

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**THE ROBIN HOOD FESTIVAL 2015 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2016****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an overview of the 2015 Robin Hood Festival and seeks approval for:
 - i) the 2016 event and its proposed dates
 - ii) the continuation of appropriate road closure arrangements to support the safe operation of the Festival in 2016.

Information and Advice

2. 2015 was the 31st year of the Robin Hood Festival, which has grown from a modest weekend event to a week-long event, and is one of the biggest free entry festivals in the region. As well as providing excellent value for money entertainment for local residents, the event attracts visitors nationally and internationally, impacting positively on the local tourism economy and raising the profile of Nottinghamshire.
3. The event is staged at the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre near Edwinstowe, and organised by the Country Parks Service. It has a well-developed event plan with a focus on the health and safety of visitors, staff and volunteers. The event management plan is scrutinised by the Newark and Sherwood Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and by County Council Health and Safety officers to ensure health and safety compliance.
4. The event attracts a large amount of media interest, being the largest public celebration in Britain of the Robin Hood legend. The County Council Communications and Marketing team is responsible for the publicity and marketing strategy.
5. During the Festival a variety of live entertainment is provided across the Forest site, ranging from strolling jesters and jugglers to a medieval jousting contest. Activities take place in and around the Visitor Centre buildings and within the Forest at the Major Oak. The Festival is not a historical re-enactment, aiming instead to provide family fun during the school summer holiday.
6. Admittance to the Festival remains free, but a special event car parking charge of £5 is levied to help offset event costs. Additional income is generated through paid for activities such as children's theatre performances, and through sales at the in-house catering and retail offer.

7. To help safely manage the large numbers that attend the event, a traffic management system is adopted. Swinecote Road is closed to through traffic for the duration of the event. This essential action enables safe crossing of pedestrians from the overflow car park to the main event site. It is recognised that the closure causes some inconvenience for motorists and local residents, but is felt to be the only practical solution to safely control the mass movement of pedestrians.
8. Over 20 event volunteers were recruited by the park Community Liaison Officer to assist the hardworking site staff team and an average of 10 per day were used: helping to marshal visitors, sell programmes, keeping the site clean and tidy, answer questions and direct visitors around the site. The volunteer team were commended by both performers and visitors. The plan is to recruit a larger pool next year, and aim to have up to 15 volunteers assisting per day.
9. The event is outdoors so it is very weather dependent. Weather was good throughout the 2015 event, and estimated visitor numbers were 45,000 – an increase of around 5,000 on last year.
10. The event costs approximately £100,000 to stage. This includes the costs of road closure and traffic management, the week-long entertainment programme, mobility scooter hire provision, portaloos, toilets, and additional staffing costs including extra site cleaning. Net income for the week was approximately £167,000, resulting in a modest operating surplus over the average expected income for a non-event summer week and weekend.
11. The 2015 Robin Hood Festival was a well-attended event which generated much positive feedback amongst visitors, generated a modest surplus and provided a boost to the north Nottinghamshire visitor economy.
12. The Festival attracted a large amount of media interest, being the largest public celebration in Britain of the Robin Hood Legend. Communications activity for the Festival secured more than 60 pieces of positive regional, national and international coverage.
13. Key communications and marketing activity included an integrated digital campaign building on established digital platforms and utilising them to grow the audience. Social media worked well, with the Robin Hood Facebook page attracting 4,120 'likes' compared to 2,878 in 2014; other digital activity included a series of Emailme bulletins that were sent in the lead up to the Festival – subscribers to the What's on Robin Hood topic bulletin increased by 189%, 7,624 (2,638, 2014).
14. The proposed dates for the 2016 event are Monday 1st August to Sunday 7th August.

Other Options Considered

15. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

16. The event is successful, well loved, and cost neutral for the Council.

17. Effective and safe highways management arrangements are critical in ensuring the safe operation of the Festival.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

19. These are contained in the main body of this report.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

20. In order to ensure that visitors with mobility restrictions can enjoy the event, additional mobility scooter hire is made available at each Festival to supplement the scooters usually available at the Park.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

21. The siting of the Festival within the National Nature Reserve is approved by Natural England.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the Robin Hood Festival for 2016 takes place from 1st - 7th August 2016.
- 2) the road closure and local parking restrictions carried out at the 2015 event be repeated in 2016 (subject to Police and Highways Authority approvals)

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Constitutional Comments (LM 28/09/15)

22. The recommendations in the report fall within the Terms of Reference of the Culture Committee.

Financial Comments (SS 30/09/15)

23. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 10 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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