

Report of Councillor Julie McManus - Cabinet member for Community Services

Leisure

A brand new 11 a side all weather artificial turf pitch, which also incorporates three smaller, 7 a-side football pitches, is now open at Leasowe Leisure Centre. There are associated external changing facilities for up to six teams including disabled changing, floodlights and access seven days a week.

Works are nearing the final stages on an impressive development of the Wirral Sailing School at West Kirby aimed at improving the facilities and offering additional opportunities to all sectors of the Wirral community to enjoy the world-renowned Marine Lake. The centre will house a new reception area, changing facilities, including accessible facilities, offices, training room and café/bistro area overlooking the scenic West Wirral coastline. It is hoped it will open in early Spring 2020.

Run in Wirral, the universal running group developed as part of the council's Invigor8 fitness product, celebrated its 10th birthday in January 2020. Created and developed by Fiona Hanik from Wirral Sports Development, RIW has grown over the last 10 years and now offers six meetings per week at various venues across Wirral and is attended by hundreds of Invigor8 customers - <https://wirralleisure.co.uk/run-in-wirral/>

A new tennis development programme launched at Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre, Bidston, in January 2020. The centre will also hosted a Tennis Festival on Saturday 15 February attended by more than 400 local children. A new coaching team and enhanced programme offering LTA accredited tennis lessons from 3 years of age to adults, is also now operating - <https://wirralleisure.co.uk/tennis-wirral/>

Parks and Countryside

On the advice of our in-house arboricultural tree specialist, Grange Cemetery was closed on Thursday 13 February due to the expected high winds and heavy rain. It will remain closed until the park has been assessed as safe. Since the initial closure, the trees that separate the cemetery and the park have been inspected again and unfortunately have been found in very poor structural condition and of significant risk to visitors and will need to be removed as soon as possible for public safety.

Eastham Country Park have installed an indoor water fountain in the visitors centre for people to use to help reduce the amount of single use plastics.

Libraries

Booktrust F2 "The Cave" visits continue across the service. "The Cave" by Rob Hodgson forms part of the Booktrust pack that is gifted to all F2 pupils via their school. Wirral libraries are currently delivering a programme of sessions that increase engagement around the gifted pack.

Harry Potter book nights took place at West Kirby and Wallasey Central libraries. This year's theme was the Triwizard tournament and is an ideal opportunity to tie into existing resources to promote reading for pleasure.

Wirral Libraries joined the Foundation Years Trust on the Hungry Little Minds campaign bus to deliver packs and read stories. Hungry Little Minds is a new three-year campaign to encourage parents to engage in activities that support their child's early learning and help set them up for school and beyond.

Ashley Dyer (Margaret Murphy) was in conversation with world renown author Ann Cleeves. The event was a sell out and proved to be extremely popular

Wirral Libraries was successful in its application for World Book Night books. A gifting and community engagement session will take place at Morrisons New Brighton on 23rd April (am) to promote Wirral Libraries and reading for pleasure

For World Book Day , author Nick Toczek will be visiting four libraries. Invited school will attend a storytelling session

As part of the Hungry Little Minds Campaign with Foundation Years Trust a pop-up story gazebo will operate at Seacombe Library (18th March tbc) and Birkenhead Central library (26th/27th March tbc)

BBC Novels that Shaped the World in partnership with Libraries Connected, Wirral Libraries have been successful in securing funding to facilitate two events and secure the loan of set of BBC Virtual Headsets.

Thursday 28 May Stute Theatre will be showing two performances of "Just Soph" at Birkenhead and Wallasey libraries. 'Just Soph' is a high-quality, professional piece of theatre for children aged 3-7 – although all ages are welcome, older and younger children may enjoy it with support, and it is designed with family audiences in mind. I have found that it works well for both school groups, nursery groups and mixed family audiences. It explores stories in a playful, imaginative way, helping children to develop literacy skills and making a complex, classic text accessible. The piece features live music, songs and puppetry, using familiar household materials and objects.

Tuesday 5 May in partnership with the Reader Organisation we will be hosting a "Robinson Crusoe/Adventure" themed tea party. Shared Reading groups from Wirral and Chester and invited public will attend a BBC Novels That Shaped Our World-Adventure themed tea party so discuss and decide on the novels that shaped their world. The party will also decide on the curated collection of books that will be purchased for Shared Reading.

In partnership with Get It Loud In Libraries Birkenhead Central Library will once again be hosting a gig- Juniore 26th April 2.30pm. Tickets sales are going extremely well and predictions are it will be a sold out gig.

Highways

29 roads in Wirral are due to receive a new surface treatment in the coming weeks, as part of a continued investment in Wirral's highways network. The roads, located mostly around Liscard, New Brighton and Seacombe, were originally scheduled to be treated as part of the council's 2019 micro-asphalt treatment programme, which involves laying a new surface on top of the existing road.

However, work was postponed following a wet summer and with colder weather settling in, and interim repairs were carried out to ensure the safety of the roads over winter.

Works on the A41 corridor between Port Sunlight and Birkenhead are completed by March 2020 after works returned to the A41 bypass on 6 January to complete the project.

The £3.4million scheme, jointly funded by Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority and Wirral Council, saw work commence in September 2019 and after a short break, 9 December 2019 to 6 January 2020, that provided full access to residents during the Christmas period, work will continue this year.

An update to residents and commuters will be given on week commencing 2 March. Looking to also do a case study around one of the apprentices that was taken on by our contractor through this project and who they plan to keep on to continue training and he will complete a degree-qualified course. Plan to issue this out at the end of March.

Streetlighting

Around 15,000 streetlights in Wirral have now been installed with new LED lamps. It will take two years to complete the LED programme and since phase 2 of the programme began in September/ October 2019 approximately 4,500 LED lanterns have been fitted and approximately 550 columns replaced across the borough up to the end of January which has resulted in an energy saving of approximately 564kWh.

As well as helping to meet carbon reduction targets by dramatically reducing energy use by 4,414,240 kWh per year, the new LED lights will also reduce running costs, these lamps are longer lasting than the original fittings, as well as requiring less maintenance.

To ensure the programme continues to be delivered successfully and residents are kept informed, a Streetlight Action Group has been established, a project plan is being utilised and a performance dashboard with a running total of figures relating to repairs is being created to be used through the councils media channels to share and update residents with information on the programme and to ensure that they can see how much work is being completed within this programme.

At the current time, streetlight repairs are consistent month on month, due to the age of the stock.

The streetlighting department currently still have two in house teams working on general and reactive repairs, one external resource on general and reactive repairs and one external support on column installations. These teams are all working on general reactive repairs that are separate to and have no impact on the LED Replacement programme (the LED lanterns that are being fitted and the columns that are being replaced).

The percentage of faulty streetlights have reduced from 5.8% in May 2018 to 4.7% in December 2019 and 4.2% in January 2020. Positive reflection is expected to continue and as the LED programme progresses further, however the full reflection of this is not expected to be seen until Autumn 2021.

Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority and Veolia Community Fund 2020/21

The funding has been made available for community and voluntary groups, schools and not-for-profit organisations, who can reduce household waste, encourage recycling and resource re-use and prevent carbon emissions. The projects will also have to demonstrate wider positive impacts on the environment, health and education.

Deadline of submission is Sunday 15 March 2020.