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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.

**Healthy Darlington Hub**

2. The Healthy Darlington Hub at the Dolphin Centre opened to the public on 28 October 2014. Since this date, over 1000 people have been into the Hub for information and advice, and 171 clients have been seen at least once (mostly more than once) on an individual basis, and are receiving personalised support to Eat Well and Move More. 61 per cent of the clients are female, and 39 per cent are male. Their ages range from 13-80 years old. Half of the clients began their contact on a walk-in basis, and were seen on the same day, and half were referred from health professionals such as GPs, Nurses and Physiotherapists. Initial retention rates at the six-week point are excellent; more data on retention will be available in the next Portfolio report.
3. In addition to the day-to-day contact with clients, another key role for the Hub is to work in partnership with stakeholders and partner agencies. A significant amount of this work has moved on apace in the last few months, with new partnerships being formed, such as with the Darlington Probation service, alongside strengthened links with current partners such as the Council's Housing team, Age UK Darlington, and Darlington MIND. In the New Year, the Hub team will lead brief advice training with front-line staff in the Housing service, so that staff can begin to Make Every Contact Count, and engage in conversations around health and wellbeing (and ultimately signpost to additional support in the Hub or out in our communities). This training will roll out to other front-line staff across the Council and in other partner organisation throughout 2015, and on an ongoing basis.

**Darlington Move More Team**

4. So far the Darlington Move More Team (formally Sports Development) has engaged 3274 residents since January 2014. The diverse outreach programme that supports this engagement includes 70 different projects delivering 2789 sessions with an average contact time of 9 hours per participant.
5. 42 per cent of the participants are male and 58 per cent female. 48 per cent of the participants were under 14 and 52 per cent aged 14 and over. 5 per cent of the participants have a disability and 5 per cent have come from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background.

## **Disability Move More Project**

6. The Darlington Move More Team has been successful with a funding application to Tees Valley Sport for £3,500 to improve Disability Sport provision in the Town. The Disability Move More Programme is a new exciting project that will take sport and physical activity to disability groups in Darlington such as The Links, Foundations and Lakeside Lodge. It will provide more opportunities for participation in regular activity for the service users within these settings and the project will deliver a range of activities such as boccia, new age kurling, walking, aerobics/dance, swimming, table tennis, orienteering, cycling, trampolining and multisport activity. The project will give organisational staff the opportunity to undertake training in coaching qualifications so they can deliver activities. This project will fund training, purchase equipment/resources and coaching hours for activity to take place with disability groups.
7. The project is not restricted to these three groups and would actively seek out similar organisations working with disabilities in Darlington, expanding the disability sport offer in Darlington helping local residents with Disability to Move More. The project will aim to form exit routes with clubs and other community projects through linked in working.

## **Darlington Civic Theatre**

8. The Civic Theatre presented two shows in late October for young people as part of the Takeoff Festival, which is run by Theatre Hullabaloo. Handmade Tales was presented for school audiences aged six to eleven at the Central Hall and Educating Ronnie, a shocking true story of the aftermath of a student's gap year friendship with a Ugandan boy, was presented at the Quaker Meeting House. Thirty delegates from the theatre sector visiting the festival also had a tour of the theatre and a glimpse of the new venue adjacent to the theatre to be called The Hullaballoon. The feedback from this visit was incredibly positive.
9. The Royal Geographical Society lecture series, which the Civic Theatre holds at the Central Hall, continues to be very popular. The November event with Nicholas Crane talking about maps, sold out and the RGS held a special reception for members prior to the event, which was also attended by the team from the London office. Sales are already brisk for the next talk in March, where Iain Stewart will be talking about the global dependency on hydrocarbon fuels.
10. As part of the ongoing partnership with the Touring Consortium Theatre Company, the latest production, Regeneration, visited Darlington in November coinciding with Armistice Day. A number of special events were organised by the theatre team to coincide. Two book groups were organised by the marketing department and participants received a free copy of the book and a ticket offer, plus the opportunity to attend the group session at the theatre. A number of free poetry workshops were made available by the company, as well as workshops for schools participating in our schools partnership scheme. On the opening night the author of Regeneration, Pat Barker, was present and she attended a special pre-show event for supporters of the theatre, hosted by the Council's Chief Executive, Ada Burns

and Theatre Director, Lynda Winstanley. Durham Miners Brass Band played before the show opened, which continued the relationship with them begun when they appeared in *Brassed Off*. The Veteran's Bakery from Catterick also joined in for the Saturday matinee. Volunteer ambassadors, mainly drawn from Darlington for Culture, helped to promote Regeneration to new audiences through their own networks and also helped throughout the week welcoming people and conducting a questionnaire.

11. The Arts Council England North Region Council asked to hold their board meeting at the Civic Theatre in early December, the meeting was attended by Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of ACE. ACE Council Members also had a tour of the theatre and received an update on plans both for the theatre and for *The Hullaballoon*. Ada Burns was invited to give a short presentation on the innovative approach to arts delivery in Darlington in a time of austerity and this was very warmly received.
12. The Civic Theatre's pantomime, *The Chuckles of Oz* opened on 6 December 2014 with sales being very good, opening on £56,000, more than the same day last year. It has been very well received by audiences and reviewers and the introduction of special 3D sequences seems to have been especially popular.
13. The *What's On* brochure for the new season was launched in early December 2014 and sales have been promising. Highlights include, *Woman in Black*, *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, *Birdsong*, Julian Lloyd Webber and Russell Watson and a visit by the Royal Shakespeare Company with *A Mad World My Masters*.

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

14. The Creative Darlington board meeting of 9 December 2014 endorsed the allocation of £10,000 to support business planning and audience development activity for the Civic Theatre as part of their Heritage Lottery Fund backed programme of development.
15. Creative Darlington has allocated £2,000 to enable children and young people from two schools in Darlington, and those engaged in the ArtSpark programme, to engage with the design of the *Hullaballoon*, a new venue that will be developed next to the Civic Theatre.
16. Darlington for Culture have been offered support from Creative Darlington to develop its membership package and web-provision and anticipate securing services to progress this work early in 2015.

### **Audience Development**

17. The <http://whatsoninthenortheast.co.uk/index.php> , managed by the Northern Echo and developed with the support of Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Partnership, Creative Darlington, Distinct Darlington Ltd and the Northern Echo, offers opportunities for Darlington artists and arts organisations to promote eligible activity free of charge. The Northern Echo has advised monthly hits have more than trebled since the introduction of the new site.

18. Creative Darlington has allocated £1,450 to support the marketing and promotion of Darlington Arts Festival 2015, co-ordinated by Darlington for Culture, which promotes arts activity across Darlington. The programme covers many art-forms and encourages debate around arts engagement. Work is being undertaken to reach new audiences, with a particular focus on children and young people, and the Parkgate area.
19. Creative Darlington has met with Members and Officers, businesses operating in Darlington, Darlington Partnership, Durham Music Service, the Halle Orchestra, Music Live and Arts Council England to explore whether there are opportunities for the Halle Orchestra to work with children and young people and to perform in Darlington in 2016. A further meeting has been held with Durham Music Service to inform their fundraising strategy.

### **Remembrance Parade**

20. On 9 November 2014 a strong public gathering came out in support of Remembrance Sunday, made more poignant with the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. The Events Team planned and delivered the traffic management of road closures and diversions, also offering assistance around the cenotaph during the service.

### **Homecoming – WW1 Event**

21. Hundreds of Darlington residents and officers from the Tees Valley attended a free spectacular outdoor event in Darlington Market Square on 14 November 2014. Homecoming told the stories of local people who took part in the war, both overseas and on the Home Front. The show featured digital projections, pyrotechnics, lighting and specially commissioned music. The event was created by internationally acclaimed theatre company Periplum as part of the Remembering our War - Tees Valley Commemorates project, which commemorates 100 years since the start of World War One. Homecoming has been performed across the Tees Valley and the final performance took place in Hartlepool on 16 December 2014 marking 100 years since the town's bombardment from the sea, the only UK battlefield during the war.

### **Reindeer Parade**

22. The Reindeer Parade drew large crowds on 30 November 2014. The event, funded by the Cornmill Shopping Centre was heralded a huge success. Well over 4,000 people lined the parade route around the town, which started and finished in the Cornmill Shopping Centre. The Events team worked in partnership with the Cornmill, delivering the traffic management aspect of the event.

## **Darlington Christmas Light Switch On**

23. The Christmas Lights Switch On was held on Thursday 27 November 2014 in the Market Square. Several thousand people attended the event with the entertainment programme including local dance groups performing, Redhall School singing Christmas carols (winners of St Cuthbert's Carol 4 Kids competition). A band called North Road, provided by the Council's media partner, TFM Radio, performed their songs and Santa arrived in style, a vintage vehicle along with The Chuckle Brothers to switch the lights on. The evening ended with a fireworks display after the lights were switched on.

## **World War One Commemoration Events**

24. World War One commemoration events held in the Centre for Local Studies included a WW1 drop-in event for those tracing military records. The session was well attended with staff and volunteer researchers and Durham Record Office promoting the 'Durham at War' website. Stephen Nicholson's talk about Darlington men who gave their lives in the war was fully booked and hugely successful. The event gave many people the opportunity to see the Albert Road School Roll of Honour and the St Hilda's War Memorial. Both of these are in the Local Studies collection and will remain on show until 2018.
25. The library hosted two special WW1 evening events organised by the Mayor, Councillor Gerald Lee. The Schools Art and Poetry evening held on 6 November 2014 was a great success with children from a variety of schools reading their poetry aloud and displaying their art in the gallery. The poetry and art work was on display in the library for parents and friends to view following the event. On Friday 7 November 2014, Chris Lloyd gave a talk about Heroes and Villains in Darlington during the WW 1, this proved to be popular event and was well attended.
26. Local Studies has collected almost 1,000 knitted poppies for the Head of Steam. Each poppy is to represent a North East Railway worker who died during WW1.

## **Collections**

27. The Head of Steam has received a £1000 grant from the Arts Council England Museum Development Programme - Small Grants Scheme. The museum is using the grant to scan its collection of locomotive drawings. This will not only protect the artefacts from over handling by researchers but it will also allow the museum staff to answer enquiries more efficiently.
28. The Making a Mark Project - National Portrait Gallery exhibition was held from 8 November to 14 December 2014. The Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Sandy Nairne, visited the museum and other partners on 21 November 2014 and Councillor Long also attended.

## **North East Railways in WW1**

29. The Head of Steam has 15 regular volunteers, and have recruited new ones to replace those who have found full-time employment. The volunteers have created 6900 records and scanned 1730 images. The volunteers have won a regional award for Museum Volunteers on a WW1 project at a ceremony at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle on Saturday 29 November 2014.
30. In its Poppies Project, the Museum has 1263 poppies towards its total of 2236, to represent each North Eastern Railway worker who was killed in WW1, these will be displayed in the museum.

## **Darlington Markets**

31. This year, Darlington Markets ran a full Christmas Programme with a varied selection of entertainment, such as school choirs, Disney 'Frozen' characters, Christmas Crackers, Brass Bands, Dancers, face painters, balloon modellers, clowns and much more. There were four Christingle Markets, which ran from 27 November until 18 December 2014 and the Christmas Market Spectacular four-day events took place at the end of November 2014.
32. 'Countdown to Christmas' in the Market Hall was a three-week campaign on the three last Saturdays before Christmas. This was to encourage more customers into the Market Hall. Santa's Grotto was set up in one of the vacant stalls. Yvonne Preston, an artist from Darlington for Culture, worked on decorating the stall. Santa's Grotto was open each Saturday from 10am until 4pm and each child received a present. Children got a free pass handed out by an entertainments character to see Santa on the Saturday if they were shopping in town. There were Christmas cookery and crafts demonstrations in the Market Hall on each of the Saturdays on the hour from 12noon until 3pm. A variety of demonstrations also took place, such as gingerbread biscuit decorating, wreath making, Caribbean Christmas cooking, Christmas cocktail making and shaking, and tree decorations.
33. Christmas came early for one lucky shopper who won a 50-inch television as part of the festivities taking place at Darlington Markets. Over Christmas, shoppers were able to claim a free ticket every time they bought something from the Covered Market and draws took place every Thursday to win toys, vouchers and pantomime tickets. All tickets were entered into the grand prize draw to win the 50-inch television that was drawn on Saturday 20 December 2014. The draw was conducted by the Mayor, Councillor Gerald Lee and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bill Dixon.
34. There was also an additional market on Christmas Eve due to demand from the market traders.

## Heritage Campus

35. The 'Get on Board' consultation went well with over 400 responses. Council officers are using the feedback from this process to draft a Vision and Action Plan that will set out how the Town plans to make the most of its railway heritage both short and long term leading up to the 2025 celebrations and beyond. These draft documents will be consulted on globally this year before formal adoption in late Summer. 2025 celebration planning is going ahead with representatives from Stockton Borough Council, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council and the Councils hope to secure budgets to appoint a Festival Director to take on responsibility for driving this project forward. Officers continue to work towards consideration of World Heritage Site status through the tentative list.

## Litter and Grounds Maintenance Project Update

36. The Litter and Grounds Maintenance project continues to evolve. The main focus is to encourage more residents and businesses across the Borough to get involved in looking after their neighbourhood; with the aim of people dropping less litter, becoming more involved and operating Zero Tolerance to environmental crime.

37. There are three key areas of work:

- (a) The adoption of the LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE campaign branding which will inform and educate; increase awareness; and enable the use of one off activities to promote the aims;
- (b) Increased community involvement within neighbourhoods and estates with regard to keeping areas clean, tidy and maintained where appropriate; and
- (c) Local businesses will be encouraged in a positive way to clean the front of their shops (Love Where You Trade); rewarding those involved with an award similar to the Food Hygiene Rating approach.

38. This direction of travel will enable us to clearly identify the people we should be working with initially, the needs and aspirations of communities and businesses within the Borough and enable us to build capacity within different areas through facilitation and empowerment.

39. To understand our communities better and how we can facilitate their involvement, work is being undertaken initially in Lascelles Ward and will be extended into Bank Top to find out what the community can do, is prepared to do and the support they need to be able to do it. An audit has been carried out in Lascelles working with Members, local community leaders, residents and local businesses to identify their key issues and concerns. The outcome of the work is to get people to take responsibility for their own neighbourhood, get actively involved and identify what support they need from the Council.

40. This work will result in an Action Plan for the area being developed in partnership with residents and community leaders to facilitate activities in the Ward.

41. The intention once this work is completed in Lascelles and Bank Top is roll out to other areas across the Borough continuing to learn and develop in coming months.
42. Keep Britain Tidy invited local authorities to complete an expression of interest in participating in the experiment and Darlington was chosen as one of the <sup>1</sup>four locations (all in the North of England).
43. The Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance Project (LGM) identified this as an additional opportunity to carry out some research with a nationally recognised partner. The experiment will provide useful insight into how Darlington residents/visitors respond to a 'nudge' towards responsible litter disposal.
44. The experiment ran between August and November last year. The final report will be produced by Keep Britain Tidy for DEFRA in March 2015. It is anticipated that the data gathered during the experiment will be invaluable in understanding ways of changing the behaviour of residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough. The final report will be widely circulated when published.
45. Groundwork North East has been successful in securing £80,000 from the Rethinking Parks programme.
46. The project highlighted three parks in Darlington in which to trial the initiative; these are South Park, the Denes and North Park. These three parks have all received appreciable amounts of expenditure in recent years, funded from a variety of sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund that has helped deliver many improvements to both the fabric of the parks as well as ensuring peoples continued enjoyment of these important green spaces. For this reason the Rethinking Parks initiative has begun to explore new ways of working at these three locations in order to ensure these improvements are maintained and improved upon through these difficult times.
47. The key component of the initiative is to work with Darlington Cares, the organisation set up to help coordinate the way the business community works with the voluntary sector. By working though Darlington Cares, the business community will be able to work with the Friends groups on a variety of initiatives. The kind of support they may be able to bring to the Friends groups are identified below:
  - (a) Help for Friends groups in finding further funds to improve the parks.
  - (b) Help with putting on an exciting and invigorating events programme at the parks.
  - (c) Help with improving footpaths and access to the parks.
  - (d) Help with putting together a business plan towards running improved facilities in the parks, (e.g. help for South Park in bringing more custom to the café).

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<sup>1</sup> The Councils selected are Cheshire CC, Darlington BC, Hull City Council and Northumberland CC



(e) Help with the promotional side of the parks, bringing more people to them and encouraging their use.

(f) Help with promoting the Friends groups and attracting more volunteers.

48. The project initially identified savings of £600,000 to be achieved from Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance services. The first two years' savings, 2014/15 and 2015/16, of £250,000 can be delivered through some of the recent service changes and reduction in some budget areas. However, the savings for 2016/17 will still be extremely challenging and the aim of the project over the next 12 months will be to identify how they can be delivered.

### **Revised Weekly Collections**

49. Members will be aware that week commencing 6 October 2014, the new Revised Weekly Collection (RWC) service was implemented across the Borough. In this regard, refuse collection is undertaken one week whilst recycling collection the following. Implementation of the scheme saves the Council £400,000 per year and early indications are that this target will be achieved. Despite a large amount of promotion both prior to the scheme and during the early stages; confusion around recycling in particular was experienced in the first few weeks. This resulted in a large amount of communications being forwarded to the Council from members of the public enquiring as to various aspects of the scheme. However, the number of enquiries received has now dropped significantly and the service is settling in as expected. There are still anomalies occurring and management are working through these to ensure residents receive the highest possible standard of service.

### **Grounds Maintenance**

50. Following the transfer to the new Street Scene Services team, staff allocated to grounds maintenance have commenced in the annual winter pruning of all shrubs, hedges and bushes across the Borough. This is progressing very well and it is anticipated that all areas will be completed in accordance with the annual programme.

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