

**REPORT OF THE ACTING CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN, FAMILIES
AND CULTURAL SERVICES 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****Improvements to Arnold Library**

2. Arnold Library, a very busy, large library was re-opened on 17 August 2015 after a seven month closure for essential building repairs and improvements, and a library refurbishment. A joint project with the Property Services Department enabled the Library service to make major improvements for customers as well as making savings on future maintenance and revenue costs, including the installation of solar panels to reduce energy bills.
3. The library, built in 1982, had not had any substantial changes and was in obvious need of repair and modernisation.
4. The aim of modernising the building was to make the library more welcoming and attractive, to encourage new audiences and increase usage. Specific improvements are new layout and shelving to improve the display of the books, enlargement of the children's area and the creation of a new meeting room. The Library service spent an additional £40,000 on new books to enhance the library stock. The major planned maintenance project replaced the ventilation system, heating, lighting, and improved the exterior of the library, replacing windows and doors.
5. The Library reopened with a riot of colour in the New Gallery space with beautiful silks and felts made by the public working with artists Jess Kemp and Georgina Bell, all inspired by the late Richard Godfrey. During the first week of opening Jess also ran a popular workshop to help create the biggest pompom in Arnold to celebrate this wonderful new space and to reflect the Record Breakers Summer Reading Challenge.

6. During the week 17 - 21 August a range of events, appealing to different members of the community, were held including: Rattle Rhyme and Roll for under-fives, a local history talk and film, therapeutic drumming, a reading café with author Stephen Booth, and an attempt to make the biggest pom-pom in Arnold for the Record Breakers theme of the Summer Reading Challenge.
7. On the opening day over 1,100 people visited the library and 2,000 items were borrowed.
8. Since reopening there have been many favourable comments on the changes from library customers:

"This is a massive improvement, well worth the wait."

"Light, airy with excellent book display, very colourful and friendly."

"I haven't been here since I was a little girl, my two boys, aged nine and one have really enjoyed their visit -"lots of lovely new books, Mummy"."

"I have really missed the library and all the helpful staff. It looks beautiful after being refurbished."

Southwell Library Poetry Festival

9. Around 400 people attended events at this year's Southwell Library Poetry Festival. Highlights included the renowned poet John Hegley, and the amazing poetry band Little Machine. Comments included:

"A superb event."

"New to the area – new to poetry since being an adult – inspired to read more and take time to reach some understanding."

"Excellent – time well spent, able to go away inspired with some good ideas."

Children's Pop Up Theatre Project Launch

10. Following a successful bid to Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts Libraries Fund, Nottinghamshire County Council was awarded over £80,000 to develop an innovative family theatre project in libraries. Working with The Sparks Arts for Children, a brand new play was commissioned, specifically tailored for library spaces. The play, A Boy and a Bear and a Boat, was based on an award winning book by Dave Shelton.
11. Councillor Pauline Allan officially launched the project on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council on Saturday 25 July following the play's debut performances at Mansfield Central Library. Representatives from The Spark Arts for Children attended along with the playwright, Stewart Melton, and Dave Shelton, the book's author. Families were able to meet the cast and take part in themed craft activities.
12. A Boy and a Bear in a Boat went on to tour 15 other County libraries. The project aims to attract new audiences to County libraries, reaching families who may not ordinarily

access a major theatre venue but will happily visit their own library. Four further seasons of performances of other shows will take place before April 2016.

Summer of Design - partnership with Nottingham Trent University

13. The launch of the Summer of Design at Mansfield Central Library marked the start of a pilot project to look at the role of our libraries in supporting new and emerging businesses through innovation. The Summer of Design programme consisted of an innovation and design exhibition, launched by Councillor John Knight on 31 July, industry and expert speakers and a range of interactive workshops, covering themes such as design using 3D software and 3D printers and laser cutters. There were also opportunities for local businesses to share their own experiences and ideas with NTU students and professors, and industry experts. The Summer of Design has been funded by NTU's European Development funding and partnering with libraries helped to reach community interaction targets.
14. The partnership between NCC libraries, the Economic Development team and NTU's Future Factory project will help to inform future business opportunities and innovation within library spaces, and to highlight the role libraries have in supporting new and emerging business ideas.

Summer Safety Roadshows

15. Over the summer 1,400 people attended a series of community partnership events in Mansfield, Worksop and West Bridgford Libraries. Children and adults had the chance to learn about road and fire safety, and take part in many hands-on activities including CPR, correct use of defibrillators, how to help a choking child and the dangers of driving distractions.
16. Various emergency vehicles visited all three libraries including an operational fire engine, an EMAS ambulance and various heritage ambulances, giving the community the chance to sit in the vehicles, try on emergency kits and learn about the essential role these appliances play and how they have evolved over time.
17. Nottinghamshire Libraries worked in partnership with the East Midlands Ambulance Service, Ambulance Heritage Society, Nottinghamshire Road Safety Team, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue, St John Ambulance, Nottinghamshire Police and Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership to deliver events which enabled people to have fun whilst learning vital health and safety messages in the creative and inspiring settings of our libraries with Notts Fire and Rescue commenting that "the importance of working with Nottinghamshire Libraries cannot be under estimated, as we are able to reach new audiences and provide lifesaving skills and education to members of the public".

Mansfield Town Football Club Summer Football Spectacular

18. Over 350 people attended this community partnership event at Mansfield Central Library on Friday 21 August. Nottinghamshire Libraries worked in partnership with Mansfield Town Football Club's Football in the Community, Mansfield Town Football Club's Commercial Team and Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership.

19. Children and adults had the opportunity to meet new players, take a shot in the radar goal, test their skills in the inflatable football pitch, take the keepy-uppy challenge, get their face painted, buy official club merchandise and meet the Club's official mascot Sammy the Stag, whilst library staff engaged in reading and craft activities. The library was full of football fever with families, including lots of boys and their dads who really enjoyed their unusual and fun packed day in the library, with one dad commenting that "my son and I have had great fun together in our local library today, he beat me in the keepy-uppy challenge, and I won't hear the last of it".

CULTURAL AND ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Visual Literacy

20. Following training earlier in the year with artists, libraries and settings, three fabulous case study projects have been running over the summer in Worksop, Hucknall and Newark, exploring approaches to visual literacy with early years, schools and learning disabled groups in library settings. Work has been shared through social media and an exhibition of school children recreating old masters has been on display in Worksop. The work will help to inform the education offer in development for Inspire.

CONSERVATION

Himalayan Balsam Control Project

21. The Biodiversity officer continues with successful efforts to promote voluntary work to control Himalayan balsam across the County.
22. Himalayan balsam is an annual Invasive Non-native Species that is known to have a detrimental impact on our native biodiversity, causing the loss of plant diversity and exposing riparian species to increased predation during the winter months when it is not present. In addition, this ornamental plant species has been proven to create an increase in the risk of flooding and bankside erosion on rivers and streams across the UK.
23. This is the fifth year of the project and efforts during the past few months have targeted over 28km of riverside habitat and a further 20 sites located away from the river network. This is a phenomenal amount of work which could not have been achieved without the input of almost 500 volunteers working within the five target catchments.
24. The project is making a positive difference to local communities and their local environment.

Greenwood Community Awards

25. The annual Greenwood Community Awards ceremony took place on Thursday 2nd July in the marquee at Rufford Abbey Country Park. One hundred and twenty seven guests attended including members of Friends groups, walking for health groups, partners and board members.

26. The evening began with a barbecue and this was followed by the formal Awards ceremony. Councillor Knight gave the welcoming address, paying tribute to the many contributions made by volunteer groups. Colin Barson, Chair of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum, provided a review of the year before moving on to the award ceremony itself. A slide presentation provided a backdrop to illustrate the contributions made by the 10 award recipients.
27. After the presentations, Greenwood's Malcolm Hackett gave a review of highlights in his first 10 years with the Community Forest partnership. Special mention was made of the huge contribution of Colin Barson, Chair of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum, who intends to step down as Chair of the Forum at the next AGM. Councillor Knight presented Colin with an engraved spade on behalf of the Greenwood Partnership Board, as a token of their appreciation.

Historic Buildings

28. County Council conservation officers are working with a number of community groups and organisations, providing support and expertise for the preparation of various grant applications for projects that preserve, enhance and celebrate the County's built heritage.
29. A recent successful first round pass for a major Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been achieved at Bramcote. The Old Church Tower is a Grade II listed building recorded on the Nottinghamshire County Council 'At Risk' register. With the County Council's help the Bramcote Old Church Tower Trust has prepared a community project that has received initial support of £50,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The money is a "first round pass" endorsing HLF's belief in the potential of the project and will help the Trust, which owns and manages the redundant 13th century tower and grounds, to apply for a full grant at a later date towards its continued restoration, conservation and maintenance (<http://www.bramcoteoldtower.org.uk/news.html>).
30. The Beeston Canalside Heritage Centre project has now received its permission to start from the HLF and the lease from the Canal and River Trust has been signed and keys handed over. The project has secured £800,000 of HLF grant aid and the County Council has provided support from the outset, with both start-up funding and essential technical advice and expertise. The Trust has appointed the lead consultant and expects work to begin on site soon (<http://www.canalsideheritagecentre.org.uk/>).
31. A Stage 1 application was submitted in August for a Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme for Mansfield. The application was submitted by Mansfield District Council on behalf of a partnership that includes Mansfield BID, the County Council and Vision West Nottinghamshire College. If successful, in the longer term the project would provide circa £900,000 of funding to help improve the built heritage of the Market Place and Leeming Street, bringing more properties back into commercial use and providing opportunities for young people to gain a range of skills. The County Council's conservation and economic development teams have worked closely with the project partners, providing expertise and start-up funding to help develop the project.

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.

Derek Higton
Acting Corporate Director
Children, Families & Cultural Services

Sally Gill
Group Manager, Planning

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Derek Higton
Acting Corporate Director
Children, Families & Cultural Services
T: 0115 9773498
E: derek.higton@nottscc.gov.uk

Sally Gill
Group Manager, Planning
T: 0115 9932608
E: sally.gill@nottscc.gov.uk

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