

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

1. This is the final report of the Arts Task and Finish Review Group, established by the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee to make a positive contribution to the review of Cultural Services, the efficiency savings and new business models being examined.

Background Information

2. At the meeting of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 5th November, 2009, it was agreed that a Task and Finish Review Group be established to give consideration to Cultural Services.
4. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at the meetings and are referred to in the notes attached (**Appendix 2**). This report describes the outcome of the Task and Finish Review Group, it summarises the work undertaken, the findings from the processes and the subsequent recommendations. At the initial meeting of the Group it was recognised that there was the potential for a very large review on Culture however it was agreed that the Group would focus on the arts and not cultural issues.

Terms of Reference

6. The following terms of reference had been established for the Review Group :-
 - a. To examine ways of increasing partnership working in both the public sector and third sector organisations.
 - b. To examine ways of ensuring Darlington's representation in the Tees Valley.
 - c. To examine funding opportunities at sub-regional and regional level.
 - d. To actively develop local culture indicators.
 - e. To monitor any recommendations arising from this Review.

Membership of the Review Group

7. The membership of the Arts Task and Finish Review Group initially comprised Councillors Hartley, Lawton, Long, Nicholson and Robson although all Members of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee were invited to all the meetings.

Acknowledgements

8. The Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigations and would like to place on record their thanks to the following :-

Steve Thompson, Assistant Director, Culture;
David Goodchild, Policy Advisor;
David Tetlow, Head of Steam;
Miranda Thain, Creative Producer, Theatre Hullabaloo;
Richard Grassick, Darlington Media Group;
Paul Dillon, Darlington Media Group;
David Cox, Humantics;
Friends of Darlington Railway Museum;
Leona White, Museum Curator, Head of Steam; and
Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer.

Aim

9. The overall aim of the Review Group was to consider what action could be taken to improve the provision of the Arts within the constraints of the current budget.

Methods of Investigation

10. The Review Group has met formally seven times between 1st December, 2009 and 12th August, 2010 and a detailed record of the topics discussed at those meetings are contained in the notes produced following each meeting attached for information (**Appendix 2**).

Financial Implications

11. The recommendations contain a number of recommendations that have a financial consequence. The Review Group recognises that the Council currently has limited resources and these spending aspirations will need to be viewed within the overall competing priorities and service delivery pressures throughout the Council. Since the start of the review it also became apparent that further budget constraints are required and that efficiencies are a priority for the Darlington Borough Council.

Conclusions

12. The Review Group concluded that :-

- (a) Darlington's Arts Service incorporated service delivery from many areas, such as the Arts Centre, Civic Theatre, visual and public art, education and outreach, youth theatre, marketing, festivals, events and sponsorship. This arts provision improved the quality of life for individuals and supported economic success and regeneration within the Borough.
- (b) There are currently budget constraints on the whole of the Council that could impact on some of findings of the Group.
- (c) Joint working opportunities between Tees Valley Museums be explored having regard to
 - Current service levels;

- Public expectations of modern museum services;
 - Recent investment made by external funders and Councils; and
 - Budget pressures.
- (d) Tees Valley Authorities must share all event information to ensure that they co-operate and not compete with each other.
- (e) Enhancing current festivals and events, with possible secondary events being staged at the same time, was seen as the way forward to encourage people to Darlington and there is always greater commercial interest for larger events which take time to evolve.
- (f) Children from the Borough needed encouragement to attend events and ArtSpark based at the Arts Centre was seen as the way forward to achieve this.
- (g) Local businesses should be approached to ascertain if they could provide refreshments for the Civic Theatre and provision of refreshments at other locations should also be investigated in order to lower costs.
- (h) In order to provide for bigger shows and larger audiences investment in the Civic Theatre was needed.
- (i) The provision of a Cultural Quarter around the Town Centre fringe would be excellent for the provision of cultural opportunities and the Group were keen for this initiative to be fully investigated.
- (j) In order to promote the work of Theatre Hullabaloo it is suggested that a named school contact be sought in order to promote forthcoming events to children and their families and that the provision of workshops and projects during the six week summer holiday be investigated.
- (k) With regard to Darlington Media Group (DMG) it is suggested that the Arts Centre could provide better publication of DMG exhibitions as its location does not encourage 'passing trade'. DMG are encouraged to continue discussions with the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College for joint venture and partnership working.
- (l) The Group felt that both Theatre Hullabaloo and Darlington Media Group operated from basic accommodation and that there were opportunities for better facilities in more ideal surroundings. Both facilities are an asset to Darlington and everything should be done to help retain these services.
- (m) Darlington's engineering history and its link to railway heritage should be more widely promoted.
- (n) Free entry for local residents to the Head of Steam should be investigated as it was felt that this could improve both visitor figures and shop sales.

