

## CREATIVE DARLINGTON BOARD

Monday 12 December 2016 at 3.00pm  
Town Hall, Darlington

### MINUTES

**Present:**

Ada Burns	Miranda Thain
Laura Case	Bill Vince
Caroline Darnbrook	Councillor Nick Wallis
John Dean	Lynda Winstanley
Chris Lloyd	Stephen Wiper
Sharon Paterson (chaired meeting)	Jenny Young – presentation
Seth Pearson	Scott Young - presentation

**Apologies:**

Eileen Atkins  
Councillor Carson - observer  
Ivor Crowther

**1. Minutes of last meeting**

1.1 Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

**2. Experience Darlington, Culture Strategy and arts transition**

2.1 Further to the last Creative Darlington board meeting the Experience Darlington and the Culture Strategy have taken to Cabinet and both have been presented in outline to the One Darlington board meeting in November 2016 with a presentation to the Darlington branch of the North East England Chamber of Commerce on 13 December 2016. A consultation plan around both is in development, expected to include meetings with stakeholders and online consultation.

2.2 **Action 1:** Creative Darlington Manager to contact Darlington for Culture re consultation strategy and questions for surveys for spring 2017.

2.3 A report will be considered by Darlington Borough Council around future options for the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in January 2017.

**3 Head, Heart, Hands**

3.1 Blue Cabin Director Jenny Young is being supported by a Grants for the arts award of £30,000 to deliver the Head, Heart, Hands Darlington project in Darlington and provided an update on activity to date. With support of Darlington Borough Council, Creative Darlington and the arts and cultural organisations and venues across Darlington, this project is working to create

an arts and cultural strategy for looked after children and the adults in their lives. A commitment of £1,500 from the Council strategic arts budget and service support has supported development of the project to date, which has involved around 50 children and young people in Darlington and 40 adults to date in activity including hard hat tours of Theatre Hullaballoon, an activity day at the Forum Music Centre and the Arts Award training scheme, with 8 adults involved in foster care now trained as Arts Award Advisors. Jenny is working with cultural organisations, enterprises, programmes and services, including Theatre Hullabaloo, OddManOut, Humantics CIC, Luxi Ltd/the Jabberwocky Market, Darlo Care Crew and the Civic/Hippodrome. Jenny expects to produce a final report on the project for Arts Council England around April 2017 and independent evaluation has been commissioned. Jenny is developing links with national best practice, including the Creative Virtual School in Derbyshire, and has met with Culture Bridge North East and Arts Council England to look at next steps re project development. The board welcomed Head, Heart, Hands work to date and invited Jenny to provide an update on how the programme may develop further in Darlington.

- 3.2 **Action 2:** Creative Darlington Manager to agenda Head, Heart, Hands update for future board meeting and liaise with Jenny re development of further proposals.

#### 4 'Evolve' Theatre Transition programme

- 4.1 The emerging culture strategy identifies development of Darlington as a theatre town as a priority. The strategic arts budget has supported the development of successful applications for capital funding by Theatre Hullabaloo (to Arts Council England) to build Theatre Hullaballoon and by Darlington Borough Council (to Heritage Lottery Fund) to restore the Civic/Hippodrome, with both scheduled to open in 2017 and subsequent work around involving children and young people in the design process for Theatre Hullaballoon.
- 4.2 With both construction of the Hullaballoon and restoration of the Civic/Hippodrome beginning in 2016 the Council strategic arts budget supported services from Laura Case and Audience Agency to inform the development of a strong proposal for Grants for the arts to support a theatre transition programme, to ensure we hit the ground running when the theatres open/re-open, and continue to build momentum around theatre in Darlington while the construction process is ongoing. Key partners in developing the proposal, who will be invited to form the project steering group, include Theatre Hullabaloo, OddManOut, Luxi Ltd/the Jabberwocky Market, the Civic/Hippodrome and Creative Darlington. Darlington Borough Council submitted the application and will manage the programme following the offer of £65,000 grant support from Arts Council England, and opportunities to build on the developing work between Darlington for Culture and the Civic/Hippodrome, during the transition programme, were noted. The Council

strategic arts budget and events budget, arts organisations and council services will support the transition programme, and a project steering group meeting will be co-ordinated in January 2017. The presentation noted the importance of building on existing audiences, with some free public town centre based programme included in the transition proposal to be supported by capacity to reach new contacts. People's willingness to commit to 30 to 60 minute drive time for distinct and high quality cultural activity was noted. The breadth of Darlington's theatre offer, including commercial venues, including the Majestic.

- 4.3 **Action 3:** Caroline Darnbrook to share reflections on how the Darlington theatre town offer and cultural place promotion may be progressed with Laura Case and Creative Darlington Manager.

## 5. Creative workspace and OddManOut presentation

- 5.1 The Creative Darlington report included the aspiration to develop Darlington as a creative place in which artists, arts producers and creative businesses can flourish. The Arts Enquiry process which informed the report recognised unsatisfied demand for accessible creative workspace and studio space within the town. The strategic arts budget supported a meeting in autumn 2016 around the workspace issue, exploring what form of creative workspace might best suit demand, the challenges to addressing demand when the council is not in a position or best placed to lead, and willingness to develop a proposal. While Navigator North, working with Hammond Associates, are currently developing a pop up programme of activity in temporary workspace in the Cornmill Centre, Darlington town centre shops have a high occupancy rate and there is limited access to temporary workspace. Notes of the meeting were circulated to board members.
- 5.2 **Action 4:** Creative Darlington Manager to schedule a follow up meeting in spring 2017 with those who volunteered to see if there is sufficient appetite in the sector to develop a valid proposal with support from the Council, but without the Council leading.
- 5.3 Scott Young from OddManOut, a new writing company with Katy Weir and Scott Young lead artists, gave a presentation to the board. This covered company development and achievements in recent years (supported by a Maximising Arts Assets award from Creative Darlington OddManOut have developed their company vision and brand, become established as a company and developed their website). Creative Darlington support had provided some capacity for OddManOut to consider how best they may develop their practice and operation beyond a project by project cycle. The presentation noted the achievements of established organisations and services and recognised a significant growth in new organisations, artists and producers, like Dave Metcalfe, commitment to making things happen across the town. Scott explored what may be required to better enable Darlington to

capitalise on this cultural momentum (Civic/Hippodrome restoration, Hullabaloo construction, Luxi Ltd /Jabberwocky Market, The Forum, Big Little Gigs, Tracks etc). A willingness to take more risks and support the development of local talent and organisations, the council and Creative Darlington role in creating the conditions in which culture thrives, willingness explore alternatives to direct service delivery, and effective marketing were discussed. The board noted the achievements of OddManOut, including securing British Council support for project activity, and building working relationships with national and international partners.

## **6 Accessible arts, culture and heritage presentation**

- 6.1 Following discussion at the last Creative Darlington board meeting and a subsequent meeting of Council officers (Healthy Darlington, events team, Civic Hippodrome, strategic arts) Darlington's culture strategy will focus on Darlington as a theatre town, 2025 as the bi-centenary of the railways and the importance of rail heritage, 2025 and the Tees Valley UK City of Culture programme and on providing a distinct, accessible and excellent cultural offer. Darlington's commitment to supporting and encouraging this offer will include instigating or backing distinct public events and festivals (working with partners including Distinct Darlington where appropriate) and committing to bespoke programmes and initiatives designed to address particular challenges to cultural engagement. Looking forward to 2017 resource will be allocated to the Festival of Ingenuity, IncludFEST Tees Valley and exploring the further development of programmes like Head, Heart, Hands.

## **7 Any other business**

- 7.1 Miranda Thain advised the board on the emerging strategy for children and young people which is being developed through the North East Cultural Partnership. Cultural funding in the region on children and young people is not proportionate to their representation within the overall north east population, with adults securing more cultural funding. Miranda noted there are opportunities for the North East to address this imbalance.
- 7.2 **Action 5:** The North East Cultural Partnership strategy for children and young people will be circulated shortly, board members invited to comment.
- 7.3 **Action 6:** Update on work of Theatre Hullabaloo and Creativitiworks to be added to agenda of February 2017 Creative Darlington board meeting.
- 7.4 Papers for information on Creative Darlington activity and risk management were accepted without query.

## **DCMS Tailored review of Arts Council**

### **8.**

- 8.1 The board agreed to submit a dedicated response to the DCMS tailored review of Arts Council England which recognised the contribution and expertise which Arts Council England have applied to the progression of the Creative Darlington vision.
- 8.2 **Action 4:** Creative Darlington Manager to submit response in advance of closure of tailored review.

### **9. Any other business**

- 9.1 The board noted papers for information and no concerns were raised.
- 9.2 **Action 5:** Darlington Borough Council to co-ordinate schedule of future board meetings.