
OVERVIEW OF LEISURE PORTFOLIO

Purpose of Report

1. During the last eight-week cycle the following were the main areas of work under my Leisure Portfolio.

Active England Bids

2. A £10 million regional funding opportunity has been released from Sport England called 'Active England'. The new funding stream focuses upon physical activity to improve health as opposed to traditional sports participation.
3. Darlington Leisure Managers have co-ordinated and supported the submission of three local and two regional revenue Active England applications. The first local application has focused on using sport and physical activity as a tool for neighbourhood renewal across the wards of Eastbourne, Park East and Lascelles. A steering group of community partners gathered to write the application and the bid has included a substantial amount of support in kind from the communities.
4. The second seeks funds to extend the work targeting physical activity amongst older people with the GEM scheme. Leisure and Arts Managers have co-ordinated a steering group with representatives from the PCT, Housing, Social Services and direct users. This application has secured £90,000 single programme matched funding.
5. The third has been written to accompany the work of the Council's *On The Move* sustainable transport application to the Department of Transport and focuses on walking and cycling initiatives. The £3 million transport application acts as matched funds.
6. In addition to the bids above, we are also partners in a regional and sub-regional application. The first seeks funds to develop street games initiative throughout the region. The second focuses on a Disability Co-ordinator to support inclusion in physical activity.

Events

7. Between January 2004 and March 2004 the Dolphin Centre has hosted 27 large scale events, opening the doors to over 7000 event customers and welcoming back high profile events such as Darlington Assembly, Racial Equality Launch Day and Darlington Schools Gala. The North of England Brass Band championships were hosted at the Dolphin Centre for the 20th successive year and the Rt Honourable Mayor of Darlington, Councillor Ron Lewis, presented commemorative awards to all participants to celebrate the occasion.

Leisure and Arts Young Peoples Activities

8. The planning process for the Summer vacation period and Autumn season is underway targeting young people (and their parents) within Darlington in a joined up and effective manner. Family focused casual activity will be accompanied by longer-term initiatives and courses across the 0-16 years age range.
9. In the Arts, residencies are being developed to include a three-week residency from New Writing North, one-week residency from Scarlet Theatre and a one-week residency from Kaos Theatre Company. All these will provide fantastic opportunities for young people to take part, write, create and perform. As an ongoing approach, young people's research will inform the programme, as will the needs of key partners.
10. Building on young people's involvement in planning services, the *Get on Board* skateboarding initiative will come to fruition with the purchase and launch of the mobile TRUCK. Funded by the New Opportunities Fund, the provision will be used as a young peoples resource in neighbourhoods all over town.
11. The Leisure and Arts Section has also worked with DDYCA to provide a *chill out* café provision for young people on a Friday evening. The 24-week pilot will start at the Dolphin Centre and be reviewed to consider developments. This scheme has been funded by County Durham Foundation.

Eastbourne Sports Pavilion

12. At Eastbourne Sports Complex the new pavilion development will be completed by Friday 23 April. This £80,000 capital programme development has provided a community facility that will be accessed by Hundens Green Bowling Association, Darlington Harriers, Darlington Hockey Club and other community groups and partners. The opening of this facility is scheduled for Saturday 22 May.

Busy with Arts and Business

13. The Arts Centre, hosted a prestigious Arts and Business lunch and awards presentation which took place on Friday 2 April. The meeting was an opportunity for arts and business to introduce their new Director, Adam Lopardo and for them to acknowledge and award a number of local businesses who have recently completed arts sponsorship projects.
14. The first instalment of £10,000 in sponsorship from Arts and Business has been received for a new artist in residence project with Darlington based, Cleveland Bridge Group. The project, due to start in June 2004 will be managed by the Council's Visual and Public Arts Officer.

Darlington Community Carnival 2004 - Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 June

15. The Council are once again supporting the work of the Darlington Community Carnival. The theme of the procession this year is Myths and Legends. Artists Suzi Robinson and Amanda Ryan will be running the six weeks of free workshops to create the costumes, masks and sculptures for the procession.

16. Community groups involved include, Sure Start, GOLD, Red Hall, Skerne Park and Firthmoor Community Centres, Reid Street and Corporation Road Primary Schools, Millennium Volunteers, Darlington College, Young Offenders and DAD.
17. The procession is accompanied by an afternoon of music and entertainment and all funds this year will go to the Crossroads Young Carers.

Creative Partnerships

18. Artists in Residence are now working in three of the four Darlington Creative Partnership schools to support artistic events and stimulate artistic thought and process across the curriculum subjects and key stages. New Writing North have been commissioned to work with a number of Darlington schools to celebrate the West Park development and an exhibition will held later in the year.
19. Creative Partnerships also involves sub-regional work and Northern Stage has been commissioned to create and produce an opera to be performed in June at Darlington Railway Museum and Railway Station. This will involve around 150 young people from across the Tees Valley.
20. Shorter projects are accompanied by a number of large projects throughout the year, including three video and film making and journalism workshops, a circus workshop for young people with special needs and a skate boarding and fashion design project. These will all involve young people from across Tees Valley with the filmmaking and circus projects, hosted in Darlington.

Civic Theatre Programme

21. The new summer season at the Civic Theatre and Arts Centre has been launched. The season has been extended to mid August leaving only two dark weeks on the stage. Throughout the season the Theatre will play host to many exceptional productions including, Tell Me On A Sunday, starring Marti Webb and the ever popular Summer repertory season brought by Ian Dickens for the fifth consecutive year. This year the Summer repertory season has been kindly sponsored by Barker and Stonehouse.

