

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Chris Meaden
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Leisure, Sport and Culture
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Clare Fish, Strategic Director- Families & Wellbeing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to her portfolio.

1. LEISURE

The capital projects at Guinea Gap and West Kirby Concourse are now complete and open to the general public. Guinea Gap has just under 1500 new Invigor8 members and West Kirby Concourse just over 2500 members, with the actual income now surpassing the targets set. A £840,000 capital bid (Wirral Council £690,000 and Sport England £150,000) has been submitted to upgrade the facilities at West Kirby Marine Lake to create a modern base for those engaged in water sport activity. A planning application will be submitted later on this year. Both of these developments are evidence of our commitment to securing leisure and cultural opportunities for all, a key pledge in our 2020 Plan.

I am pleased to announce the NCS graduation ceremony took place at Wallasey Town Hall on Saturday 26th September.

The Mayor presented certificates to 150 16 and 17 year olds who successfully completed this summer's programme. In addition to the away and home residential, they have collectively completed 2400 hours of community programmes. Those programmes have included delivering community fun days in our parks to undertaking a complete garden makeover for a young peoples' project in Grange Road West, Birkenhead, where I performed the ribbon cutting ceremony.

To deliver a number of those programmes the young people have raised their own funds and sought the support of local businesses. During the 'home' phase of the NCS programme at Thurstaston Country Park, the old toilet and shower block was completely refurbished. For the first time in over a decade participants have been able to enjoy hot showers and the basic amenities of toilets and hot running water. Further developments of this site can now be considered.

Sport Development's outreach programme will be working alongside the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service to deliver 'Operation Banger' for the period including Mischief Night, Halloween & Bonfire Night, aiming to reduce ASB & fires at this peak time in the calendar. This will be the 3rd year that sports instructors will be delivering activities in multiuse games areas across the Borough. Partnership working is key, with other agencies directing young people to these activities.

2. WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY AND PRIORY

Discussions with National Museums Liverpool have been paused whilst both organisations await the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review at the end of November 2015. The employees at the Williamson and Priory are now working with their Head of Service to develop a plan for continuing to run and develop the Gallery and Priory. The Friends of the Williamson are also working with the staff to support the planned activities and they are making a valuable contribution towards future events.

3. FLORAL PAVILION

The Floral Pavilion continues to provide a range of high quality events as part of its autumn and winter programmes and other parts of the business, including weddings, are continuing to develop. Work is currently on-going to look at various commercial opportunities that the building can be used for, with the aim of reducing the Council's subsidy over the next three financial years.

New management systems are now in place which allow for better programming and cost analysis and arrangements to achieve more on-line transactions and promotions are in place. The Volunteers continue to make a very valuable contribution towards the running of the venue with their enthusiasm and interaction with members of the public. The Floral is also playing its part in the wider success of New Brighton by working with other venues and businesses in the town.

4. PARK & OPEN SPACES

The Junior Rangers outreach programme was launched again this summer in partnership with the Pyramids Shopping Centre in Birkenhead, and has been a huge success with over a 1,000 children attending every day. Educational and fun activities were delivered by Rangers, Forest school leaders and Volunteers of Birkenhead Park. New York's Central Park assisted with Virtual live educational games via Skype (60+ children at each session). Local media and press attended. Local user groups such as nurseries and youth schemes have utilised this event along with the Animal Ark and Owl animal sanctuaries.

The pilot Assistant Discovery Ranger Traineeship programme run in Birkenhead Park and delivered in partnership with Wirral Met College finished its 14 week term this July. Two of the trainees were successful in applying for an 18 month NVQ level 2 park ranger apprenticeships. A second cohort of Assistant Discovery Rangers began in August.

Four of the Parks and Countryside Horticultural Apprentices that successfully completed their NVQ level 2, have been successful in applying for an Advanced Apprenticeship, during which they will complete their NVQ level 3. Those successful in this will be kept on as gardeners within Parks and Countryside.

Mary Worrall's joint presentation at the Large Parks in Large Cities Conference in Stockholm (2 to 4 September) with Sari Suomalainen from HAMK University, Finland went very well. Through the presentation and poster display, the international significance of Birkenhead Park was highlighted and significant interest in visiting Birkenhead Park was expressed by presenters and conference attendees from across the world.

Sari Suomalainen is one of the Senior Lecturers at HAMK University who earlier this year spent several weeks with Wirral's Parks & Countryside Team as part of her six week visit studying UK and Ireland Parks good practice. HAMK University is the main University in Finland which provides education for horticulturalists, landscape designers, landscape managers and landscape constructors.

HAMK University has developed the use of mobile technologies to help interpret their campus and assist in the education of students. They have also piloted the use of new and innovative techniques, such as 'drifting' to help people share and enhance the awareness of the special nature of places. The international partnership project we are developing with HAMK University, called Landscape Alive, will pilot the use of these technologies to help interpret Birkenhead Park in a number of different languages.

5. LIBRARIES

Our work with Volunteer and Partner Libraries continues to support our main service with initiatives in place at Leasowe, St. James and Pensby operating new 'Library Express' service successfully for their communities. Our officers are in discussion with other groups which we hope will soon be established.

Added to this site support the service has a range of individual volunteers. 32 computer support volunteers help customers in libraries, nine who work to help book delivery to the vulnerable with the home reader service and this year we were extremely pleased to welcome 25 students who have helped us deliver an excellent Summer Reading Challenge across all sites this year.

Our Library service continues to successfully provide a wide range of activities that support the cultural and learning aspects of a Library service. Once again we will be promoting our Annual Bookfest events in October with a range of events across the area. Our high profile Bookfest event is the return of Brian Patten to Merseyside to read a selection of his works. As part of the launch of the next round of the "Reading Ahead" initiative Birkenhead Library will be host on 11th November to guest author Andy McNab, given this authors international standing this is another extremely high profile event for Wirral I am pleased to report on.