
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:

Dolphin Centre Civic Opening

2. Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE officially reopened the Dolphin Centre on 26 March 2007. The Civic re-opening included the unveiling of the original commemorative plaque conducted by Sir Roger Bannister in 1983 and a new plaque to acknowledge the major redevelopment of the Centre.
3. Young people from Heathfield Primary School were the focus of these celebrations and this provided a clear link to one of the primary long-term aims of the 2012 Games to increase participation in sport, at community and grass roots level. Many of the participants were representatives from 'Team Darlington', Darlington's 2006 Partnership Youth Games team and will demonstrate some of the drills and skills that they used as part of their preparation for the Tees Valley Partnership Youth Games.

Civic Theatre Centenary

4. In September 2007 Darlington Civic Theatre celebrates its Centenary. Over the past one hundred years the venue has been home to an outstanding array of entertainment.
5. The theatre first opened its doors on Monday, 2 September 1907 as the New Hippodrome and Palace of Varieties, under the leadership of Managing Director Signor Rino Pepi. Among the first acts to grace the stage was comedienne Marie Loftus and audiences were charged just 2d for a seat in the stalls.
6. To mark the centenary, a celebratory season has been planned for September. The season begins with an evening to mark one hundred years of music and variety in Darlington. There will also be a play from Sir Peter Hall's own company, based at the Theatre Royal in Bath, and a production by the English National Ballet.
7. One of the highlights of this special season will be a unique production of work by Catherine Cookson, in which Darlington residents will perform alongside professional actors. A gala night is also being planned.

Events

The Dolphin Centre

8. Thirty indoor events have taken place during February and March at the Dolphin Centre including historic events such as the Northumberland and Durham Swimming Gala, which returned to the refurbished Centre for the first time in three years. The charity Swimathon event and North of England Brass Band Competition also contributed to a diverse programme.

The Arts Centre

“Spring Thing”

9. The Annual Spring Festival has taken place at the Arts Centre. The event happened from Thursday, 15 March 2007 and continued through to Sunday, 18 March 2007 with a variety of Folk music and a large parade of regional and national Morris Dancers. The Arts Centre also managed to allow the Festival organisers to use the Foyer entrance by co-ordinating the current ongoing refurbishment works.

National ‘No Smoking Day’ and Making a “FRESH” start –

10. Working in partnership with the Primary Care Trust, Darlington Partnership and the Leisure and Arts Events Team, an event was held on Wednesday, 14 March 2007 outside 16 Horsemarket. The event incorporated a walkabout in the Pedestrian Heart Area to promote National No Smoking Day and the Smoke Free Charter.
11. The Smoke Free Charter was signed by Alasdair McConachie, Chairman of Darlington Partnership, John Williams, Leader of the Council and Nonnie Crawford, Director of Public Health following a small presentation to invited guests and the general public.
12. A Daisy street performer promoted the no smoking event in the town centre by handing information to the general public along with a token flower symbolising the theme of making a FRESH start.

Promoting Positive Activities “Yo Yo” Your Opportunities, Your Offer

Thursday 12 and Friday 13 April 2007

13. This event will endeavour to promote the three key aims of the youth offer to the young people of Darlington.

These key three aims are:

- To convey the concept of the youth offer by having a listing, directory and/or information on the website of what is on offer to young people.
- To test the activities on offer.
- To encourage Young People to make more suggestions on what they want and what the offer needs in terms of activities by consulting with them.

14. The event will deliver a range of participatory activities for the whole family. Planned and managed by the Leisure and Arts Events Team in partnership with the Youth Services and Sports Development Team.

Activities during the two days will include:

- “Team Extreme” – Skateboard and BMX display team with workshops
- Synthetic Ice Rink
- Chinese arts and crafts
- Delivering circus skills Arc entertainment
- Junk music
- A large range of sports demonstrations and the opportunity to participate in Sports workshops

Launch of the Great North Walk -Thursday 22 March 2007

15. The Launch event was held in the Dolphin Centre to officially announce that Darlington, for the second year, will host the Great North Walk, which will start and finish in Springfield Park.

