
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) **Darlington Town Centre Pedestrian Heart Shop Front Grant Scheme** - In order to encourage further investment and regeneration in Darlington Town Centre as part of the wider Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme, we gave approval for a grant scheme to help improve the appearance of shop fronts within the Town Centre. The Council will manage the grant scheme over a period of three years with capital funding being provided by One NorthEast through the Single Programme with revenue costs for managing the scheme being met from within the Planning Services Section budget.
 - (b) **Darlington Advantage - office marketing campaign** - A national office property campaign was launched on 9 June by Alan Milburn M.P. The Darlington Advantage campaign is funded by Darlington Borough Council, Tees Valley Regeneration, and property developers Marchday plc, City & Northern and Gort Securities, as well as some funds from the British American Tobacco (BAT) Legacy. The aim of the campaign is to promote the advantages of Darlington as a business location, the readily available office space at Morton Palms, Lingfield Point, and Hopetown Office Park, and to attract new businesses to Darlington
 - (c) **Self Development Grant** - A Self-Development Grant is available to unemployed Darlington residents, new businesses in Darlington under 6 months and ex-BAT employees who need financial assistance towards getting into work, training or education. Support can be in the form of help with training courses, confidence and motivation building activities, and costs associated with specialist equipment or clothing necessary to undertake work or training. The scheme is funded through the Single Programme and the BAT Legacy
 - (d) **External Funding Fair** - A Funding Fair was held at the Dolphin Centre on 22 June, where organisations from the voluntary and community sector were invited to meet funders, receive advice, discuss project ideas and listen to speeches from the Big Lottery Fund and Government Office. Ten major funders were represented alongside the Council's External Funding Team, Darlington Council for Voluntary Service and the Darlington Partnership. The event drew around 100 attendees and is likely to become an annual event.
 - (e) **Local Development Framework (LDF) - Issues and Options** - A key stage in the preparation of the Council's replacement Local Plan, the LDF, is the production of a Core Strategy. This will set out the overarching vision, objectives and strategic framework for the subsequent detailed policies and proposals, for development in the

Borough to 2021. The first stage in preparing the Core Strategy is an Issues and Options paper which provides Key Stakeholders with the opportunity to identify, comment on, and suggest planning issues and options which will influence development patterns over the next 10 to 15 years. On 22 June, at the Darlington Partnership Assembly Meeting, the Core strategy Issues and Options Paper was launched for consultation, through a presentation and workshops. Consultation will continue until the end of July and, following consideration of responses, a preferred set of options will be drawn up by officers for consideration by Cabinet in September.

- (f) **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** - The Draft SCI sets out the Council's proposed approach to carrying out consultation on the Local Development Framework and significant planning applications, prior to submission. The document was endorsed by Council in April and was submitted to The Planning Inspectorate in June. The Inspectorate will judge the document's 'Soundness' and make any suggested modifications in a binding report. The final version of the SCI will be submitted to Council later this year for approval and adoption.

- (g) **Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund** - Thanks to a contribution from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund a grant has been received via County Durham to continue to develop the new Skertingham Community Woodland in north Darlington. The new public access the new community woodland offers now needs promoting and it is this vital stage in the projects development that this grant will enable. It will be used for funding such elements as signposting , site interpretation and information, and wider publicity through the distribution of a leaflet and the holding of a series of events. The two communities affected by aggregates extraction will be represented by the local steering group for the woodland soon to be set up. These groups will be consulted on the production of the promotional material. The new woodland already offers extensive new countryside recreation to the people of north Darlington and this is set to increase further as the woodland grows and improves.

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Regeneration and Planning Portfolio