Arts Centre Fellow

22. As previously reported, Darlington Arts Centre and Civic Theatre were successful in their application to become a host in the Arts Council of England's prestigious Fellowship Programme. The placement carries a bursary from the Arts Council of £13,000. Liana Miller has been appointed and will takes up her post based at the Arts Centre working closely with the Visual and Public Art Officer, Wendy Scott and the Performing Arts Officer, Lynda Winstanley. Her main role will be to develop an education and outreach programme to support the film programme as well as the Myles Meehan Gallery programme and to establish further links the Queen Elizabeth VI Form College and The College of Technology with our work.

New Museum Leaflets

23. A new series of colourful and informative leaflets has recently been produced for the Museum, each incorporating the Museum's new logo. There is a 'general' museum leaflet, a museum guide, an events programme and an updated leaflet for the Ken Hoole Study Centre. Many have already been distributed to outlets both in and around Darlington.

Museum Events

24. A wide range of events have taken place at the Museum in recent weeks and more are scheduled during May. An Easter Steam Weekend was held 9 – 12th April (steam train rides and childrens activities) closely followed by a Grandparents Day (when old toys, games and household items were on display in the Museum). A Steam Weekend was held 1 – 3rd May with a visiting steamroller, mill engine and live steam miniature railway. On 8th May a Film Day is being held (a programme of short railway films) followed by a Toy Fair on the 15th May and a Site Open Weekend 22 – 23rd May (when the premises of the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group, the A1 Trust and the Darlington Railway Preservation Society) will be open to the public. A steam weekend on 29th and 30th May rounds off this busy month!

VAQAS

25. Darlington Railway Centre and Museum was recently awarded a top accreditation from the English Tourism Council. The accreditation, known as VAQAS (Visitor Quality Assurance Service) allows the visitor to feel safe in the knowledge that the Museum is an excellent choice for a day out. VAQAS is well recognised in the Tourism industry and other attractions with the accreditation already awarded to the Imperial War Museum, the National Railway Museum and Beamish Open Air Museum.

New Museum Car Park

26. The Museum's new car park has now been officially opened to the public and new signs have been erected to direct visitors to the main Museum building. These signs greatly enhance both the approach to the Museum and the quality of information to visitors.

Museum Education Activities

27. Improvements to the education service continue at the Railway Centre and Museum. Notably education visits were up by 1093 on the preceding year, rising from 5038 in 2002/03 to 6131 - an increase of 23% over the year. This continues the trend started last year, which saw a doubling of education visits.
28. The education department has secured significant outside funds to continue and develop high quality educational projects. Perhaps the most prestigious being a £15,000 film making project with Sony Award winning director Tony Glover, which involved children from a Connexions scheme. Made over the Easter holidays, the final version of the film will be ready for showing this summer.

29. Innovative education and interpretation work using drama as an interpretive medium will be starting in May, following the securing of £15,000 from Renaissance in the Regions. It is expected that a similar amount will be secured to continue with this work in 2005/06.
30. Other new projects starting in the summer term include a bridge building (engineering) project for Keystage 3 pupils and a mathematics trails for Year 2 & Year 6 pupils. Again these projects have been developed with outside funding.
31. The flagship project of the summer term will undoubtedly be a new opera, based on Locomotion No.1. This major project is done in partnership with Northern Stage, Opera North, Creative Partnerships, Darlington Railway Museum and schools from the Tees Valley. This is the largest Creative Partnership project in the country and will culminate in a series of performances from the 3rd to the 7th of August in a purpose built covered auditorium, which will seat up to 350 people.

Museum Collections

32. **Study Centre Redecoration** - The Study Centre was re-decorated at the end of March. This created an opportunity to take down all the pictures/photographs from the wall and these will be replaced with new items. A new lockable storage cabinet has been added and space has been created for new shelving. This will give the Study Centre much needed additional storage. An additional workstation has been purchased, which will accommodate an extra member of staff.
33. **Environmental Monitoring Equipment** - New environmental monitoring equipment has been purchased for the collections. This consists of two data loggers and associated computer software. These loggers have been placed within the two main stores of the Museum and will log the relative humidity and temperature of the stores. This information can then be downloaded onto the computer and used to monitor the environmental conditions within these stores. This will help enormously in our understanding of the fluctuations in conditions throughout the year. These have previously been monitored manually. Additional loggers will be purchased as and when money is made available and added to other areas of the Museum. The information collected will help the Museum with informed decisions in collections management and preventative conservation.
34. **Renaissance in the Regions** - A pre-application form for a Best Practice grant from NEMLAC has been sent off and we are currently waiting for a reply. If this grant is secured, it will be added to money already set aside from the Renaissance in the Regions (ICT hub) money to provide another member of staff to contribute to the updating of the museum catalogue on the MODES database. The Museum catalogues have been transferred from the old system (apart from a section from the North Eastern Railway Association catalogue) and the additional member of staff will bring these records up to SPECTRUM standards and make them ready for addition onto the website.
35. **Tubwell Row Museum Objects** - During April the remaining items left within the Museum previously belonging to the town's Tubwell Row Museum have been transferred to the house on McNay Street. These items will then be sorted and a decision will be made as to

how they will eventually be disposed of.

Railway Centre and Museum Website

36. The website is continually being updated. A page specifically for the Thomas the Tank weekend has now been added, which will help to promote the event and the events page now has a complete listing for 2004.

Study Centre Computer

37. The Study Centre computer is now in need of replacement as it has ceased to operate effectively. This computer was previously purchased with a grant from the Ken Hoole Trust. A replacement will be leased and not purchased so that it can be upgraded easily in conjunction with all other computers in the Council. This computer will be networked and an additional computer sited in the Study Centre, which will allow the Museum catalogue to be accessed by another member of staff.

**Councillor Lee Vasey
Cabinet Member with Leisure Portfolio**