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**REVISIONS TO THE MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
AND COLLECTING AND DISPOSALS POLICY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Lee Vasey, Leisure Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for necessary revisions to the Museum's Five Year Development Plan and an updated Collecting and Disposals Policy. The report also seeks authority to prepare a Business Plan for consideration at a future meeting.

**Information and Analysis**

2. Since 1994, Darlington Railway Centre and Museum has been registered as a Museum with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. This confirms that the Museum achieves a defined minimum standard in terms of its management and activities. This official status, now known as "accreditation", requires a resubmission every five years, which is now due.
3. A new requirement on this occasion is that the supporting papers should include a document, approved by the Council, defining the Museum's purposes and setting out its development objectives for the next five years. Most external grant funders, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, also now require applications to be supported by a current, formally approved, Development Plan.
4. The Heritage Lottery Fund is currently considering a grant application for about £500,000, and requires confirmation of an update of the Development Plan. This funding would be part of a package with already confirmed amounts of £191,000 from English Heritage, £400,000 from the Northern Rock Foundation and £100,000 from the Rail Heritage Trust. An additional amount of about £180,000 is being sought from the European Regional Development Fund. These amounts form an inter-related package, so the update of the Development Plan is important to the achievement of this whole package of funding.
5. The current Museum Development Plan, approved by Cabinet in 2002 (MinC144/Nov/02 refers) and covering the period 2002-2007, is nearing the end of its life and has generally become outdated. In order to meet the requirements for renewing the Museum's accreditation and to satisfy the conditions of external grant funding bodies, a new Development Plan needs to be approved now.

**Proposed Revisions**

6. In comparison with the previous Development Plan, and in line with current best practice, the new Development Plan (**attached** at Appendix 1) provides more detail in relation to the

Museum's service delivery objectives. In substance, however, these largely represent a continuation of past practice. The one significant new initiative proposed is that the Museum should implement a programme of community-based outreach activities, with the aim of attracting and involving those residents of the Borough who are currently under-represented amongst its visitors.

7. As with the previous Development Plan, the new Development Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for future capital developments at the Museum. Within the context of an integrated plan for the development of the site as a whole, these cover each of the buildings within what is now considered to be the world's most important surviving group of early railway buildings.
8. One key difference is that the Goods Station is now envisaged as being developed as gallery space for temporary and touring exhibitions, and to house the Museum's Study Centre and collections stores, rather than for the open storage of railway vehicles. The other is that on financial grounds it is now not proposed that the site should incorporate a narrow-gauge railway.
9. A further requirement for accreditation is that the supporting papers should include a Collecting and Disposals Policy covering the Museum's collections for the next five years. A revised Collecting and Disposals Policy (**attached** at Appendix 2) is therefore submitted alongside the Development Plan and supports relevant sections of the Plan where appropriate. This again is simply an updated document. The one material change is to propose that as opportunities and resources allow, the Museum should in future seek to reduce its dependence on loans for major exhibits, by itself acquiring relevant locomotives, carriages and wagons.
10. The next stage in assessing the future of the Museum is to put together a robust Business Plan, which will be the opportunity to consider the Council's future revenue and capital input to the Museum. Agreeing the revised Development Plan and Collecting and Disposals Policy does not prejudice future consideration of the Business Plan, and is necessary for the reasons set out in paragraphs 2 to 4. The Business Plan will almost certainly require changes to the Development Plan and the plan that is appended to this report will be reconsidered in the light of the Business Plan.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

11. The Council is not required to formally consult in relation to its Museum Development Plan. Informal discussions have, however, been held with appropriate official bodies, other museums and partner organisations, and their relevant comments have been taken into account.

### **Legal Implications**

12. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

13. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Council Policy Framework**

14. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

## **Decision Deadline**

15. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

## **Recommendation**

16. It is recommended that:-
- (a) Members adopt the revised Museum Development Plan and Collecting and Disposals Policy;
  - (b) Members authorise officers to proceed with the preparation of a Business Plan for the museum, to be submitted for future Cabinet consideration.

