
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.

No Messin' Event

2. "No Messin' ", a campaign funded by Network Rail and Darlington Borough Council took place on 25 –26 August 2005. The purpose was to raise awareness of railway safety to young people. A comprehensive programme of diversionary activities took place at the Dolphin Centre and sites throughout the town. It was estimated that 600 young people attended during the two-day event.

Black History Month

3. The Arts have worked in partnership with the Children's Trust and Arts Council North East, to stage Black History Month in October.
4. The celebrations took place with authentic musicians from Ghana along with a week-long drama and music residency at the Arts Centre. 'Jack Drum Arts' worked with young people from the Youth Theatre groups to recreate the epic story of Rama and Sita, which was performed in the theatre. A variety of music, song and dance events, including several workshops, took place at venues across the town to support the event.

Arts Development Team

Vane House Resource Centre Dance Action

5. A series of dance workshops are programmed from October to December to introduce people with visual impairments to dance and to encourage participation in the arts, promoting exercise and movement.

Surestart Arts Project

6. The Arts have been working in partnership with Surestart to develop and provide a series of creative workshops. The workshops will be held Darlington Arts Centre throughout November and December 2005 aimed at young families from Surestart to work together using a variety of arts.

North Lodge Park

7. A series of arts and leisure activities were held in North Lodge Park over the summer holidays. A total of 579 children were given the opportunity to access arts and sports activities in a local, safe environment. A number of artists were commissioned to illustrate various art forms and to engage with spectators to encourage participation. All activities were offered free of charge to the participants.

Pedestrian Heart

8. To celebrate the launch of the Pedestrian Heart in Darlington, arts activities were provided for young people. Opportunities to make Christmas cards, origami gifts, learn about mehndi and to work on a community mural complemented the street entertainment provided over the three-day event.

Arts Challenge

9. A series of workshops has been developed to create opportunities for years 3 and 4 children from Corporation Road Community Primary School. Held at the Darlington Arts Centre, the weekly workshops will improve access to cultural methods of approaching curriculum subjects. This project will encourage pupils to explore their own ideas, raise their aspirations and improve their concentration levels. It will also give the children the opportunity to work outside of their school environment. The workshops include creative writing; dance and puppet making and will ultimately lead to a film being made of their work which will be shown in school at the end of the year.

Fe2 05 Exhibition Workshop

10. Thirty Year 1 children from St Augustine's RC (Aided) Primary School attended a workshop in the Myles Meehan Gallery at the Arts Centre. The children created their own drawings based on the artwork and their own three dimensional sculptures with assistance from a local artist. The pieces of artwork were returned to the school to create one extremely large community piece of artwork.

Dolphin Centre

Darlington Swimming Club Gala

11. Darlington Amateur Swimming Club's annual Open Gala occurred on the 1st and 2nd October 2005. More than 400 Swimmers participated in this event from all over the United Kingdom. The upgraded pool timing system at the Dolphin Centre was showcased at this gala following a £30,000 investment earlier in the year.

Eastbourne Sports Complex

12. Rejuvenation work to the value of £20,000 has been completed on the Artificial surface at Eastbourne Sports complex. The work has been carried out to extend the life of the facility to ensure on going high quality provision.

The Million Mile Challenge

13. The Million Mile Challenge sport initiative is linked to Sport England's Everyday Sport campaign. As part of this campaign the North East was given the task to run or walk one million miles between the dates of the Great North Walk and the Great North Run. The people of Darlington exceeded the target of 13,000 miles by achieving a total of 27,000 miles.

Sports Development

Alderman Leach School – Multi Use Games Area

14. The new multi use games area at Alderman Leach School was formally opened on 30 September 2005. The facility will enable children to play tennis, mini tennis, basketball and netball on the purpose built synthetic pitch. The Sport Development team are working with the school to secure a community access agreements which will enable out of school opening times for the wider community.

Sponsorship

15. The Sponsorship Team has secured some significant deals with high profile companies.
16. The Vibe awards took place on 3rd October at the Civic Theatre. This is the first year that sponsorship has been involved resulting in a full-sponsored category for all awards.
17. Cummins Engine Company Limited sponsored the annual Mayor's Ball. Over £3,000 worth of prizes have been secured for the Casino/Black Jack event of the evening. Alpha FM has also supported the event, financially and in kind.
18. TFM/Magic 1170 have been appointed media partner for the Festival of Fireworks event. The event was held in the South Park on Saturday, 5 November 2005. Darlington worked in partnership with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and Stockton Borough Council to promote this as a 'regional event'. This has been achieved by organising the fireworks displays at different times throughout the region, which will give people the opportunity to attend more than one display, if desired.
19. Alpha FM will be the media partner for the Christmas Lights event this year. The "switching on of the lights" events will take place in the town centre on Sunday, 20 November 2005. Alpha FM has confirmed that they will provide two-week on-air campaign to publicise the event. In addition, Alpha will provide staging, lighting and a presenter to host the event.
20. Darlington Building Society will sponsor a night at the pantomime in January to help celebrate their 150th anniversary.
21. Support funding has been awarded from Arts and Business, which will be used to support Education in the Arts. A theatre company will be commissioned to work with young people during the 2006 summer holidays. A theatre piece will be performed in the newly refurbished Dance Studio and will form part of the refurbishment launch event for Arts Centre next September.

22. Learning Together Children's Day Nursery has sponsored the Faverdale / Rotary Way roundabout.

South Park

23. The majority of the work included within Phase 1 is now complete. The only exception is the installation of the east entrance gates, which will now be completed at the end of Phase 2. With a programmed completion date of mid to late November envisaged.
24. Work on the Skateboard Park is now complete as is the commissioned artwork within this element.
25. The major parts of the project are now complete, with the only exceptions being:
 - Rose Garden – Footpath surfacing to complete
 - Teaching Block – Flooring to complete
 - New Toilet Block – Flooring to complete
 - Bandstand – Lights to install and footpath surfacing to complete
 - Footpath – 50% complete to date
 - Lake – Boardwalk to complete
 - Café - Work only just started
26. The overall project is expected to be completed by December 2005.

Renaissance in the Regions

27. Since late September, “The Curiosity Shop”, a museum marketing exhibition funded and organised by the Tees Valley Hub, has occupied a vacant unit in The Cornmill Centre. Visitor numbers on the first day exceeded 2,200, and by close of business on Saturday 15 October had reached nearly 17,000. The exhibition’s organisers have noted with particular pleasure its popularity in Darlington.
28. The staffing roster included a mixture of museum employees, volunteers, “Friends”, and members of Darlington Railway Preservation Society, and was an encouraging sign for the future.

Events

29. The 180th Anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway took place on 27 September, with museum staff contributing to a photo feature in the Northern Echo. The advertised event the previous Saturday and Sunday attracted in the order of 80 more visitors than might have been expected on a normal September weekend. On 8 October, the Toy Fair received 231 visitors - perhaps 180 more than would otherwise have been the case. On 15 and 16 October, the museum was involved in “The Big Draw”, a national event where children are taught how to draw artistic inspiration from museums. At the time of writing numbers had yet to be collated, but the two tutors involved reported a busier weekend than they had expected. Once again, the event generated good news coverage.

30. Preparations for the “Bollywood” youth film project have been completed. This event took the form of a free-admission, family-oriented cultural celebration targeted specifically at the town’s Asian community, and was held on the afternoon of Sunday, 13 November. The event marked a new departure for the museum, being the first time that it had actively sought to engage with local residents of Asian cultural background.

Education

31. The highlight of the period was the “Bollywood” youth film production noted above, with filming completed in early November. Schools have shown an encouraging level of interest in the “Maths Trail”, which used a series of clues found in the exhibitions to help primary children develop numeracy skills. During the first week in October, the museum hosted “Tissue of Lives”, a history-based drama project for schools developed and run by Beamish.

Site and Buildings

32. Work has continued on repairs to the roof, and is due for completion within the next few weeks. Following a specialist survey of the condition of the roof trusses, many of the temporary supports have now been removed and repairs are underway. In general, the works have caused minimal impact upon visitors.

Study Centre and Collections

33. One interesting donation in recent weeks has been three wooden foundry patterns for railway wheels. These had spent some years as garden ornaments after being rescued from a bonfire on the site of the former works of Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns.

Staffing

34. A number of new volunteers have been recruited to the team, and we look forward to working with them.

Development

35. On Friday 21 October, the Northern Rock Foundation announced a grant of £400,000 towards the museum’s refurbishment. The press release said, “The Foundation's grant is towards the first phase of a major redevelopment that will see repairs to buildings and public areas, and improved education and exhibition facilities. The transformed Museum will work alongside the region's other rail heritage sites”.

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