
OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

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

Cultural Services

Sportsmakers

2. Darlington residents have the opportunity to become one of 40,000 Sport Makers nationwide, not only to get the skills, knowledge and opportunities needed to get more people playing sport, but also to become part of the official London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics' sports legacy. Becoming a Sport Maker is easy and the programme is open to everyone aged 16 and over (www.sportmakers.co.uk).

Exercise After Stroke

3. Building upon the success of the current ARNI (Action for Rehabilitation Following Neurological Injury) programme, which takes place at Eastbourne Sports Complex, six staff have just completed their Exercise After Stroke qualification, which is comparable to BSc (Hons) Level 2. Following best practice guidelines, an evidence based programme is in the process of being developed and will be implemented by spring 2012. Meetings regarding ways to approach the new S.T.A.R.T.E.R. programme between organisers and staff involved are now taking place, and visits to other stroke centres are ongoing to see how their programmes have ran.

Eastbourne Development (Activities for Disability Groups)

4. Sports Development has secured funding through English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) to provide activities for disability groups and train disabled children in Sports Leaders Level 1 to assist in delivering the sessions. The three activities chosen are Netball, Football and Cycling. Sports Development has made contact with the Education Village to engage its pupils and teachers are keen to work together.
5. St Aidan's Academy has agreed to allow some sessions to take place in its hall and the team have established links with the Gateway Wheelers for the cycling sessions.
6. Communications are ongoing between Gateways adult disability group and Haughton Education Village with the view to run a junior and adult session back to back on a Tuesday Evening. The Education Village are looking into transport to get the young people to Eastbourne Sports Complex so that they can train straight after school and we are currently putting coaches through the relevant qualifications to coach children with disabilities for this session.

Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)

7. The FISCH Programme is delivering to four schools this term: Northwood, Springfield, Red Hall and Mowden Juniors. The programme is currently in Week Four and seeing good attendance figures at the after school clubs. Initial feedback from staff and pupils is very positive and are engaging well in the programme.

Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it! (MEND)

8. Funding has been confirmed for the next MEND programme, which should go ahead after the Easter school holidays. Preparation for the launch of the next programme has begun.

Cycle: In Darlington

9. Sports Development is looking to launch the Cycle: In Darlington project in the spring. A cycling forum has been created to pull all delivery partners involved in cycling in Darlington together to ensure efficient partnership working. The Cycle: In Darlington programme is going to be promoted through the Pedal Power brochure, which offers the tourist trail rides organised by the Events Team.

Junior One Life

10. Junior One Life is currently in Week One. The programme will last 10 weeks and is a family-based obesity intervention to promote healthy living and activity. Sessions consist of activity, cooking and educational content.

Fitbug

11. The deadline for this campaign was 3 February 2012. We are offering 200 free Fitbugs and memberships; these are to be distributed during the two weeks following the deadline. We are monitoring three groups in Darlington, which are Darlington Residents, Fit Mamas (in partnership with Groundwork) and a Health Trainer Referral Group (in partnership with the NHS health trainer team).

GEM

12. There are currently eight GEM classes running, four of which are in partnership with Age UK and its 'Fit as a Fiddle' scheme. The remaining four are run by our Sports Development Team. We are looking to put on a new class using the facilities at either the Dolphin Centre or Eastbourne Sports Complex to meet demand from current participants.

Run in Darlington

13. There are currently two sessions per week on a Monday and a Saturday. These sessions are consistently well attended and further programmed sessions will be added. Participants will be channelled into community based running groups at the Race for Life and tie it into Darlington 10K.

Events

Chinese New Year Celebration – 23 January 2012

14. Students from Hummersknott Academy and Carmel College welcomed in the Chinese New Year in Darlington on 23 January 2012. They performed a traditional Chinese Lion Dance and paraded their own dragon around Joseph Pease Place to Chinese music whilst shoppers stopped to enjoy the performances. The celebrations attracted media coverage from Tyne Tees Television who used the footage during their evening news.

Darlington Civic Theatre

15. The annual pantomime, which this year was Cinderella, starring Ray Quinn, Deena Payne and Jimmy Cricket, was very well received by audiences and reviewers alike. Over the run it was seen by almost 43,000 people. In January, the Civic Theatre also presented The Russian State Ballet and Orchestra of Siberia, with the best sales ever for a visit by this popular company. Over four days, 4,700 attended five performances, generating box office income of £105,000. Sales in January were also very strong with Rumours of Fleetwood Mac (712 seats sold), Carnival du Vampires Rock (1,184 seats sold over two performances), Motown's Greatest Hits (847 tickets sold) and the Grimethorpe Colliery Band (895 tickets sold).

Darlington Arts Centre

Arts Centre

16. Work continues with the various groups and organisations which use the Arts Centre currently to assist them with relocation ahead of the closure of the building in July, 2012.
17. In considering the future of the arts in an era of sharply reduced Government support for local authorities, I attended and spoke at the ANEC organised conference on 19 March 2012, which took place at the Arts Centre. The meeting considered the response from ANEC's Task and Finish group on the future of the Arts in the North East.

Arts Award

18. All seven of the Bronze Award students who were awaiting moderation results successfully achieved their Bronze Award, we also had one young person successfully achieve a Silver; the team are continuing to work with students at Bronze, Silver and Gold Levels and we are supporting a group of Year 6 gifted and talented students at Mount Pleasant School in achieving their Bronze.

Holocaust Memorial Day

19. Working in conjunction with Ensemble Theatre Company, The Anne Frank Trust and Democratic Services, on 23 January 2012 we delivered a workshop for Year 5 Skerne Park Primary using the story of Anne Frank to look at similarities and differences and how it is wrong to persecute people because of one part of their identity. The workshop was very successful and children produced messages for Anne, which were hung on a remembrance tree produced by Ensemble Theatre Company. A rose, grafted from one of the Souvenir d'Anne Frank roses was then planted by the children on the 26 January 2012 in a short

ceremony in South Park where the Mayor, Councillor Cyndi Hughes and Naomi Shaw from Darlington Synagogue, as well as students from Darlington College all spoke.

20. The event was well attended by Members of the Council and public, and was well documented by journalism students from Darlington College and the Northern Echo. Children from Skerne Park Primary School and the students from Darlington College then attended and read at the official Holocaust Memorial Ceremony organised by Democratic Services later that day at the Arts Centre.

ArtsSpark

21. Darlington Arts Centre provided a number of Christmas-themed arts activities for young people at the Arts Centre during the Christmas holiday period. Approximately 70 young people attended five sessions in dance, visual arts and crafts led by professional artists from across the region.
22. ArtsSpark's Contemporary Dance Group performed at PULSE, a local dance platform event for youth dance groups in January, where they also got to watch performances from other local youth dance groups. They have been invited back to perform at the sub-regional platform for PULSE at the Arc in Stockton in February 2012.

Arts Engagement

23. As part of the Tech Max project, a group of looked after young people from Darlington were given the chance to attend the first Tech Max project meeting for this year at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. Three Darlington young people took part and worked alongside other young people from across the region in creative arts and team building exercises. The group will form a steering group and work towards putting on a region-wide arts event.
24. Darlington Arts Centre worked in partnership with the Youth Offending Team and First Stop to host an event at the Arts Centre for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to signpost them to work based learning providers offering apprenticeships, career advice and placements. The event attracted over 40 young people and also provided creative workshops in MCing, graffiti design and woodwork. At least one young person came away from the event with a new apprenticeship and many others gained interviews with providers.

Visual Arts

Myles Meehan Gallery

25. The Myles Meehan Gallery hosted *Brazilian by Nature*, an exhibition of colourful abstract landscape painting by artist Vera Hynes during Friday 2 December 2011 to Saturday 28 January 2012. The exhibition was a great success attracting 4,566 visitors and receiving excellent feedback. The artist has sold seven artworks during the exhibition period.
26. Artist Vera Hynes delivered an artist talk to members of the public in the Myles Meehan Gallery on Friday 2 December 2011. The talk was very well attended and received very positive feedback from audience members.

Lounge Gallery

27. Local artist Julie MacBean is currently showcasing her work in the Lounge Gallery. Julie lives in Darlington and is currently studying for her MA in Fine Art at Teesside University. This is her first solo show, receiving excellent feedback with 14 artworks being sold in the first three weeks. The exhibition runs until Saturday 18 February 2012.

Openart Studio

28. Openart Studio, a project part funded by NHS/PCT County Durham and Darlington Borough Council around positive mental health wellbeing based at Darlington Arts Centre, has created an exhibition of members' work for the Lounge Gallery and Craft Cabinet. The exhibition showcases have received very positive feedback. Visitors to the exhibition bought many pieces of artwork which serves to demonstrate the high quality of work being produced by attendees. It also serves to inspire attendees and raises their self esteem.
29. Online exhibitions have been accepted for Voluntary Arts England and NHS Reflections magazine. The work is currently being recorded and will be available in the next two months.
30. To date (April 2011 to Jan 2012) there have been 210 adult individuals attending Openart Studio with well over 2,000 attendances for 70 daytime sessions. Three major Darlington health and wellbeing groups attend Openart Studio to enable their clients to express their creativity in a social and inclusive setting.
31. 28 people from the Darlington West Indian Association attended a series of evening sessions to learn to play steelpans and there are plans to further this to promote inclusion in future events. Twilight sessions for adults (those working or with caring commitments) are currently being provided; these are becoming increasingly popular.
32. Evening sessions for children, young people and families are proving very positive. Some are from the looked after sector but many are accessing Openart Studio as a means to creatively engage and connect with their family members. After only 32 sessions, there has been an attendance of over 400 from 34 attendees.
33. Outreach opportunities are welcomed and First Stop will take this up in February 2012 with taster then developmental opportunities, leading to some being able to access creative and social activities.

Libraries

Christmas Mural

34. The mural designed by young library users for the 'Market News' stall won the owner the prize for best Christmas decorated stall, and he was so pleased that he donated a range of craft materials for the group who did the mural for him.

Wool Town – Knit Darlington

35. The Centre for Local Studies is working with the Head of Steam, GOLD and Hartlepool Museums to create a 3D wall hanging of the town. Centre staff put together displays on

Patons and Baldwins, knitting, and Darlington landmarks for the taster day at Crown Street Library on 27 January 2012. The major exhibition about Patons and Baldwins, which we ran some years ago was our most popular ever, so we are hoping that this one will fill the library with lots of people signing up for Knit Darlington.

National Libraries Day: Saturday 4 February 2012

36. The service is encouraging parents (and grandparents) to make a Bookstart pledge for 2012 that they will read at least 20 books with their children during the year. Pledge postcards to support the national campaign will be available at all libraries from 4 February 2012.
37. A number of activities were delivered leading up to National Libraries Day, as follows :-
 - (a) 30 January 2012 - Visually impaired reading group 2.00 pm
 - (b) 31 January 2012 - Behind the scenes tour of the library (booking essential) 10.30am , Bookstart Baby Rhymetime 11.00 am (for children under 18 months)
 - (c) 1 February 2012 - How to use the library catalogue drop-in session, 10.30 -11.30 am, How to use reference resources on-line drop-in session, 2.30 - 3.30 pm, Gem (Get Everybody Motivated) low level exercise for adults, 2.00 pm-3.00pm (£2.50 per weekly session)
 - (d) 2 February 2012 - Bookstart Rhymetime at Cockerton Library, 9.15am (session for 0-4 year olds and their families), Introduction to Local Studies, 10.30am (booking essential), Find my past demonstration drop-in session, 2.00 pm-3.00 pm
 - (e) 3 February 2012 - Bookstart Rhymetime, 10.30am and 2.00 pm (session for 0-4 year olds and their families)
38. World Book Day was held on 1 March 2012 and planning is beginning for World Book Night on 23 April 2012. Both are national celebrations of books and reading.

Environmental Services

Winter Maintenance

39. To date during this winter, road surface temperatures have not been the extremes of previous years and have been average for this time of year. Therefore, compared to the previous two winters, salt stocks remain healthy and as of 14 February 2012, we have used only 2,201 tonnes of our 6,000 stock pile, equating to some 36% of salt available.

Grounds Maintenance

40. All planned winter pruning of hedges/bushes/shrubs has been completed in the required timeframe. Service managers are now planning for the commencement of the grass cutting season in March of this year, whilst also working on changes to floral displays across the town. Members will recall that due to cut backs, the amount of floral displays are to be reduced and officers are planning more sustainable planting schemes across the Borough that will meet the level of cuts required whilst continuing to provide aesthetically pleasing displays.

Durham and Darlington Fire Authority

41. I have attended meetings of the Fire Authority, including the full Authority meeting on 17 February 2012, and the Policy and Performance Committee meeting on 6 March 2012.
42. I also attended the LGA Fire Conference on 20 and 21 March 2012.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio