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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.

**Stonebridge Strengthening Works**

2. Phase two of the works was completed in April 2016. The bridge is now open to two way traffic. There is further work scheduled for the bridge over the summer months, including a new paint system, stonework and lighting. The road will remain open throughout the work but there may be some footpath closures.

**Central Park South Junction and Spine Road**

3. Central Park south junction is now substantially complete.
4. The construction of the spine road commenced in March 2016. Initial work involved the removal of the top surface and disposal. Works are also ongoing to provide the infrastructure to enable further development.

**Beaumont Street and Feethams Improvements**

5. A scheme has been developed to improve pedestrian links between the multi-story car park, the town centre and the new cinema development. This includes the implementation of a one way system around Beaumont Street to Houndgate.
6. The first phase to provide level access from the multi-story car park to the town centre was completed in February 2016. The second phase to make a permanent one way system around Beaumont Street was completed at the beginning of April 2016.
7. A third phase to provide pedestrian improvements around the Feethams/Beaumont Street junction commenced towards the end of April 2016 after works by Northern Gas Network was completed on Feethams. The works are programmed to be completed by mid-May in time for the anticipated opening of the cinema. They provide safer provision for crossing at a point where pedestrian movement will increase significantly.

## **Highway Maintenance Schemes**

8. Recently completed scheme:
  - (a) Coombe Drive – speed cushion refurbishment
9. Ongoing scheme:
  - (a) Estoril Road – Carriageway reconstruction
10. Schemes due to complete:
  - (a) A167 Croft Road Phase 5 – Carriageway resurfacing
  - (b) Church Lane Middleton St George – Channels and Patching prior to Carriageway Micro Asphaltting
  - (c) Minors and Witton Crescent(s) - Patching prior to Carriageway Micro Asphaltting

## **Changes to the Concessionary Travel (ENCTS) Assessment Process**

11. We approved the introduction of a new assessment process for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) which was introduced in April, 2008 to provide free travel for eligible people on local bus services in England.
12. In order to receive a statutory concessionary bus pass residents of the Borough must be eligible under one of two broad categories which are men and women who have attained the state pension age for women; and eligible disabled people of fare paying age of which there are seven categories.
13. Applicants must provide the appropriate evidence in order to receive the bus pass, some evidence provides automatic entitlement but for others further assessment is required. This has usually been proved by GPs, however this is not in line with the Department for Transport guidance which states that Independent Health Professionals should be used.
14. This new assessment process was introduced on 1 April, 2016 for all new applications and applied to existing pass holders where no or insufficient information has been provided previously, or where their evidence is now out of date; and will be carried out in line with the Department for Transport guidance on Independent Medical Assessments.
15. A consultation exercise was undertaken by letter with the 626 existing pass holders and whilst 170 people responded to the letter, only one person made comments regarding the proposed changes in the assessment process.

## **Delivery of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026**

16. We received an update on developments in Transport and delivery of Darlington's Local Transport Plan (LTP) at Cabinet in March 2016.
17. There are some significant changes emerging in the governance and funding around transport and the hierarchy that is emerging is based around National Transport Programmes over five year investment periods; Transport for North, which is an organisation bringing together local transport authorities; the new Tees Valley Combined Authority which came into force on 1 April 2016 and has a number of transport powers focussing on strategic transport priorities important to the sub-region and region; and the Darlington Local Transport Plan which sets out the transport strategy for supporting sustainable growth over the period up to 2026.
18. The objectives of the Darlington Local Transport Plan are to support employment, economic activity and sustainable development by providing and maintaining a reliable, predictable and efficient transport network; to tackle climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transport; achieving better health and longer life expectancy for everyone by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness from transport and to provide travel options to keep people active and independent; to achieve a fairer society by enabling people to access jobs, education, training, health, food and green spaces; to achieve a better quality of life for all by improving the journey experience and minimising the negative effects of noise, air pollution and accidents on the natural environment; and to implement schemes that demonstrate value for money and/or deliver the greatest outcomes at a local level.
19. Transport Scheme Delivery for 2015/16 included transport projects for the construction of the new Central Park/Yarm Road junction; construction of the new Town Centre multi-storey car park; delivery of Local Motion personalised travel marketing to 896 new households; continuation of work with schools to promote sustainable travel; resurfacing and re-lining of Winston and Barnard Street car parks; the delivery of 12 capital highway maintenance schemes; repairing of potholes; the replacement of 853 street lighting columns to date; and the completion of work on the repair of the A167 at Carlbury slip.
20. Cabinet agreed to release integrated Transport Block funding which will help fund future schemes i.e. £50,000 for the replacement of Pay and Display parking meters in the Council's off-street car parks; £115,000 towards the construction of the River Skerne, John Street pedestrian and cycleway; and £90,000 for advanced design work to support modelling association with the Local Plan and early design work for schemes emerging from that work.

## **Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF)**

21. Darlington Civic Theatre has received confirmation of a £4.5m grant (on top of the £0.5m already received to develop the scheme) to restore the building to its former glory. The HLF investment will enable the restoration and extension of the town's beloved Edwardian Theatre. This will also increase seating capacity to 1,000,

improve disability access and enable larger touring shows to be accommodated. The Theatre will close on 31 May 2016 to allow restoration work to begin and is planned to reopen in autumn 2017, with a new name – The Darlington Hippodrome.

22. Arts Council England has also confirmed a £1.5m grant award to Theatre Hullabaloon, in partnership with Darlington Borough Council, to support the creation of a new flag ship children's theatre venue, the Hullabaloon, adjacent to the Civic Theatre. This will include a 150 seat studio theatre, creative play and rehearsal spaces and will be the only specialist children's theatre in the North of England.

### **Darlington Football Club Relocation**

23. Darlington Football Club has received confirmation of a grant from the Football Foundation to support the relocation of the club to Blackwell Meadows for the 2016/17 season. The Council has worked extensively with the Football Association at a regional and national level to develop and submit the application to the 'Football Stadium Investment Fund' and the grant of £155,000 forms a critical part of the funding package for the colocation scheme with Darlington Rugby club at the Grange Road site. The Council also secured £145,000 from Sport England to support improvements to changing facilities and car parking within this project; and we are continuing to support DFC and DRFC on the ground share development proposal.

### **Healthy Darlington**

24. This period has seen an increase in the number of local people seeking support from the Healthy Darlington Hub. In the period from the 1 December 2015 through to 29 February 2016, 417 individual people received 1:1 support with officers, with 606 hours of one-to-one appointments taking place within that month.
25. Work also continues in local communities, with support offered in some local GP Surgeries and also at Eastbourne Sports Complex. Recent developments include a new exercise session specifically for those living with Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis, following requests from local support groups for support.

### **Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College - Move More**

26. 128 Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College students have engaged in the Move More programme over the last quarter. The Girls Only Gym has continued to be popular and we supplied coaches to deliver Boxercise, Yoga, and Beach Body Bootcamp on site at the college.

### **Healthy Schools**

27. We have provided support via the Healthy Darlington Team to Reid Street Primary School, empowering the children and staff in school to lead and promote healthy active lifestyles. Through working closely with lunchtime supervisors, a pupil voice group and teachers in the school, the Healthy Darlington team has been able to

help them achieve a Healthy Schools Award from The Northern Echo at a prestigious awards ceremony which was held on 10 March 2016.

### **Go Run For Run**

28. Eastbourne Sports Complex hosted a Go Run For Run event once again in partnership with INEOS and Nova International. The event engaged over 400 primary school children running a two mile distance across the fields. Each child received a free pink t-shirt and had the opportunity to meet British Long Jumper, Chris Tomlinson.

### **Active Darlington Project**

29. There have been 330 completed consultations completed through the Community Sport Activation Project. 82 per cent of the participants agreed that the sport was appropriate for their ability. Of those who completed the consultation 7 per cent were encouraged to take part by a member of staff. 63 per cent of participants increased the number of days they played sport. The Year 3 plan has been completed and new activities including Walking Football, Netball, Archery and Outdoor Bowls have been added.

### **Sheltered Housing**

30. The Move More Sheltered Housing programme has had 55 individuals taking part in a range of activities including Boccia, chair based exercise, Keep Fit, New Age Kurling, Darts and Pool. To date there has been 235 visits with activities offered at all eleven settings in phase one, with Dinsdale Court starting from phase 2. Phase 1 targets are to expand uptake of male members and to increase the number of individuals by 10 per cent. Community links have been established with the Rotary Club, Darlington Cares, Darlington College, The Bridge and a local choir.

### **Disability Move More Project**

31. Continuation funding for 2016/17 has been agreed with for the Disability Move More project. This project has engaged 85 participants with 2619 visits to date giving average of 31 hours contact time per participant. The strong relationship created with the Move More Team and staff at the day centres such as The Links, Lakeside Lodge and Foundations, has sat at the heart of the programme with strong partnership working.
32. Links have been created with the Danshell group and two sports days took place at the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex sites. Links with Darlington Rotary Club have been established and the Sports Development Team are supporting Darlington Rotary in the delivery of an activity station at the Northern Games for the Disabled in July 2016.

## **Civic Theatre**

33. The Theatre has sustained very strong ticket sales since Christmas, with outstanding box office figures for shows including Peppa Pig's Surprise, The Mousetrap, Gilbert O'Sullivan, Brendan Cole's 'A Night to Remember' and Thriller Live. These shows also created exceptional secondary spend and considerable favourable feedback. .
34. The Touring Consortium Theatre Company were back in Darlington at the Theatre with a new production of 'Of Mice and Men' in March. Theatre ambassadors were very supportive of this production, helping to promote the show to people who don't normally visit the Theatre and also helping to welcome audiences to the Theatre and asking them to fill in feedback questionnaires. On the opening night there was live Americana music in the bar which added to the atmosphere of the show. During the run there were also workshops held by the company in schools and a page to stage workshop in the Theatre for schools attending the matinee on the Thursday which was sold out. There was also a lively post show talk, stage tours and audio description and a captioned performance.
35. The Theatre's Youth Theatre Company was chosen to take part in the National Theatre's Connections, an annual national festival of new plays for youth theatres and schools, which gives young people the opportunity to experience producing and presenting professional theatre. Each group taking part had to present three performances in their home theatre and then performed again at the regional platform, which in our case was at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough in March. Our youth theatre performed a very challenging play by Stephen Armitage, called Eclipse.
36. The Theatre's Youth Dance Company has also been competing and got through to the regional final of Pulse 2016 at Dance City in April.

## **Audience Development**

37. Creative Darlington has supported the development of the Jabberwocky Market programme, part of a collaborative touring network which has received support from Arts Council England's strategic touring programme and other funders since 2013. This spring the Jabberwocky Market has piloted a new operational model, promoting a series of events on different days, rather than focusing their activity within a festival weekend. A children's show, Grass, was performed in Darlington Cattle Market on 12 March 2016, Jess Thom who has Tourettes performed Backstage in Biscuit Land at the Forge campus of Teesside University in Darlington and attracted a full house on 19 March 2016 and a pay what you decide performance in development, Empire of the Rat, was performed on 1 April 2016.
38. Creative Darlington is supporting the promotion of Darlington Arts Festival 2016 by Darlington for Culture via the production and distribution of festival brochures. Creative Darlington has supported the promotion of Darlington Arts Festival since the Festival was first held in May 2013, and has programmed a variety of events within the programme. This year's festival including 70 plus confirmed events

started on 21 April and runs until 31 May 2016 at a wide range of venues across the Borough.

39. Creative Darlington is supporting the Civic Theatre in developing a proposal to inform audience development work and the transition of the performing arts offer whilst the capital programmes to develop Theatre Hullabaloon and restore the Civic Theatre/Hippodrome are underway.
40. Creative Darlington has met with Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 'Tin Arts' to discuss its proposal to develop a second IncludFEST in South Park following the success of the first event staged there in July 2015. IncludFEST has an arts and family focus, offering inclusive creative activity including opportunities for disabled people. Lifestyle Fitness supported the first IncludFEST event in Darlington and Tin Arts is approaching trusts and foundations and Creative Darlington to support IncludFEST 2016.
41. Creative Darlington has offered £1,500 support to Jenny Young and her social enterprise Blue Cabin to progress the Heads, Hearts and Hands proposal, which has secured a Grants for the Arts offer of £30,000 from Arts Council England, and will involve services, organisations and programmes including the family support and adoption service, Creative Darlington, Civic Theatre, Theatre Hullabaloon and the Jabberwocky Market programme in working together to enhance cultural opportunities for children, young people and adults.
42. A meeting was held on 12 April between various organisations and services including Groundwork North East, Red Hall Primary School, Darlington Borough Council Housing Services, Creative Darlington and Helix Arts to discuss the development of a Making Art Happen programme on Red Hall estate in Darlington. The programme is focused on capacity building and engaging the community in shaping its own creative activities. A small financial contribution from the strategic arts budget and through other services will enable Helix Arts to deliver the programme, as they it has secured grant aid from trusts and foundations.

