

| Report of: | To: | Date of Publication | Item No. |
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| Cllr Lynne Bowen, Leisure & Culture Portfolio Holder | Council | 1 December 2011 | 9(f) |

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| EXECUTIVE REPORT: LEISURE AND CULTURE PORTFOLIO HOLDER |
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Leisure and Culture Portfolio.

2. Current and Future Issues

- 2.1 Summary information is included in Appendix 1 on the following key outcomes.

- Reduction in health inequalities
- Healthier lifestyles and participation in physical effort.
- Protection of biodiversity and the natural environment.
- A vibrant visitor economy.
- Increased community involvement.
- Young people involved in positive activities.

3. In accordance with Procedure Rule 11.3 any member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with procedure Rule 11.5.

LEISURE AND CULTURE PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE – December 2011

1. Reduction in health inequalities

- 1.1 The number of visits to the leisure centres for the first six months of the financial year compared to the same period last year has increased from 288,821 to 304,278
- 1.2 The YMCA Leisure Management budgets are monitored on a monthly basis. Income remains up against budget and expenditure is down against budget to date.

2. Healthier lifestyles and participation in physical effort.

- 2.1 The Blackpool Group of the Stroke Association and the North Lancashire Group both took part in a series of short tramper treks with the council's healthy walks coordinator and countryside volunteers at the Wyre Estuary Country Park. For many of the participants, this was the first time that they had been able to explore the paths of the country park, the councils trampers which are "4x4" mobility aids enabled them to get round the estuary paths. Some of these people hope to become more regular participants in the health walks programme.

3. Protection of biodiversity and the natural environment.

- 3.1 A fungi survey was undertaken by volunteers over 2ha of Grizedale Valley, this was part of an Active Wyre event with aim of helping the public to learn more about the wildlife of Wyre.
- 3.2 Volunteer Rangers undertook 0.1 ha of wild flower seeding at Pilling Lane Ends a popular picnic site and conservation area.
- 3.3 Volunteers from Hawthorne Park Trust and the Wyre Council Volunteer Ranger team have undertaken wildlife surveying. These surveys have helped to provide species lists for the site and will assist in the annual revision of the management plan, the aim being to increase the knowledge of the biodiversity of the area and assist with its long-term management.

4. A vibrant visitor economy.

- 4.1 A journalist from The Times will be visiting Wyre in November and is particularly focussing on Fleetwood for an article, which will feature in their Travel Section in November.
- 4.2 The Tourist Information Point at Poulton Station was established in September. The creation of the tourist information point has generated some very positive press from Poulton and for Wyre in general.

A Small Tourist Information Point has now been established at The Priory in Scorton which now compliments the main Visit Garstang Centre (TIC) site.

There will be a small Tourist Information Point set up at The Shard Riverside Inn within the next few weeks

- 4.3 Coast Apartments – North Shore is a 4 star accommodation and has recently joined the Wyre Tourism Association.
Bridge House Marina – Nateby is a 3 star accommodation and has recently joined the Wyre Tourism Association.

The Shard Riverside Inn – 4 star accommodation (existing WTA member) has with Council support produced a bedroom browsers where the small tourist information point will be established.

- 4.4 During September 2011 there were just under 6,000 hits on the visit wyre website with approximately 20,000 pages viewed.
The most popular pages are places to visit – Fleetwood, Cleveleys, Garstang and the Forest Of Bowland and the most popular attraction being Fleetwood Market.
84% of users are new to the site and this figure is borne out by the fact that our most popular mechanism for promotion the site is through search engine promotion.

- 4.5 The Wyre Holiday Guide will be refreshed for 2012. Wyre Tourism Association members listings will be updated. The events page will also be refreshed. It is anticipated that the guide will be ready for distribution by January 2012.

The Whats On in Wyre 2012 is currently in development and should be available in readiness for the 2012 Spring/Easter Season.

