
OVERVIEW OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Regeneration and Planning Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Town Centre Business Plan** – We gave consideration to the draft Darlington Town Centre Business Plan and Annual Action Plan, which has been compiled based on the discussions at Town Centre Board Meetings. The Plan is based on a three-year period with Year 1 commencing October 2004 and Year 3 concluding March 2007. It is intended that the Business Plan will be used to inwardly promote the Town Centre and the ‘vision’ for Darlington. The Plan fully accords with the Community Strategy and relevant Council Policy documents and complements the Town Centre Development Strategy and other key Council initiatives. The Council, as one of the partner organisations which form the Town Centre Board, will need to carry out some of the actions in the Plan since the Board has no formal status in its own right.
 - (b) **Haughton Road Site** – We received a report on the progress of the current master planning study for the Haughton Road Site which sought approval for the Council’s involvement in the project requested direction on several issues which included this Council’s involvement in the project as landowner; the Heads of Terms for a development agreement; relocation of the Council Depot; instigation of the consultation process which is required if the relocation of the allotments to an off-site location goes ahead as part of the project; and finally the under grounding of the overhead high voltage power lines.
 - (c) **‘Women Into Enterprise’ Project** – We gave approval to the extension of the ‘Women Into Enterprise’ Project with Council funding for a further year and to enter into a new Service Level Agreement with Darlington Business Venture for the delivery of the project which provides a valuable service and much needed support to women entrepreneurs in Darlington, thereby supporting National and Regional enterprise objectives. This project is supported by Darlington’s Community Strategy, One NorthEast’s Regional Economic Strategy and by Business Link’s Corporate Strategy.
 - (d) **‘Start Your Business’ Event** – In order to provide residents of Darlington with the assistance and advice they require to establish their own businesses we gave approval to this Council’s sponsorship of the ‘Start Your Business’ event, organised by the Darlington Business Venture and scheduled to be held at Carmel College on Saturday, 25th September, 2004.
 - (e) **Darlington’s first Walking Festival** – The weekend of the 21st of August saw the highly successful first attempt at staging a walking festival for Darlington. The festival

was organised by the Council's Countryside Team in conjunction with health walking groups such as Cardiac Support and Darlington walking groups such as the Ramblers Association. It was highly successful with nearly 200 people taking part, many of whom were new to exploring the Darlington countryside. It is intended to build on this success by making the festival an annual event.

- (f) **The Countryside Summer Events Programme** – The events programme is reaching the end of its third very successful year with over 700 people attending events over the period. The events programme, run by the Countryside Team, is aimed at attracting, in particular, new people into the countryside. It tries to avoid simply preaching to the converted but rather to encourage people who are normally not used to straying away from the security of the pavements. For this reason a steady growth in the numbers attending should have the knock on effects of better health, both physical and mental. It will also provide a greater understanding of rural and wildlife issues so helping to bridge an apparent increasing urban rural/ divide. The programme consists of a wide range of activities including storytelling events in Darlington's wildlife reserves, guided walks for a wide cross section of the public from the visually impaired to those interested in natural history, and also late night and early morning explorations of the birds and bats of the borough.
- (g) **Darlington Partnership External Funding Guide** – The Guide was launched at Maidendale House on Thursday 9 September. The Guide, which has been put together by the Council's External Funding Team, is designed to help Darlington's organisations improve their overall approach to securing and utilising external funding.
- (h) **Darlington Economic Regeneration Strategy 'Gateway to Economic Quality'** – was launched on Thursday 9 September at Darlington Football Club. 'Gateway to Economic Quality' will guide economic activity in the town from 2004 to 2009.

Councillor David Lyonette
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio