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**OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio :-

**Future of the Former Vane Terrace, Arts Centre and Options for Supporting the Arts**

2. Following the announcement that Project Vane investors have been unable to obtain the necessary funding for the redevelopment of the former Arts Centre, Cabinet has agreed to its marketing and to use any money raised to support the arts. The Council is working with Darlington for Culture to consult local people and the arts community on how this money should be spent.
3. Darlington's Arts Centre closed in July 2012 and the Council supported the movement of various arts activities to new locations in Darlington; however appraisal of Darlington's current art facilities indicate that the loss of the two small-scale theatre spaces located within the Arts Centre has left a gap in current provision

**Darlington School Games Annual Review**

4. It has been a fantastic year for school sport in Darlington, with competitions and festivals in more than 20 different sports over the course of the year and over 4,000 school-aged children taking part.
5. The sports have ranged from traditional team games such as netball, rugby, cricket, rounders and football to more individual sports like athletics, cross country, gymnastics, cycling, tennis and swimming. This year we have included more target games in our festivals such as golf, boccia, fencing and archery.
6. More competition for younger children has been introduced with Quadkids Athletics, where participants from years 3 and 4 each take part in four athletics events; sprint, run, jump and throw.
7. More young disabled children have been engaged, with opportunities for wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, Quadkids and track and field athletics, swimming, football and table tennis.
8. Running parallel to the School Games Competition Calendar has been the School Games Leadership Academy. 70 students from across the secondary schools in

the town have accessed a range of leadership training, a Darlington conference and National Governing Body sport specific awards. These excellent young leaders have assisted in the competitions and festivals and have provided an essential workforce.

9. All of our Darlington Schools competitions have led to representation at County level in the Tees Valley for the majority of sports but some, such as cricket, to Durham, where our girls' team from Abbey were victorious and went on to represent Durham at the Regional Finals at Headingley against Yorkshire and Derbyshire.
10. Other superb performances for Darlington were at the Tees Valley Swimming in March, as part of the wider Tees Valley School Games, beating the other districts by a tight margin; Cross Country in the spring where again there were fantastic performances as individuals and our composite team from many schools, and similarly the Primary Track and Field Events at Clairville Stadium where our 50-strong team had an amazing day with brilliant performances by all.
11. The year was brought to the perfect conclusion with the Community Games. 500 children from 23 schools, all aged 8 or 9 took part in one of 10 sports over the day all around Eastbourne Sports Complex and St Aidan's CE Academy. The day also deployed 50 young leaders from the School Games Leadership Academy.

#### **West Park 4 Motion Biking Small Grants Bid**

12. 4 Motion has been successful with a Sport England small grants bid for £7,000 to support the development of the newly formed 4 Motion Club which will ride out of West Park. The Darlington Sports Development Team supported the new club throughout the bid process and it is hoped more new members will join the club and start participating in Cycling.

#### **Community Sport Activation Fund Bid Submitted**

13. Darlington Sports Development Team has submitted a funding bid to Sport England for £240,000 to develop a three-year Active Darlington programme. The project involves activities reflecting a broad range of sports for adults, offering informal opportunities that could lead to regular participation and multi-sport activities, which provide people with a range of choices and opportunities to suit them. The sports will include Rounders, Swimming, Netball, Golf, Indoor Cricket, Running, Orienteering, Gymnastics, Cycling and Badminton. The application is currently being reviewed and we will know the outcome at the end of September.

#### **Darlington Table Tennis Academy**

14. Darlington Sports Development Team has supported the new academy with a £10,000 funding application to Sport England and also a £5,000 funding application to County Durham Foundation. If successful, the funding will be spent on new table tennis tables, clothing kit, facility hire and additional community based sessions organised by the academy. The applications are currently being reviewed. The

club will move to a new venue in September at Longfield School and currently they have 80 adult and junior members, which is fantastic progress having only started in May 2013.

### **Darlington Gymnastics Club Successful Inspired Facilities Bid**

15. Darlington Sports Development Team has supported Darlington Gymnastics Club with a successful Inspired Facilities application. The Club has been awarded £50,000 which is fantastic news for gymnastic and sport/physical activity development in the town. The Club has just secured the lease on a new site in Faverdale and the funding will be used to provide changing room, café and ancillary facilities on site to supplement the new gymnastics equipment already being used on site. This has helped secure the future of the Club and is a real success story. The new site will provide a high quality multi-sport facility, which will be enjoyed by local residents for many years.

### **Darlington Golf Academy – Blackwell Grange Golf Club**

16. Darlington Sports Development Team continues to work in partnership with Blackwell Grange Golf Club following its relocation. Between 20 and 30 young people attend the Tri Golf sessions organised by the team on Saturday mornings. It has been agreed with the club that these sessions will form part of an overall new junior academy supported by all of the PGA professionals from the Club. Five of the young people from the Tri Golf sessions have joined the Club and taken out junior membership with Blackwell agreeing to reduce junior memberships for Under 11's to £50 a year. The club will start delivering golf extreme sessions in four local secondary schools from September supported by the Sports Development Team. Blackwell is also looking for capital funding to support a 9-hole junior course as part of the club's overall junior development and the Academy programme.

### **Tees Valley Coach Bursary Scheme**

17. Tees Valley Sport launched the Tees Valley Coach Bursary Scheme this year that aims to increase the number of qualified coaches in the Tees Valley. The funding covered two main criteria:
18. Applicants could apply for 50 per cent (up to a maximum of £200) of the total cost of a coaching qualification and in return deliver an agreed amount of voluntary hours. Darlington had 25 successful applications for level 1 and 2 qualifications. Applications came from local clubs, community based volunteers and the Darlington Sports Development Team.

### **Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)**

19. The FISCH programme working with the following schools: Rydal Academy, Skerne Park Academy, Firthmoor Primary, Mount Pleasant Primary and Beaumont Hill Primary School, has now finished. After School clubs were well attended with positive feedback from all schools and pupils.

### **Cycle in Darlington**

20. The Cycle in Darlington rides have expanded with four weekly rides taking place including a weekly 'Back on Your Bike' ride for beginners. The rides go from South Park and West Park and have been well attended. Promotion will continue to assist in growing, developing and sustaining the programme.

### **Exercise after Stroke**

21. Darlington Sports Development is running an Exercise after Stroke rehabilitation programme based at Eastbourne Sports Complex. Each session consists of group based exercises taken by our Level 4 Exercise and Fitness Training after Stroke Instructors and exercises are tailored to the individuals taking part. The programme can be accessed by referral from a medical professional such as general practitioner or physiotherapist. We currently have 34 people accessing the scheme.

### **Financial Brokerage**

22. Creative Darlington promoted a sponsorship seminar on 24 July 2013 led by Adam Lopardo and Ellie Turner from the Sponsors Club/The Community Foundation, at the Dolphin Centre in Darlington, which attracted eleven attendees and received positive evaluation from those attending.
23. Further capacity building training for arts organisations in generating finance through sponsorship, philanthropy and trusts and foundations was supported by Creative Darlington on 4 and 5 September 2013.

### **Arts Consultation Events**

24. Creative Darlington has worked with Darlington for Culture to support promotion of a questionnaire, which closed on 10 August 2013, regarding how any finance secured from the sale of the Arts Centre site might be used to support the arts in Darlington going forward.
25. Creative Darlington has also supported two seminars, held on the afternoon and evening of 29 July 2013 at the Dolphin Centre, which explored some of the key options on how any money from the sale of the Arts Centre site might be used to support the arts going forward.

### **Darlington Arts Festival**

26. Darlington Arts Festival, promoted by Darlington for Culture and supported by Creative Darlington and Darlington Borough Council, ran throughout May 2013, featuring more than 80 events and attracting thousands of people. Key events included:

- (a) Northern Sinfonia Strings - This special concert in Central Hall, Dolphin Centre, was presented by the Swaledale Festival as part of the Darlington Arts Festival, and generously supported by Sherwoods Vauxhall of Darlington and Roman Limited of Newton Aycliffe.
  - (b) A Festival Showcase Event was held on 19 May 2013 in the Market Place and Dolphin Centre with an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 people attending. Darlington for Culture volunteers undertook a small survey of attendees. 20 of the 24 questioned said that they would not have come to Darlington town centre if the Arts Festival had not been taking place. Some of the stallholders had excellent sales records.
  - (c) Inner Landscapes – St Cuthbert’s Church, Market Place, Darlington; Exhibition of Textile Art by Helen Winthorpe Kendrick.
  - (d) The Literary Festival at Cafe Create - Featured more than 20 events, including recitals and workshops.
27. £1,920 from Creative Darlington was used to fund 4,000 copies of the festival brochure, supporting leaflets and also the prize-giving for the short story competition to be staged at Crown Street Library in autumn 2013.

### **Festival of Thrift**

28. The Festival of Thrift had its official press launch on 26 June 2013 and has developed a dedicated website, Facebook and Twitter presence, with the Facebook presence receiving an average of 50 likes per day.
29. The programme has secured Grants for the Arts support and additional budget from Darlington Borough Council, in addition to financial support from Marchday and Creative Darlington. A detailed sponsorship presentation and written proposals have been distributed to a range of potential sponsors, followed up by several face to face meetings.
30. It is hoped that the Festival's fundraising target will shortly be reached. Creative Darlington is supporting the engagement of Darlington based artists, arts organisations, schools and community based arts activities linked to the Festival of Thrift programme. The Festival of Thrift will include a new commission by Darlington based National Portfolio Organisation, Theatre Hullabaloo.

### **The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts**

31. Darlington Cares and Esh Construction supported a programme of work at The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in July 2013, including interior and exterior decoration and creation of new social spaces on site.
32. Creative Darlington and Darlington for Culture are supporting follow up weekends to undertake further interior decoration within The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts and a special first birthday event was promoted at the end of August 2013. A new term

of ticketed arts courses for adults opened at The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in August and the venue continues to programme exhibitions by local artists and groups.

### **Darlington Civic Theatre**

33. The Civic Theatre's pantomime continues to sell strongly with ticket sales currently £40,000 up on the same time last year. Beth Stobbart, who lives in Darlington and also leads the theatre's ArtsSpark Youth Theatre, has been successful in securing the role of the Princess in this year's pantomime, Aladdin, alongside The Chuckle Brothers.
34. The Theatre updated its box office ticketing system ENTA in July. This upgrade enables the Theatre to accept chip and pin card payments and the upgraded online booking system allows customers to choose their own seats. We can now offer a better customer service and will be able to research where our audience comes from and have a better insight into our existing customers and potential future customers.
35. The 40th Anniversary Rocky Horror Show was presented at the Theatre in July and contributed to a very successful week both financially in terms of ticket sales and secondary spend and with positive feedback from audiences.
36. The restoration levy of £1 per ticket has been in place since 1 July 2013 with the majority of customers happy to contribute. To date this project has raised £7,600.
37. Following an open evening at the theatre in partnership with The Touring Consortium Theatre Company (TCTC) and Darlington Civic Theatre, we have recruited a team of Ambassadors to spread the word about the shows that the company are bringing and to help them introduce the magic of theatre to new and existing audiences in the local area. The first production in this partnership is 'To Sir With Love' in November 2013. Three Darlington schools have become part of a special partnership over three years with the Theatre and the TCTC. These are Longfield Academy, Hummersknott Academy and Darlington School of Mathematics and Science. Young people from the Theatre's ArtsSpark youth theatre have also begun rehearsals to perform in 'To Sir with Love' alongside the professional cast, taking the roles of school pupils in the story which is set in 1948.
38. The Theatre was in the dark until the beginning of September whilst a programme of maintenance and refurbishment took place in preparation for the new season, which includes productions of Dreamboats and Petticoats, Mansfield Park, Horrible Science and Strictly Musicals, a new production by Darlington Operatic Society.

### **Cancer Research Race for Life –9 June 2013**

39. Over 3,000 women and girls participated in this year's Race for Life in aid of Cancer Research held in the South Park. Local running clubs, traffic management, stewards and Council events staff provide Cancer Research with numerous volunteers to enable the event to take place.

### **Community Carnival - 29 June 2013**

40. Following the sad loss of Carnival Committee Chair, Jackie Maddison last year a new committee was formed early this year to ensure the Carnival continues to grow. This year's Community Carnival, which celebrated its 31<sup>st</sup> year, attracted more community groups and charities than ever before and was a fitting legacy for Jackie.
41. There were well over 450 participants in the parade including groups from local schools and colleges and voluntary organisations, including the Cockerton Prize Silver Band, Skerne Park Drummers, local dance schools, Darlington Arts Academy, Salsa group, BME network group, Darlington Green Theatre Company and Hummersknott Academy.

### **Darlington Dance Festival – 13 July 2013**

42. Following the success of a funding bid from Grants for the Arts, Darlington Dance Festival Association were able to continue with their Mass Dance event, which was held in the Market Square. Darlington College supported the festival and used the event to promote its services whilst TFM provided the compare and technical support.
43. Well over 700 people turned out for the Mass Dance in the Market Square, which was choreographed by Darrien Wright and Debbie Waistell and taught to individual dance teachers who will in turn teach their own pupils as well as community groups and school groups. Professional performances entertained the public and dance schools throughout the afternoon as well as providing workshops. Dance schools who took part in the Mass Dance had the opportunity to perform at the Civic Theatre on 16 September 2013.

### **Mayor's Proms in the Park – 6 July 2013**

44. The Mayor's Proms in the Park was one of many events initiated by the Mayor, Councillor Johnson, in his mayoral year. The events team worked in partnership with the Northern Military Music Group in the organisation and delivery of the event in South Park's Band Stand. Modus Seabed Intervention supported the event financially.
45. Hundreds of people flocked to the South Park to enjoy a fabulous programme of musical entertainment throughout a hot summer's evening. The programme included the Royal Signals (Northern Band), Hurworth Concert Band, who joined with The Royal Signals for the first time, 102 Battalion REME Pipes and Drums,

405 Squadron Air Training Corps of Drums and guest vocalists.

46. The highlight of the evening was when the audience joined in by waving their flags to Land of Hope and Glory whilst signing along to the bands. The Brownies and Guides joined in the Sunset Ceremony along with Colours and Standard Bearers from the Regiments.
47. Just over a £1,000 was collected on the evening of which the funds were divided between the Mayor's Fund and SSAFA.

### **Our Big Gig**

48. Following the success of the Band Stand Marathon in 2012, which celebrated the Cultural Olympiad, Superact, a member of the International Music Council provided funding to successful bidders to put on a participatory musical event in a bandstand. Darlington's Events team was successful and held a very popular event on 14 July.
49. Hundreds attended an afternoon of musical entertainment which was organised in partnership with the Durham Music Service; the programme included the Jazz Tones, Darlington Little Big Band, Darlington Big Band, Vocal Soul and a sing-along which included audience participation.

### **The Darlington 10km**

50. The 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary Darlington 10km was held on 11 August 2013 and attracted a record 1450 runners, which is full capacity.
51. Sherwoods Vauxhall of Darlington were the headline sponsor for the eleventh consecutive year and supporting sponsorship was also received from Highland Spring, Mizuno, The Northern Echo and TFM Radio. A free physiotherapy service was also provided for competitors by Footstop of Darlington.
52. The event continues to attract people to Darlington from all over the region and beyond and is established as one of the best supported road races in the North East.

### **Markets**

53. The Darlington Sunday People's Market has continued to grow over the past eleven months with an increase in traders. The first anniversary took place on 4 August 2013. On average 20 to 25 traders attend the market on the first Sunday of every month.

### **Head of Steam**

54. The Festival of the North East workshops in the Market Square went smoothly with 220 children from four schools in the Borough taking part in the bridge building



sessions.

55. Junior Neighbourhood Watch - the Learning and Access Officer has been into schools in partnership with the Police as part of a scheme with Year 6 children.
56. WW2 workshops in partnership with Locomotion, the National Railway Museum at Shildon were popular again this year, with some classes arriving by train and in costume. 190 children took part from Darlington and County Durham schools as well as children educated at home.
57. Transitions/Junior Travel Ranger workshop days were very well attended with the museum providing spaces for bus and train workshops, and the children travelled by train from Bank Top to the Museum at North Road Station. These were in partnership with the Sustainable Transport team.
58. Hurworth School visited as part of the Making a Mark project taking place in the Tees Valley Museums and in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery. As part of this project, the Museum will receive loans of artwork from the National Portrait Gallery in 2014.

### **Volunteers**

59. Our volunteers have given 336 hours of their time from April to the end of July 2013. This has included giving guided tours, helping with events, cataloguing collections and helping to get ready for temporary exhibitions.

### **External Funding and Partnerships**

60. The Head of Steam Museum has made a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £43,300 to allow the development of an online database of railway workers in the north east who served during World War One. The museum has a large archive, which includes staff history books, pension records, registers of firemen and enginemen and staff magazines. The project will collate information about workers from these sources and put them in one easily searchable online space.
61. The project also aims to produce loans boxes to borrow, downloadable resource materials and workshops at the museum for Key Stage 3/4 students. The museum would recruit and train volunteers and recruit a part time member of staff to work on the project.
62. Tees Valley Strategic Funding: WW1 Project – The Museum has been working with the Boroughs of the Tees Valley (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton) and the Heugh Gun Battery to commemorate 100 years since the start of World War I. The aim of the project is to bring the story of the Great War to life, to make it real for a generation who have no direct or close family memory of it, to root an understanding of it in local events and artefacts, and to reveal the profound social impact it had on every section of our community. The project is to include performances in each borough, a touring exhibition, outreach sessions, formal and informal learning and loans boxes.

