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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio.

**Strategic Economic Plan for the Tees Valley**

2. In October 2013, Government requested that the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership submit its draft Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) to it by 19 December 2013, and early thoughts on bids for Local Growth Fund (LGF) schemes. Darlington's important schemes that support economic growth have been included in that draft submission. Further work is progressing to refine the submission and a report will be made to Cabinet before the final submission is made.
3. The Council has made a submission for Local Growth funding as part of the SEP process, in relation to 'Enabling Infrastructure' at Central Park. The application seeks a £2.3million grant towards a new Yarm Road Junction, Spine Road and utilities with some remediation for delivery in 2015/16. This infrastructure will open up land at Central Park South, enabling further development plots to be released and making possible innovative proposals being put together by partners. Additional infrastructure has been included for potential LGF in future years, including improvements at Haughton Road and site wider remediation. Tees Valley Unlimited will assess the application before taking a decision as to whether it is included in the final SEP which will be submitted on 31 March for consideration. The Government response on the Tees Valley SEP and its comprehensive LGF application is due in July 2014.

**Town Centre Conference**

4. A Darlington Town Centre Conference will take place in Central Hall on 27 March from 5.00 to 8.00pm. This is a Council and Distinct Darlington jointly sponsored event asking businesses and residents to take part in planning the future of the Town Centre.
5. Whilst Darlington Town Centre is a good place to do business, go shopping, relax and meet friends, changing lifestyles, particularly online shopping, mean that Town Centre's must adapt to new behaviours.
6. The Conference is an opportunity to flag up the exciting new developments already or about to happen in the Town Centre: new cinema, Department for Education Office, Multi-Storey Car Park and plans for the riverside park. It will also discuss what the town centre is used for and how together we can all make sure it thrives in

the future.

### **Foundation for Jobs**

7. The award winning Foundation for Jobs (FFJ) scheme is continuing to deliver exciting opportunities for young people in Darlington. Since the launch of FFJ in April 2012:
  - (a) 238 young people have taken part in an apprenticeship;
  - (b) 211 young people have completed work experience; and
  - (c) 2124 pupils have participated in a FFJ event.
8. Through FFJ school age youngsters are given a practical insight into industries such as engineering, specialist training for them to pursue this interest, available locally (e.g. Subsea Centre) potentially leading to good engineering qualifications and well paid local jobs. (Subsea is an important growth area for Darlington and the Tees Valley with new entrants to the industry likely to earn circa £30,000 to £54,000.)
9. On 7 March pupils from Darlington secondary schools took part in a hovercraft building day, and welcomed the Duke of York on his visit to see Foundation for Jobs initiative.
10. As well as watching the hovercraft event and meeting young people the Duke also visited Bike Stop, where FFJ helped a young man from a disadvantaged background secure an apprenticeship in cycle mechanics, a specialist course used for potential members of Tour de France teams. He then went onto open the new Subsea robotics centre at Darlington College, developed by FFJ member company Modus.

### **Darlington Central Public Sector Hub Focus Group Meeting**

11. A focus group meeting for senior public sector stakeholders was held on 25 February at Teesside University. The meeting was chaired by Ada Burns, but project managed and supplemented with expert involvement from DragonGate, who are working on behalf of the Council. The event was to outline the model for the Darlington Central Public Sector Hub that envisages multi-occupancy across a public sector spectrum, with the aim of building on our experience of working with Department for Education (DfE) and attracting further jobs to Darlington. It featured presentations from DragonGate, Richard Alty, Brian Williams (DfE) and Jerry Cooper (National Biologics Manufacturing Centre). The event was well attended, with 24 delegates and culminated with a short tour of the borough for those able to participate.

### **Tees Valley Workforce Skills Project**

12. The Tees Valley Workforce Skills Project is a joint venture, between the five Tees Valley local authorities, to engage small and medium sized businesses, conduct training needs analysis and then arrange to deliver free staff development programmes in specific or technical skills as well as general subjects.

13. The project has been running since October 2013, and has engaged with around 120 businesses across the Tees Valley. Priority sectors are Health and Social Care, Logistics, Digital, Manufacturing, Chemical Processing, Engineering, Retail, Hospitality and Catering, Construction, and Travel and Tourism.
14. In Darlington the private Health and Social Care sector has taken advantage of the funded training with a number of care homes and nurseries applying for a variety of programmes including First Aid and Dementia Care. Other businesses, including an artisan bakery, construction company, engineering factory and ice cream manufacturer are also interested in developing their staff by up-skilling in Food Hygiene, Customer Service and Welding

### **Digital City**

15. Digital City has a member of staff, Niel Bushnell, working part of his time in Darlington, his role being to help identify, support and grow digital and creative businesses in the Borough. Niel has been visiting companies in Darlington and seeing what they need to grow their digital expertise, signposting them to the appropriate support such as the Digital City mentor programme or making them aware of the support the Council's Business Engagement Team can provide. He has also been able to update businesses on the British Telecom Infinity roll out of super-fast broadband in Darlington.

