

## **Culture Committee**

**Tuesday, 03 December 2013 at 10:30**

**County Hall, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP**

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### **AGENDA**

- |    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 1  | Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 October 2013   | 3 - 8   |
| 2  | Apologies for Absence  |         |
| 3  | Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below)<br>(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests<br>(b) Private Interests (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) |         |
| 4  | Introduction to Services - Conservation  | 9 - 10  |
| 5  | Biodiversity Offsetting in England Green Paper   | 11 - 22 |
| 6  | Service Update for the Period 16 September to 10 November 2013   | 23 - 28 |
| 7  | Performance Reporting 1 April to 30 September 2013   | 29 - 34 |
| 8  | The Impact of Nottinghamshire Library Services   | 35 - 48 |
| 9  | Library Management System Replacement Update   | 49 - 52 |
| 10 | Summer Reading Challenge 2013  | 53 - 56 |
| 11 | Survey of Visitors to British Archives 2012 Performance of Nottinghamshire Archives  | 57 - 70 |

12	Fees and Charges 2014-15 - Country Parks and Green Estates	71 - 76
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## **Notes**

- (1) Councillors are advised to contact their Research Officer for details of any Group Meetings which are planned for this meeting.
- (2) Members of the public wishing to inspect "Background Papers" referred to in the reports on the agenda or Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act should contact:-

Customer Services Centre 0300 500 80 80

- (3) Persons making a declaration of interest should have regard to the Code of Conduct and the Council's Procedure Rules. Those declaring must indicate the nature of their interest and the reasons for the declaration.

Councillors or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Martin Gately (Tel. 0115 977 2826) or a colleague in Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

- (4) Councillors are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information, may be recycled.

## minutes

Meeting	CULTURE COMMITTEE	
Date	8 October 2013	(commencing at 10:30 am)

### **Membership**

Persons absent are marked with `A`

### **COUNCILLORS**

John Knight (Chairman)  
Alan Bell (Vice-Chairman)  
Pauline Allan  
Chris Barnfather  
John Cottey  
Maureen Dobson  
Sybil Fielding  
Alice Grice  
Tom Hollis  
Roger Jackson  
Yvonne Woodhead

Ex-officio (non-voting)

A Alan Rhodes

### **OTHER COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE**

None.

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Derek Higon - Service Director, Youth, Families and Cultural Services  
Sue Cullen - Cultural and Enrichment Services  
Gareth Broome – Countryside service manager  
Ted Woodisse – Forestry and Land Management Officer  
Mark Dorrington – Team Manager Archives  
Peter Gaw - Group Manager Libraries, Archives & Information  
Sally Gill – Group Manager Planning  
Philippa Milbourne – Children Families and Cultural Services  
Heather Stokes - Team Manager, Conservation  
Martin Gately - Democratic Services Officer

### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Kevin Thomas – SERCO  
Jamie Bryant - SERCO

## **MEMBERSHIP**

It was reported that Councillor Yvonne Woodhead had been appointed to the Committee in place of Councillor John Clarke for this meeting only.

The committee marked the passing of former County Councillor Andy Stewart with a minute of silence.

The committee thanked Mark Dorrington for his ten years of work at the County Archives and wished him well in his new post at the University of Nottingham.

## **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2013**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **INTRODUCTION TO SERVICES – SPORTS AND ARTS**

Sue Cullen gave a presentation to the Committee on Sports & Arts Development. Members heard that the service developed the sporting and creative talents of Nottinghamshire communities by nurturing the artistic and sporting aspirations of our young people and supporting sportspeople, sporting clubs, artists and creative organisations to flourish while increasing opportunities for everyone to enjoy high quality sports and arts.

In response to comments and questions Ms Cullen indicated that the service was embarking on a creative people and places project which would receive money from the Arts Council to work on areas of least engagement, and this would include Mansfield and Ashfield. Members commended the work of the Village Ventures performance group.

Members welcomed the presentation and invaluable work being undertaken by the department.

## **RESOLVED 2013/41**

That the introductory report be noted and commented upon.

## **NATIONAL WATER SPORTS CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT**

Kevin Thomas and Jamie Bryant presented an update on the contract and associated works programme at the National Water Sports Centre. Members heard that the County Council's vision for the NWSC was for an accessible, high quality family activity and sporting centre with an adventurous flavour set in stunning green space. In practical terms, this means striking a balance between elite sport and community/family facilities, retaining the regatta lake and white water course, as well as retaining the centre's attractive green space. New facilities included: a

new 60-80 station community gym (to open January 2014), a family zone sky trail (to be completed March 2014), and E-Combat (which opened in May).

**RESOLVED 2013/42**

That the update on the National Water Sports Centre management and development contract be noted.

**SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD UP TO 15 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**RESOLVED: 2013/43**

That the report be noted.

**PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (QUARTER 1)**

**RESOLVED: 2013/44**

That the update on a range of issues being undertaken to improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people be noted.

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE GREEN ESTATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PLAN 2013-2023**

**RESOLVED: 2013/45**

That the Development Strategy and Plan 2013-2023 for the Nottinghamshire County Green Estate service as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

That a further report to approve the recommendations regarding the status of each site be received in July 2014

**RUFFORD ABBEY COUNTRY PARK – NEW DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2023**

**RESOLVED: 2013/46**

That the outline Development Plan for Rufford Abbey Country Park, and in particular, the operating objectives as set out in this report, be approved

That the progress made on the programme of ‘quick wins’ to improve the Country Park during the course of the last year be noted

That a Conservation Management Plan to provide the conservation, heritage, and commercial planning and policy context for a range of new development opportunities to take place be noted

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE OLYMPIC LEGACY FUND DEFERRED BIDS FOR GAME CHANGER AWARDS**

Following discussion, the committee agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of the committee.

**RESOLVED: 2013/47**

That consideration of Nottinghamshire Olympic Legacy Fund deferred bids for Game Changer Awards take place at the 3 December meeting of the Culture Committee.

**A STRATEGY FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S LIBRARIES – SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT JANUARY – JUNE 2013**

**RESOLVED: 2013/48**

That the update on the implementation of the Strategy for Nottinghamshire Libraries between January and June 2013 be noted.

**WORLD WAR ONE CENTENARY COMMEMORATION UPDATE**

**RESOLVED: 2013/49**

That the work of the coordination group to ensure the County Council contributes to a fitting commemoration

That the outline listing of County Council activity and support be agreed and progressed

That a regular progress report continues to be provided to the Culture Committee as the programme develops

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A TEMPORARY 1 FTE INFORMATION ASSISTANT FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) LOCAL OFFER PROJECT**

**RESOLVED: 2013/50**

That 1 fte Information Assistant post at Grade 3 be established on a temporary basis until 31 March 2014 for the implementation of the SEND Local Offer project.

**LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP CONTRIBUTION**

**RESOLVED: 2013/51**

That the financial contribution to the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership on the basis of £5,000 per annum for the financial years 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 be approved.

**WORK PROGRAMME**

Members noted that the Culture Committee meetings for 5 November 2013, 7 January and 4 March 2014 had been cancelled.

**RESOLVED: 2013/51**

The work programme and its contents were noted.

The meeting closed at 12:35 pm.

**CHAIRMAN**





**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND  
CORPORATE SERVICES****INTRODUCTION TO SERVICES - CONSERVATION****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide the Culture Committee with an introductory overview of the key service areas within its remit.

**Information and Advice**

2. To support the new Committee's work, officers will deliver short introductory presentations at this meeting, in order to provide members with an overview of the following key service areas:
  - Archaeology – including community archaeology
  - Listed Buildings
  - Historic Environment
  - Historic Environment Record
  - Ecology
  - Biodiversity Partnership
  - Green Wood Community Forest
  - Local Nature Partnership
3. Members will have the opportunity to ask questions following the presentation.
4. The Committee's consideration of the presentations will inform the future Work Programme.

**Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

5. To support the Committee's ongoing consideration of cultural services matters across Nottinghamshire.

**Statutory and Policy Implications**

6. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service

and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Committee notes and comments upon the introductory service presentations.

**Jayne Francis-Ward**  
**Corporate Director Policy, Planning and Corporate Services.**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Heather Stokes  
Team Manager Conservation  
T: 0115 9696508  
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## **Constitutional Comments**

7. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (SEM 25/11/13)**

8. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND  
CORPORATE SERVICES****BIODIVERSITY OFFSETTING IN ENGLAND – GREEN PAPER****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee ratification for comments appended to this report, which were sent to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on 6 November 2013 in response to a Green Paper entitled “Biodiversity offsetting in England”.

**Information and Advice**

2. Biodiversity offsets are conservation activities that are designed to give biodiversity gain to compensate for residual losses arising from the impacts of development. They are different from other forms of ecological compensation as they need to show measurable outcomes that are sustained over time.
3. The government recognises that as well as needing development, the country also needs nature for its long-term prosperity. It also recognises that impacts on biodiversity from development are not always adequately accounted for, but also that some planning decisions can take too long and the outcome be too uncertain, as a result of biodiversity considerations. Biodiversity offsetting has the potential to address these issues, to help the planning system deliver more for both the economy, and our environment.
4. The green paper:
  - Sets out the Government's objectives to avoid additional costs to developers and to achieve better environmental outcomes and explores how offsetting could help achieve these objectives.
  - Sets out the options for biodiversity offsetting
  - Seeks evidence of the costs and benefits of biodiversity offsetting
  - Asks questions about how detailed design of an offsetting system should be approached.
5. The response to the Green paper consultation is provided in Appendix 1, and the key points raised therein are summarised below:
  - Nottinghamshire County Council is leading one of the six national biodiversity offsetting pilots. It is suggested that a consultation on offsetting is premature in advance of these pilots being completed, and a thorough given that the pilots have yet to be completed.

- Biodiversity offsetting has the potential to deliver compensation for residual impacts on biodiversity arising from development, and to provide developers and planners with more certainty, and possibly also reduced costs.
- If offsetting is to become a mainstream planning tool, it will be necessary to ensure that use of the offsetting metric (used to calculate impacts) is required on all sites that have a significant impact on wildlife habitat.
- Consistent and rigorous application of the mitigation hierarchy, as set out in the National planning Policy Framework (and which requires impacts on biodiversity to be avoided, mitigated against, and then compensated for, in that order) will be essential to ensure that offsetting does not become a so-called 'licence to trash'.
- A national approach should be taken to determining when harm to biodiversity caused by developed is 'significant'.
- A strategic approach should be taken when applying offsetting, to help deliver a net ecological gain and to meet identified priorities and opportunities.
- Concerns are raised about whether planning authorities have, or will continue to have, sufficient capacity and ecological expertise to allow offsetting to be properly applied.
- Offsets should be delivered at the very least within the same county or natural area as the development to which they relate.
- Offsetting should operate within a national framework, but there should be flexibility to reflect the local context.
- Concerns are raised about the appropriateness of including 'irreplaceable' habitats, such as Ancient Woodland, within the offsetting metric, and whether these should be treated differently.

## **Other Options Considered**

6. The County Council could choose not to respond. In this case, however, as the Council is leading one of the national Biodiversity Offsetting pilots, this was not considered to be a viable option.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

7. To enable the County Council to consider the response to the Biodiversity Offsetting in England Green Paper which feeds the direct experience gained through the pilot programme in to the national debate.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

8. 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.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Committee ratify the appended comments that were sent to the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs on 6 November 2013.

**Jayne Francis Ward**  
**Corporate Director Policy Planning and Corporate Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Nick Crouch, Senior Practitioner Nature Conservation (0115 969 6520)**

### **Constitutional Comments (SHB.20.11.13)**

9. Committee have power to decide the Recommendation.

### **Financial Comments ((SEM 21/11/13)**

10. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All

## **Appendix 1 - response to green paper consultation**

### **Biodiversity offsetting in England green paper – September 2013**

Comments from Planning and Conservation Group, Nottinghamshire County Council; it should be noted that these are officer-level comments and do not necessarily reflect the views of Nottinghamshire County Council.

#### **Introduction**

These comments are made by the Planning and Conservation Group of Nottinghamshire County Council. The Group is leading one of the six national biodiversity offsetting pilots, and these comments are therefore informed by practical experiences of trying to deliver biodiversity offsetting, although it should be noted that the pilot has yet to successfully deliver any biodiversity offsetting schemes. Given that lessons from the pilots are still being learnt, it is suggested that the wider implementation of offsetting should not take place until the pilots have been completed and evaluated.

#### **Response to consultation**

##### **Question 1: Do you think the Government should introduce a biodiversity offsetting system in England?**

Biodiversity offsetting provides the potential to deliver compensation for residual impacts on biodiversity arising from development, in a meaningful and consistent way, and also to deliver net gains by helping to contribute to the strengthening of ecological networks. However, it is essential that offsetting does not become a 'licence to trash', and that it is not viewed as a vehicle for allowing previously unacceptable development to take place.

##### **Question 2: Do you think the Government's objectives for the system and the characteristics the Government thinks a system would display are right?**

The objectives for and characteristics of the system as proposed appear to be appropriate. However:

- Regarding the objective of avoiding additional cost to businesses, it is possible that business will experience additional costs because in many cases to date, planning permissions have been granted for developments which have not required sufficient mitigation or compensation to be provided and therefore developers have only had to pay a proportion of what they should have had to pay, had impacts been fully mitigated or compensated. Therefore, there is danger that introducing a more rigorous approach to securing compensation through offsetting will be perceived by developers as an increased burden.
- Regarding observation of the mitigation hierarchy, this is absolutely critical if the 'licence to trash' scenario is to be avoided. This is commented on in greater detail in the response to Q6 below.

**Question 3: Do you think it is appropriate to base an offsetting system on the pilot metric? If not is there an alternative metric that should be used?**

The pilot metric, whilst not without problems, has proven to be relatively easy to use and understand when applied to real-life cases in the Nottinghamshire pilot. Any alternative metric would need to share these characteristics.

**Question 4: If you think the pilot metric is the right basis for an offsetting system:**

- a. **Are there any other factors which should be considered when quantifying biodiversity loss and gain?**
  - b. **Are the weights given to the different factors appropriate?**
  - c. **Are there any other changes you think should be taken into account?**
- a. Other factors which should be considered when quantifying biodiversity loss and gain ideally include the position that a site/habitat has within a wider ecological network; the strengthening of ecological networks is identified as a potential net gain arising from using offsetting, but the weakening of existing ecological networks as a result of the loss of a site/habitat is not captured within the current metric. The irreplaceability of certain habitats is also not currently captured.
  - b. The weightings given to different factors do generally appear appropriate. However, it is suggested that 'irreplaceable' habitats should be given an additional weighting during the calculation of the initial biodiversity units score, to discourage the development of such habitats.
  - c. One of the main practical problems with the metric is that it still requires subjectivity when determining what habitat is being dealt with, and what condition it is in. Whilst this is unavoidable, better guidance may help; for example, the current list of habitats and distinctiveness scores used in the pilots is very long, and it is not always clear which habitat you are dealing with (e.g. there are multiple subsets of grassland). This should be simplified. When assessing habitat condition, the FEP Handbook is meant to be used in the pilots, but not all habitats are included within this (e.g. post-industrial habitats), so this will also need to be addressed.

