
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.

Inclusion

2. As part of the Better Play Project, a “new age kurling” training day was initiated and delivered at the Dolphin Centre on Sunday 6 March. This provided an introduction to this new accessible sport at the Dolphin Centre, with seventeen people attending the training from primary school teachers to users of the Learning Disability Service. Following an initial taster session and work alongside the PE Co-ordinator at Beaumont Hill School, a Boccia tournament has been scheduled for 18 May. This will involve pupils from some schools in the area and people from the Learning Disability Service with the intention of mainstreaming this provision within facilities.
3. Ongoing consultation work with the Children’s Trust and Investors in Children has led to the delivery of activities for disabled children attending mainstream schools who had identified a lack of leisure opportunities within Darlington. Questionnaire feedback suggested the formation of pilot “sportsability” sessions, which commenced in mid-April with volunteer support and input from DAD.
4. Leisure Management and the Youth Service established and continue to develop the “chill out café” at the Dolphin Centre on a Friday evening from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. Young people from across the town have the opportunity to access a range of leisure activities including swimming, football, badminton and fitness suite. This service has proved a real success and there are currently between 60-80 young people using the Café each Friday evening.

Facilities

5. There has been investment in new state of the art pool timing equipment at the Dolphin Centre. This equipment includes a new digital scoreboard and will enable the Centre to host national level swimming galas once again.

6. Darlington's incoming Mayor Elect, Councillor Stella Robson will take up office on Thursday 19 May 2005 and is inviting local people to participate in a charity golf day. The event will take place at Stressholme on Friday 3 June 2005 and aims to raise money for Darlington Association on Disability, Family Help Refuge and Darlington Music Festival, a charity that encourages and supports young musicians in our local area. This high profile competition has already received an enthusiastic response from local organisations who are keen to work in partnership with Darlington Borough Council and contribute to local charities.

Visual Arts - Myles Meehan Gallery

Paper Dolls, Karen Melvin – 3 June – 16 July

7. The driving force of Karen's work is storytelling, which stemmed from documentary photography. Cycles of nature, ancient woodland, gardens and more constructed pictures around myth and fairy tale folklore are some of the areas Karen has explored. From kitchen domestic to garden allotment, the process involves cut-outs and collage assemblages meticulously arranged by hand. These are then re-photographed and digitally printed.

North Lodge Park

8. Building on the development of text in public places in Darlington, Maureen Almond was commissioned as Writer in Residence for North Lodge Park last summer. Maureen has worked closely with local groups and school children and will be producing text for a New Writing North supported publication to provide a legacy for the local people involved. Text will be translated into public art elements throughout the Park by visual artist, Andrew McKeown.
9. At 11.00am on Wednesday 25 May there will be an opportunity to see and hear what the children from Corporation Road School and Reid Street School have written in celebration of the Park.

Visiting the Theatre has Become a Lot Easier

10. A ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the Civic Theatre on 14 April to officially commission the fully automated doors that have been installed at the Theatre's Borough Road entrance. Representatives from the Friends of the Civic Theatre, Darlington Association on Disability and staff from Darlington Borough Council were in attendance.

Zoe Birkett Returns Home to Star in Panto

11. Darlington's Zoe Birkett will start in this year's pantomime at Darlington Civic Theatre. She will star alongside favourites, The Grumbleweeds in Beauty and the Beast, which runs from Friday 9 December until Sunday 22 January, a total of 69 performances.

South Park

12. 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. Work on Phase 2 is progressing well, the first elements of this phase are due to be completed as follows:-

- Children's Play area completed
- Bowlers Changing Facilities May
- Lodge Facilities May
- Teaching Block mid May

All other works are on programme for completion by September 2005.

13. The proposals for the Skateboard Park have now received planning consent and work is expected to commence within the next few weeks.

14. The new Friends Group of South Park is gathering momentum and has developed over the past few months.

Darlington Railway Centre and Museum

Visitor Figures

15. In April there were 1096 visitors to the Museum, this is a decrease on last year due to Easter falling within the 2004/05 financial year and an expected downturn due to the opening of Locomotion.

Events

16. The Teddy Bears Picnic on May 2nd realised 230 visitors on a Bank Holiday Monday, which is an exceptional figure. It is anticipated that all of the events planned for this year will be as successful.

Heritage Lottery Fund Application

17. Work on the HLF bid has progressed well and it is anticipated that the application will be submitted mid May. Full designs, costings, layouts and interpretation concepts have been provided and will be included in the submission.

Roof Repair Project

18. Tender documents have been circulated and it is anticipated that the contract will be awarded soon. English Heritage have been included in discussions regarding the costs for the roof repair project and are happy with the proposed works.

Community Rail Partnership

19. The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) recently designated 56 rural routes in the UK as Community Railways and the Heritage Line was one of them. The SRA aim to improve the financial performance, value for money and social value of these lines by making them community rail partnership lines, which are supported by Community Partnerships. With this in mind a group was formed to pursue this and the museum is represented by the Tourism & Heritage Officer. There is to be a 'soft' launch of the partnership on the 14th May at Locomotion in Shildon followed by other events at key sites on the Heritage Line, one of which will be in Darlington at a venue to be confirmed.

Education

April

20. Delivery has been taken of a new interactive, which has been developed in house. '**Read All About It**' allows visitors to compile a railway celebratory special edition of the Northern Echo and by doing brass rubbings, they can create the illustrations for the paper.
21. A £20,000 grant towards a Bollywood film 'Palace on Wheels' has been secured and a source of Bollywood art for supporting exhibition has been identified. Further funds are being sought.
22. Work on the Access & Learning Plan continues, with a view to adopting the final version as museum policy in due course. This will incorporate the introduction of 'Inspiring Learning For All' to the Museum.

May

23. The WWII Time Trackers school project returned to the Museum from 9th to 23rd May and was fully booked.
24. A joint oral history project with the library is being developed. A grant application has been submitted to hold WWII concerts at both the Museum and Crown Street Library, which will act as a pivot in unlocking the memories of the older generation who lived through the war.

Collections

Training

25. The Documentation Assistant has attended a MODES database training course, which was funded by the Renaissance Hartlepool Hub. She will also be attending Basic Object Handling in May run by the North Eastern Museum, Libraries and Archives Council and funded by the Renaissance North East Hub.

Donations

26. Of particular interest is a beautiful mahogany Tees Valley railway wall clock, which has been donated by the Railway Heritage Committee. This clock is in very good condition and it is planned to display this item within the main hall of the Museum once the roof has been repaired.

University Student

27. A student from Newcastle University will spend a period of eight weeks at the Museum on a work placement and will assist the Collections team with the Museum inventory and the updating of the collection records on the MODES database. These item will be transferred (with others) later this year to be included on the Single Point of Access (SPA) website, allowing visitors to view items we have on display and in store within the Museum. This student will also help with an education project for one week.

Security/Disaster Planning

28. A security advisor has visited the Museum (from Darlington Police) and supplied a report advising of some security alterations that are needed both within the Museum and along the perimeter of the site. The recommendations in this report are being addressed.
29. A Disaster Plan is being prepared for the Museum. This will be completed by the end of May and will detail the procedures to follow and responsibilities of staff in the event of a disaster such as fire and flood. This will be a quick point of reference and will also have essential information about conservators / advisors within the region and what to do with damaged items immediately after an event.

Councillor Lee Vasey
Cabinet Member with Leisure Portfolio