community groups to plant over 15,000 trees to date. Working in partnership with Broxtowe Borough Council, Mansfield District Council and Gedling Borough Council, the Greenwood team has secured a fund of £3,000 and it is

anticipated that this will deliver around four community tree planting projects in each of the three local authority areas in 2012/13.

43. Greenwood continues to support the Friends of Thynghowe in delivering the *Thynghowe and the Forgotten Heritage of Sherwood* Heritage Lottery Fund project. A key part of this project is to encourage children to visit Birklands Forest and, working in partnership with the Forestry Commission, the first of a series of planned visits from schools in Clipstone, Meden Vale, Warsop and Church Warsop took place on 16 October. Children took part in a "Maths in the Forest" day which then led on to the production of artwork based on symmetry.

Nature Conservation

44. All work on this year's Invasive Non-native Species projects has now been completed. The projects included work to control *Azolla* water fern on Nottinghamshire Canals and supporting community groups in surveying and removing Himalayan Balsam on key river corridors.
45. Funding of £4,000 has been secured from Natural England to support the pilot Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping project in Sherwood. Further funding has also been secured through the Trent Vale Landscape Partnership project to extend the pilot into the Trent Vale area between Newark and Gainsborough. Both projects will provide up-to-date information to support any future funding bids for biodiversity projects.

Heritage

46. A project to undertake condition surveys of all free-standing, dedicated war memorials in Nottinghamshire has now been completed and the data collected has been added to the County Historic Environment Record. In addition to providing a report on their condition, this information will help us to identify the types of memorials in the County, any potential threats (e.g. from metal theft) and any access issues. It will also help to inform and support communities in bidding for funding to restore their memorials and improve accessibility.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That the report be noted.

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