

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

To: NORTH AREA COMMITTEE		Subject: GOOD NEWS
From: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES		
Date: 24 NOVEMBER 2005	Ref: PJ/LMcM/JP	

1. **INTRODUCTION**

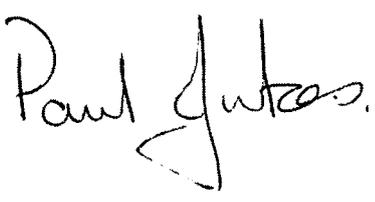
The purpose of this report is to advise committee of current 'good news' stories within the department.

2. **GOOD NEWS ITEMS**

A list of the current 'good news' stories is attached as appendix 1.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 That members note the report.



There are no background papers relevant to this report

1. DEPARTMENTAL

1.1 Garden Awards

The annual Garden Awards took place on Thursday, October 13, in Motherwell Concert Hall. The winners of this year's awards, which recognise the work of green fingered residents across North Lanarkshire, were revealed at the showcase awards ceremony.

The ever-popular event proved a resounding success yet again with hundreds of entries flocking in for the various categories. Scooping the overall first prize was Mrs Jean Hutchison from Banton, taking home the Challenge Cup and gardening vouchers, after beating off stiff competition from previous winners.

The ceremony was hosted by television and radio personality Cathy MacDonald. She was joined by keen gardener and radio presenter Bill Torrance in handing out trophies and certificates to the winners

1.2 Panto Success at Motherwell Theatre

This year's pantomime proved to be a huge success yet again with Motherwell Theatre and Robert C Kelly Ltd teaming up to present Aladdin, starring Scotland's top entertainer Dean Park.

Aladdin has become one of the country's most popular pantos, not to mention one of the longest running, with the first production dating back to 1788, at the Theatre Royal, London.

Also appearing in the production was Rodd Christensen (Spencer from Balamory), as the Secret Policeman/Genie, Russell Lane, who played the emperor and Adele Rankin as Aladdin.

The production ran from Monday, November 21, until Saturday, January 7, with over 25,000 people attending.

1.3 Fireworks Displays Huge Success

The annual fireworks displays across North Lanarkshire were again well attended by local residents. Strathclyde Park, Dunbeth Park, Airdrie Leisure Centre and Broadwood Loch hosted the firework spectacles.

The Department continues to provide some of the best firework entertainment in the country and, as ever, the events were well received by all who attended.

2. SPORT & RECREATION

2.1 Recognition for Popular Jogging Group

North Lanarkshire has been voted jogscotland Group of the Year for 2005, beating off stiff competition from groups throughout Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian.

The group, organised by North Lanarkshire Council's Department of Community Services, also finished runner up in the Jogleader of the Year category and took second and third

places in the Achievers of the Year category. The success in the annual awards scheme is a tribute to the work being done by the group, both by members and coaches.

The first North Lanarkshire group was set up at the Iain Nicolson Centre in Chryston, in March 2003, with 15 members and three jogleaders. In just three years the group has grown with over 60 members and seven jogleaders covering groups from beginners through to advanced runners, and they now take place twice a week.

This success was equalled with the introduction of a group at Strathclyde Park in June 2003, with 30 members and three jogleaders, this group has also grown and now offers sessions twice a week from beginners through to advance level. Currently, 170 runners take part on a Wednesday night with a further 102 taking part on a Sunday morning, joining 15 jogleaders.

Such is the success of the popular groups, a third venue was introduced in April last year with 20 members and two jogleaders. This group has also grown in popularity and it is hoped that a fourth group will be established early this year.

3. COUNTRYSIDE & LANDSCAPE

3.1 Forestry Commission

Forestry Commission Scotland are providing £40,000 funding for North Lanarkshire Council to commission a Consultant to carry out an Urban Woodland Audit and Strategy under the Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) challenge fund scheme.

The Audit is now in progress with 13 large urban woodlands in the ownership of North Lanarkshire Council being surveyed. Five of these sites are subject to management plans which will detail priorities for the improvement of these woodlands for people and wildlife. The audit, management plans and strategy, which will take on board local community responses, will form the basis for future active woodland management.

The aim is to increase the contribution of woodland to the quality of life in North Lanarkshire's urban, post-industrial areas and nearby countryside. On completion of the consultancy in May 2006, North Lanarkshire Council will be in an ideal position to attract further funding from Forestry Commission Scotland for capital improvements to the range of woodlands in the course of 2006 and 2007.

4 COMMUNITY LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Youth Theatre Scoops Top Award

North Lanarkshire Gaelic Youth Theatre is celebrating after becoming Royal National Mod Winners. The group, which formed in September 2004, entered the Youth Media section of the Mod and walked away with the honours.