## **Reasons**

17. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) An adopted Museum Development Plan and a Collecting and Disposals Policy are needed to support renewal of the museum's accredited status and external funding applications. In both cases the existing documents are too outdated to be serviceable.
  - (b) Future investment decisions require to be supported by a strong Business Plan.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

## **Background Papers**

Details of the Accreditation Scheme run by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council can be found at: [http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/accreditation\\_leaflet\\_pdf\\_5601.pdf](http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/accreditation_leaflet_pdf_5601.pdf)  
Museum Development Plan 2002-07

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# **Darlington Railway Centre & Museum**

## **Development Plan 2006 – 2011**

Darlington Railway Centre & Museum  
North Road Station, Darlington, DL3 6ST

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Plan updates the Darlington Railway Centre & Museum Development Plan 2002-2007, adopted by the Council in 2002.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Plan is to provide a strategic framework within which future project-based development work can take place, and to validate the application of resources on planning, or seeking to secure funding for, such projects. As such, it sets out the Council's aspirations for the future of the museum, but does not represent a formal commitment to implement any or all of the desired service delivery or capital development objectives. All projects will be the subject of individual internal and external bidding processes for the required resources.
- 1.3 In overall terms, the case for development at the museum is that this will unlock its potential to deliver community and economic benefits for the Borough, both achieving Best Value and providing a worthwhile return on investment. As such, the intention is that the Plan should be underpinned by a separate Business Plan, to be prepared within six months of its adoption.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Railway Centre and Museum occupies a triangle of land west of Northgate, north-east of Hopetown Lane, and south of the railway between Darlington and Bishop Auckland. Known historically as "North Road", the site was developed by the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) as its base in Darlington.
- 2.2 The first S&DR building at North Road, erected in 1833, was a new Goods Station to replace earlier premises east of Northgate. It was the world's first railway goods shed on one level, and as such set the style for future development. In 1839 the building was enlarged, and in 1840 was supplemented by offices built for the company's Goods Agent and staff.
- 2.3 In 1841-42, North Road became the site of the S&DR's new passenger station for Darlington. Later in the 1840s, a set of Lime Cells were erected, to handle bulk deliveries of burnt lime used in the construction of mid-Victorian Darlington. In 1853, the site's main development phase concluded with the construction of Hopetown Carriage Works, although other minor buildings came and went after the S&DR was absorbed into the North Eastern Railway in 1863. North Road was also home to the privately-owned Kitching's Foundry, which relocated there from the town centre in 1831 and which, between then and its replacement by North Road Shops in 1863, obtained much of its business from the railway.
- 2.4 The remaining buildings from Kitching's Foundry were demolished in 1975. Otherwise, despite later extensions and modifications through re-use, the site recognisably retains all the buildings erected by the S&DR. Today, it is argued to be the world's most important surviving group of early railway buildings.
- 2.5 The railway operating significance of North Road declined rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, both through changes in the nature of railway transport and closure

of many of the east-west routes it had once served. By the early 1970s it had become an unstaffed halt, with its derelict and decaying buildings facing the threat of demolition.

- 2.6 A campaign by enthusiasts and community activists resulted in preservation of the passenger station. In 1975, to coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the S&DR, one platform was partitioned off for ongoing main-line use, with the remainder becoming the museum.
- 2.7 The museum was originally administered by a charitable trust, but responsibility passed to the Council in 1985.
- 2.8 Over the past thirty years, the site has become home to several independent heritage railway organisations, working in partnership with the Council. Hopetown Carriage Works is being used by the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust to construct the first new main-line steam locomotive to be built in Britain since 1960, and by the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group as a restoration workshop. The Goods Station is occupied by Darlington Railway Preservation Society, Darlington Model Railway Club has two rooms in the station, and the Ken Hoole Study Centre includes the library of the North Eastern Railway Association. The museum is supported by an active Friends organisation.
- 2.9 In the late 1990s, the Council recognised both that the museum had changed little since 1975 and that the site had considerable potential for expansion as a community resource and visitor attraction.
- 2.10 In 2005, improvement works began with a £500,000 project, funded by the Council, to repair the roof of the station building and train shed. Applications were also submitted to external bodies, seeking grants towards the remaining cost of a full refurbishment project. This Plan starts from the assumption that this project will proceed during 2006-2007, and in the main thus focuses on where the museum might go thereafter.