- 4.6 At the recent North West In Bloom Awards held in Southport on 20th October 2011, the borough picked up a massive 27 awards in the competition. Poulton Railway Station (site of the new Tourist Information Point) was described as “absolutely magnificent” as it picked up the title of best small tourism attraction and Garstang once again took best small town. There was a gold medal for St Michaels, silver gilts for Thornton, Poulton and Great Eccleston, silver for Carleton, Forton, Hambleton and Cleveleys, plus a bronze for Preesall and Knott End. Individual businesses did equally well.

5. Increased community involvement.

- 5.1 In the last 2 months (Sept– Oct) TryVolunteering has placed 3 new volunteers at our Disability sessions at Fleetwood High School. The volunteers include an existing participant, who has been gradually developing their volunteering skills over the past few months, an ex-participant who is now getting involved in a voluntary capacity and a young man with a disability who is seeking to gain new skills and experience to assist his chances of gaining employment.

A new Cycling project, 'Cycle Wyre – Wheel Good', was launched as a pilot scheme in September. This activity was supported by existing volunteers from 'Coast & Countryside' programmes, and volunteers from our database. The Fleetwood Triathlon Event took place in September at Fleetwood Leisure Centre and Promenade. This event attracted over 600 participants and was supported by 11 of our volunteers. The 'Lancashire Big Swim' event took place in October at Fleetwood Leisure Centre, which 1 of our volunteers attended to assist in counting lengths swam.

- 5.2 The Council's supported the launch of the Fylde Beach Care Project which is a joint project between Keep Britain Tidy, the Environment Agency and United Utilities, its aim is to work with local communities, volunteers, local authorities and industry, to improve the beaches and bathing waters of the Fylde Coast. The new Fylde Beach Care project officer worked with the Wyre Rangers to make links with local groups and schools and to bring 52 volunteers from the Environment Agency who volunteered alongside Wyre Countryside Volunteers, staff from Wyre Borough Council together with some pupils from St Mary's Primary School to clean up the beach at Fleetwood.

In total the volunteers collected 90 plus bags of litter including fishing netting, a tyre, part of a portacabin, broken glass, sweet wrappers and lots of small pieces of plastic. The aim of this project is to raise awareness of the impact of litter on our coast and to help local communities on the Fylde Coast be more active in beach care.

- 5.3 Tenders have been prepared for the improvement works at Vicarage park and St Chads church yard utilising S106 monies. The work will include lighting improvements, improved footpath networks, drainage works, removing the unsightly disused toilet block on the park and replacing with a new central recreational area. Tenders will be evaluated within the next few weeks and a contractor appointed before Christmas. Works are anticipated to start in March 2012.

6. Young people involved in positive activities.

- 6.1 In partnership with the School Sports Network, a co-ordinated programme of Multi-Sports Coaching commenced in September. Nineteen Primary Schools across Wyre have paid for the provision of two 6 week blocks of Multi-Sports Coaching and one 6 week block of Dance throughout the academic year.

The first block of coaching has seen activities such as Lacrosse, Handball, Futsal and Ultimate Frisbee delivered within schools. These 'Alternative / New Age' activities are proving to be very popular with school pupils and staff. All of these activities promote and develop participants physical literacy and sports skills. The first 3 weeks of delivery has seen 191 young people participate with a total of 345 visits.

- 6.2 82 Children took part in a litter picks as a part of the Pride in Poulton week.

- 6.3 The community sport timetable has seen over 200 young people enroll and take part, and over 1000 visits during September and October). The young people have attended evening sessions in various locations across the borough, such as Fleetwood (3 sites), Thornton, Preesall and Garstang. These sessions aim to have an influence on reducing juvenile nuisance and anti social behavior. The popular Free Running/Parkour session will start in November thanks to external funding being secured.
- 6.4 The installation of the new playground on Church Road Playing fields in Thornton has now been completed. Tenders have been returned for the works to refurbish the play ground at Hambleton (Bob Williamson Playing fields) they are currently being evaluated with works on site scheduled to start in the new year.

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