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**OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio.

**Purchase of 9 Borough Road Former Fire Station**

2. Regarding the Arts Council England (ACE) Partnership bid with Theatre Hullabaloo to provide a children's theatre the Director of Economic Growth has been authorised to purchase 9 Borough Road (the former Fire Station) and to enter into an appropriate lease or licence with Theatre Hullabaloo to formalise its occupation of the proposed new children's theatre.
3. Council has now approved the £0.66M underwriting and a payment of up to £300k will be made prior to December 2014 with the vendor remaining in the property under licence until at the latest December 2015 when the building will be required. On final completion of the sale the balance remaining of the £425k will be paid.
4. The children's theatre project is a partnership between the Council and the Theatre Hullabaloo however the building will be owned by the Council so it will be necessary to formalise its occupation.

**Provision of Culture Review Group**

5. The final findings of the Provision of Culture Review Group undertaken by Place Scrutiny Committee to understand the issues around provision of culture for Darlington and to identify potential solutions have been noted. It is also noted that Place Scrutiny Committee plan to review the work of Creative Darlington.

**Markets Review Group**

6. The final findings of the Markets Review Group undertaken by Place Scrutiny Committee to ensure promotion of Darlington as a vibrant market town have been received and Officers have been requested to continue to action the recommendations deliverable within existing resources.
7. Consideration will also be given to the allocation of funds to refurbish and support the Market Hall as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

## **Darlington Civic Theatre Heritage Lottery Capital award**

8. The Civic Theatre has been successful in its application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to undertake a major restoration programme. The Theatre has been awarded a first round pass, which is the first stage towards a grant of £4.98M to restore the theatre, improve its facilities and engage new audiences with the theatre's heritage. HLF will make a development grant of up to £426,000 available to support an application to the second stage which will be submitted by 31 July 2015. Work is expected to begin on site mid-2016.
9. The news of the award was made public on 9 October and was covered by both regional news channels, local media and The Stage. Ivor Crowther, the Head of HLF North East, was present at the Theatre for the announcement. The project team will be working very closely with HLF to ensure the scheme meets its funding requirements as it moves forward.

## **Audience Development Civic Theatre**

10. During August staff members and volunteer audio describers received training from VocalEyes the national audio description charity. This will help the Theatre to attract more people to access these services.
11. Approximately 100 people attended Heritage Open day tours in September. Visitors were particularly interested to view some paintwork uncovered during the repair work in the Summer which dates back to the 1960s.
12. The Theatre's volunteer ambassadors visited Northampton Royal and Derngate Theatre in September to attend a preview performance of Regeneration which came to the Civic Theatre in November. This visit was organised and paid for by the Touring Consortium Theatre Company to support the ambassadors who are helping to build new audiences for the play.
13. A production of Private Peaceful, an adaptation of the novel by Michael Morpurgo, was very popular in early September. It was attended by large numbers of school parties as well as family audiences of all ages.
14. Simon Callow visited the Civic Theatre in early October with his one man play The Man Jesus and he also gave a very interesting post-show talk which was sold out.
15. The cast of The Chuckles of Oz were in Darlington at the beginning of October to launch this year's Civic Theatre pantomime. The event was held at the Houndgate Townhouse who is sponsoring the pantomime. Sales are progressing well and are up on the previous year. For the first time the pantomime will include some specially commissioned 3D sequences, which should add to its appeal.

## **Healthy Darlington Hub**

16. The Healthy Darlington Hub at the Dolphin Centre opened to the public on 28 October. It is Darlington's one-stop-shop for information, support and advice for those who live and work in Darlington to eat well, move more and live longer.
17. The Hub will offer personalised motivational support to clients: from intensive support for those who have medical or Long Term Conditions, to informal chats (brief interventions), support will be based upon the individual needs of each client. The overall philosophy of the approach is that small changes can make a big difference, and on strong evidence that placing the individual at the centre of any change is the most effective way of working. The team are trained to offer a wide variety of services, with the most help being given to those who need it most. The Healthy Darlington Hub team are able to support clients with no lengthy application or registration processes: clients can just 'walk-in' as well as being referred.
18. The Hub is the central point for receiving and processing healthy lifestyle referrals from doctors and other health professionals. Work with GPs and practice nurses over many years has helped inform the Healthy Darlington model, and recent feedback has whole-heartedly endorsed both the concept of the Hub itself and the range of services that are offered.

## **Active Darlington Project**

19. So far the Darlington Move More Team has engaged 936 participants as part of the Community Sport Activation Active Darlington project since February 2014. Sport England has recognised this as great progress in such a short space of time. 645 participants have been the primary target age group of 14 plus and the ages range from seven year old to 74. 56 of the participants are from an ethnic background and 73 have a disability. So far the team have delivered 1,108 sessions with an average contact time of nine hours per participant.

## **Get Going Summer Programme**

20. The Darlington Move More Team engaged 550 participants as part of the Get Going Summer Programme. There were 2,083 visits with an average contact time of eight hours and 46 different session groups were delivered. The ages ranged from one year olds to 79. Customer survey monkey highlighted the high quality delivery of the programme. 97 per cent of the respondents felt the sessions were well organised, affordable and accessible with 100 per cent of the respondents stating that they felt the coaches were knowledgeable, approachable and well presented.

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

21. Creative Darlington agreed to allocate £10,000 to support business planning and audience development activity for the Civic Theatre, subject to the success of the Heritage Lottery Fund capital application and this offer supported their successful application.

## **Developing Finance for the Arts**

22. Creative Darlington supported The Women's Voices Project in working with women in County Durham and Darlington in towns and village halls to gather testimonies from local women around domestic abuse and what happens behind closed doors. Two performances of their new production, Playing House, were given by an ensemble cast of professional and community performers at The Dolphin Centre on 20 September 2014. The project secured match finance from Arts Council England, the Altogether Better Durham Partnership and the Skills Funding Agency.
23. Creative Darlington supported Backscratch Theatre CIC in bringing three performances of its new production, Hewin Goals, which celebrated the 125th Anniversary of the Northern League, to Darlington. Two were staged at the Voodoo Café and one at The Forum to a combined audience of 44 people. The production was accompanied by two participatory workshops, one staged at Holy Family Primary School in Darlington and one staged at St Teresa's Hospice in Darlington. Darlington based Michael Daynes is one of the co-producers of Backscratch Theatre CIC and the new show has toured to various venues across the North East, including Crook Town Football Club, and at the Miner's Institute in Newcastle. The project secured match finance from various local authorities and Arts Council England.
24. Creative Darlington supported the staging of two performances at Darlington Cattle Market of Solas Fae, a new production devised by Debbie Waistell/The D-Project in October 2014, attracting over 80 attendees. Debbie also devised and promoted a schools workshop package with Creative Darlington support. Supporting the development of local talent is one of Creative Darlington's approaches. The project secured sponsorship and grant support from Arts Council England.
25. Tin Arts has been offered conditional support to develop an IncludeFEST in Darlington in summer 2015, probably at South Park. The IncludeFEST concept is to develop a free programme of family arts activity and entertainment working with local groups, encouraging families with disabled and non-disabled children to have fun together. Tin Arts aim to involve local groups and artists in developing the IncludeFEST in Darlington and have secured match finance for this proposal through the County Durham Foundation.

## **Audience Development**

26. Creative Darlington supported the Festival of Thrift 2014, which attracted c 40,000 visitors to Lingfield Point over the weekend of 27 and 28 September 2014. Strategic Arts budget supported Darlington artists, arts organisations and schools engagement in the festival programme. North East (The Sage Gateshead), national (Ida Barr) and international artists worked with Darlington schools and groups in advance of the festival weekend to build their creative experience and generate original junk art pieces throughout Darlington town centre. Creative Darlington co-ordinated meetings between Marchday, the Council and Arts Council England and supported the development of Marchday's successful application to Grants for the Arts, which secured an award of £80,000 to enrich the arts

programme of the festival. A full festival evaluation report is expected in due course.

27. Creative Darlington supported the development of Battersea Arts Centre's successful application for strategic touring programme support from Arts Council England to develop a National Touring Consortium on Luxi's invitation. Darlington's Strategic Arts budget commitment has been matched by significant Arts Council England and trust and foundation support to the overall National Touring Consortium, which supports organisations working in Thanet, Hull, Darlington, Gloucester, Great Yarmouth, Torbay and London. Luxi Ltd, led by Caroline Pearce, exists to advance education and participation in the arts through multidisciplinary performance or projects, and have programmed Jabberwocky Markets in October 2013, May and October 2014 and with two to follow in 2015. The Jabberwocky Markets bring great contemporary theatre to venues across Darlington. The October 2014 programme included performances of The Incredible Book Eating Boy at Crown Street Library, a performance of The Ballad of the Burning Star in Polam Hall School's Lydiard Theatre and a night of scratch performances (work in progress) at Voodoo Cafe. The next Jabberwocky Market event will be held in Darlington in March 2015.