### **The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts**

43. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts recorded footfall of 2,980 during March 2016, with the centre housing the Community Arts Project (daytime Monday to Friday), the OpenArt Studio programme (daytime Monday and Friday), a ticketed programme of arts courses (daytime and evenings Monday to Friday) and bookings by various groups, organisations and individuals (Monday to Saturday). The summer term of ticketed adult courses promoted through the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts opened on 18 April 2016 with sixteen courses on offer. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts community organisation is currently in the process of applying for charitable status and is involved in developing a business plan proposal to operate the venue.

### **World Book Day**

44. Families were given book vouchers throughout the week at regular sessions and on World Book Day, 3 March 2016, the mobile library was located in Joseph Pease

Place, where Deefor Dragon paid a visit and children had their faces painted.

45. A library information stand was placed at the Dolphin Centre which again had a visit from Deefor Dragon. In Crown Street library a 'Jack and the Beanstalk' story and craft session was held along with a face painter who later visited Cockerton Library after school hours.
46. For the third year we welcomed the Catholic Schools Partnership in to Crown Street Library for a Book Extravaganza. The Year 7 pupils were treated to a workshop from renowned comic book illustrator, Kev F Sutherland, and each went away with their own comic book and caricature.
47. The Bookstart and Library Literacy Coordinator helped to oversee a world record attempt made at the Education Village. The attempt was to have the most children attempting a book quiz. On World Book Day we heard that the attempt was successful and a new record had been broken.

### **Centre for Local Studies**

48. A very popular exhibition of Darlington photographs by Owen Wicksteed was held during February and March in Local Studies and throughout Crown Street library, together with the Register Office and Cockerton Library. Wicksteed was born in 1904 in Northamptonshire, became a dentist and had a practice in Victoria Road, Darlington from the 1930s to 1971. He was also a keen amateur photographer and captured some wonderful images of the town many of which he donated as negatives to the Local Studies collection. Some were printed at the time, but most were left unseen until recently when all 523 negatives in the Wicksteed collection have been digitised by volunteers and staff.
49. As well as the main exhibitions, the photographs are currently being added to the local studies Flickr page which can be viewed from the library website [www2.darlington.gov.uk](http://www2.darlington.gov.uk). The Wicksteed collection is just a small part of the 40,000 images in the Local Studies collection and each one is individually catalogued. The images of local people and places are available to view in the library and come in a variety of formats including framed oil and watercolour paintings, photographs, slides and negatives. There are always images on display in the Centre for Local Studies and displays are changed monthly.
50. Local Studies hosted four local book signing and meet the author events with two local authors, Colin Wilkinson and John Phelan. Sessions were well attended with much interest in their books and displays on Darlington Churches and South West Durham Football.
51. Class visits from Reid Street School with 70 children attending explored the history of the Reid Street School area of the town using materials from the Local Studies collection.



## **Collections and Exhibitions**

52. The North Roads Works Memories Project is picking up pace with regular uploads to the project website. Staff and volunteers have engaged with over 100 members of the public at outreach events. The Museum is working in partnership with the Move More team and have visited six sheltered accommodations since February with two more visits lined up. The Museum also commemorated the closure of the works with a free exhibition on 2 April 2016. The exhibition featured photographs from the onsite users of the Museum including the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group and the North Eastern Railway Association.

## **Grounds Maintenance**

53. As predicted in the previous report, the winter programme was completed on time with all works undertaken. Staff commenced summer cutting operations week commencing 28 March 2016 with no problems anticipated. Again, as mentioned in the previous report, the resurfacing of the play area in South Park was completed in time for the school holidays at Easter where heavy usage was experienced.

## **Refuse and Recycling**

54. Members will be aware that charges have been introduced for stolen or lost refuse/recycling containers. Charges came into force on 1 April 2016 and staff will monitor the impact on delivery schedules.

## **Winter Maintenance**

55. At the time of writing, the Winter Maintenance season draws to its conclusion with a very mild winter having been experienced. The anticipated date for cessation of winter duties is 1 May 2016 unless weather dictates otherwise.

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