
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.

Schemes of Work

2. Highway maintenance schemes recently completed:
 - (a) Hurworth, Church Row – Carriageway resurfacing;
 - (b) Carriageway Micro Asphalt Programme – numerous throughout Borough;
 - (c) Snackgate Lane Heighington – Carriageway refurbishment; and
 - (d) B6279 Staindrop Road, approach to B6280 Carmel Road – Carriageway resurfacing.

Town Centre Parking

3. Charging has commenced for those people who have a blue badge and who park in an off street Council car park. Charging will be in line with the current charges, currently £1 per hour in short stay car parks and £4 per day for long stay car parks. The decision to charge blue badge holders was made in 2016 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
4. New accessible pay and display machines have now been installed in all car parks to make payment easier with machines accepting cash, cards with chip and pin and contactless. Pay by phone is also available in all car parks.

Rail Heritage

5. The Council acted as lead authority for Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) status on behalf of Durham County Council, Stockton Borough Council and Tees Valley Combined Authority for the Stockton and Darlington Railway. I am pleased to report that application was successful and is one of eight HAZ to be announced. The HAZ will provide focus, expertise and resources on the management, restoration and interpretation of the historic railway assets across the sub region.
6. A project team has now been formed to develop and deliver a rail regeneration project around North Road Station. The Tees Valley Combined Authority has led on the submission of an application for grant through the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund to facilitate the A1 Trust's ambitions as a first phase of the project. The outcome is anticipated in March. The regeneration plans for the main

North Road Station and Museum site are anticipated to emerge in the Spring of 2018.

7. The Skerne Bridge was recognised as one of the hundred places that tell the history of the County by Historic England.

Bishop Line Rail Service Enhancements

8. Improvements are taking place to rail services on the Bishop Line and address the issues raised by customers in the market research commissioned in June 2017. The two main improvements to the Bishop Line service are an hourly service, Monday – Saturday, which launched on 11 December 2017; and a clock-face timetable which is due in May 2018 (i.e. trains will depart at the same time each hour. e.g. 09.08, 10.08).
9. To increase awareness of this change we ran the Hourly Service campaign to ultimately get more people travelling on the Bishop Line route. The marketing campaign included two weeks of targeted social media advertising to people within a five mile radius of each of the Bishop Line stations; a mail drop to residential and business addresses within a one mile radius of each of the Bishop Line stations encouraging recipients to visit the Bishop Line website to find out more about the improvements; and posters at stations. The same eye catching graphics will be used in May 2018 to promote the clock-face timetable.

Bus/Rail Interchange

10. New vinyls, funded by Arriva, are to be installed at the two rail station bus stops on Parkgate. The vinyls will clearly identify the stops as serving Darlington station, and will be in keeping with the existing vinyls at both the town centre bus stops and coach stop. The vinyls are being installed this month. There is a bus from the rail station to the town centre every three minutes, and it is hoped that the vinyls will help to raise the profile of bus and rail interchange. Additional vinyls will also be installed at the town centre bus stops, which serve the rail station.

Shining Example Cycle Safety Campaign

11. The aim was to increase awareness amongst cyclists of their legal obligation to use lights at night and to improve actual and perceived cycle safety within the greater Tees Valley population. Partners included Durham Cleveland Police. A launch event was held at Cummins Engine plant in Darlington on 22 November with a second event held at Teesside Park on 1 December. Posters, flyers and slap bands were distributed to the Active Travel Hubs and local businesses across the Tees Valley and the campaign was supported by social media and online advertising. All collateral produced featured the message that cycling without lights at night is illegal. There was a call to action to visit the website for an opportunity to win lights.
12. Outcomes included coverage in the Northern Echo and an interview on the drive time show BBC Radio Tees on 1 December; 22,844 people reached with the

Facebook message; 1,543 visitors to the campaign page; and more than 200 competition entries.

Love to Ride – Winter Wheelers

13. The Campaign ran from 1 to 25 December 2017 with social media posts. The aim was to continue engagement with businesses and cyclists through the winter.

School Games and D Project

14. Darlington School Sport Partnership and the D Project have moved into new office space at Eastbourne Sports Complex. This is an exciting new partnership with both partners on site and will continue to bring additional business, new events, courses and physical activity sessions, to be delivered throughout 2018 at the sports complex.

Red Hall Healthy New Towns Project

15. A new project has started to try and encourage Red Hall residents and people from the surrounding area to engage in physical activity. There are four sessions being delivered free of charge to the participants, each week. The activities include Walking Football, Nordic Walking, Couch 2 5k and an Outdoor Boot Camp. The sessions are held in community spaces to remove any barriers when it comes to travel, and are held during school time to alleviate any childcare issues.
16. A consultation with the residents, in partnership with Groundwork, is about to take place to gain information on which other sessions they wish to partake in and to determine which day, time and area would be best for them.

Active Darlington Extension Project

17. The Active Darlington Project has engaged 364 participants since September 2017. 280 of those participants are still involved in the project with a throughput of 1881 and 2641.30 contact hours being delivered. 49 per cent of participants are female and 51 per cent male. Activities have included Battle Archery, Couch 25k, Badminton, Walking Football, Swimfit and Bowls.

Running – Couch 2 5K and 5K to 10K Clubs

18. The programme aims to encourage people of Darlington to jog on a regular basis, commencing with a 10 week programme led by a skilled running coach. The two programmes cover low experience and intermediate level runners by building their technique and confidence. The next block of sessions for both programmes started in the New Year, with the previous programme engaging twelve new runners.

Visual Arts

19. A 'Conversations in Painting' exhibition was held from 14 October until 9 November 2017, attracting over 2,000 visits. An associated programme of discussion events

took place, the first held at Crown Street Library, the second at the Platform-A gallery in Middlesbrough and the third at the Auxiliary Art Space in Stockton, which engaged around 100 visitors with significant discussion around artist led projects in Tees Valley.

20. The 'Another Side of Paul Dillon' exhibition was held next from 11 November to 14 December 2017, with an exhibition by Darlington Society of Arts which began on 16 December 2017. Exhibitions are currently being programmed for both the gallery in Crown Street Library and the Town Hall exhibition space.

Tees Valley

21. Following the announcement in 2015 of Tees Valley's intention to apply for UK City of Culture 2025 and the announcement of Coventry as UK City of Culture 2021, in November 2017 discussion has progressed around what the Tees Valley UK City of Culture proposal may aim to achieve; how people are engaged in shaping the proposal; and indicative starting themes, which people might consider as a starting points for the development of ideas.

Remembrance Parade

22. The Events Team assisted in the delivering of the Remembrance Parade held at Hollyhurst Road Cenotaph. The service was well attended.

Darlington Christmas Lights Switch On

23. Thousands turned up for this year's light switch on, supported by Feethams Darlington with TFM providing stage and PA requirements. Crowds were entertained by a fantastic programme of entertainment: carol singers from local schools and TFM's own breakfast duo Steve and Karen providing festive games, followed by the arrival of Santa in his Sleigh, accompanied by panto stars Bubbles and Snow White, of Darlington Hippodrome.

Darlington Hippodrome

24. The team returned to the restored Theatre on 9 November 2017. The launch event took place on 17 November and the ribbon was cut by myself and the Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sir Peter Luff, in front of an audience of invited guests. Official speeches were followed by a performance of a specially composed fanfare by students from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College and Carmel College with Durham Music Service and members of the Halle Orchestra. Young people from the Theatre's youth dance company and from Darlington Operatic Society also performed, and there was a presentation of a replica train plaque by Virgin Rail, who have named a train in the Theatre's honour.
25. Darlington Operatic Society helped the Theatre by holding a dress rehearsal on 20 December, so all facilities both front and back of house could be tested. It then performed its show Strictly Musicals 2 for the remainder of the week. All

performances were sold out.

26. On 18 December there was an opening of the exhibition in the Gillian Dickinson Gallery which is 'Graff At The Hipp' and is a graffiti exhibition by young artists who are looked after and which is inspired by the Theatre's heritage. The young people also achieved their Arts Award as part of the project.
27. ODDMANOUT Theatre Company and the Lab Theatre of Johannesburg have been engaged in a theatre project for young people from both Darlington and South Africa and have held workshops in the Hippodrome in the lead up to their performance of 'Encountering the Other', which took place in the Theatre on 27 November, exploring what it means to be a young woman in both countries.
28. The Pantomime Company were able to use the Theatre for its rehearsals for the first time this year using our new facilities and were very impressed not only with the front of house facilities but also with the new dressing rooms.
29. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs opened on 9 December and has been very well received. Sales also opened on that day for next year's pantomime, Aladdin.
30. Volunteers from our new collaboration with Darlington for Culture have been meeting regularly to catalogue items from our archive and will also be taking up roles as welcome hosts, helping to guide people round the building and explaining how the building has been restored to reflect our rich heritage.

The Hullabaloo

31. The Hullabaloo opened on 11 December. Ribbon cutting was carried out by the Leader with Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, and two pupils from Rydal Academy. Guests attended a performance of the Theatre Hullabaloo's Christmas production, Bear and Butterfly, and had the opportunity to explore Gillian Dickinson's creative play. Bear and Butterfly held performances up until New Year's Eve.

Head of Steam

32. The Head of Steam enjoyed a busy October with over 900 people visiting our very popular Halloween event. We also had a very busy half term with lots of fun activities and entertainment for all the family. Visitor figures in October and November 2017 were up: over 6600 visited the Museum during this period, compared to over 4600 visitors the previous year during October and November 2016.
33. We had 200 children visit in October and 345 visit in November; this is up from the same time last year. There were over 200 booked for December, with the majority visiting from Darlington, but we have also had visits from schools in Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Stockton

34. Volunteers worked for 142.5 hours in October and 124 hours in November supporting collections and events.

Grounds Maintenance

35. The Grounds Maintenance Team have commenced their winter pruning works to ensure all shrubs and bushes are taken back to appropriate levels.

Winter Maintenance

36. The new winter maintenance season commenced on 2 October and no significant problems have arisen to date. Arrangements are in place to deal with inclement weather as it happens.

Respect Your Street

37. A joint initiative between Darlington Borough Council, Durham and Darlington Police and Durham and Darlington Fire Services, launched on 2 December. The aim being to empower residents to take more pride in the area in which they live by undertaking litter picks, speaking with neighbours about environmental issues, not placing waste in rear lanes and the retrieval of wheeled bins following collections. Door-to-door knocking will be undertaken by officers of all services, as well as literature distributed.
38. The initiative will be monitored in the coming weeks/months to determine its success, with a view to potential roll out elsewhere.

Street Champions

39. The number of active Street Champions continues to grow with 49 now litter picking on a regular basis. Members who were involved in the initial pilot on the Member-led approach to volunteering have successfully engaged with residents getting more of them involved in street cleaning as well as leaf gathering activities in some of our parks/open spaces.
40. I am hoping this year that that all Members become actively involved in the Member-led approach, leading and supporting residents in their areas who want to get actively involved keeping our streets clean and our open spaces tidy and well presented. One key opportunity coming up is Litter Free Durham's Big Spring Clean which will take place from 19 February to 15 April 2018. For those Members who want to be involved there is support and help available from Council staff so let's make this the best year ever. During last year's event, 62 litter picks took place in Darlington with 1099 bags of litter collected by 1085 volunteers, who spent 1727.5 hours litter picking.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio