

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)		
COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Liz Dowd	Communities and Partnership Engagement	January 2025

Community Engagement

Christmas events took place at the following locations.

- Bootle – Saturday 23rd November 5pm
- Hightown Village Green – Tuesday 26th November 6.50pm
- Marian Square – Wednesday 27th November 6.30pm
- South Road – Thursday 28th November 5pm
- Crosby Village – Friday 29th November 5pm
- Bispham Road – Friday 29th November 6.30pm
- Thornton – Friday 6th November 6.30pm

Bootle Tool Shed were commissioned to build a new Christmas crib that is located on Hawthorne Road at the junction with Church Road.

The team are working with Hugh Baird College students to design a flyer and poster to encourage residents not to fly tip, particularly within rear entries. ETS and our new waste minimisation officer within cleansing will provide some information and support to students to enable them to carry out this task.

Southport Recovery

The first phase of work to the memorial gardens took place between the 28-30th October. Dowhigh dug out the old bedding around the gardens and there was a partnership day, involving members of staff from Dowhigh, Sefton Council and around 20 volunteers from the Lord Street in Bloom Volunteers who planted 3000 bulbs.

Immediate Justice programme – Causeway

In 2023 Merseyside was identified to participate in the Immediate Justice Programme which was initiated by the Home Office. Under the programme, those found committing anti-social behaviour were made to carry out reparations in the community, with aim of works starting as soon as 48 hours after the offence. The programme will cease in March 2025 and as such Causeway will be unable to proceed with the proposed grass/weeding maintenance project around the Sefton Estate. Community engagement on the proposal has not taken place however officers aim to develop a work plan with Community Payback that will include this project.

Community Safety

The community garden on Park Lane estate was launched on 21st November. Colleagues from One Vision Housing (OVH), Netherton Park, Neighbourhoods Team, Community Payback and Merseyside Police attended to help clear weeds, litter, and fly tipping.

The OVH land is being leased to Netherton Park Community Centre as part of the Evolve, Clean Hold Build initiative.

Holiday Activity Fund

There have been 31 applications to the programme for the Christmas delivery period. Offer letters have been sent out to the applicants. There is a wide range of activities being offered across the borough for Children of all ages.

The Department for Education has made us aware that currently, there has been no decision about the future of HAF.

Equality Diversity & Inclusion

School support and engagement across Sefton has continued to be developed, aimed at improving outcomes with black, Asian, & minority ethnic children and young people and support of their families. This has included staff training and curriculum area reviews with key education leaders.

Youth Engagement

The youth engagement team delivered activities with partners across the area during the Halloween and Bonfire period.

- 55 young people participated in the Behaviourself programme.
- 33 young people attended a session at Linacre Mission delivered with the Fire Service looking at the dangers of fireworks and fires.
- 50+ young people attended a Halloween Disco in partnership with community-by-nature
- 40+ young people took part in activities on Bonfire night in partnership with community-by-nature

20 young people visited a fun session at Linacre mission on Bonfire Night.

Hate Crime

The draft hate crime strategy and action plan was considered by the Safer Sefton Together Partnership in November. The Strategy sets out Sefton's response to hate crime - a collective vision for the borough based on consultation with service users, partner organisations and informed by research. The aim of the strategy is to provide a framework for agencies and partners to work together challenging hate crime, identifying gaps in services and other areas for development.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Sefton Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU) currently has 80 open cases. The team attended training with colleagues from environmental protection to upskill them on dealing with ASB and noise complaints. The training focussed on Community Protection Warning Letters and Community Protection Notices.

LIBRARIES

Microgrant Funding success

A new external funding stream has become available to public libraries called the Libraries Connected Microgrant. Library services can submit a bid for up to £5000 and the funding is designed to support small library projects with the aim of providing experience and training for library staff. Bootle Library staff member Ben Kelly had already submitted a project concept which fitted the funding well. Ben's concept is to develop an exhibition on the history of gaming which will provide an intergenerational experience for families. The exhibition will then tour the library services across the Northwest. The funding bid has been successful and once received, the work on the project can begin.

Grief Project launches

Crosby Library hosted the launch of a new grief project with artist Jenny Gaskell leading a lively discussion on public attitudes to grief. The launch was well attended and is the start of wider activities aimed at encouraging residents to talk about their experiences. The project is the first event in Sefton where the concept of a 'death positive library service' is explored, where libraries support residents living with grief, with the hope of improving their mental well-being.

Library App goes live

The library service has been developing a new library app with suppliers PTFS Europe. The app was first developed in America to work with the Aspen System which is the new public facing system of Koha (our library management system). Sefton library service was only the second library service in the country to go live with Aspen and since then have been the trail blazer in the development of it. The new library app called LiDA is designed to be an extension of Aspen, allowing customers to renew their books, check their account and take out books using a virtual library card feature. Sefton is the first library service in Europe to go live with LiDA which is now available to download via the Google Play and Apple store. As the first to adopt LiDA, Sefton received the app for free and staff have now been asked to attend conferences to demonstrate how we have developed it.

International Café, Bootle

Venus have recently relocated the International Café from Bootle Library to operate from their premises in Orrell. The International Café supports migrants who need help integrating with the community, finding housing, filling out paperwork to support their immigration applications and general day to day living. Work has now begun in setting up a similar project in Crosby and Southport Libraries with the support of the Resettlement Team.

Southport Library becomes latest National Databank site

After a successful application to the Good Things Foundation, Southport Library has now joined Bootle, Crosby and Netherton Libraries in becoming a National Databank site. These sites distribute free SIMs and data to residents that are digitally excluded due to the cost of the data for their devices. Unlike other applications, Southport's isn't targeting a specific demographic group in the area but provides more general SIM availability. The onboarding process for library staff at Southport has taken place and it is hoped that SIMs will arrive and be ready for distribution before Christmas.

Squish project

A new project aimed at parents with young toddlers is being run from Bootle Library with funding from Arts Council England. Called Squish, the project aims to provide creative activities for toddlers that engage all the senses. The weekly activities have proved successful with clay smushing, creating jelly sculptures and sniff sessions all going down well. The sessions are artist led with each artist bringing a new and exciting activity to stimulate specific senses.

Colour of Pomegranates away day

Participants of the Colour of Pomegranates project and the library's mums and toddler group held a joint visit via Mersey Ferries to the Eureka! Museum at Secombe ferry terminal. The Colour of Pomegranates members are all sanctuary seeking and have young children. Arts Council England fund the project, and the idea of the visit is to help the two groups get to know each other and help the migrant ladies integrate into the local community. Activities such as this should help the Pomegranate ladies make friends and establish connections outside of their peer group.

Devicebank and Digital Inclusion Initiative completion

The library service's first foray into the National Devicebank and LCR's Digital Inclusion Initiative has now been completed. Both projects allowed the library service to gift equipment to residents who were digitally excluded which was 30 reconditioned laptops and 50 new tablets, all provide with data. Working with the Resettlement Team, officers took the opportunity of the gifting process to provide additional support to target groups, particularly migrants being resettled in Sefton. Two migrant ladies from the Colour of Pomegranates received training so they could support the gifting process. Funding for both projects is currently closed but plans are being developed to reapply to both initiatives if/once they reopen.

New local history publication

The information team have been working on new local history publication called Unseen Formby. This is a booklet of historic photographs of old Formby that have never been published before. The photos come from a variety of sources but are primarily from old lantern slides in the council archive. The booklet is a collaboration with Formby Civic Society who provided some of the images and information for the captions. Working between other jobs, the booklet has taken two years to complete, as sourcing old photos of Formby that haven't been previously published has proved challenging. The booklet is an income generator, and we expect to cover our costs and be in profit by January/February.

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“Shine a Light” for Libraries

On 11 December, libraries across the country were lit up overnight in a gesture of “solidarity, hope and joy” to mark the opening of Spellow Library and Community Hub, which suffered criminal damage during the public disturbances of the summer.

In the image below, Councillors Atkinson, Lappin and Dowd can be seen standing with Children’s Laurette Frank Cotterall-Boyce as they answered the call for solidarity at Crosby Library ahead of the reopening of Spellow Lane Library the following day. Every library in Sefton displayed a light in support of our neighbours in Liverpool.



