
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 :-

Sports Development - Inspired Facilities Success

2. The Sports Development Team developed a successful bid for Rockcliffe Cricket Club in Hurworth to secure Olympic legacy funding from Sport England's Inspired Facilities Fund.
3. Rockcliffe Park Cricket Club, who play in the Darlington and District League and have been established since 1927, will receive £49,640 of National Lottery funding to help build its new pavilion. The old pavilion has stood for 40 years and has been used by many players over the years. It is hoped that many more local people, especially young people, will benefit from the new pavilion facilities by joining the club and participating in the sport of cricket for many years to come. Work will commence in April 2013.

Sport England Assessment

4. The Sport and Physical Activity Development Team has been graded 'excellent' in its first ever Quest assessment. Quest is a tool for continuous improvement, designed by and for the management of leisure facilities and sports development. Quest defines industry standards and good practice, and encourages on-going development and delivery within a customer focused management framework.
5. The assessor commented on the vibrancy and ethos of the whole team, including coaching provision, and commented that the output and impact of the team relative to its size was astounding. The assessor was particularly impressed with our partnership and local community work, and commented that some of the projects were 'ground-breaking'.

Sport England Small Grants Success – Gentlemen and Lady Archers of Darlington

6. Gentlemen and Lady Archers of Darlington Club has been awarded £4,000 from the Sport England Small Grants Scheme. The Club worked in partnership with Darlington Sports Development, Tees Valley Sport and GB Archery. The funding will support extending access to the sport through more equipment, coaching and

indoor facility hire.

Disability Football Festival

7. Darlington Sports Development, in partnership with Durham County FA, is hosting a Disability six-a-side Festival of Football at Eastbourne Sports Complex on 24 March. The festival welcomes individuals and team entries from players aged 12 to 16 years with involvement on the day from the FA Tesco Skills Coaches.

Dolphin Centre

8. A major refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre Gym, underpinned by a robust business case, started on 4 February 2013 which modernised this facility for Darlington residents. More than 90,000 users access this service every year with over 6,000 visits by GP Referral clients alone, in addition to a range of other specialist programmes.
9. The membership model has been revised and repackaged to further develop access, resulting in a huge growth in members during January/February 2013 in the pre-refurbishment period. Casual 'pay as you play' remains a fundamental part of the offer to support access for all residents; this remains popular with young people across the town.
10. Temporary gym provision was available in the Dolphin Centre Studio during the programme of work which was completed during a five-week window. The new gym facility opened on 4 March 2013.

Spring Thing –20 March to 24 March 2013

11. This year's Spring Thing is a town-wide event for the first time following its move from the Arts Centre.
12. A variety of events and stalls will be located in the Dolphin Centre over the weekend with the headline act, Richard Digance appearing in the Central Hall on 22 March 2013. Events will also be held in the Forum Music Centre, St Cuthbert's Church Hall and local pubs.
13. Dance demonstrations will be held throughout the town centre on 23 March 2013 before culminating in a mass dance performance in the Market Square.

Civic Theatre

14. This year's pantomime, Sleeping Beauty was very well received with many customers providing feedback to say it was the best ever and rebooking to see it a second time. The cast, which included Sam Kane, Linda Lusardi and Zoe Birkett (who grew up in Darlington) were delighted to spend the Christmas season here and were very happy to meet many community groups at the Theatre and they also visited the Memorial Hospital and St Teresa's Hospice. Bucket collections during the run raised £3,050 for Great Ormond Street Hospital and £1,000 for the Hospice.

Sales are already up on the same time last year for the next pantomime, which will be Aladdin and will star the Chuckle Brothers.

15. The Theatre organised an 'Open Morning for Panto', on 19 January 2013 for families who attended the pantomime. The Open Morning was attended by over 60 people and included tours of the stage, a chance to meet the stars of the show and take part in a talk with members of the cast, competitions, prize giveaways and two arts workshops. More Open Mornings are planned as part of a family friendly offer.
16. Ticket sales were good for the spring season with the Russian State Ballet of Siberia and Woman in Black selling particularly well. Advanced Sales of The Mousetrap for June have also been particularly good.
17. During the week commencing 24 January 2013, members of the Touring Consortium Theatre Company were in Darlington to begin to create an ambitious audience development project to support the five productions they are bringing to the Civic Theatre over the next three years with funding from ACE Strategic Touring Programme. Special partnerships and creative projects have been offered to Darlington schools and other groups, and have been very warmly received. The first production is in the autumn and is set in a school; young people from a Darlington school and the theatre's own ArtsSpark Youth Theatre will have the opportunity to appear in the cast alongside the professional company.

ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance

18. ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance Groups started a new term at Hummersknott Academy and have a number of performances and trips planned this term. The dance groups have already visited Gateshead College to see students in a dance showcase.

Creative Darlington

19. The Creative Darlington Board has agreed to form three working groups, Strategy and Programme, Communications and Income Generation to support the work of the full Creative Darlington Board. Meetings of working groups will be co-ordinated in advance of the next full Creative Darlington Board meeting which will take place on 27 March 2013. The Creative Darlington Board has secured an offer of in-kind support from Market Focus to support development of the organisation's draft business plan. The draft Creative Darlington Business Plan has also been considered by the Cultural Provision Review Group of the Council.
20. Creative Darlington contacted individuals and groups in February 2013 who have found new spaces and places for activity in Darlington since the closure of Darlington's Arts Centre to get an overview of how satisfied they are with the 'Moving On ...' campaign and to get their thoughts on what improvements would most benefit their current activity and the arts in Darlington going forward.

The Bridge Visual Arts Centre (The Bridge)

21. An arts cafe event was promoted by Bridge artists on 26 January 2013 from 11am to 2pm with admission at £2.00 including refreshments, tips on how to get the most out of digital cameras and a beading demonstration. A further arts cafe event was held on 23 February 2013.
22. The Openart Studio steering group met at The Bridge on 28 January 2013 to discuss developing systems which will be introduced from this month to support existing users whilst encouraging new users to access activity. The Steering Group includes current users of the Openart Studio, professional artists delivering activity and health expertise. The Openart Studio is open to anyone with an interest, regardless of ability, in exploring creative and artistic activities with the help of professional artists and other studio members. Openart Studio operated in 2012/13 as a joint partnership project funded by the PCT County Durham and Darlington Borough Council, including funding from the Creative Darlington budget.
23. The spring 2013 term of adult art courses at The Bridge opened on 14 January 2013 with active courses including ceramics, painting and textiles. Artists delivering the adult course programme have made a modest contribution to support the operating costs of the venue.
24. Individual artists and groups who utilise The Bridge submitted work for inclusion in a group exhibition currently being held at the Crown Street Art Gallery until 28 March 2013. This group exhibition celebrates the talents of those artists who have engaged with the building since its opening and includes many different types of art and craft practice, paintings, drawings, ceramics, photography, digital work and textiles.
25. The Bridge featured as a good example of resilient arts practice within the Northern Life magazine, which included significant editorial on the development of activity.

Crown Street Art Gallery

26. The 'Book Borrowers' exhibition ran from 18 December 2012 to 18 January 2013. It received positive reviews in the local press and the comments book for gallery visitors, introduced by Darlington for Culture, shows it was positively received by those attending. The support that Darlington for Culture volunteers provided in stewarding the exhibition and welcoming visitors to the gallery space was invaluable in enabling Darlington to host this exhibition.
27. 'Mining a Golden Seam', an exhibition of embroidery and textile art by Embroiderers' Guild members in the North East Region, was displayed at the Gallery from 21 January to 21 February 2013.

BBC YOUR PAINTINGS

28. The BBC has allocated funding to Darlington Borough Council to support Creative Darlington in programming artists to deliver activity within Crown Street Library as

part of its 'Your Paintings', uncovering the nation's art collection campaign. Creative Darlington has worked with the Council's Communications Team in developing activity linked to the painting of Lewis Carroll at St Peter's Rectory, Croft, by Ralph Leslie Swinden. Darlington activity was rescheduled from 21 February 2013 to 19 February 2013.

Festival of Thrift

29. Marchday Ltd has commissioned Stella Hall to support development of a Festival of Thrift in Darlington in 2013. Creative Darlington has supported Marchday and Stella in co-ordinating a steering group to ensure local artists and organisations can inform and support delivery of the Festival of Thrift. Creative Darlington will be represented on the Steering Group.

Darlington Arts Festival

30. Creative Darlington has confirmed support for activity and marketing within the forthcoming Darlington Arts Festival, May 2013, co-ordinated by Darlington for Culture.

