



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **Thursday, 28 June 2007**

agenda item number

from: **Cabinet Member for Environment**

REPORT FOR PERIOD MAY – JUNE 2007

1. Building Better Communities

Earlier this month I attended our annual BBC conference. The day provides an opportunity to showcase improvement schemes and inspire delegates to think about improvement schemes in their own areas. We once again presented Community Awards to local groups or individuals who were key to the successful development or delivery of schemes in their area. The leader and I were delighted to present the awards for 12 projects and it was an absolute pleasure to recognise the efforts of local people in this way.

This year over 165 representatives from around the County were present and this represents our busiest event to date. I am sure that colleagues who were present found it interesting and informative.

This year's annual programme of BBC schemes is now committed and Members will have received notice of which schemes within their own wards have been programmed for inclusion. If any Member would like to discuss elements of the programme, the project team will be happy to help.

2. Retford Bus Station

Improving the quality of bus travel is a key element of the County Council's transport strategy and the provision of new and refurbished bus stations is an integral part of this strategy. I am delighted to report that work is now almost complete on the new bus station for Retford. The actual design for the building was chosen by local people and boasts an enclosed building with seating, passenger information, toilets and baby changing facilities. Furthermore, CCTV and a staff presence will significantly enhance passenger safety. The new bus station offers a considerably more comfortable, safe and attractive environment to wait for a bus and this, combined with other bus priority and service changes, forms part of a package of measures designed to encourage more people to use the bus.

I am looking forward to officially opening the bus station to the public on the afternoon of Thursday 26 July when people can come and have a look around before it becomes fully operational the following week. The whole scheme has been designed in-house and is being delivered by Marriott Construction, one of the County Council's Construction Framework partners, to time and within the target cost. I would like to congratulate all those who contributed to the success of this project.

3. **Mansfield Public Transport Interchange**

As well as Retford Bus Station, the Authority is also working on the relocation of the proposed new bus station in Mansfield. This will significantly improve the quality of bus travel and will also help to stimulate the redevelopment of the town centre and promote regeneration. To secure Department for Transport funding it is essential to acquire all the necessary land for the scheme. The majority of the land required is under local authority ownership, however there are two parcels of land in owned by a third party. Although negotiations are continuing, I have given my approval for compulsory purchase procedures to begin.

I have also agreed that work to improve the Belvedere Street/Station Road junction will commence in order to ensure that funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which must be spent this calendar year is not lost. Signalling the junction is essential for buses using the interchange from Belvedere Street and it also improves access to the train station and a proposed new office development. Improved pedestrian crossing points, footway widths and cycle facilities will also be provided.

4. **Arnold Town Centre Improvement Scheme**

I was pleased to see that work on the £900,000 environmental improvement scheme in Arnold has begun. The scheme aims to improve the appearance of Front Street, reduce traffic congestion and contribute to the regeneration of the area. The improvements include high quality paving and street furniture, dedicated parking bays for buses to reduce congestion, a new taxi rank, improved street lighting and new disabled parking bays. In future it should be easier for people who do not own a car to access the town centre.

5. **Quiet Lanes Pilot Project**

The Quiet Lanes initiative was developed by the former Countryside Agency (now part of Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities) and is supported by the Department for Transport. Quiet Lanes are minor rural roads or networks of roads considered appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Key elements of the scheme are community involvement to encourage a change in user behaviour and signing to discourage through traffic.

A pilot project was chosen in consultation with the parish councils to determine whether Quiet Lanes were appropriate to the conditions in rural Nottinghamshire. In May 2002 a route was identified in Sutton Bonington which would provide a recreational facility, a dedicated off-road link between two parts of the village and improve links between the village and outlying properties.

However, the pilot scheme demonstrated that there was little ownership of the scheme by the village and it was perceived largely as a means of rural traffic calming. Nevertheless, the Quiet Lanes designation could be appropriate for lanes that have low vehicle usage and where this will significantly improve connectivity to the Rights of Way network. I have agreed, therefore, that in future they will be considered only as part of an integrated element of the Rights of Way network.

6. **Notts Nappy Project**

I was delighted to see the return of the nappy catwalk event earlier this month at Mansfield's Four Seasons shopping centre. The Notts Nappy Project which promotes the use of cotton nappies to minimize waste being sent to landfill, pioneered the event to mark real nappy week in 2005. Since then it has inspired some 17 similar catwalk shows in other local authorities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, along with one in Sydney, Australia last year.

Nearly three billion nappies are thrown away in the UK every year with the vast majority of these ending up in landfill. Research shows that parents using cotton nappies can save around £250 per baby from birth to potty which could cover the cost of nursery furniture.

Around 60,000 people walk through the shopping centre on an average Saturday, so the message that cotton nappies are better for the environment and your pocket reached a wide audience.

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Cabinet Member for Environment

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