- (o) Educational visits to the Head of Steam could increase if a form of transportation were to be provided for the schools.
- (p) Provision of a pass to local businesses for use of the café area only could generate income and this should be pursued as a viable option.
- (q) Winter opening hours for the Head of Steam should be investigated as a priority as there was a risk that the National Railway Museum could request the return of exhibits and the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant could be frozen.
- (r) The National Railway Museum was keen for Head of Steam to have World Heritage Status and this should be pursued as a priority.
- (s) Use of the Bishop Auckland line could create a transport hub within the Whessoe Road area of Darlington and this should be taken into consideration during any future development in the area.
- (t) The package of assistance to save the Forum Music Centre is welcomed however it is also suggested that a public subscription scheme be examined.
- (u) Local performance indicators for culture are gathered but within each Arts Service however the National Framework has now been abolished with the new Framework not expected until April 2011.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee endorse the following findings and recommendations of the Arts Task and Finish Review Group:-

- (a) Cabinet are encouraged to pursue discussions with the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College with a view to the efficient operation of the Arts Centre Building and continued use of its resources by organisations such as Theatre Hullabaloo and Darlington Media Group.
- (b) The actions of Cabinet in aiding the Forum and Humanities to continue to operate be applauded and welcomed.
- (c) The budget constraints of 25 to 30 per cent over the next four years on the Arts Council of Great Britain and resultant consequence to Darlington Borough Council be acknowledged and the implications be explored.
- (d) Efforts to increase income at the Head of Steam, by providing open access to the café and greater use of the Conference facility, be explored.
- (e) Consideration be given to a system of public subscription for arts services
- (f) An assessment be made of the potential use of volunteers in the arts services and Head of Steam.

- (g) Darlington has a unique Industrial Railway Heritage which needs to be more actively promoted to encourage tourism to Darlington.
- (h) Last year's Winter Closure of Head of Steam should not be repeated and therefore should be limited to two days per week (to ensure visitors have greater accessibility) and exhibits and Heritage Lottery Funding be secured.
- (i) World Heritage Status, which has the backing of the National Railway Museum and the Friends of North Road Station, be proactively sought as an investment for Darlington Borough Council.
- (j) As the National Framework for Performance Indicators has been replaced by outcome-based accountability consideration be given to developing local performance indicators to aid the process and it is suggested that the Consumer Survey Panel may have a role to play.
- (k) That the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee monitor the recommendations arising out of this review.

Arts Task and Finish Review Group

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

1st December, 2009

PRESENT – Councillors Hartley, Lawton, Long and Robson.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Nicholson.

OFFICERS – Steve Thompson, Assistant Director – Culture, Allison Carling, Democratic Support Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To discuss areas of work that can be undertaken by Members of the Task and Finish Review Group and the Committee to make a positive contribution to the Review of Cultural Services and the efficiency savings and new business models being examined.

The Members are very mindful to not duplicate the work of CMT and Cabinet but to offer support and contribution to the overall task of efficiency savings and aid the process rather than replace the strategic thinking.

Points Discussed –

- Partnership Working – to look at the work with other public sector and third sector arts organisations and the scope for partnership working with the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, the Media Group and Theatre Hullabaloo and the use of the Arts Centre as a venue. Also potential for working with the Forum and Darlington College.
- Tees Valley – To be made aware of the work ongoing to collaborate with the Tees Valley and to ensure representation in the Tees Valley.
- Reference to separate information leaflets produced by the Tees Valley authorities on our museums and the need to have one booklet to include all arts venues.
- Work is ongoing to pursue opportunities collaboration between the Tees Valley Museums.
- To look at representation at sub regional and regional level to access funding in particular that related to tourism and large scale events. To discuss with officers internally initially.
- Heritage Day – to encourage this authority to participate in ‘Heritage Day’ and explore how to involve voluntary creative groups, the Friends Meeting House, Civic Trust, Railway Museum and the Tees Cottage Pumping Station.
- The responsibility for Culture has just been handed back to this Scrutiny Committee and there is a need to remind Members of the Committee responsibilities. Members are however mindful of the budget constraints and that efficiencies are being looked at .
- To look at arts provision elsewhere and to harness what is being done outside the Council.

- The Council receive an annual Arts Council Grant of approx £130k but in the main arts and culture is funded by the Council with a heavy reliance on being successful in the commercial arena i.e. the Pantomime, sponsorship.
- It is recognised that Darlington has by its size a lot of good quality cultural provision but spend per head shows a lot is spent on culture with other local authorities in the Tees Valley. The Corporate Review is focussed around efficiency savings and priorities in the current economic climate and to examine third sector support, other business models, trust status and partnership working.
- The potential for this Review Group to become too wide so there is a need to keep within tight terms of reference therefore the group will focus on the arts primarily and not cultural issues.
- The exploration of integrating cultural issues agenda into the Prosperous and Aspiring Themed Groups and the setting up/resurrection of the Culture Network.

IT WAS AGREED – Following discussions it was agreed:-

- (a) That Steve Thompson would produce a paper for the next meeting to provide background on the responsibilities of officers and the links with others both internally and externally; an explanation of what the ‘arts’ are in Darlington; specific project funding opportunities and grants available.
- (b) That the review Group be called the Arts Task and Finish Review Group.

NEXT MEETING – That the next meeting of the Task and Finish Review Group be arranged for Thursday, 14th January, 2010 commencing at 9.30 a.m.

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

14th January, 2010

PRESENT – Councillors Hartley, Lawton, Long, Nicholson and Robson.

APOLOGIES –

OFFICERS – Steve Thompson, Assistant Director – Culture, Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer.

NOTE – Prior to the meeting Councillor Long declared a non-pecuniary interest in the items to be discussed.

Purpose of the Meeting – To discuss and analyse information relevant to the Arts Services that is currently provided by Darlington Borough Council and included within the scope of this Review.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- Steve Thompson advised the Group that the Arts Service in Darlington incorporated service delivery from both The Arts Centre and Civic Theatre, visual and public Art, education and outreach, youth theatre, marketing, festivals, events and sponsorship and significantly improved the quality of life for individuals as well as supporting economic success and regeneration.
- Despite the current financial climate Darlington had been performing well across its Arts Service.
- The Group were advised that a Tees Valley Festival and Events Partnership comprising key partners and stakeholders had been established. The Aim of the Partnership was to implement a Festival and Events Development Plan for the Tees Valley covering the next 3 to 5 years and Councillor Robson and Steve recently attended a Visit Tees Valley (vTv) Seminar as Darlington's representatives on that Partnership.
- Due to Darlington's geographical area partnership opportunities were also being explored with Durham and the Dales areas.
- The Group were advised that the Tees Valley Festival and Events Plan 2010-2015 was submitted to the Tees Valley Chief Executives in January 2010 for approval, the majority of funding this year had been allocated to Hartlepool as the hosts of the Tall Ships Event and it was the responsibility of each Authority to publicise, and apply for funding for, its events.
- There was a consensus of opinion amongst all Tees Valley Authorities that they must 'co-operate and not compete', avoid clashes of events and share information.
- Positive progress has been made on a Tees Valley Calendar of events, funding was available but Local Authorities were required to contribute 60 percent of total funding. The Group were advised that the Events budget had been cut by approximately one-third

but it was hoped to secure funding from other areas.

- The payment for events depended very much on the event itself with most being spent on health and safety issues and stewarding. Young people's bands didn't generally get payment but the Council provided the infrastructure. Some events were sponsored i.e. the road race and some events were given sponsorship in kind via staging and publicity etc.
- The Group were advised that increased licensing fees in relation to public performance had had a significant impact as the fee was based on attendees. The licence fee alone for the Fireworks Display was thousands of pounds.
- Steve stated that Officers were looking at existing events which could grow and evolve rather than new events. The Rhythm and Blues event was held mainly at the Arts Centre, however, on Sunday when held in the Market Square the attendance was excellent. As funding was in place it one suggestion was that the Food Festival could be a secondary event to the Rhythm and Blues. Events need several years to evolve and there was always greater commercial interest for larger events.
- Members were keen to inspire children to attend events which they would not normally attend and it was hoped that ArtsSpark, the new name and identity for all children and young people's activities at Darlington Arts Centre, would help to raise the profile of all activities and encourage usage from children all over the Borough.
- Following a question with regard to the provision of refreshments at the Arts Centre during evening performances, Members were advised that this was currently being investigated, the Authority had to be clear of its customer base and the service was currently subsidised. It was also stated that lower ticket prices was dependent on the performance although producers were actively being encouraged to reduce their costs.
- The Group requested a Ward by Ward breakdown of attendees to the Arts Centre and the Civic Theatre in order to publicise events in those areas which did not widely use the Arts Services.
- With regard to the Civic Theatre there had been a lot of positive publicity with audience figures above expectation, different levels of subsidy applied to all Theatres and a successful pantomime was key to the Civic Theatre Events programme.
- It was highlighted that the efficiency savings identified in the report were not in this current budget but were savings that had been achieved over the previous two years.
- The Group discussed several possible alternative Service Delivery Options which included transfer of services to a non-profit distributing organisation (NPDO) or Trust, contract with the commercial sector, trade sale of assets to a commercial buyer or public partnership.
- The Group were advised that the tenants which currently used various areas of the Arts Centre would be safeguarded and that all areas of the Arts Centre needed to be utilised.

- Members requested Ward by Ward figures of the Civic Theatre attendees and discussion continued on the application of booking fees.
- Following a request by a Member, the Group were advised that negotiations were taking place with local ice cream suppliers to ensure local businesses were utilised.
- The Group were also advised that the Civic Theatre needed investments, shows were getting bigger, better and more technical and the Bar Areas did not cope well when there was a full house. There was also a lack of space for corporate sponsors.
- Members enquired about the possibility of a Cultural Quarter within the Borough and the possibility of cultural opportunities around the Town Centre fringe.

IT WAS AGREED – Following discussions it was agreed that the topic for the next meeting of this Task and Finish Group be the opportunities and prospects for Culture and the Arts within the Town Centre Fringe and the advantages and benefits of a Culture Quarter.

NEXT MEETING – That the next meeting of the Task and Finish Review Group be arranged in consultation with the Chair and Officers.

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

11th March, 2010

PRESENT – Councillors Lawton, Long, Nicholson, Robson and G.B. Walker.

APOLOGIES –

OFFICERS – Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To investigate the work currently being undertaken by Theatre Hullabaloo and to ascertain its requirements for future development.

The Chair introduced Miranda Thain, Creative Producer of Theatre Hullabaloo to the Group and in doing so stated that as part of a Review of Culture, Economy and Environment would be interested to know what Theatre Hullabaloo did and what Darlington Borough Council could do to support its needs.

Miranda gave an outline of the origins and work of Theatre Hullabaloo and a tour of the premises followed the meeting.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- Miranda advised the Group that the Art Centre had had a Theatre since the 1970's in the form of the Durham Theatre Company and the Cleveland Theatre Company (CTC), which grew when the Arts were funded regionally. Although both Companies served their communities they had no specialism. The CTC had a variety of regional homes and had been at Darlington since 1997/98 and was the only specialist theatre Company to provide for children in this region since 1994.
- Last year CTC became 30 years old and underwent a celebration and restructure. As part of that restructure CTC was re-launched and rebranded as Theatre Hullabaloo (TH).
- Miranda stated that her role was to bring together creative teams, commission projects, tour and organise productions and education projects, with a staff complement of three part-time personnel.
- The first show TH did was 'Five', TH worked with the Teachers and every five year old pupil in the Borough was bussed into the Theatre and it had a massive impact.
- Following a question Members were advised that the only regional funding received was £160k from the Arts Council and TH had a big challenge to find other funding partners. A small amount of income came from schools and Lynda Wynstanley (LW), Arts Manager of the Arts Centre was very supportive of the work of TH.
- TH also led on the annual Takeoff Festival of Theatre for Children and Young People, a central part of TH's programme. The Festival was split into two strands, Small Size conference which focussed on theatre for Early Years in a European context and the main focus being looking at performance for young audiences across the age spectrum. The Takeoff Festival attracted 100 or so delegates from around the world to Darlington Arts centre each year. World-class performances were made available for Darlington schools

to attend during the three day event.

- Take Off cost £50k to stage but only £10k was raised. The event was subsidised by the Arts Council as the event was the only specialised festival for those working in the field of theatre for young audiences.
- Members stated that they did not feel that the event was well advertised although it had been held at the Arts Centre for over four years.
- TH currently paid £4k rent per year for its space with technical support and previews being provided by LW. Takeoff is a joint venture between the Arts Centre and TH with TH paying some commercial fees for additional space and catering for the festival through Arts services. TH present their work at the Arts Centre free of charge and take any income from performances held Thursday to Friday with the Arts Centre taking Box Office on Saturdays.
- Currently there were two major shows per year but TH would like to stage three i.e. one per term. There was also pressure on the available space from the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form (QE) as a teaching area and examination space for the Performing Arts. The Arts Council gave grant money with the proviso that the studio be used as a public area, if this requirement was not met, the Arts Council could possibly ask for the return of any grant monies provided. The Arts Council therefore kept a close watch on the use of the area.
- Members were keen to gain maximum publicity for TH in order to ensure more families were aware of the productions and TH itself and it was suggested that a named school contact was required to promote the events to children and their families. The target age of audiences for performances at TH was 0 to 16 years.
- TH's current tour was 'My Mother Told Me Not to Stare', a dark operetta for curious children and their grown ups, aimed for ages 8 and above with the Autumn production being The Night Pirates aimed at ages 3 - 7. Following Darlington performances the productions would then embark on a sell-out national tour.
- Miranda explained that the meaning of 'tour' was quite a lengthy process starting with finding a story, taking the story into schools for ideas, commissioning of a composer, writer and designer. A two to three week research and development period followed with a four week rehearsal six months later, the final week being adding the finishing touches and finalising the performance. Also during this process the sets were built and costumes made. There was normally a two to three day performance at TH followed by a three to four week tour in the North East region and then a further three weeks of national touring. TH hired a transit van which used to transport sets, costumes and actors to the various venues. The whole process takes approximately two years from start to finish.
- The actual tour period of a production was eight to ten weeks out of the two year period. Theatre Hullaballoo delivers two tours per year plus the festival.
- Members were advised that The Arts do not make a profit, a show can cost approximately £60 - 100k from start to finish and would make approximately £20k profit, therefore subsidy was crucial. Once a show was made at the initial cost of £100k

it could tour in following years at a cost of £40k each time.

- Following a question from a Member the Group were advised that TH toured internationally, with a recent visit being undertaken to Canada, and that performances of Indian dancing and Italian Theatre, La Baracca, has recently been to TH.
- A tour of the premises followed whereby Miranda indicated that Theatre Hullabaloo had invested £6k in 2007 repainting, carpeting and doing up the premises. She also explained that the Theatre would love to have more space accessible to children, moveable drapes at a cost of £1500, a new floor and a shower in the bathroom for performers. Members were advised that there were two exits for Health and Safety reasons and that disabled access was an area of concern. The issue of flooring was quite a pressing one as holes in the existing floor presented H & S concerns, particularly relating to dance work.
- Miranda also stated that long term TH wanted to develop theatre for young children as there was not another specialised Theatre Company from Darlington to Berwick. It was also suggested that workshops and projects could be held during the six weeks holiday period.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of this Group be extended to Miranda Thain for her enlightening and instructive introduction to Theathre Hullabaloo.

(b) That Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee give consideration to the needs of Theatre Hullabaloo.

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

11th March, 2010 (pm)

PRESENT – Councillors Lawton, Long, Nicholson, Robson and G.B. Walker.

APOLOGIES –

OFFICERS – Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To investigate the locality and facilities provided by the Darlington Media Group in order to ascertain its requirements for future developments.

The Chair introduced Richard Grassick and Paul Dillon of Darlington Media Group to the Group and in doing so stated that as part of a Review of Culture, Economy and Environment would be interested to know what Darlington Media Group did and what Darlington Borough Council could do to support its needs.

Richard and Paul gave an outline of the origins and work of Darlington Media Group and a tour of the premises followed the meeting.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- The Group were advised that Darlington Media Group (DMG) were an independent artist led voluntary organisation with 25 years of experience in community arts based in the Media Workshop/Gallery at Darlington Arts Centre.
- The Group were advised that DMG was a unique media resource based in Darlington for the use of people of the north east. There were many facilities provided within DMG which included the provision of a wet darkroom, video production equipment and digital photography facilities. The wet darkroom was the only one of its kind in the north east as most people now use digital photography. Film was used very rarely although professionals use film and then digitise.
- Digital photography can emulate nearly everything done in a darkroom. The wet room was purely for black/white film processing and was a simple process done at room temperature. Colour photography was more complex requiring warmer temperature and total darkness.
- The Group were advised that any member of the public could use the facilities for a small fee.
- DMG currently ran six courses per week over a three day period during term time with 1- to 15 people attending on a regular basis. Open Arts was a successful free event held Monday and Friday with open access to all.
- DMG worked closely with the Arts Centre and felt it was ‘crazy’ to compete with the Arts Centre however DMG felt that it did not get ‘passing trade’ as it was at the rear of the Art Centre building.

- Concerns were also expressed that the Arts Centre did not publicise all of its exhibitions which also needed to be addressed.
- DMG undertook a lot of voluntary work last year with an approximate value of £10k. Its running costs were approximately £16k per year with turnaround amounting to £50k. An additional younger new assistant brought new ideas and was very keen. Rental costs amounted to £54 per month and any money made was invested back into DMG either through purchase of new equipment or to assist in undertaking in a project. DMG had worked with various groups during the recent years and had helped to produce a variety of projects with those partnerships.
- DMG had undertaken various projects and were willing to help and assist anybody with any aspect of photography or de
- DMG, the only non-commercial film maker in town, also organised courses and one-day workshops for local amateur film makers. With DMG's help the Youth Service had taken borrowed equipment to Africa and produced a film.
- A tour of the Workshop followed
- Members were shown two short films made by the Open Arts Studio and were advised that it was hoped to establish a library of films produced as many had disappeared but were still available on computer.
- A demonstration of photo processing in the dark room was also given.
- Following a question DMG advised that the current space was heavily used but could be shared public space which was easily accessible. The current space worked really well with three separate work areas and was used for all sorts of activities i.e. origami, jewellery making, meetings of the Community Carnival organisers.
- There was also money available for the Arts Centre but hardly any for use by the DMG, the upper floor levels of the building were in a poor state and approx £500,000 was required to bring it up to an acceptable level.
- The Group were advised that the third sector could access money that was not available to the Local Authority although volunteer workers did not have the skills to apply for relevant funding therefore partnership working was crucial and a cultural strategy was needed to ensure the Arts flourished.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of this Group be extended to Paul Dillon and Richard Grassick for their informative insight into Darlington Media Group.

