

Consultation

Appendix 4

1. There has been Consultation was carried out between November 2018 and March 2019 and consisted of:
 - (a) Stakeholder consultation with key individuals and partners, specialist interest groups, arts organisations, industry partners and the education sector.
 - (b) An online survey was open from 18 February to 18 March 2019. 240 responses were received. A link to the survey was distributed through various networks and was largely filled in by people who knew about or had some connection with the Stockton & Darlington Railway.
 - (c) Community consultation was carried out with a range of groups and individuals.
 - (d) Community open days: 286 people attended and contributed to the open day sessions, which were held at Preston Park Museum, Locomotion Shildon and the Head of Steam.
2. An additional online survey was developed to ascertain the priority areas of interest for potential visitors based on the proposed interpretation scheme for DRHQ. This was limited only to Darlington Borough Council employees as it was in early stages of development and initial feedback would help inform options to be included in final proposal. A total of 85 returns were received to the survey.
3. In February and March 2020 pre planning consultation was carried out online as drop-in sessions could not be held as a result of Covid. There were 31 responses received.

Outcome of Consultation

4. The outcome of the consultation was extremely positive and the outcome and benefits that those consulted perceive will result from the project include:
 - (a) A renewed sense of local awareness of the region's heritage;
 - (b) Younger and future generations learning about the region's heritage, leading to new appreciation of their local area and a sense of grass roots local pride;
 - (c) Family history projects, galvanising local communities to engage with the heritage and revealing new personal stories;
 - (d) Raised levels of aspiration, particularly in young people;
 - (e) New facilities and activities that will fulfil existing community needs;
 - (f) Activities and volunteering opportunities that provide positive social, health and quality of life benefits.

5. It was clear that DRHQ promises to thrive as a community hub, taking on the activity preferences voiced by those consulted:
 - (a) To engage audiences from across the spectrum of abilities, ages, social, cultural or economic backgrounds;
 - (b) To provide opportunities for young people to gain new skills, expertise and qualifications, which will be a valuable resource to help set them up for their next vital stage in life;
 - (c) To be a vehicle for new social interaction and improved health and quality of life.

6. Generally, the overall reactions were:
 - (a) Real enthusiasm from the majority of people and organisations spoken to for DRHQ;
 - (b) Huge potential for it to be a catalyst for the area;
 - (c) Most organisations want to get involved; further engagement/consultation will take place throughout the project;
 - (d) A wow factor is needed;
 - (e) Unique grouping of existing tenants and buildings, key to the success of the site;
 - (f) There is a desire to have working steam on site;
 - (g) There were strong feelings that DRHQ is currently a hidden location and in developing as a world-class visitor destination, it is important to balance the needs of the locals and visitors;
 - (h) Northgate needs to be improved as this will be important for visitors coming from the town centre;
 - (i) Opportunity for a bike hub linking the 26-mile route;
 - (j) Schools and universities interested in learning opportunities, STEM and STEAM, hands on experience;
 - (k) Businesses interested in skills for young people and potential involvement on the site.

7. From the additional survey carried out with Darlington Borough Council employees, the headline themes that came out on the interpretation strategy were:
 - (a) Global Innovation
 - (b) The First Day
 - (c) Darlington then and now
 - (d) Peoples' stories

8. In general, the feedback from the public and stakeholders from the pre planning consultation was generally in favour of the DRHQ proposals, especially with regards to regenerating and attracting people to the heritage of Darlington and the railway. In addition, there were very few negative comments about DRHQ proposals. No comments were received that would suggest the outline scheme proposals were not acceptable or needed to be drastically altered prior to progressing to the next stage in scheme development.
9. This consultation work has helped develop DRHQ and the interpretation strategy. The intention is to continue to develop the offer going forward and further consult on the various aspects of DRHQ, an example being the play area where young people will be consulted on the design options to help inform the final design.