**Question 5: Do you think offsetting assessment should be used when preparing a planning application for a project?**

It is absolutely vital that the use of the offsetting metric should become mandatory in all planning applications where there is a 'significant' impact on biodiversity (see Q27 below). If not, there will be a continuation of the current wranglings that are experienced about whether or not sufficient on-site mitigation has been provided and whether any compensation is needed, which will lead to delays. Making use of the metric mandatory should not lead to any increased burden on business, as in such cases an ecological assessment of the site will have been completed, and carrying out the metric calculation would be a small addition piece of work as part of this.

**Question 6: Do you agree that it should be the responsibility of planning authorities to ensure the mitigation hierarchy is observed and decide what offset is required to compensate for any residual loss? If not, why, and how do you think offsetting should be approached in the planning system?**

Yes, it must be the responsibility of the planning authority to ensure the mitigation hierarchy is observed. However, there are issues here about capacity, and application:

- In terms of capacity, many planning authorities do not have sufficient in-house expertise to support them in judging whether the mitigation hierarchy has been applied (or indeed, the wider aspects of biodiversity offsetting). It is unclear where this capacity would come from.
- It is my opinion that a more formalised approach to the application of the mitigation hierarchy is required, perhaps akin to the steps which need to be taken to demonstrate that the 'three tests' required by Regulation 53 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (in relation to European protected species) have been met. Such a formalised approach would require LPAs to demonstrate and document how the mitigation hierarchy has been worked through, i.e. why impacts cannot be avoided (why the development has to be located where it is proposed), how mitigation has been put in place (if and how the layout of the development has been modified to retain the highest value habitats on site), and then what the level of residual impact is (as demonstrated through use of the metric) so that compensatory requirements can be quantified. Without such an approach there is a very real danger of being tempted into jumping straight to the 'compensate' stage, which will lead to the realisation of fears about a 'licence to trash'.

**Question 7: Do you think biodiversity offsetting should have a role in all development consent regimes?**

Yes; there appears to be no reason why certain development consent regimes should be exempt.

**Question 8: Do you think developers should be able to choose whether to use offsetting? If so what steps could Government take to encourage developers to use offsetting?**

It is felt that a permissive approach to offsetting would not be successful, as this would result in 'business as usual' and continued wranglings about whether or not sufficient mitigation or compensation has been provided, and insufficient levels of both being permitted due to pressures that planning authorities are under to deliver new housing and employment. This is partly borne out in experience gained during the Nottinghamshire pilot, where developers have not been interested in using offsetting due to the voluntary nature of the pilots. Therefore, it is believed that a partially permissive scheme is required at the very least, where developers are required to use the offsetting metric to determine whether or not there will be a residual impact on biodiversity (see Q5 above). Possibly, this could be adapted such that this would only apply to developments above a particular threshold (see Q9 below). The use of CIL does not appear appropriate, and would be very complicated to administer.

**Question 9: If you think developers should be required to use offsetting do you think this requirement should only apply above a threshold based on the size of the development? What level should the threshold be?**

The use of thresholds is fraught with difficulties, as a large development may have low biodiversity impacts (e.g. if a large area of amenity grassland is affected), whilst a small development could affect an area of high-quality, locally-rare habitat which is potentially 'irreplaceable'. If offsetting were to become mandatory, it would probably be necessary to say that all residual impacts should be dealt with through offsetting.



**Question 10: Do you think there should be constraints on where offsets can be located? If so what constraints do you think should be put in place?**

There should definitely be constraints on where offsets can be located. 'Exporting' biodiversity to other areas (e.g. with less development pressure or lower land prices) is unlikely to be acceptable to the local communities affected (who may value areas for reasons other than their biodiversity value), or to local decision makers. At the very least, offsets should be located within the same county or National Character Area (NCA), and should ideally be located as close as possible to the source of the impact (although noting that this may not always be possible, or indeed desirable if increased benefits can be brought by locating an offset elsewhere). Within this overall constraint, there may then be scope to use either of the two options outlined in paragraph 28 of the green paper, to try and encourage offsets to be appropriately located.

It is suggest there should also be controls put in place regarding things like:

- Which habitats are created, i.e. ensuring that habitats are appropriate to the relevant NCA
- How much habitat is created, i.e. setting minimum size thresholds which created/restored habitat should meet, to avoid lots of small and fragmented habitat patches being created.

**Question 11: Do you have any comments on the analysis set out in the impact assessment?**

No comment.

**Question 12: Do you have evidence that would help refine the Government's analysis of the costs and benefits of the options considered in this paper? In particular, evidence relating to:**

- a. The amount of compensation already occurring where there is residual biodiversity loss which cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated
  - b. The method for estimating costs and their magnitude
  - c. The method for estimating benefits and savings and their magnitude
  - d. How to capture the wider social and environmental benefits of maintaining England's stock of biodiversity and delivering a coherent ecological network
  - e. Likely take up of offsetting under a permissive approach
- a. No comment.
  - b. No comment.
  - c. No comment.
  - d. No comment.
  - e. Experience from the Nottinghamshire Pilot indicates that a permissive approach to offsetting may not be successful, as developers may believe that they can progress with 'traditional' forms of compensation which require them to do less, and therefore cost less.

**Question 13: Do you think offsetting should be a single consistent national system without scope for local variation?**

Whilst offsetting should operate within an agreed national framework, there needs to be scope for local variation to be built in, to reflect the fact that areas differ from each other; some are rich in semi-natural habitats whilst others are not, and what is common in one place may be rare in another. However, such variation should be accommodated in such a way that it does not complicate the system or increase costs.

**Question 14: Do you agree with the proposed exceptions to the routine use of biodiversity offsetting? If not, why not? If you suggest additional restriction, why are they needed?**

There must definitely be exceptions to the routine use of offsetting – applying it to statutorily designated sites does not appear appropriate, as a) such sites should not be routinely be effected by development anyway, and b) due to the special nature of these sites, compensation will probably need to be determined on a case-by-case basis, and be bespoke in nature.

**Question 15: Which habitats do you think should be considered irreplaceable?**

Within a Nottinghamshire context, ancient woodland is probably the only truly irreplaceable habitat we have. However, it could be argued that other areas of semi-natural habitat which have existed for a long period of time, such as a traditionally-managed hay-meadow or a wetland system, are effectively irreplaceable due to their longevity, the complex ecological interactions they support (e.g. mycorrhizal associations, soil microfauna), and particular conditions which support their presence (e.g. hydrological), which cannot be effectively replicated elsewhere.

**Question 16: Do you think offsetting should in principle be applied to protected species?**

It is not made clear how offsetting could or would be applied to protected species such as great crested newts, but there is the potential for offsetting to be used. In the case of great crested newts it is unclear what the 'unit' would be in this case – number of individual animals? Population size? Number of breeding ponds? Area/quality of terrestrial habitat?

**Question 17: Has the Government identified the right constraints and features that need to be addressed when applying offsetting to protected species?**

Species-specificity should apply to all protected species, not just those protected by the Habitats Directive. Priority species (i.e. species of principle importance) should also be included.

**Question 18: Do you agree that great crested newts should be the first area of focus?**

Great crested newt appears a good place to start. Other protected species are likely to be more complicated (e.g. bats).

**Question 19: Do you have any comments on the Government's thinking on how to apply offsetting to great crested newts?**

See Q16.

**Question 20: Should offsetting be considered for any other species in the near future taking account of the constraints on species offsetting?**

No comment.

**Question 21: Do you think conservation covenants should be put in place as part of an offsetting system? If they are required, who do you think should be responsible for agreeing conservation covenants? If not, how else do you think offsets could be secured for the long-term?**

Conservation covenants would appear to be the best way of securing offsets in the long term (in the absence of any other mechanism), although it is worrying to see that a covenant could still be released to allow land to be developed, which appears to defeat the whole purpose of a covenant being used to protect a piece of land.

**Question 22: Do you think management agreements should be put in place as part of an offsetting system? If they are required, who do you think should be responsible for agreeing management agreements?**

Yes, management agreements should be put in place, although it needs to be recognised that management activities will change over time as habitats mature and external pressures come to bear. It may be that the management agreements could be quite broad-brush (i.e. requiring the creation/maintenance of a particular habitat), with the production of more detailed 5 or 10 year management plans required as part of this. Management agreements should be approved at the time that the offset is agreed, and there is a role for Natural England to provide here.

**Question 23: Do you think an offset register should be put in place as part of an offsetting system? If so, who do you think should be responsible for maintaining an offset register?**

Yes, an offset register should be maintained. No views are offered on which organisation should be responsible for this.

**Question 24: How long should offsets be secured for?**

The term 'in perpetuity' is used in the pilots. Offsets should be secured for as long as possible – at least 30 years, probably more like 99 years.

**Question 25: Are there any long-term factors, besides climate change, that should be taken into account when securing offsets?**

Possibly; there is probably a need to give thought here to whether we should be aiming to create habitats which are likely to be more resilient to climate change from the outset.

**Question 26: Do you think biodiversity offsetting should be "backdated" so it can apply in relation to any planning applications under consideration at the point it is introduced?**

There appear to be no reasons why offsetting could not be 'backdated' as described.

**Question 27: Do you think an offsetting system should take a national approach to the question of significant harm and if so how?**

Offsetting should definitely take a national approach to determining when harm is 'significant', as otherwise it will be dealt with inconsistently by individual planning authorities. There also needs to be an element of objectivity introduced into making decisions about what is 'significant', and the use of either a threshold, or excluding low-distinctiveness, low-quality habitats, could work in this respect, but this would need to be examined in greater detail based on specific proposals, and probably there needs to be a combination of the two as neither approach would appear to be perfect. There may need to be an allowance for local variation built in, to reflect, for example, that a habitat which is common in one place may be rare somewhere else (and therefore there will be variation in whether an impact is significant or not). Thought may also need to be given to how 'in-combination' effects are dealt with, given that individually a development may not have a significant impact, but when combined with other developments, the loss of a particular habitat may then become more major, and hence more significant.

**Question 28: Do you think any additional mechanisms need to be put in place to secure offsets beyond conservation covenants? If so why and what are they? If this includes measures not listed above, please explain what they are.**

No comment.

**Question 29: Do you think there should be constraints on what habitat can be provided as an offset? If so what constraints do you think should be put in place, and how should they work in practice?**

Trading-up of habitats should definitely be promoted, as should a like-for-like approach when dealing with habitats of high distinctiveness, with a penalty system incorporated to account for instances where this may not be possible. This is something where local variation should be allowed (in terms of which habitats should be offset on a like-for-like basis), given that a habitat may be rare in one area (and should therefore be replaced), but might be common somewhere else (and therefore providing a different habitat isn't such an issue).

**Question 30: Do you agree an offsetting system should apply a strategic approach to generate net ecological gain in line with *Making Space for Nature*? If so, at what level should the strategy be set and who by? How should the system ensure compliance with the strategy?**

Yes. Such a strategic approach should be provided as a broad national framework, but allow for the development of local strategies to address local issues and utilise local tools such as Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping (i.e. a hybrid model). A prohibition or penalty approach to ensuring compliance seems most appropriate.

**Question 31: Do you think habitat banking should be allowed? Do you think a provider must show intent to create a habitat bank to be allowed to sell it as an offset? Do you think habitat banks should be “retired” if they are not used to provide an offset? If so, after how long?**

Habitat banking is an interesting concept, and one which removes a lot of uncertainty from the offsetting process (i.e. the offset is already created, presumably in an appropriate location, and the costs are known). However, providers must certainly be able to ‘demonstrate intent’ so that the offset is something new, rather than something which would have happened anyway. The issue of retiring habitat banks poses issues for those doing the banking and looking to sell the offsets, as this will presumably leave them out of pocket financially and may put organisations off from doing habitat banking.

**Question 32: Do you think maintaining an environmental gain that might otherwise be lost should count as an offset? If so, how should a value be attached to the offset?**

No comment.

**Question 33: Do you think it is acceptable or not to use biodiversity gain created for other purposes as an offset? If you do, how should it be decided what is allowed to be used as an offset?**

Yes, there appears to be no reason why biodiversity gain created for other purposes cannot be used as an offset (or indeed, as mitigation to reduce the level of residual impact and hence the amount of compensation/offsetting required), provided that it is secured in the same way as any other offset. This may also encourage multi-functional design of things like flood alleviation features.

**Question 34: How do you think the quality of assessments should be assured and who by?**

Quality assurance of assessments is a very important issue. There is probably a need for those undertaking the initial assessments on behalf of developers to have some accreditation (following training on how to use the metric), perhaps something which could be looked at with CIEEM. After this assessment has taken place, the results should not then be taken at face value and accepted without some level of quality assurance. Planning authorities may be able to do this initially, where they have an in-house ecologist or access to ecological advice – where they do not, this will be problematic. Natural England may be able to assist.

**Question 35: How should differences of opinion over assessments be addressed?**

There will inevitably be instances where differences of opinion arise when applying the metric and doing offset calculations (because there is still a degree of subjectivity involved in a. determining what habitat is involved, and b. what condition it is in), and in these cases access to independent arbitration would be necessary, but noting this will add time and cost to the process.

**Question 36: Do you think the metric should take account of hedgerows? If so do you think the current approach is the right one or should it be adjusted?**

The metric should include hedgerows, but may also need to include other linear habitats such as rivers, streams and ditches, and possibly also small-scale features such as ponds.

**Question 37: Do you think it should be possible to offset the loss of hedgerows by creating or restoring another form of habitat?**

Possibly, but this would require the metric to be adjusted to allow comparison.

**Question 38: If conservation covenants are put in place, do you think providing for offsetting through planning guidance will be sufficient to achieve national consistency? If not, what legislative provision may be necessary?**

No comment.

Nick Crouch  
Senior Practitioner Nature Conservation  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2013

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE****SERVICE UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 16 SEPTEMBER TO 10 NOVEMBER  
2013****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****Turf Cutting ceremony at Nottinghamshire Archives**

2. On 15 October the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor John Allin, with Councillor John Knight, Chairman of the Culture Committee, and Councillor David Kirkham, Chairman of the Finance and Property Committee, cut the first sod of the £2.5 million extension to Nottinghamshire Archives. They were joined by Professor John Beckett, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Archives Users Group, Archives staff, the contractors Morgan Sindall and members of the County Council Design team.
3. The extension will provide additional archive storage for the next twenty years, including specialist storage for photographs and digital media, and improved public and learning facilities.

**National Poetry Celebrations at West Bridgford Library on 5 Oct 2013**

4. Nottinghamshire Libraries celebrated National Poetry Day with a series of special poetry workshops and events aimed at children, young families and members of the Asian community in West Bridgford Library.
5. Children's author Debjani Chatterjee ran a poetry session for children and a family creative writing workshop for children and their families where she shared her experience of growing up in different countries and love of writing poetry. The events provided opportunities for 17 children and their families to enjoy poetry and learn poetry writing techniques.
6. An event for adults in the evening provided the opportunity for local poets to showcase their talents as they recited their poetry in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu to an audience of 38 people. This event was an opportunity to promote the Asian book collection which



includes poetry titles, the Library Service in general and to launch West Bridgford Library's Asian Language reading group.

7. Feedback for both events was very positive. Comments included:

*"Captivating speaker. Got children to participate" (children's event)*

*"Wonderful exposure to poetry by a poet for children" (children's event)*

*"Such events should be organised regularly for developing community cohesion" (adult event)*

8. An on-going programme of poetry events is part of the Library Service's strategy to promote reading for pleasure. For children, poetry can play a significant part in helping them develop a love of language and a love of reading. Poems can stimulate imagination, expand their vocabulary and help to develop creative thinking.

### **Storysaurus Week in Nottinghamshire Libraries: 21 – 26 October 2013**

9. Dinosaur roars were heard throughout our libraries during October half term as children and their families attended a range of 'Storysaurus' activities. The week began in grand style with the Dinosaur Dome at Mansfield Library. This 30 minute 3D show was repeated throughout the day and attracted 200 children and 100 adults. Children were also able to take part in the craft activities where they could make a Diplodocus Doorhanger, a Fridgeosaurus, a flying Icarosaurus and take part in our Dino Hunt with the chance of winning a book and a jar of dinosaurs. Dinosaur themed books were also available to borrow.
10. Family Fun sessions were held during the rest of the week at Kirkby, Hucknall, East Leake, West Bridgford, Bingham and Worksop libraries where children participated in dinosaur themed storytimes, craft activities and Dino hunts.
11. The dinosaur theme was very popular and was successful in encouraging more boys to attend the half term activities. Dinosaur book displays were provided across the week and were sought after. Attendances were good with a total of 597 children and 322 adults across the week.
12. Feedback was positive with comments including:

*"Me and my two children aged 8 and 4 really enjoyed the Dome experience"*

*"Even as an adult I learnt some new facts about dinosaurs"*

*"A well organised event with helpful and friendly staff. A lovely atmosphere for the age groups concerned"*

*"Excellent use of library!! Warm and welcoming. Geared up for the children. Good ideas to keep them occupied!!"*



## **Chatterbooks Reading Groups in Nottinghamshire Libraries: November 2013**

13. November saw a series of monthly Chatterbooks reading group meetings taking place in three Nottinghamshire libraries. Organised by The Reading Agency, a national charity that promotes reading, Chatterbooks reading groups take place all over the country in libraries, schools and community venues and provide an opportunity for children aged 8 – 11 years to get together to talk about books they are reading.
14. There are currently three Chatterbooks groups which run in Mansfield, West Bridgford and Worksop libraries. Each month children talk about books they have been reading followed by a reading related activity. A range of books is also available for children to borrow and a librarian is on hand to advise children on their reading choices when required. The emphasis is very much on fun and sharing. Children are involved in the decision making process about how the sessions will work and what books to read and discuss.
15. Support from The Reading Agency includes staff training and core packs of Chatterbooks branded materials which include a bag, bookmark, reading diary, wristband and pen that are given to each new member.
16. The Mansfield and Worksop groups have been running for a couple of years and are targeted at primary aged children in years 5 and 6. Favourite subjects for discussion have included Roald Dahl titles, short scary stories and poetry. Activities have included designing book covers, playing book bingo and acting out short story scenarios. The West Bridgford group was formed earlier this year and is aimed at children aged 10 – 12 years, supporting them through the transition from primary to secondary school. Favourite activities so far have been First Impressions, a game that involves matching book openings to titles, and Book Bingo.
17. Through attending the groups there is usually a noticeable increase in children's confidence and skills in talking about the books that they read. Most children already love reading when they join the group but usually gain in confidence from participating. Children have also enjoyed discovering new books from friends and talking about books they have read in a group situation. All participants have reported either a continuation or increase in the amount of books that they have read after coming to the sessions.
18. Recent research has shown that reading for pleasure is more important to children's successes than education or social class. Chatterbooks reading clubs help children build a lifelong reading habit.

## **Readers' Day**

19. The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Readers' Day, jointly held with Nottingham City Libraries, took place at County Hall on Saturday 2 November 2013. The sell-out event saw 150 readers gather together to listen to authors and participate in workshops ranging from a history of whistling in literature to writing historical fiction set in China. Highlights included the chance to listen to the acclaimed locally born screen writer Billy Ivory, writer of the television series Truckers and the film Made in Dagenham, and authors Bernadine Evaristo and Dorothy Koomson. Participant feedback was excellent.

## **COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATE**

### **Autumn Events in Country Parks**

20. Autumn visits to Rufford Abbey Country Park traditionally peak during the October half term period. Despite dire (but thankfully un-realised) national predictions of storm conditions on the weekend of 26 October, this year proved no exception. A high number of families took part in seasonal activities such as the October “One Sky One World” Kite Festival and family drumming sessions. Rufford’s popular annual “Halloween Trail” took place over the last two weeks of October and attracted some 2,000 participants. At the same time the County Council’s Arts Service held its annual “Big Draw” campaign at Rufford Craft Centre Gallery with around 3,000 people taking part.
21. At Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, families enjoyed a variety of events themed around nature, with the annual “Fungal Foray” soon fully booked, and new short courses on offer teaching traditional woodland crafts such as spoon carving and basket weaving. “Seed Hunt Sunday” attracted over 200 participants, with children taking home acorns from Sherwood’s veteran oaks to grow into saplings and later return for planting. A large scale evening Halloween event called “Sinister Circus” took place in the woods, aimed in part at engaging youngsters in safe organised activities rather than “Trick or Treating.”
22. Bestwood Country Park hosted a series of autumn events for the Nottinghamshire Fungi Group including displays at the Dynamo House by Nottingham University students. Its success raised the suggestion that this become an annual event at Bestwood. A hedge laying weekend event taught this countryside management skill to a group of enthusiastic learners. To quote from a thank you email to the County Council afterwards “I left the course with great confidence, and a big sense of achievement - thank you.”

### **Country Parks Volunteering**

23. Volunteering programmes in country parks this autumn included cutting hay from Rufford Abbey’s “Blue Butterfly” standard meadow area, with the help of around a dozen volunteers. Whilst carrying out this grassland management, a species of fungus (Devil’s Finger Fungus) was found which had never previously been recorded at Rufford Country Park, highlighting the benefits of such biodiversity projects.

### **Rufford Abbey Conservation Plan**

24. Work commissioned recently to compile a Conservation Plan for Rufford Abbey and its historic landscape is now underway, and heritage consultancy MRDA has visited the site several times to carry out surveys. A volunteer from Nottingham University has also been found to assist with this by the cataloguing of onsite maps and plans, and the County’s Historic Buildings Officer is developing links with a University of Nottingham PhD student working on the three dimensional modelling of historic buildings and landscapes, all of which will usefully feed into the conservation plan work.

### **Green Estates**

25. Work has been taking place at Manton Pit Woods to install a new car park and to restore footpaths and trails. A number of very productive meetings have taken place with the

local community and the Green Estates team are anticipating being able to organise an official opening of the new works in Spring 2014.

## **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 Highton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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C0313



## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **PERFORMANCE REPORTING (1 APRIL – 30 SEPTEMBER 2013)**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of performance during the first two quarters of the 2013/14 financial year, covering activities from April to September 2013.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. At the meeting on 5 November 2012, the Committee agreed to receive a quarterly report, which reviews performance across the full range of cultural services provided for children, young people and families that fall within its remit. These reports will be in addition to other reports that may be presented to the Committee from time to time providing detailed performance-related information about specific cultural services initiatives or projects.
3. This report forms the quarterly performance report for Quarter 2, i.e. reports on performance between 1 April and 30 September 2013.

#### **Performance Reporting for 2012/13**

4. As agreed at the meeting on 5 November 2012, quantitative performance reporting to the Committee will be measured via a combination of:
  - outcome based key performance indicators (KPIs)
  - key service indicators that will be measured against objectives within each of the cultural services business plans
  - a summary of key achievements across the relevant service areas.
5. The list includes a number of KPIs that reflect priorities within the Council's Strategic Plan, and which will also therefore be reported to the Policy Committee.
6. The performance data for the period 1 April 2013 – 30 September, as described above, is set out in the table at **Appendix A**.
7. The activities, key performance indicators and service level indicators which are reported here have been selected by cultural services managers to provide information on the key development activities planned for 2013/14, plus a summary of performance achieved across the key service areas.

## Key messages

8. As shown in **Appendix A**, all planned activities are proceeding on or close to schedule. For all of the KPIs where information is available, performance is above target.
9. The latest performance reporting for Country Parks and Green Estates indicates that visitor numbers are meeting quarterly targets, with 814,750 visitors between April and September, and are on track to achieve the annual target of 1,500,000. Visitor numbers exceed those for the equivalent period in 2012/13, which were 652,000. Targets for engaging volunteers have been met, and annual surveys indicate that service user and customer satisfaction levels across the service area were at 97%.
10. The Cultural and Enrichment Service has 75,759 young people and adults engaged or participating in sports, arts and education, and 355 active volunteers engaged in delivering sports and arts activities, meeting its quarterly targets for both areas. Service user and customer satisfaction levels are at 98%.
11. The Libraries, Archives and Information Service is meeting performance targets across a range of indicators, reflecting the various services delivered. The number of in-person visits to libraries is 1,576,346, meeting the quarterly target and exceeding the number for the equivalent period in 2012/13, which was 1,530,732. The number of virtual visits is also on target, at 550,741 and above the number for the equivalent period in 2012/13, which was 548,482. The numbers of in-person and virtual visits to archives are both meeting quarterly targets. The number of in-person visits is slightly lower than the number for the equivalent period for 2012/13 (3,610 compared with 3,811) but the number of virtual visits is higher (200,170 compared with 186,864).
12. As reported in the Quarter 1 report to this Committee, the number of adult learners engaged by the Adult and Community Learning Service was 7,719 during 2012/13, exceeding the annual target of 7,500, although slightly lower than the number of learners for 2011/12 (which was 7,889). Performance reporting for the Adult and Community Learning Service is on a different schedule from the other KPIs. The business/planning year for this service runs from August to July, so the KPI for the *number of adult learners* identifies the total number of adult learners for 2012/13.

## Other Options Considered

13. The process for presenting performance information set out in this report is in line with corporate guidance, which has itself been established following an appropriate analysis of alternative options.

## Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. The recommendation for quarterly reporting to Committee, and the KPIs that will form the basis of the report, is in line with the established processes of reporting and publishing performance information across all of the services within the Children, Families and Cultural Services Department.

## Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the

safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the Committee notes the performance of the Council's cultural services during the period 1 April – 30 September 2013.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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## **Constitutional Comments**

16. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (KLA 31/10/13)**

17. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0314





## Youth, Families and Cultural Services REPORT TO COMMITTEE

## Appendix A

### Our Performance from April to September 2013

#### What have we achieved?

Country Parks & Green Estates	Progress the creation of a new visitor centre for Sherwood Forest in partnership with Discovery Attractions	⊙
	Implement a new Development Plan for Sherwood National Nature Reserve	⊙
	Implement a new Development Plan for Rufford Abbey Country Park	⊙
	Prepare a new Development Plan for Bestwood Country Park	⊙
	Increase volunteer engagement for Country Parks and Green Estate	⊙
	Implement the Green Estate Strategy and Plan	⊙
Cultural & Enrichment	Develop a remodelled Community Sports and Arts Service	⊙
	Review the Nottinghamshire Performing Arts and County Youth Arts Programmes, designed at refreshing the offer.	⊙
	Undertake a detailed survey of young people focused on meeting their needs and aspirations in relation to the arts.	⊙
	Develop new market let resource material for the Achievement and Equalities team	⊙
Libraries, Archives & Information	Undertake the new Archives extension	⊙
	Develop the new Mansfield Central, Worksop and West Bridgford Libraries as strategic sites in the County	⊙
	Respond to the Government's requirements regarding Community Learning Trusts for adult education provision	⊙
	Ensure a development response to OfSTED inspection areas for improvement is delivered across the Adult Education Service	⊙
	Continue to develop a re modelled library network, locating services in best locations	○

Our achievement is rated by: [✓achieved ⊙on schedule ○ progress being made, but behind schedule ✕ not started or will not complete]

Country Parks & Green Estates Service	Yr Target	Apr-Sep	On Target?
Number of visitors to our Country Parks and Green Estate sites	(1,500,000)	814,750 <sup>2</sup>	✓
Generation of external income	(£2,500,000)	£1,569,468 <sup>2</sup>	✓
Number of volunteers worked with	(250)	354	✓
Number of volunteer hours supported	(5000)	8,134	✓
Number of public events organised, across country parks and green estate sites	(450)	392	✓
Service user and customer satisfaction levels achieved across the service area	(90%)	97%	✓
Cultural and Enrichment Service	Yr Target	Apr-Sep	On Target?
The number of young people and adults engaged or participating in sports, arts and outdoor education	(118,000)	75,759	✓
The number of active volunteers engaged in delivering sports and arts activities	(1,200)	355 <sup>2</sup>	✓
Service user and customer satisfaction levels achieved across the service area	(90%)	98%	✓
Libraries, Archives and Information Service	Yr Target	Apr-Sep	On Target?
The number of visits to Libraries	(3,100,000)	1,576,346	✓
The number of virtual visits to Libraries	(1,000,000)	550,741	✓
The number of Library events and activities	(7,000)	4,990	✓
The number of Library loans	(3,500,000)	1,892,868	✓
The number of active Library users	(150,000)	149,074	✓
The number of new Library members	(29,000)	20,584	✓
The number of adult learners	(7,500)	7,719 (2012/13)	✓
Percentage of adult learners who stated that the course met their expectations	(TBC)	92%(p)	-
The number of Newlinc sessions (public computer access sessions)	(200,000)	169,508	✓
The number of visits to Archives	(5,000)	3,610	✓
The number of virtual visits to Archives	(400,000)	200,170	✓
The number of Archives learning activities/events and number of attendances	(50)/(1,000)	39 / 549	✓
The number of file requests for the Records Management Service	(6,000)	3,926	✓
The number of boxes successfully received for the Records Management Service	(3,000)	1,685	✓
Achieve Education Library Service schools buyback rates	(73%)	(annual)	-
Service user and customer satisfaction levels achieved across the service area	(90%)	(annual)	-

Our achievement is rated by: [✓on or above target / ○off target (by less than 10%) / ✕off target (by more than 10%)]

<sup>1</sup>data not yet received in full    <sup>2</sup>against quarter profile    (p) provisional figure    (annual) figure not reported on a quarterly basis    \*\*TSYJ / ACLS Reports to previous quarter



## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **THE IMPACT OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LIBRARY SERVICES**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Members of the results of research into the impact of Nottinghamshire Library Services upon library users.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. Nottinghamshire Libraries carried out a series of focus groups with different groups of library users. The focus groups were held across the County and engaged with users about different aspects of the library service.
3. The aim was to explore how public library services make a difference to - and impact upon - the lives of users, and to what extent the service meets its aims and objectives outlined in the Library Strategy. Customer feedback, performance statistics and the results of the service's Public Library User Survey (PLUS) were also referred to in order to further explore the impact of our services.
4. Focus groups were held with the following groups at the locations shown:

Reading group members	Retford
Young people	Worksop
Visitors to the Southwell Library Poetry Festival	Southwell
Visually Impaired Reading Group members	Mansfield
Parents of under 5s	Mansfield
People who study or use the library for extended periods	Beeston
People with learning disabilities	Worksop
Computer users	Arnold
Local studies and family history users	Newark
Staff from across the service	

#### **The impact of library services upon their users**

5. The County Council's *A Strategy for Nottinghamshire's Libraries* clearly sets out the aims of the service, which is to:

*Be at the heart of Nottinghamshire communities and community life.*

6. To achieve this, we will:
- Inspire the enjoyment of books and reading
  - Create knowledge through access to learning, information and local heritage
  - Stimulate and encourage cultural activities
  - Offer excellent and inclusive customer service for all every time.
7. The results of the focus groups and further research demonstrated the extent to which the service achieves each of its aims and objectives. This can be summarised as follows:

**Aim: To be at the heart of Nottinghamshire communities and community life:**

8. A key factor to come out of the research was just how much our customers value their libraries as a shared, public space, where all members of the community are welcome to come together.