(b) That Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee give consideration to the needs of Darlington Media Group.

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP
12th July, 2010

PRESENT – Councillors Hartley, Lawton, Long, Ruck and Walker; Steve Thompson, Assistant Director, Culture, David Goodchild, Policy Advisor and Allison Carling, Democratic Support Officer.

ALSO – Councillor Williams

APOLOGIES – Councillors Nicholson, Robson, Harker and A. Coultas.

1. **Update on the Forum Music Centre** - Councillor Williams addressed the meeting to give an update on the situation with The Forum Music Centre and options to support it arising from the announcement of its closure on 1st September, 2010. Cabinet at its meeting on 13th July, 2010 is to be presented with a recommendation to approve a secured loan to David Cox, Humantics in the sum of £80,000 which should ensure a grant from One North East. Temporary funding of £6,000 per month for up to 3 months is also to be recommended, offset against the potential loan to Humantics. It is also the intention of officers from the Council to continue to work with David Cox and conduct an independent review of Humantics business plan. Members were keen to see the support offered to the Forum and agreed that the Forum fits in well with the One Darlington agenda for inclusion.

RECOMMENDED – That the Members of the Task and Finish Review Group note the progress made to date to get together a package of assistance to save the Forum and hope that this is successful and also suggest a further measure to examine the proposal of a public subscription scheme. The Members also agreed that a person with business and/or accounting experience to sit on the Board. Members approve of the recommendations to be made to Cabinet at their meeting scheduled for 13th July, 2010.

2. **Assessing the needs of Theatre Hullabaloo and Darlington Media Group** – Members discussed Theatre Hullabaloo and the provision to the town in specialist youth theatre which is both nationally and internationally acclaimed. Theatre Hullabaloo receives direct funding from the Arts Council and support from the Council by working collaboratively with the Theatre when developing cultural strategies. Theatre Hullabaloo is a key partner in enabling the Council to support the main streaming agenda and a lot of Council funding is channelled through Theatre Hullabaloo. The Theatre pays rent for their space to the Council and receives Arts Council funding. Members discussed the accommodation facilities following a recent site visit and agreed that the space needed further development, and that the condition of the floor and facilities to shower were poor.

The Darlington Media Group is located at Blanche Pease House on the ground floor with a studio and workshop as the only usable space. Darlington Media Group is funded by the Council through a Strategic Corporate Grant in the sum of £16,000. This sum covers the employment of one worker. Darlington Media Group run various courses and workshops on behalf of the Council and co-operate with the QE Sixth Form. Members requested sight of the annual statement of accounts for the Darlington Media Group and more information on their running costs. Members were advised that through the Darlington Arts Association, the views of the Theatre and the Media Group can be taken on board and the Council has a good working relationship with both organisations.

RECOMMENDED – The Members acknowledged the excellent work of Theatre Hullabaloo and Darlington Media Group but felt that the accommodation was basic and not ideal and that there were opportunities for better facilities in more ideal surroundings. Members also strongly advised the Darlington Media Group to continue discussions with the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College for joint ventures and future partnership working. Both facilities were seen as an asset to the Town and everything should be done to retain those services.

3. **Local Performance Indicators for leisure** – Members commenced discussion on the need to develop local performance indicators for leisure but agreed to focus on this at a future meeting. Steve Thompson advised Members of a review of cultural services that was being undertaken by Deloitte. The review recognises that for culture to continue positively there is a need to look at key objectives and link these to the Strategic Community Strategy and officers were currently working on new Service Plans to look at where the local indicators can fit and how these can be measured against effectiveness.

RECOMMENDED – That a future meeting be arranged to discuss local performance indicators with David Goodchild and Steve Thompson and that Steve circulate any relevant information to Members prior to this meeting being arranged.

4. **Head of Steam** – Members discussed how to continue the Group's work on culture. They agreed to look at Head of Steam, particularly in relation to Tourism in Darlington and agreed to meet with David Tetlow at their next meeting.

RECOMMENDED – That a meeting of this Group be arranged for Thursday, 22nd July, 2010 at 11.00 a.m. at Head of Steam Railway Museum.

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

22nd July, 2010

PRESENT – Councillors Hartley, Jenkinson, Lawton, Long, Nicholson, Robson, Ruck and G.B. Walker.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Coultas and Lewis.

OFFICERS – David Tetlow, Manager of Head of Steam and Piercebridge Roman Fort and Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To investigate the facilities at the Head of Steam Museum, particularly in relation to Tourism within the Borough, and how this Group could support and assist.

Prior to the meeting Members undertook a guided tour around Head of Steam and were informed that the Head of Steam had recently undergone a major refurbishment at a cost of £1.7m. Following visitors concerns at the removal of displays a rota system was put in place to ensure all displays were utilised. Over 9,000 school children per year had taken advantage of a free educational service as part of the Museum's engagement with local residents.

Members were advised that the Head of Steam was also a social history museum as well as a Railway Centre and that some of the Tubwell Row Museum collection had transferred to Head of Steam following its closure. A new exhibit was the Edward Pease Memorial room which contained the actual sofa which Edward Pease and George Stephenson have sat on and the original chest containing the metal plan holders of the line maps. Unfortunately the Darlington to Stockton line map was missing. It was suggested that the Network Rail Offices could be contacted as it was believed there could be some line maps stored in the attic of those premises.

It was stated that the next event was Home Front at Head of Steam World War II Day and would be held on 21st August, 2010, the current temporary exhibition was Tattoos of the Tees Valley with Alice in Wonderland scheduled to run from 1st October, 2010 to 31st March, 2011.

A Tornado Exhibition was planned for the coming year and several more exhibitions were being investigated for the future.

Details were given of the History of the World partnership between the British Museum, BBC and Museums across the United Kingdom and the Head of Steam had contributed to this partnership.

The Chair made introduction and advised David Tetlow, Head of Steam that the Group wished to support Head of Steam and discover how to progress and investigate issues of how to promote the Head of Steam particularly in relation to tourism.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- Councillor Ruck advised the Group that Russell Swift, Grandson of one of the founders of The Forge Industrial Works, had recently found some original drawings during a house move. It was believed that Mr. Swift would be willing to donate/loan some of the

artefacts to the Museum if he was approached.

- The Group were advised that the Museum had a Five Year Action Plan copies could be made available if required. Following a question the Group were advised that the Museum Collection Policy (MCP) was specific to Railway Heritage however this could be updated and adopted if approved by Cabinet, Members were keen to contribute to updating the MCP and advise Cabinet of the value of updating the Policy;
- The Group were keen to promote Darlington's engineering history and its link to the railways highlighted by the fact that all foundries had railway lines to them;
- With regard to tourism the Group were advised that a Family Membership Scheme was in operation although it was highlighted that some local Museums were free to the local community. The Head of Steam was located between two such Museums, Shildon and York and it was felt that if Head of Steam was free to the local community visitor figures would increase resulting in more shop sales;
- The Café is now franchised and income generated from rental;
- Although many schoolchildren undertake educational visits it was felt that the number would increase if some sort of transportation was provided;
- It was also stated that in order to access the café customers had to pay entry to the Museum although staff at Surestart were in possession of a pass which ensured café use only; it was agreed that if this could be extended to local businesses more income could be generated;
- Income has been generated by relocating the family room and using the available space as a meeting room;
- With regard to opening hours the Group were advised that it was possible that the National Railway Museum could request their trains be returned and Heritage Lottery Fund could freeze its grant if the Museum were to close during Winter (six months per year); Mr. Tetlow believed that he could operate the Museum for five days per week during the Winter months with a skeleton staff
- Visitors had been turned away during previous Winters as the Museum was closed Monday to Thursday;
- The Manager advised the Group that he had been in communication with Mr. Davis of the National Railway Museum on possible events which could be held during 2012;
- It was also highlighted that the National Railway Museum would like Darlington to have World Heritage Status and Mr. Tetlow outlined the contents of a letter received from Mr. S. Davies of the National Railway Museum; Members were keen to involve the Friends of the North Road Station in any future meetings held;
- Members requested information on the Bishop Auckland line and were advised that if it were improved and public use could be increased the rewards could be vast; Mr. Tetlow outlined his vision of how the station and railway lines could be utilised to provide better

access to the Museum and again stressed that if longer opening hours could be achieved then Phase 2 of the Heritage Lottery Fund could be utilised to achieve this aim; however there were many uncertainties and the Railway Station was actually within the Town Centre Fringe project;

- Members were keen to highlight that if Whessoe Road junction were re-arranged better access could be provided to the area of B& Q and it was suggested that any planned development in the area or Local Transport Plan requirements should consult with the Museum, if the Bishop Auckland line were to be used a transport hub could be created in the area as there would be a linkage of all transport systems.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of this Group be extended to David Tetlow for his informative tour.

(b) That a copy of the Collection and Disposals Policy and the Head of Steam Business Plan be forwarded to all Members of this Group.

(c) That Members receive a copy of the letter from Steve Davies, Director of the National Railway Museum.

(d) That the Museum Collections and Disposal Policy be given consideration at the next meeting of this Group.

(e) That the proposal to provide free entry to local residents be investigated.

(f) That the Friends of Darlington Railway Museum be invited to the next meeting of this Task and Finish Review Group.

(g) That longer opening during the Winter months be thoroughly investigated and pursued.

(h) That World Heritage Status be pursued.

