
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.

Highways and Transport

2. I reported an annual update on Highways and Transport from a national, regional and local perspective to Cabinet earlier this month. The report outlined performance, public satisfaction and reported on delivery in 2017/18 and what is planned for 2018/19.
3. Darlington has secured significant additional funding over and above the Local Transport Plan formulaic allocations through successful competitive bidding processes and securing funding from TVCA programmes. The transport capital programme is now £8.564m, circa £5.5m above LTP allocations. This this will facilitate growth and improve transport.

National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF)

4. The Council has been successful in a £3.3m bid to the Department for Transport National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF). The money will be spent on highway and transport improvements to alleviate congestion and unlock development sites around Central Park, Morton Palms and the Eastern Transport corridor.
5. The project will link to other planned investment to reduce congestion at the A66 Morton Palms roundabout; provide capacity improvements at the McMullen Road/Yarm Road roundabout and Haughton Road throughabout; and help develop the road links between Yarm Road and the Eastern Transport Corridor.
6. Works are programmed to start on McMullen Road/Yarm Road roundabout in April 2018. The scheme will provide a widened circularly lane to accommodate vehicles with the entrances onto the roundabouts widened to provide two lane approaches on all legs apart from Darlington Retail Park. This will be a complex project to deliver whilst trying to keep the roundabout open, which could result in traffic delays. We will try to minimise the disruption by programming the works in phases, but some of the electricity, telecommunications and other public utilities diversions may result in carriageway narrowing on multiple arms. The scheme is programmed to be complete within 12 months.

Transport Plan

7. The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) is developing its first Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan for consultation in the spring. This will also include a number of daughter strategies and action plans. This will link into national and sub-national strategy but will mean Darlington has to update the Local Transport Plan to reflect changes in functions and roles. Darlington and the other Tees Valley Authorities will produce Local Implementation Plans to reflect local priorities and policy with TVCA focussing on Strategic Transport. The Darlington Transport Plan will be developed in draft and be consulted upon with a view to a separate Cabinet and Council approval process to include the Plan in the policy framework for Darlington.

Tornado Way Naming Ceremony

8. The Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor, running from the throughabout on Haughton Road to the A66, has been renamed Tornado Way, in honour of the first steam engine to be built in Darlington since 1960, whose maiden journey took place in 2008.
9. The name was selected following a public vote conducted by the Council in September 2017, in which Tornado Way emerged as the clear winner with almost 50 per cent of the votes.

Red Hall Healthy New Towns Project

10. Groundwork have now completed its consultation work with over 100 residents at Red Hall responding on our new positive activity timetable. Activities will concentrate on working with families, especially mothers with young children and also teenagers and older adults. These will include: Yoga, Pilates, Walking, Couch 25k and Tai Chi.

Events

11. Darlington celebrated Chinese New Year on 17 February, with three performances of the traditional lion dance. Two of the performances took place on Joseph Pease Place and one in the Library.
12. The launch of the Darlington 10K took place at the beginning of March on Joseph Pease Place. We were joined on the day by principal sponsor Sherwoods, along with our other partners, Imagine Physiotherapy and the Northern Echo.
13. The 2018 Events programme has now been finalised, which builds on previous years' events in the town centre. There will be a number of key headline events, such as: Summer Food Market, 10K, Ingenious Festival, Dance Festival, Community Carnival, Live Music Event, Roundabout Theatre, Rhythm 'n' Blues Festival, Christmas Lights Switch-on, and Christmas Market. Alongside the headline events will be a number of smaller, regular events/activities taking place in the town centre, such as: Easter activities, Chinese New Year, Tea Dance and A

VIP event.

Darlington Hippodrome

14. The first pantomime in the restored Hippodrome took place from 9 December to 14 January and was very well received, with good ticket sales and excellent secondary sales through the new bars. The relaxed performance of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, which is a performance specially designed for people with autism, or anyone else who would find a typical theatre setting a challenging environment, was also very well received. Next year's pantomime, Aladdin, is already on sale and is selling well.
15. Sales for the new season's shows are good with some shows such as The Play That Goes Wrong, Blood Brothers and the Russian State Ballet looking to sell out.
16. Activities agreed and funded through our Heritage Lottery Fund grant are also progressing well. ANYWHERE, an interactive tour of the theatre, took place from 2 to 4 February. 567 people attended 28 performances of ANYWHERE. There were 19 people in the community cast and there were 12 costume volunteers and three student volunteers from Cleveland College of Art and Design.
17. A new exhibition went into the Gillian Dickinson Young People's Gallery which was called 'Schools at the Hipp' and celebrated work which took place at Marchbank School and Springfield Academy during the period when the theatre was 'dark'.
18. Volunteers from Darlington Culture Volunteers have been making great progress in cataloguing the theatre's archive. Other volunteers have taken up roles as welcome hosts and have also helped with tours of the building.
19. The project 'On the Street Where You Live', which aims to engage local residents and businesses with the theatre, is underway and being led by photographer Pete Robinson of Eye of the Tyne Photography. Participants will have the opportunity to tour the building and attend a workshop with the Pete. During March the photographs formed part of an exhibition in the Catherine Cookson Gallery.
20. A project is underway with eight young people on the Darlington Borough Council Employability Programme, they are being supported in developing the skills to create and deliver a tour of the theatre.
21. Tours of the theatre are proving very popular, with all of those currently available sold out and requests for more. In addition, there has been significant interest in hiring spaces for meetings and conferences, which generates income and is a nice way for people to be introduced to the new facilities in the theatre.
22. The BBC's 'Inside Out' team, led by producer Chris Jackson, followed the restoration of the theatre from the time it closed in May 2016 to the resulting film which was screened on 29 January. It finished with footage of the theatre with a full house for the pantomime and had some interesting vox pops.