THE ATKINSON

Theatre Programme

The Theatre programme enjoyed a successful autumn season with wonderful audience attendance including many sold-out shows. Events featured perennial favourites such as comedian Count Arthur Strong and Ruby Wax’s stage show *I’m not as well as I thought I was*. Music performances have included piano quartets by Mozart, a Bruce Springsteen tribute, blues/rock from King King and an evening with ABC frontman Martin Fry.

A particular highlight was the welcome return of Crown Ballet with *The Nutcracker*. After a successful tour last year, the ensemble returned to enchant a sold-out audience with their delightful production. This eternal favourite is an ideal introduction to classical ballet and a welcome addition to the performing arts programme at the Atkinson. It also marked the lead-in to the Christmas season followed by Chapterhouse Theatre Company with their interpretation of *A Christmas Carol*, and the KD pantomime production of *Sleeping Beauty* which attracted thousands of visitors to Southport across its 41-performance run.

Exhibitions Programme

Ruth Moilliet: *Fear of Finding Out* 26 October 2024 – 8 March 2025

Having celebrated the botanical world in her work for many years, artist Ruth Moilliet’s bold and engaging sculptures now look at the decline of plant species, their pollinators and the natural world. Her initial studies highlighted the impact the fossil fuel industry has on our planet where

she began to use found, recycled plastic materials to produce her work. The new additions shown in this exhibition encourage discussion around the responsibilities we have as individuals to prevent further decline through our daily activities and the items in our lives. <https://www.theatkinson.co.uk/exhibition/ruth-moilliet>

Volunteer audio description project

The Atkinson has been working with a team of twelve Inclusion Volunteers to develop audio descriptions of the art in our collection. The priority is to improve access for visitors who are blind, have low vision or are partially sighted. An audio description provides a spoken description of the art, including dimensions, medium used, content, colour and style. This offers an understanding of what's being represented visually; creating valuable insight for people who are blind or have low vision. They are available to all visitors, offering a slow and close-looking experience for anyone interested in art.

The volunteers received in-house training to enable them to create drafts of art installed in current exhibitions, which are then peer reviewed, before being checked and approved by the Curatorial team. The audio recordings and their transcripts are then installed onto Bloomberg Connects - a free arts and culture app. Anyone with a mobile phone can download this app for use within the venue or elsewhere.

Print acquisitions

The Atkinson has received two substantial gifts of prints recently. A group of thirty-four prints, the Balakjian collection, has been given through the government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme, whereby important works of art are given to public art collections in lieu of tax. The collection includes work by leading British artists including seven prints by Lucian Freud, as well as several prints by Michael Auerbach, Leon Kossoff and Celia Paul. There are also prints by Marc Balakjian (1938-2017) and his wife and collaborator Dorothea Wight (1944-2013), who ran Studio Prints in London, where all the prints in the Balakjian gift were made.

In addition, four more prints by Lucian Freud have been received from the Lucian Freud estate. The donations are the most important additions to The Atkinson's fine art collections for several decades and will be displayed in a special exhibition at The Atkinson from 18th October 2025 to 28th February 2026.

Museum Programme

Lessons from Windrush: the Atkinson supported the council's celebrations for Black History Month with an open discussion on 22 October. Organised by Sefton's Equality and Diversity Officer, in association with the Southport African Caribbean Heritage Association (SACHA), this consultation event referenced the current Windrush exhibition to encourage debate and reflection. Participants featured in the exhibition acted as panel members and shared accounts of their experiences of racism. It made for a moving occasion, celebrating the fortitude and resilience of the Windrush generation and their descendants.

Southport Library

National Databank Inclusion Hub: Along with Bootle and Crosby Libraries Southport Library has been successful in their application to become a Digital Inclusion Hub. The National Databank is like a food bank, but for internet connectivity data. Southport Library will provide free data to people in our community who otherwise cannot afford it. Working with the Good Things Foundation and their partners Vodafone, O2 and 3 Mobile, the library will issue data sims to residents ensuring more people can access the connectivity they need in today's digital world.

