
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 - Playing Pitch strategy

2. In response to the Council's 2013 Making and Growing Places DPD: Preferred Options consultations, Officers are working alongside Sport England to renew Playing Pitch and Sports Facilities Strategies for the Borough. This will inform the ongoing development of sports related policies in the DPD, including the identification of sites for playing fields and built sports facilities to 2026 as well as the identification of land for new housing sites. The process for developing the strategies is underway and the relevant support to develop strategies in line with the new 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy' (August 2013 draft version) has been identified. The timescale for the development of the new strategy from inception to completion is approximately 9-12 months.

School Games Dance Festival

3. The annual celebration of Dance took place at the Civic Theatre on 12 March 2014. This event has grown and grown from its early days held in a school hall and is now one of the largest, and most enjoyable, of all School Games events.
4. This year saw performances from 22 Schools, 350 young performers from age five to 16 performing pieces around the theme of The Spirit of the Games (Honesty, Passion, Respect, Teamwork, Self-belief and Determination). The standard of choreography and performance was tremendous and nearly took the roof off with the almost sell-out audience.

Primary Netball Tournament

5. 16 Schools took part on this event held at St Aidan's Academy on 18 March 2014. Young leaders from Carmel and Hummersknott umpired the 40 matches played over the afternoon and some excellent young leaders from St Aidan's assisted with team management and logistics and refreshments on the day. The games were played with good spirit and fair play and resulted in two very tight semi-finals between West Park Academy and St Bede's in one and Mowden and Abbey in the other. The final went to golden goal with St Bede's beating Abbey. St Bede's represented Darlington in the Tees Valley final on 3 April.

Tees Valley Boys Football

6. Abbey represented Darlington at this prestigious event organised by the School Sport Partnerships at Middlesbrough Football Club's training ground at Rockcliffe Park. A day of activities and football and a tour of the facilities led to an amazing experience for all those attending and Abbey topped the day off by coming second out of the eight teams taking part.

Tees Valley Primary Cross Country

7. A team of 60 children from 18 schools, year 3, 4, 5 and 6 were selected from the Darlington Cross-Country competition held in November to represent Darlington at the Tees Valley event at Stewarts Park in Middlesbrough on 5 March. The School Sport Partnership arranged some training sessions at Eastbourne Sports Complex after school, both to build endurance and confidence and to build team spirit prior to this event which, historically, we do well in.
8. This event as part of Project Ability and organised through the School Sport Partnerships took place at Marsh House in Billingham on 18 March. Darlington had 18 young disabled representatives from Beaumont Hill, St Bede's and Rydal Academy taking part in a carousel of seven activities including boccia, parachute, curling, target games, relays etc. All participants had an excellent day both in terms of sporting performance and social aspects, making new friends.

Sports Development - Easter Extravaganza

9. The Easter Extravaganza took place through the week commencing 7 April. A comprehensive programme of family activities and sports took place including Indoor Rounders, Table Tennis, Diving, Netball, Golf, Badminton, Gymnastics and Orienteering. The event was used to promote the Community Sport Activation Fund programme.
10. Weekly activity sessions have taken place too with Disability groups in Lakeside Lodge and Foundations. Coaches have delivered a range of activities to the service users seeing 10-15 participants taking part in the sessions. Sports Development is in the early stages of supporting Foundations with a County Durham Community Foundation funding application to develop a programme of in house activity sessions for the organisation.
11. Healthy Lifestyle Clubs are continuing to run in 12 Primary Schools across the town. These clubs target children not engaged in sport or those lacking confidence in Physical Education or are linked with existing Breakfast Clubs to increase physical activity. The School Sport Partnership has established these clubs in schools, supported them through provision of coaches and is moving towards making them sustainable with Change for Life equipment from Easter onwards.

Creative Darlington - Maximising Strategic Arts Assets

12. Creative Darlington is currently assessing an application from Darlington for Culture to enhance its sustainability and reach. Proposed activities includes the introduction of more efficient systems to collect annual subscription fees, development of its website and the promotion of a new members benefits package, encouraging engagement in the arts in Darlington.

Creative Darlington – Developing Finance for the Arts

13. Creative Darlington recently supported artist Anton Hecht in developing two new films, the 'Stop Start Tango' working in Darlington's Indoor Market, and 'All the Music is Our Hands', working in Darlington Market Square, The Dolphin Centre and St Cuthbert's Church.
14. The latter piece was filmed on 11 March 2014. Anton worked with two dance artists and two production assistants from Darlington to produce 'Stop Start Tango', and 35 members of the public engaged in dance activity. On the 'All the Music is Our Hands' work, Anton worked with two artists (conductor Andy Jackson music and visual artist Chris Folowell). 42 local singers and five members of the general public were involved. The Tango video has had over 6,000 views on Youtube and over 7,500 views on arplayer.tv
15. Applications to this scheme from Darlington Community Carnival, Darlington Jazz Festival, Flying Cloud Theatre Company and Julie Ward (to promote arts activity in Darlington within the Durham Women Rising campaign) are currently under assessment.

Festivals 2014

16. The strategic arts budget has supported Darlington for Culture in commissioning print for Darlington Arts Festival 2014. Creative Darlington is also supporting specific activity within the Arts Festival 2014 programme. Activities which are receiving direct support include the Jabberwocky Market shows across Darlington and the Art Lending Library exhibition at Crown Street Library. Both of these are also supported by Strategic Touring Fund awards from Arts Council England.
17. The strategic arts budget is supporting the Festival of Thrift in 2014 (27–28 September 2014), particularly engagement of Darlington artists, arts organisations and schools. Creative Darlington attended meetings with Marchday, Darlington Borough Council and Arts Council England in 2013/14 to discuss how to build on the success of the Festival of Thrift in 2013. Creative Darlington supported and advised on Marchday's application to Arts Council England for Grants for the arts (Lottery) scheme. Marchday have recently secured a grant offer of £80,000 from Arts Council England to bring more 'great art to everyone' within the Festival of Thrift 2014.

The North East Children's Theatre Consortium

18. Members of the Civic Theatre team attended a workshop hosted and funded by the North East Touring Consortium (NECTC) to develop creative evaluation techniques to inform work with family audiences. As a result of this the NECTC are also going to fund the commissioning of a customer feedback board for the Civic Theatre, engaging specifically with family audiences which will be designed by artist Sam Zuppardi.

ArtsSpark

19. On 18 February 2014, 22 young people from Darlington took part in the professional show *The Good Old Days of Music Hall and Variety*, following a day's workshop delivered by the theatre's ArtsSpark leaders in which the young people learnt about the story of music hall theatre and developed a music hall style act for the show.

The National Touring Group, Eternal Love

20. On 13 February 2014 Tom Bird, the executive producer of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, came to the theatre to give a talk entitled *Around the Globe in an Hour*, prior to the company's visit with their production *Eternal Love*. He spoke about the creation of the work by the company and also about the Globe and its new covered venue, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.
21. During the run of *Eternal Love* Giles Gasper, Senior Academic in Medieval History from Durham University, gave a pre-show talk about the period the show is set in and the real lives of Peter Abelard and Heloise. Cast members also took part in a post-show talk. The post-show talk and the performance itself were captioned by Stagetext for deaf or deafened customers and Vocal Eyes audio described one of the performances for customers with visual impairments. This audience development work was made possible by funding from ACE Strategic Touring Fund.

Theatre Programme

22. One night shows are selling very strongly at the Theatre this spring, including an appearance by Jason Manford over two nights which sold out both nights generating ticket income of £39,000 and secondary spend of £8,000.
23. The week long run of *Brassed Off* was hugely successful at the box office with tickets sales in excess of £70,000.

Community Events at the Civic Theatre

24. Hundreds of young people performed at the Civic Theatre in the week commencing 11 March. The annual Vibe awards took place, as well as the Darlington Schools Dance festival which included performances by 350 young people from Darlington

schools. The Sandra Welsh School of Dance and the Ian Pyle Dancers also performed their show, Our Turn Our Time, to packed houses.

Outdoor Events

Spring Thing

25. This year's Spring Thing was held from 20 March to 23 March and became a town-wide event for the second year running following its move from the Art Centre in July 2012.
26. A variety of events and stalls were located in the Dolphin Centre over the weekend with the headline act John Tams and Barry Coope appearing in the Central Hall on 22 March; other events included a family Ceilidh, sing around and workshops.
27. Dance demonstrations were held throughout the town centre on the Saturday before culminating in a mass dance performance in the market square and dance demonstrations in the Central Hall Dolphin Centre.