## **Library Events**

63. Summer is the busiest time of the year for Libraries with lots of events and activities for children, and promotion of reading throughout the summer. The Libraries service runs a Summer Reading Challenge, for children aged 4 to 11. The aim is to encourage children to continue reading through the summer holidays, avoiding the 'summer reading dip' which can mean that they have dropped behind in their reading skills by the time they return to school in September. The challenge is to read six books over three visits to the library. When they sign up they get a sticker, on the second visit they get a voucher for soft play or swimming at the Dolphin Centre, and on the third visit they get a certificate, a lucky dip prize and are entered into the draw for Civic Theatre tickets and the chance to win their height in books. This year 995 children joined the challenge.
64. There is always a busy programme of events and activities to engage children and their parents throughout the holiday period. Deefor, the library dragon had his birthday party on the 2 August 2013 with lots of excited children attending, and the Bookstart Bear attended the fun day at the Head of Steam. A successful 'underneath the hedge' Peter Rabbit Day was held at Crown Street and children at Cockerton made bird feeders. The Sports Development team worked with children at the Library every Thursday, and lots of story and craft sessions were also held.
65. Having been granted permission to use some of his illustrations by world renowned Celtic artist Aidan Meehan, funding was then secured from local estate agents, J.W. Wood, for a Lindisfarne Gospels colouring competition that ran throughout the summer. The best of the completed pages were displayed in the Art Gallery at the end of the summer with a prize-giving event. To complete the tie-in to the visit of the Lindisfarne Gospels to the region, a display by local embroiderers, which had recently been on show in Durham Cathedral, was added to items from Local Studies to create Darlington's own eye-catching Lindisfarne Gospels display.

## **Environmental Services – Wheeled Bins**

66. The implementation of wheeled bins has gone exceptionally well with bins being delivered during May and early June, and first collections starting on 17 June 2013. Following initial publicity earlier in the year, the Council has received nearly 5,000 enquiries with regard to wheeled bins, of which a significant number have been visited by officers. In the majority of cases, residents' concerns were resolved there and then. In the early weeks there were a number of teething issues, particularly missed assisted collections and round over-runs. These were to be expected due to the significant change for both residents and staff.
67. The majority of outstanding issues are now resolved with rounds settling down and residents getting used to the new system.

## **Winter Maintenance**

68. Preparation has taken place for this year's winter maintenance season and staff will be on standby from Monday 7 October 2013. The winter maintenance operation will run from Vicarage Road during October 2013 and will move to the new site in Lingfield Way in November 2013 where the salt will be stored in a new salt barn.

## **Green Flag Award**

69. Environmental Services were delighted to receive Green Flag accreditation for both West Cemetery and South Park this year. Historically, South Park has achieved the award for the past four years, however this is the first year that West Cemetery has achieved this highly acclaimed award. It is hoped that West Park will be added to this prestigious list in the near future.

## **Community Voluntary Involvement**

70. There is a significant amount of volunteering/community support across the Borough that assists the delivery of Street Scene services.

(a) **Friends Groups**

There are 17 Friends Groups of Parks/Open spaces which meet regularly with Officers co-ordinating activity and events within specific sites.

(b) **Litter Free Durham**

In conjunction with Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council promoted its annual campaign to encourage residents to undertake community litter picks. This year's campaign saw a total of 32 community litter picks undertaken utilising 384 volunteers with a total of 537 bags of litter collected from all areas across the Borough. In addition this year as part of the campaign, Street Scene, working alongside the Environment Agency, cleared out a stretch of the River Skerne from Victoria Embankment through to the southern end of South Park. A large amount of debris was removed and disposed of.

(c) **Hundreds Bowling Association**

The Council works closely with Hundreds Bowling Association which has resulted in the successful transfer of maintenance of the bowling green to the Bowls Club earlier this year. This followed the successful transfer of four other greens to Darlington Park Bowls Association during the previous year.

(d) **Countryside Volunteers**

Through the Countryside service a team of volunteers are supervised who on a daily basis undertake maintenance work in nature reserves, public open

spaces and along the public rights of way.

(e) **Street Champions**

There are in excess of 300 Street Champions across the Borough who vary in their level of activity from simply reporting to carrying out regular litter picks.

71. A number of Council Members are also actively involved in many of the above groups providing support and guidance as required. Officers within Environmental Services will continue to work closely with existing groups and encourage the setting up of new groups in other areas across the Borough.

**Councillor Nick Wallis**  
**Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**