### **3 THE MUSEUM'S PURPOSE**

- 3.1 Each of the following three statements contributes towards an understanding of the museum's purpose.
- 3.2 The museum's *mission* is to explain the significance of Darlington to railways, and of railways to Darlington.
- 3.3 The museum's *responsibility* is to preserve for future generations, and to make available for education and enjoyment, the unique historical collections it holds in trust.
- 3.4 The museum's *objective* is to make a worthwhile contribution to community development and economic prosperity in Darlington, in relation to the funding it receives.

## **4 SERVICE DELIVERY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

4.1 During the period covered by this Plan, the museum will have the following service delivery development objectives.

### **4.2 Formal Education**

The museum will maximise the extent to which it supports the delivery of formal education. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) establishing effective strategic links with Children's Services, using these to develop an understanding of the National Curriculum, and of the needs of, and constraints affecting, the Borough's schools;
- (ii) creating and maintaining working relationships with each of the Council's primary and secondary schools;
- (iii) promoting site visits and its use as an educational resource amongst other primary, secondary and independent schools; and
- (iv) developing close liaison arrangements with SureStart and other pre-school service providers in the Borough.

### **4.3 Leisure Learning**

The museum will maximise its contribution to leisure learning amongst people of all ages. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) providing fixed and temporary exhibitions with content to a high standard and covering the full range of its subject matter;
- (ii) working with its Friends organisation to provide a programme of public lectures;
- (iii) promoting use of the Ken Hoole Study Centre; and
- (iv) offering volunteering opportunities linked to research and interpretation.

### **4.4 Access and Social Inclusion**

The museum will maximise the extent to which it is used by all sectors of the Borough's population. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) building links with Adult Services, Children's Services, and with established local community and cultural organisations;
- (ii) organising museum outreach activities in areas currently under-represented amongst the museum's visitors;
- (iii) targeting participants in outreach activities with promotional offers, particularly for events; and

- (iv) actively promoting inclusive, supported, volunteering opportunities for all age, ability, interest and cultural groups;

#### 4.5 Day-Visits

The museum will maximise its penetration of the regional day-visits market. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) providing a half-day visit of consistent quality, involving something different every year;
- (ii) starting to develop a distinctive brand image based on good visitor experiences and word-of-mouth recommendations;
- (iii) general and targeted advertising and promotional activities; and
- (iv) developing a body of reliable management information about its visitors and non-visitors.

#### 4.6 Tourism

The museum will maximise attendances from amongst leisure and business visitors to the south of the region. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) developing marketing and other partnerships with attractions in the sub-region, and heritage railways in the region;
- (ii) actively pursuing the market for group visits and coach tours;
- (iii) targeted marketing through regional gateways and accommodation providers; and
- (iv) establishing a strong web presence aimed at those planning holidays or business visits to the sub-region.

#### 4.7 Research

The museum will maximise use of the Ken Hoole Study Centre, and of its collections, by researchers. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) expanding this aspect of the museum's web presence to provide more information about available material and promote visits or enquiries;
- (ii) improving the quality and range of indices, databases and links to other sources, to support family history research;
- (iii) continuing to develop collections of archival, photographic and published resources to support the study of railways in the region; and
- (iv) developing existing and new links with other relevant organisations, such as the North Eastern Railway Association and the National Railway Museum.



#### 4.8 Museum Excellence

The museum will develop its image, and that of the Council, as an organisation that is professionally excellent, managerially and financially stable, and innovative. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) achieving and maintaining accredited status;
- (ii) continuing involvement in the government's *Renaissance in the Regions* programme through the Tees Valley Hub;
- (iii) increasing involvement in professional networks and sector organisations; and
- (iv) proactive working to develop partnerships with other museums, heritage railways and community organisations.

#### 4.9 Collections

The museum will develop the quality and usefulness of its collections, and the standard of care to which they are subject. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) pursuing new acquisitions in line with the revised Collecting Policy adopted as part of this Plan;
- (ii) developing collections storage and workshop facilities appropriate to its needs, with public access where appropriate;
- (iii) completing a full, computer-based catalogue covering all collections it holds; and
- (iv) where relevant, arranging for the conservation or restoration of items to a condition suitable for display or demonstration use.

#### 4.10 Building Conservation

The museum will establish a reputation for excellence in the care and conservation of historic buildings. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) developing, and seeking funding for, a series of projects to refurbish and adaptively re-use each of the buildings on the site;
- (ii) implementing a programme of planned maintenance covering the life cycle of each building, and achieving standards equivalent to those of English Heritage in both workmanship and materials involved in repairs and renewals;
- (iii) making alterations to the original fabric of the buildings to the minimum possible extent consistent with public access and effective operation for museum purposes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and

- (iv) through exhibitions, publications and guided tours, actively celebrating its status as occupier of the world's most important surviving group of early railway buildings.

#### 4.11 Partnerships

The museum will continue to develop the site's visitor offer, and its management and operation, as a partnership between the Council and appropriate heritage railway organisations. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) the gradual conversion of tenancies into formal partnerships based on mutual obligations set out in Minutes of Agreement;
- (ii) establishing effective arrangements for integrated forward planning and activity management, including the allocation of responsibilities in ways that play to the different strengths of the various partners;
- (iii) supporting reconstruction of the Darlington (North Road Station) Museum Trust into a Collections Trust and consultative body; and
- (iv) continuing to work closely with the Friends of Darlington Railway Centre & Museum.

#### 4.12 Health & Safety

The museum will establish a regime of full compliance with the Health & Safety at Work Act, with the Railways and Other Guided Transport Safety Regulations, and other relevant safety legislation or railway industry standards. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) putting in place a Safety Management System covering all activity on the site, including the appointment of Competent Persons to advise the Council as necessary on the safe management of a heritage railway site;
- (ii) providing induction, training and assessment, to ensure that all individuals are able to undertake the work assigned to them;
- (iii) extending, improving and renewing the site's railway system, to ensure it is fit for use by demonstration passenger trains and for the internal movement of railway vehicles; and
- (iv) maintaining close liaison with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Railways and with the Heritage Railway Association.

#### 4.13 Workforce Development

The museum will develop a skilled and stable workforce, involving volunteers to an extent that will enable it to sustain levels of activity beyond those achievable by paid staff alone. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) building a stable, appropriately qualified, team of paid professional, managerial and operational staff;

- (ii) supporting the Continuing Professional Development of staff, through the provision of relevant training;
- (iii) developing the museum as the Borough's leading provider of volunteering opportunities; and
- (iv) encouraging and enabling the involvement of volunteers in all aspects and levels of museum activity.

#### 4.14 Forward Planning and Business Development

The museum will maintain the currency of the policy and other documents that underpin its activities and future development. It will seek to do so by:

- (i) recording and analysing management information as required to measure, monitor and assess performance;
- (ii) reporting annually on its market performance and on progress against this Plan;
- (iii) updating its Business Plan each year, and its Development Plan and Collecting Policy no less frequently than every five years; and
- (iv) keeping the Council advised of the implications and potential impact of developments by others, changing trends, evolving government or sector policies, and new funding opportunities.

## **5 CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

5.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to care for the site's listed buildings to appropriate standards, and some of the proposed future capital projects in whole or in part aim to meet this objective.

5.2 In all other respects, capital projects represent no more than one aspect of the implementation of service delivery development objectives: they are not freestanding objectives in their own right. This section of the Plan should be read on that basis.

### 5.3 The Station

5.3.1 The Station has since 1975 housed the museum's main interpretive displays and public amenities. It is envisaged that it should maintain this role into the future, but in the longer term with some changes.

5.3.2 Subject to funding decisions to be taken during 2006, implementation of the Plan's capital development objectives will commence with refurbishment and refitting of the main Station Building.

5.3.3 This will involve the completion of roof and other fabric repairs begun in 2005, the replacement or upgrading of building services and amenities, and a

programme of internal relocations to make better use of space. It will also include complete renewal of all the displays.

- 5.3.4 Any significant elements that cannot be managed within the available funding package will be held over. They may then be brought forward individually, or be included in a second and smaller phase of relocations and improvements that will follow, and be enabled by developments elsewhere on site.

#### 5.4 The Goods Agent's Offices

- 5.4.1 During 2006/7 (again subject to funding), the museum's administrative offices will be relocated from the Station to No 2 McNay Street, constructed in 1840 as offices for the S&DR's Goods Agent and his staff.

- 5.4.2 Some works necessary to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act may be held over for financial reasons, and brought forward again later as a freestanding small project. With this possible exception, the building should see no major change in use, or require significant further investment, for a generation.

#### 5.5 A New Building

- 5.5.1 Previous development plans have proposed the erection of one new building on the site. This would be used as a store and/or workshop for railway vehicles, including both some of those already on site and potential future acquisitions. Neither the re-use of buildings currently housing stored railway vehicles, nor significant new acquisitions, become possible until this building has been constructed, and its provision is thus critical to the overall implementation of the Plan.

- 5.5.2 The preferred location is at the south-west corner of the site, between the Car Park and the Lime Cells, which limits the extent to which its construction affects the field. In this location, the building could if desired be configured for public access.

#### 5.6 The Lime Cells

- 5.6.1 The Lime Cells, a rare survivor of a once-common regional building type and constructed by the S&DR during the 1840s, is the one building within the North Road group not at present in Council ownership and not protected by listing. The building has been in private ownership and used as a light engineering workshop since the 1950s.

- 5.6.2 The building is expected to fall vacant within the next few years, and it is proposed that the museum should then seek to acquire it (subject to funding), by purchase or on lease, for permanent incorporation into the site. A number of options exist for its long-term use.

## 5.7 The Goods Station and Yard

- 5.7.1 The Goods Station will continue in use as a workshop and railway vehicle store until the proposed new building can be constructed to provide more suitable facilities.
- 5.7.2 Once vacated, this historically significant building will need to be the subject of a major conservation and refurbishment project: this will be necessary regardless of any future use to which it might be put.
- 5.7.3 It is then envisaged that the building will be functionally subdivided. The eastern half will house the Ken Hoole Study Centre and storage facilities on two levels for the museum's archive and small object collections. The western half will be converted into a Temporary Exhibition Gallery, an essential feature in terms of the site's long-term market appeal for which no appropriate provision can be made in the main Station Building.
- 5.7.4 The Goods Yard will be resurfaced for use as outdoor display, overflow car parking, or small-scale events.

## 5.7 Hopetown Carriage Works

- 5.7.1 The Carriage Works is currently used as workshops by the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust and the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group.
- 5.7.2 During the life of this Plan, the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust will complete construction of their new A1 Pacific locomotive No 60163 *Tornado*. The Trust may then wish to remain and pursue a new project, or to move its base away from North Road. Decisions to be taken in the future, both by the Trust and the Council, will thus influence the nature and scale of future engineering workshop provision required on the site. It is, however, anticipated that the partnership with the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group will continue on a long-term basis.
- 5.7.3 Until future needs and options are clear, the building will continue to be used as at present. However, regardless of any future use to which it might be put, the building requires full refurbishment.