Launch of the re-installation of Pease Monument –Saturday 24 March 2007

16. Human Statues and local musicians performed for the official launch in the Pedestrian Heart area and in the new performance space. Chris Lloyd, Deputy Editor of The Northern Echo conducted guided tours around the town.

Arts Development

North Lodge Park

17. The Council secured funding in 2004 to regenerate North Lodge Park. Poet Maureen Almond was appointed as poet in residence and worked with the local community, including two schools, to develop their own poetry and prose. Artist Andrew McKeown was then engaged to interpret the texts through Public Art, which resulted in the creation of a series of leaves incorporating lines from the poetry.
18. Some of the poetry was later translated into Bengali and incorporated on two of the leaves, which will be installed in the Park later this month.

Hami's

19. The PAMIs Performing Arts Management Interns scheme of 2005/06 has evolved into the HAAMs Higher Apprenticeship in Arts Management. There are currently five apprentices on the scheme who are gaining experience of management in the local authorities across the Tees Valley. Darlington has three of the apprentices working on various projects including Marketing research, public art and the “Openart” Studio.

Myles Meehan Gallery

20. Exhibition: Non-conforming Area
Artist Laurence Ward

Darlington Arts Centre
Friday 6 April 2007 – Saturday 26 May 2007

This thought-provoking exhibition will use photography to investigate and document urban space, recording the way in which our environment evolves and decays.

21. The Artist focuses on areas where contrast and transition occurs. He draws attention to areas that may normally be considered insignificant for example wasteland or piles of building materials encouraging a curious, investigative relationship with our environment.

Arts Centre Refurbishment

22. Work is continuing on the final phase of the Arts Centre refurbishment. The Foyer space is still undergoing extensive refurbishment.

Community Sports/Sport Development

23. The Extended Schools Programme within the Longfield School Cluster continues to deliver a diverse programme of activities for young people. At February half term a range of performance camps were delivered in Netball, Basketball and Tennis that were supported by local clubs and the Northumbrian Flames and Teesside Mohawks.
24. There is a full programme commencing at Easter including Basketball, Cricket and Trampolining Camps at Longfield School, Eastbourne Sports Complex and the Dolphin Centre.
25. During February half term the Sports Development team, in partnership with Zone Active, delivered a Community Sports Leaders Award at Haughton Education Village. Fifteen students attended the course, which encourages more young adults into coaching and volunteering within the community. Many of the students have already completed hours coaching and volunteering within the sports development team.
26. An extensive Programme of Continued Professional Development courses have been organised for teachers and adults other than teachers by the Sports Development Team in partnership with the Schools Sports Partnership. A High Five Netball Awareness course, Key Stage 1 Football and Top Dance have been run at the Dolphin Centre and Top Gymnastics and Top Games courses will be delivered after Easter.
27. Working with the Schools Sport Partnership, twenty-four young volunteers were given the opportunity to attend the Step Into Sport Conference on Friday, 16 March 2007. Many of these volunteers already have placements within local clubs throughout the town and in the community and this provided a further stage in their professional development.

28. A new part-time GEM (Get Everybody Motivated) Co-ordinator was appointed in November 2006 and has since developed four new community-based classes. There are now 80 qualified Gem Leaders with the next training course taking place 13 April 2007 and 16 April 2007 and there are over 200 people with an average age of 85 years participating on a weekly basis. Work is currently being undertaken to achieve accreditation for the Gem Training qualification through the Open College Network.
29. Following further partnering work with Darlington PCT's Health Improvement Team, Leisure officers who have undergone relevant behaviour change training are now delivering Smoking Cessation programmes within community venues. This has built on previous joint working with Darlington's Obesity Strategy and the Lifestyle on Referral programme.
30. An extensive programme of Easter activities are arranged to promote community use of the Multi Use Games Areas at Carmel, Skerne Park (Coleridge Centre) and Alderman Leach Schools. There are a number of adult taster sessions planned including Netball, Cricket, Football and Hockey. Multi Activity Clubs for younger children are also planned to enable adults to participate in these activities.

