

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 :-

Cultural Services

Dolphin Centre 30th Birthday, 2 November 2012

2. The Dolphin Centre celebrated its 30th birthday with a programme of activities, offers and competitions for residents to enjoy. The actual birthday was Friday 2 November 2012.
3. Earlier in October, the Town Clock turned blue to recognise the birthday and many health related offers have launched, such as a new Student membership package available to support access for people in full time education.
4. A 30 hour activity challenge in aid of St Teresa's Hospice is planned leading up to the birthday where customers, staff and residents have been invited to participate in this 30 themed challenge for charity. Long serving staff have been acknowledged and Clubs and Societies have been introduced to a new local club support package that has been designed to support the existence and growth of clubs during these challenging times.

Markets

Sunday Market

5. 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. The Group stimulate interest from Traders, provide musical entertainment and distribution of marketing materials across all parts of the social media. The Markets team provide management of stall resources, planning, implementation and expenditure/revenue controls.
6. A four-month pilot commenced on 5 August 2012 and proved very successful with 32 stalls taken and numbers have increased month on month. Footfall counts evidence the strong customer interest too, as reported to the Town Centre Board.

Love Your Local Market

7. This was one of Darlington's contribution to the Government's (Mary Portas) Initiative to help regenerate town centres through introducing market trading opportunities for all. Economic Regeneration worked alongside the Markets team to deliver a very successful event. National interest culminated in a special presentation to the NABMA conference.

Covered Market Lettings

8. A very successful year has seen the occupation of all vacant stalls in the Market Hall. In addition, 1 & 2 West Row (along with Stall 5) is being converted to an Internet Café and 7 West Row into a Barbers Shop.
9. Wi-Fi access was installed during September 2012 with log in access for the general public and encrypted access for the traders to facilitate the introduction of debit /credit customer payment methods.

Sports Development

Active People Survey

10. The Active People Survey (APS) is the largest ever survey of sport and active recreation to be undertaken in Europe. The Active People survey provides by far the largest sample size ever established for a sport and recreation survey and allows levels of detailed analysis previously unavailable. It identifies how participation varies from place to place and between different groups in the population. The most recent results from APS6 shows that Darlington is the most active local authority area in the North East, with 24.2% of residents taking part in 3 x 30 minute sessions of sport and physical activity per week. This is a testament to the hard work of local clubs, the Sports Development Team, health professionals, coaches and volunteers who work continuously to develop provision of sport in the town.

Exercise after Stroke in Darlington

11. Darlington's Sports Development Team is running an 'Exercise after Stroke' rehabilitation programme based at Eastbourne Sports Complex in the town.
12. The sessions consist of group based exercises taken by Level 4 Exercise and Fitness Training After Stroke Instructors; exercises are importantly tailored to the individuals taking part.
13. Access to the programme can be made by referral from a medical professional such as general practitioner or physiotherapist. Hourly sessions currently run on a Wednesday and Friday afternoon between the hours of 14:00 to 15:00 and 15:00 to 16:00. Access to the facilities during these periods is strictly for people attending the Exercise After Stroke programme and free parking is available on site. The sessions are priced at a cost of £2.00 per hour.

Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)

14. The Fisch Programme is delivering to four schools this term: Northwood, Cockerton, West Park Academy and Corporation Road. The programme is currently in week four and seeing good attendance figures at the after school clubs. Initial feedback from staff and pupils is very positive and are engaging well in the programme.

Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it! (MEND)

15. The Mend programme commenced on Monday 24 September 2012. The programme is currently in week 3 with nine families in attendance. Families get to take part in group educational activities focussed around nutrition and health. The children and young people have the opportunity to take part in pool based and land based activities twice a week.

Darlington Triathlon Club Sport England Small Grants Bid

16. Sports Development has assisted Darlington Triathlon Club to submit a small grants bid. The aim of the bid is to increase participation of adult membership and create a junior section to the club by providing more opportunities and resources. If successful this will provide greater access to sport and activity within the town.

Sportivate – Triathlon Tasters

17. Sports Development through the Sportivate programme have provided Triathlon Tasters to support Darlington Triathlon Club in their bid to create a junior section. There has been an overwhelming response seeing 35 to 42 attendances per session. Due to demand, a further block of Triathlon taster sessions are going to take place after half term. This has been supported by Polam Hall School and the Dolphin Centre allowing use of the onsite facilities.

