



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

# **Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee Agenda**

10.00 am - Thursday, 12 June 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT

**Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.**

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting
2. To consider the dates and times of the meetings of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2025/2026 –
  - Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025
  - Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025
  - Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026
  - Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026
3. Declarations of Interest
4. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny held on 10th April 2025 (Pages 3 - 8)
5. Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan 2024-2025 –  
Report of the Executive Director – Environment, Highways, and Community Services.  
(Pages 9 - 48)
6. Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031 –  
Report of the Assistant Director – Environmental Services and Community Safety.  
(Pages 49 - 82)

7. Work Programme 2025/2026 –  
Report of the Assistant Director, Law and Governance.  
(Pages 83 - 96)
8. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are  
of an urgent nature and can be discussed at the meeting.
9. Questions

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'A. Wennington', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Amy Wennington**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Wednesday, 4 June 2025**

**Town Hall**  
**Darlington.**

**Membership**

Councillors Cossins, Coe, Mrs Culley, Keir, Mahmud, McGill, M Nicholson, Snedker, Walters and Dr. Riley

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact James McAllister, Democratic Officer, Resources and Governance, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays email: [james.mcallister@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:james.mcallister@darlington.gov.uk) or telephone 01325 403122

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 April 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors McGill (Chair), Cossins, Mrs Culley, Mahmud, M Nicholson, Snedker and Walters

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Coe, Keir and Dr. Riley,

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors McCollom and Garner (Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services), Booth (Private Sector Housing Manager), Neil Bowerbank (Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications), Andrew Casey (Head of Highway Network Management), Chris Knox (Head of Community Safety), Richardson (ASB Civic Enforce Operational Team Lead), Smalling (Parks Allotments and Countryside Officer) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

### **CLS30 INTRODUCTIONS/ATTENDANCE AT MEETING**

### **CLS31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Walters declared that he had a rental property in Darlington in relation to the Renters Rights Bill Paper. Councillor Snedker declared he was a member of the Friends of Stanhope Park and Councillor McGill declared he was a member of the Friends of the Denes in relation to the Management of Parks and Open Spaces Item.

### **CLS32 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2025**

**Submitted** – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2025.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### **CLS33 ALLOTMENT STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Assistant Director Environmental Services and Community Safety submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update to Members on how Darlington Borough Council managed the Council owned allotments and those transferred to 'self-managed' associations.

The report explained that Council developed an allotment strategy when the majority of allotments were in council ownership, the strategy had not been renewed as during the period of the strategy 13 of the 16 allotment sites transferred to a 'self-managed' association. It did explain that the principles in the strategy have continued to be used as a management framework to manage allotments going forward.

The report stated that there was an excess of 800 individual plots available across the Borough, both DBC and self-managed. There are also four privately owned allotment sites in the borough, the council manages three allotment sites; Arnold Road, Honeypot Lane and Parkside, the other remaining sites are managed and ran by committees.

Conversation ensued around the current status of allotments still managed by the Council, Members wanted to understand whether there were any plans in place to increase dwellings for future allotment sites.

Members wanted to know if any 106 funding is used towards allotment sites and if the Council is involved with any Allotment Forums. One of the self-managed sites was praised allocation of fresh produce to Food Banks across Darlington.

**AGREED** – That Members note the report.

#### **CLS34 MANAGEMENT OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

The Head of Environmental Services provided a presentation on the Management of Parks and Open Spaces to Members of the Committee.

The presentation explained the types of open spaces that are managed by Darlington Borough Council, such as formal manicured parks like South Park and designated local nature reserves such as Brankin Moor. It also stated the resources used to cover 665 hectares across the borough with a budget of £932,988.

It was advised that there are various volunteer and volunteer groups which support parks and open spaces such as the Darlington Forest Project, 17 x Friends Groups, South Park Foundation, Doves and 738 Street Champions. Other agencies involved in the management of parks and open spaces included Darlington Cares, Durham Wildlife Trust, Northumbrian Water, Etc.

The presentation gave an overview of the Health and Safety Management, named parks such as South Park, The Denes, etc are inspected twice per week. Other parks are inspected weekly and nature reserves are inspected on a monthly basis.

Conversation ensued around the maintenance of open spaces on new developments, whether this is the developer or Councils responsibility.

Members discussed invasive species and whether the Council have any involvement, it was explained that friend groups are aware of the current issues with Himalayan Balsam and licensing is required for the management of American Crayfish.

The Committee asked whether community service still operates around parks and opens spaces in Darlington. Vandalism was discussed during this item and how the light nights had spiked an increase in this particular crime, Members wanted to know whether implementing CCTV would help.

**AGREED** – That Members note the report.

### **CLS35 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

The Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with information on the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems.

The report referred to the points raised from the Quad of Aims submitted by Members, such as whether it was possible to configure existing systems spanning several service areas into a single point of access to accept reports from the public and from councillors, and automatically provide updates which included job numbers, allocation status and the date started or completed.

It was explained that the Council uses over 17 commercial systems to meet different service needs. The report focused on the systems that are in use to report antisocial behaviour issues, environmental issues, highway issues and housing repair requests. The report also explained how some system providers allow their customer portals to connect with 3<sup>rd</sup> party portals which would reduce the number of online accounts customers need to access council services, where this is possible the Council's in-house team have already developed the integrations.

Discussion ensued around the current CRM Systems the Council currently has, Members wanted to know whether other integrations within the systems in place would be possible and whether there is information anywhere to find the most relevant officers to speak when logging a report.

The Committee wanted to know whether timescales are tracked from the report had been logged to the work completed, other issues were identified from Members in certain systems.

Members asked if it is possible to take a photo of the issue you are too report rather than downloading the photo and uploading at a further stage and if the photo size limit could be increased.

**AGREED** – That Members noted the report and asked for this item to remain on the Work Programme.

### **CLS36 RENTERS RIGHTS BILL - DISCUSSION PAPER**

The Private Sector Housing Manager provided a discussion paper (previously circulated) and a presentation to the Committee around the Renter's Rights Bill.

The presentation included the Bill's aims were to give greater security and stability to renters to stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities and avoid the risk of homelessness. An overview of the 4 parts of the bill were explained as well as what is included in the bill such as the duty to enforce and report, the key measures and how the changes will be funded.

The discussion paper stated that the Private Rented Sector had now stabilised from its

increase in the 15 years to 2021. 10.45% of households in Darlington are rented from the Local Authority, 5.76% are rented from a housing association and 18.47% are privately rented. The proportion of privately rented properties in Darlington was explained to be above the nation average and that of the Northeast.

Included in the paper was the latest census data (2021) which indicated that the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in Darlington was approximately 9035 properties. The Council did not have the details of the individual properties, but the census data is broken down into Ward data, Northgate Ward was detailed with the highest proportion of privately rented with 1,118 (50%) properties.

Discussion ensued around the funding of the renter's rights bill and how this would affect officers at Darlington Borough Council.

**AGREED** – That Members note the report and recommended this item to return.

**CLS37 CONSULTATION ON THE RENEWAL OF THE TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER AND INTRODUCTION OF A BOROUGH WIDE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER**

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services and Community Safety submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided information on the Consultation of the Renewal of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and Introduction of a Borough Wide Public Space Protection Order. A final report would be presented to Cabinet in June to consider and make a decision.

The existing PSPO covered the Town Centre and came into force on the 2 July 2022, it is due to expire on the 1 July 2025. The current town PSPO provides the Council with the powers to deal with the following: Persons acting in an anti-social manner who continue to drink alcohol in public places where are not licensed premises, after they have been asked to stop. Persons acting in an antisocial manner who fail to surrender any alcohol in their possession in a public place and not a licensed premises, when asked to do so. As well as begging and threatening behaviour.

The report explained that the Council must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that certain conditions had been met to renew or introduce a PSPO, officers reviewed the evidence and are satisfied that the required conditions had been met to consider the renewal of the order.

It also explained that there are some new considerations that are to be consulted, it was proposed to extend the area covered by the PSPO to include Victoria Road from the Station entrance area to Feethams due to the experiences of ASB covered by the PSPO. There are two new activities that the Council receives complaints about in the Town Centre that cause issues to the public and business which are Feeding Birds and Anti-Social use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards within the Town Centre.

The report also detailed that other authorities have borough wide PSPO's for certain circumstances, based on experience and evidence from Civic Enforcement Team this could be considered for certain issues because of the impact on communities, financially and service delivery. The proposed powers to deter and assist with the management are Begging, Side Waste and Stray Dogs.

Discussion ensued around the current issues with pigeons in the Town Centre and how this can affect the cleanliness, Members wanted to understand the enforcement around of cycling in the Town Centre and whether this would only affect any antisocial behaviour.

Members asked for further clarification around begging and whether fines would be introduced as well as repeat offends for stray dogs.

**RESOLVED** – That Members noted the report and approved consultation on the renewal of a revised Town Centre PSPO as outlined in this report and the introduction of a Borough wide PSPO as outlined in this report.

### **CLS38 RESIDENTS PARKING ZONE POLICY UPDATE**

The Assistant Director of Highways and Capital Projects submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the Resident's Parking Policy that the Council operates to prioritise on street parking for residents in areas where there is also a demand for visitor parking.

In addition to this Members submitted a Quad of Aims to consider the implications of vehicles of different sizes and emissions when parking within the zones.

The Quad of Aims identified the following outcomes: To provide an incentive to use and ownership of smaller, more sustainable vehicles that will have a positive impact on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Road Maintenance Budget, provide additional funding for transport policy objectives, reduce severity of road collision injuries and inform any future review of on-street and council car park differential charging.

It was explained that the existing policy had been in place for a number of years and is subject to a review to ensure it meets its current needs. At current there are 16 RPZ zones within the Borough of Darlington. Parking is restricted to permit holders only during the hours of operation which are generally between 8am-6pm seven days a week. Of the 16 zones, 13 are charged for permits at £40 per 12 months, £24 per six months and £12 for a temporary 3 month permit.

The report also included the current policies which influence the Resident Permit Zones, the current Resident Parking Policy, current schemes such as how the Darlington Scheme compares to other Local Authority RPZs, Enforcement and the proposal for a consultation to be undertaken with relevant Ward Members, eligible residents and businesses.

Discussion ensued around how visitor permits would work and ward issues with the enforcement team. Members asked if there is any additional enforcement staff scheduled for the future. The committee also discussed how some of the markings for permit zones have faded which can affect parking.

**AGREED** – That Members note the report.

### **CLS39 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest be included in the Work Programme for the next municipal year.

**RESOLVED** – That Members note the Work Programme

**CLS40 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (IF ANY) WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR OF THIS COMMITTEE ARE OF AN URGENT NATURE AND CAN BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING.**

**CLS41 QUESTIONS**



**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**12 June 2025**

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**DARLINGTON CULTURAL STRATEGY ACTION PLAN FOR 2024/2025**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update members on progress delivering the priorities in the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 and the 2024/25 Action Plan.
2. For members to consider the Action Plan for 2025/26.

**Summary**

3. In the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 (Appendix 1) there is a commitment to submit annual Action Plans for consideration by Scrutiny Members. This report presents a summary of progress for 2024/25 alongside the Action Plan for 2025/26.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that:
  - (a) Members note the update on progress on the 2024/25 Action Plan
  - (b) Members consider the Action Plan for 2025/26.

**Dave Winstanley**  
**Executive Director- Environment, Highways and Community Services**

Author: Stephen Wiper (EXT 6051)

## Background Papers

### Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026

Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan delivery for 2024 to 2025 and Action Plan for 2024 to 2026.

Stephen Wiper: 07970184533

Council Plan	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 has set out how the Council will deliver its cultural ambitions.
Addressing inequalities	One of the priorities within Darlington's Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is for Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture.
Tackling Climate Change	This report has no significant impact on Carbon Impact and Climate Change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	There is no impact on the Council's efficiency agenda.
Health and Wellbeing	Culture can have a positive impact on Health and Wellbeing
S17 Crime and Disorder	Cultural activities can have a positive impact on crime and disorder by engaging individuals in positive activity.
Wards Affected	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 covers all wards in Darlington Borough.
Groups Affected	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is focused on the population of Darlington Borough, and also considers those working in, visiting or considering establishing or relocating business within Darlington Borough.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no impact on the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This report is not a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an Urgent Decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2026 and associated Action Plan for 2024/25 considers cultural access for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Cultural services routinely work with colleagues in Children's Services to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers access to cultural provision through the Holiday Activities and Food programme, the In2 programme and programmes involving the Virtual School.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

- The Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 was approved in 2022/23 and is attached at **Appendix 1**. The strategy was informed by research, including the previous Darlington focused Arts Enquiry report, development work since that date and discussion with stakeholders including: Arts Council England, Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Creative Darlington Board.

6. The main drivers for Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 are to focus our cultural vision and assist advocacy and fundraising to take forward cultural priorities within the timespan of the document. The Strategy has subsequently been shared with various parties to support successful applications for activities and commissions in Darlington borough.
7. The strategy uses a definition of Culture as set out by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which covers the following areas:
  - (a) Arts (including visual arts, literature, music, theatre and dance)
  - (b) Architecture
  - (c) Crafts
  - (d) Creative Industries
  - (e) Design
  - (f) Heritage
  - (g) Historic Environment
  - (h) Museums and Galleries
  - (i) Libraries
  - (j) Archives
  - (k) Film
  - (l) Broadcasting and Media
8. The vision of Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is that Darlington will be a place in 2026 and beyond where culture enriches lives, involves people and is central to identity and prosperity.
9. The five priorities which Darlington Cultural Strategy seeks to address between 2022 and 2026 are:
  - (a) To creatively celebrate Darlington's contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway.
  - (b) For Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth.
  - (c) For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people.
  - (d) For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre.
  - (e) For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages.
10. Numerous council services and partners contribute to taking the vision and these priorities forward, including Darlington Hippodrome, the Heritage and Culture Fund (Creative Darlington) budget, the Library Service, the Museums Service, Town Centre Partnership and Events Service alongside additional services for adults (e.g. The Community Arts Project) and children (e.g. The Virtual School's longstanding support for cultural engagement involving Care Experienced Children in the borough), as do programmes which the Council contributes (e.g. the S&DR200 Festival).

11. Most of the cultural provision delivered or supported by the Council contributes to council priorities of economic and/or social concerns including place promotion, community cohesion, education and well-being, and the Council frequently works in partnership with different enterprises, groups and organisations to take things forward. Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 clarifies our priorities and is helpful in identifying opportunities for joint working with other agencies.
12. Within Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 a commitment was made to present detailed annual Action Plans to Members on an annual basis, and to share annual reports on progress.
13. Attached at **Appendix 2**, is an update on progress on the 2024/25 Action Plan and the Action Plan for 2025 to 2026.
14. Considerable progress was made in 2024/25 in addressing particular priorities.
  - (a) The Hopetown Darlington visitor attraction opened to the public.
  - (b) The Stockton and Darlington Railway Community Grants Fund was launched and funding awarded.
  - (c) The S&DR200 Festival programme was launched.
  - (d) Darlington Library provided an extensive offer and programme of activities throughout the year.
  - (e) A diverse programme of Town Centre events and festivals delivered.
  - (f) Darlington Hippodrome attracted significant audiences for performance and participation in programmes.

# Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council



# Darlington Cultural Strategy

## 2022-2026

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### **Section 1**

#### **Darlington, People, Place and Culture**

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What is culture

Current assets

Cultural highlights since 2016

Impact of the pandemic

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### **Section 2**

#### **Vision, priorities, opportunities and how this strategy will impact on Darlington's culture**

Vision

Priorities

Opportunities

How the strategy will impact on Darlington's culture

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### **Section 3**

#### **Where the Cultural Strategy sits and how it is actioned**

Where the Cultural Strategy sits

Equality

Sustainability

How we will act on the Cultural Strategy and where we aim to be in 2026

# Section 1

## Darlington, People, Place and Culture

### 1.1 Introduction

Darlington is known for many things including its railway heritage, connectivity, a fantastic theatre offer and as a distinctive and attractive town with a strong market tradition. It is an ingenious and welcoming place where commercial, industrial, scientific and social innovations have been nurtured and supported.