The Hullabaloo

23. Theatre Hullabaloo delivered its first Christmas show 'Bear and Butterfly' which finished on 31 December. Their Creative Play installation 'The Enchanted Forest' is still running and is regularly attracting large numbers of under-fives and their parents/carers.
24. The Hippodrome has also delivered some shows for adult audiences including some comedy and the first in the series of Royal Geographical Society Lectures and there have been some large hires including a book launch organised by Darlington Building Society.

Visual Art

25. The Darlington Society of Arts exhibition, which ran from 16 December 2017 to 8 February 2018 had 2,992 visits to the exhibition. At the exhibition opening event, Darlington Society of Arts members voted on and awarded prizes to selected artists. On 10 February, Helen Winthorpe-Kendrick held an opening event for the 'Beginnings and Endings' exhibition, including an artist's talk, which attracted approximately 50 visitors to the gallery. This exhibition will be followed by a spring exhibition by the Community Arts Project, who recently exhibited in New York.
26. The group show of artists working at Dalkeith House and Oban Court, ran from 23 October 2017 to 9 February 2018, and showcased the creativity of residents at two of the Borough's extra care housing schemes. Dalkeith House and Oban Court support older people to live independently. Art classes began in 2016 and are run by local artist and volunteer, Alan Cooke. A new solo exhibition by local painter Roz Hall was installed at the Town Hall exhibition space on 10 February 2018. This is the 21st exhibition to be held in the Town Hall exhibition space, since the exhibition programme began in July 2014.
27. Creative Darlington supported the development of an original dance performance developed by artist Debbie Harbin and pupils from a Darlington school, which was shared in the Cornmill Centre, Darlington, as part of a Holocaust Memorial Ceremony on 29 January 2018. The event was co-ordinated by the Councils events service.
28. Creative Darlington supported the development of a successful application by Darlington based 'Tracks': a new music collective aiming to develop activities and services for the benefit of local musicians, music organisations and audiences living, working and visiting the area, which has secured a Grants for the Arts offer from Arts Council England. Tracks has organised the 'Noisy Daughters' event at The Hullabaloo in Darlington on 3 March 2018, with an aim to teach and inspire the next generation and lead the way to equality in music, with other programmes expected in 2018.

Libraries

29. Crown Street Library celebrated a Harry Potter night, an event for children on 1 February.
30. The event was attended by 130 people, many in themed dress. The library was decorated with a Hogwarts theme, with owls available for photographs and an hour long magic show.
31. Darlington Library is working with Carmel College to promote the online services to the students. Library staff visited the college to showcase its services to the students, with particular emphasis on the Driving Theory Test, E-magazines and the Digital Reference Library.

Grounds Maintenance

32. As we approach the end of the winter grounds maintenance period, staff report services are on target to prune/reduce all shrubs and bushes across the Borough.
33. Staff have started a path edging programme this year removing the over spill of grass on footpaths, which makes a huge impact aesthetically and feedback to date has been very positive.

Winter Maintenance

34. This winter saw a return to average/cold weather and as a result the amount of the salt used compared to last year (milder winter) was significantly more. At the time of writing, the roads had been treated on 177 occasions using 4,771 tonnes of salt.

LitterFree Durham and Darlington

35. The Big Spring Clean through LitterFree Durham and Darlington is well underway, having started on the 19 February and running up to 15 April. A significant number of events are taking place across the Borough, cleaning areas from parks to housing estates and cycle ways. There is still time for any Member who wants to organise a litter pick, just contact Pippa Smaling at South Park. Let's beat last year's totals of:
 - (a) 1070 volunteers who took part in 58 events across Darlington
 - (b) In excess of 1560 hours of volunteering completed, cleaning up streets, parks and green spaces.
 - (c) 1099 bags of litter collected in total, along with approximately three tonnes of bulky waste items.

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