Eastbourne Sports Complex

Club Development

18. Clubs support packages have been introduced to assist local sports clubs develop their infrastructure in Darlington. Benefits to clubs and members include: reduced rates on facility hire, discount on physiotherapy services, planning and management of festivals and support with event publicity. Clubs already using this offer are Darlington RA, Middleton Rangers, Mount Pleasant, Darlington Spraire Lads and Lasses, Mowden Rugby Club, Darlington Harriers, Darlington Quakers, Darlington Hockey Club and Bishop Auckland Hockey Club.

Recreational delivery of community based physical activity

19. The Sports Development Team continues to deliver a diverse programme of community based activities that are available for the residents of Darlington.

Activities include Gymnastics, Trampolining, Nordic Walking, Running, Tri Golf, Table Tennis, Street Swords, Disability Football and Athletics, Skate School and much more. The team focuses on delivering recreational sessions in sports where these opportunities are not available elsewhere in the town.

Events

The Annual Rhythm and Blues Festival – Sunday, 16 September 2012

20. Thousands of people turned out for the annual Rhythm and Blues event which was held in the Market Square and surrounding pubs and Dolphin Centre on Sunday 16 September 2012. Headlining the event was Andy Fairweather Lowe and the Low Riders and they were supported by The Robin Bibi Band and The Blue Bishops.

Darlington Heart Walk – Sunday 23 September 2012

21. The Darlington Heart walk, previously know as the Community Walk was held on Sunday 23 September 2012. The event, which attracted nearly a 100 participants, was organised in partnership with the British Heart Foundation.
22. The walk, part of the Darlington Heart Town initiative was to encourage people of the town to improve their heart and to raise awareness of the range of support services. A new route was chosen for this year's walk, which proved very popular with those who participated enjoying the lovely scenery around South Burdon, just over the bridleway on the A66.

Christmas Lights Switch On – Thursday 29 November 2012

23. The Annual Christmas Light Switch On will be held in the Market Square on Thursday 29 November 2012 and will coincide with the first late night shopping and the opening of the Ice Rink. The event will be supported by TFM, Town Centre Management and the BID.

Creative Darlington

The Bridge Visual Arts Centre

24. The adult art course programme began at The Bridge Visual Arts Centre (The Bridge) in the week commencing 10 September 2012, with 21 courses running each week, led by a variety of artists and creative practitioners based in and around Darlington. Darlington Borough Council has provided box office and promotion for the course programme and will receive a contribution from the artists and creative practitioners leading the courses for use of the facility. Income is also being generated from arts groups who hire the venue. The Press Gang, a group of print makers, recently advised The Bridge of their satisfaction with the transfer of a Rochat printing press, formerly housed at Darlington Arts Centre, to the facility.

25. The Bridge also staged its first Arts Cafe event on Saturday 29 September 2012. This new initiative was devised by artists and organisations using The Bridge and offers adults the opportunity to try out new creative skills, meet new people and enjoy some refreshments for a modest fee of £2.00. The Bridge intends to programme three further Saturday Arts Cafes, exploring different arts and crafts, in 2012/13, which should build the local profile and engagement.
26. Darlington CARES would like to arrange a 'Team Challenge' to support the renovation of The Bridge, which should particularly benefit the external decoration of the building.

The Crown Street Gallery programme

27. In its first 5 months Crown Street Art Gallery has had over 13,000 visitors and hosted exhibitions by The Dover Prize (supporting local emerging and established artists), The Postmodern Art Collective (a local student group who arranged their own exhibition before leaving the region to pursue places at some of the country's finest visual arts universities); The Materialistics (a regional knitting group whose exhibition was programmed to support The National Summer Reading Challenge) and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College students. The Gallery will shortly be playing host to Stephen Waterhouse, a well-known children's book writer and illustrator. Participatory workshops and activities were staged during October half term on Monday 29 and Tuesday 30 October 2012 from 10am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm to coincide with Yorkshire based artist Stephen Waterhouse's *Creating Colourful Characters* exhibition. A future exhibition to celebrate the Borough Art Collection is currently in development.

Festivals and Carnivals

28. Creative Darlington is currently engaged in dialogue with Darlington for Culture around voluntary stewarding of future exhibitions at the Crown Street Gallery and around development of an arts festival for Darlington in May 2013, with Darlington Community Carnival to support their activity in 2013. Creative Darlington will also join Tees Valley local authorities in developing exciting activities within the Festival of the North East, also in June 2013.

