
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 :-

Markets

2. The success of the event on 8 July 2012 prompted a local group to seek a regular monthly Sunday Market to help add to the Town Centre offer and showcase quality independent traders. A four-month pilot commenced on 5 August 2012 and proved very successful with 32 stalls taken.

Sport England Bids

3. The Sports Development Officer has helped with a successful grant application on behalf of Darlington Indoor Bowls Club to Sport England's Inspire Facilities programme. This is part of the £135 million People Places Play Olympic Legacy programme to improve community sports venues throughout the UK. The Club were notified of the success of this application in July and will receive an allocation of £43,000 (maximum allocation is £50,000) through this programme to enable refurbishment of their playing surface.
4. Work to replace the surface began on 6 August 2012 and took a week using materials that bring it up to an international standard. The club hosted two open days for new prospective new members, who tested the new playing surface, on 15 and 23 September 2012.
5. The Sports Development team are also working closely with a number of clubs and organisations to apply for funding opportunities to help develop club facilities, equipment and sessions. Bids are currently being developed for Sport England's Small Grants programme with Darlington Triathlon Club, 4motion, Darlington Archery Club and Hundens Green Association. Further work is ongoing with Rockcliffe Cricket Club and Darlington RA to submit applications to the next round of Inspire Facilities applications.

Olympic Legacy 2012+

6. As part of the Legacy for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the School Sports Programme in Darlington will boost existing work in school sport to create a year-round calendar of competition for all year students through inter and intra school competition. All competitions lead to an inter partnership level 3 competition. There is a current medals table in place for all level 2 and 3 competition to support participation and also reward performance.

7. The Tees Valley School Games are designed to build on the magic of 2012 (funded through to 2014 at present) to enable every school and child to participate in competitive sport including meaningful opportunities for disabled youngsters.
8. At a local level the School Games will be delivered by schools, clubs, county sports partnerships and other local partners. Local organising committees have been set up, chaired by Head Teachers, to oversee the county festivals. Whilst just one of the local partners, county sports partnerships have an important role to play in helping to stage the festivals.
9. The Tees Valley School Games took place at a variety of venues across Stockton and Middlesbrough on 11 and 12 July 2012. Darlington had representative teams competing in a variety of sports including: Swimming, Athletics, Cricket, Tri-golf, Table Tennis, Netball, Disability Cricket and Football, Cycling and Wheelchair Basketball. Darlington came second overall in Swimming and Athletics. Over 400 competitors took part from Darlington.
10. Working together, partners in the Tees Valley - national governing bodies of sport, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton Councils, Tees Active and Tees Valley Leisure Trusts and Teesside University – have developed a programme to help young people achieve their sporting potential.
11. Future Champions has been designed to support Tees Valley's talented athletes and players, aged 12 to 18 years, participating in regional and national squads in selected sports. Through an exciting partnership with Teesside University up to 80 young people and their coaches will be offered bespoke physiological testing, strength and conditioning advice and training programmes, and tailored coach and athlete support. Young athletes will also be supported with access to local sports venues including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex to facilitate training.
12. Further Olympic legacy programmes will be developed by the Sports Development team alongside schools, local clubs and Tees Valley Sport in the next few months with a commitment from Sport England to help resource this work.

Get Active Get Cycling in Darlington

13. The Get Active Get Cycling in Darlington programme has been launched in partnership with Local Motion and the Get Active team from the NHS County Durham and Darlington. The project includes weekly rides taking place on Thursdays from 10.00 am at the South Park and Sundays 10.00 am at West Park.
14. Get Active Get Cycling in Darlington offers rides lasting between one to two hours to help people build their fitness. Trained staff lead the groups within the local area and help build their confidence, fitness and bike handling skills. Additional rides can and have been set up with community organisations, education centres and businesses. Most recently a number of rides have been led for Darlington College and their students with good feedback from staff.

West Park 4Motion

15. A new club has been set up and constituted in Darlington, with a focus on 4x cycling and mountain biking. This group are working with the Sports Development Team to apply for a Sport England Small Grant, applying for the full amount of £10,000. This application was submitted late August 2012.

Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)

16. The FISCH programme took place in High Coniscliffe, Northwood, St John's and St Augustine's Primary Schools. Attendance of the after school clubs was good with an engagement of 32 per cent of all pupils in the programme. 32 of the 209 pupils were identified as obese and these pupils and families were offered support by the programmes health advisor. Exit routes were promoted such as sports development clubs and session and the summer programme activity brochures.

Click To Do Summer Programme 2012

17. The Sports Development team worked in partnership with the Dolphin Centre, Eastbourne Sports Complex, Youth Service, local clubs and community partners for the 2012 summer programme. The activities include Street Swords, Tennis, Angling, Mini Soccer, Dance, Karate, Swimming and numerous other diverse activities. So far over 400 young people have booked onto the camps and activities. Following the programme it is hoped that community based Trampolining and Tri golf sessions will be developed at the Dolphin Centre and Stressholme

Events

Cancer Research Race for Life

18. Over 3,500 women participated in this year's Race for Life on 10 June 2012 in aid of Cancer Research held in the South Park. Local running clubs, traffic management, stewards and the Council's events and sports development staff provide Cancer Research with numerous volunteers to enable the event to take place.

Community Carnival

19. This year's Community Carnival celebrated its 30th year on 30 June 2012 and attracted more community groups and charities than ever before.
20. There was well over 400 participants in the parade including groups from local schools and colleges and voluntary organisations, including the Hummersknott and Skerne Park Salsa Band, local dance schools, Darlington Arts Academy, Rhythm Train, Salsa Group and Darlington Green Theatre Company.
21. The parade followed a circular route around the town centre starting at 12 noon from outside the Arts Centre and arrived back at Stanhope Park where there were lots of family activities, as well as the New Blood Live Stage supported by the Forum Music Centre.

Darlington Dance Festival

22. More than 700 people took part in the Mass Dance on 14 July 2012 in the Market Square along with professional performances. The performance was choreographed by Darrien Wright and Debbie Waistell and taught to individual dance teachers who in turn taught their own pupils as well as community groups, school groups and Council employees and Darlington College staff.
23. The second phase of the Festival went ahead on 10 September 2012 at the Civic Theatre where 14 Dance Schools from Darlington showcased their talents for an audience in excess of 700.

Jubilee Tea Dance

24. Working in partnership with GOLD (Growing Older Living in Darlington) the Cultural Services Events Team assisted in the organisation of the annual tea dance on 18 July 2012 in the Market Square. This year's event celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and coincided with Her Majesty's visit to Stockton on Tees.
25. Hundreds of people flocked to the Market Square to enjoy a free cream tea supplied by various sponsors and danced the afternoon away to the Little Big Band and enjoyed the various dance displays on offer. A variety of service providers were also present to provide advice and information on a variety of topics.

Darlington by the Sea

26. Following the success of 2011, the popular Darlington by the Sea event returned to the Market Square on 26 August 2012 and attracted a steady flow throughout the day. Unfortunately, visitor numbers were not as high as previous years due to the poor weather.
27. A variety of attractions and activities all with a seaside and nautical theme provided entertainment for a largely family audience. Featured entertainment included street theatre, face painters, balloon modellers and themed craft activities. The biggest attraction as always however, was the 32 tons of sand that made up the beach area.

The Darlington 10km

28. The 25th Anniversary Darlington 10km was held on 12 August and attracted a record number of 1350 runners and over 150 people also took part in The Family Fun Run.
29. Sherwoods Vauxhall of Darlington was headline sponsor for the 10th 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.
30. 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.

Induction and Business Plan Development

31. The Creative Darlington Board Meeting on 25 June 2012 welcomed the appointment of the Creative Darlington Manager, Stephen Wiper, who began work on 23 July 2012 based at the Dolphin Centre.
32. Development of a business plan for Creative Darlington is underway and a review of the Creative Darlington action plan have been identified as priority tasks. The Creative Darlington Manager has met with a variety of agencies and regional organisations as part of his induction to inform business planning and network development. These have included Teesside University, Darlington for Culture, Theatre Hullabaloo, Bridge North East (The Sage Gateshead), The Sponsors Club and Marchday Group plc.

The Bridge Visual Arts Centre

33. The Bridge Visual Arts Centre opened in July 2012. Significant voluntary time has been allocated by resident groups and individuals to brightening up the facility, including hanging exhibitions, installing signage and tidying the garden area, and Darlington Borough Council has also facilitated the transfer of specialist equipment, including ceramic kilns and a printing press, formerly housed at Darlington Arts Centre.
34. The Bridge Visual Arts Centre currently hosts the Open Art Studio, the Community Arts Project and Darlington Media Group and work is underway to develop engagement with groups including Darlington Arts Society, the Studio Group and The Press Gang, who may wish to hire space within the venue. The Bridge was visited by the Lord Lieutenant of Durham, Sir Paul Nicholson, and Lady Sarah Nicholson alongside Ada Burns, Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council and Alasdair MacConachie, Chairman of Darlington Partnership on 7 August 2012 and visitors met with a variety of users and artists during a successful visit.

Adult Art Courses at The Bridge Visual Arts Centre

35. In addition to housing visual arts groups and offering facilities to regular hirers, The Bridge Visual Arts Centre also supported a programme of ticketed adult art courses from 10 September 2012. Courses on offer include ceramics, life drawing and painting, jewellery making, watercolour and landscape painting, and exploring digital photography.
36. The Bridge Visual Arts Centre was formally constituted on 23 August and the Creative Darlington Manager called a meeting of course tutors, resident groups and potential hirers on 23 August 2012 to consider the governance and development of the venue.

The Crown Street Gallery Exhibitions

37. The Crown Street Gallery is currently hosting the Once Upon A Time exhibition, featuring murals and knitted characters from stories such as Hansel and Gretel, The Jungle Book, The Hobbit, Alice in Wonderland and a number of Roald Dahl books as part of the Summer Reading Challenge. Once Upon A Time was created by The Materialistics, a knitting group initially formed by the Customs House for the Coat for a Boat project, which received worldwide acclaim in 2009. The exhibition, the third to be staged at the new high quality exhibition space in this stunning Grade II listed building

since May 2012, has been very popular.

38. Overall attendance at exhibitions at the Crown Street Gallery to date has increased on the comparable period at the Myles Meehan Gallery in 2011. Crown Street Gallery will support both professional and amateur artists and organisations and actively encourage the showcasing of art work by and for children and young people. National art events, as well as national reading and literature events can be supported by the gallery programme with exhibitions arranged specifically to tie in with, for example, The Summer Reading Challenge and The Big Draw. Crown Street Library has been programmed through to July 2013 with a mixture of solo and group exhibitions, featuring artists and groups from Darlington and the North East. Creative Darlington is keen to support development of the gallery, working with the library service, to reach more people with exciting exhibitions and activities.

Civic Theatre

39. In early July 2012, the new What's On brochure was produced with a very exciting programme, including Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, Blood Brothers with Marti Pellow and exciting new productions of Great Expectations and Haunting Julia. For the first time some productions will take place in the Dolphin Centre Central Hall, including the next in the RGS IBG lecture series Survivors of the Ice Age with Dr Alice Roberts and a new play commissioned through a partnership with other North East venues and New Writing North, called Blue Boy. This work will take place alongside concerts organised by clubs and societies moving on from the Arts Centre.
40. On 2 July 2012, the Civic Theatre presented Hilarity Bites' Darlington Comedy Festival Opening Gala. The event was sold out and Hilarity Bites raised almost £15,000 for their four chosen charities, Butterwick Hospice, DAD, St Teresa's Hospice and Daisy Chain.
41. In week commencing 24 July 2012, in partnership with DFC 1883 and local producers Ed Waugh and Trevor Wood, the Civic Theatre presented Alf Ramsey Knew My Grandfather, with the aim of raising the profile of and funds for Darlington Football Club. This production was extremely well received by critics and audiences alike and particularly brought new audiences to the theatre.
42. The Civic Theatre is continuing to support Theatre Hullabaloo and their young people's theatre offer by providing technical support to the Takeoff Festival in November and will also be presenting two shows from the Festival, one at the Civic Theatre (Red Riding Hood) and another in the Dolphin Centre, where a leading company from the Netherlands Theatergroep Max will be presenting Wanted: Rabbit.

Lending Services

43. Lending has been busy over the summer holidays with Zoo Lab offering a session of creepy crawlies to 70 children aged 4 to 11 at both branches. Staff from the Sports Development team have been at Crown Street Library every Friday for an hour offering Olympic themed sports activities.
44. A local author has been running weekly creative writing for young people aged 7 to 11. Craft activities have been offered every Thursday morning at Crown Street and on two Wednesday afternoons at Cockerton. Groundwork have continued to offer play sessions

for the 5 to 13 age group on Tuesdays. The Dogs Trust have also been at Crown Street, giving a talk and bringing along dogs.

45. The 'Big Toddler' saw 26 little ones walking all round the library dressed up as super heroes!

Waste Management

46. The Council are now in Year 4 of the 11 year waste management contract with Wades and there has been significant environmental improvement since the start of the contract. The overall recycling, composting and reuse rate is now at 44.6 per cent and through the treatment process 12.4 per cent of the waste is used for energy recovery therefore only 43 per cent of household waste is landfilled.
47. Currently all the black sack waste that is collected at the household goes through the treatment plant, which bio-dries the waste then recyclable material is recovered with the remaining output being landfilled. Wades are about to invest £1million in new plant and equipment that will enable them to turn the waste that is currently landfilled and not recycled into a refuse derived fuel (RDF). The RDF is then used as an alternative fuel source to create energy. In the last year, 21 companies have been granted permission to export material to eight European countries that have facilities already established to use this energy source. Wades will be working with the regulator to gain a permit to also enable them to export RDF. However, it is likely that there will be facilities in this country in the next few years that will be looking to utilise RDF as a fuel to generate energy.
48. From next year, the Council will take a further step in improving its environmental performance by moving ever closer to zero waste to landfill.

Refuse Collection

49. Members will be aware that the Council is now working towards the implementation of a wheeled bin system in summer 2013. A list of potential problem streets has been drafted by refuse collection crews where a suitable solution needs to be determined. An email was forwarded to all Elected Members asking if they were aware of any other potential problem areas and an article was included in the September edition of Darlington Together informing residents of the forthcoming change in service and again advising them to contact the Council with any potential concerns. Thereafter, officers will investigate each concern on an individual basis and feed back outcomes accordingly.

Grounds Maintenance

50. Members will be aware of the significant problems the Council has faced with grass cutting this summer due to the excessive amount of rainfall that fell particularly in June and July. The teams have worked additional hours in an attempt to catch up and at the time of writing, grass cutting is now back to the required standard. Officers are now evaluating the equipment currently being used for grass cutting, to determine whether any other options are available which facilitate cutting of longer grass and/or in wet weather to assist us should we experience growing conditions in future similar to those experienced this year.

South Park

51. Members will be aware that since 2009, South Park has been accredited with Green Flag status. I am delighted to advise that the park has again received accreditation for the forthcoming year.

Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority

52. For some time, I have been concerned about the need to promote the fitting of smoke alarms with local residents. Every day two people die and fifty are injured in fires in the UK. 75% of all fire casualties occur at home, where you are three times more at risk than anywhere else. Your chance of experiencing a major fire in your lifetime is just one in five. Smoke alarms are one of the most effective ways that residents can protect themselves and their families, but many households either do not have them fitted, or do not test their alarms regularly, to ensure they are fully functional.
53. Durham and Darlington Fire Authority carry out Home Fire Safety Checks and then supply smoke alarms free of charge to residents. Each year, the Fire Authority undertakes about 9,000 checks.
54. With the support of the Fire Authority and the Police, and together with my ward colleagues Cllrs. Scott and Lyonette, I have launched an initiative to try and boost the number of households protected by smoke alarms in our community. We have begun to contact households across our ward with a face-to-face survey to find out who does not have working smoke alarms, and whether residents would like a safety check from the Fire Service? Free smoke alarms can then be fitted. We are also working with Darlington Police, and the surveys include questions about anti-social behaviour in the locality and knowledge about PACT meetings.
55. If the initiative is successful, the Fire Authority will look to roll the idea out across the area, where councillors would like to take part. I will keep Council aware of progress in future reports.

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Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio