

**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 :-

**Cultural Services**

**Sports Development – Be Active Summer Programme 2011**

2. There has been an unprecedented demand from residents for this year's summer vacation programme, which has engaged a record number of young people across a diverse range of activities throughout Darlington. Sports Development, Arts Team, Dolphin Centre, Eastbourne Sports Complex and Groundwork have all been involved offering a wide range of Sports, Arts and family activities at an affordable price. This has included Trampolining, Diving, Athletics, Cricket, Martial Arts, Skate School, Fencing, Gymnastics, Arts and Craft sessions and a whole range of other camps and workshops.
3. The programme has engaged over 800 young people and is now sustainable ensuring strong vacation provision for young people within Darlington.

**Sportivate**

4. Darlington Sports Development has secured £8,000 of funding from Tees Valley Sport within the Sportivate programme to deliver sport and physical activity from September 2011 to July 2012. Activities include Zumba, Football, Squash, Netball, Hockey, Orienteering, Dance and more. Sportivate is a Lottery programme that gives 14 to 25 year olds access to six-week courses in a range of sports to support long term participation.
5. The programme is aimed at those who are not currently choosing to take part in sport in their own time, or are doing so for a very limited amount of time, and will support them to continue playing sport in their community after the six weeks is up. During the six weeks a participant may work towards an event or personal challenge.
6. Sportivate is fully inclusive and target participants across this group, including young people who have a disability, males and females and people from BME groups.

**Darlington Community Games 2011**

7. More than 550 Year 3 and Year 4 primary school children took part in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Games at Eastbourne Sports Complex on 14 July 2011. The children took part in a variety of sports including football, tag rugby, cricket, athletics and tennis. Darlington Football Club attended the day with the FA Trophy, and Olympic Swimmer Nick Gillingham spoke to the children throughout the day in the 'inspire tent'. All participants

received a medal and T shirt for taking part on the day. Plans are underway to further develop the event for 2012 alongside private sector sponsors to enable 1,000 young people from Darlington to participate.

8. With the Olympics in mind, Darlington Borough Council hosted an event in the Dolphin Centre on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011, which I opened. This brought together partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors, and was addressed by Charles Allen CBE, who is a Chair of the Nations and Regions Group and Board Member of the 2012 London Olympic Games Organising Committee. The Council received very positive feedback afterwards regarding the quality of the organisation on the day.

### **Darlington Street Swords Club**

9. The 'Street Swords' fencing initiative has been facilitated within the Dolphin Centre to ensure the continuation of this highly successful project. Street Swords is a fencing project aimed at young people, providing positive activities in areas that have high incidences of crime or social deprivation. It provides fencing and training for aspiring coaches as well as other programmes for young leaders. On the 20 July 2011, Street Swords was awarded with the London 2012 Inspire Mark from the LOCOG.

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

10. The FISCH programme had a successful summer term, engaging 239 school pupils in after school clubs. 29 young people were identified as having a Body Mass Index placing them in the obese percentile and support was offered to these families. Ten families accepted the offer of support from the Health Advisor. Four schools are currently booked to start the FISCH programme from September to December.

### **Events**

#### **Cancer Research Race for Life –12 June 2011**

11. Almost 4,000 women from across the region and a crowd of around 1,000 spectators visited South Park on 12 June 2011 for the 10<sup>th</sup> Darlington Race for Life.
12. Women of all ages and fitness levels took part in the 5K race and joined together to walk, jog or run to raise money to help beat Cancer. The Darlington participants together have raised approximately £249,000 for Cancer Research UK.
13. Local running clubs, traffic management, stewards and Council events and sports development staff all volunteered their time to Cancer Research to enable the event to happen.

#### **Spooky Spectacular – 28 and 29 October 2011**

14. Darlington Borough Council Events Team, TFM and an event management company, Generate Events, have agreed to a proposal put forward by Generate Events for a family orientated musical performance with a fireworks finale targeted at residents in Darlington and within the Tees Valley area. Generate Events will hire the main field in the South Park.

15. There will be a fenced area which will house an outdoor stage hosted by TFM's presenters and a well-known X Factor artist (or similar) will perform a set of around 30 minutes prior to a 15 minutes fireworks display set to music. There will be fairground rides, catering units and toilets also on site.
16. There will be an admission charge into the event and tickets will be sold in advance by a reputable ticket agency and from Cultural Services box office once the acts have been secured by TFM and Generate Events. The fees are as follows :-

Adults: £8

Under 16's: £5 (accompanied by a full paying adult)

Under 3's: Free

A proportion of the ticket money will go to TFM's Cash for Kids as well as a proportion of the tickets being available for distribution by the charity. TFM Radio will provide the media coverage and discussions are also taking place with the Northern Echo.

The Council will also promote the event in the Town Crier. The communications plan is important so that residents understand that it is not the traditional fireworks event organised historically by the Council but is a music event with a fireworks finale organised and managed by Generate Events.

### **Community Carnival - 25 June 2011**

17. Thousands of people lined the streets of Darlington's Town Centre as the 29th Community Carnival procession got underway on 25 June 2011.
18. The theme of this year's carnival was 'It's a Good Life', with schools and community groups taking part in the parade, which left Stanhope Park at midday and worked its way through the town centre. All proceeds raised throughout the day went to the charity First Stop Darlington.
19. On show were the colourful costumes and sculptures made by the groups in recent weeks with help from local artists, Ben Reche and Shirley Wells. Large scale models included farm animals and characters from the 70s BBC sitcom 'The Good Life.' There were lots of family activities, as well as the New Blood Live Stage supported by the Forum Music Centre, for people to enjoy in Stanhope Park.

### **West Park Activity Day –24 July 2011**

20. Hundreds of people participated in free activities on offer at the West Park Activity Day jointly organised by the Friends of West Park, the Council's Rangers and Events Team.
21. Funding for the event was provided by Bussey and Armstrong, Friends of West Park and local stores on West Park.
22. Activities on the day included 4x cycling, kite making workshops, archery, spots and stripes games provided by Groundwork, face painting and an inflatable game provided by the Army. Music was provided by the Air Cadets and Cockerton Vintage Brass.

23. The Business Enterprise Team linked into the event for the first time providing information on how to set up a small business. Local businesses also showcased their products as well as providing hands on workshops for the public to participate.

### **Darlington's Dance Festival – 16 and 17 July 2011**

24. Darrien Wright, a TV personality and local dance teacher from Darlington was supported by Cultural Services Officers to secure £10k from the Arts Council to stage this year's 'Dance Festival'. The Event was jointly organised by Darrien, Darlington's West Indian Association, volunteers and the Council's Events Team.
25. Following on from the success of last year's Caribbean Dance Party Night, the Events Team and the West Indian Community organised the second Caribbean Dance Party in the Market Square on Saturday 16 July, which attracted hundreds of people who listened and danced to The Royal Blood Reggae Band and the Pan Jumbie Steel Band. Additional entertainment was provided this year to enhance the event, which included a Salsa and Caribbean Dance Workshop in the Dolphin Centre and a Salsa demonstration with audience participation in the Market Square during the event.
26. On Sunday 17 July 2011, despite torrential rain and wind which led to the cancellation of part of the programme at lunch time, 18 local dance schools participated in a mass dance in the Market Square, which was choreographed by Darrien and taught to the pupils by their own dance tutors. Approximately 600 people took part in this hugely successful performance.
27. All the local dance schools had prepared a dance based on a Hollywood and Broadway theme as well as individual demonstrations, which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the weather. This was rescheduled and took place on Monday 18 September at the Civic Theatre so the children had the opportunity to perform. I attended this, together with the Mayor – it was a first class event and demonstrated the wealth of talent that there is around the various dance schools in the Borough, as well as the dedication of the teachers and leaders concerned.

### **Darlington Arts Centre**

#### **ArtsSpark**

28. Darlington Arts Centre is taking part in a pilot project run by Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board called 'Safe Places to Be'. The project is to provide safe places for young people during the school holidays that are experiencing problems with bullying.
29. Over 100 young people from ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and dance classes took part in the ArtsSpark showcase in July, an annual performance and sharing of work for family and friends in the Arts Centre Theatre. The showcase was attended by over 180 audience members.

#### **Arts Engagement**

30. Darlington Arts Centre started an Arts project in June for looked after young people in Darlington, led by Urban Illustrator, Carlos Rosati from The Cloud Commission. The project has been funded through Tech Max, a region-wide project to engage looked after

young people in cultural activities. The project will culminate in a celebration event for the young people involved at Darlington Arts Centre.

## **Visual Arts**

### **Myles Meehan Gallery**

31. The Myles Meehan Gallery held an exhibition of sculpture by Graeme Hopper between 27 May and 23 July 2011, which attracted 6,325 visitors. The exhibition featured fun and lively sculpture including an acrobat and seats based on Victoria and David Beckham, and has received very positive feedback from visitors.
32. A family drop in arts workshop was held in the Myles Meehan Gallery during May's half term school holidays. The workshop was very well attended and participants created their own sculptures and drawings based on Graeme Hopper's exhibition.

### **The Lounge Gallery**

33. Local artist and member of Darlington Society of Arts, Lynda Docherty, held an exhibition of her work in the Lounge Gallery between 24 May and 9 July 2011. Lynda is also the organiser of the Dover Prize Biannual Art Competition, which is held in Darlington.

## **Public Art**

34. As part of the improvements to the Denes by Matthew Fedden, Coralie Turpin and Mayflower Engineering Ltd have been commissioned. The first major entrance feature has now been installed and has attracted a lot of positive comments. The other entrance features will be installed in stages from now until November.
35. A series of sculptural bollards by Jim Roberts have been installed on the Lascelles and Eastbourne link as part of a wider improvements scheme. The artist worked with local schools and the surrounding community to develop designs for the bollards, which include references to local industry, animals and football.
36. The public art web pages have been updated and now include 24 public artworks and a map highlighting the location of artworks. This will improve the availability of information on public artworks and encourage people to visit them.

## **The Borough Collection**

37. Darlington Borough Art Collection was catalogued as part of the Public Catalogue Foundation's national initiative to catalogue all oils and acrylics in public ownership. All of the oils and acrylics from our collection are now featured on the BBC's Your Paintings website. This will significantly improve access to our collection and may encourage new partnerships with other organisations. The website enables visitors to 'tag' paintings adding details such as subject matter and styles, which will make the collections features even easier to search. There is also an art detective feature so people can send in any additional information about any painting featured, enabling collections to build up more information on their paintings.

## **Openart Studio**

38. Openart Studio continues to increase in popularity, aiming to improve mental wellbeing with many more GPs, CPNs and Secondary Care Professionals now regularly referring patients to the project.
39. Darlington MP Jenny Chapman visited Openart Studio in July. She enjoyed speaking with the participants and learned more about the positive effects of social prescription for mental wellbeing.
40. The group undertook a visit to South Park to sketch from life; the trip provided opportunities to both engage with local amenities and meet the Park Rangers, who were hugely helpful in welcoming the group. Many of the group have since visited the park to further develop their art work.
41. Openart Studio staff provided arts-based workshops at West Park Family Day; a total of 200 people participated in the workshops.
42. A consultation session was held with the Bangladeshi community to highlight areas for mental health improvement. This was very successful and further work is being programmed for the future.
43. The NE Director for Samaritans visited Openart Studio in July and a presentation for the 'Sam' team is being scheduled. The NHS Director for Public Health for Darlington is also due to visit Openart Studio to meet the participants and staff and to learn more about the project. In addition, the Team Manager for NHS Community Psychiatric Nursing has arranged for a presentation to be made by Openart Studio for the CPN Team in August, to raise awareness for social prescription.

## **Arts Enquiry Group**

44. I attended meetings of Darlington Partnership's Arts Enquiry Group, and have also held meetings with various partners to discuss the way forwards. The Group has presented strong vision for the future role of the Arts in Darlington, agreed by the Partnerships Board on 14<sup>th</sup> September. I am looking forward to continuing to work with a wide range of partners to take forward this vision to enable the Arts to flourish within the current public sector funding constraints.

## **Darlington for Culture Events**

45. Darlington for Culture (D4C), a Community Benefit Society, delivered a series of events during w/c 29 August, to launch their programme at the Arts Centre, titled the 'Summer Fling'. This included an Art and Craft fair with more than 40 stall holders attended by the Mayor and myself, creative writing sessions, children's activities and a series of workshops. D4C's Autumn programme got underway with a Monday night Film Club that will showcase cult and classic films through until Christmas and Open Mic evening's for Writers will start from 26 September. The remainder of the D4C Autumn programme that will focus on Monday/Tuesday evenings at the Arts Centre is still under development and will be announced in the near future.

## **Head of Steam**

46. The Museum's new 'Darlington Rail Trail' project is due to go live to the public at the beginning of September. The rail trail is a series of nine exterior interpretation panels that will allow visitors to explore the outside of the museum for the first time.
47. The Museum's current temporary exhibition is 'The Art of Robert Stephenson', a travelling exhibition from the Robert Stephenson Trust. This has proved to be an extremely popular installation with visitors. I have visited the exhibition, and would recommend it to anyone interested in the development of the railways here in Darlington.
48. The Romans at the Railway Museum Event Day attracted over 400 people to both the Museum and Piercebridge Roman Fort on 10 July 2011.
49. The education workshop week 'World War Two Evacuees' attracted many local schools to the Museum with over 240 students engaged.
50. The Museum is getting ready to liaise with the National Railway Museum at York and Locomotion, Shildon on the Diesel and Steam Shuttle weekends in September. If successful, this could be the first of many joint events between the three museums.
51. The Museum is assisting an independent filmmaker with the story of Arthur Wharton, Britain's first professional black footballer who played for Darlington FC. The Museum is to be used as a location for several scenes of the 10-minute documentary.
52. Two new temporary exhibitions are currently being completed for display at Head of Steam: The History of North Road Station and The Tornado Story. In particular, The Tornado Story is expected to attract new and repeat visitors in light of the national and international profile of this project.

## **Environmental Services**

### **In Bloom**

53. Darlington entered both the regional Northumbria In Bloom Competition and the national Britain in Bloom Competition this past summer. Displays around the town were to the normal, very high standard and feedback from the judges at the time of assessment was positive. It is hoped that at the time of reading this report, results appertaining to both these competitions will be known.

### **Allotments & the Allotment Strategy**

54. Cabinet has considered the adopted Allotments Strategy for Darlington. The purpose of the strategy is to provide guidance on how the Council's Allotments Service continues to be integrated within the framework of the town wide allotments provision, including self managed sites and private sites as well as into the wider local food movement.
55. During the Recess, I had the pleasure of attending the open days of the Barmpton Lane and West Cemetery Allotment Associations. In both cases, the allotments were a testament to the massive improvements which self-managed sites can help bring about.

## **Grass Banks**

56. Members will be aware of concerns raised following the cessation of cutting grass banks due to the Council's cutting equipment not being suitable for banks steeper than 25 degrees. Extensive demonstrations were sought from manufacturers to determine the best method of grass cutting without breaches to any health and safety legislation. As a result of these demonstrations, a remote controlled grass cutting machine has been procured and we will now recommence cutting of grass banks around the Borough.

## **Hedges**

57. Members may be aware that pruning or cutting back of hedges during the spring and summer months are prohibited by the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. As a result, a thorough programme of cutting back hedges commences the first week in September each year and runs throughout the winter. This past summer has seen the growth of hedges exacerbated by the frequent heavy rainfall and subsequent warm temperatures, leading to extensive growth and in some areas, concerns in relation to hedges overhanging footpaths. Priority is to be given to those hedges that are causing concern for pedestrians and motorists alike and it is envisaged that all hedges will be thoroughly cut back in the near future.

## **Tree and Woodland Strategy 2011-2020**

58. Cabinet has considered and agreed the adopted Tree and Woodland Strategy 2011-2020 for Darlington, which has been developed over the past 18 months in consultation with various organisations and the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee. The key aim of the strategy is to proactively manage and enlarge the tree population of the Borough of Darlington in order to protect our historical heritage of trees and provide a valued environmental amenity for future generations.

## **Winter Maintenance**

59. The winter maintenance season for the forthcoming winter commences on 3 October 2011 and finishes (weather allowing) on Sunday 29 April 2012. Once again staff will be deployed accordingly allowing for 24/7 availability throughout this period. Despite significant inclement weather in the past two winters, resources allocated ensured that those roads identified on the highway network for treatment, remained open at all times and it is envisaged that these standards will be attained once more this coming winter.

## **Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority**

60. I have attended meetings of the Authority, including the Performance Review Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2011 and 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011, and will be present at the full Board meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011.

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