

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY****KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES****Purpose of the Report**

1. The following are summaries of work relating to my Portfolio. This report reflects the wide range of initiatives being undertaken, all of which help improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people.

**Arts & Sports in the Community****Arts**

2. An explosion of family fun has been taking place at the Craft Centre at Rufford Abbey in readiness for the Diamond Jubilee Right Royal Extravaganza Exhibition. Every day over Easter families were able to make their own commemorative plates and mugs and contribute to the red, white and blue bunting that will adorn the Gallery beams. Over 500 plates and mugs are now making their way through the kilns and everyone's artistic creations will be part of the Exhibition. Artists are also working with four community groups to create permanent jubilee artworks for their venues: Slipware commemorative tiles are being made in South Leverton, sculptural panels in Tuxford, Jubilee garden planters at Newgate Lane School in Mansfield together with jewelled mosaics panels at Sherwood West Children's Centre. All these will also feature in the Exhibition.
3. Our creative industries officer has been working with artists across the County to develop a new countywide open studio event. A small investment has resulted in a collaborative initiative involving over 100 artists offering visitors the opportunity to see and buy contemporary art and craft during May and June. It is envisaged that this initiative will grow, becoming an annual event led and organised by the artists themselves.

**Sports**

4. Our Sports Development Team have been working with golf clubs across the County and have secured external funding to appoint a 'Get into Golf Officer' for the partnership. The partnership is also expanding last years successful 'Get into the Swing' campaign to include girls and ladies only coaching sessions along with the existing adult sessions. The Coach Academy Programme ran a hugely successful and innovative training day for talented junior golfers at Rufford Park and has worked with Sports Coach UK and the

Professional Golf Association (PGA) to develop a disability awareness training course for golf professionals which was well attended and is planned to roll out across the country.

5. The Team has also helped three swimming clubs secure funding from Sport England's Sportivate scheme. This will see the establishment of two new Masters Sections (Adults) at local clubs and the delivery of novice open water swimming sessions in the lead up to a new event that is being organised at the National Water Sports Centre.
6. To further develop a range of sports clubs across the County an Aspiring Clubs Programme has been launched. Clubs will receive one to one support and mentoring to help secure their future and offer increased opportunities for community participation in sport. All clubs across the County will also benefit from a new resource pack developed by the Team with Sport Nottinghamshire: Nottinghamshire 2012 And Beyond, provides a range of information to help clubs reap the benefits of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

### **Adult Learners' Week, 12 -18 May, 2012.**

7. Adult Learners' Week is the UK's largest celebration of learning. It promotes education and training for adults, provides access to information and guidance, motivates and celebrates learning achievements. With its nationwide promotional campaign and high profile activities, Adult Learners' Week offers us a framework to promote the Council's learning provision.
8. During the week, the Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) is holding a number of celebration showcase events across the County. These are taking place in Worksop Library and Mansfield Library. The events will showcase some of the work done by our learners in the past year and also learners who have been nominated by our providers to receive ACLS certificates of achievement.

### **Libraries**

9. I am delighted to tell you that Nottinghamshire Libraries has submitted a successful bid to be one of six authorities nationally to participate in a Digital Skills Sharing Project. This project is being facilitated by The Reading Agency and will see two members of library service staff and a corporate communications officer paired up with publishers to develop a reading campaign, using the expertise of the publishers to enhance the Service's digital marketing skills and to develop our digital reading offer. The project was launched in London on 30<sup>th</sup> April and will run until March 2013.

#### **Author visits at Mansfield Library**

10. Two authors recently visited Mansfield Library to meet local school children and share with them their passion for reading and writing.
11. In February children's author Andy Newbound performed his Word Wizard event to 120 pupils from High Oakham and St Philip Neri primary schools. He showed the children what makes the English language so special through fun facts, word-wonders, quizzes

and fascinating 'did you know?' Funny stories introduced the children to lost or forgotten words like Huggermugger, Hobbledehoy and Filibuster and they learned the origin of popular expressions such as 'Raining cats and dogs' and the 'The bees knees'.

12. Alexander Gordon Smith, author of the 'Furnace' series visited in March to give a funny and informative talk about his approach to writing his novels and to talk about the horror genre in general. His session generated many questions from the audience which comprised 40 young people from The Brunts Academy.
13. Both authors developed great rapport with their audiences and generated a high level of interest in their work from the young people present.

