

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES**SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 18 AUGUST TO 28 SEPTEMBER 2014****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, INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY LEARNING****Summer Reading Challenge 2014**

2. This year's Summer Reading Challenge was launched on 12 July with a special launch event at West Bridgford Library featuring children's author Guy Bass. The Summer Reading Challenge, run by independent charity The Reading Agency, challenges children aged between 4 and 11 years old to read six books from their local library during the summer holidays. The Reading Agency provides fun, collectable incentives and rewards, plus a certificate and medal for every child who completes the Challenge. Children just need to visit their local library to sign up.
3. Now in its sixteenth year, the Summer Reading Challenge has proved extremely popular.
4. UKLA research on the impact of the Summer Reading Challenge found that as well as stemming the 'summer holiday dip' in children's reading achievements, teachers interviewed noted the social benefits of involvement with the Challenge, and praised the materials and website resources.
5. This year's theme for the Challenge was Mythical Maze where children were challenged to find their way around a labyrinth that introduces them to fantastical creatures from the world of legend and mythology. There was very positive coverage of the challenge in the local press and considerable interest from Nottinghamshire children; 9,611 took part with 55% of these going on to complete the challenge by reading all six books. West Bridgford Library built on the success of last year by increasing participation to almost 1,300 children. The challenge ended on 7 September. A full report will be brought to the Committee in December.
6. Volunteers, age 14 years upwards, were recruited in 19 of the busiest libraries. In all, 103 volunteers were recruited to support children on the Reading Challenge, by listening to

children talk about the books they have read and hand out the incentives and rewards. Volunteers gave over 1,700 hours of their time over the six week holiday.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Giveaway

7. Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield libraries were among 200 libraries across the country to take part in Good Morning Britain's 'Just Read' giveaway. The Just Read campaign, supported by The Reading Agency (a leading, national reading charity) and children's publisher Puffin, aims to encourage parents to spend 10 minutes reading with their children every day. Kirkby and Sutton were each able to give away 50 copies of the bestselling book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney.
8. Kirkby's supply of books lasted only an hour and a half as it welcomed over 150 children throughout the morning while 45 children joined in the fun at Sutton. Customers unable to secure a free copy of the book to keep were encouraged to borrow from the library. They also received an exclusive extract from the, as yet unpublished, latest *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* title. In addition to the book gifting, both libraries encouraged children to take part in Wimpy Kid themed craft activities.
9. Participating in the campaign was an opportunity to highlight the vital role of libraries in supporting children's literacy and love of reading.

COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATES

Major Oak Woodland Festival at Sherwood Forest

10. This was a new event for the County and took place at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre on the weekend of 13/14 September. The event was a partnership between the County and the Sherwood Forest Trust, celebrating the ancient woodland and traditional woodland crafts. Around 40 exhibitors took part, ranging from wildlife organisations to charcoal burners (from the Green Estate team) and rustic chair makers.
11. An unusual highlight was the ability of visitors to book a 'skylift' into the Major Oak canopy on an elevated platform lift normally used for woodland maintenance.
12. The event was hosted by the Chairman of the County Council and the Lord Lieutenant of the County also visited. The weekend was blessed with excellent weather and the event proved a hit with the public.

Visit England Quality Attraction Scheme (VAQS)

13. The national tourist board runs a quality standard scheme for tourist attractions. A paid inspector visits participating venues once per year and conducts a full day "mystery shopper" visit. This includes eating in all onsite catering outlets, checking the toilets, visiting shops, and conducting pre-visit checks of the site's website and tourism leaflets.
14. Rufford Abbey underwent its 2014 inspection on 10 September and passed. This gives the park the right to display the Visit England "Rose" quality mark. The assessor's written report is to follow, but the inspector's verbal feedback on the day specifically praised:

- a friendly welcome from the Tourist Information Centre staff on arrival
- an interesting exhibition in the Craft Centre Gallery
- good service, welcome and choice of food in catering and retail outlets
- “Everyone I met seemed to enjoy working here.”

15. Suggestions for improvement included:

- some more modern types of ‘interpretation’ of site history (e.g. audio tours)
- staff in the gallery and staff in the catering outlets did not seem well informed about events in each other’s areas - find ways to tackle this.
- post more frequently on the site’s Facebook page.

16. The inspector then carried out a full day inspection of Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre on 18 September. The inspector appreciated that the County Council is in a process to create a replacement centre, and that there are issues with ageing buildings and décor. However, his feedback indicated that despite the challenges of operating in such conditions, the enthusiasm and welcome of the staff shone through and the visitor experience was good. He awarded the site a pass. His suggestions for improvement included investing in refurbishment and replacement of signage, and avoiding using temporary signage.

Manton Pit Wood

17. A series of volunteer tasks over the summer involving the local community and a group of children from a local Barnardo’s Project helped improve the woodland for visitors and wildlife as part of the Manton Pit Wood Gateway Project. We also led an event specifically for the Polish community in Manton where over 30 children and their parents joined in with the Big Butterfly Count, a series of wildlife activities and a picnic.

Moor Pond Woods

18. External funding to the tune of £42,220 has recently been secured for the Moor Pond Woods Project. This is in the form of two significant grants, one of £29,200 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake conservation and restoration work to structures and landforms which are remains of a pioneering C18th cotton milling enterprise in the upper Leen Valley. This will also fund a programme of education, community archaeology and provide improved onsite interpretation.

19. The second grant of £13,020 from Waste Recycling Environmental (WREN) will achieve improvements to the path network through the project area and its connection to local Rights Of Way and access corridors including the Linby Trail and Sustrans route.

Shireoaks

20. Work has been undertaken in partnership with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Woodlands and Coach Wood Green to establish Nottinghamshire’s Coronation Meadow on part of the Shireoaks Colliery Tip. This new wildlife meadow will be Nottinghamshire’s contribution to the nationwide project to establish new wildflower meadows in every county as part of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. Over the next few years work will be undertaken to manage the meadow for wildflowers that will

support invertebrate and bird species and provide a valuable amenity for the local community.

Placement Students

21. Based on the success of last year's 'pilot' project, Country Parks and Green Estates teams have taken on two new Placement Students from Nottinghamshire Trent University, who will spend a year working with the Authority learning about the work we do and gaining valuable experience in Conservation, Land Management and Forestry.
22. The condition of the Green Estate has continued to improve for wildlife and for the public who use our sites. We have maintained over 20 miles of multi-user route and managed over 30 hectares of conservation grassland. The autumn and winter tree programme is about to commence with the Green Estate team hosting a large scrub clearance task on Freckland Wood for 50 volunteers from Boots in Nottingham.

CONSERVATION

Heritage Open Days (HODs)

23. HODs is a national free event that celebrated its 20 year anniversary on the weekend of 13/14 September. It is the largest heritage event in the country and has links across Europe. This year's HODs looks to have been the largest ever in the UK with 4,695 events registered by 1,588 volunteer organisers. In Nottinghamshire there were 89 events registered with the HODs organisation; the total number of visitors has yet to be released but some organisers have reported record numbers. As always the Civic Societies of Beeston and Retford contributed a number of events around their towns. The County Council opened a number of its sites, including the Archives, Bestwood Winding Engine House and Sibthorpe dovecote, and many of our partners were involved too, such as the owners at Beauvale Abbey and the Chesterfield Canal Trust.

Skylarks Project

24. The Senior Archaeological Officer and the Community Archaeologists have started work on the Skylarks Project, a partnership project led by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The site is a partially restored gravel quarry next to Holme Pierrepont Country Park. The main focus of the project is to provide habitat improvements for biodiversity, but also involves an ambitious programme of community engagement. Conservation team staff involvement is to maintain a watching brief over ground works where archaeological remains may be uncovered, and also to develop the site as a centre for experimental archaeology, which could range from prehistoric cookery techniques, to recreating Roman pottery kilns. Each year of the project there will be a festival of ancient arts, demonstrating long forgotten skills and co-hosted by the Conservation Team and the Wildlife Trust. The first is scheduled for September 2015.

Greenwood Awards 2014

25. The efforts of volunteers and Friends groups were recognised at the Greenwood Community Awards Ceremony on 22 September.

26. 130 guests assembled at the John Fretwell Centre, near Mansfield, for the event. Councillor John Knight, Chair of the Greenwood Partnership Board, opened the evening with the observation that “we would not have the beautiful County that we have without volunteers who work hard to keep it that way.”
27. Ten awards were presented to volunteers from all areas of Greenwood Community Forest. These recognised individuals and teams of all ages and abilities who take part in conservation tasks or work behind the scenes.
28. Colin Barson, Chair of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum commented: “This is always a big night for volunteers who work hard on our parks and green spaces within the Greenwood area. I never know how the event will better the previous one and I’m always surprised and delighted.”

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY AWARDS 2014 LIST OF NOMINEES					
Award Winners	Group	category	district	nominated by	org/group
Lucy Walvin	Brierley Forest Park Trust	Young Volunteer	Ashfield	Michael Straw	Brierley Forest Park Trust
David Shaw	Local Notts Wildlife Trust Group	Biodiversity Award	Ashfield/Mans	Chris Jackson	Biodiversity Action Group
Lee Maxwell and Leander Sellie	Alexander House, Mansfield	Volunteer Endeavour	Mansfield	Seb Tighe	Forestry Commission
Innova House	Maun Conservation Group	Team Endeavour	Mansfield	Sarah Spurry	Maun Conservation Group
Richard Smith	Rushpool Open Space	Adult Volunteer	Mansfield	Alex Smith	Nottinghamshire County Council
George and Sue Thompson	Rufford volunteers	Long Serving Volunteer Team	Newark	Leanne Wombwell	Nottinghamshire County Council
Colin Johnson	Sherwood Foragers	Walkin For Health Volunteer	Newark	Christine Johnson	Sherwood Foragers
Maureen Hayden	Walk & Talk	Walkin For Health Volunteer	Broxtowe	Gill Bloom	Walk & Talk
Bob Thacker	Mansfield W'house Millennium Green Trust	Senior Volunteer	Mansfield	Shiela Macfarlane	Mansfield Woodh'se Millennium Green Trust
Margaret Passey	Friends of Moor Pond Wood	Long Serving Volunteer	Gedling	Maureen Barker	Friends of Moor Pond Wood
Brierley Forest Park Trust	Brierley Forest Park Trust	Volunteer Team Award	Ashfield	Sarah Daniel	Ashfield District Council
Runners Up	Group	category	district	nominated by	org/group
Harry Pye	Maun Conservation Group	Senior Volunteer	Mansfield	Sarah Spurry	Maun Conservation Group
Ken Hamilton	Friends of Brinsley Headstocks	Senior Volunteer	Broxtowe	Malc Tivey	Friends of Brinsley Headstocks
Terry Cumberland	RSPB	Long Serving Volunteer	Ashfield/Mans	John Barlow	RSPB
The Friends of Bramcote Ridge	Friends of Bramcote Ridge	Volunteer Team	Broxtowe	Chris Riley	Broxtowe Borough Council

Local Wildlife Sites under positive management

29. Local Wildlife Sites are a local, non-statutory designation that identifies sites of substantive value for the conservation of biodiversity, and each county/unitary authority in England runs a Local Wildlife Site system. Local Wildlife Sites are home to rare and scarce species or represent the best surviving examples of habitats that were once widespread and typical of the Nottinghamshire landscape. All are selected based on agreed habitat or species-based criteria, which require certain minimum thresholds to be met for a site to qualify as a Local Wildlife Site.
30. Local Wildlife Sites contribute to an essential ecological network and act as wildlife corridors and stepping stones, allowing species to migrate and disperse between sites. The continued existence of these sites is vital to safeguard wildlife from the pressures of development, intensive agriculture and climate change. Although not legally protected, Local Wildlife Sites receive a degree of protection through the planning system. Appropriate positive conservation management of these sites is therefore required to maintain their value.
31. As part of the Government’s ‘Single Data List’ requirements, Nottinghamshire County Council must submit data annually on the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites in positive conservation management. The 2013-14 submission has just been made by the

Conservation Team and this shows that during that period 30.1% of Local Wildlife Sites were under positive management. This compares with 29.8% in 2012-13; 28.4% in 2011-12; 26.9% in 2010-11; 21.3% in 2009-10; and 19.6% in 2008-09. Therefore, whilst the number of sites under positive management is increasing, the annual increase is small. However, it should be noted that for many sites no data exists to help determine whether sites are under positive management or not, meaning that these sites automatically fail to score.

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.

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