***“Libraries are unique. There is no where else to find that public space.” (Library customer)***

9. A number of users referred to the effect the library had on combating their loneliness and isolation.

***“I took early retirement last year. I didn’t know anyone in the area, but it is now nice to recognise faces and people when out and about.” (Library customer)***

10. The following experiences of staff members also seek to illustrate this role:

***“We have a lady who recently moved into the area to be near her daughter. She was quite lonely while [she was] at work. So she came to one of our coffee mornings. She commented that: ‘the library had saved my life, I wasn’t going anywhere but I now have a group of friends, and if it was not for the coffee mornings I would probably have been very ill.’”***

***“We have an elderly gentleman who comes into one of our libraries every Saturday to read the newspaper. He loves the library because it’s warm (he can turn his heating off at home), read the paper for free, and talk to people (he doesn’t have visitors at home). The library provides what he is missing in his home life.”***

11. Having free or low cost events in our libraries can have a positive effect not only on individuals, but also on community life as whole – enabling it to flourish and grow.

***“I think of it [the library Reading Group] as a support group. We both lost our husbands and the ladies have been a support to us. I think of us as a family.” (Library reading group customer)***

***“I came to the poetry festival for the first time shortly after I moved here...that’s what I take away from it – it’s that sense of community.” (Poetry Festival attendee)***

***“It’s...[integrated] me more into the community, I’ve not really been part of the... community before.” (Poetry Festival attendee)***

12. For people who are not in work, libraries offer access to a warm environment, which gives people who are used to the structure and companionship of a working day a chance to interact with others; to get out of their house; to access computers for free, to learn new skills, access a wide range of resources and information and apply for jobs.

***“I use the computers because it focuses my mind here [in the library]. It gets me into the habit of getting out and doing something. (Customer, Arnold Library)***

13. Investment in our buildings through the development of our strategic libraries at Worksop, Mansfield and West Bridgford increases the impact that libraries and their services have.

***“Can I just say how brilliant a resource the library is in Worksop – I came in to renew some books a week ago and was thrilled to see how many families were using it and what great events you have planned. Lots of people we know are talking about what a real gem it is for the Worksop area – no dusty old whispering places in sight and the staff are excellent, plus it’s such a contemporary building which makes people think their town is a bit more ‘cool’ than it used to be. Buildings such as this really raise aspirations.” (Worksop Library customer)***

14. Comparing performance figures pre and post refurbishment for a library such as Mansfield demonstrates the effect of this development: Mansfield saw a 73% increase of items loaned between 2010 and 2012; a 30% increase in visitors and a 110% increase in new members.

#### **Aim: Inspire the enjoyment of books and reading**

15. Nottinghamshire Libraries provides a wide range of reading related activities, from the annual Southwell Library Poetry Festival and Readers’ Day to regular reading cafes, children’s Rhyme, Rattle and Roll events, poetry walks, crime cafes, reading prize events, reading chains, author events and Chatterbooks groups for younger readers.
16. These events offer an opportunity for people to share their reading experience, to develop reading from being an isolated activity to a shared experience, and to find new authors, poets and books to enjoy:

***“[I have] read books that I would never think of reading”***

***“[It is] very important to mix with people who have different views”***

***“[It] takes you out of your comfort zone”***

***(Reading group members, Retford)***

17. The service provides a wide range of reading development work with children and young people to encourage the enjoyment of books and reading. This starts with the library service working with babies through the national Bookstart scheme, where the library service ensures that 100% of babies receive a Bookstart pack including free books, and an invitation to join the library service.

18. Our research found that Nottinghamshire residents valued the provision of this scheme and recognised the importance for their child's development.

***“Bookstart has supplied my grandchildren with lots of new books and activities. They are learning to read and are advancing quickly.”***

***“Books enhance a child's start in life. Bookstart reinforces that from the beginning. The free books my child has received are wonderful.”***

***“We all love the library and Bookstart – without it my girls would not read anything like as much!”***

***(Bookstart service users)***

19. Nottinghamshire Libraries provide free Rhyme, Rattle and Roll sessions of rhymes and songs for babies, plus Story Hullabaloo sessions for toddlers and pre-schoolers, with the aim of developing a love of reading and books from an early age, improving literacy development, and providing preparation for the school environment. Studies demonstrate that the better children are at detecting rhyme the better and quicker they are at learning to read – regardless of their social class, general intelligence or memory ability.<sup>1</sup>
20. A focus group on the delivery of these sessions at one Nottinghamshire library illustrated the real experience of local parents, who valued these sessions and the impact they can have on their child's early development:

***“My daughter recognises the songs now. She starts nursery in January so I'm thinking it's getting her used to sitting down without it being too strict.”***

***“I've seen a big difference. We came to the very first session and she was all over the place. Now she sits and takes part and it brings them on.”***

***“Nice to get to know the songs, because I don't know many songs.”***

***“This group gave us the motivation to get up in the mornings.”***

***“My son reads the reading books and he is now way ahead of his classmates in school for his reading level. He's been to the library from 6 months old.”***

***(Parents of under 5s at Mansfield Library)***

Annually, Nottinghamshire Libraries attracts over 30,000 attendances at its under 5 activities.

21. The library service delivers a varied and vibrant programme of special events delivered and hosted by the service to inspire a love of reading for pleasure in children, with the aim to make a real contribution to stimulating children's imaginations and creating enthusiasm for reading. These events have included exciting guest appearances from

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bookstart.org.uk/professionals/about-bookstart-and-the-packs/research/reviews-and-resources/the-benefit-of-rhymes/> Accessed 17/10/2013



book characters, such as the Gruffalo, attended by hundreds of children and parents, to inspire and excite children with books and reading.

22. Parents value these events and recognise their importance to their children's development.

***"So proud of my big/little Girl – she's read 50 books in 3 weeks and has moved higher in her reading group! The Gruffalo gave her more motivation – Library again tomorrow for another 23 books." (Parent)***

23. The value placed on these events by local parents in nurturing an excitement for reading is supported by national evidence which demonstrates the positive impact of child's success in life:

*"Reading for pleasure has been revealed as the most important indicator of the future success of a child (OECD, 2002)<sup>2</sup>*

24. The service delivers the annual Summer Reading Challenge during the school holidays for primary aged children. This encourages children to read six books over the summer - a time when children's reading ability tends to dip in the absence of reading regularly at school. In summer 2013, over 10,000 children took part in the challenge:

***"A fabulous challenge to keep my children reading over the summer. Last year my 5 year old learnt to read through the challenge. This year he has flourished and read harder books. My 7 year old is now more of a bookworm!! (Parent of children aged 5 & 7)"***

25. The service also provides a variety of reading activity for adults, including the annual Southwell Library Poetry Festival which enjoys a national reputation, attracts visitors from across the region and garners fantastic feedback from audiences:

***"It was like an oasis in the middle of our life...a very special time...it has been enriching... I've read a lot more poetry since."***

***"Very, very open...to the extent that people you'd only just met would say hi at the next session"***

***"[My girls] were absolutely blown away by that..pottery and poetry...I just watched...[them] blossom, be more confident and writing stuff that blew me away!"***

***"When they gave you things to go away and read...somehow I've found poets that I'd never come across before."***

***"It's not always what you read, it's how I read it that's affected by the festival."***

***"I was inspired to write poetry again."  
(Southwell Library Poetry Festival attendees)***

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from *Literacy changes Lives*, National Literacy Trust (2008)

26. Nottinghamshire Libraries supports around 150 reading groups through the provision of books and/or meeting spaces, providing the opportunity to share a love of reading for pleasure while meeting new people in an inspiring community setting. These are highly valued by local users, both for the social function they provide and the chance to try different kinds of books and develop their reading tastes.

***“[I] read books that I would never think of reading.”***

***“If you are not used to reading on a regular basis, it gives you a challenge to make sure you have read it for the next meeting.”***

***“Very important to mix with people who have different views.”***

***“I think you read in a more analytical way.”***

***“I don’t see how a book group could survive without the library. My house couldn’t fit 12 people in. It would cost money for a room and the books each time.”***

#### **(Reading Group members)**

Attendees of our vibrant and large network of reading groups clearly value the opportunity these groups provide in developing their love of reading for pleasure – which has also been shown to impact positively on a person’s health and well-being.<sup>3</sup>

27. Nottinghamshire Libraries also supports four reading groups for people with visual impairments at West Bridgford, Worksop, Sutton in Ashfield and Mansfield Libraries. These offer an opportunity for people with visual impairments and their friends or carers to borrow talking books or large print and enjoy the experience of sharing books with others. The groups also offer a chance to meet others with visual impairments, which is highly valued:

***“I have had a stroke. It’s nice to get out and be able to do things. This is like something new for me because all the activities I used to do before my stroke I am unable to do now. This has been perfect for me.”***

***“I did not realise you had audio books in the library. So I was spending a lot of money to download them. It’s been a major bonus for me.”***

***“I like to hear other people’s views. I can’t understand sometimes how many different views on one book we actually get.”***

***“[If this group didn’t exist] it would stop me having a day out socially. I’d suffer greatly from that.”***

#### **(Visually Impaired Reading Group members)**

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<sup>3</sup> Reading and Health Mapping Research Project Hicks, D (2003) accessed at [http://readingagency.org.uk/new-thinking/newthinking-uploads/Reading\\_and\\_health\\_project.pdf](http://readingagency.org.uk/new-thinking/newthinking-uploads/Reading_and_health_project.pdf) 9th April 2013



**Aim: Create knowledge through access to learning, information and local heritage.**

## **Learning**

28. Nottinghamshire Libraries provide a range of adult and family learning opportunities throughout the county. Events range from Rowdy Robots, where families can build robots together and enjoy spending time learning together, to larger events such as a farm day where we bring animals into the library to give children new experiences. Other opportunities cover a wide range of activities, from crime scene investigating to calligraphy and craft.
29. These learning focused events encourage participation, support independence and help residents to develop learning in fun and exciting ways.

***“We have all enjoyed the animal fun day, and have joined the library.”***

***“Really great day out for the kids, young and old. Lots of activities to keep everyone entertained, and for the slightly older children... quite educational.”***

***“My daughter really enjoyed making a robot. I thought it was really good and I enjoyed helping her make it.”***

### ***(Family event participants)***

36% of PLUS respondents said that the library had helped them with learning or studying.

30. Public access computers, with free internet access, are available in all libraries. Customers use around a quarter of a million computer sessions a year – and 20% of library visits are to use computers. This provides a valued service to our customers, including the 20% of households<sup>4</sup> who have not got internet access at home. The use of computers by people seeking employment is particularly valued, bringing benefits to individual development and empowerment, and supporting community economy and capacity building.

***“It’s the only place [the unemployed] can apply for jobs.”***

***“I’m an unemployed engineer at the moment and I can’t afford internet access. So it’s imperative to come to the library and be able to search for jobs.”***

### ***(Library users, Arnold)***

31. In addition, our own staff offer help and support to people to make best use of our services through the delivery of one-to-one TRY IT sessions, which cover a range of skills development, including basic IT, family history or job searching.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access---households-and-individuals/2012/stb-internet-access--households-and-individuals--2012.html> Accessed 2/4/13

***“A young man through our help got a job...through helping him with his CV etc. He needed help with searching for jobs, filling in forms etc – help which he didn’t get elsewhere.” (Staff member)***

32. Libraries provide over a thousand IT sessions a year, with 98% of respondents rating the quality of the content as very good or good, 99% rating the staff delivery of the training as very good or good, and 96% of people saying that they are more confident in using computers after their sessions. This can have a lasting impact on people’s lives:

***“We had a gentleman in his 70s come to do a TRY IT session who had never used a computer before. He learnt all the basics and then his wife died. He did not have any communication with his son who lived a long way away, and now they communicate via e-mail due to the skills he built with us.” (Staff member)***

### **Information**

33. Libraries answer a wide variety of information requests across our service points, including through our specialist enquiry service Ask Libraries. The service answers nearly half a million enquiries a year on everything ranging from how to thread a vintage singer sewing machine to whether bears, wolves and beavers existed in Sherwood Forest in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century (you may well have seen a wolf in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century in Sherwood Forest, but the last beavers disappeared from England and Wales by this time and brown bears were present in Britain until no later than 1000 AD). 26% of all library visits are to find something out.
34. By providing impartial access to information, our libraries empower people and encourage independence. This role as information provider is highly valued by Nottinghamshire residents, providing them with the tools and knowledge to take control in aspects of their own lives.

***“We are next to a doctor’s surgery and often people are given a diagnosis but not much information to go with it. So they come into us to look it up. “ (Staff member)***

***“We had a lady...who was devastated after her dog had died. We found her some books and a website on dog bereavement. She was so grateful...as she had felt other people had not wanted to listen.” (Staff member)***

***“My son’s girlfriend was recently preparing for an interview at Nottingham Uni to do midwifery. As she was having difficulty finding info about current issues in midwifery on the net, I suggested she contact you. She found the websites you sent her very useful and she was able to impress her interview panel to such an extent that she was offered a place for next September. I asked her to email you her thanks but she’ll probably forget so I’m thanking you on her behalf. Part of the credit for [her] getting into Uni must go to Ask Libraries.” (Ask Libraries customer)***

35. Nottinghamshire Libraries manages a database of local groups and services which enables us to provide local information to people, and provide online subscriptions to national services such as Ancestry (for family history) and Kompass (for business

information), that are expensive for individuals to access. The service sees more than 25,000 accesses to these subscription services each year.

## **Local Heritage**

36. Nottinghamshire Libraries provides access to a wealth of local studies and family history resources, and provide training sessions to help people to access this popular area of research. Local and family history surgeries are held every month at each of our biggest libraries. Customers are very grateful for staff help in finding information:

***“...you are stars!!! Wow you have finally given me the answer after several weeks of [searching]...Thanks so very much for your help.” (Library customer)***

37. These popular services encourage residents to engage with their local heritage and nurture collective pride in the rich history of our County.
38. A particular success has been the introduction of an annual local history fair, which in 2013 in Mansfield saw over 800 people attend.
39. Customers were found to greatly value the fact that local history collections are held in local libraries – which ensures access to and, ownership of, the Nottinghamshire story across the County.

***“It’s great to have all the information locally”***

***“I find a local library is a rich source of information on a local area.”***

***(Library users, Newark)***

40. The local collections and Archives are of huge value to customers:

***“Excellent service. It is essential that we have access to our past, and Nottinghamshire do an excellent job of providing it. Having used the service as a degree level student, and for family research, I have never found the service lacking.” (Customer)***

## **Aim: Stimulate and encourage cultural activities**

41. The library service delivers around 8,000 events annually. The varied and wide ranging nature of these events includes:
- art exhibitions in our library galleries
  - regular group craft activities, such as knit and natter
  - Our Library courses for people with learning difficulties
  - live jazz concerts bringing quality live music to our communities outside of city centres
  - firefighters visits, enabling critical local services to engage with their communities in fun and exciting ways
  - a variety of further cultural events such as film showings, ghost walks, music events, reading and children’s events.

42. These local events are valued highly by our customers:

***“We run a knit and natter group in our library. One lady came with no previous knitting experience and learned to knit with us and she is now teaching others in the group how to knit. “ (Staff member)***

***“Glad this has become a regular feature” (Jazz attendee)***

***“An absolutely fabulous evening! So glad these jazz evenings are becoming more permanent fixture. Long may it continue” (Jazz attendee)***

***‘Having the artists explaining and reading their own work, putting the emphasis as they meant it to be, made it more understandable. We would in future go to events that would not normally appeal with a more open mind” (attendee at an exhibition opening at Mansfield Central Library Gallery)***

43. The experience of attendees at cultural events across Nottinghamshire libraries, underlines the value of libraries in providing access to cultural activity in an inclusive environment, breaking down many of the usual barriers to arts and cultural engagement.
44. The service delivers a successful ‘HeadSpace’ young people’s group at Worksop Library. This group of young people work with library staff to develop events for young people to participate in. These have included the library service working with the youth service to deliver the Randomfest indoor young people’s festival, author visits, a photography project and a murder mystery evening. The young people also helped to buy the young people’s book stock for the new Worksop Library.

***“You don’t judge people in HeadSpace. You can relax.”***

***“We get to arrange stuff we actually want to do. If we suggest things at school it probably wouldn’t happen, but here it happens.”***

***“You have to be a part of the community and talk to people you don’t usually talk to.”***

***“It’s not just a library anymore, it’s like a place to socialise.”***

***(HeadSpace users, Worksop)***

**Aim: Offer excellent and inclusive customer service for all every time**

45. Nottinghamshire Libraries strives to provide excellent and inclusive customer service for all every time, and was recently awarded the Customer Service Excellence Award. This is particularly evidenced by the use that is made of the services by those who are vulnerable.

***“We have vulnerable adults come in from adult social care every Monday. For them to be able to sit in an environment where they feel comfortable and happy to walk around and talk to the staff makes a big difference to this group and for them to feel confident is important. “***

***“We are based on a housing estate and the young children come to us because we are a safe warm place.”***

***“We have a lady with learning difficulties and she is in everyday from opening until closing. Her mum sets her quizzes to do in the library which she uses computers for. It’s a safe place for her to be.”***

***(Members of staff)***

46. Often, staff go the extra mile to help customers:

***“Once when [a regular customer] was ill and didn’t come we knew something was wrong so we gave her a call to see if she was okay. I think it was important to her to know someone cared”. (Member of staff)***

47. Nottinghamshire Libraries delivers a series of workshops with adults with learning difficulties, called ‘Our Library’. These courses familiarise participants with how the library works, and how to access the services, to encourage people to use library services as independently as possible. Participants have found the courses very useful;

***“It was strange when we first came to the library, but I know where things are now.”***

***“I like it here in the library.” (Our Library users)***

## **Summary**

48. In summary, the experience of our focus group participants illustrated in a real way, the impact a comprehensive and vibrant library service can have on the lives of individuals and the communities they belong to.
49. Libraries can empower communities by supporting individuals and groups, provide community identity as landmarks in the locality, and support community cohesion through access to a public space.
50. Our findings bring to life the established evidence of the positive role public libraries and their services can play in their localities, and how this is being realised in Nottinghamshire.

***“In short, libraries enrich the lives of many people. Library use improves the life chances of individuals, in terms of education and job opportunities. Moreover, the provision of public library services helps promote social cohesion and community confidence. Public libraries are seen as community landmarks that reinforce community identity. The library can help individuals, especially older people, overcome the problems of social isolation and loneliness. (Matarasso 1997)<sup>5</sup>***

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<sup>5</sup> *Impact Evaluation of Museums, archives and Libraries: available evidence Project*, Wavell et al, 2002

## **Other Options Considered**

51. As this is a report for noting, it is not necessary to consider other options.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

52. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Implications for Service Users**

53. This report reflects the views of some service users, who were consulted through focus groups and through the PLUS survey.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

1) That the results of research into the impact of Nottinghamshire Library Services upon library users be noted.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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## **Constitutional Comments**

54. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (KLA 28/10/13)**

55. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

A Strategy for Nottinghamshire Libraries, Nottinghamshire County Council, December 2011.

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0310





## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REPLACEMENT UPDATE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to re-tender the Library Management System (LMS) within a consortium of East Midlands library services.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The Library Management System (LMS) is the core business system for the public library service and the educational library service. Nottinghamshire County Council currently works in partnership with Nottingham City Council in a consortium to provide a joint LMS. The County Council leads this consortium, hosts the LMS, and administers the LMS for both Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries and Nottingham City Libraries.
3. The current LMS was implemented in 2002 and maintained and supported by ICT Services in conjunction with Libraries, Archives and Information staff. Systems of this nature are required to develop as service needs change and this is achieved through a regular incremental upgrading process.
4. The application is currently provided by the supplier on annually renewable contract. However after such a period of time it is advisable to test the market to ensure that best value is being achieved and that the latest applications are available to the service. In addition Derbyshire County Council and their consortium partner Derby City Council are required to go out for tender for a new system towards the end of 2014.
5. Nottinghamshire County Council has therefore led a joint procurement process to enable the Derbyshire consortium and the Leicestershire consortium (which includes Rutland) to jointly tender for a replacement LMS. This approach reduces costs of the tendering process and aims to achieve value for money in reducing purchase and on-going costs.
6. In addition, the procurement of the same LMS supplier provides the potential for joint working between current consortia and across any or all of the participating library services without loss of identification for the local authority and customisation to local authority policies.
7. A specification and tendering process is being led by the Team Manager, Library Resources, with full support from the Nottinghamshire County Council procurement team and ICT Services. Formal tender responses are due to be evaluated in early 2014 with

the selection of a supplier made by April 2014. Implementation of the agreed solution will be made across the consortium from September 2014 to Spring 2015

### **Other Options Considered**

8. All other options considered would have a potentially negative impact on the sustainability of the library service.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

9. A re-tendering exercise is best practice in achieving value for money and improved LMS functionality.
10. A consortium approach provides greater scope for efficiency and future joint working

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

12. Procurement of a sustainable LMS provides access to library resources and meets changing needs over the coming years.

### **Financial Implications**

13. There are no direct financial implications

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the principle of working in an extended consortium in the re-procurement and provision of a Library Management System be approved.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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**Constitutional Comments (initials xx/11/13)**

14.

**Financial Comments (KLA 14/11/13)**

15. There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0322



## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES & CULTURE**

### **SUMMER READING CHALLENGE 2013**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on the Summer Reading Challenge 2013 reading initiative.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The Summer Reading Challenge is the UK's biggest national reading initiative which is aimed at children aged 4 – 11 years old.
3. The Challenge is an annual event and involves 98% of UK local authorities and is led by public libraries. It is co-ordinated nationally by voluntary sector partner The Reading Agency. The Challenge is now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year.
4. Children are invited to read six books of their choice during the summer. They join at their local library and a themed membership pack gets them started. There are stickers and rewards to collect along the way with a medal and certificate if they read six books. The Challenge is designed for children of all reading abilities. They can read any books they like – fact books, stories, joke books, picture books – it is up to them.
5. Each year the Summer Reading Challenge has a different theme. The 2013 theme was Creepy House - a spine-tingling adventure.
6. The combination of fun, freedom and creativity impacts significantly on children's reading levels, range, motivation and confidence. Taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge helps prevent the 'summer reading dip' in achievement when children without reading opportunities at home over the long summer break from school traditionally lose ground in their reading.
7. In order to keep children motivated library staff and volunteers are on hand to provide advice, encouragement and support and there are linked activities to encourage families into libraries during the summer. There is also an interactive Summer Reading Challenge website full of activities to keep children engaged and motivated to keep reading.
8. Libraries work closely with schools and each year library staff promote the Challenge to schools in the summer term. Invitations are provided for children to take home to encourage families to take part.

9. The Challenge was run in all Nottinghamshire libraries from 13 July – 8 September 2013.
10. Key achievements include:
- 10,186 children took part in this year's Challenge, a considerable increase on last year's number of participants (8,896)
  - 5,647 children completed the Challenge by reading six books (55%) exceeding last year's total of 4,973 and exceeding the national completion rate of 50%
  - the highest number of children taking part was in the 4 – 7 years age group (51%); the second biggest age group was 8 – 11 year olds (42%).
  - boys accounted for 42.5% of children signing up for the challenge and 40% of children completing
  - 327 children joined as library members in order to take part
  - 38,639 books were read as part of the Challenge
  - 195 activities for children were held in libraries throughout the six week holiday
  - 4,749 children attended activities
  - 101 volunteers helped in 20 libraries giving 1,618 volunteer hours.
11. Evaluation was overwhelmingly positive. Parents and carers thought that the incentives were motivational; children loved the stickers, wristbands and medals. It encouraged children and families to borrow more books and reminded children and families to use the library more. It has also encouraged children to read a wider range of books and motivated children who already enjoy reading to read more. Comments received from parents include:

*"I love these reading challenges! It encourages us to get to the library, read new books as a family. It also meant my eldest son read more over the holidays. Thank you". (Parent of children aged 5 & 3)*

*"The summer reading challenge was a great initiative. My son couldn't wait to start reading his books and began already in the car on the way from the library. He wore the medal proudly for days" (Parent of child aged 6)*

*"Excellent – definitely without a doubt encouraged my (reluctant) son to read this summer. Thank you!" (Parent of child aged 9)*

*"The reading challenge is an excellent idea. Although Esme is an avid reader the challenge has become part of our summer holiday where sometimes reading can slip when away from school. It is always a talking point between Esme and her friends" (Parent of child aged 8)*

*Comments received from children include:*

*"I really enjoyed the reading challenge it made reading way more fun and because you got things every time you read books it was like you was working towards something" (Child aged 10)*

*"Creepy House was spooktacular!!" (Child aged 11)*

*"I really enjoyed the creepy house reading challenge because it helped me learn new words and read more books" (Child aged 7)<sup>1</sup>*

*"I think Creepy House was amazing and it is so much fun to do. The best bit about it was I read some different books and not just stories" (Child aged 11)*

*"I think that Creepy House has been one of the best ones so far. I have really enjoyed the prizes and the smelly stickers! Thank you!!!" (Child aged 10).*

12. Using The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge enables the Library Service to deliver a high quality, well developed reading product which is evaluated on a national scale. The scheme benefits from economies of scale as it involves the majority of UK local authorities which makes it a cost effective means of delivering a reading scheme in libraries.
13. The Challenge is now a prioritised programme within the Universal Reading Offer strategy developed with the Society of Chief Librarians which Nottinghamshire has signed up to.
14. The Summer Reading Challenge is a successful way to encourage children to read for pleasure. The Department of Education in 2012<sup>1</sup> stated that research shows the benefits of reading for pleasure are numerous and include:
  - children who say they enjoy reading for pleasure are more likely to score well on reading assessments compared to pupils who said they enjoyed reading less
  - regularly reading stories or novels outside of school is associated with higher scores in reading assessments
  - there's some evidence to show that the activity is a more important determinant of children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status
  - it can have a positive impact on pupils' emotional and social behaviour
  - it can have a positive impact on text comprehension and grammar
  - positive reading attitudes are associated with reading more later in life and having increased general knowledge.

### **Other Options Considered**

15. The report is for noting only.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

16. The report is for noting only.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, 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.

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1. Education Standards Research Team (2012). Evidence for Reading for Pleasure. ESARD.

## **Implications for Service Users**

18. The Summer Reading Challenge is a reading scheme that is available to all children of the target age via Nottinghamshire's public library network. Customer satisfaction with the scheme is excellent.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the update on the Summer Reading Challenge 2013 reading initiative be noted.

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## **Constitutional Comments**

19. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (KLA 29/10/13)**

20. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0312



**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE****SURVEY OF VISITORS TO BRITISH ARCHIVES 2012 – PERFORMANCE OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform the Committee of the performance of Nottinghamshire Archives in the 2012 Survey of Visitors to British Archives.

**Information and Advice****Background**

2. Every 18 months the Public Services Quality Group of the Archives and Records Association runs a national Survey of Visitors to British Archives. In 2012 125 repositories took part with 8,994 questionnaires completed.
3. The survey was run at Nottinghamshire Archives between 20 & 30 November 2012. During this period 180 questionnaires were issued and 159 returned. Full results are provided in the **Appendix** with comparisons against performance in 2011 and the regional and national ratings.

**Ratings**

4. Visitors were asked to rate the staff, facilities and services in the following categories:
  - Pre-visit information (telephone)
  - Pre-visit information (printed)
  - Web site
  - Opening hours
  - Physical access to and in the building
  - Visitor facilities
  - Catalogues & guides (including online guides)
  - Document delivery
  - Microfilm and fiche viewing facilities
  - Copy services
  - On site computer facilities
  - Quality and appropriateness of the staff's advice
  - Helpfulness and friendliness of the staff
  - The archive's service overall

5. The survey results show a considerable improvement on previous surveys with Nottinghamshire Archives rated above the national rating in all fourteen categories (up from ten in 2011) and above the regional rating in thirteen (up from five) and equal in one. There has also been an improvement in the very good rating in seven categories.
6. The most outstanding results show an overall very good and good rating of 99% and a very good and good rating for the helpfulness and friendliness of the staff of 100%.

### **Areas to improve**

7. The survey also asked visitors to rate areas to improve and 52% thought no change was necessary at Nottinghamshire Archives.
8. The next two most important areas to improve with 15% were Opening Hours, reflecting the reduction in opening hours in 2011 and Visitor Facilities, which will be improved with the current capital project.
9. Following these 9% thought the most important areas to improve were the web site; catalogues and guides; and onsite computer facilities. We continue to enhance the Archive web pages wherever possible; have externally funded projects to increase our cataloguing production and a remote volunteer project to assist with the retro conversion of paper catalogues to electronic format; and additional public computers will be provided as a result of the capital project.

### **Comments and compliments**

10. Comments and suggestions provided within the survey alongside the ratings and areas to improve will inform future development of Archives customer service. However compliments included:

*'The atmosphere is excellent for work. Welcoming and quiet and always someone on hand to help. Visits are always relaxing unless I am working against time to complete using a document delivered. Thank you.'*

*Staff exceptionally friendly, willing to explain, show how everything works. Also very good service/advice via email.*

*This is an excellent facility, with helpful and informative staff.*

*Over many years of using archive facilities in several areas I can say that most staff everywhere are most pleasant and very knowledgeable and helpful. There are one or two exceptions. Nottinghamshire Archives staff are the best! Invariably efficient yet welcoming, cheerful and able to provide help and information when required. It is always a pleasure to visit here, even on days when little or no relevant information is found in the items being researched.*

*I value the fact that as well as an excellent archive, Notts Archives provide, unlike many others, excellent visitor facilities enabling people to spend a full day here doing research.*

*It has also been good to be able to volunteer & put something back into the archives as well.*

*The welcoming, helpful and knowledgeable staff make this an outstanding facility. I have used many Archives around the country & have yet to find a better 'crew' than Nottinghamshire's.'*

## **Profile**

11. Questions asked by the survey also enable a profile of Archives users to be built up.
12. Full information is provided in the **Appendix** but the survey has shown the following:
  - 79% of readers stay for less than 3 hours
  - 84% make a special journey to visit the Archives
  - there has been a decline in the use of cars to access the Archives from 43% to 39%
  - most visitors contribute to the local economy by eating locally or taking the opportunity to go shopping
  - there has been an increase in educational use of the archives from 9% to 19% and a decline in use by family historians from 78% to 69%
  - 17% were first time visitors but 25% have been visiting for over 10 years
  - 72% of visitors are aged over 55
  - average travel distance is 19.8 kms with half our visitors living within 7.7 km
  - there has been a slight increase in the ethnic diversity of our users.

## **Value for Money**

13. The survey shows that Nottinghamshire Archives provides a highly rated service and excellent value for money.
14. Nottinghamshire Archives is a comparatively low expenditure and high performance service rated 34<sup>th</sup> out of 39 English Non Metropolitan Areas in net expenditure per 1,000 population, with a cost of 63p per person per annum in the 2011/12 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Archives Services Statistics.

## **Other Options Considered**

15. None.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

16. To inform the Committee of the outstanding work of Nottinghamshire Archives.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, 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.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the performance of Nottinghamshire Archives in the 2012 Survey of Visitors to British Archives be noted.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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## **Constitutional Comments**

18. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (KLA 02/10/13)**

19. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

2012 Survey of Visitors to British Archives, National Report  
<http://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/2012-survey-results-showed-improved-user-satisfaction-in-key-areas.html>

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0302

## APPENDIX

Figures given below show the performance of Nottinghamshire Archives in 2012 in bold and performance in 2011 in brackets. Comparisons have also been made with regional (EM) and national (UK) results.

### A ABOUT YOUR VISIT EXPERIENCE

		Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor	Replies
<b>1. How would you rate the staff, facilities and services at this archive?</b>							
Pre-visit information (telephone)	<b>NA</b>	<b>65%</b> (57%)	<b>32%</b> (38%)	<b>1%</b> (3%)	<b>2%</b> (3%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>112</b> (116)
	EM	57%	40%	3%	0%	0%	290
	UK	62%	31%	5%	1%	0%	5,751
Pre-visit information (printed )	<b>NA</b>	<b>43%</b> (47%)	<b>53%</b> (44%)	<b>4%</b> (8%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>96</b> (108)
	EM	42%	50%	8%	0%	0%	226
	UK	48%	41%	10%	1%	0%	4,700
Web site	<b>NA</b>	<b>40%</b> (42%)	<b>47%</b> (42%)	<b>12%</b> (15%)	<b>1%</b> (2%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>108</b> (120)
	EM	30%	52%	15%	2%	0%	293
	UK	38%	45%	14%	2%	0%	6,093
Opening hours	<b>NA</b>	<b>32%</b> (47%)	<b>54%</b> (46%)	<b>18%</b> (8%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>153</b> (169)
	EM	24%	49%	24%	3%	0%	422
	UK	39%	44%	14%	3%	0%	8,427
Physical access to and in the building	<b>NA</b>	<b>63%</b> (69%)	<b>32%</b> (26%)	<b>5%</b> (5%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>155</b> (175)
	EM	52%	42%	5%	0%	1%	429
	UK	57%	35%	7%	1%	0%	8,516

		Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor	Replies
<b>1. How would you rate the staff, facilities and services at this archive?</b>							
Visitor facilities	<b>NA</b>	<b>46%</b> (43%)	<b>43%</b> (39%)	<b>11%</b> (16%)	<b>1%</b> (2%)	<b>0</b> (0%)	<b>155</b> (173)
	EM	37%	47%	14%	2%	0%	425
	UK	47%	40%	11%	1%	0%	8,378
Catalogues & guides (including online guides)	<b>NA</b>	<b>44%</b> (41% )	<b>50%</b> (47%)	<b>6%</b> (11%)	<b>0%</b> (1%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>143</b> (154)
	EM	35%	49%	14%	2%	0%	373
	UK	41%	46%	11%	2%	0%	7,331
Document delivery	<b>NA</b>	<b>55%</b> (54%)	<b>41%</b> (37%)	<b>5%</b> (8%)	<b>0%</b> (1%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>130</b> (135)
	EM	53%	39%	6%	1%	0%	352
	UK	62%	31%	5%	1%	0%	6,919
Microfilm and fiche viewing facilities	<b>NA</b>	<b>52%</b> (58% )	<b>40%</b> (32%)	<b>8%</b> (9%)	<b>1%</b> (1%)	<b>0%</b> (1%)	<b>128</b> (149)
	EM	43%	44%	11%	2%	0%	332
	UK	45%	39%	13%	2%	0%	5,675
Copy services	<b>NA</b>	<b>32%</b> (37%)	<b>57%</b> (45%)	<b>12%</b> (15%)	<b>0%</b> (2%)	0% (0%)	<b>113</b> (132)
	EM	29%	49%	16%	5%	1%	290
	UK	44%	40%	13%	3%	1%	5,453
On site computer facilities	<b>NA</b>	<b>48%</b> (42%)	<b>35%</b> (34%)	<b>16%</b> (21%)	<b>0%</b> (3%)	<b>0%</b> (1%)	<b>110</b> (119)
	EM	28%	50%	19%	3%	0%	269
	UK	46%	41%	10%	2%	0%	5,817

		Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor	Replies
<b>1. How would you rate the staff, facilities and services at this archive?</b>							
Quality and appropriateness of the staff's advice	<b>NA</b>	<b>82%</b> (73%)	<b>16%</b> (25%)	<b>1%</b> (2%)	<b>0%</b> (1%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>148</b> (171)
	EM	69%	28%	2%	0%	0%	406
	UK	73%	23%	3%	0%	0%	8,248
Helpfulness and friendliness of the staff	<b>NA</b>	<b>82%</b> (75%)	<b>18%</b> (21%)	<b>0%</b> (3%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>0%</b> (1%)	<b>156</b> (177)
	EM	77%	21%	2%	0%	0%	436
	UK	81%	16%	2%	0%	0%	8,549
The archive's service overall	<b>NA</b>	<b>67%</b> (66%)	<b>33%</b> (31%)	<b>1%</b> (3%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>0%</b> (0%)	<b>156</b> (173)
	EM	56%	40%	3%	0%	0%	424
	UK	63%	33%	3%	0%	0%	8,364

<b>2 In what areas is it most important for this archive to improve?</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>Rank</b>
No change necessary	<b>NA</b>	<b>52%</b> (62%)	<b>1</b> (1)
	EM	43%	
	UK	46%	
Pre-visit information (telephone)	<b>NA</b>	<b>1%</b> (1%)	<b>12</b> (13)
	EM	2%	
	UK	3%	
Pre-visit information (printed)	<b>NA</b>	<b>2%</b> (1%)	<b>10</b> (13)
	EM	3%	
	UK	3%	
Web site	<b>NA</b>	<b>9%</b> (11%)	<b>4</b> (2)
	EM	17%	
	UK	13%	
Opening hours	<b>NA</b>	<b>15%</b> (9%)	<b>2</b> (4)
	EM	25%	
	UK	19%	
Physical access to and in the building	<b>NA</b>	<b>4%</b> (4%)	<b>9</b> (9)
	EM	3%	
	UK	5%	
Visitor facilities	<b>NA</b>	<b>15%</b> (11% )	<b>2</b> (2)
	EM	10%	
	UK	10%	



<b>2 In what areas is it most important for this archive to improve?</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Catalogues and guides (including online guides)	<b>NA</b>	<b>9%</b> (9%)	<b>4</b> (4)
	EM	114%	
	UK	14%	
Document delivery	<b>NA</b>	<b>2%</b> (3%)	<b>10</b> (11)
	EM	5%	
	UK	5%	
Microfilm and fiche viewing facilities	<b>NA</b>	<b>7%</b> (8%)	<b>7</b> (7)
	EM	7%	
	UK	8%	
Copy services	<b>NA</b>	<b>5%</b> (9%)	<b>8</b> (4)
	EM	10%	
	UK	8%	
On site computer facilities	<b>NA</b>	<b>9%</b> (8%)	<b>4</b> (7)
	EM	10%	
	UK	8%	
Quality and appropriateness of the staff's advice	<b>NA</b>	<b>1%</b> (4%)	<b>12</b> (9)
	EM	1%	
	UK	2%	
Helpfulness and friendliness of the staff	<b>NA</b>	<b>1%</b> (3%)	<b>12</b> (11)
	EM	3%	
	UK	2%	

## B ABOUT YOUR VISIT TODAY

<b>3 How long have you stayed at this archive today?</b>	
Up to one hour	<b>15%</b> (13% )
Between one to two hours	<b>31%</b> (24%)
Between two to three hours	<b>33%</b> (37%)
Between three to five hours	<b>15%</b> (17%)
More than five hours	<b>6%</b> (8%)

<b>4 Was your visit to this archive today the main purpose of your visit to the area?</b>	
Yes	<b>84%</b> (86%)
No	<b>16%</b> (14%)

<b>5. What was your primary means of travel to this archive today?</b>	
Public transport	<b>46%</b> (51%)
Coach	<b>1%</b> (0%)
Car / motorbike / taxi	<b>39%</b> (43%)
Bicycle	<b>3%</b> (1%)
Foot	<b>11%</b> (4%)
Other	<b>0%</b> (0%)

<b>6. In connection with your visit to this archive today, are you doing any of the following?</b>	
Paying for overnight accommodation	<b>3%</b> (2%)
Eating out locally	<b>36%</b> (41%)
Using local shops and services	<b>72%</b> (69%)
Visiting other places of interest in the area	<b>19%</b> (19%)

<b>7. What was your main purpose in visiting this archive today?</b>	
Personal leisure / recreation	<b>64%</b> (78% )
Non-leisure personal or family business	<b>8%</b> (9%)
Formal education as student / researcher	<b>17%</b> (9%)
Formal education as teacher	<b>2%</b> (0%)
Work in connection with employment	<b>9%</b> (4%)

<b>8. Have you used this archive's Website?</b>	
Yes	<b>63%</b> (66%)
No	<b>37%</b> (34%)

<b>9. Are you researching family history?</b>	
Yes	<b>69%</b> (78%)
No	<b>31%</b> (22%)

## C VALUING THE ARCHIVE SERVICE

<b>10. How far do you agree that archives contribute to society by</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Providing opportunities for learning	<b>62%</b> (61%)	<b>32%</b> (33%)	<b>2%</b> (7%)		
Preserving our culture and heritage	<b>79%</b> (79%)	<b>20%</b> (17%)	<b>1%</b> (3%)	(1%)	
Strengthening family and community identity	<b>51%</b> (52%)	<b>35%</b> (33%)	<b>14%</b> (14%)	(1%)	
Supporting administrative and business activity	<b>24%</b> (25%)	<b>40%</b> (35%)	<b>36%</b> (39%)	(1%)	
Supporting the rights of citizens	<b>34%</b> (38%)	<b>35%</b> (34%)	<b>29%</b> (26%)	<b>1%</b> (2%)	

## D ABOUT YOURSELF

<b>11. How long have you been visiting this archive?</b>	
First visit	<b>17%</b> (22%)
Less than a year	<b>6%</b> (5%)
1 - 4 years	<b>30%</b> (30%)
5 - 10 years	<b>23%</b> (13%)
More than 10 years	<b>25%</b> (21%)

<b>12. Your Age?</b>	
14 or under	<b>0%</b> (0%)
15 to 19	<b>4%</b> (1%)
20 to 24	<b>5%</b> (6%)
25 to 34	<b>7%</b> (5%)
35 to 44	<b>5%</b> (6%)
45 to 54	<b>6%</b> (13%)
55 to 64	<b>27%</b> (34%)
65 to 74	<b>34%</b> (29%)
75 or over	<b>11%</b> (7%)

<b>13. Your Postcode?</b>	<b>Distance km</b>
5% live within	<b>1.7</b> (2.4)
25% live within	<b>4.3</b> (5.5)
Median / 50% live within	<b>7.7</b> (8.9)
75% live within	<b>21</b> (20.3)
95% live within	<b>79</b> (123.3)
Mean / Average	<b>19.8</b> (25.5)
Blue collar communities	<b>9%</b>
City living	<b>8%</b>
Constrained by circumstances	<b>12%</b>
Countryside	<b>42%</b>
Multicultural	<b>6%</b>
Prospering Suburbs	<b>13%</b>

Typical Traits	10%
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<b>14. If you do not normally live in the UK, what is your country of residence?</b>	<b>check</b>
Live outside UK	4% (5.3%)

<b>15. Your Gender?</b>	
Male	50% (51%)
Female	50% (49%)

<b>18. What is your ethnic group?</b>	
White	95% (98% )
Mixed	1%
Black	1%
Asian	2%
Chinese	1%
Any other ethnic group	0% (2%)

<b>19. Do you have a disability / long term illness or impairment?</b>	
None / not applicable	79% (73%)
Mobility - getting around	9% (8%)
Hearing (including deafness)	6% (4%)
Eyesight (including blindness)	2% (1%)
Dexterity - using hands / fingers	3% (3%)
Learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)	1% (1%)
Mental health	2% (1%)
Other	1% (0%)



## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **FEES AND CHARGES 2014/15 FOR THE COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATE SERVICE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the proposed fees and charges for the Country Parks and Green Estate Service for the financial year 2014/15.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. Fees and charges are reviewed annually and are influenced by the rate of inflation, service income targets, market forces, and the level to which customers are 'price sensitive' in what is becoming a very competitive leisure and tourism market, also served by other providers across the County, such as the National Trust, Forestry Commission and Thoresby Estate.
3. Fees and charges levied by the Country Parks Service comprise car parking, hiring for mobility scooters, filming fees for commercial companies (infrequent) and events on parks.
4. Commercial charges in trading outlets (catering and retail at Rufford and Sherwood) are not covered in this report. School sessions at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre provided by the Environmental Education team and in the Rufford Crafts Centre (Arts Service) are also excluded.
5. It should be noted that the income raised through car parking is about one tenth of that generated through retail and catering, and there is a concern that it may act as a deterrent to some visitors to the country parks. Customer feedback during the year questioned the need to charge and there was also some confusion as to when car park charges were levied.
6. The proposed charges for 2014/15 for the Country Parks Service are set out below:

#### **Car Parking at Rufford Abbey Country Park and Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve**

- the car parking charge to remain at £3 per car per whole day for all cars
- the free concession for coaches and mini-buses will be retained

- the charge for motorcycles will be remain the same £1 per bike per whole day
- the charging period will be from 5 April to 21 December for all week ends and bank holidays. In addition there will be a week day charge from 24 July until 3 September (see **Appendix 1**)
- the season ticket of £20 per calendar year will be increased to £25
- mobility scooter hire to be increased to £1 per hour
- a special event charge of £5 per car to be made for premier events, including, but not exclusively, the Robin Hood Festival, the Earth and Fire Festival the World War 1 event and the 1940s week-end.
- to retain the special offer redemption at Rufford and Sherwood where the £3 car park fee is refunded on a purchase of £15 or more (except when the special event fee is in force).

