

COUNCIL
16 MAY 2024

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Local Services Portfolio.

Highway Maintenance Programme

2. The following Highway Maintenance Schemes are now on site:
 - (a) Unclassified (Unc) Swaledale Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.275km)
 - (b) A67 Coniscliffe Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.440km)
 - (c) Unc Barmpton Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.810km)
3. The following Highway Maintenance schemes are due to start:
 - (a) Patching Contract: Carriageway Patching (18 sites)
 - (b) A167 Croft Road (Tees View) Carriageway Remedials (0.050km)
 - (c) Unc Riverside Way: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.310km)
4. The following Highway Maintenance Schemes are now complete:
 - (a) C71 Houghton Bank, Heighington: Drainage Repairs / Carriageway Reconstruction (0.188km)
 - (b) C182 Thompson Street East: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.183km)
 - (c) B6279 Tornado Way / McMullen Road Junction: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.447km)

Rail Education Programme

5. The Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership recruited a Rail Education Officer in September 2023 to deliver a programme of rail safety and confidence sessions in schools within a 1.5-mile corridor of the Bishop Line, between Bishop Auckland and Darlington. The programme is funded by the rail industry and since sessions began in schools in November the programme has been delivered in ten schools in total, four in Darlington – Red Hall Primary, Firthmoor Primary, St Bede’s RC Primary and St John’s CE Academy. To date 1,687 pupils have received the training, of which 672 are Darlington students. The programme will be extended to St George’s Academy in April.

Bus Services

6. Connect Tees Valley (public transport information service) and the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) are in the process of revising the way at stop bus information is displayed. We are working with TVCA to ensure that the design is accessible and meets the needs of as many bus users as possible.
7. TVCA have confirmed that they will fund service 16 (Mowden to town centre) from August 2024 when the current DBC contract expires until March 2025. This will bring service 16 into line with all other secured services in Darlington and across the Tees Valley and be part of TVCA’s role as the Local Transport Authority. The current funding for some

supported bus services across the Tees Valley is provided to TVCA by Government. The funding beyond March 2025 has not yet been confirmed by Government.

Safer Routes to School (SRTS)

8. A consultation has been completed on a scheme to introduce a 20mph zone on Abbey Road and Cleveland Terrace covering the frontage of Abbey Infant and Junior School. Whilst there is general support for the proposals, we are currently working through consultee responses. Subject to traffic regulation orders we are aiming to deliver the scheme towards the end of the financial year.
9. A scheme for St. Augustine's Primary School was consulted on but there was no consensus amongst local residents, therefore Officers are investigating alternative options.
10. A scheme for St. Bede Primary School on Thompson Street East is being finalised and will be consulted on at the end of May.
11. A scheme for Hurworth Comprehensive has been consulted on and is programmed to be delivered during the summer holidays.
12. An Initial scheme design for Longfield School has begun.
13. Feasibility work is about to begin for a scheme at Mowden Junior School.

Hopetown Darlington

14. The Hopetown Darlington development is progressing at speed with the construction of the bespoke play area, Wagon Woods, and the installation of the exciting and engaging interpretation in North Road Station Museum.
15. Throughout March and April, recruitment has been undertaken for 50 roles for the site; including, positions in catering, retail, admissions, housekeeping, finance and administration, learning and technical roles.

Darlington Hippodrome

16. The theatre has secured a whole series of week-long shows from London's West End for the Autumn 2024 season. The shows include: The Mouse Trap, Sister Act, An Inspector Calls, Ghost and Cluedo. This will be the most highly anticipated theatre season in Darlington since the 2016/17 restoration programme.

Libraries

Augmented Reality

17. After securing funding from LibraryOn, a new self-led tour has been introduced at Darlington Library. The tour includes augmented reality, which displays areas of the library throughout the past, including an image from 1885.
18. Augmented reality has also been incorporated into the large wall mural within The Hive, which allows the user to view Locomotion Number 1 on their device as an enlarged 3D

model. This, alongside Darlington's Fowler Plough and an augmented reality car engine, aims to increase enthusiasm for STEM activity and make it more accessible to all.

Crossing The Tees Book Festival

19. The festival celebrated local writers with an award ceremony at Darlington Library on Monday 22 April. The festival is organised by libraries in Darlington, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool and takes place annually in June.

World Book Night

20. World Book Night was celebrated on Wednesday 23 April, with an author event and visits to Morrisons on North Road, to increase promotion of the digital library, which includes newspapers, magazines, digital and audio books.

Local History Month

21. Throughout May, Darlington Library is hosting events at both libraries, including an exciting art exhibition in the gallery, a Musical Memories event, open days and talks. A range of interesting displays can also be viewed in the Centre for Local Studies.

Cockerton Library

22. Cockerton Library is growing audiences by offering a range of after school activities, including photography workshops, Sing A Story, arts and crafts and games and logic puzzles.

Creative Darlington

23. The 'Place, People & Living Memory' exhibition at Darlington Library in February and March 2024 received Heritage & Culture Fund budget support alongside £29,400 project funding from Arts Council England in 2023/24. It considered the work of female campaigners and artists, including Elizabeth Pease, Josephine Butler and Jo Spence, contained a photo essay, painting, print, photography, textiles and a number of video works. An events programme which included talks from exhibiting artists and exhibition curator Phil Gatenby and MIMA learning curator, Claire Pounder, accompanied the exhibition and attracted 100 plus attendees, including students from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College Foundation Course in Art & Design and 'A' level courses. The exhibition attracted 1,661 visits.
24. Creative Darlington has worked with the Director of the Stockton & Darlington Railway Bicentenary Festival 2025 to submit an Expression of Interest to apply for Major Projects support of £750,000 from Arts Council England for aspects of the programme. Arts Council England advised on 4 March 2024 that this could proceed to a full application. Creative Darlington supported the submission by Stockton Borough Council of a Major Projects proposal to Arts Council England on 27 March 2024 by Stockton Borough Council, alongside colleagues from Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council, Stockton Borough Council and other parties. The Arts Council England funding decision is expected in summer 2024.

25. The 'Now, Then' exhibition at Darlington Library, which ran from Tuesday 2 April to Thursday 2 May, included illustrations and poems created by Lizzie Lovejoy as part of the 'Your Library Story' creative programme supported by Arts Council England. The artist engaged with 62 people through Darlo Draws drop-in sessions at Darlington Library and at other locations in Darlington, including The Friends Community Hub and Meeting House on Skinnergate. The exhibition also included works by five artists selected from responses to a call out.
26. 'Now, Then' has been followed by 'Photography With or Without A Camera or Rules', an exhibition on the evolution of photography from cyanotypes to digital, which opened on Saturday 4 May and will run until Thursday 13 June. Both exhibitions are part of Darlington's Local History Month programme, with support from the Council's Heritage and Culture Fund budget.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

27. On Wednesday 24 April, Northumbria in Bloom judges were welcomed for their Spring visit to Darlington, which was an opportunity to showcase the improvements that have taken place, including: installation of multiple shop fronts, planters and signs.
28. As the events programme begins to build up for the summer, the Continental Markets returned during the Easter school holidays, following a successful trial in October 2023.
29. A new motor sports display event was organised by Darlington and District Motor Club with vehicles from a variety of motorsports in the town centre Saturday 27 April.
30. The Town Centre Team continue to programme high street social events to network with town centre businesses. The events have been well received by those attending, whilst also supporting a town centre venue.
31. Working with British Cycling, the Events Team are finalising arrangements to accommodate a circuit event to the town centre on Friday 21 June. This spectacular sporting competition will see hundreds of professional cyclists competing against each other around the town centre.

Environmental Services

32. The Garden Waste Collection Service resumed collections on Tuesday 2 April and will continue throughout the year to December for subscribers of the service.

Climate Change

33. Working with the sustainability and climate change lead, Darlington Library has opened a Seed Library, offering the public a safe space to exchange seeds and gather useful knowledge for planting. This will lead to less wastage of seeds and hopefully encourage more people to become growers.
34. The Town Centre Team are organising an Eco Fair to be held on Saturday 8 June. To complement the event, free water refilling locations and recycling collection point

information is being collated to add to the Council's sustainability web pages.

Councillor Libby McCollom
Local Services Portfolio