

BA13+ REPORT TO WESTBURY AREA BOARD

The latest in a very popular series of quarterly BA13+ Community Area Partnership meetings took place at the Laverton on the evening of Thursday 18th May and was themed around Children and Young people.

Those present, who included the town's newly appointed Mayor Cllr. Gordon King, enjoyed a lively and entertaining keynote presentation from TV presenter, international skateboarder and the face of the 'Animal' sports brand, **James Threlfall**



Making good use of the excellent audio-visual facilities available at the Laverton, James featured interviews with several successful skateboarders on film, including the legendary Tony Hawke (a name many will recognise from a generation of Playstation games featuring his likeness). James gave a potted history of skateboarding, right back to its origins in the USA in the 1950s, through its introduction to the UK in the 1970s to the present day.

James particularly liked the fact that skating taught perseverance, that if you fall you get back up and carry on. You have to be passionate, to really want to achieve something. As well as the perseverance it's taught James to accept knock-backs. It's given him confidence and a positive outlook on life.

In answer to a question from the audience regarding injuries, James explained that he had found high jumping and rugby to be far more prone to injury when he was younger; he has only had one serious injury (a broken leg) while skateboarding. He explained that it appeals to different backgrounds, religions, all kinds of people. It's predominantly males, but they are encouraging more and more females to take part.

James explained that as a teenager growing up here in Wiltshire there were no competitions available to enter, as a result of which he had helped to establish the Wiltshire Skate Series competition in 2010. It now attracts people from not only Wiltshire but from right across the country. About 100 young people take part each year. Wiltshire Council have seen the benefit of it and been very supportive, as it engages so many young people who might not take place in other sports. James said that in his opinion we are very lucky here in Wiltshire to have so many facilities.

There is a new, state of the art skateboard park being built in Melksham, costing £178,000. It will last for 50 years, so basically is costing around £4,000 a year, which is very cost-effective compared to many facilities.

Skateboarding is in the Olympic Games for 2020. There is now a national governing body called Skateboard England (which James is associated with). He's also talking with people about how to get it onto the TV.

James finished by quoting Theodore Roosevelt, "Believe you can, and you're halfway there"

James was thanked by an appreciative, if disappointingly small, audience for an entertaining and thought-provoking presentation.

Chairman Carole King went on to mention that the BA13+ Community Area Partnership is working closely with Alzheimers Support in order to help Westbury join the Dementia Action Alliance, and we are very keen to hear from anyone who would like to get involved. The formation meeting is on June 7th at 11am at Crosspoint.

The venue and theme of the next Partnership meeting, which is scheduled to take place on 17th August 2017, is to be agreed at the next Steering Group meeting, which takes place on Wednesday 14st June 2017 at Crosspoint.

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