### **Review of Economic Strategy**

16. The Economic Strategy Annual Monitoring Report went to Cabinet on the 4 March 2014 for approval. Significant opportunities for economic growth are opening up in Darlington with a recovery in employment levels and growth of new businesses being seen. The scale and rate of investment now happening at our major regeneration site, Central Park, and in the Town Centre is testament to the confidence investors have in Darlington as a place to do business.
17. An Economic Strategy Action Planning event was held on the 15 November 2013 at the Teesside University Darlington campus. The event was attended by approximately 70 delegates, primarily drawn from the private sector representing a good cross section of business sectors from the Borough (e.g Rockliffe Hall, Shepherd Construction, Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's, Harvey and Hugo, HSBC Bank). The event comprised a keynote speaker, launch of the new promotional DVD and workshop sessions to consider how Darlington can grow to the next level. Feedback from the workshops was used to inform/influence the 2014/15 Action Plan.
18. Key themes that emerged from the Action Planning Event with businesses (as priorities for 2014/15) included:-
  - (a) Raising the profile of Darlington, what is happening here and the opportunities, in order to generate growth;

- (b) With Tees Valley Unlimited, focussing on plans for growth of key sectors :  
Biologics, Subsea, Advanced Engineering/Manufacturing, Logistics, and Public Sector/Service Sector;
- (c) Skills initiatives, working with TVU;
- (d) SME business growth, again working with TVU; and
- (e) Infrastructure and site development.

## **C-State**

19. C-STATE (Centre for Subsea Technology Awareness and Training and Education) is the first facility of its kind in Subsea engineering and training and officially opened its first phase on 7th March at Darlington College. It is a unique collaboration between industry leaders (Modus Seabed Intervention and Maritime Training and Competence Solutions Ltd (MTCS)), the public sector (Tees Valley Unlimited and Darlington Borough Council) and education sector (Darlington College and Teesside University). C-STATE has been created to address the growing skills gap in the subsea engineering and service sectors, by providing an unrivalled platform for specialist training and education and is offered to the entire industry in the UK, Europe and the world. RoV (remote operated vehicle) training vital for subsea operations is now available for students at the College and for next academic year for Teesside University students through tailored modules in engineering courses. From February 2014 MTCS, a world leading private RoV training provider, is also operating from the base at Darlington College to provide professional accredited RoV courses.

## **Central Park**

20. Teesside University has submitted a bid to the Local Growth Fund to develop the National Horizons Centre on Central Park. It will be an iconic national centre for skills, leadership and innovation in the enabling and industrial technologies that are vital for the future of a successful UK economy.
21. The Horizons Centre will provide high-value, integrated support for companies in innovation and commercialisation, and training programmes from level 2/3 up to postdoctoral level. Digital manufacturing and design facilities and expertise will be the 'digital thread' running through this provision: the enabler through modelling, simulation and advanced digital tools and practices, of cross-disciplinary work; integration of IT and manufacturing solutions; and interoperability in supply chains.

## **Planning Enforcement Notice Appeal**

22. Albert Hill Skip Hire has failed in its attempt to overturn an Enforcement Notice requiring the company to cease the tipping and transfer of waste and skip hire operations at the site. Darlington Council issued the enforcement notice claiming that the waste operations needed planning permission and that the appropriate permission was not in place. A Planning Inspector agreed that the uses were unauthorised and gave the company three months to clear the site of waste and remove the skips. He also ruled that the company and Mr Anthony Shepherd had behaved unreasonably during the appeal process causing wasted expense to the

Council and ordered them to pay the Council's costs.

### **Trading Standards**

23. On 29 January, Peter Tiplady of Neasham Hill Farm, Darlington, was found guilty under the Animal By Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2011 of failing to dispose of animal carcasses in an approved manner. Following welfare issues with his flock of sheep, there were a large number of carcasses to be disposed of in an approved manner, which Mr Tiplady failed to do. He was fined £500 and ordered to pay £600 costs plus a £50 victim surcharge.
24. On 5 February, staff from seven of Darlington's licensed premises took part in a half day Fair Trading Award in Age Restricted Sales training session about the sale of age restricted products such as alcohol, tobacco. The session was organised by Darlington Council's Trading Standards team. The session covered the law on the sale of restricted products to underage people and gave advice on how to deal with customers trying to buy age restricted products when they are not legally allowed to do so. The training also covered the responsibilities of the businesses under the Licensing Act 2003.

### **Food Safety Prosecutions**

25. A Food Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice to formally close the business known as Peking Chef, 61 Alverton Drive, Darlington was served when it was found that the owner had set up a temporary electrical supply using a series of extension leads from an adjoining empty property, following loss of his own electricity supply. Food was being prepared and cooked using temporary lighting but without hot water. A prosecution case for the food hygiene offences found is pending.
26. J. Lochner (Darlington) Limited pleaded guilty to five food hygiene offences (premises not kept clean, equipment not kept clean, ready to eat food in the walk-in chiller not protected and at risk of contamination, food handlers not supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activity, and the sanitary accommodation not kept clean). David Edward Crone and Leo Crone were each fined £2,000 plus £120 victim surcharge. J. Lochner (Darlington) Limited was fined £2,000 plus £120 victim surcharge. The Council was awarded costs of £480.
27. The Taste of India at 22 Yarm Road pleaded guilty in Darlington Magistrates Court, on 4 December 2013, to four specimen food hygiene offences (premises not kept clean, equipment not kept clean, food handlers not wearing suitable protective overclothing, and failure to implement a food safety management system). The operator was fined £250 for offence 1, 2 and 4 and £150 for offence 3, with a £25 Victim Surcharge. The Council was awarded costs of £287.50.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**