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

28. Darlington based artist Mariwan Abdullah, born in Makhmoor in Kurdistan, opened his first Darlington exhibition entitled Truly at The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts on 3 October 2014, which ran until 29 November 2014.

### **Crown Street Art Gallery**

29. The gallery, which opened in May 2012, has now held 21 exhibitions drawing 43,818 visitors. The gallery is currently programmed into August 2016 with 15 exhibitions either ongoing or expected.

### **Hell of the North (HOTN) Cycle Ride**

30. The HOTN 100 mile cycle ride had its best attendance to date with 235 cyclists entered on 7 September 2014. The ride covers areas such as Leyburn, Kirby Stephen and Middleton. The weather was pleasant and they all enjoyed the experience. Online entry was introduced this year with over 75 people opting to register via online.

### **Rhythm n Blues Event**

31. On 14 September 2014 thousands turned out to see the enigmatic headliner Mungo Jerry at the RnB event in the Market Square; they were not left disappointed. The afternoon began with the Groove a Matics warming the crowd and with the Deep South RnB vocals of Marcus Malone, got everyone in the mood. All surrounding Market Square pubs and more afield featured live bands throughout the afternoon and into the evening. It's going to take something special for next year's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary to top 2014.

## **Proms in the Park**

32. This year's Proms in the Park was held in the South Park bandstand on 13 September and was organised in partnership with the Northern Military Music. Modus Seabed Intervention sponsored the event for the second year running.
33. Hundreds of people flocked to the South Park to enjoy a fabulous programme of musical entertainment throughout a late summer afternoon. The program included the Royal Signals (Northern Band), Hurworth Concert Band, who joined with The Royal Signals for the first time, Newton Aycliffe Pipes and Drums, Central and East Yorkshire Wing ATC Section 1 Band and guest vocalists. Just over £700 was collected on the evening for the Army Benevolent Fund.

## **Run the Spectrum – Colour Run**

34. Darlington's first ever colour run was held in South Park on 21 September, the event was organised by the North East Autism Society with support from the Council's events team. The event encouraged supporters to bathe themselves in colour and run the 5K spectrum around South Park to raise money in a bid to highlight and raise awareness of autism.
35. The 5k race was the first of its kind in the region and ended with a Colour Festival, held at the finish line. The event attracted nearly 600 participants and to date they have raised £20,000 for the charity.

## **Railway Heritage**

36. A comprehensive and wide reaching public engagement programme was undertaken in September and October in advance of the drafting of the Vision and Action Plan for railway heritage in Darlington. A number of specific events were organised including a Family Fun Gala Day on the 11<sup>th</sup> October where around 2000 people attended and gave their views whilst enjoying live music, local beers, foodstalls and crafts.
37. Officers also attended events such as the Festival of Thrift and Heritage Open Days and used the opportunity to raise awareness, engage with the public and explore ideas for the assets and the possible business models, events programmes and economic potential of railway heritage and Darlington.
38. In addition targeted events have been put on for the business community and the Railway Heritage Enquiry Group were engaged with early in the programme and will be a reference group for the emerging feedback and themes which are currently being collated.
39. The Vision and Action Plan will be drafted throughout November and December and will be formally consulted on in early 2015.

## **'Right on Track'**

40. The 'Right on Track' event was held at the Museum in October as part of the 'Get on Board' consultation. The event was well attended with 1,500 visitors to the Museum site. The event included live music, literature readings, food and craft stalls and activities for children.

