
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

Concessionary Scheme

2. Following a comprehensive review of Darlington Borough Council's pricing policy across Leisure and Arts Services, the new Concessionary Scheme went live on 1 April 2006.

Dolphin Centre

Dolphin Centre Refurbishment

3. A comprehensive communications plan has been implemented to support the refurbishment process at the Dolphin Centre to keep customers informed throughout the programme. Clear and well-positioned signage has been placed within the Dolphin Centre and informative signage attached to the hoardings at the front of the building. Giant banners have also been fixed onto the building to direct customers to the temporary reception provision.
4. Frontline staff has been available at all key access points within the building to signpost customers and deal with enquiries or feedback.
5. The plan has been developed using the Town Crier, publicity to groups, schools and partners via letters, website updates, the refurbishment hotline and the use of SMS to engage with as many groups as possible.
6. Leisure Services is working in partnership with Inky Productions to create a series of short films which will be posted on the Darlington Borough Council website to inform the community of progress. It is anticipated that three additional five-minute films will be produced for the completion of the project that can then be used to promote the Dolphin Centre's new services.
7. Plans are underway to begin publicising the relocation of the Register Office and Marriage Hall. A competition has been designed to give Darlington residents the opportunity to 'Name the new Marriage Hall' and win a wedding ceremony and reception in December this year. The competition will be released in June's Town Crier.

Sports Development

Sports and Physical Activity Strategy

8. The Darlington Community Sports Network led by Leisure Officers is working with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), Primary Care Trust (PCT), Youth Service, Sport England, Tees Valley Sport and Local Clubs to develop a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Darlington. An extended period of consultation has provided valuable input from the community and enabled the development of several key strategic priorities. It is envisaged that the first draft of the strategy will be available in May 2006.

Community Sports

Darlington secures the Tees Valley Sport Partnership Youth Games 2006

9. Darlington and Middlesbrough have been successful in securing a joint bid for the youth games. The games will be held at Kings Academy School in Middlesbrough on Saturday 17 June 2006 and at Eastbourne Sports Complex and Education Village on Sunday 18 June 2006. This is the first time the games have been held in Darlington and will provide an opportunity for youngsters, local clubs and volunteers to be involved in this mini Olympic style event.

Darlington Dragons Basketball Club

10. A £3,000 investment in new basketball provision at the Dolphin Centre has provided the opportunity for young people to learn to play basketball and develop their skills through the formation of a new junior basketball club called the Darlington Dragons. The weekly sessions have been very popular, and some of the young people will be selected to represent Darlington at the 2006 Tees Valley Partnership Youth Games.

Zone Active

11. The Zone Active Project, launched in May 2005, aims to increase the number of people participating in sport and physical activity across the Lascelles, Park East and Eastbourne wards of Darlington. A full programme of Easter activities was planned including: multi-activity days, football and basketball tournaments, and support of the ATOM (Activities, Thoughts, Opinions and Music).

Breaking Barriers Project

12. Darlington and District Youth and Community Association (DDYCA), and the Sports Development Team are working in partnership on the 'Breaking Barriers' project in Darlington. This project was developed in recognition of the lack of activities for young people in some parts of the town, and aims to use sport and physical activity as a way of engaging young people in constructive activities. The activity that forms the Breaking Barriers session is sport and physical activity, supported by youth workers and peer mentors.

Looked After Children (LAC) Sessions

13. Multi activity sessions for looked after children (LAC), in the care of the Council are being delivered by residential social workers, working in partnership with the Community Sports Coaching Team. The focus of the sessions is to involve young people in physical activity on a regular basis, with the overall aim of integration into mainstream activity where appropriate. In addition, the LAC Health Coordinator provides sessions for the group carrying out mini health MOTs to establish a base line for the future evaluation of the programme. This programme will be extended over the next month to introduce the LAC group to other physical activity options including Pulse Suite 2 at the Dolphin Centre and a menu of other activities within the Easter vacation.

Education Arts Outreach

North Lodge Park

14. The Arts Team and Corporation Road Primary School launched *Our North Lodge Park* book of poetry on Friday 24th March 2006 at Corporation Road Primary School. Children, parents and friends of the park were invited to read their poems to an audience.
15. The project is a result of an 18-month residency by poet, Maureen Almond with assistance from Andrew McKeown.

Sponsorship and Marketing

Marketing

16. The new 'What's On' brochure for the Summer 2006 Season at Darlington Civic Theatre and Darlington Arts Centre has been produced and distributed at the beginning of April.

Sponsorship

17. The Atlantic Bar and Grill in Darlington has confirmed sponsorship for the Ian Dickens Productions Summer Repertory Season at the Civic Theatre.
18. The first year of "Best of Darlington" awards were held at Darlington Football Club on 10th March 2006. The evening was sponsored by Sherwoods Chevrolet, NHS PCTOpenreach, Williams Music, Darlington Football Club, Darlington College of Technology, Darlington CVS, Darlington Borough Council and The Northern Echo.
19. Hellens Contractors, Parsons and Brinckerhoff Project Managers and One North East have confirmed sponsorship of the South Park launch day.
20. Roper's Leisure, The Northern Echo, Hayton and Lamb, John Wade Haulage and Promovere will sponsor the Mayor's Charity Golf Day on Friday, 2 June 2006.
21. Phillips, Gallerina, Cleveland Bridge and Bussey and Armstrong have confirmed a further year's roundabout sponsorship. A new roundabout sponsorship agreement has been confirmed by Lingfield Point.

South Park

22. The actual work on site is now completed and the official opening is programmed for Sunday 7 May 2006.

Darlington Railway Museum

Visitor Numbers 2005-06

23. In the year to 31st March 2006, the museum received 26,915 visitors in comparison to 28,500 the previous year. However, Easter 2005 fell into the 2004-05 financial year and Easter 2006 into 2006-07. In addition, in 2004-05 the museum hosted a large arts event that had a significant impact of numbers. The underlying trend in visitor numbers is thus that they are increasing

Events

24. Over the Easter weekend, the museum held a “Grand Easter Egg Hunt”, with the Easter Bunny visiting on the Sunday. Over the three days, the museum received 431 visitors and the event made a small net financial profit. The next event, the Works Open Days, takes place on 27th-29th May, and detailed planning for this, and for the summer’s other events, is now underway.

Study Centre and Collections

25. The Study Centre and collections continue to receive a high amount of interest and positive feedback from the public. This ensures the continuing donation of many interesting items to the museum, including personal collections from the public. An interesting recent acquisition is a set of eleven working models of workshop machines, created by a former employee at North Road Shops. The museum has also purchased a rare original copy of a parliamentary petition against the construction of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, dating from the early 1820s.

Partnerships

26. The museum continues to develop advantageous partnerships, and to develop its volunteer workforce. A partnership that has come to prominence in this period is that with the Darlington office of Durham County Probation Service. The museum is increasingly seen as able to provide constructive and useful activities for those serving community service orders, and in the year to 31st March the museum gained the benefit of nearly 900 hours of work.

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