Best of Darlington Awards

28. Best of Darlington Awards was held on 21 March at Darlington College, with almost 300 people attending the event showcasing the outstanding skills and dedication of Darlington people in education, industry, business, sport and a range of other sectors.

Sport Relief Mile

29. Darlington hosted the fourth Sport Relief Mile on 23 March in South Park. The event attracted 400+ runners raising money for Comic Relief. Families with children and grandparents completed either a one, three or six mile circuit.

Swimathon

30. The Swimathon was held in the Dolphin Centre on the evenings of 22 and 23 March. The Swimathon is a national event to raise awareness of Marie Curie and support their cause.
31. The Dolphin Centre has supported this event for the past 17 years and this year we had 190 people registered at our pool. We are currently ranked 5th in the Country for registered swimmers taking part in the challenge to complete either a 2.5K individual or 5K team distance.

Launch of the Sherwoods Darlington 10km

32. The Sherwoods Darlington 10km which will be held on 10 August 2014 was launched in Joseph Pease Place on 15 March 2014. Applicants who purchased the Northern Echo on Saturday were given the opportunity to enter the race at a

reduced rate as well as receiving a free bottle of water from Teesside University who will provide free water for the actual race.

World Book Day at Darlington Libraries

33. Darlington Libraries has just celebrated World Book Day. Throughout the week any child who attended one of our Bookstart sessions received a £1.00 book voucher redeemable on all books priced £2.99 or more in participating stores or against one of the £1 books made available for sale especially for World Book Day. We also gave away copies of 'Beyond The Deepwoods' by Paul Stewart, 'Wintercraft' by Jenna Burtenshaw and 'The Quietness' by Alison Rattle to celebrate World Book Day.
34. Crown Street played host to the Hexham and Newcastle Catholic Partnership and worked together to organise a Book Extravaganza, a Festival of Reading for selected year 7 and year 8 children from a range of schools in the North East. 60 pupils attended with their teachers all dressed as famous book characters. Each school led presentations about a book or a range of books which interested them and which they have enjoyed reading. Author and illustrator, Faye Robertson, gave a talk and demonstration about working as an author and the children heard a reading of Roald Dahl's famous book Matilda. The day ended with a presentation of prizes and a gift of a free book for every child who attended as a present from Darlington Libraries.

Booktime Gifting

35. In other news the Booktime packs for reception class children are being gifted alongside a library visit to each class in Darlington. The visit consists of a talk about the library, a story and rhymetime and the book gifting. Every reception pupil in Darlington will receive their free pack of books and from this we notice more children joining the library and borrowing books.

Centre for Local Studies

36. Local Studies has showcased a Paton and Baldwins exhibition and three day 'open event'. More than 300 people came to see the resources we hold about Patons over the three days. Many enjoyed finding themselves and friends in the photographs and we gained some wonderful memories of working there for our archive.
37. The Centre is also working with Becky Sunter to start a Knitting Circle at the library, some of whom are going to work with the Patons yarn and patterns that we have had donated, in the hope of producing some 'historical' garments for future displays and events.
38. The latest display in the Centre is entitled 'Northern League 125' and celebrates 125 years of Northern League football. It has been compiled by John Phelan of the Durham Amateur Football Trust. As well as programmes, photographs and Northern League magazines, visitors will be able to see Seamus O'Connell's

football shirt worn in the 1959 Amateur Cup Final and an Amateur Cup Winners medal from 1950.

Environmental Services - Depot

39. Members will be aware that operations are transferring from Vicarage Road to Allington Way. Transfer for all Environmental Services operations commenced on 18 March with staff plant and equipment relocated over the following days.

Refuse Collection

40. Officers continue to progress the forthcoming alternate weekly collection system.
41. January saw the first Christmas collections following the implementation of wheeled bins. No issues were experienced and all Christmas/New Year waste was collected successfully.

Grounds Maintenance

42. The winter programme for grounds maintenance was completed on schedule and the new cutting season commenced on 17 March 2014.

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