The criteria for the award involved producing a short film, with the Youth Theatre deciding to concentrate on bullying. The story focused on the plight of a young boy who, with the help of school staff, the community and friends, managed to tell his parents he was being bullied.

The talented group has previously performed a Gaelic Pantomime staged in Greenfaulds High School and took part in a variety of workshops with BBC Scotland and Radio nan

Gaidheal. As part of future developments, the North Lanarkshire Gaelic Initiative is proposing an International Study Visit to the University of Cape Breton, Australia, in the summer of this year.

4.2 Listening to You

Black and minority ethnic groups were invited to an informative consultation event recently in an attempt to make them aware of the many services North Lanarkshire Council provides for them.

It was also an opportunity to find out what people thought of the services and to explore how they could be made more accessible and culturally sensitive to the needs of diverse local communities.

Communication was the main issue, with few of the participants having a comprehensive idea of Council services. Council representatives gave a commitment to provide guidance on the use of Language Line (translation and interpretation service) and to produce a DVD on council services.

4.3 Success at International Literacy Day

Community Learning & Development's Adult Literacy & Numeracy (ALN) Partnership recently showcased an innovative computer programme during the annual International Literacy Day conference.

The programme, Kar2ouche, was one of the highlights of the event in Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh. It is aimed at improving the literacy skills of learners throughout North Lanarkshire.

Such was the impact made, it received a special mention from Johann Lamont, Deputy Minister for Communities, during her address to the conference, encouraging delegates to visit the stall. Delegates were impressed by how effectively the software had engaged the learners.

4.4 ACCESS Programme

The Community Learning & Development ACCESS programme made a shortlist of only 5 organisations across Scotland to make the final of the National Housing Awards 2005. Competition in the category, Outstanding Achievement in Social Housing, was fierce with the programme narrowly missing out on the honour.

Nevertheless, the work done by the programme in areas of employability and inclusion has been recognised for its quality and innovation and is clearly rated within an elite group in Scotland. The service aims to deliver channels into the labour, training and learning markets for individuals who are, or have become, disengaged from mainstream activities and learning opportunities.

5 CREATIVE SERVICES

5.1 Top Talent on Display at Arts Awards

Some of the best new talent from all over North Lanarkshire descended on Motherwell Concert Hall for the annual Arts Awards Evening.

The prestigious competition, organised by the Creative Services section of North Lanarkshire Council's Department of Community Services, provides a platform for local talent focusing on creative writing, photography, singing, music, dance, visual art, craft, silvers stars and battle of the bands.

North Lanarkshire Council Provost, Councillor Pat Connelly, was on hand to welcome the winners and invited guests, with the evening compered by Scotland's top female DJ, Lisa Littlewood. Community participation is at the heart of the Arts Awards and once again, it was heartening to note the extent to which the people of North Lanarkshire embraced the opportunity to display their talents.

Entries flooded in from all corners of the authority area and there is no doubt that some of the individuals who received awards will go on to achieve recognition in the highly competitive professional arts world.

6 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & ESTATES

6.1 Apprentice Programme takes top Honours

The launch of the 2004/05 Performance Report brought success for the Grounds Maintenance & Estates Section who walked away with one of the top awards on offer. The section was awarded the 'Developing the Organisation' award for the 'Modern Apprentices Project'

This recruitment and training programme for young people has been running since 2002 and started off with an intake of three 16-18 year olds. Each year since then the intake has been increased to six apprentices, all of whom are resident in North Lanarkshire.

They attend day release to help them achieve the qualification of SVQ Level 3 in amenity horticulture and undergo three years training at various placements throughout Grounds Maintenance to give them a good grounding in all the basic tasks and disciplines. All apprentices who complete the training are invited to apply for vacancies within the section, helping to ensure new skills come back into the section.

Those who are able are encouraged to train for the HNC in amenity horticulture which further enhances their knowledge, skills and confidence. This in turn is fed back into the workplace and helps raise the standards within the section.

7 TRANSPORT

7.1 National Recognition for Apprentices

The Transport Section Apprentice Programme was recently recognised at national level with success at two major award ceremonies. Martin Hanlon, a second year apprentice mechanic, was a finalist in the category 'Apprentice of the Year Transport & Vehicle Maintenance'. With the section picking up a presentation for Excellence in Training at the APSE 2005 Apprentice of the Year Awards in Stoke on Trent.

Adding to this recognition, at another national awards ceremony in the Moat House, Glasgow, final year apprentice Iain Dawson was awarded with a bronze award for young Scottish Engineer of the year.

The Apprentice Programme continues to develop and strengthen its position as one of the most popular training schemes for young people in North Lanarkshire.