
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title of Report:	Report by Cllr Sarah Stamp Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage	
Report No:	COU/SE/14/010 [to be completed by Democratic Services]	
Report to and date/s:	Council	16 December 2014
Portfolio includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arts and Culture• Festivals and Events• Heritage Services• Parks and open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Halls• Sport• Tourism (Destinations and Events)

1. Parks and Open Spaces

1.1 Events & Activities

Halloween

The recent Halloween event hosted at East Town Park attracted an estimated 3,000 attendees.

The Pumpkin carving events hosted by Park Rangers at Abbey Gardens, East Town Park and Nowton Park proved popular with over 130 pumpkins having been carved by eager participants.

Promotion of Events

All the council managed park events are now advertised on 'What's on in West Suffolk'.

Link: <http://www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk>

1.2 Projects

Abbey Gardens - Peace Garden

A charity, which was specifically created to raise funds to enhance the garden area where the Holocaust Memorial Day service is held annually, has achieved its aim of raising £10,000. Works on the new garden area commenced just after the Christmas Fayre and

the garden will be completed in time for the Holocaust Memorial Day service on Tuesday 27 January 2015.

Sale of firewood – 44 loads of firewood have been sold by the Ranger team based at Nowton Park generating £3,500 worth of income.

2. Heritage Services

2.1 Moyses Hall

The Sci-Fi exhibition (25 October to 9 November 2014) which was launched by Dave Prowse, the original Darth Vader, was a great success this year. The exhibition and associated events attracted over 3,500 attendees, nearly 1,000 up on last year. Most of the props and exhibits for the Sci-Fi exhibition were lent/donated by local enthusiasts.

2.2 West Stow

Work on the sunken house has progressed well and has received some positive publicity. The roof of the new sunken house is scheduled to be thatched with locally sourced gorse early in the New Year.

Visitor figures to the Village are up on the previous three years. School group visits are at a five year high- In November 2013 there were 754 children that visited and in November 2014 there were 2200.

Also, the very successful Brecks Building Skills at West Stow are proving a success, with 6 courses running from October to April, each with 50 attendees. Currently all but one session is fully booked (around 300 people).

Four ticketed events are planned for next year which should guarantee greater footfall, these being;

- (i) Ring Quest – 14-22 February 2014
- (ii) Brecks Festival – 5-6 April 2014
- (iii) Dragons Festival – 20-21 June 2014
- (iv) British Warrior through time – 28-29 August 2014

These pre-booked ticketed events will be supplemented by a series of smaller scale non pre-booked events.

The Breck's festival is being sponsored (£10,000) via the Breck's 'Breaking New Ground' Heritage lottery fund.

West Stow has hosted a number of very popular traditional craft training days this year. These craft training days have also been

sponsored by the Breck's 'Breaking New Ground' Heritage lottery fund.

2.3 **Staff**

Sylvia Cox has now been appointed to replace Dr Keith Cunliffe as the Borough's Heritage Officer (Collections).

3. **Tourism (Destinations & Events)**

- 3.1 The Heritage & TIC Operations Manager has been helping to coordinate training and networking sessions for the Cathedral's Volunteers. More formalised training for all tourism staff and volunteers, known as 'Welcome Host Gold', is scheduled to take place in February and this will provide participants with the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised City and Guilds qualification - available through the Regional Tourist Board Partnership. We hope to get 16 people from our tourist information points around Bury St Edmunds through the training.

The improved tourism service is working well with TIPs such as the Cathedral and Smiths Row reporting an increased footfall since the service began. All signage is now in place and custom built display racks for leaflets and merchandise have now been installed at The Apex.

The 2015 visitor accommodation guide for West Suffolk has been prepared and just over £5,000 of advertising income has been generated through this initiative.

4. **Public Halls**

4.1 **The Apex**

Box office sales from the Apex continue to increase. A new marketing supplement has been produced and 82,000 of these have been distributed via EADT and The Mercury newspapers. The bulk of the cost associated with producing this supplement has been offset by the advertising that appears in the publication. Following its publication there was an immediate uplift in sales and particularly pleasing were the number of new customers. Last year, during the week of 19–27 November 2014, 179 new customers bought tickets. Following the launch of the supplement this increased to 393 during the same week this year.

The Apex Gallery space continues to add diversity in its offering and a recent print workshop exhibition from Gainsborough House has added value. A number of prints were sold and The Apex received a healthy commission on sales. In addition to raising additional income for The Apex this event also prompted some very positive feedback.