## **2025**

41. During late Summer and Autumn, the Director of Economic Growth met with colleagues from Durham County Council and Stockton Borough Council to discuss the significance of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and to determine the appetite for working over the long term and to jointly co-operate over an appropriate programme of events/activities.
42. At this preliminary stage three key areas are in scope of research including assessment of key national and local artefacts and assets of significance (or likely to be), the actual line itself working with key interested parties, and an infrastructure audit of venues across the areas.
43. It is intended that towards the end of the first quarter of 2015 more intensive engagement with interested stakeholders, potential sponsors or funders will take place.
44. Officers are continuing to work with a broad range of Rail Heritage partners to develop a celebratory programme of activity for Sept 2015 to mark 190 years of the Darlington to Stockton Passenger Railway. This Event will recognise the pivotal role of the birthplace of Passenger Rail Travel in the Industrial Revolution and begin the countdown towards the 200 year anniversary in 2025.

## **Tees Valley WW1**

45. The 'Trains to Trenches' exhibition ran until 2 November and proved very popular with visitors. This is part of the WW1 commemoration programme that the Museum has been extensively involved in with partners across the Tees Valley.
46. The team led some outreach in the town in Joseph Pease Place, The Cornmill Centre and C: The Box on 11 September – working with 367 people. This helped support the WW1 commemoration performance in the Market Square on 14 November.

## **North East Railways in WW1**

47. Poppies Project – We now have 468 poppies towards our total of 2,236 to represent each North Eastern Railway worker who was killed in WW1. These will be displayed in the Museum.
48. The Team supported a successful weekend at Palace Green in Durham on 13 and 14 September as part of the DLI statue dedication and commemorations. Over 300

people directly engaged with our staff at our stall. We have now created 6,372 records and scanned over 1,110 photos within the project. Furthermore a Learning Consultant is developing resources for schools – the pack is nearing completion and is being ‘road tested’ before being launched.

## **Environmental Services**

### **Restructure**

49. Members will be aware that a restructure of the former Street Scene team was implemented at the beginning of October. In this regard the service was split into two with grounds maintenance and street cleansing activities remaining as ‘Street Scene’, whilst all services associated with waste were combined with the Council’s transport function forming the new Waste and Transport Services Section. Further, a small horticultural team has accompanied the Council’s Nursery provision to focus on the more highly skilled elements of horticulture, i.e. flower beds, landscaping, maintenance of the Council’s housing stock and housing tenants’ gardens.

### **Revised Weekly Collection**

50. The new Revised Weekly Collection service was also introduced week commencing 6 October. Generally the new system has commenced smoothly and successfully, however, with this major change to the service it is not surprising that there have been a number of initial teething issues. The main problems experienced with the service are not surprisingly confusion on the part of residents as to which day and bin and what can be placed in each container. As the service is now settling down, these initial problems have been resolved as both residents and staff get used to the new service. In addition, as a result of the significant changes to the routes and introduction of new staff, we have seen an increase in the number of missed bins during the early weeks of the new service. There was also an influx of requests for recycling containers, particularly boxes used to place glass in as these have been misplaced previously by residents. Early indication is that the majority of residents are actively participating in the new service separating waste as requested before collection.

### **Grounds Maintenance**

51. Other than difficulties experienced during the early growing season following an initial burst of growth, the grass cutting is now coming to an end and work will now focus on Council owned hedges and shrubs which will be pruned/maintained over the forthcoming winter months.

### **Street Cleansing**

52. As a result of both the restructure and implementation of the new revised weekly collection service, street cleansing activities have also been reviewed to ensure satisfactory levels of cleanliness are maintained throughout the Borough. Linked to the ongoing grounds maintenance/litter project, focus is on delivery of services to



main arterial routes, whilst working with residents/community groups on cleansing in residential areas.

### **Countryside**

53. Durham Wildlife Trust in partnership with Darlington Borough Council have recently undertaken significant works to some of the meadow areas across the Borough carrying out a thorough reseeded programme to ensure that the wildflower areas are full of colour in forthcoming seasons.

### **Fitting Shop**

54. As part of the recent Depot move from Vicarage Road to Allington Way, provision was built within the Fitting Shop for taxi testing and MOTs. This new service commenced at the beginning of October and is working very well.

### **Winter Maintenance**

55. The winter maintenance season is now upon us with the new salt barn located at Lingfield Way fully stocked with 6,000 tonne of rock salt and all vehicles and staff are prepared for the new season.

### **Environmental Crime/Dog Warden Service**

56. I am delighted to advise that the dog warden service was once again awarded the RSPCA's Gold Stray Footprint Award for 2014. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row that we have received this RSPCA award.

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