Darlington is located within County Durham for ceremonial purposes and Darlington Borough Council was established as a unitary authority on 1 April 1997 as the administrative authority. Tees Valley Combined Authority was established in 2016 to further the sustainable and inclusive growth of the economy of the Tees Valley and their remit includes Darlington.

Looking to the future, Darlington Borough Council recognises economic growth as its priority in delivering a long-term vision for the borough and the importance of working alongside Tees Valley Combined Authority to support economic growth. Darlington Borough Council aims to provide the opportunity for everyone to access a good job and a good home and is committed to maximising the potential of young people, working with communities and supporting the most vulnerable in the borough, so people can play their part in Darlington's success.

Darlington is bordered by County Durham to the north and west, Stockton-on-Tees to the east and North Yorkshire to the south, along the line of the River Tees. The borough includes a number of villages and settlements. This Cultural Strategy is informed by dialogue with local people and reflects Darlington Borough Council's recognition of the importance of economic growth within the Delivering Success for Darlington Council Plan to 2023.

Darlington's Cultural Strategy takes note of the vision and drivers of national strategies, including Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy to 2030, the North East Cultural Partnership's Case for Culture strategy to 2030 and the priorities of the Tees Valley Combined Authority, as befits an outward looking place. It recognises the importance of the contributions made by people from the private, public and voluntary sectors to Darlington's current cultural offer and their potential to further develop Darlington as a Creative Place.

Within Let's Create, Arts Council England advise they will *'focus a large part of our development role on ensuring that children and young people are able to fulfil their creative potential, and access the highest-quality cultural experiences where they live, where they go to school and where they spend their free time.'*



Darlington's Cultural Strategy to 2026 is informed by our longstanding engagement with agencies including Durham Music Service and Theatre Hullabaloo, who have secured national recognition for their work with children and young people. We plan to continue to work with these partners and to learn from Darlington Hippodrome's In2 programme to ensure that children, young people, their families and the adults in their lives have opportunities to experience Darlington as a creative place.

Our Cultural Strategy for 2022 to 2026 is focused on maximising the social and economic benefits which culture can bring to people across Darlington Borough, including residents, visitors, those working and investing in Darlington. It considers the fantastic opportunities Darlington has via investment through the Towns Fund, through the expected upgrade of Darlington Station, the Rail Heritage Quarter and celebrations in 2025 of the bicentenary of the birth of the modern passenger railway marking the momentous journey of Locomotion No. 1 on the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825.

## 1.2 What is culture and why does it matter?

This strategy uses a definition of Culture as set out by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which covers the following areas:

- arts (including visual arts, literature, music, theatre and dance)
- architecture
- crafts
- creative industries
- design
- heritage
- historic environment
- museums and galleries
- libraries
- archives
- film
- broadcasting and media

We recognise this definition of Culture does not include Sports and Leisure, which are considered in other strategies covering Darlington and will support ongoing dialogue between both sectors.

Recently published national research shows the value of culture to the UK economy, and that while the arts and culture industry receives public funding it makes a significant contribution to the exchequer through VAT, corporation tax, income tax and national insurance and is highly productive. There are direct economic contributions made by the sector alongside the indirect impact (demand supported through supply-chain purchases) and the induced impact (demand supported through the wider spending of employees).

*In 2018, the arts and culture industry supported £64bn of turnover, £29bn of GVA, 461,000 FTE jobs and £16bn of employee compensation in the UK economy.*

The Contribution of the arts and culture industry to the UK economy report by the Centre for Economics and Business Research for Arts Council England, May 2020

Culture plays an important role in making Darlington a vibrant place, it adds life and energy to the borough, helps define Darlington as place and provides opportunities for people to explore their own potential, enjoy themselves, work together and to explore and enrich the world.

Culture should be seen as not only the commissioning of arts and the production of events, but also as a tool; that builds upon the heritage of the area; that builds a shared vision and identity for the area that is steeped in history and has a wealth of cultural assets; that builds the local economy particularly in the context of tourism and creative industries; that improves the local quality of life and encourages engagement in community activities; and that provides new ways of tackling challenges around health and well-being.

Local Government Association: Cultural Strategy in a box

### 1.3 Current Assets

Culture harnesses, nurtures and shares the talents of the people involved, bringing economic and social benefits to places. The Forum Music Studios is a major cultural asset in Darlington, which attracts visitors alongside highly acclaimed artists and has launched and supported many musical careers through the facilities and services it provides whilst housing activities that bring people together. As a Community Benefit Society, they have contributed to the growth of the UK Music Industry and create a first-class music experience at a grassroots level that inspires people of all ages and demographics to engage with music through participation in a range of social, education, enterprise or entertainment activities. Since they began trading as a social enterprise in 2010, they advise they have introduced over three million pounds into the local economy, over half a million of which has been grant funding from bodies including National Lottery providers and local funding and donations, whilst generating income through the provision of services, activities and reinvesting into the cultural economy of Darlington.

Darlington for Culture currently promote and support culture through advocacy and initiatives including Darlington Cultural Volunteers, their Small Grants programme and network. They came into being in late 2010 and became established as a co-operative in 2011. Members include representatives from arts and community groups from across the borough, and networks and organisations including Darlington for Culture play a significant part in advocating for culture and making things happen.

*‘Darlington for Culture has become an important organisation through its ability to provide a network through which the arts can be promoted, supporting Creative Darlington.’*

On With the Show, Supporting Local Arts & Culture, Dr Claire Mansfield, New Local Government Network

Going forward to 2025 and beyond we recognise the importance of bringing together voluntary, public and private sector parties, including Darlington for Culture, to make Darlington Borough the best creative place it can be.

Many people, organisations and enterprises animate our cultural offer. Those involved include actors, architects, archivists, artists, broadcasters, crafts people, ceramicists, choreographers, comedians, creatives, curators, dancers, designers, directors, filmmakers, librarians, musicians, performers, poets, photographers, producers, readers, singers, technicians, writers, not forgetting audience members, participants and volunteers, the list goes on. A selection of Darlington's current cultural assets in terms of buildings, resources and events is shown below.

### **Museums and Galleries**

- The Head of Steam railway museum
- Crown Street Art Gallery in Darlington Library

### **Theatres**

- Darlington Hippodrome
- The Hullabaloo
- The Majestic

### **Cinemas**

- Odeon Luxe
- Vue Cinema

### **Heritage**

- Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter
- Darlington Market
- A section of the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone
- Tees Cottage Pumping Station
- There are 20 archaeological sites within the borough registered as Scheduled Monuments

### **Libraries**

- Darlington Library
- Cockerton Library

### **Music Venues**

- The Forum Music Studios

### **Parks and Green Spaces**

- 16 parks (including South Park)
- 10 nature reserves

## Festivals and Events

- (In 2025) the bicentenary of the 1825 passenger journey on the Stockton & Darlington Railway
- Darlington Arts Festival
- Darlington Community Carnival
- Darlington Food Festival
- Darlington Pride
- Darlington R 'n' B Festival
- Last Train Home and Mish Mash music festivals

## Visual Arts

- The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts
- Gallerina

### 1.4 Cultural highlights from 2016 to 2021



Darlington Hippodrome reopened in 2017 post restoration



The Hullabaloo, home of Theatre Hullabaloo, opened 2018



The Stockton & Darlington railway Heritage Action Zone announced in 2018

There have been many highlights in Darlington's cultural offer in recent years including:

- The opening of the Vue cinema in Darlington in 2016
- The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts secured charitable status, focusing on the connections between art and health (particularly mental health)
- The restoration and reopening of Darlington Hippodrome in 2017
- The opening of The Hullabaloo, home of Theatre Hullabaloo, in 2018
- Stockton & Darlington Railway declared a Heritage Action Zone in 2018
- The Enjoy Darlington campaign launched, and a cohesive Town Centre events programme promoted
- Commercial concerts promoted successfully at The Darlington Arena
- Refurbishment of the Odeon Luxe cinema in Darlington
- Darlington Borough Council allocating capital to refurbish Darlington Library

- Darlington securing Purple Flag status in 2020 and the Town's nightlife deemed one of the safest in the North-East
- Tees Valley Combined Authority allocating budget to create a Rail Heritage Quarter in Darlington which is expected to become a significant visitor attraction in Tees Valley by 2025
- Darlington securing £22.3 million in 2020 through the Town's Fund to support regeneration schemes in Darlington including the acquisition of key properties on Northgate, to protect heritage assets within the Rail Heritage Quarter, including supporting the creation of a 26-mile walking and cycling route along the track-bed of the original Stockton and Darlington Railway
- The re-opening of Cockerton Library following a refurbishment programme and Darlington Library refurbishment underway in 2021/22
- Support secured for sector recovery and adaptation during the Covid 19 pandemic



Darlington secured Purple Flag status in 2020



Cockerton Library reopened in 2021



Restoration of Darlington Library underway in 2022

## 1.5 Impact of the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably impacted on Darlington's culture and the lives of those providing services or employed in the cultural sector. The pandemic necessitated temporary closure of cultural venues and facilities and either cancellation or postponement of cultural programme. Government announced the largest ever one-off investment in UK Culture of £1.57 billion. Several Darlington residents secured support through Arts Council England's Emergency Funds and The Forum Music Centre and Darlington Hippodrome secured support from Arts Council England's Culture Recovery Programme.

North East Culture Partnership commissioned research to assess the regional impact of the pandemic on the sector, which has helped to identify prevailing issues. Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen announced the establishment of a new, independent and sector-led Task Force to advise on the development and delivery of a £1million Recovery Programme for the Visitor Economy and Cultural Industries sectors through Tees Valley Combined Authority in June 2020, and a number of programmes have been delivered and are in development. Darlington Borough Council led programmes to support resilience and recovery during the pandemic. It is expected that national, regional, sub regional and local bodies will continue to monitor recovery and that further research will inform measures taken to encourage recovery.

## Section 2

### Vision, priorities, opportunities and how this strategy will impact on Darlington's culture

The Cultural Strategy for 2022 – 2026 will look to build on momentum gained in the last decade and will be reviewed regularly. The vision and priorities for investment within the 2022 – 2026 timeframe are shown below.

#### 2.1 Vision:

*Darlington will be a place in 2026 and beyond where culture enriches lives, involves people and is central to identity and prosperity.*

#### 2.2 Priorities

- 1 To creatively celebrate Darlington's contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway.
- 2 For Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth.
- 3 For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people.
- 4 For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre.
- 5 For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages.

#### 2.3 Opportunities to 2026

In recent years, Darlington has worked with Tees Valley Combined Authority and other parties to secure investment to create a Rail Heritage Quarter around the current site of the Head of Steam railway museum,



Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter and 2025 programme fast approaching

adjoining North Road Station, which is expected to open in advance of 2025 and to become a significant and distinctive visitor attraction in Tees Valley. The Rail Heritage Quarter will be one of the North East's tourism assets and a catalyst for regeneration in the Northgate area.

Work is also underway to preserve and promote public engagement with rail heritage within the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone. The original track-bed of the railway runs 26 miles from County Durham, through Darlington, to Stockton and several programmes of work are moving forward to safeguard this heritage and build public engagement.



Darlington was involved in a significant programme of events in 1925 to mark the centenary of this historic journey, which is the birth of the modern passenger railway, and again in the Stockton & Darlington Railway Pageant 1975. Given the importance of railway heritage to Darlington, and the worldwide significance of railways, we aim for the 2025 bicentenary to celebrate and safeguard our heritage and to leave a legacy for people in the borough and the wider area working with partners. The bi-centenary events programme is expected to be of significant scale and to attract visitors to Darlington, Tees Valley. and County Durham. Subject to budget the programme may include live steam and motive power, the exhibition of early steam locomotives, education projects, knowledge sharing activity, community events and large scale outdoor cultural events.

Darlington secured a significant Town's Fund Award in 2020 which is supporting significant regeneration activity within Darlington and will help develop the Rail Heritage Quarter as a visitor attraction and to protect key heritage assets. It is expected Darlington Borough Council will seek support from other government programmes for regeneration and that culture can be a component of these programmes subject to successful application, through protecting heritage and improvements to the public realm.

Culture is making a strong contribution to our Town Centre offer, and the Enjoy Darlington and Enjoy Tees Valley campaigns, and regular festivals and events play a part in attracting people to visit Darlington and add value to their visits, whether residents, tourists or people working here. Culture is contributing to encouraging extended visits and to the vibrancy of the daytime and evening economy, and we will continue to explore opportunities to share local, Tees Valley, regional and national events with people in Darlington.

Darlington Borough Council expects to work closely with Tees Valley Combined Authority in addressing shared cultural

priorities up to 2026 and beyond, and recognises the importance of culture as a high growth sector of the economy, in encouraging sustainable growth, encouraging investment, supporting place promotion, and contributing efficiently to agendas including education, health and quality of life. Tees Valley Combined Authority area was identified by Arts Council England in 2021 amongst 54 priority places for their focus during the first period of their Let's Create strategy 2020 - 2030.



Enjoy Darlington – Town Centre

Darlington is the home of pioneering theatre company, Theatre Hullabaloo, who have recently delivered successful programmes engaging parents, babies and young children to support positive health outcomes. Darlington Borough Council has commissioned collaborative programmes including In2 led by Darlington Hippodrome and work involving Blue Cabin and our Virtual School, which help to maximise the potential of young people. We will explore opportunities to extend programmes of this nature working with Tees Valley Combined Authority and other partners in the health and education sectors.

Darlington Hippodrome has developed significant programmes to engage residents in Darlington's theatre heritage and we intend to maintain this work and to build on successful initiatives to make Darlington Hippodrome a place for everyone. Alongside celebrating the heritage of theatre in Darlington we intend to develop the reach of other assets including Darlington Library by exploring their heritage with people in Darlington.

Tees Valley has established a well-earned reputation for innovative practice in film, animation and creative digital practice. The Northern School of Art, Teesside University and Northern Film + Media through Tees Valley Screen are working alongside various partners, with Tees Valley Combined Authority support, to promote Tees Valley as a fantastic location for film and television productions. Successful film and television productions have provided significant economic returns for the locations in which they are housed, including employment and place promotion. Darlington has distinctive locations for film and television productions to utilise, given our railway, engineering and agricultural heritage and as a market town. Popular television series 'Vera' and films, including 'Atonement' and '1917', have utilised locations in Tees Valley successfully. We applaud the work undertaken in recent years in developing production facilities within Tees Valley, working with the sector to support progression routes and retain talent, and to attract film and television productions here.

## **2.4 How the strategy will impact on Darlington's culture**

We will use this strategy to inform:

- Where Darlington Borough Council focuses resources
- Our engagement with people living in Darlington Borough around culture
- Darlington Borough Council's engagement with Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund, North East Cultural Partnership and Tees Valley Combined Authority and other bodies
- Our fundraising strategy

This Cultural Strategy has been informed by dialogue with people resident in, working in, visiting and invested in the borough, and by strategic priorities in Darlington, Tees Valley, the North East of England and Nationally, given Darlington's connectivity and outward looking instinct.



# Section 3

## Where the Cultural Strategy sits and how it is actioned

### 3.1 Where the Cultural Strategy sits

The Cultural Strategy is informed by Darlington's Borough Council's Delivering success for Darlington Council Plan to 2023, by Tees Valley Combined Authority's work on culture and tourism, by the North East Cultural Partnership's Case for Culture and by Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy to 2030.

**Darlington Borough Council's Council Plan 2020 – 2023 Delivering success for Darlington vision sees:**

*Darlington is a place where people want to live and businesses want to locate, where the economy continues to grow, where people are happy and proud of the borough and where everyone has the opportunity to maximise their potential.*

It is focused on growing Darlington's Economy by delivering more sustainable well-paid jobs, more businesses and more homes and commits Darlington Borough Council to supporting economic growth by keeping the borough clean, safe, healthy, sustainable, well-planned and on the move, whilst valuing our heritage and culture.

The Council's overarching focus on growing Darlington's Economy feeds into commitments to:

- Maximise the potential of our young people by working with partners to maximise educational achievement, working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential, working at a Tees Valley level to match jobs with skills and training.
- Work with communities to maximise their potential by maximising the benefits of a growing economy for all communities, targeting services where they are most needed, working with partners and working with communities.
- Support the most vulnerable in the borough by providing care and support when needed, working with people to build on their strengths to maximise their potential, working with partners.

Darlington's Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2026 is informed by and aligned to the vision and commitments above.

**Tees Valley Combined Authority** are leading significant work around Culture and Tourism and Darlington Borough Council and organisations and enterprises working in Darlington, regularly engage with Tees Valley Combined Authority around Culture and Tourism. Through its Culture and Tourism programme, the Combined Authority is currently taking the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Programme forward and has allocated significant budget to support development of a Rail Heritage Quarter in Darlington. Tees Valley Combined Authority is included amongst 54 Priority Places that Arts Council England will prioritise working with between 2021 and 2024. Darlington Borough Council engages with Tees Valley Combined Authority around culture through a variety of mechanisms, including Creative Darlington board meetings.

**North East Culture Partnership's The North East Case for Culture 2015-2030** vision is *'...a positive statement of ambition for the next 15 years, building on the strengths of our diverse communities and pointing to the opportunities for further investment in arts and heritage right across the North East'.*

North East Culture Partnership's five aspirations address Participation, Children and Young People, Talent and Progression, Economic Value and Quality of Life. The partnership is backed by the region's arts and heritage sector, the business and private sector, North East universities, the further education sector and the twelve local authorities in the region including Darlington Borough Council. They have reached out beyond the cultural sector to universities, business networks, the health and well-being sector, and organisations working with children and young people.

**Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy 2020 – 2030** will inform their work with the arts, libraries and museums and contains their vision that *'by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences'.* The strategy seeks three outcomes, Creative People, Cultural Communities and A Creative and Cultural Economy and recognises the importance of involving people in shaping culture, the value of culture to communities and the economic value of the sector and the importance of leadership and diversity. Arts Council England have shared four investment principles for the first period of the Let's Create strategy, these being Ambition and Quality, Dynamism, Environmental Responsibility and Inclusivity and Relevance.

Arts Council England have a National Portfolio of Organisations they support through regular funding, co-ordinate support for Music Hubs, lead strategic programmes and manage Project Funding (Lottery). Within Darlington as of May 2021 Theatre Hullabaloo are the sole Darlington based National Portfolio Organisation, although Darlington Borough is within the remit served by Tees Valley Museums who are a National Portfolio Organisation. Darlington Borough is also served by Durham Music Hub, who receive support through Arts Council England.

### 3.2 Equality

Darlington Borough Council aims to promote equality in everything it does. This means treating people fairly, valuing diversity and removing barriers that prevent people being able to fully participate in public life and fulfil their potential. Much of the local authority's work, together with its partners, is focused on narrowing the gaps in health, attainment, prosperity and quality of life between more vulnerable and disadvantaged people and the Darlington community as a whole. Darlington's Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2026 embodies the local authority commitment to equality in various measures, including supporting diverse public events, festivals and programmes and continued support for bespoke activity and the promotion of opportunities for people with protected characteristics.

Darlington Borough Council supports a rich array of cultural activity involving people with different protected characteristics and consults with appropriate partners to ensure that equality underpins our cultural planning and service provision. Programmes including the Darlington Hippodrome led In2 are engaging children in diverse areas of Darlington including Northgate, while free Town Centre festivals like the Mish Mash music festival and Darlington Pride Weekender, celebrate the rich diversity within Darlington. Between 2022 and 2026 this commitment to equality will continue to inform the various cultural services and programmes we provide. Our Cultural Strategy seeks to provide opportunities for everyone including minority groups ensuring all residents can experience Darlington's rich and vibrant cultural programmes. Darlington's cultural offer is distinctive and ever evolving and we welcome and appreciate people from all ethnicities and nationalities contribution to this.

We will support diversity within Darlington Borough Council's cultural programmes and build or maintain productive relationships with individuals, enterprises, organisations and services who develop provision for people in Darlington. For example, as a Corporate Parent we expect to continue to engage with registered charities, like Blue Cabin, who nurture meaningful relationships between children and young people with experience of the care system, and the adults and organisations who play a significant part in their lives. We will work with community based creative organisations and enterprises who value equality, and will promote funding opportunities like Darlington for Culture's small grants programme widely, which has supported Chinese and Polish cultural events engaging people in Darlington in recent years.

### **3.3 Sustainability**

Darlington Borough Council is also committed to promoting a sustainable approach, which means balancing different, and often competing, needs against an awareness of the economic, social and environmental limitations that we face as a society. In July 2019, Members acknowledged the threat of climate change and passed a motion committing Darlington Borough Council to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Plans to develop or refurbish cultural assets within Darlington by 2026 are informed by our commitment to sustainability. For example, the refurbishment programme at Darlington Library will incorporate improvements to the energy efficiency of heating and lighting the building, and plans for Darlington's Rail Heritage Quarter pay due consideration to those travelling on foot, bicycle, via public transport and automobile.

### **3.4 How we will act on the Cultural Strategy and where we aim to be in 2026**

Darlington Borough Council will implement the Cultural Strategy working with partners including Tees Valley Combined Authority, North East Culture Partnership, organisations including Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund, and sharing information on progress through the Creative Darlington Board and Darlington Partnership as appropriate.

Detailed annual action plans will be presented to Darlington Borough Council on an annual basis. Annual reports on progress will be made to the Creative Darlington Board, which includes board members from Darlington for Culture, Darlington Partnership and Arts Council England. Darlington Borough Council will consider climate change and other environmental concerns when taking forward these action plans.

Subject to our success in taking forward the Cultural Strategy by 2026 and beyond Darlington will be where culture enriches lives, involves people and plays a central role in the identity and prosperity of the borough.

We will have creatively celebrated the birth of the modern railways in 1825 and the bicentenary celebrations in 2025, investment in our Rail Heritage Quarter and the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Action will have left a positive legacy for the borough, Tees Valley and the North East region. Darlington will have a distinctive, accessible and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth. Culture will be a significant component of our vibrant Town Centre offer, enriching the lives of those living, working or visiting the borough, contributing to place promotion and encouraging investment here. Darlington's theatres and cultural assets will be vibrant, thriving and known for their innovative work and Darlington will be known for its creative people, creative communities and making a positive contribution to England as a creative and cultural country. Equality and environmental sustainability will underpin our cultural offer. We encourage all people interested in culture in Darlington to get involved with this strategy and welcome your comments.



## Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan 2024/25 delivery and Action Plan for 2025/26

### 1.1 Introduction

Darlington Cultural Strategy for 2022 to 2026 (**Appendix 1**) is focused on maximising the social and economic benefits which culture can bring to people across Darlington Borough, including residents, visitors, those working and investing in Darlington. It considers the fantastic opportunities for culture to benefit the borough within this timeframe, including the bicentenary of the birth of the modern passenger railway marking the momentous journey of Locomotion No. 1 on the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. It uses a definition of Culture as set out by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport covering:

- arts (including visual arts, literature, music, theatre and dance)
- architecture
- crafts
- creative industries
- design
- heritage
- historic environment
- museums and galleries
- libraries
- archives
- film
- broadcasting and media

## **1.2 Vision, priorities, opportunities and how this strategy will impact on Darlington's culture**

The vision and priorities for investment within the 2022-2026 timeframe are shown below.

### **Vision:**

*Darlington will be a place in 2026 and beyond where culture enriches lives, involves people and is central to identity and prosperity.*

### **Priorities**

1. To creatively celebrate Darlington's contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway.
2. For Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth.
3. For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people.
4. For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre.
5. For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages.

## **1.3 Delivery of Darlington Cultural Strategy**

The 2022-2023 Action Plan alongside a report on Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 went to Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee on 17 February 2022, before its publication. The strategy has since been signed off and utilised to inform our work and advocacy, including in fundraising where appropriate, to address the vision above. Annual Action Plans are considered by Darlington Borough Council. The table following point 1.4 in this report summarises delivery against the 2024/25 Action Plan and the table following point 1.5 presents the proposed Action Plan for 2025/26 for consideration by Darlington Borough Council.

This paper asks the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee to comment on and/or endorse the proposed Action Plan for 2025/26.

1.4 Darlington Cultural Strategy Annual Action Plan delivery 2024/25

The five priorities of Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 are listed below. We recognise these priorities overlap to some degree, and that some actions address more than one priority.

- 1. To creatively celebrate Darlington’s contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway.
- 2. For Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth.
- 3. For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people.
- 4. For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre.
- 5. For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages.

The table below shows delivery against the 2024/25 Cultural Strategy Action Plan agreed by Darlington Borough Council.

Delivery of Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan 2024/25					
Priority	What	Lead	Partners	Action	Measure(s) of success
1	Promote the S&DR Bicentenary festival locally, nationally, and internationally through multiple channels	Darlington Borough Council	Rail Heritage board partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deliver 1 year to go Festival launch in September 2024</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased S&amp;DR Social Media</li><li>• Increased Media coverage in 2024</li></ul>
	Work with the S&DR Bicentenary Festival Director to inform the project plan for Library and or community centre-based activity	Darlington Borough Council	Rail Heritage board partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liaise with Library Services and community venues and present a draft schedule for exhibitions and activity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project plan developed</li></ul>

<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The S&amp;DR200 Festival launch was compered by Steph McGovern at Darlington Hippodrome on Thursday 19 September 2024 and secured significant local and national media attendance then coverage.</li><li>• A well-attended WOW (World of Women) Think In event at Darlington Library on Wednesday 5 February 2025 will inform the programme of the WOW festival at Gala Durham within the S&amp;DR200 programme.</li><li>• An S&amp;DR200 entry level exhibition is scheduled to visit several Libraries and Community Venues in Darlington borough, Stockton borough and County Durham into 2025/26, including at Darlington Library Art Gallery in 2025/26, alongside rail related works within Darlington’s Local Studies and Borough Art Collections. As of 8 May.2025 this touring exhibition has been seen in three locations to date.</li></ul>					
1	Open the Hopetown Darlington site delivering a world class heritage visitor attraction by mid-summer 2024/25	Darlington Borough Council	PLB Ltd, Funders, Service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote opening of Hopetown Darlington programme</li><li>• Address Art Fund enquiries regarding grant offer and agree plan to unveil new work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opening of Hopetown Darlington and visitor numbers</li><li>• Art Fund grant utilised and commissioned work installed</li></ul>
<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A press opening for Hopetown Darlington, the north’s newest visitor attraction, took place on Monday 15 July 2024 and the newly opened attraction secured significant media coverage, with the public opening on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024.</li><li>• Hopetown Darlington welcomed over 35,000 visitors in the first month since opening on 16 July 2024. Visitor figures: in first six months (mid-July to end of December 2024) were 91,498, from opening to end of 2024/25 financial year were 129,831.</li><li>• Tees Valley based sculptor Andrew McKeown produced a suite of public artwork, some pieces informed by engagement activity with Darlington school and community groups, which were successfully installed across the Hopetown Darlington site and commissioned with support from the Art Fund, who were invited to the attraction opening in 2024/25, wherein their funding support was acknowledged.</li><li>• Tracks Darlington programmed the Last Train Home Express event in September at Hopetown Darlington, the Last Train Home 2024 music and comedy festival split across 7 stages at 3 venues on 7 September 2024 (Darlington Hippodrome, The Forum Music Studios</li></ul>					



and The Hullabaloo) alongside other activity with support from Darlington Borough Council's Heritage & Culture fund budget and Arts Council England Project Funding award. 5 days of activity were supported, 1 participatory session + 47 performances were delivered in Darlington borough with 135 artists delivering the project, 16 new works were commissioned, with 683 audience members and 11 participants engaged. Within the Last Train Home project, they organised:

- A small internship scheme where they took on a small number of local students and gave them paid work experience at events
- a Zine to pair which contained commissioned work by local artists (visual artists & writers)
- a recording of some of the live performances
- photography of live sessions with local artists in Darlington Hippodrome to promote the festival but also provide fantastic free content for them to promote themselves beyond Last Train Home 2024

- The Worshipful the Mayor of Darlington, Councillor Bob Donoghue, officially opened Hopetown Darlington on Friday 27 September, the 199th birthday of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.
- Hopetown Darlington has already secured several awards and accolades recognising the quality of its offer including the 'VisitEngland Welcome' accolade which recognises excellence within the visitor attraction sector in October, the highly prestigious 'North East Culture Award for Best Museum or Cultural Venue' in November, and the 'Visitor Economy Award' in December 2024.
- The opening of the 'Experiment!' state-of-the-art railway-themed time travel immersive experience in November 2024, and the 'Ho-Ho-Hopetown' festive programme added to the family visitor attraction offer of Hopetown Darlington in 2024/25.
- Hopetown Darlington welcomed 625 Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers and 180 Guide Leaders from Darlington, Durham, Northumberland, Yorkshire and Leeds on Saturday 29 March 2025 to celebrate the launch of the Girlguiding North East England Railway Challenge – Celebrating 200 years of railway travel. The groups explored the site as well as taking part in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) session before visiting Wagon Woods and 'Experiment!' our immersive experience. The event was also attended by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Cyndi Hughes with representatives from Rail 200 and Network Rail.
- Hopetown Darlington several exhibitions alongside its collections in 2024/25, these being Brick Journeys (Lego) in the Exhibitions Hall from Friday 19 July to Sunday 6 October 2024, an exhibition by St. Aidan's Art Project in The Space from Saturday 12 October to Tuesday 31 December 2024, an exhibition created working with Darlington's Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Community in The Space from Saturday

11 January to Sunday 16 March 2025, and an S&DR Team Community Exhibition - The Space which opened on Saturday 22 March 2025.					
2	Follow the North East Filming Friendly charter and work across services to address location and project development enquiries	Darlington Borough Council	North East Screen, Northern School of Art, Teesside University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond as per charter to address location and other enquiries as a Filming Friendly Authority, and work with partners to promote opportunities for talent development and locations for filming in borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enquiries addressed as per North East Filming Friendly charter</li> <li>Filming undertaken in Darlington borough</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chief Executives and Leaders of all TVCA councils, including Darlington Borough Council, have signed up to the North East Filming Friendly Charter. Darlington Borough Council addressed several enquiries from the film and TV sector in 2024/25 regarding permissions required to film in the borough.</li> <li>The Women X Film Festival is promoted by Darlington based Rianne Pictures and is a valuable showcase for North East talent. It was held from 20 - 22 September 2024 at Darlington Hippodrome, combined actual and digital activity, and included the screening of over 70 short films from various genres, including comedy, documentary and horror.</li> <li>The first screening of a short film, <i>A Light That Never Fades</i>, exploring the latter life of Arthur Wharton, was held on 22 January 2025 at the Forum Music Studios. It was commissioned by the Arthur Wharton Foundation and produced by Broken Scar Productions, with support from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Darlington Borough Council. The cast included Derek Griffiths in the role of Arthur Wharton. Broken Scar Productions and the Arthur Wharton Foundation attended a Trailblazers awards night hosted by the Black Footballers Partnership at the Houses of Parliament in October 2024 and shared the film, which runs for approximately 20 minutes in length (sitting within the short film category of many film festivals).</li> </ul>					

## APPENDIX 2

3	Work with Children and Young Peoples Plan – Multi Agency Steering Group partners to provide an excellent and accessible cultural offer to children and young people across Darlington borough	Darlington Borough Council	Creative Sector individuals, organisations and enterprises, Creative Darlington, Darlington Academies and Schools, Darlington and Durham Music Hub, Further Education providers in Darlington, Northern School of Art, Teesside University, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Tees Valley Museums, Theatre Hullabaloo and additional Children and Young Peoples Plan – Multi Agency Steering Group partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darlington Borough Council will provide a Children's Library Service, an Events Service, and a Museum's Service providing opportunities for children and young people</li> <li>Darlington Borough Council will support Darlington Hippodrome and Creative Darlington's work with children and young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service delivery and outputs</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between September and December 2024, 20 classes visited 'The Hive' at Darlington Library, engaging children with STEAM activities and learning, including taking part in coding, animation, 3D design and print and virtual reality workshops.</li> <li>Most events promoted by Darlington Town Centre Partnership and events service in 2024/25 were family friendly, and some were designed particularly to appeal to families. Springboard data demonstrates many event days saw an increase in average daily footfall count in the Town Centre. These included Darlington by the Sea from 24 July to 28 July 2024 (+8,548 per day on</li> </ul>					

average), the Christmas Lights Switch On of 17 November 2025 (+26,677) and Darlington Ice Sculpture Trail on 14 December 2024 (+11,849) which encouraged visitors from different generations to use maps to discover the icy creations at different locations within the Town Centre. A number of 2024/25 events showcased the talents of local children and young people including The Forum Freshers event on 30 August 2024 (+13,140).

- The BrickJourneys exhibition at Hopetown Darlington was accompanied by a variety of participatory activities for children and young people. 6 Bricklab sessions were held from Monday 22 July to Monday 29 August 2024 and 9 guided LEGO® sessions delivered by Construction Kids between Tuesday 23 July and Saturday 31 August 2025 at Hopetown Darlington.
- 'Spooktown', Hopetown's Halloween programme, ran from Saturday 19 October to Sunday 3 November and featured family-friendly activities, workshops, and entertainment, including a pumpkin trail and ghost train installation.
- During the school summer holidays, young people joined in with circus skills workshops co-ordinated by Darlington Hippodrome (to complement performances by Cirque in the theatre), alongside Youth Theatre and Youth Dance taster sessions.
- Darlington Hippodrome's pantomime in 2024/25 *Sleeping Beauty*, provided the box office with record sales. The theatre's 'A Place for Everyone fund' enabled large numbers of schools and community groups to attend the pantomime, including one of the residents of Rose Lodge Care Home who had never been to a pantomime before this.
- A variety of workshop activities were offered alongside the Place, People and Living Memory exhibition in Darlington Library Art Gallery from Wednesday 31 January 2024 to Monday 25 March 2024. There were 1,661 visits to the exhibition and sixty-eight students from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form's A level and Foundation courses in Art & Design engaged with the accompanying events programme.
- Creative Darlington budget supported Theatre Hullabaloo's Walk in Wonderland programme with Northern School of Art students as part of the Hullabaloo in the Park festival held in South Park from 26 – 28 July 2025. 23 people participated in Walk in Wonderland activity, with 380 audience members for promenade performances.
- Darlington Borough Council supported Darlington Community Carnival on Saturday 29 June 2024, which secured an estimated audience of 3,000 people. 46 artists took part in the parade, 567 individuals participated in the parade, 56 performers took part in the wider carnival and there were 32 separate performances on the day itself.

3	Darlington Borough Council will support children and young people's cultural engagement through intervention programmes	Darlington Borough Council	Darlington Borough Council, particular Darlington Academies and Schools, cultural sector	Darlington Hippodrome will deliver the In2 programme, and Darlington Borough Council will provide	In2 programme and Holiday Activities Fund cultural programme outputs
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				cultural opportunities for children and young people through the Holiday Activities Fund	
<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <b>Action:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A variety of cultural programme engaged children and young people in the borough during 2024/25 within the Holiday Activities and Food programme.</li> <li>Between Tuesday 1 October to Saturday 5 October over 2,000 secondary school students from across the region and beyond attended performances of National Theatre's landmark production of JB Priestley's classic thriller, An Inspector Calls, and the theatre's 'A Place For Everyone' Fund helped meet the cost of over 650 tickets shared across 17 schools.</li> <li>Darlington Borough Council Children's Services and Heritage &amp; Culture Fund budgets supported Blue Cabin's This is the Place programme of music-making activities in 2024/25 for care-experienced babies and children in Darlington, which is supported by Youth Music funding. The programme provided 31 term time weekly sessions to small groups of foster carers and children aged 0- 5 years old, securing 200 engagements of babies, children and foster carers Online engagements: 163 views of online training video 1493 listens to the song bank in 2024/25.</li> </ul>					
4	Support cultural engagement through events, exhibitions and programmes at Hopetown Darlington and Darlington Library benefiting families, residents and visitors	Darlington Borough Council	Creative sector, Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund	Programme cultural events, exhibitions and activity at Darlington Library (throughout the year) and Hopetown Darlington (from mid-summer 2024/25)	Programme outputs and funding secured
<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hopetown Darlington promoted a variety of well received exhibitions and events in 2024/25, some of which were fully booked, e.g. the Hopetown Comic Con on 1 February 2025.</li> </ul>					

- A total of 43,572 people joined in one of 1,396 events within our libraries during 2024/25. 997 (71%) of these events took place at Darlington Library, including a variety of cultural events. In 2024/25 these included poetry, reading and writing groups, events for children and adults, and live music and spoken word events.
- Literacy PLUS education packages were offered to Primary and Secondary schools at the Hive in Darlington Library. The package offers author visits, poetry, writing competitions and story stimulation workshops enhanced by virtual reality headsets there, and has generated income from various Darlington Schools and Academies.
- Darlington Library service hosted cultural events within the BookFest and Crossing the Tees festivals in 2025/26.
- Darlington Libraries Takeover Day took place in the market square on Wednesday 7 August 2024 offering children's entertainment, a range of author and illustrator experiences and mascot meet and greets. Building on the success of last year, the day presents an opportunity to engage with a large group of families, to promote library services and the Summer Reading Challenge.
- Between 29.3.24 and 31.3.25 11 exhibitions were held in Darlington Library Art Gallery (10 opening in 24/25) securing 34,655 visits (29.3.24 to 10.4.25). A significant majority of questionnaire respondents selected strongly agree, from strongly agree, tend to agree, neither, tend to disagree, strongly disagree menu to the statement 'I enjoyed my visit to the Darlington Library gallery'.
- A variety of Your Library Story Arts Council England Project Funded project activity was held at Darlington Library in 2024/25, including a writing programme led by Penguin published author Lisette Auton, animation workshops in the Hive, Hark! the Sound of Stories and BIG Little Gigs events programmed by Tracks Darlington, and a Mini Pride events led by Curious Arts.
- Tees Women Poets delivered five Positive Poetry Writing to Wellbeing sessions at Darlington Library from June - July 2024, as part of a programme supported by Arts Council England Project Funding and Darlington Borough Council.
- Darlington born artist, and North East Culture Awards Visual Artist of the year 2024, Lizzie Lovejoy, delivered the Circe's Island creative writing project at Darlington Library supported by Arts Council England Project Funding and Darlington Borough Council.

4	Support economic growth through Enjoy Darlington offering accessible, diverse and vibrant cultural events, festivals and programmes that contribute to Town Centre animation	Darlington Borough Council	Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Borough Town Centre Partnership, Darlington Partnership, Tees Valley Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and manage a year-round Town Centre events programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Centre footfall, estimated attendance at cultural events, media coverage secured</li> </ul>
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<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darlington Town Centre Partnership and events service promoted a variety of events throughout the year that contributed to Darlington Town Centre Strategy through town centre animation, and commissioned local creative sector service providers, and/or offered local creative enterprises opportunities to promote their business.</li> <li>Springboard data shows many events coincided with an increase in average daily footfall count in the Town Centre, including a World Cultural event on 13 July 2024 (+4,418), Darlington by the Sea from 24 July to 28 July 2024 (+8,548 per day on average), Darlington Pride on 10 August 2024 (+20,752), Making Sense Together on 15 August 2024 (+3,246), a Diwali event on 26 October 2024 (+6,317), and a Chinese New Year event on 25 January 2025 (+4,161) with spectacular lion dance performances from the Chinese community.</li> <li>The 2024/25 Enjoy Darlington programme included accessible, diverse and vibrant cultural events including the GOLD (Growing Older Living in Darlington) Tea Dance on Wednesday 17 July 2024 which featured live music, Making Sense Together a community celebration day to raise awareness of supporting people with learning disabilities or autism, promoting inclusivity for all on Thursday 15 August 2024, a Ukrainian Independence Day on Saturday 17 August 2024, and the ever popular Darlington Rhythm &amp; Tunes event Saturday 14 – Sunday 15 September (+3,505 per day on average).</li> <li>Thousands of visitors came to Darlington to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community through Darlington Pride in August 2024. The annual Saturday event in the market square attracted many organisations with great live music on stage for visitors to enjoy and was followed by the more relaxed event in South Park on the Sunday and the Mongay Pride Party.</li> </ul>					
5	Audience development and sector development programmes are led by, promoted by, or held at Darlington Hippodrome	Darlington Hippodrome	Darlington Hippodrome, Creative Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tees Valley Youth Dance programme. Orchestras Live education programme, and A Place for Everyone programme delivered</li> <li>Arts Council England Project Funding proposal submitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme outputs</li> <li>Arts Council England Project Funding offer secured</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery in 2024/25:</b>					

- Over the course of 2024/25 Darlington Hippodrome continued to support “The Cuckoo Club” a peer-led dementia social group for people with dementia and their spouses by ensuring that they have a safe, supportive space in the Hippo Lounge every Thursday morning. They are supported by team members from Alzheimers Society, and numbers range from 20-30 each week.
- Further to this, Darlington Hippodrome assisted Dementia Friendly Darlington in staging “Dementia’s Got Talent” (21 January 2025) on the Hippodrome stage, a variety show in which all the participants had dementia (with some support from carers/loved ones). The production sold 414 tickets.
- GemArts delivered a Mini Mela at Darlington Hippodrome on 8 April 2024 with Bollywood dance, steel pan drumming, face painting, origami and other participatory artforms. This had 750 attendees.
- Darlington Hippodrome May 2024 launched their popular access scheme in May 2024, and from then until 31 March 2025 this benefited 1,444 people who can claim a free essential companion ticket, 323 people who can claim 50% off for their household on universal credit, 49 people who can claim 50% off their own ticket, please note that some of the people on Darlington Hippodrome’s access scheme are eligible for an essential companion ticket plus the universal or pension credit discount.

They have received fantastic feedback from their access scheme members and have people who regularly attend due to this breaking down barriers for them.

- The Mousetrap ran for seven performances at Darlington Hippodrome from 23 to 27 July 2024, selling over 4,200 seats across the week (up from 3,240 seats sold across the week in April 2019). Audio description and a touch tour for visually impaired people took place prior to the Saturday matinee.
- A Taste of Africa Family Fun Day was held at Darlington Hippodrome on Saturday 24 August 2024: a day of culture, entertainment, cuisine and community spirit for all ages in celebration of African heritage.
- From Tuesday 1 October to Saturday 5 October 2024 over 7,000 tickets were sold across eight performances of the National Theatre’s landmark production of JB Priestley’s classic thriller, An Inspector Calls, at Darlington Hippodrome. 2,000 secondary school students watched this show and Darlington Hippodrome’s ‘A Place For Everyone’ Fund helped meet the cost of over 650 tickets to An Inspector Calls, shared across 17 schools.
- LGBTQIA+ arts and youth charity, Curious Arts, returned to Darlington Hippodrome to deliver a Curious Takeover event on Friday 1 November 2024 supported by Arts Council England and Darlington Hippodrome’s ‘A Place for Everyone’ Fund. Admission to the event was free with visitors invited to drop in and take part in creative, family-friendly activities.
- Darlington Hippodrome’s charitable fund, ‘A Place for Everyone’, has supported the local community and schools, offering visits to the theatre to see shows, supporting transport costs, delivery of theatre workshops and tours, funded places for looked after



children on youth theatre and dance courses, and enabled artist development in Darlington. Darlington Hippodrome supported a variety of audience development activity in 2024/25.

- Longstanding partnership work with organisations and services, including Orchestras Live and Durham Music Service supported audience development, with many events within Darlington Hippodrome's 2024/25 programme sharing local talent e.g. Manchester Camerata performed at Darlington Hippodrome on Monday 25 November and workshops for adult folk musicians were organised through Darlington Folk Club, and young musicians through youth folk group Cream Tees, and other parties, which culminated in an opportunity to perform on stage at Darlington Hippodrome.
- Darlington Hippodrome submitted an unsuccessful Project Funding application to Arts Council England in 2024/25 to support delivery of the In2 programme.
- Darlington Hippodrome's Welcome Space (on Tuesdays between 10am and 12 noon) attracts regular customers for free tea and coffee and a space to socialise, including a group from Darlington Action on Disability who meet there every week.
- An exhibition from service users at Darlington Mind, who attend an art class to aid with mental health which opened at Darlington Hippodrome in December 2024 and continued into May 2025 showcases work from 5 artists, both their personal work and work informed by a visit to the Hippodrome and a meeting with archive volunteers.
- Matinee Matters, was a new initiative involving Darlington Hippodrome launched in 2024/25. Matinee Matters seeks to help battle loneliness and self-isolation through a series of free, hosted, informal meet-ups at the theatre supported by Care Matters and A Place For Everyone. Six sessions took place between Thursday 20 June 2024 and Thursday 20 February 2025, preceding week-day matinee performances of What The Butler Saw, The Mousetrap, Sister Act, Ghost, Blood Brothers and Dial M For Mayhem, attracting 75 people. These played an active role in helping tackle loneliness and self-isolation amongst people in the local community.
- Darlington Hippodrome continued to provide Touch Tours for the Visually Impaired and Audio Described Performances; in 2024/25, these formed part of our offer for 12 productions. As the year has progressed there have been further requests for BSL interpretation for some productions. In 2024/25, Darlington Hippodrome provided BSL for 6 productions.

1.5 Proposed Action Plan for 2025/26

The proposed 2025/26 Action Plan tackles the five priorities of Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2026 listed below. We recognise priorities overlap to some degree, and that a revised Council Plan is currently in development. It retains some priorities from the 2024/25 Action Plan and recognises the significance of 2025/26 as the year of the S&DR200 and the first full year of Hopetown Darlington operation:

- 1. To creatively celebrate Darlington’s contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway
- 2. For Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth
- 3. For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people
- 4. For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre
- 5. For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages

1.5 Proposed Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan 2025/26					
Priority	What	Lead	Partners	Action(s)	Measure(s) of success
1	Promote the S&DR200 festival locally, nationally, and	Darlington Borough Council	Rail Heritage board partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promote S&amp;DR200 activity in Darlington April – November 2025</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attendance</li><li>Media and social media coverage</li></ul>

## APPENDIX 2

	internationally through multiple channels  Support S&DR200 festival delivery in Darlington borough	Darlington Borough Council	Rail Heritage board partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support programme delivery in Darlington borough (activity, events, exhibitions, projects)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme delivery and outputs</li> </ul>
1	Promote Hopetown Darlington attraction and offer and increase visitor numbers	Darlington Borough Council	Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund, Funders, Service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote Hopetown Darlington programme</li> <li>Promote S&amp;DR200 Festival programme at Hopetown Darlington</li> <li>Submit National Heritage Lottery Fund project funding proposal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor numbers</li> <li>Programme delivery and outputs</li> <li>Media coverage</li> <li>Funding offer secured</li> </ul>
2	Follow the North East Filming Friendly charter and work across services to address enquiries	Darlington Borough Council	North East Screen, Northern School of Art, Teesside University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond as per charter to address location and other enquiries as a Filming Friendly Authority, and work with partners to promote opportunities for talent development and locations for filming in borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enquiries addressed as per North East Filming Friendly charter</li> <li>Filming undertaken in Darlington borough</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2

3	Work with Darlington Borough Council Children's Services to provide an excellent and accessible cultural offer to children and young people across Darlington borough	Darlington Borough Council	Academies and Schools in borough, Creative Sector individuals, organisations and enterprises, Creative Darlington, the North East Music Hub, Further Education providers, Northern School of Art, Teesside University, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Tees Valley Museums, Theatre Hullabaloo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darlington Borough Council will provide a Children's Library Service, an Events Service, and a Museum's Service providing opportunities for children and young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme delivery and outputs</li> </ul>
3	Darlington Borough Council will support children and young people's cultural engagement through intervention programmes	Darlington Borough Council	Academies and Schools in Darlington borough, Blue Cabin, Darlington Virtual School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darlington Hippodrome will offer cultural opportunities for children and young people from disadvantaged wards in the borough</li> <li>Darlington Borough Council will include cultural opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme delivery and outputs</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2

				within the Holiday Activities and Food Fund programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural programme will be offered to Care Experienced Children and Care Leavers in Darlington borough</li> </ul>	
4	Support cultural engagement through events, exhibitions and programmes at Darlington Library benefiting residents and visitors	Darlington Borough Council	Creative sector, Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme cultural events, exhibitions and activity at Darlington Library, including rail themed programme in 2025</li> <li>• Submit National Heritage Lottery Grant proposal submitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme delivery and outputs</li> <li>• National Heritage Lottery Grant offer secured</li> </ul>
4	Contribute to Darlington Town Centre Strategy by offering accessible, diverse and vibrant cultural engagement opportunities to residents and visitors	Darlington Borough Council	Cultural Sector, Darlington Town Centre Partnership, Darlington Partnership, Tees Valley Combined Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and manage a year-round Town Centre events programme , including S&amp;DR200 festival programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Centre footfall</li> <li>• Estimated attendance at cultural events</li> <li>• Media coverage</li> <li>• Diverse programme delivered</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local creative services commissioned</li> </ul>
5	Audience development and sector development programmes are led by, promoted by, or held at Darlington Hippodrome	Darlington Hippodrome	Darlington Hippodrome, Creative Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tees Valley Youth Dance programme. Orchestras Live education programme, and A Place for Everyone programme delivered</li> <li>Arts Council England Project Funding proposal submitted</li> <li>National Heritage Lottery Grant proposal submitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme outputs</li> <li>Arts Council England Project Funding offer secured</li> <li>National Heritage Lottery Grant offer secured</li> </ul>
1 - 5	Update Darlington Cultural Strategy and produce an action plan for 2026/27	DBC	TVCA, ACE, NHLF, Darlington Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with stakeholders</li> <li>Present 2026/27 action plan to DBC</li> </ul>	2026/27 Cultural Strategy action plan produced, considering legacy of S&DR200



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**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY**  
**12 JUNE 2025**

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**TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY 2021-2031**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide members with the annual update on delivery of the actions within the strategy.

**Summary**

2. Darlington has had a Tree and Woodland Strategy in place since 2000. The latest Strategy covers the period 2021-2031, and this is attached at **Appendix 1**.
3. The Strategy is in place to set out how the Council manage and enlarge the tree population across the Borough.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and the proposed action plan for 2025/26.

**Ben Grabham**  
**Assistant Director – Environmental Services and Community Safety**

**Background Papers**

Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031

Author: Brian Graham (Ext 6607)

<b>Council Plan</b>	
<b>Addressing inequalities</b>	Trees benefit all individuals.
<b>Tackling Climate Change</b>	Trees can have a significant impact on mitigating or reducing carbon in the atmosphere by sequestering carbon.
<b>Efficient and effective use of resources</b>	There is no impact on the Council's efficiency agenda.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Trees have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
<b>S17 Crime and Disorder</b>	There is no impact as a result of this report.
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All Wards

<b>Groups Affected</b>	Trees play an important role in the environment by improving air quality, reducing pollution, and providing essential habitats for wildlife.
<b>Budget and Policy Framework</b>	There is no impact as a result of this report.
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Urgent Decision</b>	No
<b>Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers</b>	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. It is thanks to our Victorian forebears that Darlington has a living legacy of urban street trees, historic parks and wooded cemeteries that is the envy of many other towns. Darlington Borough Council has had in place a Tree Strategy for the past 20 years, which was initially developed with due regard to protecting the tree heritage in Darlington. The updated and revised versions of the strategy have continued with that theme at the core.
6. Since the initial strategy in 2000, the understanding and awareness of the impact humans are having on the environment has resulted in central and local government starting to address the balance, recognising the role trees play in carbon capture and carbon offset. The Woodland Trust estimates that a young mixed woodland can store 400+ tonnes of carbon per hectare, approximately 1,000 trees.
7. The aim of the Tree and Woodland Strategy is:
  - (a) To proactively manage and enlarge the tree population of the borough of Darlington in order to protect our historical heritage of trees and provide a valued environmental amenity for future generations.
8. The strategy covers the following aspects:
  - (a) how the Council manage trees that they own;
  - (b) how the Council protects trees on private land;
  - (c) an action plan setting out what needs to be done over the next five years.
9. The policies within the strategy cover:
  - (a) **Street Trees** - these are trees planted in pavements and road verges;
  - (b) **Woodlands** - approximately 3% of the Borough is woodland;
  - (c) **Trees in Parks and Open Spaces** - generally these trees are the most significant and have a positive impact on use of these spaces;

- (d) **Trees in Cemeteries and Disused Churchyards** - some of cemeteries and disused churchyards have significant tree cover, particularly West Cemetery;
  - (e) **Housing Area Trees** - generally found in communal areas or residents' gardens;
  - (f) **Privately Owned Trees** - there are a significant number of trees on private land and in private gardens.
10. Since the adoption of the strategy work has been ongoing in delivering the action plan. The key highlights of work completed to date are as follows.
- (a) Number of trees planted:

(i)	2021	2,379
(ii)	2022	12,151
(iii)	2023	12,244
(iv)	2024	16,402
(v)	2025 (to date)	4,566
(vi)	Total:	47,742
  - (b) In 2024, tree canopy cover was assessed as 8.28 % in Darlington overall, of which within settlements is 23.67%, outside settlements 76.33%. The average canopy cover for England is 16% and the target is 17.5%. However, there is significant variability in tree canopy cover across England's towns and cities, ranging from 3% to 45% and significant variability in tree canopy cover within towns. Over time, the number of trees planted will increase the canopy cover throughout the period of the strategy.
  - (c) The Council has worked with a wide range of residents, volunteers, students, Elected Members, Friends Groups and businesses to achieve our tree planting goals, including: Department for Education, Darlington Economic Campus, Learning and Skills, Education Village, Darlington College, EE, Cummins, Capita, ISG Construction, Handels Bank, Darlington Building Society, Redde Northgate, Street Champions, Darlington Forest Project, Darlington Cares, Darlington Scouts and Cubs, Ranger Team Volunteers, Signet House, Probation Service and Durham Constabulary.

## **Risk Management**

- 11. Following a number of incidents at other Local Authorities in recent years, officers alongside the Council's insurance provider, Zurich, have reviewed and updated the Council's approach to risk management for Council owned trees.
- 12. The review by Zurich Risk Assessment and Improvement Team classified the service as 'good' and provided recommendations on how to move to excellent. All of these have now been acted upon which should see a move to excellent at the next inspection.

## **Risk Management Tree Inspections New Approach**

- 13. The Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-31 was updated to incorporate the following approach following the advice. Inspection of all trees on Council land will be undertaken by a competent arboriculturist, at defined intervals according to consistent methodology,

incorporating a systematic and replicable risk assessment. Trees that do not meet the defined standard of safety will be identified, and remedial measures will be specified to mitigate unacceptable risks within the defined timeframe. These will be implemented as specified, which will be verified by a competent person. A record of all activity will be kept.

14. The Council will maintain an inventory of trees on the Treewise system, which contains records of tree condition, location, works recommendations and works completion. The inventory will be reviewed to ensure that it remains comprehensive and reliable.
15. The timescale for the completion of each works item following an inspection will be set in proportion to the level of risk presented by the tree.
16. The successful completion of risk management works will be confirmed by a competent person and recorded along with the date. Where a tree remains following works, an inspection will be made to update the record for that tree.

### **Tree Inspections**

17. Tree inspections are the means of gathering reliable information about the current condition, and the context of the Council's trees. This strategy defines three kinds of inspection. Proactive tree inspections are planned inspections, undertaken by a competent arboriculturist, to a defined standard, at defined intervals. They are fundamental to tree risk management. Where this strategy refers to tree inspections, it means proactive tree inspections unless otherwise specified. The Council will undertake them as defined by this strategy.
18. Reactive tree inspections are the same as planned tree inspections, except that they are done in response to an event that gives reasonable grounds to doubt the reliability of the existing tree inspection record. For example, an enquiry or report relating to tree safety, a tree failure event, a change in the context of a tree, a completion of certain tree works, or a significant weather event could all indicate a change in the safety of a tree. The Council will undertake these as required.
19. Additional tree inspections are all other types of non-specialist observation of trees made by the Council. For example, these could include highway inspections, observations by parks staff and development related surveys. They may be beneficial, but they are not required by this strategy.

### **How often will trees be inspected**

20. All trees in high-risk areas, for example, adjacent to highways and play areas, will be inspected to a minimum frequency of every 24 months. Trees in other locations, with the exception of woodlands/forests, will be inspected to a minimum of every 24 to 36 months. Trees in woodlands/forests will be inspected as required.
21. Reactive and additional tree inspections and their frequency cannot be defined.
22. Tree inspections will only be undertaken by individuals that are competent to do so. Competence will be defined in accordance with industry standards and will comprise a

combination of training, qualifications and experience.

- 23. Tree inspections will include sufficient information to locate and identify the feature described by the inspection record i.e. the type of feature, the risk assessment, and the means to determine whether the risk associated with that feature is acceptable. For any feature does not meet the Council’s tolerable level of the risk, the inspection will include a specification for the works and the timescale for completion. Every inspection record will include a date for the next inspection.

**Tree Works**

- 24. Tree works that are specified for the purpose of risk management (i.e. where the risk assessment has identified that a tree exceeds the tolerable level of risk) will be completed within a defined period from the date of inspection.
- 25. The Council has a team of fully qualified arborists that undertake tree works as and when required.

**Climate Declaration**

- 26. In July 2023, the Council updated its commitment to the climate, bringing forward the target to be carbon neutral by 2040 from 2050. In addition, the tree planting target has been revised to plant 100,000 trees over the lifetime of the strategy. The strategy was updated to reflect this amendment (please see Appendix 1).

**Monitoring**

- 27. A report will be brought to Scrutiny each year, updating members on the progress of delivering the agreed actions and the number of trees planted against the target of 100,000 over the lifetime of the Strategy. Since 2021, the Council has planted over 47,700 trees broken down as follows: -

(i)	2021	2,379
(ii)	2022	12,151
(iii)	2023	12,244
(iv)	2024	16,402
(v)	2025 (to date)	4,566

**Update on Key Performance Indicators**

Percentage of inspections undertaken in Zone 1 (High Risk) over a two-year period

- 28. An inspection programme is currently ongoing. It is envisaged that all trees in Zone 1 will be completed in 12-15 months, well within the two-year target time.

Number of Trees Planted

- 29. 16,402 trees were planted in the 2024 calendar year, across the borough meaning we are above target at this moment in time.

Number of trees felled compared to no. of replacement trees planted

30. The number of trees felled is 98 and the number of trees planted 100, with a further 100 to be planted at the earliest opportunity.

Measure, review and report on Darlington's Tree Canopy (five yearly measurement)

31. As per the previous Scrutiny report, the next planned tree canopy survey will be undertaken in 2029.

Number of enquiries received, and percentage responded to within target time

32. From April 2024 to March 2025, 772 requests were recorded on Lagan for the tree service. 152 of these were closed within the Service Level Agreement target, showing a compliance of 32.41%.
33. Further investigation was undertaken to understand the reasons behind this and from the lessons learned we have updated the scripting used by customer services colleagues to ensure that the categorisation of jobs and their priority was correct. There is clear guidance now in operation now to ensure categorisation is clear as to what requires a two-day response (i.e. urgent) and what are non-urgent requests.
34. It is anticipated therefore, that an improvement in the compliance statistics will be experienced as a result of the update.

Number of repeat visits to same tree arising from the same customer enquiry or complaint

35. Due to the recording capabilities of Lagan, we are unable to identify the number of repeat visits to trees arising from customer enquiries.

Number of trees removed infected with more than 50% Ash Dieback

36. The Forestry Commission recommend that any tree suffering from greater than 50% Ash Dieback be removed. There have been no Ash trees removed due to the above.

Further information on the action plan is included in **Appendix 2**.



# Tree and woodland strategy

2021-2031



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council



# Foreword

**Councillor Andy Keir,**  
Local Services Portfolio Holder

**We know that people want to live in a pleasant environment that is clean, green and safe and this is why it is part of our vision for the future of Darlington.**

Trees and woodland areas play a vital and integral part in achieving this by cleaning the air we breathe, providing a habitat for plants and animal species and creating an attractive environment for people to live in and to visit.

Trees are a unique component of the landscape, unlike man-made structures; they are living organisms subject to change, which are vulnerable to damage by vandalism, development, pest and diseases. Many trees are long-lived, offering enjoyment and a diversity of benefits to residents both today and in the future.

Trees provide us with important services such as reducing air pollution and helping reduce flooding by intercepting rainfall and therefore allowing it to disperse into the ground at a reduced rate to be absorbed by the soil.

Trees also contribute significantly to the reduction of carbon dioxide and are therefore integral to the well-being of the planet and link with the Council's Climate Change Declaration

To ensure the huge contribution of both Council owned and privately owned trees to our landscape continues, it is essential that their needs and requirements are understood and planned for and this strategy sets out how we will do this.