The Christmas programme at The Apex remains full and a sell-out show "Father Christmas needs a wee" prompted the scheduling of a second show which, at the time of preparing this report, has 75% of tickets sold.

New and more renowned acts are being attracted to The Apex including Andy Parsons, Gervase Phinn, Count Arthur Strong, Kate Rusby and Ruby Turner. Monty Don is visiting us on 23 January 2014. Bury Sound Unplugged continue to attract young people into the bar area and offers local, young talent a chance to perform. In 2015 there will be new themes developed and in developing the use of other spaces when not used there will be a new Sunday Brunch offering in the lounge area, with newspapers, and a chance to enjoy the relaxed vibe. This will be supported by a small Jazz set.

In the New Year we will also be partnering with the Bury Free Press to produce a further supplement which again we anticipate will maintain ticket sales.

4.2 **The Athenaeum**

Sodexo report that their Website promoting the Athenaeum is averaging almost 250 unique visitors per week.

Link:

<http://www.prestigevenuesandevents.sodexo.com/venues/56/the-athenaeum/>

A Wedding Fair hosted at the Athenaeum by Sodexo on 2 November 2014 resulted in four wedding bookings for 2015/2016.

Public satisfaction with Sodexo's services in the Athenaeum remains high:

Conf and events	Ave 94.2% (Sodexo ave 89)
Showround	Ave 89.2% (Sodexo ave 86.7)
Online	Ave 91% (Sodexo ave 89.3)

5. **Projects**

5.1 **Tree works in the Moreton Hall area**

As part of this years scheduled tree work programme, there are a number of woodland projects being progressed in the Moreton Hall area. This work includes;

The Bedingfield Road woodland: extension of the woodland walk (approximately 1 mile) which now links up to and around Raedwald

Drive. The Nowton Park Volunteer's helped spread the woodchips to create the walk and cleared a large amount of litter from the woods.

Mount Road: Work is nearing completion on the Mount Road hedge/tree belt. This involves the reduction in height of the hedge, thinning of the tree belt and clearance of neighbouring property boundaries.

Moreton Hall cycle way: Work is currently underway to thin out the woodland. The work involves thinning out of the densely planted tree belts which are located either side of the cycle path, improving sightlines and clearance of street lights.

Heldhaw Road open space: This work involves the removal of a number of poplars that are leaning in the direction of the road. The removal of these trees will enable the remaining trees (Pine, Oak and silver birch) to grow to their full potential. The Old hedge around the playing fields will be restored and any gapped up.

Other Moreton Hall sites: Works have also been completed at Natters Wood, Layhill, Daisy Avenue and Tassel road. All of which have been positively received by local residents.

6. Sport

6.1 Haverhill Leisure Centre

Abbeycroft Leisure has invested £70,000 in a new range of fitness equipment at Haverhill Leisure Centre. This investment has been made in response to increasing demand for facilities but also provides a more diverse offering for customers, which means that they are able to enjoy functional training to further enhance their overall health and wellbeing.

6.2 Partnership with West Suffolk College

There has been an extension to the fitness facilities at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre through a partnership between Abbeycroft Leisure and West Suffolk College. This new facility enables the college to move elements of their sports and leisure curriculum into a fitness facility that is designed for their needs. In addition to this, the facility is open to customers in the evening and at weekends. This has kick-started a broader partnership with the college and which aims to capitalise on other opportunities linked to learning and development.

6.3 **Inspire Me Campaign**

Abbeycroft Leisure's Inspire Me Campaign has recruited another 9 cover stars. Each of the cover stars have an inspiring a story about how physical activity has had an impact on their lives. These individuals are true role models and look to inspire others to engage in physical activity and lead a healthier lifestyle. All of the cover star stories can be found at <http://www.acleisure.com/active-bury-st-edmunds/inspire-me-cover-stars-bury.html>

6.4 **Go Run for Fun**

Abbeycroft Leisure worked in partnership with Suffolk County Council and King Edwards School to bring the "Go Run for Fun" event to West Suffolk Athletics Arena. 100 children aged 5-11 took part in an event that aims to promote running. All of the children took part in the warm up, a 2km run and warm down. The event created a fun environment where they could enjoy taking part. This activity is part of a broad network of events that are operating around the country to promote athletics.

6.5 **Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategy**

A study into the current provision of facilities for sport in West Suffolk commenced in November. This work will examine the demand and supply for all playing pitches and sports and leisure facilities in the area. The work will also aim to identify the future demand, taking into account population, growth and demographic profiles to ensure that the future needs of the community for leisure and sport can be identified.