

---

**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 :-

**Sport and Physical Activity Strategy**

2. Cabinet endorsed the Darlington Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-2019 and recommended it to Council.
3. The current Strategy expired in 2011 and there was a need to prepare a new Strategy, which sets out a 15 year Ambitions and 5 year Outcomes and is supported by an Action Plan that identifies 12 Priority Actions to be implemented over the next two years.
4. The overall aim of the Strategy is to enable more Darlington residents to be more active and it reflects the recent changes in the national and local government finances, including the need to maximise the contribution from the voluntary and community sectors.
5. The public consultation period for the Draft Strategy ran between 26 November and 13 December 2013 and included other partners and organisations such as sports clubs and community organisations for their comments and suggestions.

**Community Sport Activation Fund - £147K Award**

6. Darlington Sports Development Team has been successful with an external funding community sport activation fund application for £147,000 to Sport England that will develop a three-year Active Darlington programme. The project involves activities reflecting a broad range of sports for adults, offering informal opportunities that could lead to regular participation and multi-sport activities which provide people with a range of choices and opportunities to suit them.
7. Two Community Sport Activators were appointed in January 2014 with an apprentice due to start in March 2014. The activators will provide high quality delivery and support the direction of the programme.
8. Various activities have already started and 175 participants have been engaged with throughput attendance of 1250.

## **Sportivate - £16K Award for Darlington**

9. Sportivate is a Lottery programme that gives 14 to 25 year olds access to six-week courses in a range of sports. The Darlington Sports Development team has recently secured £16,000 funding to deliver the programme locally from April 2014 to March 2015. Darlington has consistently performed well in engaging participants for the programme and hence the team has been allocated £7000 more funding than previous years.
10. The programme is aimed at those who are not currently choosing to take part in sport in their own time, or are doing so for a very limited amount of time, and will support them to continue playing sport in their community after the six weeks is up. Activities will include Skateboarding, New Junior Indoor Cricket League, Dance, Girls Rugby, Multi Sports Clubs and many other sports and activities.

## **Darlington Powerchair Football Club – Successful Get Equipped Bid**

11. Darlington Sports Development Team has supported Darlington Powerchair Football Club with a successful funding application to the Sport England Get Equipped fund for £10,000. The funding will be spent on two new power chairs at the Club and additional equipment including balls, goals and bibs. The Club has only recently formed and they have had two taster sessions at the Dolphin Centre that were extremely successful, engaging ten new participants. The Club has become constituted and are working in partnership with Durham Football Association to form a team to join the national power chair football league. The Club now have a permanent base at Darlington School of Mathematics and Science.

## **Family Initiative Supporting Children’s Health (FISCH)**

12. The FISCH programme is working with three schools this term. Heathfield, St Augustine’s and Mount Pleasant Primary schools are receiving health education, physical activity and afterschool club sessions. Uptake at the afterschool club has been high with over twenty school pupils attending each club.

## **Cycle in Darlington**

13. Following the success of the cycling programme a comprehensive 2014 programme of cycling is in the planning. Bike storage for the ride is now relocated to South Park making the sessions more accessible to the general public. The programme will be having a big launch in the run up to Easter, working closely with the Local Motion Team.

## **Junior One Life**

14. Sports Development is assisting the delivery of the Junior One Life programme. In partnership with the food and health team, Sports Development is providing physical activity sessions at St Aiden’s Academy. Junior One Life is a ten-week

obesity intervention programme supporting children and their families to a healthier lifestyle.

### **Tees Valley InSport Funding Application**

15. Tees Valley Sport has applied to Sport England Inclusive Sport Fund with an application for £250,000. The project, if successful, will be delivered across the five Local Authorities in the Tees Valley; Darlington, Hartlepool, Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland, and Middlesbrough. The aim of the project is to increase the number of disabled people taking part in sport in the Tees Valley.
16. The project will provide Tees Valley-wide high quality sporting opportunities in a variety of settings readily accessible for disabled people. The sessions will be delivered by four InSport Activators and two apprentices working in partnership with community disability organisations, local authorities, national governing bodies and appropriate local clubs.

### **Darlington Sports Winners Scheme – Grand Final**

17. The annual Darlington Sports Winners Scheme was held on 29 January 2014 at Darlington College. The scheme celebrates achievement and progress in the Borough's young athletes and recognised the men and women who have dedicated time volunteering in sport in Darlington.
18. The scheme is sponsored by Vauxhall dealers Sherwoods, Darlington Borough Council's Sports Development Team, Tees Valley Sport, Master Skills Sporting Academy, Rotary International and Serco. Over 100 people attended the event and awards were given out for Young Sports Achiever, Team Club, Service to Sport, Special Achievement and Lifetime Achievement.

### **Primary Gymnastics**

19. 332 children from Darlington Primary Schools competed in the Key Steps in Gymnastics programme. The winning schools and individuals went through to represent Darlington in the Tees Valley (County) finals.

### **Year 3 Mini-Tennis**

20. 112 children from 14 schools within the Borough have competed in the Year 3 mini Tennis cluster competitions at the Dolphin Centre. Winners from each cluster will vie for the medals and a place in the Tees Valley School Games. The Mini-tennis programme has also deployed 25 young leaders from Carmel and DSMS Leadership Academy over the course of the programme.

### **Primary Basketball Competition**

21. Mid-January saw a well-supported and enthusiastic Primary Basketball festival held at the Education Village. Ten schools took part with 84 Year 5/6 children. The winners, Abbey and runners-up, Gurney Pease went through to represent

Darlington in the Tees Valley Finals. The competition was run in conjunction with personnel from Darlington Storm Basketball Club.

### **Tees Valley Sportshall Athletics**

22. This prestigious event was held at Eston Sports Academy on 16 January 2014. The primary competition was held during the morning and Darlington was well represented by Abbey and St Bede's who were up against stiff competition from 14 schools, ending up 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively. During the afternoon the Year 7 and 8 competitions were held, organised by Darlington School Sport Partnership and run with the help of 12 Young Leaders from Hummersknott Academy. We were very well represented by Carmel and Hummersknott and returned with medals of every colour.

### **Tees Valley Primary Gymnastics**

23. Darlington School Sport Partnership offered to host the Tees Valley Gym Finals at a late stage, as Middlesbrough felt unable to host it this year. It was a fantastic afternoon and a very high standard of competition with 170 competitors from 20 schools across the Tees Valley. Reid Street and Heighington were 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively in the Year 5/6 team competition, Heighington won the Team Year 3/4 competition, High Coniscliffe and St Teresa's were 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively in the Year 1/2 team competition and we had four gold and four silver individual medals for the higher level competition. This is a fantastic credit to all the hard work of the children, their teachers and gym coaches alike.

### **Creative Darlington – Maximising Strategic Arts Assets**

24. In 2012/13 Creative Darlington supported time limited organisational development work with Theatre Hullabaloo (options appraisal and an application to Arts Council England's large scale capital programme) and Humantics CIC (review of its business plan and operating systems, and advice from a qualified accountant).
25. Creative Darlington plans to offer further support to established and developing arts assets in the Borough. Formed in 2007 to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, OddManOut aims to support new writing and make theatre that promises to 'challenge and surprise'. Having secured a variety of grants to develop and tour new work in recent years, OddManOut is eager to consolidate its organisation and develop its artistic practice successfully from a Darlington base. Creative Darlington will support OddManOut's core team during 2013/14 in working to develop its organisational vision and business plan.

### **Creative Darlington – Developing Finance for the Arts**

26. Creative Darlington recently supported artist Anton Hecht in creating a new film, the 'Stop Start Tango' working in Darlington's indoor market. Working out of The Dolphin Centre with local singers and guidance from musician Andy Jackson, Anton shot a second film on Saturday 1 March 2014. The new work, provisionally titled 'hand music' explores a traditional system employed to help people remember

musical notes.

27. The D Project is 'a UK dance company based in Darlington delivering quality dance across Tees Valley and the North East', which focuses on 'Education and the Community' led by Debbie Waistell. Debbie recently received support from Creative Darlington, Arts Council England and Tees Valley Dance to test and develop ideas for a new performance. Debbie aims to develop the artistic profile and impact of the company, and to develop audiences for original dance pieces. As a result of this support Debbie has worked with a number of professional artists, including musician Mike McGrother, a producer, and pupils and staff from a Darlington school to refine ideas for the new work she hopes to tour in coming years. Debbie invited people to meet her outside Darlington Station in January 2014 for a short walk to a special sharing event, which was staged nearby in the cattle market space.
28. Creative Darlington recently offered three further Developing Finance for the Arts awards to artists and organisations planning activity in Darlington, including an award to progress a 'creative ageing programme'. Awards will be made subject to additional finance being secured from other sources.
29. Theatre to stage a special choral event working with various local choirs and Susie Royce, to explore the connection between Darlington and Rapa Nui (Easter Island) as part of an exhibition 'Retracing Routledge' (Quaker Katherine Routledge, the granddaughter of Joseph Pease, co-led the 1914 Mana Expedition to Easter Island whilst addressing contemporary environmental issues. The proposed exhibition will be shared through Crown Street Art Gallery and/or through local cultural festivals.

#### **Festivals 2014**

30. New arts festivals thrived in Darlington last year with the inaugural Darlington Arts Festival, promoted by Darlington for Culture, incorporating comedy, film, musical and literary events, a successful arts and crafts market in May 2013 and the Festival of Thrift attracting national media coverage in September 2013. Creative Darlington supported both festivals in 2013 and will continue to back them in 2014.
31. Marchday, who operate the Lingfield Point site in Darlington, recently applied to Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts scheme to develop the arts programme of the Festival of Thrift 2014, which is scheduled for 27 and 28 September 2014. Last year's event attracted approximately 27,000 visits to Darlington over two days, and evaluation shows the festival secured significant media coverage and left people with a positive impression of Darlington. Creative Darlington will provide finance to support local artists, arts organisations and schools in engaging with the forthcoming Festival of Thrift and has advised Marchday regarding their recent fundraising, including a January 2014 application to Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts to enable greater engagement by children and young people and to expand performing arts activity within the festival programme. A result on this application is expected in April 2014.

## **Spring 2015 Jabberwocky Market – Luxi**

32. Creative Darlington is supporting Luxi in staging Jabberwocky Market programmes in Darlington, as part of the Battersea Arts Centre led Contemporary Touring Network. The Contemporary Touring Network enables some of the leading contemporary performing arts shows currently available to tour to new audiences and has secured significant financial support from Arts Council England and major foundations. As part of the Contemporary Touring Network, Luxi expect to stage further Jabberwocky Market activity in Spring and Autumn 2014 with two more Jabberwocky Markets anticipated in 2015. The Spring 2014 Jabberwocky Market will run from 15 to 18 May 2014 and expect to see ticketed performances promoted at a number of venues across Darlington.

## **The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts**

33. A new programme of adult courses opened at the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in January 2014. An Arts and Crafts event on 29 March 2014 provides a good opportunity to buy original gifts in advance of Mother's Day. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts continues to administer and promote exhibitions. The 'Alternative Landscape' photography exhibition by Dave Thomas opened on 24 January 2014 alongside Chris Walker's 'Half Price This Way' photographs. Both exhibitions ran to 28 March 2014.

## **Chinese New Year - Friday 31 January 2014**

34. Students from Hummersknott Academy and Polam Hall school welcomed in the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Horse, in Darlington on 31 January 2014. Polam Hall School decorated a stall and provided calligraphy to the general public whilst Hummersknott Academy performed a traditional Chinese Lion Dance, a fan dance and Chinese singing, as well as parading their own dragon around Joseph Pease Place to Chinese music whilst shoppers stopped to enjoy the performances.

## **Darlington Civic Theatre**

35. This year's pantomime, Aladdin starring the Chuckle Brothers, finished its run on 12 January 2014. It was very well received and sales were very good, finishing £109,000 up on last year. Charitable collections during the run raised £4,200 for Great Ormond Street Hospital and over £8,000 for St Teresa's Hospice.
36. Whilst in Darlington the cast also visited the children's ward at Darlington Memorial Hospital and St Teresa's Hospice. An open morning was attended by 75 people and included a Q&A session with the cast, tours of the set and arts and crafts activities for families. Durham Support Group for Families with Visually Impaired Children took part in a special stage touch tour before attending the show. Next year's pantomime is to be a special production of The Wizard of Oz, again starring the popular Chuckle Brothers and ticket sales of £137,000 have already been achieved.

37. On 18 January 2014, the Theatre hosted the Mayor's Gala 'Strictly Musicals', which was performed by Darlington Operatic Society. 703 people attended including a number of civic dignitaries.
38. A new term of Civic Theatre ArtsSpark courses for young people has started at Hummersknott Academy.
39. The Russian State Ballet of Siberia visited the Civic Theatre at the end of January 2014 and was seen by 2,738 people. Young dancers from the Tiffany School of Dance were able to take part in a workshop with the dancers.
40. The Council received extremely positive feedback from the Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of January on its application for the restoration of the Civic Theatre. The application will be further considered in the coming months with the Council expecting a final decision in May 2014.

### **Libraries**

41. Read Regional is a project produced by New Writing North, the reading and writing development agency for the North East. One of its large scale projects is to connect writers from Yorkshire and the North East with local readers through libraries, bookshops and festivals. Darlington libraries are part of Read Regional, with three events over the first quarter of 2014. The first event was a poetry workshop and reading with two local poets, followed by three novelists joining library reading groups to discuss their work.

### **Housebound Users Service**

42. The service has successfully re-negotiated the contract for the delivery of books to housebound users by the Royal Voluntary Service volunteers. The contract requires a development of the service to increase the numbers reached. As partners in this delivery, the volunteers who deliver the books will be able to advertise the service to users of other RVS services, and within other partner networks.

### **Volunteer Digitisation Project**

43. The Centre for Local Studies in Crown Street has a very large collection of material in many different formats and will now benefit from the hard work of our volunteers who have digitised over 15,000 records of books, posters and maps to be uploaded to our online catalogue. This is over three quarters of the card catalogue and is an amazing achievement. As this work is completed, we hope that volunteers will continue to work with us to digitise many more of the 30,000 images we hold.

## **Head of Steam Museum**

### **Families**

44. In half-term week in February 2014, the museum tried out a 'Family Passport' to link into the 'Making a Mark' project for schools in the Tees Valley, which we are a part of, and this will be repeated at Easter. Each family who visit receive a card encouraging them to return to the museum to complete three activities on different days, promoting repeat visits to individual or multiple museums in the scheme.

### **Volunteers**

45. 150 hours of volunteer time in December 2013 really helped support delivery of seasonal events at the Museum as well as general help for the collections.

### **Tees Valley WW1**

46. Outreach took place on 22 February 2014 at The Bridge, Crown Street Library and the Dolphin Centre, led by Time Bandits, a group of historians and re-enactors. Publicity for this event was placed in various venues in the town via the Communications team.

### **Heritage Lottery Fund - World War One bid £42K**

47. The Museum's application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to undertake a project to collate, digitise, conserve and make accessible through an online resource records relating the North Eastern Railway workers from the World War I period has been successful with a £42K award.

## **Environmental Services**

### **Refuse Collection**

48. Members will be aware of the forthcoming implementation of an alternate week collection service. Officers from Street Scene are currently working towards smooth transition from the current weekly collection method to the new system of work, which it is anticipated to commence in October 2014.

### **Street Cleansing**

49. As part of the Litter and Grounds Maintenance project, officers, Members and partner organisations are investigating methods of increasing community involvement in relation to street cleansing. It is hoped the project will identify means in which the community can undertake cleansing in areas of the Borough to assist the Council in achieving required levels of cleanliness whilst absorbing further funding cuts.



## **Grounds Maintenance**

50. The winter programme for grounds maintenance (shrub pruning, etc) across the Borough is progressing well and it is anticipated that all areas will be serviced in accordance with the programme by the end of March 2014.

## **Winter Maintenance**

51. To date we have experienced no major snow events throughout the winter. As a result, at the end of January 2014, treatment had been undertaken on 31 less occasions (30 per cent reduction) than the same period last year.

## **Cemeteries**

52. Both West Cemetery and East Cemetery have recently undergone a resurface of all main roads within the Cemeteries enhancing the area and making visits for residents more amenable.

## **Countryside**

53. Officers of the Countryside Team have signed a partnership with Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) for them to provide education in relation to environmental issues to children across the Borough at the Council's Education Centre in South Park. As a result of this partnership, education can increase and provide a far better service for the children of the Borough.

## **Railway Heritage Campus**

54. The new project manager is now in post and work has begun pulling together a programme plan to incorporate several identifiable projects related to Darlington's Railway Heritage with the intention of securing a viable future for the Head of Steam Museum. Meetings have taken place with several stakeholders, and more are planned in the forthcoming weeks.
55. Early discussions with Trackworks have taken place to try and develop track laying apprenticeships on site adjacent to the museum. Tees Valley Arts are leading on the first Stage 1 Lottery bid to secure funding for community learning / engagement around the promotion of the Darlington's pioneering railway story as a kick starter for 10 years of promotion and activity leading to the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the first passenger journey in 2025.

**Councillor Nick Wallis**  
**Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**