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# Introduction

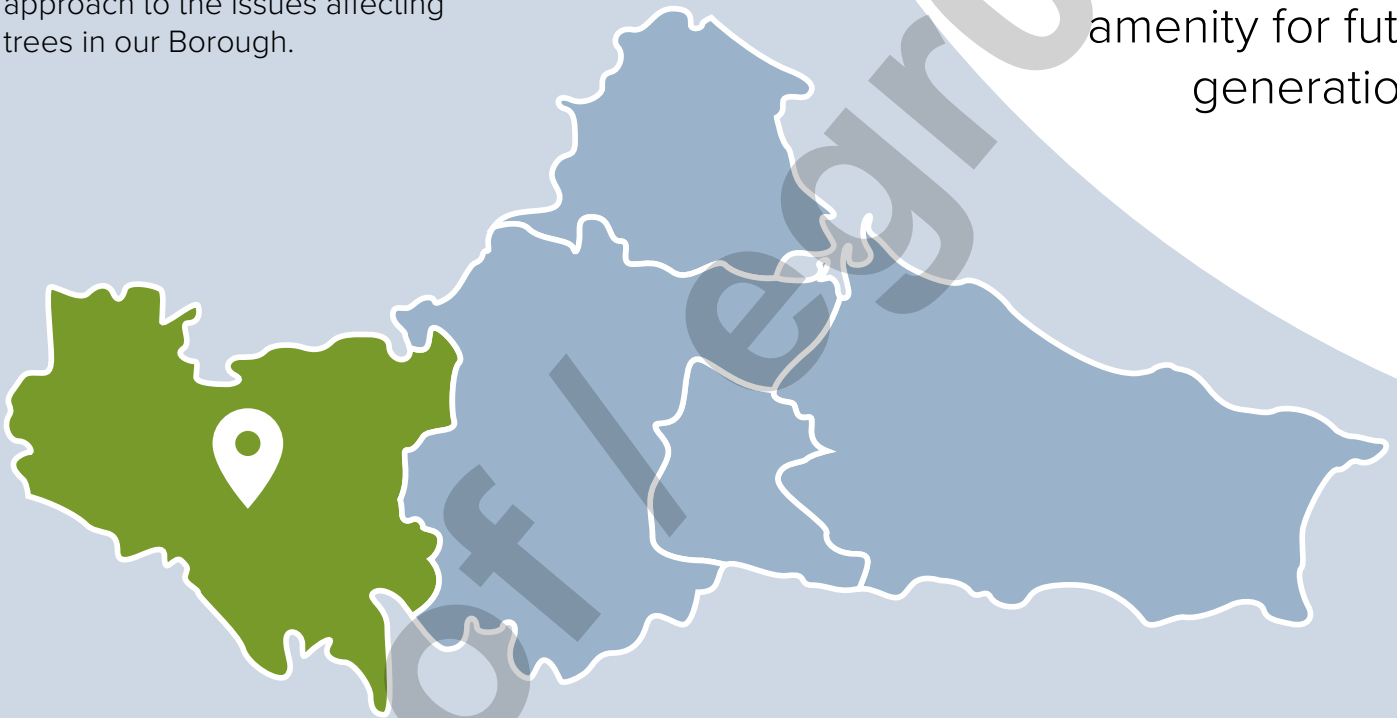
Darlington Borough Council adopted the first Tree Strategy for Darlington in 2000. However, since 2000 things have moved on. People are beginning to place a higher priority on the environment in which they live, which in turn has increased public awareness of the benefits provided by trees.

It is therefore essential that a framework is created through which the trees of Darlington can be both protected and enhanced for future generations.

This strategy is intended to act as a point of reference for the public, councillors, officers and professionally interested people to enable informed discussion and to establish a clearer, consistent and more structured approach to the issues affecting trees in our Borough.

## The aim of this strategy

‘To proactively manage and enlarge the tree population of the Borough of Darlington in order to protect our historical heritage of trees and provide a valued environmental amenity for future generations.’



## The Borough of Darlington

**The Borough of Darlington covers an area of almost 200 square kilometres and has a population 106,000 of which approximately 90% live within the town of Darlington. The area outside the town is dominated by a rural landscape, with agriculture being both the historic and current primary industry.**

The town however, became one of the focal points of the industrial revolution, being the ‘birthplace of the modern passenger railway’. This brought to Darlington both prosperity and a sudden growth in development within the structure of the town that is characteristic of Victorian landscapes.

It is thanks to these Victorian forebears that Darlington has a living legacy of urban street trees, historic parks and wooded cemeteries that is the envy of many other towns. This includes South Park, established in 1849 when farmland was bequeathed to the town.

The park is now included in English Heritage’s Register of ‘Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest’ and is referred to within the register as “a fine example of a mid-nineteenth century public park”. This Tree Strategy has been developed with due regard to protecting the tree heritage we have in Darlington.

# What residents have told us

**Residents have identified a number of common sources of complaint about trees, including overhanging branches, shade, leaf/fruit fall, sticky deposits, obstructing and physical damage.**

Many of these problems can be dealt with by careful pruning once the tree is established. However, sometimes the problem is a result of inappropriate species selection in the past and may be difficult or impossible to resolve in all parties' favour.

Also, a common theme from complaints is the potential for structural damage caused through soil moisture extraction by tree roots.

This type of damage only occurs in areas where the soil type is heavy, shrinkable clay, which is prone to fluctuations in volume caused by changing soil moisture levels. There has been a relatively low amount of concern regarding tree roots and foundations in recent years. Much of this is unsubstantiated and the incidence of proven tree root related claims against the Council remains low despite the level of tree cover and proportion of our Borough having soils with a partial clay content. There are however occasions when removal/replacement of a tree or group of trees is required to halt a serious or a worsening case of subsidence damage.

## Policy framework

### Context

**Residents have told us that they want to live in a pleasant environment that is clean, green and safe and this is why it is part of our vision for the future of Darlington.**

This vision is being brought alive by closely working with our partners and delivering the Council Plan, which sets out the overall priorities for Darlington Borough Council.

This strategy can contribute to the vision by helping to ensure that Darlington provides an attractive, green environment that supports people's quality of life and by recognising the part that trees can play in counter-balancing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and contributing to action on climate change.



### Climate declaration

**Darlington Borough Council in July 2019 declared a climate emergency with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. In July 2023, a motion was passed by members bringing the carbon neutral target forward to 2040.**

We are also monitoring and tracking emissions across the Borough, doing everything we can to reduce the Council's carbon emissions, however, there will inevitably be a residual amount that needs to be offset.

The Woodland Trust estimates a young mixed woodland can store 400 plus tonnes of carbon per hectare. Our Tree and Woodland Strategy forms one part of a solution to reach our carbon neutral target, with the planting of 100,000 trees over the lifetime of this strategy.

Alongside our carbon reduction ambitions, we also need to deal with the inevitable impacts that climate change brings. Trees can provide shade and cooling, and in an urban setting they could cool the air by several degrees. They also help prevent flooding by reducing surface water run-off, improving air and water quality, and keeping our soils full of nutrients.

# How to use this strategy

## **This strategy covers the following aspects:**

- How we manage trees we, the Council, own
- How we protect trees the public own on private land
- Action plan setting out what needs to be done over the next five years to achieve our aim

## **It is important to clarify the trees the Council owns, these are:**

- Street Trees - These are the trees planted in pavements or road verges along the Council's highway network. They help to filter traffic pollution, provide shade for car parking and pedestrians and improve the overall appearance of the street scene.
- Woodlands - We maintain woodlands, which is approximately 3% of the Borough. The number of parks and open spaces also contains a proportion of woodland.

- Trees in Parks and Open Space - These are commonly the most significant trees in the area and have profound effect on its appearance and consequently, upon the leisure experience of users of the open space as well as for visual amenity for our residents and visitors alike.
- Trees within Cemeteries and Disused Cemeteries – Historic England has bequeathed parts of West Cemetery a site of special interest and is regarded as having one of the finest tree collections in the North of England.
- Housing Area Trees - These are found in and around communal or residential type gardens maintained by the Housing Department. These trees help to improve the landscape especially around communal housing areas and provide shade during hot weather and wildlife.

The above categories are by no means an exhaustive list, as we also maintain trees in allotments and other parcels of land.

## **Process to review the tree strategy**

The Tree Strategy Action Plan will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that the actions are being delivered according to the timescales set out. The Tree Strategy will be subject to a review every ten years.

# How we will manage all council owned trees

**The existing tree population is a valuable resource that requires more than just maintenance if it is to continue to provide the range of benefits that we expect.**

Management will include a long-term view of the tree resource, providing for the future as well as for today.

## Planting species

The different species for planting reflect, in most cases, what is already in situ. Different species will only be used if the originals are unavailable on the market, are unsuitable for the location, are prone to pest and disease attack or are part of a road containing mixed types.

## Aftercare

All newly planted trees need aftercare, which includes:

- Watering in dry weather
- Checking and adjusting stakes/ties

## Protective measures

- High profile areas where there is a risk of vandalism should be planted using guards
- Areas covered by CCTV also require consultation with the operator before planting new trees

## Pruning work

All pruning work will be carried out to modern safety and technical standards and to standards set within BS 3998 2010 and subsequent revisions. Precautions are to be taken to avoid disturbance of nesting birds (between March to September) and Bat roosts. Advice will be sought if Bat roosts are believed to be present.

The type of pruning used will vary according to the tree species, age, condition, past works and the nature of any complaint associated with the tree.

In cases where trees are colonised by ivy, this can be left undisturbed unless the tree is becoming visibly suppressed or is likely to be vulnerable to wind damage or for a visible inspection of trees. Ivy provides valuable habitat and should not be removed during the bird-nesting season.

Pruning is usually found to be necessary because of the following reasons:

- To maintain the health and safety of the tree
- Obstruction to users of the highway, pathways and/or private property
- To abate actionable nuisance

Intervals for pruning will vary between species and locations i.e. visual restrictions on the highway. Minor works e.g. the removal of basal growth will need annual attention in some cases. Pruning can take place at most times of the year but ideally leaf flushing and autumn should be avoided as well as flowering periods. Certain species have more specific times because of disease and the risk of bleeding.

Trees, which are adjacent to pathways, will be lifted so that passage is unhindered at a reasonable level within their canopies.



## Tree removal

It is sometimes necessary to remove trees for the following reasons:

- When they are dead, dying or dangerous
- To allow space for development of nearby trees that may be more desirable for retention
- To allow light and room for new planting
- To make way for any approved engineering or building works
- To abate actionable nuisance
- If bats are found roosting in a tree scheduled for removal then the Council has to obtain advice from qualified persons before starting work

## Cyclical tree work

All trees in high-risk areas, for example, adjacent to highways and play areas, will be inspected to a minimum frequency of every 24 months. Trees in other locations, with the exception of woodlands/forests, will be inspected within 36 months. Trees in woodlands/forests will be inspected as required.

## Responsive tree work

There will always be a need to carry out responsive work even when cyclical work is established. The quantity of this work should reduce in proportion as cyclical work increases.

## Residents' concerns

Trees have the potential to cause damage to buildings and structures, consequently many homeowners are concerned about tree roots and foundation damage.

Normally, this type of damage occurs where the soil type is shrinkable, usually clay, which is susceptible to soil movement from moisture extraction. Fortunately in the Borough of Darlington, although pockets of clay do exist, the majority of soils are of a non-shrinkable nature. It should also be noted that where buildings are damaged, trees are rarely the sole cause.

Much of the concern surrounding trees and building damage is unsubstantiated and claims against the Council for tree root damage remain low, especially in view of the huge number of trees under its care.

However, there is clearly a case for providing clear, concise and simple information on this subject and for promoting appropriate research where possible.

We will endeavour to investigate residents' concerns and will take every appropriate action to prevent any further difficulties.

We have a policy only to remove trees that are dead, diseased, dangerous or can be proven to be linked to damage caused to buildings. This approach fully addresses the Council's duty of care in accordance with current industry best practice and ensures that all possible investigations are carried out.

## Approach to Risk Management

Inspection of all trees on Council land will be undertaken by a competent arboriculturist, at defined intervals according to consistent methodology, incorporating a systematic and replicable risk assessment. Trees that do not meet the defined standard of safety will be identified, and remedial measures will be specified to mitigate unacceptable risks within the defined timeframe. These will be implemented as specified, which will be verified by a competent person. A record of all activity will be kept.

The Council will maintain an inventory of trees that contain records of tree condition, location, works recommendations and works completion. The inventory will be reviewed to ensure that it remains comprehensive and reliable.

The timescale for the completion of each works item following an inspection will be set in proportion to the level of risk presented by the tree.

The successful completion of risk management works will be confirmed by a competent person and recorded along with the date. Where a tree remains following works, an inspection will be made to update the record for that tree.

# Tree Inspections

## What are tree inspections

Tree inspections are the means of gathering reliable information about the current condition, and the context of the Council's trees. This strategy defines three kinds of inspection.

- Proactive tree inspections are planned inspections, undertaken by a competent arboriculturist, to a defined standard, at defined intervals. They are fundamental to tree risk management. Where this strategy refers to tree inspections, it means proactive tree inspections unless otherwise specified. The Council will undertake them as defined by this strategy.
- Reactive tree inspections are the same as planned tree inspections, except that they are done in response to an event that gives reasonable grounds to doubt the reliability of the existing tree inspection record. For example, an enquiry or report relating to tree safety, a tree failure event, a change in the context of a tree, a completion of certain tree works, or a significant weather event could all indicate a change in the safety of a tree. The Council will undertake these as required.
- Additional tree inspections are all other types of non-specialist observation of trees made by the Council. For example, these could include highway inspections, observations by park staff and development related surveys. They may be beneficial, but they are not required by this strategy.

## Who will inspect the trees

Tree inspections will only be undertaken by individuals that are competent to do so. Competence will be defined in accordance with industry standards and will comprise a combination of training, qualifications and experience.

## What will be recorded during a tree inspection

Tree inspections will include sufficient information to locate and identify the feature described by the inspection record i.e. the type of feature, the risk assessment, and the means to determine whether the risk associated with that feature is acceptable. For any feature does not meet the Council's tolerable level of the risk, the inspection will include a specification for the works and the timescale for completion.

Every inspection record will include a date for the next inspection.

## How often will trees be inspected?

All trees adjacent to highways, footpaths with heavy footfall, children's play areas, footpaths within public parks and any other high-risk areas are to be inspected every two years. Trees in other locations such as housing estates but not near footpaths are to be inspected every three years. All other trees i.e. woodlands, to be inspected as and when required.

## Tree Works

Tree works that are specified for the purpose of risk management (i.e. where the risk assessment has identified that a tree exceeds the tolerable level of risk) will be completed within a defined period from the date of inspection.

## Emergency Response

Should an emergency situation develop i.e. trees falling as a result of adverse weather conditions, the Council's Emergency Response Plan would be activated as required.

## Ash Dieback

Should an Ash tree be infected with Ash Dieback the tree will be monitored. Should the tree lose 50% of its leaf coverage due to the disease, the tree will be removed within three months, as per Forestry Commission guidance. There is no need to indiscriminately fell all Ash trees.





# Our policy for the management of all council trees

- 1.** We will ensure that the tree population continues to be developed and expanded with new planting where appropriate. Any trees removed shall be replaced unless there are special circumstances preventing this.
- 2.** We will provide a sustainable, high quality tree population. Where appropriate, native species will be planted to maximise habitats for wildlife.
- 3.** We will encourage and enable better understanding of the management of trees in order to promote greater community ownership and awareness.
- 4.** We will maintain the highest possible standards of tree care and management by:
  - i) Working to standards set within BS 3998 2010.
  - ii) Adopting best practise according to all relevant legislation and research.
- 5.** We will fulfil our obligation to ensure the safety of people and property.
- 6.** We will endeavour to avoid any work to trees that result in the loss of valuable wildlife habitat.
- 7.** We will resist the removal of trees unless there are sound arboricultural or other reasons e.g. disease or structural damage.
- 8.** We will not carry out felling or potentially disfiguring forms of tree work in order to improve the reception of television signals, solar panels and wind turbines or for CCTV operations, or the alleviation of bird mess, honey dew, leaf or fruit fall.
- 9.** We will support the process of natural regeneration on appropriate sites.
- 10.** We will maximise the recycling of tree related 'waste' created by the Council's own tree management.
- 11.** We will require more active protection of Council tree stock from avoidable damage caused by agencies responsible for engineering works near trees, such as highway maintenance contractors and the utility companies.
- 12.** We will endeavour where possible to keep tree cover.

# Street trees

**Street trees are trees located next to or within a public road. Trees planted in the highway help to reduce vehicle speeds (Department for Transport, 2007). They assist in improving road safety, as they can provide and maintain a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles. Street trees can assist in reducing traffic speed by giving the impression that the road is narrower and this may encourage slower driving.**

The roadside environment is a tough place for a tree to survive. There is often intense pressure for space from underground cables and pipes, traffic, buildings, street lights, road signs, etc. This limited space is often polluted by car emissions, road salt, oil and other pollutants that challenge the tree's survival. There is also an increasing trend by car users to park their vehicles on verges, causing rutting and soil compaction, which seriously damages tree roots as well as leaving the verge in an unsightly and unsafe condition. This coincides with an increasing requirement for off street parking and subsequent construction of new vehicle crossovers. Despite all of this, trees can and do survive, albeit with a more limited life expectancy and with varying degrees of success.

Many of our most notable tree lined streets have tree populations that are over-mature.

Such trees are vulnerable to climatic variations (such as drought), disease and damage. An over-mature population of street trees tends to erode gradually over a number of years as individual trees decline and have to be removed. This generally affects the older areas of the Borough. In these areas new trees should be introduced between the mature trees to ensure that there will be continuous tree cover in future years.

In planning for the replacement of older forest-type trees, it is tempting to consider using small short-lived ornamental species that do not have the same scale and habit, thereby reducing maintenance costs. However, the massive contribution that large trees make to the character of the environment must be maintained and safeguarded, and be supported by new planting of similar species where applicable.

This will help to ensure that the balance of a dominant 'treescape' is retained within the Borough.





# Our policy for street trees

- 1.** We will maintain our presumption against the removal of trees that are healthy but subject to complaint, unless the basis of the complaint has an overriding justification and no alternative management practice can be implemented.
- 2.** We will place a priority on the replacement of aging street tree populations, particularly where these adjoin major traffic routes, planting large-growing trees where appropriate.
- 3.** We will seek to plant new street trees in appropriate sites with priority given to sites where street trees are currently or have in the past been located.
- 4.** We will aim to use the same type of tree species for new and/or replacement planting in roads that reflect the type in use locally, maintaining single species avenues where appropriate.
- 5.** We will endeavour to protect street trees and the growing environment from threats such as: loss of and damage to verges, the activities of statutory undertakers and others excavating near trees and damage from the over-use of road de-icing salt.
- 6.** We will not support the removal of trees for vehicle crossovers unless the tree is of limited life expectancy or can be relocated elsewhere. All trees removed will be replaced and all costs will be borne by the crossover applicant.
- 7.** For new developments where appropriate, developers will be encouraged to include a street tree scheme within the development.
- 8.** We will support measures that discourage verge parking by road vehicles and damage to verge caused by adjoining building works.
- 9.** We will give advanced notice to all interested parties of proposed major tree work programmes, such as large scale felling.
- 10.** We will maintain the highway trees.

# Trees in woodlands

**The majority of the Borough's woodland is made up of Oak, Beech, Hornbeam, Ash, Birch, Hazel, Maple, Sycamore, Elm, Willow, Poplar, Thorn, Walnut, Chestnut, Pine, Cherry and Holly.**

Most of the woodlands in the Borough will be managed with nature conservation objectives as a priority; some are managed by our in-house team. The future management of woodlands needs to address the continued problem of neglect.

Taking into account the multi-purpose objectives, which woodlands today fulfil, when appropriate dead trees will be left in situ to provide habitat for wildlife.

## Our policy for trees in woodlands

1. We will ensure woodlands have an up-to-date management plan in place.
2. We will ensure that woodlands are managed as a long-term sustainable resource for the public, for education and for nature conservation.
3. We will support the natural regeneration on appropriate sites.
4. We will, where appropriate, ensure dead and fallen trees and wood are left on site and dead trees are left standing to encourage species diversity, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for removal.
5. We will manage woodland to fulfil its obligation to ensure safety of people and property whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places and the level of acceptable risk must reflect this.
6. We will quantify the canopy cover in the Borough and monitor in future years.

# Trees in parks and open spaces

**The Victorian legacy of fine specimen planting is more apparent within the parks and open spaces of Darlington than in any other area. Tree planting within the parks mirrored the popular interests of the time in botany and horticulture, hence the planting of various exotic specimen trees.**

The tree coverage within these sites has for a long time provided a stunning amenity that can only be created and maintained through the presence of large mature specimens that were chosen for both their aesthetic qualities and contribution to the site as a whole.

This situation however is precariously placed at present. Little or no under planting has occurred within many areas; leading to the possibility of extensive loss of continuous tree-canopy coverage should mature trees require removal. Where under planting and replanting has been undertaken, the trees that have been planted often will never be of the same amenity value as the trees they are to replace, due to the use of smaller, less expensive species. This use of inappropriate trees has the potential to devalue this resource forever.

## Our policy for trees in parks and open spaces

1. We will support the natural regeneration on appropriate sites.
2. We will, where appropriate, ensure dead and fallen trees and wood are left on site and dead trees are left standing to encourage species diversity, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for removal.
3. We will quantify the canopy cover in the Borough and monitor in future years.

# Trees in disused churchyards and cemeteries

**We maintain three large cemeteries within the Borough: these are North Cemetery, East Cemetery and West Cemetery.**

English Heritage has bequeathed parts of West Cemetery, a site of special interest.

Some of the oldest trees in Darlington are within West Cemetery, as historically people would plant a tree as a monument to their loved ones. We will continue this practice within West Cemetery should residents require it.

## Our policy for disused churchyard and cemetery trees

1. We will create a varied and sustained tree population in Council disused churchyards and cemeteries.
2. We will develop long term management plans for trees in disused churchyards and cemeteries to identify areas of risk and to prevent decline.
3. We will continue, where appropriate, to plant amenity trees and native species of local provenance.

# Trees in council housing areas

**Many of the public housing areas within the Borough have a good number and selection of trees, many of which are large old hedgerow trees, which are now over maturing. If evergreen hedges are not maintained to an acceptable level, then it may be necessary to remove them.**

A large proportion of the trees within Council house gardens have been planted by tenants or by natural regeneration from seed. A number of trees have been inappropriately planted in the past on housing open spaced land and within some communal gardens.

## Our policy for trees in council housing areas

1. We will support the natural regeneration on appropriate sites.
2. We will, where appropriate, ensure dead and fallen trees and wood are left on site and dead trees are left standing to encourage species diversity, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for removal.
3. We will quantify the canopy cover in the Borough and monitor in future years.

# Trees on private land

**The greatest proportion of both the urban and rural tree population is privately owned. Therefore, this part of the strategy sets out our approach to the protection of privately owned trees in the area.**

As the Local Planning Authority, we have a statutory duty to take steps to protect trees that we believe make an important contribution to the amenity of the areas. The quality of private tree care is very variable and ranges from owners who are indifferent, through to motivated but poorly advised owners, to those who take great pride in their trees and are anxious to seek the best advice and engage quality contractors to carry out required work.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, we have powers to make and enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and designate Conservation Areas (CAs) within which all established trees are protected. It is usually only in cases of potential threat that a local authority will protect trees by use of a TPO.

Protection has not only been achieved through the statutory process, a substantial number of trees have been saved from inappropriate pruning or premature felling by the offer of tree advice from Council's officers. Recommendation is given to use reputable contractors/consultant who can give more detailed advice on site.

Advice can be given to the owners of protected trees and other tree owners; this advice is offered free and is seen as a valuable part of tree protection. The Council is however unable to give detailed advice regarding the safety of privately-owned trees.

## Statutory protection of trees

The current Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes it a duty of the Local Planning Authority to “ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation of planting of trees” and to “make Tree Preservation Orders, under Section 198, as appear to the authority to be necessary in connection with the granting of such permission, whether for giving effect to such conditions or otherwise.”

As part of the Council's duty as set out in the 1990 Act, it will incorporate improved policies relating to Trees and Woodlands within its Local Plan through the review process.

More generally:

- Significant healthy trees and other landscape features such as hedgerows, ponds and watercourses shall be retained.
- Planning applications on sites with significant existing landscaping shall be supported by a full tree survey indicating all landscape features, tree species, canopy spreads, trunk diameter and levels at the base of each tree.
- Trees shall not normally be severely topped or lopped, or endangered by construction work or underground services. In addition, buildings shall not be sited so that sunlight and daylight is reduced to an extent that would lead to a request for a tree surgery.
- The Council will make Tree Preservation Orders and/or attach appropriate conditions to planning permissions to safeguard existing trees and ensure that new planting is established and protected.



- Where appropriate, adequate space for planting must be allowed within developments. In particular, screen planting including large trees will normally be required at the edge of settlements.
- Detailed landscaping schemes will normally be required as part of full planning applications. Amongst other things they must indicate existing trees and shrubs to be retained; trees to be felled; the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass; and screening and paving. Preference should be given to the use of native trees. Wildlife corridors shall be established wherever opportunities occur.

We are also guided by the Department of the Environment Circular 36/78 “Trees and Forestry” and Department of the Environment “Good Practice Guide for Tree Preservation Orders 2000” (and as amended).

While the most commonly known form of the statutory tree protection is the Tree Preservation Order (TPO), equally important are Conservation Areas within which nearly all established trees are protected. New TPO’s are being made all the time in line with its statutory duties.

The title “Tree Preservation Order” suggests that the tree or trees are “preserved” for all time. This is not the case and is, of course, impossible. Trees have a finite life and will require attention at some time in their life, especially in urban areas near properties etc. The TPO ensures that the local authority, as an independent party, has a measure of control over the fate of the tree to ensure that only appropriate works are carried out and that, where appropriate, the tree is replaced at the end of its life. Any tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order or Conservation Area that is rendered dangerous e.g. by storm damage or disease can be made safe without formal consent from the local planning authority. Tree owners or contractors are however encouraged to write to the Council to put any exempted work on record.

## Trees on development sites

**One of the most common threats against trees (and therefore a common reason for making a TPO) is the proposed development of land upon which trees are growing. It is common for plans to be submitted showing a relationship between trees and buildings that is unsuitable.**

Schemes are frequently amended to ensure that significant trees are properly retained, often through a process of working with the applicant to reach mutually acceptable solutions to the conflicts that can arise.

Some developers assume that all trees on a site will have to be retained and consequently often view trees as a problem rather than an asset. Unfortunately, this can occasionally result in trees being removed from development sites before a planning application is made.

It is common for planning applications to fail to provide sufficient information to assess the likely impact upon trees on a proposed development site. This usually means that council officers have to spend time making detailed assessments of trees and other factors, which can delay the application process. This is easily addressed by developers and other professionals accessing the preapplication advice and guidance that the Council gives.

It is usual for us to impose tree protection and/or planting conditions as part of any planning permission. For the trees to be retained successfully within a development site, it is vital that their root system is properly protected from direct and indirect damage such as ground compaction. The protected areas should be large enough to ensure that no disturbance occurs within the crown spread of the tree as a minimum, the distance can vary accordingly to local ground conditions, tree species and health. Guidance for tree protection within development sites can be found within BS 5837 (2012).

# Protection through advice

**The advice we give is seen as an important area of work contributing to the general protection of the tree population.**

Land owners have a Common Law right to remove (abate) the nuisance associated with tree encroaching onto your property.

They can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. Land owners have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.

Land owners are strongly advised to consult a professional tree surgeon for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees; they may be liable if the tree is heavily pruned in such a way as to render it unstable. If the works are trivial, meaning you could do the works with hand secateurs or similar, then such advice may not be necessary.

Before considering doing any works to a tree or trees you should find out if they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a Conservation Area. If the trees are protected, the land owner will need to gain consent by making an application give notice to the Council's Planning Department. To find out if the trees are protected and guidance on how to apply for works if they are protected contact:

- write to the Planning Department, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT
- send a fax to 01325 388616
- email [planning@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning@darlington.gov.uk)

Land owners are strongly advised to discuss with your neighbour your intention to prune encroaching branches.

Legally you do not own the encroaching branches and you should offer these to your neighbour but they are not obliged to accept them, you should consider disposing of the arisings yourself.

If the encroachment relates to a Council owned tree, any cuttings must be disposed of appropriately and not returned to Council land.

There are a variety of potential seasonal nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor and considered to be problems associated with living near trees.

Falling leaves, honeydew, fruit, nuts, bird droppings or blossom, leaves falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs. Darlington Borough Council will not fell or prune Council owned trees solely to alleviate problems caused by such natural phenomena.

The maintenance of gutters is the responsibility of the landowner and the Council is not obliged to remove leaves that may have fallen from Council owned trees. Where gutters are regularly blocked by fallen leaves, gutter guards may be fitted to provide a low maintenance solution. Honeydew is caused by greenfly (aphids) feeding on the tree, and then excreting a sugary sap. Often the honeydew is colonised by a mould, which causes it to go black. There is little that can be done to remove the aphid which causes the problem and pruning the tree may only offer temporary relief and any re-growth is often more likely to be colonised by greenfly thereby potentially increasing the problem. Some trees, such as limes, are more prone to attack by greenfly and in some years greenfly are more common, especially following a mild winter.

Honeydew is a natural and seasonal problem as are nesting birds which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, where bird droppings and honeydew affects cars, warm soapy water will remove the substance, particularly if you wash the car as soon as possible.

# Our policy for the protection of privately owned trees

1. We will seek to protect trees of amenity (and environmental) value.
2. We will promote good standards of tree care and woodland management.
3. We will give consent for works to a tree or woodland protected by a Tree Preservation Order provided it is satisfied that:
  - i) The long term health and appearance of the tree or woodland will not be impaired.
  - ii) The work will not unjustifiably inhibit or prevent the full and natural development of the tree.
  - iii) The work is necessary to its continued retention and consistent with good arboricultural practice.
  - iv) In the case of a woodland, the proposed work is consistent with the principles of sound woodland management.
  - v) There are sound arboricultural and/or safety reasons for the work.
4. We may impose planning conditions to protect trees according to BS 5837 (2012).
5. There will be a presumption against the cutting down, topping, lopping or uprooting of any tree protected by the Tree Preservation Order, Conservation Area or planning condition.
6. We will not give consent to fell a tree or protect by a TPO unless it is satisfied that this is necessary and justified. Generally, any such consent will be conditional upon appropriate replacement of the tree. Any unauthorised works to protected trees will be investigated and enforcement action taken where appropriate.
7. We will resist development, which it is considered makes inadequate provision for the retention of trees and other woody plants and natural features, particularly wildlife habitats such as woodlands.
8. We will continue to protect significant trees by the use of Tree Preservation Orders and will review all such Orders periodically to ensure they contain accurate information.
9. Applicants for the development of land with existing trees shall provide a tree survey with their application showing accurate positions of both trees to be retained and removed, including their dimensions and condition.
10. We will usually expect a new site development to contribute to the overall tree population either through on-site planting through planning conditions or through the donation of funds via 'Section 106 Agreement' dedicated to the planting of trees by the Council in the locality.
11. We will encourage all major tree-owning organisations to adopt best practice in the care of their trees, especially where those trees contribute to the character of the Borough.
12. The Senior Arboricultural Officer will develop closer links with the Planning Section to keep up-to-date with planning applications that have been authorised or refused.
13. If any land is to be adopted by the Council from a development, that the relevant officers inspect the site before the land is handed over, if trees are within this area, a tree survey should be carried out for health and safety purposes and that the developer would carry out any works which are necessary at their own expense. Any trees which require removal, should be replaced with heavy standard trees with a five-year maintenance plan, so that the Council do not adopt costly works.

# Tree planting

**The Council has made a commitment to plant 100,000 trees on Council land over the lifetime of this strategy.**

Further to this, the Council will also plant a minimum of two trees for every tree that has been removed due to the conditions set out in this policy. Where appropriate we will ensure that trees lost as part of any new development are replaced within 5 years by the developer. Where a significant tree is removed for a legitimate reason, the replacement will be specified as a heavy standard.

We will work with local communities to identify suitable sites for the planting of trees to deliver our aspirations. We will also work with communities to ensure we plant appropriate species of trees in the various locations identified.

A report will be brought to Scrutiny each year, updating members on the progress of delivering the agreed actions and the number of trees planted against the target of 100,000 over the lifetime of the Strategy.

## Equalities Impact Assessment Statement

This tree strategy provides a framework for the Council to manage trees, woodlands and hedgerows in the Borough in ways that enhance life and well being for people and wildlife.

Whilst the overriding aim of the strategy is to safeguard trees as an important part of Darlington's environmental quality, the Council recognises that in certain circumstances there may be conflict between tree protection and people's requirements for access or other needs. Where such circumstances arise, normally there will be a presumption in favour of protecting trees.

However, where issues arise relating to the access or mobility needs of disabled people, the

presumption in favour of tree protection will be weighed against those needs through Equalities Impact Assessment on a case-by-case basis. This recognises that the protection of trees must be balanced with the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality of opportunity for disabled people, as well as other people with protected characteristics specified in the act.

This shift in the balance of consideration will only be applied where a disabled person's needs are specifically related to their impairment or disability, as distinct from general views or preferences that might be shared by any citizen.

Where such circumstances arise in relation to development proposals, the needs of disabled people and the desirability of protecting trees will be balanced within the planning application process. Policies CS2 and CS19 within the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework promote the access needs of disabled people, whilst CS15 provides the policy framework for tree protection.

In circumstances not related to development proposals, such as the maintenance and management of trees in the highway, this policy statement within the Tree Strategy provides the trigger for considering the needs of disabled people and of tree protection by means of Equality Impact Assessment. The overall approach will be to seek to find solutions that avoid the removal of healthy trees. If this is not possible, and the removal of trees is necessary, agreement will be sought on appropriate replanting.

In practice, the most frequent concerns tend to be related to problems with raised roots or low hanging branches on footways or in public open spaces. In most cases these can be easily rectified by routine management.

In cases of raised roots it will be important to seek to find solutions that do not cause medium to long term damage to trees.

Resolving problems arising from trees is often dependant on the ways in which maintenance work is carried out by front-line staff.

The Council will seek to ensure through appropriate training that staff are aware of the needs of disabled people in dealing on a routine basis with problems such as overhanging branches and raised roots.







Tree and woodland  
strategy 2021-2031



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

egr0322

## Tree & Woodland Strategy 2021-2031 Action Plan

## Appendix 2

Action	Lead	Status	Measures of Success
Inspections of trees in Zone 1 to take place on a 12-24 month programme.	Head of Environmental Services	<b>Ongoing</b>  Commenced November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspections of trees adjacent to highways, footpaths, children's play areas etc.</li> <li>• Consistent ground based, visual inspections of the current condition of trees. As trees are dynamic organisms and therefore subject to change, inspections should detail the condition of trees on the day of the inspection.</li> <li>• Any works identified during inspections should be carried out within three months.</li> </ul>
Inspection of trees in Zone 2 to take place on a 24-36 month programme.	Head of Environmental Services	<b>Ongoing</b>  Commenced November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspections of Estate trees.</li> <li>• Consistent ground based, visual inspections of the current condition of trees. As trees are dynamic organisms and therefore subject to change, inspections should detail the condition of trees on the day of the inspection.</li> <li>• Any works identified during inspections should be carried out within two to three months.</li> </ul>
Other trees i.e. woodland, to be inspected as required.	Head of Environmental Services	<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk through inspections to be undertaken as required as per advice from Zurich.</li> <li>• Any works identified during inspections should be carried out within the year, dependent on targets.</li> </ul>
Continue parks replanting and underplanting (when you plant complimentary plants around the base)	Team Leader for Arboriculture	<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To continue to plant within parks and open spaces as necessary, planting heavy standard to replace removed trees.</li> </ul>

## Tree & Woodland Strategy 2021-2031 Action Plan

## Appendix 2

Action	Lead	Status	Measures of Success
Continue re-assessment of TPO Trees. (Enquiries)	Team Leader for Arboriculture/ Head of Planning, Development Management and Environmental Health	<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to the nationally set timescales when determining tree applications: TPO applications (eight weeks) and TFC applications (6 weeks).</li> <li>Ensure that applications are determined in line with good arboriculture practice.</li> </ul>
Plant replacements for any removed trees.	Team Leader for Arboriculture	<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitable trees to be planted in locations where a replacement tree is required.</li> </ul>
Work with TVCA on their aim to plant 1 million trees across the Tees Valley.	Head of Environmental Services	<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist TVCA officers in their pursuit of maximising tree planting within the Borough, including planting trees on DBC owned land.</li> </ul>
Continue utilisation of prospective planting areas as outlined on the database, working towards the 100,000 trees target.	Team Leader for Arboriculture	<b>Ongoing – On track</b>  Over 47,700 trees planted to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where funding allows, trees will be planted at identified locations.</li> </ul>
Review and reassessment of Tree Strategy.	Head of Environmental Services	<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a yearly update to the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee, on the progress of delivering the agreed actions and the number of trees planted against the target of 100,000 over the lifetime of the Strategy.</li> </ul>



## Tree & Woodland Strategy 2021-2031 Action Plan

## Appendix 2

Action	Lead	Status	Measures of Success
Develop a range of annual KPIs to report to the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee	Head of Environmental Services	<b>Complete</b>  Included in main report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of inspections undertaken in Zone 1 (High Risk) over a two-year period.</li> <li>No. of trees planted.</li> <li>No. of trees felled compared to no. of replacement trees planted.</li> <li>Measure, review and report on Darlington's Tree Canopy (5 yearly measurement).</li> <li>No. of enquiries received, and percentage responded to within target time.</li> <li>No. of repeat visits to same tree arising from the same customer enquiry or complaint.</li> <li>No. of trees removed infected with more than 50% Ash Dieback.</li> </ul>

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**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
12 JUNE 2025**

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**WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2025/26 Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included.

**Summary**

2. Members are requested to consider the attached draft work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the remainder of the Municipal Year, which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and discussions held at the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee Annual Briefing which took place on 29 May 2025.
3. Once the work programme has been approved by this Scrutiny Committee, any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure (**Appendix 2**).

**Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that Members note the current status of the Work Programme and consider any additional areas of work they would like to include.
5. Members' views are requested.

**Amy Wennington  
Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Author: James McAllister

Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan. The Work Programme contains items which enable Members to scrutinise those areas that contribute the priority of Living Well – a healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most, and Communities - working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder.
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. The format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.
7. The Council Plan was adopted on 18 July 2024, and outlines Darlington Borough Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for action over the next three years. It gives strategic direction to the Council and Council services, defining priorities, identifying key actions, and shaping delivery.
8. The Council Plan identifies six priorities, one of which is 'Living Well', which states that more years in good health leads to more fulfilling lives, and a better standard of living, however the Plan highlights that there are inequalities in Darlington across all stages of life which are influenced by broader social factors including education, employment, housing and income. Seven key deliverables are identified as part of this priority.
9. The Council believes that all residents should have the opportunity to live longer, healthier lives, and wants to support residents of every age to live well. The Council has committed to improving our contact with carers and working to create a network of support for better health and wellbeing outcomes. The Council will support those who need it most and signpost for access to other provision and support, where appropriate.

### Forward Plan and Additional Items

10. Once the Work Programme has been agreed by this Scrutiny Committee, any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a Quad of Aims.
11. A copy of the index of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

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**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved</b>	<b>Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)</b>	<b>Scrutiny's Role</b>
<b>Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031</b>	June 2025	Brian Graham		To receive a yearly review of the strategy.
<b>Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan for 2024-2025</b>	June 2025	Ian Thompson		To Update Scrutiny Members.
<b>Deployable Camera Policy</b>	July 2025	Paul Branch		To Update Scrutiny Members
<b>2024/2025 Q4 Performance Reports</b>	August 2025	Relevant AD		To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary.
<b>Darlington Transport Plan Delivery Report (2022-2030)</b>	February 2026	Anthony Hewitt		To receive an update on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capital Programme</li> <li>- Tees Valley Combined Authority Strategic Transport Plan</li> <li>- Rail Station Improvement Plan</li> </ul>

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved	Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Residents Parking Zone Policy Update	October 2025	Andrew Casey		To be confirmed
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements Update	To be confirmed	Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed
Local Plan Refresh	To be confirmed	To be confirmed		To be confirmed
Rights of Way Improvement Plan	To be confirmed	Andrew Casey/Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed
Network Management Plan	To be confirmed	Andrew Casey/Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed

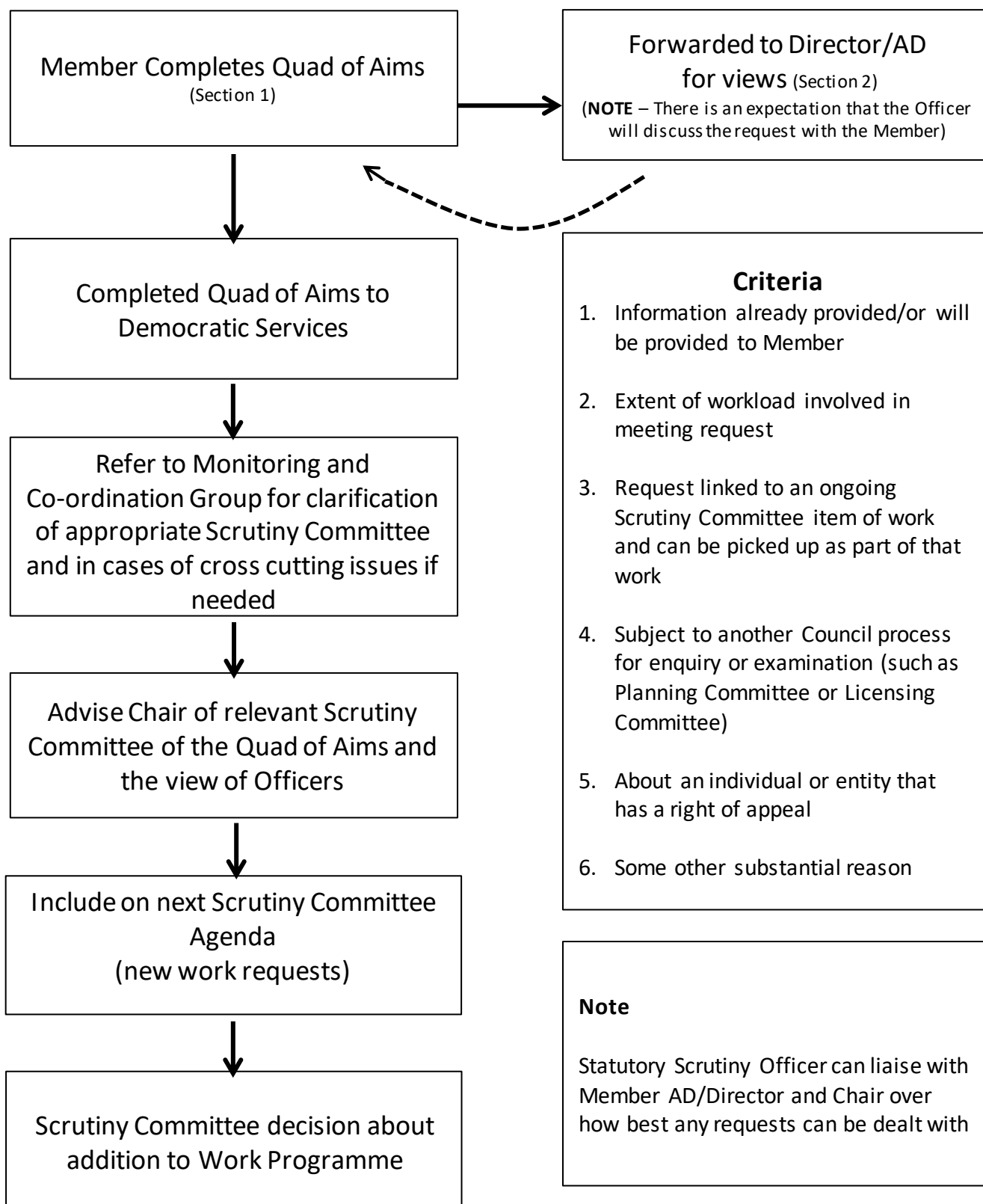


Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved	Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Flood Risk Management Plan	To be confirmed	Andrew Casey/Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed
Electric Vehicle Charging Policy	To be confirmed	Andrew Casey/Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed
Low Traffic/Active Travel Neighbourhood Feasibility Report	To be confirmed	Andrew Casey/Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed
Public Safety Contingency Plan	To be confirmed	Chris Knox/Ben Grabham		To be confirmed
Modern Slavery Report	To be confirmed	To be confirmed		To be confirmed

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved	Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Policy Review Dates	To be confirmed	Relevant AD		To be confirmed
Harm Reduction on Highways Approach	To be agreed	Andrew Casey/Anthony Hewitt		To be confirmed
Council and Police Co-working approach to Anti-Social Behaviour Report	To be confirmed	Chris Knox		To be confirmed

- Task and Finish Groups:**
- Councillor Case Monitoring System with Neil Bowerbank.

## PROCESS FOR ADDING AN ITEM TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME



PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

## QUAD OF AIMS (MEMBERS' REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY)

### SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS

**NOTE** – This document should only be completed if there is a clearly defined and significant outcome from any potential further work. This document should **not** be completed as a request for or understanding of information.

REASON FOR REQUEST?	RESOURCE (WHAT OFFICER SUPPORT WOULD YOU REQUIRE?)
PROCESS (HOW CAN SCRUTINY ACHIEVE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME?)	HOW WILL THE OUTCOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Signed Councillor .....

Date .....

**SECTION 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTORS/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS**  
**(NOTE – There is an expectation that Officers will discuss the request with the Member)**

	<b>Criteria</b>
1. (a) Is the information available elsewhere? Yes ..... No .....  If yes, please indicate where the information can be found (attach if possible and return with this document to Democratic Services)  .....  (b) Have you already provided the information to the Member or will you shortly be doing so?  .....	1. Information already provided/or will be provided to Member
2. If the request is included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme what are the likely workload implications for you/your staff?  .....	2. Extent of workload involved in meeting request
3. Can the request be included in an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and picked up as part of that?  .....	3. Request linked to an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and can be picked up as part of that work
4. Is there another Council process for enquiry or examination about the matter currently underway?  .....	4. Subject to another Council process for enquiry or examination (such as Planning Committee or Licensing Committee)
5. Has the individual or entity some other right of appeal?  .....	5. About an individual or entity that has a right of appeal
6. Is there any substantial reason (other than the above) why you feel it should not be included on the work programme?  .....	6. Some other substantial reason

**Signed .....**    **Position .....**    **Date .....**

**PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FORWARD PLAN**



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

**FORWARD PLAN  
FOR THE PERIOD: 4 JUNE 2025 - 30 OCTOBER 2025**

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Consultation on the Renewal of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order and Introduction of a Borough Wide Public Space Protection Order	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025
Physical Activity Strategy	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025
Representation on Other Bodies 2025/26	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025
Climate Change Progress	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Rent 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Consultation on a Homes Strategy for the Borough	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Council Plan Performance Reporting Update - Quarter 4	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Disabled Facilities Grant 2025/26	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Dolphin Centre – Invest to Save Projects	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2025-2030	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Introduction of a Boroughwide Article 4 Direction to control changes of use to Houses of Multiple Occupation	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Outturn 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Revenue Budget Outturn 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Schedule of Transactions	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Town Centre Regeneration	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Annual Review of the Investment Fund	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Blue Badge Application Procedures	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Climate Change and Nature Restoration Strategy	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Community Asset Transfer Policy	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2023/24	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 1 2025/26	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26 - Quarter 1	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Single Use Plastic Policy	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Strategic Asset Plan	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2024/2025	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Woodland Road Waiting Restrictions	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Procurement Plan Update	Cabinet 7 Oct 2025

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