
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 :-

Civic Theatre Restoration

2. In recent years Cabinet has made decisions to continue to fund the Theatre at a cost of £100,000 per annum and to allocate £50,000 capital funding to develop a project for refurbishment to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Stage 1 Application.
3. A Project Brief has been developed which identifies the future vision for the Theatre and the shortcomings that need to be addressed as part of the restoration. Following receipt of the Brief, we have approved the establishment of a compulsory restoration levy at a cost of £1 per ticket with the exception of dedicated children's performances, and given the Director or Resources delegated authority to pursue the acquisition of properties with a view to addressing front of house issues.

Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)

4. The FISCH programme is currently working with the following schools:- Rydal Academy, Skerne Park Academy, Firthmoor Primary, Mount Pleasant Primary and Beaumont Hill Primary School. After School clubs are well attended, sustaining and increasing attendances.

Nordic Walking

5. The Nordic walking programme has four-weekly walks taking place within the community. Walks are running close to full capacity with regular promotion and press releases taking place. This scheme will be further extended in July 2013.

Disability Festival of Football

6. Darlington Sports Development, in partnership with Durham FA, is to hold a Disability Festival of Football at Eastbourne Sports Complex. This will take place on 21 July 2013. The event will be aimed at young people between the ages of 12 and 16, who will be able to register as a team or as individuals, for the cost of £1 per person. FA Tesco skills coaches will be on hand during the festival.

Cycle in Darlington

7. The Cycle in Darlington rides continue to be well attended as we head into the summer with weekly rides still taking place on Thursdays and Sundays. For the second year, we hosted a leg of the British Cycling MTB XC League at West Park Bike Track. This took place on Friday 7 June 2013; there were almost double the amount of entries as last year.

MEND

8. MEND is going well with seven children and their families currently engaged. The programme, which is delivered in partnership with NHS County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust Health Improvement Team, helps children towards a healthy weight, and fitter, happier lives. Also attending are several MEND 'graduates' who have previously attended a MEND programme but want to keep up their new physical activity levels so they are adding to the fun and encouraging the current cohort to get active and make healthy changes to their diets.

Ping Pong Care Campaign

9. The Sports Development Team is promoting the Ping Pong Care Campaign, an initiative to inspire older adults to get involved in table tennis for physical, social and mental benefits. Sparked by a documentary about the Over 80s Table Tennis World Championships, the campaign hopes to get people involved in table tennis for recreational reasons, or at a more competitive level for those who want to take it further.
10. We are currently working with Lifeline Services, GOLD, Age UK, Darlington Table Tennis Club and private providers to roll the campaign out in sheltered accommodation, day care settings and public venues.

Bariatric Group

11. Sports Development is working with the NHS County Durham and Darlington Health Improvement Service to support people waiting for bariatric surgery to kick start and maintain their weight loss. The Food and Health Team is delivering community-based sessions offering practical dietary advice and the Sports Development Team will provide exercise guidance and opportunities. We are planning to start with a walking programme using the Fitbug pedometers to help the group embark on their journey to being more active.

Darlington One Life

12. After a comprehensive re-structure, a new Darlington One Life Exercise Referral Scheme was implemented at the Dolphin Centre in April 2013. Participation in the first two months has been excellent. 86 clients have been referred to exercise by health professionals and 94 per cent of these clients have attended a personalised health induction. Two per cent did not want to take part in the programme; Two per cent were able to exercise independently and have therefore taken out

memberships at the Dolphin Centre; and the remaining two per cent did not attend the induction and are being followed up. In the first quarter of this financial year there have been over 600 visits to One Life activities, which have included: Gym Sessions, Pilates, Easyline and Swimming. Over the next few months, this good work will be consolidated, with a focus on supporting clients to complete the 12-week course, and also the development of additional community based One Life sessions.

Grant Award

13. The Sports Development Team secured the Hundens Green Community Bowls Association's (HGCBA) successful application for just under £10,000 of funding from Sport England and the County Durham Foundation. The HGCBA will use the funding to deliver community-based bowls sessions, to support some of its members to become qualified coaches, and also to help them to manage and care for the bowling green following the asset transfer in April of this year. The Sports Development Team will continue to support the HGCBA to deliver the project.

Community Gymnastics Sessions

14. In response to increased demand for sessions, an additional three recreational gymnastics sessions per week are now being provided for young people in Darlington. The new sessions cater specifically for beginners, and younger gymnasts who are taking part for the first time. Over 150 children and young people take part in these sessions each week.

Community Sport Activation Fund

15. The Sports Development Team are in the process of preparing a comprehensive bid for funding to Sport England under the Community Sport Activation Fund programme. The aim of the funding programme is to increase participation in sport and physical activity, particularly to increase participation of those who are inactive to one 30 minute session per week. The project is being planned, and if the bid is successful, will be delivered in very close partnership with National Governing Bodies of sport and also local clubs and community groups.

Sportivate

16. Sportivate is a Lottery programme that gives 14 to 25 year olds access to six-week courses in a range of sports. The Darlington Sports Development team secured funding to deliver the programme locally.
17. 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. Activities have already been delivered in Darlington at local clubs and community based venues, these have included Orienteering, Zumba, Volleyball, Swimming, Hockey, Boys Dance, Squash and Basketball. Currently Darlington have retained 491 young people aged from 14 to 25 years and have engaged 525 young people

in total.

Civic Theatre

19. Darlington Operatic Society presented one of its most well received and successful ever shows at Darlington Civic Theatre. The Sound of Music was seen by over 6,500 people during its run and the lead role of Maria was played by Beth Stobbart, who lives in Darlington and also teaches the theatre's ArtsSpark Youth Theatre. A collection was made following each performance for St Teresa's Hospice.
20. In May, the Civic Theatre also hosted two sold out performances by Tiffany School of Dance and a Vane Women Showcase. 2,317 young people and their families saw Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom over just four performances and 20 children and their families won prizes consisting of theatre tickets and a chance to meet the cast of the show in art competitions held at Darlington and Cockerton Libraries, Waterstones and Adventure Point.
21. The Civic Theatre's pantomime is selling strongly with ticket sales currently £40,000 up on the same time last year. The Mousetrap, which arrived in Darlington week commencing 10 June 2013, was the most successful drama in terms of ticket sales that has ever been presented at the Civic Theatre with sales of £136,000.
22. ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance Groups are having a very active summer term. The oldest Youth Theatre group has attended several training sessions in preparation for the North East Regional Youth Theatre Festival, which they hosted and organised, on 1 June 2013 at the Civic Theatre. This was attended by six Youth Theatres from across the North East, totalling 85 young people, plus their leaders. They took part in workshops in stage combat, comedy improvisation, games exchange and ensemble working and shared performances of their work.
23. ArtsSpark Contemporary Dance Group led by Debbie Waistell took part in a regional dance platform competition called Pulse at Dance City in Newcastle on 20 April 2013. The Contemporary Dance Group also performed alongside the Mix It Up Dance Group at Longfield Dance Festival on 30 April 2013.
24. Young people from the Contemporary Dance Class have also been participating in Salamander, a project that is part of the Festival of the North East, which culminated in a large outdoor dance performance in Redcar on Saturday 15 June 2013.

Darlington Arts Festival

25. Creative Darlington supported Darlington for Culture promoting the Darlington Arts Festival 2013 and the Culture team are working with Darlington for Culture to sustain the festival in 2014 and beyond. The programme contained ticketed events including a concert performance by Northern Sinfonia Strings, a literary festival and an arts market showcase displaying the work of local artists, craftspeople and arts organisations in Darlington Market Square and in the Dolphin Centre.

Festival of Thrift

26. Creative Darlington has offered financial support to enable local artists, arts organisations and schools to engage with Marchday's proposal to stage a Festival of Thrift in Darlington in 2013. Marchday secured a significant grant offer from Arts Council England in May 2013 to support the arts within the Festival of Thrift. It is expected the Festival of Thrift will be publically launched in Summer 2013 and staged at Lingfield Point in September 2013.

The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts

27. Darlington Cares has proposed a schedule of work incorporating internal and external decoration of the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts for July 2013. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts continues to promote Arts Cafes inviting donations for refreshments to support artist led activity. The Arts Cafe held in May 2013 included free workshop activity supported by the Lindisfarne Gospels 2013 programme. Creative Darlington is supporting the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in developing a website to promote their activity. A community interest organisation has been recently established at The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts with an agreed constitution to support the visual arts in Darlington.