## **Economic Development**

### **Superfast broadband for Nottinghamshire gets the go ahead**

14. I am delighted to confirm that plans to bring superfast broadband for 90% (up to 24 megabits per second) of Nottinghamshire and improved broadband for the remaining 10% (2 megabits per second) by 2015 have been approved by the Government. The Local Broadband Plan has successfully gained £4.25 million from the Government, which has been match-funded locally primarily by the County Council but also with a combined contribution of £1 million by all the Nottinghamshire local councils. When the investment from the communications supplier is included, this is a £17 million project - work on the ground is expected to start as early as 2013. The Council continues to seek European funding routes to extend the reach of the Plan. The Plan will improve access to broadband for 116,011 premises, both business and residential. The Government approval paves the way for the procurement of a communications supplier to put in the necessary infrastructure.

### **Nottinghamshire Business Plan Competition Launch**

15. I am delighted to announce the launch of the new Nottinghamshire Business Plan Competition "spark@notts". Nottinghamshire County Council, with Oxford Innovation (our Innovation Centre management contractor) is offering opportunities for local entrepreneurs to start up their own business with relatively low risk. Entrants with new and innovative business ideas are asked to submit a business plan by the closing date of 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012. My Deputy, Councillor Keith Girling, will be one of the judges, along with local business people.
16. The first prize includes one year's free rent at any of the Nottinghamshire Innovation Centres in Mansfield, Newark or Worksop and support services for the first year of operating, such as accountancy advice, employment law advice, branding, website design, access to patent and trademark specialists and business coaching. For the two runners up, there will be use of the virtual office facility for one year in a choice of the Nottinghamshire Innovation Centres, plus business support from Oxford Innovation. This initiative supports the 2012 national Start Up Britain campaign, led by Prime Minister, David Cameron, and gives the East Midlands region a chance to shine.

### **Innovation Centres' new websites launched**

17. Three new websites have been launched to publicise the facilities and services offered by our Nottinghamshire Innovation Centres, managed for us by Oxford Innovations. The new websites are aimed at re-branding the centres, promoting their unique blend of flexibility and business support, and increasing the take-up of office accommodation and meeting spaces.

## **Country Parks and Green Estate**

### **New Development Groups for Rufford Abbey and Bestwood Country Parks**

18. Two new planning, design, conservation, environmental and funding groups have been set up to develop a series of short term and longer term (5-10 years) development plans for these two important parts of the County Council's green estate. Both Parks are very well used but are in need of some significant investment into their infrastructure to ensure that they continue to meet the aspirations and enjoyment of users and visitors. It is anticipated that these multi agency groups will prepare suitable plans through which any investment can be channelled and directed.

### **Record breaking year for catering and retail on Country Parks**

19. The catering and retail services at Rufford Abbey and Sherwood Forest country parks enjoyed their best ever year in 2011/12, with combined sales of £2.4 million.
20. The main reasons for the increased business were the generally better than expected weather during 2011/12, especially early spring and at Christmas time, together with evidence of more visitors and tourists choosing to spend time in the UK rather than travelling abroad.

### **Successful re-launch of the Savile Restaurant**

21. The popular Savile Restaurant at Rufford Abbey was refurbished in January 2012, and re-opened on 11<sup>th</sup> February for the half term break.
22. A new menu was introduced together with a new style of customer service to better meet our customer expectations, a move from a counter service to table service.
23. In March, sales in the Restaurant rose by 53%, and spend per customer rose by 29%. Customer feedback was even more positive than the sales figures, with 97% rating the Savile as good or very good.

### **Rufford Abbey**

24. Despite changeable weather, nearly 1,800 children enjoyed the annual Easter Trail at Rufford Abbey over the school Easter holidays.

25. Work on the Changing Places toilet at Rufford Abbey has been completed and is now open to enable more severely disabled children and adults to enjoy a day out at the park free from the worry of having no suitable toilet and changing facilities.
26. An exhibition on the site's monastic history is being refurbished and is scheduled to re-open in early May. A contribution to the cost has been obtained from our partners, English Heritage.

## **Conservation**

### **Local Nature Partnerships**

27. I am pleased to report that the capacity building work funded by DEFRA and undertaken with our partners in Lowland Derbyshire has been very successful. A series of events to engage with colleagues from the community, education, business, health, farming and environmental sectors has generated significant interest in the proposal to form a multi-sectoral Local Nature Partnership for Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Work is now underway to submit an application to DEFRA for formal LNP status.

### **Biodiversity Offsetting**

28. The national pilot project to test the concept of biodiversity offsetting is now underway and will complete in March 2014. The County Council is working with Nottingham City Council, Gedling Borough Council, Newark & Sherwood District Council and Bassetlaw District Council to develop shared principles and ways of working that will meet the needs of both biodiversity and local people in Nottinghamshire.

### **Improving the County's Biodiversity**

29. I am pleased to report that we have been successful in a bid for funding from DEFRA's Water Framework Directive programme. The project will support Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group volunteers in work to address invasive non-native species such as Himalayan Balsam and Signal Crayfish.

### **Beeston Canalside Heritage Centre**

30. With my colleague, Councillor Richard Butler, I am very pleased to report that the Canalside Heritage Trust in Beeston has successfully secured a Phase 1 grant of £35,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This Phase 1 grant, along with match funding from the County Council's Local Improvement Scheme, will help them progress towards a £600,000 Phase 2 HLF project.
31. The historic lock buildings in Beeston had fallen into disuse and are in need of complete restoration. The Canalside Heritage Trust, formed by local residents with support from their elected member and specialist advice from the County Council's Conservation Team, is hoping to turn the buildings into an education centre, community cafe and museum.

### **Buildings at Risk online**

32. The County's Buildings at Risk Register has been updated and expanded to include non-residential structures. The Register is available online through the County Council's website, making it easier for local people to find out more about heritage at risk in their area.

### **Greenwood Community Forest**

33. Greenwood Community Forest has continued to support local groups and projects across the Greenwood area. I was delighted to be invited to attend a tree planting event at St John's College, Bramcote at the end of March. The Greenwood team has helped to support or advise on 26 tree planting projects and has been able to provide funding for 16 of them, which has been matched by funds from the Big Tree Plant and local groups. 2,000 trees and hedge plants have been planted with the help of 550 volunteers from schools and local groups.
34. Greenwood has also supported the Friends of Thynghowe in a successful bid for £49,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will help local people to investigate the forgotten heritage of this part of Sherwood Forest, including training in research, surveys and recording. As a partner in the project, Greenwood will help volunteers to get involved and encourage participation by a wide range of people of all ages.

### **Kirkby Hardwick Manor House**

35. At the end of March I was delighted to be able to visit an archaeological excavation at Kirkby Hardwick. There is documentary evidence to suggest that Kirkby Hardwick was once a place of power and influence, not least because it was excluded from the boundary of the royal hunting forest of Sherwood and therefore not subject to Forest Law. Kirkby and District Archaeological Group was successful in attracting funding from the Local Improvement Scheme to investigate this part of their heritage. Working with the County Council's Community Archaeologists, they undertook an archaeological excavation, clocking up hundreds of volunteer hours and hosting school visits, special needs groups and open days for local people. Their hard work has been rewarded with the discovery of the remains of a large high-status Medieval timber and stone building which may date back to the thirteenth century or earlier.

### **Community Archaeology**

36. In addition to supporting the community excavation at Kirkby Hardwick, the County Council's community archaeologists have been helping people to learn about geophysical surveys with funding from the Heritage Lottery funded Trent Vale Landscape Partnership project. A series of events held at Willoughby enabled 25 volunteers to work with surveyors and archaeologists learn how to undertake geophysical surveys and understand the results.
37. The development of settlements from the Roman to Medieval periods is not well understood, as much of the evidence may be buried under existing towns and villages. An innovative project, also supported by the Trent Vale project, has enabled the residents of Laneham and Church Laneham to explore the origins and development of

their villages and contribute to the national evidence base. Working with the Community Archaeologists, local volunteers have excavated a series of test pits in residents' gardens. Twenty test pits have been dug so far, uncovering thirteenth and fifteenth century cobbled surfaces and prehistoric flint, as well as pottery and glass finds from Roman, Medieval and later periods.

**COUNCILLOR JOHN COTTEE**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES**