
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) **Building Control Consultants** – We approved the appointment of specialist consultant CSS (Yorkshire) Limited to vet plans submitted under the Building Regulations in order to assist this Council’s Building Control Unit.
 - (b) **Faverdale** – Practical Completion of the 170,000 sq ft speculative Industrial/Warehousing development by Easter Developments Ltd at Faverdale East Business Park was achieved in early December.

Countryside Projects

- (c) **Faverdale Environmental Masterplan Planting and Landscaping Completion** – The planting around the new business park has been completed providing in total five hectares of new urban fringe woodland with 40,000 native trees planted as well as seven new habitat ponds, suitable for great crested newt habitat. It also includes a new recreational path of some 300 metres through woodland known as Faverdale Whinn.
- (d) **Winter Countryside Events Programme Underway** – Main events include a Winter Festival at West Park attended by more than 60 people including carol singing in the cold by children from Alderman Leach School. An event entitled, “Walk the Darlington Way Again” based at West Park was staged as a part of national tree week. Also as a part of this thriving programme was a “Get Crafty” event at Firthmoor associated with world wetlands day and a bird box making event at the beginning of February as well as a treasure hunt at the Skerne restoration site, or Rockwell Local Nature Reserve as it is now called.
- (e) **Work Re-commencing on Habitat Creation Work at Maidendale Local Nature Reserve** – An additional set of works is just commencing to further improve the nature reserve at Firthmoor. This follows the award from the County Durham Environmental Trust last year of £40,000 of additional funds that enables the Council to continue improving this fast developing countryside facility.
- (f) **Rockcliffe** – Agreement by the developer of the new golf course at Hurworth has been obtained which will see the dedication of a new public footpath around what is known as the Rockcliffe Loop of the River Tees at Hurworth. If confirmed, this will give the public a fabulous new, highly scenic route of 4.2 km and an important new addition to the nationally renowned Teesdale Way long distance walking route.
- (g) **Bid Successful to Heritage Lottery Fund** – Our partner, Durham Wildlife Trust has successfully bid for funds for two new posts to be based with Darlington Borough

Council, the role of which will be to carry out a survey of the population of great crested newts in the Borough. This is necessary, primarily in order to demonstrate that the work carried out to improve, in particular wetland habitat across the Borough as well as mitigation works often associated with the development process, is achieving the desired effect of enhancing the population of this endangered species. The survey should help reduce delays in development projects in future through greater advance knowledge of the great crested newt population. Accompanying the survey work is an environment education post, the aim of which is to promote the importance of nature conservation and in particular, how it can complement the process of improving the urban environment through the development process.

Councillor David Lyonette
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio