

## Youth Council celebrate over a decade of youth participation

Stroud District Youth Council celebrated over a decade of its achievements at an event held at the Stroud Subscription Rooms on 20 March. Established in 2000, it has evolved into the recognised active voice of young people which helps to champion the voice of the 12,500, 11 to 18 year olds in the district.

SDYC Youth Cabinet Leader, Lindsey Driver said:

'It was a great occasion which allowed us to showcase over ten years of the youth council's work. Over the past decade close to 200 members of the youth council have benefited directly from the empowerment that their work has given them and we hope that our work with, and for, all young people in the district has also made a difference.'

The event was attended by an audience of over 80, including current and former members of the youth council, parents and local councillors. Local band, The Kinetics, also entertained those attending.

Over the past decade the youth council has supported a high number of groups in the district and individuals with their projects, including World Jungle, a community based project delivering activities on arts, culture and health as well as Stroud Range Fighting, who benefited from financial help for pads, mats and gloves for martial arts training. Both of these organisations gave performances at the event, which also featured speeches and presentations from past and present members of the youth council.

Lindsey added:

'Being part of the youth council has enabled many of us to become actively involved in how society works and how we can influence change. Recent efforts have focussed on campaigning against cuts to youth services across the county and concessionary transport fares for 16-18 year olds. Long term projects remain to develop local youth forums and an intergenerational project involving food waste. It was clear from those that spoke at the event that current and former members have gone on into higher education, broadened their life experiences nationally and internationally, and several of our members have gone on to become a

Member of the Youth Parliament'.

Young people's champion, Bill Badham from Practical Participation, also took part in the celebrations. Bill has campaigned for children and young people's rights for 30 years, is co-author of the national Hear by Right standards framework which helps build in participation in an effective and sustainable manner and is author of Act by Right.

He said:

'It was a privilege to be part of the event. Stroud's participation work has been exemplary for many years. At a time of significant policy changes at a national level, the rights of younger citizens to a meaningful voice has never been more important. Stroud District Youth Council is to be commended for the quality and care of its work and the passion and commitment of the young people and staff who make things happen.'

Last year the youth council also won an award for its innovative waste and recycling initiative which saw it introduce colourful, compartmentalised waste and recycling bins along routes which school children took to and from school. The project was piloted in Stroud and following its success they have been installed in other areas of the district in Paganhill, Cam, Stonehouse and Dursley.