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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**

2. The Healthy Darlington Team engaged 5,008 participants from September to December 2014. This was through various projects including the School Games competitions, Healthy Darlington Hub consultations, after school clubs and community outreach sport and physical activity provision.
3. The Healthy Darlington School Sport Partnership has been ranked in the top 10 per cent of partnerships in the country (more than 400 nationwide) for engaging young people and providing high quality school sport competition.
4. The Team has helped secure £8,000 of Sportivate funding from Sport England to deliver sport and physical activity sessions for 14 to 25 year olds across a number of school and community based settings in Darlington.
5. Building upon its strong record of supporting community groups and sports clubs to access external funding, the Team has supported Darlington Rugby Club with pending funding applications to the inspired facilities fund for £210,000 to support the redevelopment of the changing facilities and car park. If successful this funding will support the development of one of the main sporting community hub sites in the town and help increase sporting participation at the club.

**Darlington Civic Theatre**

6. This year's pantomime The Chuckles of Oz was one of the theatre's most successful ever pantomimes. It was seen by over 42,000 people and generated £60,000 more in ticket sales than the previous year. It was the second year in Darlington for the very popular Chuckle Brothers. They are moving on to Wolverhampton Grand next year so the Theatre Director is working closely with QDOS Pantomimes, the producers, to cast next year's show Cinderella and maintain audience growth.
7. Almost £9,000 was raised during the pantomime run by bucket collections for St Teresa's Hospice and £3,600 was also raised for Great Ormond Street Hospital. The pantomime company made a number of public appearances including visits to Darlington Memorial Hospital and St Teresa's Hospice.

8. The New Year got off to a good start with full houses for The Viennese Spectacular, Grimethorpe Colliery Band and That'll Be the Day. Woman in Black also proved popular and there was a very well received post show Ghost Tour, which was also attended by the cast of the show. The Russian State Ballet and Orchestra of Siberia was seen by almost 3,000 people during its four day run and also exceeded last year's box office income.
9. The new term began for the ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance groups with them working towards performances at the Family Open Weekend at the theatre at the end of February and also towards presenting the Regional Youth theatre Festival in July. Young people from the groups attended a performance of Peter Pan Goes Wrong and were able to meet the cast and view the set and props for the show.
10. Theatre staff are working closely with Darlington for Culture and other local partners to develop a programme of work for the Arts Showcase planned for May in Borough Road. It will be an excellent opportunity to showcase all that is on offer in this area and to open our doors to local residents as well as to people from further afield.

### **Developing Finance for the Arts**

11. Since the scheme was launched in Autumn 2013, to date 21 awards have been offered to artists/arts organisations to develop activity in Darlington. Five of these projects secured additional finance through Grants for the Arts and Arts Council England's Lottery programme. As a result of this programme, various new projects will be staged, including TIN Arts' IncludeFEST, a family arts day with activity for families, including disabled and non-disabled children, in South Park on 18 July 2015. TIN Arts have secured match finance through the County Durham Community Foundation and anticipate securing additional sponsorship. Joelene English Dance Theatre have secured support to bring its new production 'February 16<sup>th</sup> 1963' informed by the life of Sylvia Plath to Darlington and to lead dance workshops with young people in Autumn 2015 and Darlington based Victoria Armstrong Physical Theatre to develop a new piece 'Bathers'. The Creative Darlington Board meeting in March 2015 will decide whether to repeat the scheme in 2015/16. Individual artists and arts organisations have been offered conditional support and some commitments will carry forward into 2015/16 should the scheme not be promoted to new applicants.

### **Audience Development**

12. Creative Darlington and Durham Music Service met with representatives of Darlington secondary schools and Darlington businesses on 28 January 2015 to develop an action plan to explore whether we can confirm interest in bringing the full Halle Orchestra to perform in Darlington and work with Darlington schools and choral groups in July 2016, by July 2015. A fundraising plan is being developed, which Creative Darlington will assist, and various organisations (Orchestras Live, Durham Music Service, Darlington schools, Creative Darlington) have indicated their willingness to provide financial support or sponsorship.

## **Crown Street Art Gallery**

13. There have been 51,592 visitors to the gallery from opening in May 2012 to 19 January 2015. An evaluation mechanism has been introduced where visitors are asked to make comments with 76 per cent agreeing the gallery champions' innovative and exciting new artwork by local and regional artists. Darlington resident, Norma Kyle has curated the River Tees and Daphne Stitt exhibitions, with support through the MIMA led Visual Arts Network and Creative Darlington is keen to explore whether this support can be further developed.

## **Organisational Development**

14. The Creative Darlington Board received a draft report from Bonnar Keenleyside containing recommendations for its organisational development, which was considered at the Board meeting on 9 December 2014. A working group of the Creative Darlington Board met on 17 February 2015 to take recommendations forward, including focusing the strategic arts budget on fewer strategic objectives.

## **Dry Hatters Tea Party**

15. The Events team and Healthy Darlington worked in partnership with Public Health and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) in organising a Dry January event. The event on 22 January 2015, which was held at Darlington College, was well attended, proving a huge success and will be repeated next year to support the Dry January Initiative.
16. The event included information and advice stalls from the Recovery Centre, Family Help, Healthy Darlington Hub, DAAT, Age UK, First Stop , SWITCH, Community engagement and Neighbourhood Police . The Mad Hatter Tea Company supported the theme. Darlington College students provided cream teas and cupcakes to raise funds for the recovery centre which helps and supports people recovering from addictions.

## **Healthy Darlington Taster Sessions**

17. On 7 February 2015 the Healthy Darlington team took over the Market Square providing drop-in taster sessions for Basket Ball, Table Tennis, Tri Golf and Athletics. It proved very popular with young people with some signing up to local sports clubs.

## **Chinese New Year**

18. Celebrating the year of the Sheep on 19 February 2015, the Moi Fa Lion Dance team made an appearance in Crown Street Library from 12 noon following a Chinese craft session and then headed to Joseph Pease Place.

## Library

19. Centre for Local Studies began the year with a 'Kick start your family history day' event. Staff from the Durham Records Office were on hand to talk about the 'Darlington at War' project which started in late February.
20. Remembering our War – Tees Valley WW1 exhibition has been on display throughout January and February. Other displays include Darlington Munitions Workers during WW1 and Darlington VAD - Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospital during WW1.
21. The Bookstart Co-ordinator is visiting all school reception classes to deliver free packs from The Book Trust. Each pack contains two story books and information for parents about reading with young children.
22. A new on-line resource is now available in the E-Library, 'Universal Skills', this will help customers with basic IT skills, CVs, job searches and applying for Government benefits. The service can also be accessed remotely from a home computer.
23. National Storytelling Week, 31 January to 7 February 2015 was celebrated at Cockerton Library with a special midweek stories and crafts event. Peter Barron, Editor of The Northern Echo, visited Crown Street Library on 31 January 2015 along with his illustrator to read his book 'Black Toothed, Ruth Black' to members of the junior story club and draw characters for his new book to be released in May.
24. National Libraries Day on 7 February 2015 witnessed the hard work of the Darlington Secret Stitch Bombers whom decorated and festooned the library with knitting and textiles in a wonderful celebration of books and reading on Friday evening. Additional items and displays will be added throughout the year to celebrate Valentine's Day, Easter, Chinese New Year and Mother's Day.
25. World Book Day on 5 March 2015 saw the mobile library parked in Joseph Pease Place with storytelling and face painting on board as well as attracting new members to the library and promoting the mobile service. Story telling also took place in the Dolphin Centre Under the Sea and Crown Street Library.
26. There will be a display of 'Treasures from the Basement' in local studies of items not normally on open access to the public. Draw your favourite book character competition which was launched on National Story Telling Day continued until 7 March 2015 when winners and runners up received prizes from the Art Shop Darlington or a set of Monstrous Morals Books by Peter Barron.

## Collections

27. Mr Hyoto, Director of the Modern Transport Museum in Osaka Japan, visited the museum with two curators in January. Mr Hyoto was visiting the UK to look at our railway museums as he is opening a new museum in 2016. He commented that although our museum was smaller than York and Shildon, he was very impressed with the amount of information and the easy to understand railway history.

## **North East Railways in WW1**

28. The learning resource was edited and trialled before the this March. The Poppies project has been completed and on display from mid-February.

## **Revised Weekly Collection Service**

29. Members will be aware that the revised weekly collection service was introduced in October 2014. Following on from the initial stages, the service has settled down and residents are now in the habit of recycling in the correct manner. The service is on target to achieve the £400,000 saving identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

## **Grounds Maintenance**

30. The winter programme has progressed on schedule and all shrubs, bushes etc., have been serviced by the end of the winter period in readiness for grass cutting operations that are commencing dependent upon weather this month.

## **Street Cleansing**

31. Street Cleansing standards continue to be high, despite reductions in services. At present it is anticipated that the local environmental quality performance is expected to be approximately 6 per cent at the end of the year. This is an excellent return and a result of changes to cleansing frequencies and the introduction of barrowmen at various litter locations across the Borough.

## **Winter Maintenance**

32. The winter maintenance season continues unhindered with no significant disruption experienced to date.

## **Fitting Shop**

33. Members will be aware that MOTs for private vehicles and taxi testing/MOTs for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles commenced in October 2014. I am pleased to say that this service is going well and proving very popular with members of the public. Further, the service is looking to undertake maintenance of vehicles for external agencies with a view to increasing income on behalf of the Authority.

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