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**OVERVIEW OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO**

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1. During the last eight week cycle of Committees the following main areas of work have been undertaken under the Regeneration and Planning Portfolio :-
  - (a) **Commercial Street** – We have selected a preferred developer for the land at Commercial Street and Kendrew Street, and also a reserve development selected should the preferred developer not proceed in a reasonable timescale. This will enable us to achieve development set out in the Council’s Town Centre Development Strategy, to benefit the economic well-being of the borough and to maximise a revenue stream for the Council consistent with the above objectives.
  - (b) **Tourism Review Group** – Cabinet considered the findings and recommendations of the Tourism Review Group, established by the Environment Scrutiny Committee to consider how the tourism strategy could be improved in the light of regeneration and gave its approval to the adoption of the Action Plan which contained a range of suggested and existing activities to carry forward.
  - (c) **Darlington Local Development Framework: Local Development Scheme** – Cabinet agreed that the Local Development Scheme for Darlington, which will set out planning policies for Darlington and eventually replace the Borough of Darlington Local Plan, as submitted to the Government Office for the North East on 16th March, 2005, take effect, as from 10th May, 2005; the proposed arrangements for consultation with key stakeholders on Core Strategy issues and alternative options be approved; and officers report on the response to the consultation, and on proposed Core Strategy options to the Cabinet Meeting on 27th September, 2005.
  - (d) **Capital Programme 2005/06, Release of Funds: Northgate (Building Improvements) Partnership Scheme** – We approved the release of £100,000 from English Heritage to support the first year of the Northgate Partnership Scheme. This will help improve the condition, appearance and economic and social prospects of one of the most historic, but most run-down gateways into Darlington.
  - (e) **Darlington Business Club** – The Council has agreed to support the Darlington Business Club with a grant of £3,000 to support additional activity, increase membership to 110 members, provide business mentoring and encourage more club transactions over the internet.
  - (f) **Targeted Assisted Employment** – The Targeted Assisted Employment scheme has been developed and supported with a grant of £40,000 from the Single Regeneration Budget. It will provide wage subsidies to Darlington employers to recruit and train 40 unemployed residents from the wards of Central, Bank Top, Lascelles, Lingfield, North Road and Northgate.

- (g) **Countryside Events** – Countryside Section’s third events programme got underway in April including such activities as a ‘turn off the TV’ week event making bird boxes with Dodmire and Whinfield infants school and a guided cycle ride through Rockwell Nature Reserves. The new season has also seen an Easter fun trail through Geneva Woods with local nursery schools in co-operation with SureStart and the commencement of the third year of the Visually Impaired Countryside Walking Group in partnership with the Primary Care Trust. We have also proceeded to fully establish the weekly practical conservation tasks in partnership with Darlington Memorial Hospital. In addition, the team received the visit of Northumberland in Bloom judges to two nature reserves and improved site safety in close cooperation with the steering groups at three nature reserves; in particular those of Geneva Woods, at Maidendale and at Brinkburn. The winter saw the completion of a further 30 hectares of community woodland planting by the Tees Community Forest and the Forestry Commission to bring the total of land managed for the purposes of nature conservation and quality countryside access to 153 hectares.

**Councillor David Lyonette**  
**Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**