Lifestyle on Referral

31. The Darlington One Life programme is now firmly established with clients accessing the scheme through a diverse range of referral agencies. Work is ongoing to further develop the community offer by rolling out Books on Referral and Learning on Prescription.

Libraries and Community Learning

32. The reading groups are going well and two new groups have started at Cockerton library. Family activities are proving to be very popular and the Baby Rhyme Time sessions attract lots of parents and children. Whilst the average is 20 children per session a recent session at Cockerton had 42 children.
33. The Centre for Local Studies has run two workshops for the use of the Family History website Ancestry.com. These have been very successful and more will run in the future. In February there was 470 user sessions for this site.
34. There was a visit organised by the North Road Railway Museum by an artist and others who are working with the Darlington GOLD group making pottery tiles based on the history of the town. They looked at maps, photos of buildings and people, information on Darlington industries, and general history etc as inspiration for their work. There is going to be a display of some of this work in the future in the library.
35. As part of the learning brief there is work with Adult Social Care to support adults with visual impairments to improve their independence and life skills and as part of this there is a delivery of cooking courses at Hummersknott School. The libraries continue to attract large numbers of adult learners and enrolment figures are improving.
36. Staff have given a number of talks and presentations to community groups about the range of services, which are offered, and they have been to Honey Pot Lane to talk to the travelling community.

37. There is a display of Korean artefacts in Crown Street Library and activities for children linked to this including kite making and a drawing competition.
38. There has been a participation in events including World Book Day, International Women's Day, Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery and Comic Relief.
39. The Bookstart Co-ordinator is being very proactive and is currently visiting all nurseries and playgroups to ensure children receive their Bookstart packs.

Darlington Railway Centre and Museum

Events

40. Planning continues for Easter event and Thomas event in July.

Education and Access

41. The Half Term activities in February were very popular and there was 367 adults and 346 children visit the museum during this week. Activities included arts and crafts and storytelling on the theme of toys and games.
42. Science workshops for Key Stage Two children are taking place during March to tie into National Science and Engineering week. So far, 271 children have taken part over four days at the museum.
43. The Museum Access Officer is continuing with outreach visits to school and in the period of February to mid March had reached 325 children at 5 different schools and has been featured in the Northern Echo.
44. There is now access to the P3 locomotive as steps have been installed. This locomotive will only be accessible until closure. During the refurbishment it will be moved to NELPG.
45. Our last Ghost Hunt before the refurbishment will take place on the 23rd March and will be run by Alpha FM. This follows on from previous successful ghost hunts.

Collections

46. Work is underway in the preparation for refurbishment. The study centre closed on 9 March to researchers. In the fortnight leading up to the closure, research spaces were fully booked and collections staff were extremely busy with research enquiries and follow up work.
47. The security and layout of the new study centre and stores has been planned in more depth. The new study centre will include improved security and will more than double the capacity for researchers. This will allow more groups, classes and organisations to use the facilities.

48. As part of the planning process staff have been looking at some of the issues relating to the collections on loan to the museum. There has been working with the Friends Group on an audit of items passed on to the museum. A long term loan of dynamometer test documents from the Greasley Society was recently returned to them, giving more space for the effective storage of the Museums own collections.
49. Donations to the collection have slowed down in recent months, there has be joint working with the National Railway Museum on the acquisition of a batch of material relating to railway catering.

Refurbishment of Museum

50. Work is now underway to transform Darlington Railway Centre and Museum into a world-class visitor attraction. The £1.7m refurbishment consists of three projects, the first of which started in February is to re-tile the roof of the Grade II listed Victorian station building at North Road in the town. The second project will see internal works carried out, such as the installation of a new heating system and fire alarms. The museum itself will also close after Easter for 12 months to allow the refurbishment to progress. While it is closed staff will be progressing the third project in the museum's transformation - to research the new displays and source artifacts and information.
51. Funding for the scheme has been obtained from the following organisations:

£498,000 Heritage Lottery Fund
£400,000 The Northern Rock Foundation
£385,000 European Regional Development Fund
£191,000 English Heritage
£150,000 Railway Heritage Trust
£69,000 Darlington Borough Council

Councillor Lee Vasey
Cabinet Member with Leisure Portfolio