ARTS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

12th August, 2010

PRESENT – Councillors Lawton, Long, Nicholson and G.B. Walker.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Coultas and Lewis.

OFFICERS – David Tetlow, Manager of Head of Steam and Piercebridge Roman Fort, David Goodchild, Policy Advisor and Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Mr. Richard Wimberley, Friends of the Railway Museum.

Purpose of the Meeting – To consider the business plan for the Head of Steam in light of budget constraints, the relationship with the National Railway Museum, World Heritage Status, opening hours and performance indicators.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- The Group considered the Business Plan for 2009/10 and were advised that the next Plan was currently under development. Members were advised that out of £1.7m there was only £12,000 left for CCTV installation which was necessary due to vandalism, graffiti and discarded needles.
- Mr. R. Wimberley addressed the Group and stated that Head of Steam was too locally focussed, it represented an international heritage site and needed to be widely publicised as there was very little outside the Borough boundaries regarding Darlington's history; Mr. Wimberley stressed that world tourists were prepared to visit Heritage sites but there was not national publicity and the Head of Steam was not in the Heritage Railway Press, unless it was bad publicity. The Museum was nationally important and thousands of potential visitors were prepared to come to Darlington which had potentially five or six heritage sites. Another of Darlington's unique selling points (USP) was the industrial railway heritage – nowhere else in the country has an industrial railway heritage. The National Railway Museum in York has a very high profile, Locomotion also has a high profile and Darlington needed to work closely with them, possibly by offering a 'Heritage Package' which would involve Darlington – Shildon – York. The Group thought that this was a good idea and stated that the pride and wellbeing of Darlington would be raised.
- Mr. Tetlow agreed that Winter closure of the Head of Steam did not help matters and that World Heritage Status needed to be proactively sought. The Group were also advised that there was no Tourism Officer in the Borough and although there was a marketing budget there was also no Marketing Officer.
- Many of the artefacts had recently been moved and some railway buffs were dismayed however the Museum Curator was actively displaying more exhibits in order to encourage the return of visitors.
- The Director of National Railway Museum advocates Head of Steam making an application for Heritage Status and the Chair of the Friends of the Railway were also

keen to pursue the application which would include the station, engines, track and Shildon. Manchester had recently made an application for Birth of the Railways World Heritage Status and was hoping to link into the North East. Members were reminded that Stockton to Darlington was prior to Liverpool to Manchester.

- Although budget cuts were imperative the Group recognised that World Heritage Status would be an investment to Darlington. It was stated that if Darlington received World Heritage Status on the 'coat tails' of Manchester's bid the visitors to the region would be enormous however time had ran out for this year and it was believed that bids were 5 yearly.
- Mr. Tetlow again reiterated that although budget reductions of £43k had resulted in staff redundancies he was confident that the Head of Steam could remain open for five days during the winter months without further budget constraints, he also re-affirmed that Heritage Lottery Funding could be lost if winter closure continued.
- The Group were also advised that there was currently a Tees Valley Museum Review being undertaken and that if Head of Steam was given Trust status and taken away from Darlington there would be no opportunity to obtain World Heritage Status. National Railway Museum had recently had a 28 percent cut in budgets therefore partnerships could be reduced.
- The Group discussed the advantages/disadvantages of Head of Steam coming within the Tees Valley Museum although it was felt that as Darlington's trains were part of the National Railway Museum it was necessary to stay with them.
- Consideration was given to the use of Volunteers to assist in Head of Steam as they added value, were railway enthusiasts and would be willing to volunteer for a couple of hours per week. The Group were advised that a Volunteer Policy existed and that it contained certain constraints, the Group were keen to look at the existing policy.
- With regard to Performance Indicators (PI's), the Group were advised that it was expected that there would be a set of PIs to measure against but as yet they were unknown, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would like a National Framework to inform local authorities, there was currently the option for an LA to set its own PI's regarding arts and culture, the CAA no longer existed and there was a need to decide if the LA wanted to keep some of this indicators, the National PI's remain but the framework it reported to no longer existed.
- The Group were advised that as the number of visitors to Head of Steam was known a set of figures could be kept however the National Framework would not be known until possibly April 2011. It was also stated that local PI's needed to be included for the Civic Theatre as the extent of use of the service needed to be shown.
- Mr. Tetlow stated all statistics were available for Head of Steam including visitors, (local, national, overseas. education), expenditure, income and that the information was available to be used.
- Following a question the Group were advised that in order to feed into the Community Survey bids from Departments were received and it was thought that a question

regarding provision of Arts could be contained within the Consumer Survey Panel.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That World Heritage Status be pursued.

(b) That the Volunteer Policy currently in use by the Head of Steam be given further consideration.

(c) That arrangements be made for the next meeting of this Group to take place on 7th October at which the Final Report can be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet.