

CABINET – 6 DECEMBER 2016

EXPERIENCE DARLINGTON – A VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

CULTURE STRATEGY

This Strategy aims to contribute to the goals and ambitions of the borough's Community Strategy – One Darlington Perfectly Placed. The Darlington Partnership, which brings together a wide coalition of public, private and community sector representatives and interests, agreed two overarching priorities for Darlington.

One Darlington outlines our goal to build a strong and an inclusive community, where inequalities are narrowed, and where everyone has opportunities regardless of where they live, their income, disability or any other factor that can limit potential.

Perfectly Placed outlines our intention to maximise the natural advantages Darlington has to build a strong economy within a thriving town and sustainable environment.

'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed', Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy from 2008 to 2021' recognises the importance of economic development in making Darlington perfectly placed and of working towards one Darlington by developing opportunities for all. It contains a number of themes, shown below, where culture is making and will make a positive contribution.

- More people healthy and independent
- Children with the best start in life
- A safe and caring community
- More people active and involved
- More businesses and more jobs
- More people caring for our environment
- Enough support for people when needed
- A place designed to thrive

Culture plays an important part in contributing to both these goals – evidence tells us that cultural activity can be a very powerful way to engage communities, to build self esteem and skills, while we know that a thriving cultural offer is a powerful asset for inward investment.

Creative Darlington is a partnership of organisations and stakeholders who share a passion to strengthen and sustain a vibrant offer for Darlington. This Strategy will be overseen by Creative Darlington on behalf of the Darlington Partnership.

The scope of this strategy

This strategy focuses on arts and heritage and is informed by our vision, that looking forward to 2020 and beyond:

Darlington will be a place where the arts, culture and heritage are central to Darlington's future identity and economic success.

The strategy is informed by the principles that the culture should be available to everyone, bring people together and champion inclusion and social cohesion. It values excellence, by which we mean striving to be the best of which we are capable and finding ingenious ways to progress our vision.

This paper focuses on the desired outcomes in three priority areas and as a basis for further engagement to work through how these can be achieved, who can contribute and when might actions be implemented.

Arts:

Darlington's broad based arts offer includes:

- combined arts - artists and organisations working across different media
- comedy
- creative writing (prose and poetry)
- digital art and non-documentary film
- festivals and events
- performing arts (dance, theatre, music)
- visual arts and crafts

Darlington has established strengths in the arts. We have a great theatre offer and nationally recognised organisations like pioneering Theatre Hullabaloo based here. Resources are being developed, key assets are being restored, and new organisations and programmes are developing here. Darlington's arts scene includes individual artists, producers and organisers, professional and voluntary organisations, arts facilities and venues, performances, events and opportunities to develop skills, enjoy yourself and get involved.

Heritage:

Darlington's heritage includes agriculture, industry, commerce and social, economic and political engagement. Our heritage is growing and developing, with many individuals and organisations involved in research, documentation, restoration, promotion and preservation.

The borough has a long established tradition of ingenuity and developing new practice, products, solutions and services, and particular strengths in industry, commerce and transport.

Darlington played a particularly significant part in the development of the railways and 2025 will see the bi-centenary of the world's first railway passenger journey on the Stockton & Darlington railway on George Stephenson's Locomotion No1.

Darlington also has a distinctive and diverse culture including important contributions from the Friends (Quakers).

The borough contains distinctive heritage sites, buildings and spaces, including Grade 1 Listed St Cuthbert's Church and South Park.

Particular areas of Darlington's culture and heritage attract significant voluntary support, particularly the arts, parks and railways.

The Strategy is for:

- Darlington – those who live, work, visit or invest in activity or business here, have an interest in Darlington as a great place for culture or business.

- Darlington Borough Council – to inform its own investment decisions and its work with local, North East, national and international organisations and partners.
- Individuals and organisations that contribute to or care about the cultural offer in Darlington.

Aims

We aim to:

- promote Darlington's distinct heritage and develop cultures contribution to the visitor economy
- create the conditions in which an excellent, broad based and relevant cultural offer in Darlington is sustainable
- build on and sustain our excellent cultural offer for Children and Young People
- promote Darlington as a place where people and organisations can develop their creative practice, business or social enterprise

The Evidence base

This strategy is informed by –

- The Creative Darlington report, July 2011 and the Darlington Arts Enquiry, which involved nearly 1,500 people
- Research for the emerging Experience Darlington strategy including the heritage economy strand
- Tees Valley Culture Task and Finish Group report, June 2015
- The North East Cultural Partnership Case for Culture 2030 report, July 2015

Building on our strengths

- Ingenious Darlington, Darlington has a longstanding track record of innovation, discovery and making things happen, from the development of passenger railways and one of the world's first daily newspapers through to the recent opening of the CPI, Darlington National Biologics Manufacturing Centre

- Darlington has a world famous railway heritage with the world's first railway passenger journey on Locomotion No. 1 and the Stockton and Darlington railway opening in 1825
- A theatre town, Darlington has a rich theatre heritage, and excellent venues and programmes (Civic/Hippodrome, The Hullaballoon, The Jabberwocky Market)
- Darlington is a beacon for specialist practice in children and young people's arts, with emphasis on the performing arts
- Pioneering Theatre Hullabaloo, who make, tour and promote theatre for young audiences, and put the young person at the heart of the creative process are based here with The Hullaballoon due to open in 2017 as a national centre of excellence for theatre for children and young people

Darlington is a place where artists, heritage professionals, producers, creative business and social enterprise can flourish, it's rich in talent and social capital with excellent schools and lots happening

- Darlington is outward looking and contributes productively to local, regional, national and international partnerships
- Darlington is a place which believes culture should champion inclusion and where distinct and diverse people, activity and heritage are valued.
- Darlington values excellence, by which we mean striving to be the best of which we are collectively capable
- Darlington is a place where different sectors work together to make things happen, including businesses, enterprises, organisations and co-operatives

AMBITIONS

We aim to –

1. To build awareness of Darlington as a fantastic theatre town with a nationally recognised offer.
2. To celebrate and promote Darlington’s contribution to railway heritage and rail travel worldwide, particularly the bi-centenary of the first railway passenger journey on Locomotion No. 1 in 1825 and leave a significant legacy for people, place and heritage here.
3. To work alongside partners to develop a strong and successful proposal for Tees Valley as UK City of Culture in 2025 and to actively contribute to the aims of the Case for Culture for the North East.
4. For Darlington to support and champion cultural inclusion and engagement and to offer great festivals and events

Outcomes for each ambition

To build awareness of Darlington as a fantastic theatre town with a nationally recognised offer		
Outcome	By 2020	By 2026
	People in the area have increased access and opportunity to experience and participate in arts and cultural activities.	Theatre and performing arts becomes a significant attractor for visitors as part of the Borough wide offer.
	Successful theatre transition programme gathers audience intelligence, informs future operation of organisations during the restoration of the Civic/Hippodrome, construction of The Hullaballoon, and once these venues are open	The Hippodrome, Theatre Hullabaloo, other theatre programmes, practitioners, organisations and enterprises co-operate where appropriate to develop intelligence around audiences for theatre and have developed their practice from a Darlington base
	Civic Theatre/Hippodrome restored and operating sustainably, positive contribution to place	Darlington has a national reputation for great theatre which attracts audiences and practitioners, delivering associated economic and place

	promotion for Darlington	promotion benefits
	Heritage of theatre and impact of theatre in Darlington better understood and engaging public	The heritage of theatre in Darlington is researched, widely known and contributes to the visitor economy and sustainable operation of current theatre assets
	The Hullaballoon is open and operating sustainably, benefiting Theatre Hullabaloo's vision and Darlington's cultural profile and partnerships	The Hullaballoon is recognised as a national centre of excellence for theatre for youth audiences
	Excellent and diverse theatre performances and development opportunities are accessible in Darlington, including work of different scale, strategic and commercial activity	Darlington has a broad and sustainable theatre offer which exemplifies the creative case for diversity through theatre and attracts diverse audiences and practitioners
	Opportunities to develop professional practice and organisational capacity supported in Darlington	Creative individuals, enterprises and organisations have developed their practice and sustainable operation from a Darlington base. Darlington offers progression routes for those working in theatre.
	Accessible opportunities for children and young people to engage with theatre and develop their skills and potential – (Artsmark, ArtSpark, Blue Cabin, Jabberwocky, IncludFEST, Theatre Hullabaloo)	Children and young people have opportunities to actively engage with and become involved in theatre in Darlington, and the contribution of theatre to the development of children and young people is better understood

To celebrate and promote Darlington’s distinct heritage, particularly the contribution to rail travel worldwide and the bi-centenary of the first railway passenger journey on Locomotion No. 1 in 1825 and leave a significant legacy for people, place and heritage here

Outcome	By 2020	By 2025
	Railway heritage of Darlington promoted across various strategic sites, including Town Centre and Head of Steam	Railway heritage offer developed to facilitate and support 200 year anniversary of the passenger railway.
	Track bed audit of Stockton and Darlington railway undertaken and plans to sustain key heritage (including £5 Note Bridge) developed and to preserve any features deemed at risk	Significant railway heritage assets saved restored promoted and valued.
	The Development of the Stockton & Darlington railway track bed as a leisure route underway	Track bed route is promoted as a local and regional asset.
	More capacity to manage the development of the 2025 bi-centenary programme secured (festival director in place), programme plan in development	Successful 2025 event with ongoing railway heritage legacy.
	Events shared, supported or led in Darlington which raise awareness of the countdown to 2025, and Darlington to contribute to joint promotion of countdown working with other authorities and organisations	Significant contribution of Darlington’s Industrial heritage to the 2025 City of Culture bid.
	A track management framework to be in place for Stockton & Darlington railway heritage, e.g. heritage action zone conservation area or	Track bed is widely recognised for its historic, social and economic importance.

	world heritage site	
	Map Darlington's Quaker railway and industrial assets and undertake a Statements of Significance for key assets	Higher profile for the contribution of Friends/Quakers to Darlington, celebration of heritage. The Quaker stories become a rich backcloth to the visitor offer and their stories are promoted and told through a variety of medium.
	Darlington engaged in regional and Tees Valley programmes to build museums resilience	The rail heritage offer is promoted and seen as a wider regional offer linking Locomotion and National Railway Museum.

To work alongside partners to develop a strong and successful proposal for Tees Valley as UK City of Culture in 2025 and to actively contribute to the aims of the Case for Culture for the North East

Outcome	By 2020	By 2026
	Darlington's cultural offer clearly and persuasively promoted, reinforcing the overarching ingenious Darlington message, contributing to visitor's experience of Darlington	The visitor economy of Darlington has grown, alongside national and international awareness of ingenious Darlington following the railway bi-centenary and Tees Valley's UK City of Culture programme in 2025
	Darlington benefits from the promotion of various aspects of its heritage and cohesive railway town and theatre town campaigns	Rail and theatre campaigns encourage more people to experience Darlington and inform Tees Valley's destination marketing campaign, with economic benefits for Darlington and the Tees Valley
	Culture programmes including Darlington, to be supported through the devolution deal agreed by the combined	The combined authority and Tees Valley Unlimited back culture's contribution to place promotion, social inclusion and

	authority for Tees Valley and by Tees Valley Unlimited	sector development in Darlington and the Tees Valley
	Darlington to influence working of the Tees Valley Culture Group board and the cultural agenda of the Tees Valley combined authority and to secure appropriate resources	Growth in the arts, culture and heritage sectors in Darlington and efficient allocation of resources to enhance the sustainable operation of key and distinct assets within Tees Valley
	Darlington has made a positive contribution to realising recommendations within the Tees Valley Culture task and finish group report and the delivery of a successful Tees Valley Great Place programme	Place promotion benefits, greater social inclusion and arts, culture and heritage sector growth in Darlington and the Tees Valley
	Darlington to contribute to the development of a winning proposal for Tees Valley to be UK City of Culture in 2025	The successful UK City of 2025 programme in Tees Valley, including the bi-centenary of the first railway passenger journey on Locomotion No. 1 delivers a significant positive legacy for Darlington, including enhancing the sustainability of key heritage assets, growth in the visitor economy, audience development and , new and stronger partnerships
	Darlington engages with the North East Cultural Partnership's Case for Culture 2030 priorities, including progressing the 100 x 100 objective (artist residencies in business settings)	Darlington has benefited from the implementation of the Case for Culture

For Darlington to support and champion cultural inclusion and engagement and to offer great festivals and events

Outcome	By 2020	By 2026
	Darlington is culturally inclusive, with residents, visitors, organisations and business involved	Darlington is recognised and promoted as a place where different people and interests work together to provide a distinct, ambitious and inclusive cultural offer
	Darlington has an excellent range of public events and festivals, like Darlington Arts Festival and the Festival of Ingenuity, which enhance place promotion and contribute to the sustainable community strategy	Events and festivals benefit the town centre economy and enhance the town centre experience
	Darlington’s cultural offer demonstrates the creative case for diversity	Darlington is recognised for championing specific initiatives which promote cultural inclusion, like IncludFEST and Head, Heart, Hands programme

Implementation – how we will deliver the strategy

We will work with the Creative Darlington board to deliver our ambitions and goals. The strategy will be reviewed and updated regularly and utilise appropriate websites and social media as appropriate.

As of September 2016 the Creative Darlington board includes representation from Arts Council England, Culture Bridge North East, Darlington Borough Council, The Civic Theatre/Hippodrome, Darlington Building Society, Darlington for Culture, Durham Music Service, Heritage Lottery Fund, Newsquest North East, One Darlington, Teesside University, Theatre Hullabaloo, What Next in and around Darlington. Creative Darlington works to create the conditions in which arts and heritage thrive and prosper and contribute to Darlington, and is primarily focused on working with individuals or organisations.

Darlington Borough Council supports co-ordination of Creative Darlington board and allocates budget to heritage and culture.

The strategy will be subject to wider engagement with a view to partner organisations, businesses and the community formulating action plans for delivery within the wider visitor strategy.