The Universal Offer from Libraries

31. A press conference was held on 31 January 2013 at the British Library to announce the Universal offer from Libraries. The offer covers :
 - (a) Reading
 - (b) Health
 - (c) Digital services
 - (d) Information services
32. Within each of these areas there is an agreed level of service that the public can expect in every public library authority and some new developments which, whilst available in some libraries, will be aspirational for others.
33. Darlington Libraries already offer the currently agreed level of service across these areas and are actively engaged in working towards some of the more aspirational targets and new developments in areas like the new Books on Prescription scheme, support for Universal Credit and welfare reform programmes, and digitisation of local history resources.

Centre for Local Studies

34. Centre for Local Studies staff and library volunteers are currently digitising a whole bank of inaccessible images in negative and slide formats, thereby making them available for the first time to the people of Darlington.
35. Volunteers are currently helping with other digitisation and we are hoping to increase the size of this group to help us with this exciting project. The intention is

that the images will be loaded to our Flickr page, advertising our resources and services across the World.

Libraries Performance Update

36. Recent work undertaken has demonstrated that in comparison with all other unitary authorities Darlington has the lowest cost per book issue and the lowest revenue expenditure per 1,000 population. The service has the highest population per service point in the Country and the second lowest lending stock numbers, due to the low number of service points. Darlington, however issues more books per thousand people than any of its colleagues across the Tees Valley and ranks 22nd of the 52 authorities who replied to that question.
37. Almost a quarter of the 0 – 3 year olds in Darlington are library members and 71 per cent of 4 – 12 year olds are members, a testament to the hard work that staff do to engage children with books and reading.
38. Eighteen per cent of the total population of Darlington, almost nineteen thousand people, borrowed a book in 2011/12. The service answered over 64,000 enquiries during the year, saw 377,000 visitors and provided over 66,000 sessions on PCs.

Head of Steam - Strategic Funding

39. The Museum Manager is working with the other four Tees Valley Museum Services on a joint Strategic Funding bid to the Arts Council England. The funding could provide the museum with over £50,000 towards activities, events and exhibitions associated with the First World War commemorations.

Museum Development Funding

40. The Museum has applied for funding from TWAM (Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum) for funding towards collection storage equipment.
41. The Museum recently secured £1,000 towards collection management from Tyne and Wear Museum Development Fund.

National Portrait/ACE Funding

42. The museum is working in partnership with museums in the Tees Valley on an Arts Council England funded three-year project to encourage more schools to be inspired by their local museum. We are partnered with the National Portrait Gallery.

Volunteers

43. Several younger volunteers have recently been recruited to support guided tours, help with events and assist with collections management. The Stockton and Darlington Railway Youth Team work on site with the Learning and Access Officer

once a month.

44. The collections department continues to work closely with volunteers who devote their time to help catalogue the museum collections. The pension records and the John Mallon collection are two areas that the volunteers have been working on recently.

Exhibition programme

45. The museum is currently working with the North Eastern Railway Association on an exhibition to commemorate the 150th anniversary of North Road Works opening in 1863. The exhibition explores and remembers the North Road Works site, the locomotives that were built there and the people who worked there. The exhibition runs from 6 April to 2 June 2013.

Refuse Collection

46. As Street Scene services are moving towards implementation of a wheeled bin collection service, commencing June 2013, Officers are continuing to visit residents where enquiries have been made in relation to the positioning of bins, suitability for bin, size of bin, etc. To date, the vast majority of the properties are suitable for wheeled bins and it is anticipated that only a small number will remain on black sacks.
47. Refuse collection has continued unhindered during the winter period with no disruption due to inclement weather.

Winter Maintenance

48. This winter, we have gritted and ploughed a total of 138 times and used 3592 tonnes of salt to date. Due to the dedication of the winter maintenance staff, disruption across the highways has been kept to a minimum.

Grounds Maintenance

49. Members will be aware that 2012 was the wettest year since records began and as such created numerous problems in relation to grounds maintenance. Officers are currently investigating the procurement of grass cutting equipment which allows for cutting to take place should be grass be longer, wetter and more lush. It is envisaged that cutting equipment will be purchased that should aid the service should such conditions prevail again this coming summer.

Recruitment

50. Officers from Environmental Services have met with representatives from Nordic Pioneer and Groundwork North East, and as a result apprentices are to be sought from both organisations for the coming year. These apprentices will be utilised across all Street Scene services giving them the opportunity to learn new skills.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio