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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 :-

**MEND Programme**

2. The next MEND programme will commence on 9 May 2013 at the Dolphin Centre. Delivered in partnership with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, MEND is a free ten week course for families of children whose weight is over the ideal for their height.
3. The aim of the programme is to educate children and their families around healthy eating and physical activity habits, in a fun and practical way. The families attend twice a week and have the chance to try new foods; practice reading labels; go on a treasure hunt at a local supermarket; as well as fun games and swimming sessions, in a supportive and encouraging environment.

**Nordic Walking**

4. Nordic walking has seen increased interest and participation after recent promotion. An extra session has been created to meet demand and additional coaching cover arranged for existing walks to allow increased capacity to cater for more participants.
5. New partnership working with Middleton Hall Retirement Village has begun and walks took place with residents over the Easter period.

**Doorstep Walks**

6. Walk Leader Training recently trained additional walk leaders for the Local Motion Team, Groundwork and Middleton Hall Retirement Village with the aim of expanding the walks programme with these organisations.

**Darlington School Games**

7. Over the past term there has been a wide variety of competitions and festivals organised through the School Sport Partnership, as part of the year-long programme of Darlington School Games. There have been inter-school competitions in Girls Football, Basketball, Girls Rugby, Swimming and a huge

Dance Festival held at the Civic Theatre involving 450 performers from 24 schools across the town from ages 5 to 16. The evening was sold out and a great success.

8. The majority of these inter-school competitions lead directly into county finals within the Tees Valley. The county level events that have taken place this term have been Sports Hall Athletics (primary and secondary), Basketball, Year 7, 8 and 9 Rugby and Boys Football at the Middlesbrough FC training ground at Rockliffe Park. The teams from Darlington have featured strongly and benefited from the higher quality competition and the opportunity to play at superb venues.
9. One of our greatest achievements was at the Tees Valley Primary Schools Cross-Country where we took a team of 60 primary-aged youngsters from across 23 schools to compete at Prissick Base, Middlesbrough. The Darlington team won five of the six races individually outright and the teams in each age group performed consistently well throughout the day – 1st team in Year 3 and 4 Girls and Year 5 Girls; 2nd team in Year 3 and 4 Boys and Year 6 Girls; 3rd team in the Year 5 Boys and 4th team in the Year 6 Boys.
10. The School Sport Partnership also runs a Leadership Academy where 70 Year 9 students from across the secondary schools within the Town are currently registered. These students have had their own conference organised at the Education Village where they accessed a variety of workshops over the course of the day and selected students accessed National Governing Body Leaders Awards in netball, cycling, golf and disability awareness. These students will have access to further training along with our Young Ambassadors and have/will assist in the running of future events and the next Tees Valley School Games days.

### **Tees Valley School Games**

11. Hundreds of youngsters from around the region revived the spirit of last summer's Olympics and Paralympics, as they took part in a day of sporting events. Children aged 9 to 16 took part in the Tees Valley Spring School Games, in Darlington, on 21 March 2013.
12. First introduced last year, the initiative aims to motivate and inspire young people across the country to participate in more competitive school sport. The Dolphin Centre and Polam Hall School were the main venues for the festival, which was the culmination of school and inter-school competitions that have been held recently across the five Tees Valley districts – Darlington, Stockton, [Redcar](#) and Cleveland, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool.
13. Among the events contested was a wheelchair basketball competition, as well as netball, rugby, golf, swimming and table tennis. There were disability events in table tennis and swimming and netball and the wheelchair basketball was inclusive. The Games' Opening Ceremony was presided over by Darlington Mayor, Paul Baldwin. Also in attendance was Gemma Collis, a member of Paralympic GB, who competed in the 2012 wheelchair fencing event. 150 young people from Darlington took part in the day.

## **Civic Theatre**

14. The Theatre is part of The National Touring Group (NTG), a partnership of eight large scale venues led by English Touring Theatre. NTG has been successful in securing a grant of £1.14 million from Arts Council England to tour three large scale high quality productions between 2014-16.
15. Following on from the highly successful tour of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre production of 'Anne Boleyn', the first production will reunite the same creative team to tour 'In Extremis, The Love Story of Abelard and Heloise'. This is the third of three grants secured by the Civic Theatre, which will bring high quality work to Darlington and help to develop new audiences.
16. With the support of the Council's Web team, the Civic Theatre has been working on an upgrade to the Enta box office system. This will provide an improved service for customers and greater capacity to manage data, thus improving marketing and income generation. Alongside this, upgrade to the theatre's website has been refreshed and has improved clarity and design.
17. The Civic Theatre has hosted a number of community events including Darlington School's Dance Festival, the Vibe Awards and 'Something to Dance About', a production by the Sandra Welsh School of Dance and Ian Pyle Dancers.
18. The Friends of Darlington Civic Theatre held their AGM at the Theatre on 18 March 2013. They continue to provide support to and particularly offer a warm welcome to visiting companies at Friends' first night receptions.
19. The Theatre also offers a variety of events and activities for people to engage with its programme. A page to stage workshop took place during the run of 'The Woman in Black', which was attended by 60 young people and there was also a well-attended post show talk with the cast. An Open Morning was held on 9 March 2013 during the run of 'James and the Giant Peach'. Families had the opportunity to take part in workshops, enter competitions, tour the stage and put their questions to the cast who also demonstrated costumes, props and puppets used in the performance.
20. ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance Groups have had a very active term, including a number of trips to see performances to gain inspiration and develop their understanding of theatre and dance. The oldest youth theatre group attended a regional Youth Theatre Festival in the East Midlands to capture best practice ideas for the North East Regional Youth Theatre Festival, which they are organising at the Civic Theatre in July 2013.

## **Creative Darlington**

21. Following a strategy day on 19 March 2013, the Creative Darlington board meeting of 27 March 2013 agreed the following three objectives for the current business planning period:

- (a) Financial viability: for Creative Darlington and for arts organisations/venues.
  - (b) The Arts contribute to Darlington's economic prospects
  - (c) More people are involved in great art
22. The Creative Darlington Board meeting also agreed three priority roles it will undertake in this business planning period to address these objectives:
- (a) Finance broker – facilitating new financing and partnerships, supporting new business models to lever finance and funding for the arts
  - (b) Strategic asset maximiser – to protect and value hard and soft assets and enhance their sustainability
  - (c) Audience developer – signposting arts consumers to arts opportunities and creating new audience
23. Revised terms of reference for Creative Darlington have been agreed and Creative Darlington is utilising Darlington Partnership's partnership management model toolkit model.
24. Creative Darlington has offered support to the Festival of Thrift, which will be staged at Lingfield Point in Darlington in September 2013. The Festival of Thrift concept has been curated by Wayne Hemingway MBE, and Marchday have commissioned Stella Hall to develop the Festival vision and to engage and energise local organisations. Creative Darlington has offered support for local artists and arts organisations and schools to get involved. The Festival will explore a variety of themes, including growing your own food, upcycling and improving furniture, inspired interior design, fashion with a passion for re-using and refining existing clothes and enjoying energy without harming the planet. Creative Darlington has also supported technical services to relocate the Borough Art Collection within Crown Street Library and to update records on the collection.

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

25. Creative Darlington has been supporting the development of activity at the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts. Creative Darlington supported services to open and operate the venue during 2012/13 and research to develop new operating methods. We estimate the venue has attracted approximately 6,500 visits in the last six months, through adult art courses, the Openart Studio, the Community Arts Project and groups and artists staging their own activities.
26. A meeting is scheduled for 26 April 2013 where artists and independent groups using the facility will consider whether they wish to support development of the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts as a constituted community group, which might help develop finance. Creative Darlington has also supported curation of an exhibition of artwork by people and groups using The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts within the Crown Street Art Gallery from February to March 2013, which promoted the facility. Creative Darlington will support artists and organisations using the venue to develop a website for The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts.

27. The Autumn 2012 term of adult art courses held at The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts attracted 1420 visits and the Spring 2013 term attracted 1730. The Summer term of adult art courses opens in the week commencing 15 April 2013.
28. The Openart Studio has introduced a new system to manage demand for activity and to address programme targets in engaging new participants. Demand for particular days has been very high in 2012/13, which may have challenged space for new referrals to the programme. The new system, informed by consultation with Openart Studio members has designated an limited number of spaces for existing users and a designated number of spaces for new referrals.
29. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts continues to manage and promote an exhibitions programme within the venue. In March 2013 artist Pat Maycroft and Vane Women staged the Northern Grit exhibition within the venue, which also staged a variety of events.

### **Crown Street Art Gallery**

30. The 'Mining a Golden Seam' exhibition by Darlington Embroiderers' Guild was followed by a group exhibition by artists from The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts running 23 February to 28 March 2013 and an exhibition of art work from the Community Art Project, running from 2 April to 4 May 2013. Darlington's Society of Arts will open their exhibition at Crown Street Art Gallery on 6 May 2013. The programme and venue continue to be well received.

### **Darlington Arts Festival**

31. Creative Darlington congratulates Darlington for Culture in co-ordinating the Darlington Arts Festival 2013, with events running throughout May across the borough. Highlights include a literary festival, a special performance by Northern Sinfonia Strings at Darlington Central Hall, the Dolphin Centre, on Saturday 11 May 2013 and an Art Showcase event organised in conjunction with Darlington Borough Council as part of the Love your Local Market event on Sunday 19 May 2013, which will help promote the work of local makers. Creative Darlington has supported the design and print costs of the Darlington Arts Festival brochure, elements of the Festival programme and Darlington for Culture's ongoing work with volunteers to support Darlington events.

### **Spring Thing – 20 to 24 March 2013**

32. This year's Spring Thing was a town-wide event for the first time following its move from the Arts Centre. Despite the bitterly cold weather all weekend the event proved a success and are looking forward to the 2014 Spring Thing.
33. A variety of events and stalls were located in the Dolphin Centre over the weekend with the headline act, Richard Digance, appearing in the Central Hall on 22 March 2013. Events were also held in the Forum Music Centre, St Cuthbert's Church Hall and local pubs for the first time.

34. Dance demonstrations were held throughout the town centre on Saturday before culminating in a mass dance performance in the Market Square and dance demonstrations in the Dolphin Centre.

### **National No Smoking Day**

35. Working in partnership with the British Heart Foundation, the Cultural Services Events team delivered a No Smoking event on 13 March 2013 in Joseph Pease Place. Based around the theme of 'Swap Fag for Swag', entertainment was provided to encourage people to the information staff located at a nearby stall.
36. The event attracted media coverage from Tyne Tees, Star Radio and the Northern Echo following the success of being runner up last year for the best entertainment based around the theme.

### **Best of Darlington Awards**

37. The eighth annual Best of Darlington Awards was held at Darlington College on 22 March 2013. The event, which was attended by almost 300 people and received a record number of entries, showcased the best of Darlington.
38. There were 13 categories which included contribution to sport, contribution to the arts, contribution to the community and the Chairman's awards, which included an award to Paula Foster and Diane Galloway from Darlington Magistrates Court and DC Jim Honeyman and PC Graham King from Durham Constabulary, who rushed to the aid of a Darlington man who suffered a heart attack at the wheel of his car near the Magistrate's court last year.
39. The two people who had made the most significant contribution were awarded the Citizen of the Year and the Young Citizen of the Year awards. The Citizen of the Year was awarded to Dave Scott, who founded the Spraire junior football club, and since then has dedicated over 30 years volunteering as a football coach for both boys and girls football.
40. The Young Citizen of the Year was awarded to James Charlton, who played a leading role in fundraising for Darlington FC when it went into administration and still continues to be involved with the club today.

### **Libraries Events**

41. A very successful event for Comic Relief saw staff and children dressed as super heroes with face painting of red noses on children, and coffee and cake for the public (with the valuable help of both volunteers and the Library's work experience student visiting from Bremen). The whole event raised over £100 for the charity.
42. As part of the Read Regional programme, local authors Alison Gangel and Fiona Shaw visited Cockerton Library to talk about their books on 19 March 2013. The evening event was a great success with 25 people attending and enjoying Alison

and Fiona's talk.

43. Easter saw four children's events, Easter Crafts at both libraries in the first week of the school holidays and Spring Crafts at Cockerton. As usual, the events at Cockerton, held on a Wednesday afternoon when the library is closed, were over-subscribed.
44. GEM (Get Everyone Motivated) sessions run by a member of staff at Crown Street Library every Wednesday are very popular. Whilst ostensibly about gentle exercise, the group have become real friends and now go for a coffee afterwards. A real example of building a community a small step at a time.
45. The Library 'Scribblers' group, a weekly creative writing session run by a member of staff, used the Local Studies exhibits from the Faverdale dig as inspiration to write their own 'roman' stories.
46. 27 March 2013 saw the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the extension to Crown Street Library, which saw more space and improved areas for the adult and junior lending libraries and the reference library. The day was marked with photographs and displays of books that were first published in 1933, many still in print today.
47. Darlington was one of 150 libraries nationwide to take part in the Reading Agency/Pan Macmillan's challenge to make author David Baldacci as popular as James Patterson by issuing more of his books. Over the 10 weeks of the challenge, issues of his books rose from 36 to 594, perhaps due to the fact that the publishers gave the Library 150 free copies of his titles.

### **Partner Events**

48. The Library service offers a number of partner organisations space, either in the public part of the Library or in the two private bookable rooms.

### **Children's Services Contact Meetings**

49. The Library's Community Room now has comfortable chairs so that it is a better space for the use of the team who arrange supervised visits for parents whose children are in care. The facility has provided a valuable private space for this service with the added advantage of parents being able to use the Children's Library with their children during the visit if they wish.

### **Age Concern**

50. Age Concern has been at both Libraries to hand out their cold crisis packs; when they visited Cockerton Library there was a queue of people waiting for them at opening time. They have been overwhelmed with the response to these events.

### **Action on Hearing Loss**

51. This charity, formerly the RNID, regularly attends the Library to engage with members of the public, talking to them about deafness and the services the charity offers. The hearing dog who comes too is always a popular visitor.

### **NHS Cancer Awareness**

52. A member of the Cancer Awareness team has been visiting the Library regularly to promote her service to the public. She has told staff that the time spent at the Library has been invaluable with many people talking to her about their issues.

### **Groundwork Play Sessions**

53. Groundwork has been running after school play sessions on a Tuesday afternoon in Crown Street Library for well over a year and the sessions have proved very popular. Unfortunately, their funding has now finished and the last session was held the week before the Easter holidays.

### **Head of Steam**

54. Visitor numbers are at an all time high for 2012/13 with over 37,000 visitors to the museum, with a further 55,000 virtual visitors via the museum's website and Facebook.

### **Accreditation**

55. Certification has now arrived at the museum and is on display to our customers.

### **Events and Exhibitions**

56. The Museum has received record visitor numbers specifically for events and exhibitions for 2012/13, nearly 8,000 people in total.
57. The 'North Road Works 1863-1966' exhibition opened to the public on 6 April 2013. The exhibition, jointly curated by the Museum and the North Eastern Railway Association, explores and remembers the North Road Works site, the locomotives that were built there and the people who worked there 150 years after it opened in 1863.
58. This is to be followed by the British Wildlife Photography awards with high expectations for this nationally travelling exhibition. The Museum will also celebrate the Festival of the North East through lectures, workshops and exhibitions over the next few months.

### **Arts Council England Strategic Funding**

59. The Museum is proud to announce that the Strategic Funding application to the Arts Council England has been successful with nearly £400,000 secured for



commemorations of World War I over the next two years across the Tees Valley Museum Hub. The commemorations will include exhibitions, workshops with schools and colleges, staged plays and research into those from the Tees Valley who assisted with the war effort.

### **Museum Development Funding**

60. The Museum has been successful in receiving funding from TWAM (Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum) for collection storage equipment. £1,000 has been received to help conserve and store items from the Tubwell Row collection.

### **Learning and Access**

61. The last three months have been very busy with school visits, 420 children visited in January, 189 in February and 462 in March 2013. Most of these have been schools from within the Borough, and most are schools who visit regularly. We have had schools who visit from County Durham, North Yorkshire and Stockton. This will give a total of school visits and outreach for the year of 3793, which is an increase of 700 on last year.

### **The Tees Valley/National Portrait Gallery Project**

62. 'Making a Mark' has just begun piloting, and Carmel College had a very successful series of visits. The project funds development of new workshops, and the use of creative practitioners, such as local authors and actors. The project's focus is on the age of industry and the part that the Tees Valley played in making Britain great. It looks at local people - famous, not so famous and unsung heroes.

### **Westbrook Villas Project**

63. The Museum has supported residents in working with Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College on producing a series of artworks for display around the street, a leaflet about the project and a series of guided walks. The Museum hosted refreshments before the first walk, for around 40 people, including the Principal of the College and Chris Lloyd from the Northern Echo. The residents have sent a thank you card for the staff of the museum.

### **Volunteers**

64. The Stockton and Darlington Railway Youth Team now visit once a month to promote their group, deliver live interpretation to visitors and help with things like tidying planters and developing new ideas for things to attract young people. They are working with Bob Whitehouse and Bishop Trains on the adoption of North Road Station, which the Museum will support in various practical ways.

### **Collections**

65. The Friends of the Museum have helped to fund (over £800) an upgrade of the Museum database software, called MODES. The new software has many new

features which will allow the Museum to answer enquiries more efficiently and will enable volunteers to help with museum inventory work.

66. The Museum is involved with the 'North East in 100 Objects' project (part of the Festival of the North East). The project will showcase 100 objects/artworks on display in museums that together best tell the story of the unique creativity and innovation of the North East. Two artefacts on display at the Museum have been included in the 100 objects - Locomotion No. 1 and the Dobbin watercolour of the Opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Richard Wimbury, a museum volunteer, was filmed talking about Locomotion No 1 and the role Darlington has played in the world of engineering.

### **Refuse Collection**

67. Members will be aware of a communication error over the Easter period in which the wrong collection day for Good Friday was published in the Darlington Together magazine. This resulted in large scale non-collection of wastes. Upon being made aware of the situation, Street Scene services allocated all available resources week commencing 1 April 2013 to the catch-up operation. Most properties that placed waste out for collection on the wrong day were collected and plans were made for additional resources to be available on Saturday 6 April 2013 (the subsequent Friday collection) to ensure all wastes were removed accordingly.

### **Wheeled Bin Implementation**

68. Members will be aware that the Council is to implement a wheeled bin refuse collection service in June of this year. Promotion of the scheme has been via the Darlington Together magazine and the Council's own website. The communication campaign will increase, commencing 20 April 2013 with the delivery of wheeled bin leaflets to all households across the Borough. Further information will then appear on the Council's website as well as in forthcoming issues of the Darlington Together magazine, and final information will be delivered to all householders at the same time as the wheeled bin itself between 6 May and 7 June 2013. Due to the ongoing campaign, to date, as of 12 April 2013, 1,011 enquiries have been received in relation to wheeled bins, of which 951 have been investigated and resolved. Officers continue to investigate each individual concern and to advise residents accordingly.
69. Additional promotion of the scheme has been via visits by staff to local supermarkets at busy times, whilst there are also displays in Crown Street Library, the Dolphin Centre and the Town Hall, which consist of pop-up banners, leaflets and a wheeled bin.
70. Officers have now surveyed the whole of the Borough and have identified problem areas where wheeled bins may not be appropriate, and alternative arrangements have been made for collection at such locations.

## **Grounds Maintenance**

71. Members will be aware of the particularly cold beginning to spring, which has resulted in a delay to grass cutting activities. One note of caution however, is the still sodden grounds on some open spaces which may delay access to tractor and gang mowing.

## **Darlington Together**

72. Led by the Council's Parks and Countryside Development Manager and the Waste and Recycling Service Development Officer, the communal get-together for all Street Champions, 'Friends Groups', Neighbourhood Watch, Police, officers of Darlington Borough Council and other external agencies is to be held on 13 April 2013 at South Park. The aim being to discuss how the various elements of the community can assist in the provision of frontline environmental services.

## **Environmental Crime**

73. Officers of the Environmental Crime Team continue to take enforcement actions in relation to litter, dog fouling, graffiti, etc. Between April 2012 and March 2013, the team issued 166 fixed penalty notices for littering, 28 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, 101 fixed penalty notices for incorrect disposal of domestic waste and a further 25 fixed penalty notices for incorrect disposal of commercial waste. Further, 14 fixed penalty notices were issued in relation to litter clearance notices, 12 for not adhering to dog control orders, one for graffiti, one nuisance parking fine, two for failure to produce waste carrier's licence and a further 13 for failure to produce waste transfer notes. The team also dealt with 19 untaxed vehicles and a further 103 abandoned vehicles. The Dog Warden service, which falls within the remit of Environmental Crime, handled 508 stray dogs in this period.

## **Winter Maintenance**

74. Members will be aware of the cold period we have recently experienced and as a result the Council used its initial stockpile of 6,000 tonnes of rock salt. A further 700 tonnes was ordered to replenish salt stocks to allow activities to continue until the end of the winter period. To highlight the increased activities that this prolonged period of inclement weather has necessitated, at the end of March 2012 we had treated the highways on 110 occasions; at the end of March 2013 we have treated the highways on 188 occasions.

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