
OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

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

Grant Funding

2. A total of £145,000 has been secured through grant funding applications to Sport England's Inspired Facilities programme towards the development of the Blackwell Meadows ground share for Darlington Rugby Club and Darlington 1883 Football Club. The Sports Development Manager developed and wrote two separate successful bids to support further development of the car parking and changing facilities at this site, which brings the relocation of DFC 1883 to the town a step closer.
3. The team have been working very closely with the Football Foundation on a bid to secure between £400-500K worth of investment into the Artificial Grass Pitch at Eastbourne Sports Complex. This work has two local key partner clubs involved (Middleton Rangers JFC and Darlington Youth JFC) and would also enable future investment specifically in Girls and Disability Football.

Darlington Playing Pitch and Sports Facility Strategy

4. Work has been ongoing during late 2014 and the first half of 2015 to set out the strategic direction and site specific priorities for the future delivery of sports facilities across the Borough through to 2020. This piece of work has been completed in line with Sport England guidance and in partnership with the Football Association, Rugby Football Union, England Hockey, England Cricket Board, Sport England, Schools and a whole range of other community partners, with the final draft strategy and action plan sent out for consultation with stakeholders in late June.

Disability Sport

5. The Healthy Darlington Team was successful in securing investment from Tees Valley Sport to deliver sport and activity sessions to people with Disability in Darlington. The premise of the project was to remove barriers for disabled people in Darlington and take Sport and Activity opportunities their doorstep.
6. There are currently seven weekly regular Disability Sport sessions taking place. Since the Project started 35 participants have taken part with 100 hours of sessions taking place in 2015.

7. Six of the sessions take place within three Adult Disability Day Centres in the town including The Links, Lakeside Lodge and Foundations. The seventh session is Disability Trampolining, which takes place in the Dolphin Centre each Wednesday afternoon. The project has established strong partnerships between the HD Team and each of the day centres. The Day Centre management team (Alyson Hill – The Links, Mandy Waterson – Lakeside Lodge, Marie Hincks – Foundations) along with their staff have taken to the programme with full support and enthusiasm, which has forged an extremely valuable relationship, placing the participant at the centre of delivery. Sport and activities which have been delivered include; Boccia, New Age Kurling, Dance/Aerobics, Table Tennis, Table Cricket, Walking, Orienteering, Trampolining and Multi Skills. Participants have accessed these sessions at a subsidised rate giving them the opportunity to manage their personalised budgets and change/start their sport habit for the future and make informed choice in engaging in sport and activity.

Healthy Darlington School Sport Partnership

8. From January to March 2015 the HD team engaged 2390 participants through school games events and festivals, including engaging 2151 young leaders who supported the events. The number of young disabled people involved in events and competitions was 26 and the number of visits to local authority venues including Dolphin Centre, Civic Theatre and Eastbourne Sports Complex was 3,312. In School PE and Sport Support 1141 children from 14 schools, Foundation to Year 6 have been engaged in a number of after school and curriculum sport coaching sessions.

Darlington Civic Theatre

9. The Theatre team has given its support to local community arts organisations in presenting a number of high quality, well attended events at the Civic Theatre. These events have included the Schools Dance Festival, the Vibe Awards and Tiffany School of Dance. Darlington Operatic Society also enjoyed great success with their production of Hairspray including raising money for its chosen charity St Teresa's Hospice with the help of theatre staff by bucket collections following performances.
10. There have been a number of shows at the Theatre with very high attendances over this period including, Rumours of Fleetwood Mac, The Elvis Years, the Easter Panto Beauty and the Beast, Tim Vine, Grumpy Old Women, The Hollies, Stars of Strictly and a wonderful show by Russell Watson, who spoke very warmly about the theatre and the Darlington audience. The production of Calamity Jane in May was one of the best-selling musicals at the Theatre for some time; taking over £167,000 in ticket sales and generating excellent secondary spend. A bucket collection following the Friday evening performance raised over £800 for the Nepal appeal.
11. A number of young people took part in a workshop to create an act which was included in the show Good Old Days of Variety, which took place at the Theatre in April.

12. The Civic Theatre worked in partnership with Darlington for Culture in the planning, promotion and delivery of the Arts Showcase, which was part of DfC's Arts Festival. The Theatre programmed a young people's theatre company, In Situ, to present a fun piece of outdoor theatre called The Wind and the Sun as part of the programme of special events for the day. Young people from our youth dance company also performed.
13. The Theatre was proud to welcome the Royal Shakespeare Company to Darlington with A Mad World My Masters in April as part of the National Touring Group partnership, which is funded by Arts Council England.

Developing Finance for the Arts

14. Creative Darlington allocated £1,500 to support Darlington Jazz Festival 2015, programmed by Darlington Jazz Club, who secured a 'Grants for the Arts' award of £4,500 from Arts Council England. Darlington Jazz Festival 2015 included a number of sell-out performances, including Matt Robert's Sextet at Voodoo Café and an evening of swinging big band music from multi-instrumentalist Al Wood, joined by the Durham Alumni Big Band.
15. Creative Darlington awarded £1,000 to support artist Sara Cooper in developing her Collections project. Sara is working with museums and organisations across the Tees Valley, including the Head of Steam railway museum, and with students of Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, to explore and respond to their collections. Sara secured a 'Grants for the Arts' offer of £10,000 from Arts Council England, for the Collections project with our support and provided an artist's talk to blimey! artists network, (who meet at Central Club in Darlington), earlier this year. Further schools workshops at the Head of Steam took place in late June as part of the project. It is anticipated work from the Collections project will be shared in the exhibition space in Darlington Town Hall later this year.

Audience Development

16. Creative Darlington has supported The Festival of Thrift, in the process of being established as a community interest company, and securing a 'Grants for the Arts' award of just under £100,000 for the Festival of Thrift 2015 arts programme from Arts Council England. The 2015 Festival of Thrift programme will include new commissions informed by Darlington's railway heritage and the ten-year countdown to 2025.
17. Creative Darlington has supported Durham Music Service in developing a 'Grants for the Arts' application for just under £15,000 to bring the full Hallé Orchestra to Darlington in June 2016 to work with local schools and to perform at The Dolphin Centre. Creative Darlington has offered up to £5,000 to support this proposal, with other finance confirmed from Durham Music Service, Orchestras Live, a local secondary school and expected from other Darlington schools and businesses.

Crown Street Art Gallery

18. There have been 59,136 visits to the gallery from opening in May 2012 to 18 May 2015. Darlington based artist, Colin Graham's 'A Mind's Eye' exhibition was held at Crown Street Art Gallery from 14 March to 7 May 2015 and attracted over 4,000 visits, with Colin co-ordinating artists' talks and meeting and greeting visitors to the gallery for the majority of the exhibition. Colin made a number of sales during the exhibition from which Creative Darlington secured commission.
19. The Materialistics 'A Grand Tour' exhibition, which features knitted interpretations of some of the most famous works of art in Western culture, opened on 11 May 2015 and has secured some very positive comments to date.

The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts

20. Artists and creative professionals from the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts promoted adult art courses and the OpenArt Studio programme at this venue from a stall in Darlington Indoor Market over two weeks in May as part of the Love Your Local Markets campaign.
21. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts has staged a variety of exhibitions by local artists and arts groups, since Creative Darlington supported them in establishing an exhibition space within their venue, which is programmed by the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts organisation.

St George's Day Celebration

22. On 23 April 2015 Darlington toasted St George's Day at the Market Cross Monument. The Mayor and Mayoress, Town Crier and Defor the dragon, the library mascot attended along with exchange students, teachers and the general public. A red rose supplied by Flowers by Natrass and a glass of port were handed out.

Buskers Re-launch

23. The Buskers Good Practice Guide was re-launched on 16 May 2015 with busking and street theatre entertainment running throughout the town. The event coincided with Love Your Local Markets event.
24. Entertainers included Mexican music group, human statue, Morris dancers, young musicians from Access to Music based at the Forum Music Centre, juggler, stand-up comedian and much more. The town centre was extremely busy throughout the day.

Best of Darlington Awards

25. The Best of Darlington Awards took place on 22 May 2015 this year for the first time. The awards celebrate everything positive that townsfolk, businesses, individuals and groups within Darlington have achieved.

The Round 50 Mile Cycle Ride

26. On 31 May 2015 the Round 50 Cycle Ride kick started the four rides taking place over the next four months. Although conditions weren't looking good for the day, the weather stayed dry, albeit windy for the 100 cyclists who participated and completed the ride.

Love Your Local Market campaign

27. During the Love Your Local Markets fortnight which was held between 13 and 27 May 2015, Darlington secured a relationship with Nabma (National Association of British Market Authorities) to become one of the 15 markets/organisations officially recognised within the two-week campaign. Nabma confirmed it would offer further publicity support to Darlington throughout the year for such campaigns, including Christmas, helping to raise the profile of Darlington nationally.
28. The campaign lead-up included a variety of activities that enabled Darlington Markets to engage with a wide reach of customer groups. These included a roadshow programme to promote the campaign and encourage new traders, which took place at the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form, within the town centre, at the Dolphin Centre and at Collaboration within Bishopsgate House.
29. Furthermore a primary school poster competition was also launched within Lifestyle Clubs at St Johns, Springfield, St Teresa's, Firthmoor and Heathfield. This engaged more than 300 entries from Darlington children.
30. A detailed social media plan was implemented and Trader Testimonials were used in both press and on the Markets' website. The local radio and press were informed of all activity taking place throughout the Love Your Local Markets fortnight.
31. Arriva agreed with Darlington Sunday Peoples Market that they would support the campaign by agreeing free inclusion of posters advertising the campaign on Darlington routes.
32. Direct marketing methods were used to target traders including, for example, email distribution and e-newsletter to a business database of over 6,000.
33. The media plan was very detailed and exploited all low and zero cost promotional activity to encourage a large footfall into the town centre which was evident on the big event day on Saturday 16 May.

Railway Heritage

34. After extensive public engagement throughout the end of 2014, a Vision Action Plan and Masterplan has been developed by officers to describe the future of railway heritage in Darlington. Consultation is planned for late Summer and the short, medium and long term plans for the area extending from the Railway Museum to the Town Centre will be tested with the public. There continues to be healthy inward investment interest in the site and the upcoming 2025 celebrations will be of a catalyst for successful external funding bids to help to deliver the vision.

Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Rail Conference

35. On 17 June 2015, the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway hosted a conference at the National Rail Museum Locomotion at Shildon. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the proposals to gain world heritage status for the Stockton and Darlington Railway Trackbed and associated assets and to explore the historic significance of this railway in the history of the development of railways around the world. With the upcoming 200th anniversary in 2025, there were presentations that highlighted the need for a co-ordinated effort between the three Councils (Durham, Stockton and Darlington) and key stakeholders to hold a world-class event with a lasting legacy.

Grounds Maintenance

36. Grass cutting commenced throughout the Borough in April with crews now operating a four-day week working in a zonal manner. To date this has proved very successful with teams getting round quicker than previously and the quality of work receiving compliments.

Horticultural Services

37. The Horticultural Team who undertake work on Garden Tidies, Sheltered Accommodation, landscaping projects and planting are all on schedule and again are receiving lots of compliments in relation to the quality of their work.

Green Flag

38. Members will be aware that both South Park and West Cemetery currently hold Green Flag status. Judging has recently taken place for the forthcoming year and it is hoped both locations retain the standard. In addition, judging has taken place this year at West Park and it is hoped it will become the third Green Flag site in the Borough.

Working with Darlington Cares

39. A programme of works, to complement those undertaken by the Council, is ongoing throughout the Borough's green spaces. Projects such as painting benches and railings in South Park, repairs to fencing in North Lodge Park and the Denes, and path edging through the Borough's nature reserves are examples of what is being achieved.

Fitting Shop

40. Members will be aware that in October 2014, the Fitting Shop commenced both testing and MOTs for taxis and subsequently MOTs for private vehicles. This has proved very successful and the Fitting Shop is in the process of working towards offering services to other organisations.

A67 Carlbury Landslip

41. The A67 at Carlbury was opened on 26 May 2015. The planned opening was delayed to enable additional road surfacing works to be carried out either side of the landslip locations.
42. The scheme was delivered under budget enabling more works on the diversion route which has suffered deterioration.

Feethams Bus Stops

43. The main part of the scheme is complete. This involved the removal of the retaining wall and part of the forecourt to enable the construction of an extended bus layby and associated shelters. As part of the project access to the town hall forecourt was improved with the provision of steps and improvements to public realm. Bus stop M was relocated here from Tubwell Row and a new stop T was created. Bus services started using the stops on 17 May 2015.
44. The second phase involves provision of screens, signs and new seating at the coach stop adjacent to the Dolphin Centre. This has the benefit of planning permission and works are programmed to start on site in August 2015.

Central Park South Junction

45. Work has commenced on the proposed signal controlled junction on Yarm Road, close to Neasham Road roundabout. The junction is located on Green Street will serve the proposed 26,000m² of commercial development at the southern end of Central Park. There are already two developments in this area: Business Central (Business Growth Hub) which opened in April 2015 and The Centre for Process Innovation's National Biologic Centre (CPI) which is nearing completion. Further proposals are in the pipeline including the National Horizons Centre and Factories for the Future, another CPI development.
46. There is a second phase of the scheme to provide a link road through the southern section of Central Park, to provide access to the commercial area and enable future

development.

47. Funding for both phases of the scheme has been provisionally allocated as part of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) which is administered by Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU).

Sugar Hill Park Footway/Cycleway

48. The scheme now has full planning permission for a path through Sugar Hill Park linking Prior Street to the area around the former Alderman Leach Primary School. This route will act as a Safe Route to School. This will come forward in phases from Local Transport Plan funding and developer contributions.

Car Park Improvements

49. Improvements are proposed to the two public car parks in Winston Street/Barnard Street that serve the Duke Street commercial area. The works will include resurfacing, replacement of old barrier and a new layout that enables vehicles to more easily access car parking spaces. The works are programmed to commence in July 2015.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

50. Recently completed schemes:

- (a) Belgrave Terrace, Hurworth – Footway Refurbishment
- (b) Farrer Street and Anns Terrace Back Lane - Back Lane Refurbishment
- (c) Faverdale – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (d) Allan Street – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (e) Cleveland Terrace/Cleveland Avenue Roundabout - Carriageway Resurfacing
- (f) Coleridge Gardens – Carriageway Patching and Resurfacing
- (g) Tyne Crescent – Carriageway Patching
- (h) A68 West Auckland Road – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (i) A167 Croft Road – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (j) Coombe Drive – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (k) A1150, Whinfield Road, Springfield to Whinbush Way - Footway Refurbishment
- (l) Haughton Road – Carriageway Refurbishment

51. Ongoing schemes:

- (a) B6275, Station Road, Piercebridge – Carlbury Slip Diversion Carriageway Resurfacing
- (b) B6279 Staindrop Road – Carlbury Slip Diversion Carriageway Resurfacing
- (c) Carriageway Micro Asphalt Contract 2015

52. Schemes due to commence:

- (a) Neasham Road – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (b) Gladstone Street – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (c) Brinkburn Road – Carriageway Refurbishment

- (d) A167 Durham Road – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (e) Burtree Lane – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (f) A68 Bondgate – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (g) A1150 Whinfield Road – Carriageway Refurbishment

Public Transport

53. The grant funding for community bus services 16/16A and 20 came to an end in June 2015. A review took place in March 2015, in light of a small amount of grant funding received from Government from the devolved Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) until 2017. Surveys took place with passengers using the services and this was considered together with patronage data and concessionary fares information. Scarlet Band, the operator of the service 16/16A, indicated that a large proportion of the service 16 could operate commercially from July 2015. Using the BSOG funding the service 16 will continue to operate six days a week, but will not serve Heighington or Newton Aycliffe. It is hoped that by continuing to promote the service, that use of the bus will continue to grow and the service will become fully commercially viable. Following a similar review of Service 20 which serves Sadberge, Bishopton, Great Stainton and Neasham, and a tendering process, the service will continue to operate one day per week.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

54. Darlington joined the other local authorities in the Love to Ride/Tees Valley cycle challenge, which took place between 8 and 26 June 2015. Over 60 businesses took part, encouraging their staff to take part and cycle for just ten minutes. This was part of a national campaign to encourage people back on to their bikes. The Love to Ride/Tees Valley saw a successful collaboration of area cycling groups and cycle shops, local organisations, local authority staff and Love to Ride staff working together to promote cycling in the Tees Valley. Whilst the key goal was to encourage more people to cycle, a further benefit has been the aforementioned partnership of local cycling resources working together that will benefit cycling in the Tees Valley beyond the Love to Ride challenge.
55. The Local Motion website has been transitioned to the new Darlington Borough Council server. Improvements to the website include integration of social media, the ability to capture marketing data, stronger links to our partner site Connect Tees Valley, and a more up-to-date site focused on current news and events in our area. The address remains dothelocalmotion.co.uk.
56. The 2015 Schools Transition event took place on 9 and 11 June 2015. Over two days 77 pupils from 14 primary schools in Darlington have learned how to plan the journey to their new secondary ready for September. The training took place at two locations and was delivered by Team Local Motion supported by the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership, Arriva and Darlington Borough Council's Road Safety Team. Pupils took part in walking, cycling and road safety sessions at the Dolphin Centre. They also got first-hand experience of travelling by train along the Bishop Line to the Head of Steam Museum at North Road Station for rail and bus sessions.

57. Big Summer Days Out (May – September) – this joint Connect Tees Valley and Local Motion campaign is aimed at helping people make the most of their summer by using public transport to explore the region. We have teamed up with top attractions across the north east to offer discounts and offers when people travel to them by bus or by train. Our Big Summer website: www.bigsummer.co.uk, has a host of ideas for things to do whatever the weather and whatever the budget. Visitors to the Big Summer website can find out which attractions are offering deals and exactly how to get to them with the online journey planner. The website also hosts competitions offering the chance to win free admission for the whole family to a top north east attraction of their choice. It isn't just top paid-for attractions, there's lots of information about places to go and things to do for free that are just a walk or a bike ride away.
58. Catch the Bus Week (29 June - 5 July) is a national initiative from Greener Journeys. This joint Connect Tees Valley and Local Motion campaign encouraged Tees Valley and South Durham commuters to leave the car at home and give the bus a go. Five drivers from Arriva and Stagecoach were chosen to front the campaign and appeared on adverts across the Tees Valley and South Durham network, kitted out in gym wear, with the slogan 'Our bus drivers are gearing up for Catch the Bus Week'. The bus companies staged a family-friendly launch event featuring dance troupes and activities in Middlesbrough on 30 June 2015. There were also promotional events and giveaways across the Tees Valley and South Durham. (www.catchthebusweek2015.com).

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