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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.

**Town Centre Parking – Seasonal Offers and Feethams Development**

2. To support evening retail trade in the town centre we have agreed a 'Free after 3.00 pm' seasonal parking offer in the town centre on the four Thursdays prior to Christmas 2016, in the Council's off-street car parks and on-street bays. There will also be no charges on 25 and 26 December 2016 and 1 January 2017. Also from 1 October through to 30 November 2016 no charges will be applied on Thursdays in the Council's off-street car parks and on-street bays from 5.00pm. This seasonal parking offer will support evening retail trade in the town centre and support Christmas evening trading and the seasonal markets.
3. With regard to the Feethams Development and the green park environment planned for the area along the side of Skerne in front of the Department for Education building, it was been agreed to delay the commencement of the Riverside Park Project to January 2017, subject to planning approval being granted.

**Central Park South Junction and Spine Road**

4. The junction construction work is complete but is likely to remain closed until after the Spine Road works are complete.
5. The first phase of this Spine Road from the end of Green Street to John Dixon Lane is substantially complete. There is no through route to Hundens Lane from John Dixon Lane.
6. The second phase of the Spine Road linking the junction to phase one of the Spine Road will commence in the New Year after recently acquired buildings have been demolished. This phase will be complete in Summer 2017 at which time the junction will be open. We also propose to construct a 157 space car park to accommodate parking from the National Biologics Centre and create the capacity for other future businesses. This will be funded from income from the businesses that use the car park.

## **Beaumont Street and Feethams Improvements**

7. There have been a number of highway improvements around the Beaumont Street/Feethams area to complement investment in that area. We have completed a level access scheme from the Feethams car park to the market square, provision of improved crossing points at Feethams/Beaumont Street junction and the implementation of a one-way system around Beaumont Street.
8. Works started on Houndgate in October 2016. This involved the creation of a layby for loading to the rear of the Dolphin Centre. This is being provided to assist local businesses and to avoid vehicles parking part on the footway, which has been a source of complaints from Darlington Association for Disability (DAD). There are also some associated footway improvements on Houndgate and Feethams.
9. Houndgate was resurfaced from Blackwellgate to Feethams.
10. New lighting has been installed at the coach stop on Feethams.

## **John Street**

11. This scheme is funded from a mixture of Local Transport Plan and Local Growth Funding. The cycle path is a key piece of the Town's cycle network. The proposed route will comprise a 450 metre section adjacent to the River Skerne and a 90 metre link up to High Northgate and will take around five months to build.
12. The project will open up an important historic asset in the story of Darlington as it will run underneath the 1825 Skerne Bridge designed by Ignatious Bonomi. The bridge, also known as the £5 note bridge, is the oldest working railway bridge in the world and is a nationally designated scheduled monument.
13. Initial works have started to improve the existing retaining wall adjacent to the River Skerne. Works on the path itself will commence early in the New Year.

## **Parkgate Connections Scheme**

14. This scheme is also partly funded from Local Transport Plan and Local Growth Funding and seeks to improve sustainable travel links between the station and the town centre.
15. A new cycle link and improvements to the existing walking route between St Cuthbert's Way toucan crossing and Park Place are underway. Work has been carried out in Park Place West car park to create space for the route. A new drainage system has been installed and the car park has been resurfaced and re-lined. Further work will be carried out alongside Parkgate from Henderson Street to the access road to the Rail Station to improve the footpath and adjacent wall.

## Highway Maintenance Schemes

### 16. Recently completed schemes:

- (a) A167 Croft Road Phase 5 – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (b) Church Lane Middleton St George – Channels and Patching prior to Carriageway Micro Asphalt
- (c) Footway Micro Asphalt Surfacing Contract 2016
- (d) Carriageway Micro Asphalt Surfacing Contract 2016
- (e) Alliance Street/Otley Terrace/Ann's Terrace – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (f) A1150 Stockton Road – Inbound Duals Carriageway Resurfacing
- (g) A167 North Road – Carriageway Patching Scheme
- (h) Hopelands, Heighington – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (i) Roundhill Road/West End/The Green, Hurworth – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (j) A67 – Sadberge Road, Mill Lane and Airport and A6072 School Aycliffe Lane – Roundabout Carriageway Retexturing
- (k) Estoril Road – Carriageway Reconstruction

### 17. Ongoing schemes:

- (a) C38 Walworth Rd – Carriageway edge Reconstruction
- (b) Houndgate – Reconstruction and Resurfacing

### 18. Scheme due to start:

- (a) Park Lane East Back - Resurfacing

## Public Transport

19. New checks have been introduced on buses in the North East to prevent the misuse of concessionary bus passes meant for eligible older and disabled people. Smart ticket machines on buses operating across the North East have been programmed to indicate immediately whether a concessionary bus pass has been cancelled by the local transport authority which issued it. A publicity campaign advised passengers of the change and an initial amnesty period ended on 31 October.
20. The Christmas campaign promoting bus services across the Tees Valley launched on 21 November. In Darlington this will include promoting and giving away the recently launched POP smart cards.
21. The Community Rail Partnership has worked with North Eastern Railway Association to develop Interpretation Boards for the stations along the Bishop Line. These have now been installed at five stations along the Bishop Line, including North Road Station in Darlington and at Dinsdale Station in Middleton St George on the Tees Valley Rail Line. The panels display the history of each of the stations and celebrate our local heritage.

22. The DAD Taxi which was part funded as part of the Local Motion project with monies from the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund, has been formally launched with a video describing the service and how it has already benefitted local people. The video is available on the Local Motion and DAD websites.

### **Travel Safety**

23. This year's Tees Valley wide travel safety campaign launched on 27 October and will run until 4 December 2016. The social media campaign will provide safety tips across all modes of transport.
24. Following on from the successful design competition run last year with college students, a new design competition was launched to the general public on 8 November 2016 to encourage people to think about how they can design a piece of clothing or accessory for a walker or cyclist to increase their safety. The competition will be judged by representatives from Zyro (largest privately owned parts and accessories distributor in the UK cycling industry and based in Darlington); Wheel Education (provide training, skills and knowledge to safely ride a bike or scooter and based in Stockton); and Blumilk (creative design agency based in Newcastle). The winners will be announced in January 2017.

### **Creative Darlington**

25. A meeting of partnership groups (Sunderland, Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Darlington) was co-ordinated in the Collaborate Space on the morning of 23 March 2016 by North East Cultural Partnerships, with support from Creative Darlington. Darlington will develop a proposal to contribute to the North East Cultural Partnership target of 100 artist residencies in a 100 businesses, identified within the Case for Culture 2030. As well as updates from each partnership, the meeting received an update on the development of Theatre Hullaballoon.
26. Creative Darlington submitted a Grants for the Arts proposal for £65,000 to Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts scheme, to support a programme of activity. This includes the development of practice to develop the intelligence key organisations and programmes, including: the Civic Theatre/Hippodrome, Theatre Hullaballoon, Jabberwocky Market and OddManOut, and the transition of Darlington's theatre offer during the restoration of the Civic Theatre and construction of the Hullaballoon. A decision on this proposal is expected from Arts Council England in early January 2017. Subject to the success of the proposal support has been offered from the Council's strategic arts and events service budgets.

### **Audience Development**

27. Following the success of IncludFEST Darlington 2015 and IncludFEST Tees Valley 2016, both staged in South Park Darlington, with financial support from local business, the Strategic Arts Budget and County Durham Community Foundation, Tin Arts and Creative Darlington met with Tees Valley Community Foundation to

discuss opportunities to extend the engagement and the reach of IncludFEST across Tees Valley. IncludFEST Tees Valley 2017, led by Tin Arts, was staged in South Park on 15 July 2017. Darlington for Culture and Healthy Darlington provided support in kind to IncludFEST Tees Valley 2016. IncludFEST does not require significant infrastructure investment and is well placed to promote Creative Darlington's commitment to making the arts accessible.

28. Helix Arts is now delivering a number of Making Art Happen sessions in Red Hall which commenced in September 2016, with support from the Council's Housing and Strategic Arts Budgets. Sessions involve local artists / producers and people from Red Hall in developing an arts programme which will be delivered in Red Hall. Helix Arts will deliver a series of training sessions with those that opt to participate, in managing and promoting arts programmes, so the project will leave a legacy in developing the experience of those participating.

### **£500K Eastbourne pitch goes live**

29. Eastbourne Sports Complex unveiled a new floodlit third generation (3G) artificial grass pitch (AGP) on 19 October 2016, with the support of a grant from the Premier League and the FA Facilities Fund, which is delivered by the Football Foundation.
30. The project will boost local grassroots sport through the creation of ten new teams as part of the Football Development Plan (FDP) established on-site; and a long-term vision for how sport will be played at the new facility. The grant has enabled the Council to upgrade the previous sand-based pitch into a new 3G AGP that will be used extensively throughout the local community, including by: Darlington FC Reserves, Middleton Rangers FC and Darlington Youth FC. St Aidan's Academy will also use the pitch during the school day to deliver its PE curriculum.
31. The project was made possible thanks to a £412,580 grant from the Premier League and The FA Facilities Fund, which provides grants towards developing new or refurbished grassroots football facilities. It is funded by the Premier League, The FA, and the Government, via Sport England, and delivered by the Football Foundation, the country's largest sports charity.

### **Darlington Football Club (DFC) Relocation**

32. The construction project at Blackwell Meadows is more than halfway through and Darlington Football Club hope to be playing fixtures in their new home in early December. The project has been made possible through strong partnership working between DFC, Darlington Rugby Football Club and the Council. Leisure Officers secured £145K funding from Sport England and worked closely with the Football Association to lever a major investment from the Football Stadium Improvement Fund.
33. This exciting project will provide a 3000 capacity for the venue, which will co locate DRFC and DFC, and provides further opportunities for community sport.

## **Couch 2 5k**

34. This programme has engaged over 80 participants and has become a highly successful starting point for people to get back into physical activity. The ten week programme takes people from absolute beginner running - by combining a mixture of running and walking - to week ten and having the ability to continuously run the distance of 5k.
35. This has developed after the ten weeks to people being able to go out running on their own and in lots of cases has led to members meeting up after the programme has finished to go running together. A number of the participants have gone on to join the progression programme of the 5 2 10K Club.

## **Archery**

36. A Sportivate Funding Bid was successful in setting up Archery sessions over a 16 week period. Over 35 people of various ages regularly attended the sessions and many have continued to attend in the Inclusion Archery and at other venues after this programme ended.

## **Netball Development – Darlington Headlanders Netball Club**

37. The Sports Development Team has supported a real growth in the sport of Netball within the town over the last year. 'Back to Netball' sessions are running weekly and provide women of all ages with a gentle re-introduction to the sport. Delivered by coaches from the Move More Team, the sessions cover the basics of the game, including: passing, footwork and shooting. Sessions finish with a friendly game to put the skills you have learnt into practice.
38. During the summer the programme was moved to Eastbourne Sports Complex and this gave the participants the opportunity to experience playing Netball outdoors.
39. Due to the success of the programme, a number of ladies have developed their confidence and skills involved in taking their love of netball further, and they have participated in Back to Netball Festival Tournaments, held at the Dolphin Centre, and some have joined a local Netball club.
40. Through Darlington Headlanders Netball Club over 50 junior and senior members train every Wednesday and over 35 juniors train every Thursday at Eastbourne Sports Complex and Darlington School of Mathematics and Science.
41. A partnership with England Netball has enabled a six week programme for adults who wanted to play Netball on a non-commitment basis. 'Netball Now' is a simple, straight forward way to play Netball. It's not a coached led session, simply a session that you turn up at, pay a small fee and play a game of netball. It has proved to be really popular.

## **Eastbourne Minis Athletics Club**

42. Over 40 children aged 5 to 8 years are now attending a weekly Mini Athletics session, established in partnership with Darlington Harriers Athletic Club. A Sports Development Coach leads this programme as a direct 'feeder' club for Darlington Harriers who needed support with developing the junior section. The club is thriving; with its highest ever level of senior and junior members in its 125<sup>th</sup> year.

## **Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation Partnership**

43. A partnership has been developed with MFC Foundation focussing on delivering the Premier League Kicks programme on site at Eastbourne Sports Complex, on a weekly basis. They have been supporting the Friday night #TheZone project at the Dolphin Centre; delivering Football coaching for 11 to 19 years and engaging with young people.

## **Home Education Session**

44. Recently the Sports Development Team established a link with a Home Education group and this group have been to access Eastbourne Sports Complex twice in September. The first session saw 20 children attend and the second saw 18 in attendance. This session will take place on a fortnightly basis and will offer a wide variety of sports for children aged between 3 and 12 years.

## **Rhythm 'n' Blues Festival**

45. It was another successful R'n'B festival this year, which took place 11 September in the town centre market square and surrounding pubs. There were four additional venues added to the fringe events, which were all keen to be part of the festival and have bands performing.
46. To increase the financial sustainability of the event, Darlington R'n'B Club introduced a booking fee to the pubs for sourcing the bands. Income generated goes towards next year's event and the pubs received specific posters detailing the bands performing in their establishment.
47. Distinct Darlington provided a sponsored media package to promote beyond our usual means, with an intensive radio air time advert with Smooth Radio. The result was over 6,000 people in the centre of Darlington specifically for the R'n'B Festival.
48. The Headline act was 'Band of Friends' who put on a fantastic performance alongside two equally great Blues support acts. We received great feedback by those in attendance and the band members too, who were extremely complementary of the Council.

## **Hell of the North Cycle Ride**

49. 180 registered for the 100 mile Hell of the North (HOTN) cycle ride provided by Darlington Events team. Conditions were near perfect for participants who came from all over the Country and all thoroughly enjoyed the experience. A £600 sponsorship package supported this year's event.

## **Civic Theatre**

50. Rehearsals for the community production of 'A Tale of Two Cities' began at the beginning of September. A cast of over 30 people has been put together and they are taking part in intensive rehearsals with the professional production team, who are helping to provide them with the skills to not only deliver accomplished performances, but also to build skills for their future acting ambitions. As well as the Director, they are working with a Movement Director, Fight Director and Musical Director. A new musical score has been specially written for the production. A team of 30 volunteers are helping to create the costumes for the production, which have again been especially designed for this production. They are working on the costumes at Scrap Studios on Borough Road and fittings are taking place at Hummersknott Academy, where rehearsals are taking place. There has been generous support for the project from local companies who have provided carpet for the set and tickets are selling well for the production; which takes place in the Central Hall in the Dolphin Centre where Dickens himself read in 1858.
51. On 3 October the exhibition 'Dickens in Darlington', developed by the theatre team in collaboration with the Dickens Museum, opened at the Crown Street Art Gallery. The exhibition tells the story of Charles Dickens, focussing on his links to Darlington, to the world of theatre and also the railways and provides background on A Tales of Two Cities and our production, as well as the history of how Dickens work has been presented at the theatre since it opened in 1907. We are showing a clip of the earliest known film of Dickens work, starring Actor Bransby Williams who performed at the theatre in the 1930s. Also on display is a dolls house created by Margaret Watson of Barnard Castle, which is the home of Charles Dickens at 48 Doughty in miniature. Every item has been specially made based on painstaking research carried out by Margaret. It is only the second time it has been on public display.
52. On 17 October, Margaret Watson gave a talk in the gallery on how she created the doll's house, attended by 26 people. On 8 October in the Gallery, Actor Chris Connaughton performed two chilling tales written by Charles Dickens. He used a reproduction reading desk made by Theatre Technician, Steve Sanderson, based on Dickens own design. The two shows were attended by 64 people. He is returning in December to perform A Christmas Carol in St Cuthbert's Church.
53. In September the theatre's youth dance company performed at the Darlington Dance Festival which took place at the Dolphin Centre, as the theatre is closed for restoration. The young dancers have also been invited to perform the same piece, a reworking of The Lion King based on traditional South African dance, at a drinks



reception to be held at the beginning of November by County Durham Community Foundation at Business Central.

54. Work has begun on pilot partnerships with Darlington schools which will test out a new schools offer being developed by the theatre team. The secondary partner is Carmel College and the primary partners are from the Education Village family. Part of the offer is a chance to have a Hard Hat Tour.
55. Hard Hat Tours are proving to be very popular and the current advertised tours have been sold out with a waiting list which has had to be capped at 80 people. This demonstrates that there is still a great deal of interest in the restoration of the theatre and this is also true of the media with the Northern Echo running a series of regular articles on the theatre. The Theatre Director was a guest on the Bob Fischer show on BBC Tees in September and a 'ghost' photograph taken in the theatre by the contractor went national. The BBC Inside Out Show are making a film about the restoration of the theatre which will be shown when the theatre reopens; again this may be of sufficient interest to be screened in other regions.
56. The theatre team supported Theatre Hullabaloo to deliver events in Darlington as part of their annual Takeoff Festival which commenced on 17 October.
57. In partnership with Creative Darlington, Jabberwock Market, Theatre Hullabaloo and Odd Man Out Theatre Company, the theatre team have submitted a bid to Arts Council England which will enable them to deliver an innovative programme of theatre events to develop and retain audiences for theatre in Darlington in the run up to the reopening of the theatre and the launch of the Hullaballoon. The outcome will be known in December.

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

58. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts organisation is currently working on a business case to operate the venue. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts secured:
  - (a) 2330 visits in July 2016
  - (b) 349 visits on 30 July 2016 (Summer Fair event)
  - (c) 2367 visits in August 2016
  - (d) 2410 visits in September 2016
59. The new term of ticketed adult art courses began week commencing 12 September with 21 courses. The Spring term is scheduled to begin week commencing 16 January 2017. Tutors manage their courses and take bookings directly. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts organisation promotes the course programme with support from the Council and tutors hire space at the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts to lead courses.
60. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts currently hosts the Openart Studio arts and well-being programme on Mondays and Fridays. The Openart Studio is expected to run until the end of January 2017. A variety of arts groups and individual artists continue to promote activities at The Bridge. The Community Arts Project is

currently based at the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts and use the facility Monday to Friday daytimes. In addition to housing events and activities, the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts co-ordinate an exhibition programme which does not require financial support, following initial investment from the Council strategic arts budget to create the exhibition space.

### **Head of Steam**

61. The Splendour of Steam, paintings by Stephen Bainbridge, and an exhibition of items from the North Eastern Railway Association (NERA) archive are currently on display. Stephen Bainbridge is coming in every week to work on a painting and talk to visitors.
62. A series of Events were held in September including a Model Railway weekend – 600 people attended and the Heritage Open Days where volunteers provided added engagement opportunities for visitors. The Victorian Family Fun Day was attended by 750 visitors

### **Bookstart Treasure Gifting**

63. The Bookstart Coordinator has begun visiting nurseries to deliver the Bookstart Treasure packs direct to children for this academic year. The Bookstart Treasure pack is for all three year olds and in Darlington is gifted via early Years Settings. All settings are offered a free library visit from the Bookstart and Library Literacy Co-ordinator which includes a story and rhyme session and often a related activity. Parents are welcome at the gifting and are also given the message to read every day with their child to promote key language development as well as a positive bonding experience. Children and families are encouraged to use their local library and are given details on the library offer.

### **Shakespeare –28 September 2016**

64. Darlington Libraries held two Shakespeare themed events for preschool children, one at Crown Street Library and one at Cockerton Library. The Midsummer Night's Dream adaptation featured puppets and songs to bring Shakespeare story alive for our younger audience.

### **Darlington Crematorium**

65. Darlington Crematorium participates in the ICCM (Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management) scheme, introduced throughout the UK, to recycle metals left as residue following the cremation process. Bereaved families provide written consent when making funeral arrangements to allow the metals to be recycled, or alternatively they can have the metals returned to them.
66. The metals are collected from the Crematorium periodically for separation, sorting and smelting and the high grade cobalt is sent to companies that manufacture new orthopaedic implants.

67. The scheme is self-funded but also creates an excess and member authorities can nominate local bereavement charities to receive a share. This year St Teresa's Hospice was the preferred nomination and has been awarded amount £4,336.

### **Environmental Services**

68. Members will be aware that via the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) significant cuts have recently been experienced by Street Scene services. A briefing was held with Members to details street cleansing schedules in future and a pack distributed so all Members could determine the level of frequency in their own ward. The new service commenced early October and is being closely monitored to ensure best use of available resource is maximised.

69. There have been no issues this past growing season in relation to grass cutting and plans are afoot for the forthcoming winter programme, when hedges, shrubs etc. are pruned. Upon commencement of the next growing season however, cuts to these services will also be implemented, resulting in the cutting cycle being extended.

70. As part of the MTFP the work previously undertaken by the dedicated Countryside team will now be undertaken by other officers within Environmental Services. In particular the team are focussing on community involvement and ways of getting the community to undertake maintenance of land and open space currently in Council ownership.

71. Again, as part of the MTFP a reduced service is now being operated within the Environmental Crime team. The focus now being on issues within rear lanes across the Borough, as well as abandoned vehicles and fly tips.

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