Civic Theatre

29. In recent months the Council has been working with specialist historic theatre consultant Theatresearch to develop a route map to identify the issues, opportunities and challenges of any proposed restoration scheme of the Civic Theatre. In that respect we agreed to develop a restoration project for the Civic Theatre and Stage 1 application for Heritage Lottery Funding.
30. We also agreed to the release of £50k capital funding to cover the cost of the Heritage Lottery Funding.

ArtsSpark

31. A new term of Youth Theatre, Dance and Arts and Crafts started at Hummersknott Academy in September 2012, each week 200 young people attend the classes. The ArtsSpark membership scheme now has 2,000 members. Through funding from Arts Council, England's free theatre ticket scheme (A Night Less Ordinary) we have been able to issue 1,500 free theatre tickets to young people under 26.

ITV Casting Director workshop

32. ArtsSpark Youth Theatre was visited by a casting professional looking to cast the part of a young boy in a brand new ITV police drama set in the North-East. Youth Theatre members got the chance to take part in a casting workshop where participants gained new skills in acting for screen and three boys went on to further regional auditions.

Theatre Education

33. The popularity of post-show discussions continues to grow. This is an opportunity for the audience to find out more from cast and company members about the performance. There have been 20 post show discussions this year and another six are planned for the coming month.
34. Schools, including St Aidan's Academy, Hurworth Comprehensive School and Dodmire Primary School are taking up the offer of workshops with artists. Other community groups are also offered this opportunity and Family Help have taken up a workshop at the venue.

International Day

35. Working with community members and residents, the International Day took place at The Forum on Sunday 17 October 2012. A range of activities and displays were programmed. As part of this event, the Arts team developed a banner with Darlington West Indian Association. This will be displayed as a backdrop for some of their performances and will be used to celebrate their culture and heritage at future events.

Head of Steam

36. The acclaimed Titanic Exhibition was opened by Peter Barron and supported by Darlington Operatic Society and attracted over 200 visitors on the first weekend.

Funding

37. The Museum is currently bidding for Strategic Funding from Arts Council England with four other Tees Valley Authorities to secure resources to develop the collection and exhibition programme.

38. Furthermore, Head of Steam will also receive funding from the National Portrait Gallery with four other Tees Valley Authorities for education-based activities.

Libraries

39. Local Studies has been temporarily relocated within Crown Street Library to enable repairs and redecoration of this area. This work should be complete pre-Christmas with a return to a normal service for residents.
40. Volunteer inductions continue, with quite a number doing excellent work on digitisation of catalogue cards and support for events. Staff and volunteers are beginning to digitise the huge collection of photographs which the service holds.
41. Bookstart Rhymetime sessions re-started at the beginning of the school term, with a new 'first come first served' attendance system. This has resulted in better attendance at all the events.

Environmental Services

Refuse Collection

42. Members will be aware that the Council are working towards the implementation of a wheeled bin refuse collection service from June 2013. Officers are now assessing locations across the Borough that have been highlighted by both refuse collection crews and members of the public respectively in relation to the suitability of wheeled bins.
43. A supplier has now been procured to deliver the wheeled bins and meetings are ongoing with representatives of the supplier to ensure that deadlines are adhered to.

Street Scene

44. Members will be aware of problems encountered throughout the summer due to the extreme rainfall experienced throughout the period. Grass cutting in particular was problematic due to surface water standing on open spaces across the Borough for long periods of time but did return to the required standard during September and cutting will be ongoing until the weather dictates otherwise.
45. With the change in weather imminent, leaves will start to fall from trees as a result. Members will recall that as part of last year's efficiencies, leaves are no longer to be removed from softscapes throughout the Borough. Street Scene services will continue to collect leaves from any hardstanding areas such as footpaths, highways, etc.

Environmental Crime Team

46. Members will be aware that the Council's Dog Warden Service is part of the Environmental Crime Team. The service has recently been awarded Gold Accreditation in the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Community Animal Welfare Footprint Awards. This is testament to the hard work undertaken by the Dog Warden and the team in general and allows the service to attach the RSPCA's Gold Footprint logo to all its communications.

Winter Maintenance

47. The winter maintenance season commenced on 1 October 2012 and continues until the end of April 2013. All systems remain unchanged with gritting routes having only one change apportioned to them, this being the new road to the rear of B & Q on North Road. The service will operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week throughout the period with all vehicles, staff and salt procured in readiness for the commencement of the season.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio