



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

Northampton Borough Council

20th January 2014

Town Centre Operations

The free parking offer on Saturdays in the Council's multi storey car parks and free parking in all car parks after 3.00pm on Thursdays leading up to Christmas was well received by shoppers and traders, and at one point on the Saturday before Christmas all four multi storey car parks were full.

Six state-of-the-art electronic traffic information signs were installed around the Town Centre during December to provide parking details for drivers coming into the Town Centre. They make it easier for shoppers to find their way to our premier car parks and take advantage of our free parking offers. This is part of the Administration's drive to improve parking information, thus making it easier for people to navigate around the town, and to help local trader by increasing footfall. The new signs are located at key gateways to the town centre, including Bedford Road, Towcester Road, Bridge Street, Barrack Road, St James Road and Abington Square.

The large scaffold and hoarding that has been in place at the fire-damaged Angel Hotel in Bridge Street since the historic building was gutted in a blaze on 2nd January 2012, will be remodelled so that it is clear of the road in Bridge Street by the end of January 2014. Discussions can then begin with Northamptonshire County Council and businesses in the area about removing existing traffic orders and reopening the road to two way traffic.

The old Angel Hotel had been home to two separate businesses before the fire, which damaged it so badly that it was in danger of collapse. Scaffolding has supported the buildings ever since and the protective hoardings around that have meant traffic flow in Bridge Street has been reduced to one way.

The Council has kept up liaison with the owners of the building to encourage them to remove the scaffolding as soon as possible, and has also held meetings to bring together businesses in the area with the landlord's representatives to discuss progress.

Regeneration

On 11th December 2013 Cabinet approved the allocation of funding that will allow for the reopening of Abington Street to traffic. The investment will also support the wider regeneration of the Town Centre, which has seen millions of pounds invested in North Gate bus station, a new railway station, new student accommodation, improved office facilities and improvements to the appearance of the area. When reopened, Abington Street will allow one way traffic movement from St Giles Terrace along Abington Street to Wellington Street, provide parking and dropping off points for businesses and shoppers, and increase footfall to help local traders.

The Council has welcomed the switch on of cutting edge 4G mobile services from mobile network EE in Northampton on 4th December 2013. Independent research has found that 4G is likely to drive economic growth locally by improving business productivity and helping businesses increase mobile-commerce, while also allowing residents to quickly and easily access social network sites, stream TV and music, and access government, banking, shopping and other online services on the go.

The new Castle Station is taking shape and the steel frame is there for all to see. The new layby outside of the station has been completed and the bridge across the railway lines is in place.

A contractor has been appointed and has commenced operations at Delapre Abbey. The first stage includes renewals to significant sections of the roof, including structural repairs that will help to protect the building. This is an important initial programme of work before the wider Heritage Lottery Fund supported restoration begins later in the year. The work is due to last for thirty weeks

Under a deal agreed with the Borough Council, a floating restaurant has been launched on the River Nene at Midsummer Meadow. The fitting out works will be completed over the coming months, and when completed it should provide a unique addition to the range of food offers in the Town.

In November 2013 Kier was appointed by open tender for the development of St Peters Waterside. Contract negotiations are ongoing and proceeding well. One particular end user is showing interest in the site, but no decisions have yet been taken.

New play equipment for children has been installed in the area of green space near Riverside Way in Hunsbury Meadows. A tightrope walk, turnstile, catwalk, rolling barrel, rubber stepping post, springboard see saw and crazy car are just some of the new pieces of equipment now installed. The investment to improve the green space was in response to calls from local residents who were keen to give young children suitable and fun equipment to play on. It has been funded by a £10,000 allocation from S106 money set aside by the developers of Pineham Locks.

The University's student accommodation is nearly complete, and the first students will move in the next few weeks. The building is sure to become a significant Northampton landmark.

Planning

The Planning Committee approved the application by the University of Northampton for the new campus at Avon Nunn Mills at its meeting in December 2013. It is expected that construction at the new university site will begin later this year.

On 15th January the Cabinet discussed a plan for the Borough Council to consult the public on the Conservation Management Plan for the Northampton Battlefield. This follows a series of workshops held with interested parties including English Heritage, the Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust and the Friends of Delapre Abbey last year.

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