
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 :-

Refuse Collection (Wheeled Bins) Review Group

2. Cabinet received the final findings and recommendations of the Refuse Collection (Wheeled Bins) Review Group undertaken by the Place Scrutiny Committee following a call in from Cabinet held on 3rd April 2013. The Review Group examined and considered a wide range of issues surrounding the implementation of wheeled bins in the Borough.

Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy

3. The new Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out the Council's ambitions and objectives to deliver a strategic, co-ordinated framework to enable the effective and efficient future development, management and maintenance of Darlington's green infrastructure network to 2026.
4. The Strategy is needed to reflect the recent changes in national and local green infrastructure policy, co-ordinate the planning, design, management and maintenance of green infrastructure in the Borough, provide a clear set of objectives and actions across a broad green infrastructure agenda for all green infrastructure partners to work with and to complete preparation of a key part of the Local Plan evidence base. Further information is given in Councillor McEwan's Portfolio report.

Darlington School Games Update

5. The School Sport Partnership (SSP) for the current academic year is looking very promising after buy-in with Sports Premium money from all of the primary schools in Darlington. The SSP has already delivered a very successful Sportsability Festival at the Education Village in September providing opportunities in boccia, skittles, table cricket, table tennis and target games for children with a variety of disabilities. The festival targeted young disabled children from across the mainstream schools in Darlington and it is hoped that we will deliver a similar outdoor festival in the summer to build on the success.
6. On 2 October 2013 the SSP organised a hugely successful Table Tennis competition for primary school children in year 5 and/or 6 in Darlington. More

children than ever were engaged with almost 50 participants competing from six schools – Heathfield Primary, Rydal Academy, Holy Family, St John's, Springfield and Northwood. Darlington Table Tennis Academy was also invited on the day to support with officiating and to create a positive community link from the school competition to the Academy. The victorious teams, both boys and girls, came from Heathfield Primary and will now progress to represent Darlington at the Tees Valley School Games on 26 June 2014.

Successful Darlington Community Sport Activation Fund Bid

7. 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 which could lead to regular participation and multi-sport activities which provide people with a range of choices and opportunities to suit them.
8. The sports will include Rounders; Swimming; Netball; Golf; Indoor Cricket; Running; Orienteering; Gymnastics; Cycling; and Badminton. Two Community Sport Activators will be appointed in due course and delivery of the programme started this month.

Be Active Summer Programme 2013

9. The Sports Development team worked in partnership with the Dolphin Centre, Eastbourne Sports Complex, local clubs and community partners to deliver the Be Active summer programme for 2013. Activities were diverse ranging from Fencing, Orienteering to Tri Golf. The service had 820 bookings with 560 separate young people having booked onto the camps and activities. The programme was supported by the Change 4 Life campaign and from a sports development perspective has been the most successful programme to date.

Darlington Table Tennis Academy Successful Small Grants Application

10. Darlington Sports Development Team has supported the new academy with a successful £10,000 funding application to Sport England. The funding will be spent on new table tennis tables, clothing kit, facility hire and additional community based sessions organised by the Academy. The club has recently moved to a new venue at Longfield Academy of Sport and currently it has 80 adult and junior members which is fantastic progress having only started in May 2013.

Recreational Delivery of Community-based Physical Activity

11. The Sports Development Team continues to deliver a diverse programme of community based activities that are available to the residents of Darlington. Activities include Gymnastics; Trampolining; Nordic Walking; Running; Tri Golf; Table Tennis; Get Everybody Motivated; Badminton and much more. The team focuses on delivering recreational sessions in sports where these opportunities are not available elsewhere in the town.

Darlington Adult Indoor Cricket League

12. The first ever Darlington Adult Indoor Cricket started at Longfield Academy of Sport on 1 October. The league is already over-subscribed with teams from local clubs and community groups. The league is being supported by Durham County Cricket Board, Darlington Sports Development Team and the local development group. It is hoped that junior versions of the format will be implemented in January 2014.

Friday Night Youth Project

13. The Sports Development Team is working on a new project for a Friday evening at the Dolphin Centre. The session will take place between 7.00pm and 9.00pm and will offer a range of activities for young people aged 11 to 17 years. Consultation surveys have been distributed to various areas across the town and we are looking to launch the project in the New Year.

Creative Darlington - New Support

14. Creative Darlington has launched two new schemes through which artists and arts organisations can seek support. One scheme is focused on developing finance for arts activity in the Borough. Darlington based arts organisations including Darlington Arts Academy and OddManOut Theatre Company have already secured support to help pilot this scheme. The second is focused on supporting the development of Borough based arts organisations through time limited organisational development support focused on building sustainability and addressing risk.
15. Theatre Hullabaloo, one of Arts Council England's national portfolio organisations based in Darlington, has been supported in commissioning an options appraisal report from Roger Lancaster Associates for its future development as a pilot of this scheme. Both schemes are being promoted through the Borough Council's website and via Darlington for Culture, and are currently open to applications. An article on Creative Darlington's work, including these schemes, was included in the November 2013 issue of Darlington Together.

Darlington Arts Festival 2014

16. Creative Darlington supported the first Darlington Arts Festival in May 2013, which secured significant coverage and positive evaluation. Creative Darlington has offered financial support to Darlington for Culture to develop a Darlington Arts Festival in May 2014, with the strategic arts budget supporting promotion of the festival and delivery of an arts and crafts market within the programme.

The Jabberwocky Market

17. Creative Darlington supported Luxi in organising the first Jabberwocky Market programme, a brand new festival of theatre in venues around Darlington including The Forum, Hummersknott Academy, Voodoo Cafe and the Quaker Meeting

House, from 3 to 6 October 2013. Jabberwocky Market included touring performances from Battersea Arts Centre, local poets including Bob Beagrie and Vane Women and scratch performances of new shows in development, including Weather to Fly by emerging Darlington based company OddManOut.

The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts

18. Autumn has been a busy and productive time at the Bridge with internal decoration supported by Darlington Cares volunteers, new signage installed and additional display boards to be installed with support from Creative Darlington. The new term of ticketed arts courses at The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts opened in the week commencing 16 September 2013, with 23 courses running.
19. In addition to housing adult art courses, the Community Arts Project, the OpenArt Studio, Darlington Media Group and various workshop bookings, an art therapist is now renting space at The Bridge on a regular basis. Further events were promoted, including a Trash and Treasure arts bazaar (arts materials and unused arts equipment) on 9 November 2013 and an arts and crafts fair on 30 November 2013. The Openart Studio is also leading a very successful outreach at the Kings Centre in Darlington, is securing a significant number of secondary referrals and building new partnerships including the 700 Club. A Darlington Media Group exhibition at The Bridge Centre for Visual Art opened on 20 September 2013 and The Bridge exhibitions programme is now scheduled into 2014.

Crown Street Art Gallery and Other Exhibitions

20. Crown Street Art Gallery has now held 13 exhibitions and attracted approximately 27,000 visitors since opening in May 2012. The latest exhibition, by students of Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College opened on 21 September 2013 and followed the gallery's most successful exhibition to date, Forest Light II by Paul Dillon. Forest Light II ran from 8 June to 19 September 2013 attracting approximately 5,895 visitors generating eight sales of original art work. 'Start of the Line', the next exhibition by Darlington based artist Julie MacBean, will showcase new work produced during Julie's tenure as artist in residence on the Darlington campus of Teesside University, including original drawings and prints inspired by railway heritage.
21. Three other local artists, Vera Hynes, Carolyn Corfield and Graeme Rowatt, under the banner of Cluster Arts, are presenting their unique exhibition of contemporary art, inspired by the area's railway heritage and the imminent centenary of the outbreak of World War One, Track Across Time, at the Head of Steam. It runs until 31 March 2014. Jane Tarr, Director Organisational Resilience and Environmental Sustainability and North, for Arts Council England attended a special opening event on 15 October 2013.

Civic Theatre

22. A £5M Heritage Lottery Fund application was submitted in October 2013 to underpin a major restoration programme at the Civic Theatre. An outline scheme has been developed alongside Heritage specialists 'TheatreSearch' with a decision on phase 1 approval expected on 28 January 2014.
23. A restoration levy of £1 per ticket has been in place since 1 July 2013. The majority of customers are happy to contribute to this project which will support the restoration scheme for the Theatre. To date it has raised £20,562.
24. The Civic Theatre presented Darlington Dance Festival on 16 September 2013, organised by Darlington Dance Festival Association. Dancers of all ages from Darlington dance schools and dance groups took part, including the Theatre's own ArtsSpark Contemporary Dance Group.
25. The aim of the festival was to attract more adults and this was highlighted at the event with five adult dance classes performing on the evening. The festival was funded from a successful bid from the Art Council with support from TFM and Darlington College. The event which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress had an audience of 573 plus the participants themselves, who also had the chance to watch each other's performances.
26. On 17 September 2013 the launch took place at the Civic Theatre of this year's Pantomime, Aladdin, which stars The Chuckle Brothers, Philip Meeks, Phil Corbitt and Beth Stobbart, who is a Youth Theatre Leader with ArtsSpark.
27. A new term of youth theatre and dance courses has started at Hummersknott Academy. Young people from the Contemporary Dance Group performed alongside the professional company of Jiving with the Swing Kings at the theatre on 7 October 2013. Members of the Senior Youth Theatre Group have also begun rehearsals led by the Assistant Director, for their roles in To Sir with Love.

Libraries

28. All three libraries in Darlington offer public internet access, with a free half an hour each day and further time bookable on paying a small fee. The service is used by a diverse range of people, for a wide range of purposes.
29. In the first half of this financial year the e-library at Crown Street had provided nearly 35,000 sessions on PC's, including 450 for adult and community learning courses, and 680 for local and family history research, with a further 2544 sessions provided at Cockerton Library. With more and more Government services utilising digital engagement to save money and staff time, this provision is increasingly important and is likely to come under increasing pressure in the coming months, with eight Government departments looking to go live with 23 new on-line services in the coming months.