Crown Street Gallery

28. The Gallery has staged eleven exhibitions since opening with 20,375 visits recorded between 14 May 2012 and 3 June 2013. Darlington's Society of Arts exhibition secured positive comments on the standard and display of Darlington Society of Arts members' original work. Enquiries to purchase art work have been received, with the Council taking 20 per cent commission plus VAT payable on this commission from all sales. The exhibition, Forest Light II, featuring original landscapes by Paul Dillon, opened on 8 June 2013. The average length of exhibitions is being extended to assist promotion and limit the costs of handling and installing exhibitions.

Library Events

29. The Library Service work with a range of volunteers in both public facing and 'back office' roles. Our long established partnership with the RVS (formerly the WRVS) allows us to deliver targeted selections of books to users who are unable to visit the library and who have no one to collect books on their behalf. The service currently has almost 80 registered borrowers for whom library staff choose books that the RVS volunteers deliver. Staff pack the books into bags, which are delivered to the Age UK office at Bradbury House by our attendant and delivered on to users by the volunteers. Over six thousand books were delivered to users in this way in 2012/2013. We will be working with the RVS to increase the usage of the service in 2013/2014.
30. The library service has, in the Centre for Local Studies, a large and diverse collection of local and family history materials. The collection was started in the 1880's with donations of personal materials from the Pease family and has been

growing ever since. The policy is to collect material relating to Darlington and the surrounding area. The collection is used by a huge range of people; from local schoolchildren to the BBC, from ex-Darlington residents living all over the world to English Heritage and Council departments.

31. Volunteers have been recruited to digitise the card catalogue of the collection. The project may well take years, but with automated up-loading of the information from the spreadsheets the volunteers are completing, we are hopeful that we will soon have a more meaningful digital presence for users across the world. The collection includes some 30,000 images, of all sorts and in all media, and one group of volunteers will be starting on a major project to digitise those. We know that this material will generate a lot of interest and be the most valuable addition to our Flickr pages.
32. Volunteers also help us with events, making coffee, manning doors and marshalling visitors. Whilst they do of course require management time and training, and represent an overhead in that area, they help free library staff to do what they do best – help people with books and information. One of our volunteers is using her time at Cockerton assisting with children's events during the holidays towards her Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award and is enjoying working in a community library setting.
33. One development in the last month has been the engagement with a group of long term patients from West Park visiting Cockerton Library on a weekly basis for a reading group. They look at the newspapers and magazines and have a discussion about books they have enjoyed. Staff from West Park have been glad to have a focus for the patient trips to Cockerton and we are hoping to develop the group further.

Green Fair - 12 May 2013

34. Many people braved the wet weather conditions to visit the Green Fair. Visitors were greeted by over 50 stallholders offering advice on environment, health and sustainable issues along with fantastic entertainment for the whole family. BBC Tees were the radio partner this year. They had a presence on the day tying in with their early morning garden show, interviewing stall holders and public alike. Feedback obtained demonstrated the effectiveness of the partnership with many people attending the event as a direct result of hearing the on air broadcast.

Round 50 Cycle Ride - 2 June 2013

35. The first of Darlington Tourist Trail rides took place at the start of June 2013. The weather was perfect for the over 120 cyclists who entered the 50 mile ride, an improvement on the previous years entrants. The rides are as popular as ever and appear to grow year on year.

St George's Day Celebrations

36. A toast to St George was organised at the Market Cross, which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of Darlington, along with the Town Crier, Dave Scott (Citizen of the Year). Darlington Library's junior mascot Deefor the Dragon handed out red roses to the public donated by Flowers by Natrass.

St Teresa's Midnight Walk – 17 May 2013

37. Following the success of last year's Midnight Walk, St Teresa's worked in partnership with the Events Team in delivering the walk in South Park for a second year. Despite the rain the event proved to be a tremendous success with over 200 women taking part in raising money for St Teresa's.

Vintage Vehicle Rally – 19 May 2013

38. Another successful Vintage Vehicle Rally was held at the Head of Steam Museum on 19 May 2013. The event attracted over 100 vintage and commercial vehicles from across the North East and Yorkshire regions, and over 900 visitors attended to enjoy a family day out.
39. Children's entertainment was also provided and entry into the museum was included as part of the admission charge.

Head of Stream - Exhibitions and Events

40. The British Wildlife Photography Awards Exhibition scheduled from 7 June 2013 to 1 August 2013 is expected to attract visitors from all over the North East. This national exhibition is highly acclaimed and is set to captivate visitors with outstanding and beautiful imagery. It is a celebration of British Wildlife as well as a showcase for the country's leading nature photographers.
41. The Museum's 'North Road Works' exhibition has now ended and was extremely popular with visitors. The exhibition explored and remembered the North Road Works site, the locomotives that were built there and the people who worked there 150 years after it opened in 1863.

Collections

42. Volunteers continue to catalogue, photograph and repackage the Tubwell Row Collection thanks to a grant for conservation materials from the Museum Development Programme's Small Grants Scheme.
43. The Friends of Darlington Railway Museum have purchased Robert Robinson's diaries for the museum collection. Mr Robinson was a civil engineer, who worked on railway projects, with offices near to North Road Station. His diaries cover the period 1859-1861 and include interesting railway local, and social history information.

Displays/Interpretation

44. The museum has worked with the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group to label the cab of the Q7 so visitors can identify what each lever does. It is proving to be a popular addition to the museum's interpretation.
45. The museum has had a small display of Cleveland Bridge Company photographs on display as part of the Festival of the North East.

Volunteers

46. New volunteers in recruitment to be able to help with arts and crafts activities. 478 volunteer hours during 2012-13, helping on a wide range of tasks on collections, displays, arts and crafts, guided visits and event days.

Markets - Darlington's Victorian Market Celebration 1863 - 2013

47. Thousands of people descended on Darlington over the weekend of 7 and 8 June to mark the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Covered Market.
48. After the official opening by the Mayor the celebrations got underway with the unveiling of a giant cake in the shape of the Covered Market and the Clock Tower. The first ox to be roasted in the Market Square since the Coronation of King George V in 1911 also proved popular as did the beer tent serving specially brewed ale.
49. There was a full range of Victorian entertainment, music, characters and workshop for both children and adults on both days of the celebration. Covered Market traders also dressed in Victorian costume and decorated their market stalls.
50. The event was successfully coincided with the 60th anniversary of Darlington's town twinning links with Germany, France and Poland, and a number of European dignitaries joined in on the festivities.
51. For two days the sun shone on Darlington as families packed the town centre for the celebrations. After months of hard work, planning and organising, the event was a huge success and was enjoyed by all.
52. I would like to this opportunity to recognise and thank Peter Wilson, former Markets Manager for his 40 years' service with Darlington Borough Council.

Environmental Services - Wheeled Bins

53. Members will be fully aware of the implementation of wheeled bins across the Borough. The contractor distributing wheeled bins to all households across the Borough completed deliveries as per schedule. Where properties were missed during the roll out, Street Scene teams have been employed to either deliver wheeled bins or exchange wheeled bins where a large bin was required, i.e. 360 litre instead of 240 litre wheeled bins. It would appear that communication to

residents has been successful in that during the period between delivery and first collection of the wheeled bins, residents continue to place black sacks out for collection as requested and did not utilise the wheeled bin by mistake.

54. Upon commencement of the new system requests for service anomalies were identified by residents, particularly in relation to collection points, requests for larger bins etc. As of 26 June 2013, only 157 requests out of a total of 4,523 were outstanding with the vast majority being wheeled bin deliveries (exchanging larger 360 bins for existing 240 bins).

Grounds Maintenance

55. Due to the reasonable start of the summer, grass cutting and general grounds maintenance activities are on target with no reported issues to date.

Litter Free Darlington and Durham Campaign

56. Members may be aware that on an annual basis, the Litter Free Durham Group in conjunction with Darlington Borough Council and Durham County Council undertake a campaign to encourage residents to undertake community litter picks. This year's campaign has just successfully concluded and a total of 32 community litter picks were undertaken, utilising 384 volunteers with a total of 537 bags of litter collected from all areas of the town. Further, 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 reaches of South Park. A large amount of debris was removed from the river and disposed of by Street Scene services.

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