### **Car Parking at Bestwood Country Park and Cotgrave Country Park**

- no car parking charges to be levied as there are no visitor facilities on site.

### **Filming Fees**

- a filming fee at Rufford Abbey if the footage / photography is to be broadcast, printed or used for commercial purposes will be charged at £250 per full day or £175 per half day (3 hours). There is no charge for amateur, educational or 'not for profit' uses
- a filming fee donation at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre (as the Council does not own this site) for short filming sessions (less than an hour on site), with only minimal input from staff, will be £50. For longer sessions, requiring greater input from staff, a fee of £200 will be charged.

### **Firewood**

- to increase the charge from £70 to £75 per trailer, when wood is available at any of our sites.

### **Public Events**

- various smaller public events are held within Country Parks, ranging in size from guided walks to living history days. On occasions, charges may be made for activities within these, eg: for trail leaflets. Such charges are outside the scope of this report.

### **Memorial Items**

- to maintain charges for benches and plaques installed at Rufford Abbey within a range of £250 to £850, dependent upon the nature of the memorial item.



7. It is further proposed that the Group Manager, Country Parks and Green Estate Service, is authorised to adopt a flexible approach towards all charging during the year, particularly to any increase in charging for car parking at special events/occasions, in consultation with the Chairman of the Culture Committee.

### **Other Options Considered**

8. Charges are kept under review throughout the course of the year and reflect a balanced approach between generating income and retaining visitor numbers at our sites.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

9. The recommendation to keep the majority of car park charges unchanged but simplify the charging period is made in the light of customer behaviour and feedback during the course of the year, after examining the operational practicalities and of its potential impact on other income generating activities. The increase of £5 on the current season ticket cost of £20 is believed to still represent excellent value for money for regular visitor including dog walkers.
10. Though the daily charge is comparable with other local providers, it should be recognised that car park charges are less important to overall site income than retail and catering income. Increase in car park charges can have a tendency to depress spending in on-site commercial outlets and so can have an overall negative effect on income.
11. It should also be remembered that visiting outdoor attractions such as country parks is heavily influenced by the weather. On good days, car parking demand at Rufford, for example, is very high. In such cases, the parking charge period is a method of helping to manage undesirable peaks and troughs of demand, by encouraging visitors to come midweek and off peak if they can.
12. Whilst it would be logical to also remove free parking for coaches, there is a concern that with some 300 plus coaches per year calling at Sherwood Forest and Rufford Abbey, trade in catering and retail outlets would be affected, and tourists would go elsewhere. As the free parking is an attractive incentive to coach operators, it is therefore proposed to retain free parking for coaches.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

14. The revised charging regime is in line with local competitor pricing and will not impact negatively upon visitor numbers.

## **Financial Implications**

15. The charging regime set out in this report will support the Service to operate within its revenue estimates for 2014/15.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

16. As part of the process of making decisions and changing policy, public authorities are required by law to think about the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics (as defined by equalities legislation) and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
17. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a means by which a public authority can assess the potential impact that proposed decisions / changes to policy could have on the community and those with protected characteristics. They may also identify potential ways to reduce any impact that a decision / policy change could have. If it is not possible to reduce the impact, the EIA can explain why. Decision makers must understand the potential implications of their decisions on people with protected characteristics.
18. An EIA has been carried out on the implications of increasing the charges and to date there is minimal evidence that these will have a disproportionate impact on any particular group of park visitors/users. However, the impact of the charges will be kept under review and if it is evident that these have a longer term disproportionate impact, there is built-in flexibility to the procedures to make any appropriate changes.
19. The EIA is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for protected groups when considering this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) the charging regime as set out in paragraph 6 of the report is adopted for 2014/15
- 2) the Group Manager, Country Parks and Green Estate Service, in consultation with the Chairman of the Culture Committee, is authorised to retain a flexible approach to charging throughout the year and that the current charges can be varied or the charging period extended as circumstances warrant.
- 3) car parking charges be further reviewed as part of the wider commercial analysis currently being undertaken of trading activity on country parks and that the results of this review be brought back to a future culture committee for analysis and discussion.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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**Constitutional Comments (NAB 19/11/13)**

20. Culture Committee has authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

**Financial Comments (KLA 19/11/13)**

21. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 15 above.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Equality Impact Assessment

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0328

## **Schedule of Charges for Rufford Abbey Country Park and Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve 2014/15**

### **When?**

Car parking charges apply as follows:

- **Saturday 5 April to Sunday 21 December** at weekends and Bank Holidays only
- **Thursday 24 July to Wednesday 3 September** every day

Outside these times, including Boxing Day and New Year's Day, parking is FREE

### **How Much?**

- **Cars £3** (this applies to all cars, including blue badge holders)
- **Motorcycles £1**
- **Coach & minibus parking free.**
- **Season Tickets £25**

**A Special Event Car Parking Charge of £5** will apply for major events, including throughout the year.

### **Discounts**

**£25 season ticket** allows parking at both Rufford Abbey and Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre as many times as you wish. Season tickets cover one specified vehicle only and cannot be used on special event days.

**Special offer** - spend £15 in a single transaction in one of our on-site shops, cafés or restaurants and present your ticket to claim a refund of your parking charge (offer does not apply when special event car parking charge is in force)

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **THE ROBIN HOOD FESTIVAL**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The report gives a brief overview of the 2013 Robin Hood Festival and outlines proposed arrangements for the 2014 Robin Hood Festival.

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Background**

2. The Festival is held at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre near Edwinstowe, and is organised by the County Council's Country Parks and Green Estates Service. It has grown over three decades from a small weekend event to a seven day festival and is now one of the biggest free festivals in the region. It is the largest public celebration in Britain of the Robin Hood legend and attracts significant public and media interest. Entry is free, though a £5 car parking charge applies.
3. A varied programme of events ranges from strolling jesters and jugglers to falconry and jousting. Activities take place in and around the Visitor Centre buildings, in the forest at the Major Oak, and at a temporary arena set up adjacent to Edwinstowe cricket ground. The event provides low cost family entertainment and an enjoyable day out for not only local residents but also tourists from further away. In this respect the event has a very positive benefit for North Nottinghamshire tourism.

##### **Promotion**

4. Prior to this year's event, an intensive promotional campaign was conducted by the County's Communications and Marketing Team (a summary of this work is captured in **Appendix 1**). There is no doubt that this work made a major contribution to the success of the 2013 Festival which saw visitor numbers at their highest. It should be remembered, however, that with all outdoor events, weather has the strongest influence on visitor numbers.

##### **Site Constraints**

5. The Festival requires approval, in advance, by Natural England, the Government's watchdog for nature and the environment, as the Festival takes place on a protected site – the Sherwood Forest Natural Nature Reserve. The fact that the site is of great significance for nature and ecology restricts the scale and type of activities that can take

place within the ancient woodland and heath land habitats. This balance is a challenging one, but one that is managed effectively by officers responsible for the event overall.

6. It is also worth pointing out that the Festival site infrastructure is aging and has a “capacity” beyond which operational problems begin to develop. This is particularly true in relation to toilets, catering capacity, crowd safety and parking.

### **Attendance and Commercial Income**

7. The 2013 event was the 29<sup>th</sup> year of the Robin Hood Festival and attracted an estimated 50,000 people over the seven day event, with attendances peaking on Wednesday and Sunday (the Festival jousting days in the main arena).
8. The preparatory, operational and wind down costs for the Festival were approximately £140,000
9. The net income (excluding VAT) generated by the event for onsite catering, retail sales, activities, programmes and car parking was £165,293, broken down as follows:
  - retail £57,509
  - catering £59,413
  - car parking £40,839
  - Festival activities £5,200
  - Souvenir Programme sales £2,332
10. The event in 2013 therefore made an operating profit of just over £25,000, helped by excellent trading figures, in catering and retail. Whilst these trading figures are impressive it should be remembered that the event is weather dependent and thus the level of income each year is unpredictable. Festival costs and income are financed from the Service budget, with a reserve account acting as a contingency to cover the unpredictability of visitor numbers due to weather.
11. Any surplus generated by the event is used to offset the wider operating costs of the Service.

### **Operational Issues – Roads, Traffic and Safety**

12. Given the size of the Festival it is inevitable that traffic related issues arise. In particular, Swinecote Road was closed to through traffic during Festival hours to enable safe crossing of pedestrians from the overflow car park to the main event site. It is acknowledged that the closure causes some irritation and inconvenience for local residents, but is strongly advised by Police and Highways officers as the only practical solution for the safe mass movement of visitors. In response to resident requests in previous years, a number of residential streets adjacent to the Festival site were “coned off” to prevent excessive on-street parking by festival visitors. This was achieved by means of temporary parking restriction orders and was pre-notified to local people with the help of the Parish Council. Inevitably traffic and parking issues caused some friction with local residents, but this was mitigated by the potential for local traders, hotels, B&Bs and campsites to capitalise on the influx of tourists to the local area.

13. Overall safety for the Festival is managed in association with the local Safety Advisory Group (SAG). SAGs are triggered for events which expect to attract more than 3,000 people to a site at any one time and chaired by the local district council, in this case, Newark & Sherwood. The SAG plays an important role in reviewing all health and safety related management plans and has representation from the police, emergency planners, fire and ambulance services and individual event managers.

### **Partnership Opportunities**

14. Contact was made with the Edwinstowe Business Forum to invite local high street traders to be involved in the Festival. Efforts are being made to encourage more partnership working for the 30<sup>th</sup> annual festival in 2014 by initiating early discussions with Edwinstowe Business Forum and also Newark & Sherwood District Council Tourism & Economic Development Team. The Sherwood Forest Trust, the Edwinstowe based charity for Sherwood Forest, was involved in the 2013 event and has shown interest in increasing its involvement at future festivals.

### **Proposals for 2014**

15. Planning for 2014 starts early. Dates have been provisionally advertised for 4–10 August 2014. Activities and entertainments are being considered by the Festival team, and a communications strategy is being developed by Central Communications Team

### **Other Options Considered**

16. No other options have been considered.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

17. The Festival is possibly the most popular of all County Council run events.
18. Festival costs are largely covered by existing revenue budgets, with the Reserve account acting as a contingency standby.
19. In terms of the amount of media interest in the Festival at local, national and international levels, it provides good value purely in terms of positive public relations for the County Council.
20. 2014 is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Festival. There is therefore an opportunity to capitalise further on the local tourism benefits of the event by partnership working.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Implications for Service Users**

22. The Robin Hood Festival is planned to be as attractive to visitors as possible. However, it is recognised that at peak times on busy days there will inevitably be queues and crowds, and parking spaces will be at capacity. Site logistics at an outdoor woodland site on a National Nature Reserve do not allow the same solutions which can be used at other sites. For example, it is difficult to service portaloos at the Major Oak. It must be accepted that whilst pressures can be managed, it is not possible to entirely eradicate them.

## **Financial Implications**

23. Income and expenditure for the Festival are managed within the Country Parks and Green Estates budget with the aim of breaking even or providing a small surplus. The current year surplus is reflected in corporate budget monitoring as at period 6. A small reserve is earmarked as being available as a contingency to prevent core Country Parks revenue budgets being subject to excessive risk in the coming year.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

24. In order to ensure that visitors with mobility restrictions can enjoy the event, Fair Mobility or a similar provider is invited to provide mobility scooter hire. Provision is made for blue badge holders in the car parking plan.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

25. The siting of the Festival within the protected National Nature Reserve (NNR) is subject to consent by Natural England as in previous years and great care is taken to ensure that the significant increase in visitors to the site over the Festival does not damage the NNR.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Committee:

- 1) notes the success of the 2013 Robin Hood Festival
- 2) agrees that the 30<sup>th</sup> Robin Hood Festival will take place on 4-10 August 2014, organised by the Country Parks Service
- 3) notes that an amount of £75,000 is earmarked in the County Council's reserves to act as a contingency in case of adverse weather etc. for the 2014 Festival.
- 4) notes that the special event car parking fee for the Festival will be held at £5 for all visitors
- 5) notes that the road closure and local parking restrictions carried out this year will be repeated in 2014.

**Derek Highton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**



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**Constitutional Comments (NAB 21/11/13)**

26. The Culture Committee has authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

**Financial Comments (KLA 21/11/13)**

27. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 23 above.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Robin Hood Festival 2013 – report to Culture Committee on 27 November 2012.

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0318



**COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING CAMPAIGN EVALUATION****Annual Robin Hood Festival - August 2013****Background**

The 29th Annual Robin Hood Festival was held at Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire from Monday 5th August – Sunday 11th August 2013. The festival is the largest event in the authority's calendar and one of the biggest celebrations of Robin Hood in the world, attracting visitors from around the country and globe.

A large and comprehensive marketing and communications campaign took place primarily from July to August 2013 aiming to inform previous visitors and attract new visitors. The campaign's strongly designed creative featured on a range of materials and channels. Key activity included leaflet distribution, banner advertising in Sherwood and Rufford Abbey country parks, various digital activity including an e-shot to last year's visitors, a bespoke Facebook page – which featured the Festival Folk cast, two life-sized Robin Hood's with QR codes and a number of tweets. A heavy-weight PR plan included timed press releases, targeted photo-call opportunities and media interviews with a local, national and international focus underpinned and supported all the activity.

**Campaign Objectives and Results**

<b><u>Objective 1</u></b>	Increase the number of visitors to the 2013 festival by 10% on off peak days only.
<b>Result</b>	The seven day festival was attended by 50k visitors, compared to 25k in 2012, and 20k in 2011 (2011 was 5 day event); a 100% increase.
<b><u>Objective 2</u></b>	Increase the number of visits to the website by 10% to 40,018 over an 8-week period from 16 June to 11 August 2013.
<b>Result</b>	39,297 visits (compared with 36,380 in 2012 and 27,974 in 2011) – an 8% increase, in addition this year's digital activity for the Festival focussed on the Festival Folk Facebook page which had 2000 likes (204 in 2012) a 880% increase.
<b><u>Objective 3</u></b>	Increase awareness by 10% of Nottinghamshire County Council as the event organiser to 86%.
<b>Result</b>	Whilst the objective was not achieved this year's survey responses showed a consistently high 73% of visitors surveyed recognised the Festival was organised by Nottinghamshire County Council (76% in 2012).

**Budget**

- The campaign spend amounted to £7,276.50 (15p per festival visitor attracted) taken from the central communications and marketing budget
- There was a £26.61 return on investment and £3.87 income generated per visitor (£24.32/ £5.63 in 2012)
- Retail income increased 34% on last year, whilst catering income increased by 22%
- A 38% increase in total income was generated (£193,661 compared to £140,866 in 2012 and £116,332 in 2011)
- This year we reintroduced a souvenir festival brochure for visitors to buy for £1, containing detailed information on the festival and also space for children to

autograph hunt. 3,000 were produced at a cost of £1,577, generating £1423 net income

- 90% of survey respondents travelled to the festival by car. The income generated from car parking income was £40,840 (£40,560 in 2012)

### **Other Campaign Highlights**

- 108 visitors completed the Festival Visitor Survey which was carried out over three days, by the communications team doing face to face surveys on Ipads
- 97% of survey respondents rated the event as either 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'
- 56% of visitors surveyed were from outside Nottinghamshire County, compared to 53% last year
- The RSPB who attended the festival were thrilled with the success they had at the festival, meeting over 4,282 people and as a result have requested a double pitch for next years stand

### **Channel Evaluation**

- evaluation of survey respondents indicated visitors became aware of the festival as follows:
  - 40% word of mouth
  - 26% press and media
  - 18% leaflets & posters
  - 16% online
  - 11% lamppost banners

### Media

- this year's festival saw high press and media attention; 15 proactive press releases were released with 50 positive and one reactive media enquiry received. A number of guest columns were also secured for Coun John Knight and Ralph Needham (one of the festival folk) As a result, 60 positive features on and offline covered the festival, as well as listings in a range of press and media:

- **pre-festival**

Media interviews included; Simple Tom (Mark Curwood) and Sue McDonald appearing on Radio Nottingham's afternoon show, coverage in a range of listings and What's On magazines locally and nationally including BBC News Online, Nottingham Post, Gem 106FM, and a front cover of the August edition of Nottinghamshire Today.

There were further feature opportunities in the run-up to the festival reporting on a number of the key Festival Folk including the Sheriff of Nottingham and Sir Ralph of Epperstone.

- **during the festival**

There were seven different television broadcasts in the run up to the festival on the Sunday and the Monday, with a lot of interest in the American couple who were renewing their vows and special guests at the festival. There were items on ITV Central Tonight, Calendar TV and BBC East Midlands Today. Other media hits included The Times, Radio Nottingham, Big Issue magazine, Mansfield Chad, Gem 106FM and Mansfield 103FM.

The Festival was attended by international journalists from the Ukraine, America and also the UK's CBeebies, the latter who will be producing a TV programme about the festival and medieval life this autumn.

- **post-festival**

Various local media articles reporting the event with photographs, including several articles in the Nottingham Post, articles in the Mansfield Chad – which included a front page picture, Newark Advertiser, Retford Times and the Worksop Guardian.

### Digital activity

Over an eight week period the Robin Hood Festival web page received;

- 39,297 visits (compared with 36,380 in 2012 and 27,974 in 2011)
- 801 visits to the Robin Hood Festival webpage were as a result of Facebook advertising at a cost of £300 (37p per click). A further 1,394 visits were generated from the web banner, 695 from the events tab on the NCC home page. The vast majority of views (36,486) came from a direct link to the URL which was included on the printed materials and lamp post banners
- the Robin Hood Facebook page had 89 posts by the digital team and attracted 1,742 likes (204 in 2012)
- 30 tweets were issued (24 tweets from the digital team and 6 retweets from external sources). Twitter generated 143 visits to the Robin Hood Festival webpage.

### Partnerships

Partnership working resulted in a variety of free and reciprocal marketing activity with the following organisations:

- **Nottingham City Homes:** free activity including - article in tenant and leaseholder newsletter circulated to over 30k homes, flyer distribution in eight city housing offices, articles on the website & staff intranet site and messages via Twitter;
- **Nottingham City Council:** reciprocal activity including part of the What's on guide advert in their What's On Guide, re-Tweets of Twitter messages and a note on the staff intranet.
- **Experience Nottinghamshire:** e-shot and website advertising, PR activity aimed at the national and international media, a listing on the Visit England website.
- **Local District Councils:** Promoted to staff and residents via their communication channels
- **Notts County Cricket Club:** advert in their Covered member magazine
- **Edwinstowe Parish Council:** distribution of posters to local businesses and community groups

### **Robin Hood Festival 2014**

This year's festival benefited from a strong integrated marketing campaign, the success will be replicated and built upon next year for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Planning has already commenced for the 2014 Festival.



**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE****2013 VISITOR SATISFACTION SURVEYS IN COUNTRY PARKS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform the Committee of the outcome of the 2013 annual visitor satisfaction surveys at Rufford Abbey Country Park and Sherwood Forest Country Park, and of the result of the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) annual inspection at Rufford Abbey Country Park.

**Information and Advice****Annual Visitor Survey - Rufford Abbey & Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre**

2. Rufford Abbey Country Park attracts some 450,000 visitors and Sherwood Forest Country Park approximately 350,000 per year. This puts the two sites amongst the top ten busiest attractions in the East Midlands region.
3. A visitor satisfaction survey is commissioned each year. Its purpose is two-fold:
  - to find out more about the parks' 'visitor profile', including where visitors come from
  - to check that we are providing a quality experience for customers.
4. This year's survey took place between 12 & 18 August. It was conducted "face to face," with researchers asking visitors to input their answers on iPads. 575 parties of visitors were randomly interviewed – 310 at Rufford and 265 at Sherwood. This equates to 1,835 individuals. The survey took place during the school summer holidays, which is traditionally the busiest period of the year for country parks.
5. The visitor satisfaction survey showed extremely high levels of satisfaction with both parks. When asked to rate their visit overall, 95% of those questioned at Sherwood Forest rated their visit as 'Good' or 'Very Good' and at Rufford Abbey the figure was 98%. The lower figure for Sherwood is likely to be affected by the aging state of the visitor centre buildings. Plans are in hand to replace the visitor centre at a new site on the opposite side of Swinecote Road.
6. The survey revealed interesting facts about our visitors and their origins, which can be examined in more detail in the full report. Nottinghamshire residents, for example, accounted for 48% of all visitors interviewed, 16% had Sheffield postcodes and 8% Doncaster postcodes.

7. Of the remaining portion, over a quarter of those interviewed came from other areas of the country. At Sherwood, national visitors included parties from Glasgow, Norwich, Kendal and Dartford. At Rufford parties were interviewed from Bodmin, Bournemouth and Worthing. International visitors amongst the sample included tourists from Australia, South Africa, Spain, Belgium, Germany, France, and Hungary.
8. 69% of respondents said they intended to visit other towns, villages and attractions whilst in the area, indicating that both parks play a crucial role as tourist attractors, and can be assumed to have a positive impact on the local tourism economy.
9. When asked why they visited, the most frequently cited reasons were about fresh air, walking, taking outdoor exercise and the perceived health benefits of this. The second most common reason was "taking out children and grandchildren." Many cited attending specific events as their reason for visiting.
10. Nearly 14% of the parties interviewed included someone with mobility problems or a disability, indicating the good accessibility of the sites for visitors with mobility impairments, and possibly also reflecting our ageing population.
11. Asked "How often do you visit this park?" 27% said they visit once per year and 24.5% come three times per year. A hard core of 2% visit 'every day'.
12. The two age groups who found the parks most appealing were those 65 years and over, who accounted for 23% of those interviewed and the next most frequent age group is children between 5 and 12. However, all ages were represented, and there is strong use of both sites by groups such as local day centres, bringing clients by coach or minibus.

### **VAQAS Tourism Inspection at Rufford Abbey Country Park**

13. For the last few years Rufford Abbey Country Park has participated in a national quality scheme run by *VisitEngland*, the English national tourist board.
14. This is specifically for tourist attractions, and a quality award is given if the site meets VisitEngland standards. A mystery shopper visit takes place, during which a trained external inspector with a background in the leisure industry examines all facilities on offer to the visitor, including pre-visit tests of website information and telephone enquiry responses.
15. The annual inspection for Rufford Abbey Country Park took place on 17 July 2013 and the park passed. The inspector's conclusion was that:

*"Rufford Abbey Country Park, on its seventh assessment, continues to provide a very good quality experience.*

*Improvements in customer service, as suggested in my report, would see the overall standard raised from very good to excellent.*

*Rufford Abbey Country Park fully merits the award of VisitEngland's accreditation of "Quality Assured Visitor attraction."*



16. The inspection includes a 'pre-visit' check by phone to see how brochure requests and general enquiries are handled, and information on web pages is also checked. The inspector felt that the quality of pre-visit responses had improved from last year and praised a speedy email response from the NCC Customer Contact Centre. The inspector was also very complimentary about the Tourist Information Centre on site which is now run as a partnership with Newark & Sherwood District Council.
17. The inspector remarked on the number of positive reviews left by visitors on the tourism website "Trip Advisor."
18. It was noted that problems with the ladies' toilets at the Abbey site last year had now been resolved, and baby-change facilities improved. Two damaged information panels remarked in the last inspection had been removed and cleanliness of the site overall was praised.
19. In her recommendations for ongoing improvement the inspector suggested more attention to weeding in some areas of the park, portion control in the Café, and more consideration of lighter food options in the Café. She also raised the need to replace poor quality "A Boards" (freestanding advertising frames). These improvement suggestions were gratefully received and plans are in place for rectification.
20. Finally, the quality of the Craft Centre exhibition was praised by the inspector. The Craft Centre at Rufford Abbey is run by the County Council's Arts Service.

### **Other Options Considered**

21. The Country Parks Service chooses to undergo annual external inspections in order to help us benchmark the quality of our visitor offer and to maintain high standards.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

22. To bring to the attention of the Culture Committee the success of Nottinghamshire's two main country park sites in terms of meeting visitors' expectations.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

23. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

24. The annual visitor survey is an important means of checking that we are meeting the needs and expectations of visitors at Nottinghamshire country parks.

## **Financial Implications**

25. The costs of the annual survey, and participation in the VAQAS scheme are met from within the Country Parks' revenue budget.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

26. The 2013 visitor survey confirmed that both parks are well used by people who consider themselves to be disabled or to have mobility restrictions. 14% of groups interviewed said someone in their party fitted into that category.

## **Crime and Disorder Implications**

27. When questioned how secure they felt whilst visiting, 98% of those interviewed in the 2013 visitor survey said they felt "safe" or "very safe" in the country park they were visiting.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

28. The importance of the natural environment is critical to the visitor experience of country parks.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the outcome of the 2013 annual visitor satisfaction surveys at Rufford Abbey Country Park and Sherwood Forest Country Park, and of the result of the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) annual inspection at Rufford Abbey Country Park, be noted

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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## **Constitutional Comments**

29. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (KLA 07/11/13)**

30. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Survey of Visitors August 2013 – Sherwood Forest Country Park, Rufford Abbey Country Park

VisitEngland VAQAS Assessment Report, Rufford Abbey Country Park, 2013

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0316



**REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, POLICY, PLANNING AND  
CORPORATE SERVICES****WORK PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the Committee's work programme for 2013/14.

**Information and Advice**

2. The County Council requires each committee to maintain a work programme. The work programme will assist the management of the committee's agenda, the scheduling of the committee's business and forward planning. The work programme will be updated and reviewed at each pre-agenda meeting and committee meeting. Any member of the committee is able to suggest items for possible inclusion.
3. The **attached** work programme has been drafted in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and includes items which can be anticipated at the present time. Other items will be added to the programme as they are identified.

**Other Options Considered**

4. None.

**Reason for Recommendations**

5. To assist the committee in preparing its work programme.

**Statutory and Policy Implications**

6. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Committee's work programme be noted, and consideration be given to any changes which the Committee wishes to make.

**Jayne Francis-Ward**  
**Corporate Director, Policy, Planning and Corporate Services**

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### **Constitutional Comments (HD)**

7. The Committee has authority to consider the matters set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (PS)**

8. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

## **CULTURE COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14**

<b><u>Report Title</u></b>	<b><u>Brief summary of agenda item</u></b>	<b><u>Lead Officer</u></b>
<b>7 January 2014 CANCELLED</b>		
<b>4 February 2014</b>		
Service update		Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Work Programme		Derek Higton
Performance monitoring report (Quarter 3)	Quarterly performance monitoring report for Key Performance Indicators	Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Cultural Strategy annual review 2013/14	Annual report	Peter Gaw
Creswell Heritage Trust – partnership award for 2014/15	Annual determination	Steve Bradley
Cultural Services Strategic Events Programme	For noting	Peter Gaw/Steve Bradley
Fees and Charges 2014/15 – Libraries, Archives and Information	Annual determination	Peter Gaw
Revised Library Stock Management Policy		Peter Gaw
Library services for people with dementia and their carers		Peter Gaw
<b>4 March 2014 CANCELLED</b>		
<b>1 April 2014</b>		
Service update		Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Work Programme		Derek Higton
Adult & Community Learning Services Priorities for 2014/15	Annual report to set priorities	Peter Gaw
A Strategy for Nottinghamshire Libraries	Six monthly progress report	Peter Gaw
<b>6 May 2014</b>		
Service update		Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Work Programme		Derek Higton
Performance monitoring report (Quarter 4)	Quarterly performance monitoring report for Key Performance Indicators	Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Outside bodies report	Comprising reports on: Creswell Heritage Trust/ Greenwood Community Forest Partnership/ Nottingham Playhouse Board/ Sherwood Forest Trust/ Sherwood Forest Regional Park Board	Derek Higton
<b>3 June 2014</b>		
Service update		Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Work Programme		Derek Higton

<b><u>Report Title</u></b>	<b><u>Brief summary of agenda item</u></b>	<b><u>Lead Officer</u></b>
<b>1 July 2014</b>		
Service update		Derek Higton/Sally Gill
Review of Green Estate sites - outcomes		Derek Higton
Work Programme		Derek Higton
<b>To be placed</b>		
Cotgrave Country Park – car park		Derek Higton
Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre updates		Derek Higton
Idle Valley Management Board	Report from officer group	Sally Gill
Heritage Plan		Sally Gill
Biodiversity Offsetting Pilot Project	Year 1 report on progress	Sally Gill
Civil War Museum, Newark		Sally Gill/Celia Morris
Conservation Management Plan for Rufford Park		Sally Gill/Celia Morris