Funding for Business and Intellectual Property Advice and Guidance

30. The Tees Valley Regional Library Services have been successful in bidding for funding to expand the work of the Newcastle Business and IP Centre into our area. The Centre is designed to support entrepreneurs, inventors and small businesses, and has been part funded by the British Library. The new funding will allow the Tees Valley region to offer focussed seminars and advice sessions as well as training some staff from each authority in how to support the information and intellectual property needs of the target audience. We are looking forward to working with colleagues in the region and with our own Economic Development Unit to take this forward.

Funding for a Celebration of the Lindisfarne Gospels Journey

31. Eleven library authorities in the North East region have also been successful in a bid for funding for a travelling exhibition of photography and associated talks and workshops from an author and a photographer who documented the original journey of the Lindisfarne Gospels around the region. The Crown Street Art Gallery will be hosting the exhibition and events in August 2014.

World War I Anniversary

32. The Tees Valley authorities have also been successful in a bid for Heritage Lottery Funding for a major piece of work to support the 100th anniversary of the First World War. The project will bring together material from local libraries, archive departments and museums. In Darlington Centre for Local Studies research work is already going ahead to provide relevant local information about the period and the effect of the war here, and the work of a local historian on a group of local men who fought in the war is also going to be utilised as part of our contribution to the project. Further information will follow when plans for events and exhibitions are in place.

Darlington Rhythm and Blues Festival

33. Hundreds of people braved the weather conditions on 15th September 2013 for a fantastic afternoon and evening of RnB music in the market square and surrounding bars. Atlantic Soul Messengers warmed the crowds up with an uplifting set followed by the Ansley Lister Band and the head line act, The Pretty Things.
34. This year saw an increase in the number of bars/restaurants hosting bands during the day which enhanced the offer for the public attending the event. Fabulous feedback was received from people attending the event and it was noted that people had travelled from Scarborough and Newcastle.

Darlington by the Sea

35. Darlington by the Sea was extended from a one day event to two weeks this year in partnership with Distinct Darlington. The 50 tonnes of sand was sponsored by My Kind of Merchant (MKM) Building Supplies and there was lots of interactive entertainment for all the family. Distinct Darlington Limited has highlighted the event as one they would like to develop and they brought in activities during the two week period and a big screen showing films. The plan is to further develop the programme for next year.

Hell of the North

36. 270 cyclists took part in the Hell of the North, 100 mile cycle ride on 1 September 2013. Best attendance to date! BiB Insurance provided the water for the riders. Conditions were one of the hardest experienced in years with very strong head winds especially leading towards Hawes. Nevertheless, the participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Head of Steam Museum

Schools

37. There were 194 school visitors and users of loans boxes during September, with 1789 users since April – up on the same time last year. October and November were almost fully booked, with several schools having booked into the Making a Mark project (in partnership with Tees Valley Museums and the National Portrait Gallery, funded by Arts Council England).

Volunteers

38. Volunteers contributed 112 hours to the Museum during August and September. They have conducted guided tours for Heritage Open Days, helped with events, helped with collections cataloguing and also with family holiday activities.

Externally Funded Projects

39. WWI Tees Valley Project has appointed a living history group to undertake outreach in each of the five Boroughs before the end of March 2014. This will link with work planned by the Museum and in partnership with Darlington Libraries and the Centre for Local Studies. In November 2014 there will be a specially commissioned performance in Darlington Market Square – the Museum, Libraries and Events team are working with the project team on this. Staff and volunteers are preparing material to inspire and inform the performance and also to feature in a touring exhibition.

Events

40. The Heritage Open Days were a great success with over 400 visitors across the weekend. The Darlington Model Railway Club exhibited their layouts during the event whilst the Friends of the Museum gave guided tours of the Museum. Also in attendance were the North Eastern Railway Association, the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group and the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust.

Waste

41. Members will be aware that in June this year wheeled bins were introduced throughout the Borough. During the second quarter of the year any anomalies/concerns have been investigated and the service is now embedded and running successfully. At the height of the implementation some 5,000 concerns were investigated with resolution being found to them all. Alongside this the recycling service continues to operate and it is hoped that the introduction of wheeled bins will see an increase in the amount of recycling materials collected. Currently the service is planning for the forthcoming festive period and Christmas and New Year working arrangements will be forwarded to all for information nearer the time.

Grounds Maintenance

42. Due to the pleasant summer there has been no significant issues experienced in relation to grounds maintenance throughout the Borough. Grass has been cut across the Borough 11/12 times as per schedule and weeds have not posed the problems they have previously. At the end of September the team commenced their annual winter pruning of all hedges, shrubs etc.

Dog Warden

43. I am pleased to announce that the Council received the Gold Star Award for animal welfare from the RSPCA.

Cemetery and Crematorium

44. I am delighted to announce that West Cemetery obtained Green Flag status this year.

Countryside

45. Agreement has been made with Durham Wildlife Trust for it to provide education on environmental matters to school children of Darlington utilising the Education Centre at South Park. This is to supplement the work of the Ranger service currently being undertaken.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio