

COUNCIL
17 JULY 2025

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.

Climate Change

2. To highlight and engage with visitors around Climate Change the Eco Fair attracted thousands of visitors with information stands, exhibitors and local producers. There were drop-in activities themed around nature with over 350 people making recycled flowers for a project that will be displayed during the summer.

Highway Maintenance Programme

3. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (a) Patching Contract: Carriageway Patching (six sites)
 - (b) A67 Sadberge Road Roundabout: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.223km)
 - (c) Unc Allington Way: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.832km)
4. Highway Maintenance Schemes on site:
 - (a) Unc. Barnes Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.268km)
5. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Surface Dressing Contract: two sites (2.330km)
 - (b) Micro-Asphalt Contract: four sites (1.298km)
 - (c) B6290 Carmel Road North (Phase 3): Carriageway Resurfacing (0.620km)
 - (d) A1150 Stockton Road/Whinfield Road Roundabout: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.240km)
 - (e) A68 West Auckland Road (Phase 2): Carriageway Resurfacing (0.475km)

Bus Services

6. From the beginning of May, the service 6 and 6a has seen an enhanced service with a daily evening service and an hourly daytime Sunday service introduced using S106 funding. These enhancements will operate for a minimum three-year period. Tees Flex is continuing until August 2025, a decision beyond this period is awaited from the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA).

7. The under 22 fares promotion will continue for the financial year 2025/26. There is also a scheme to provide bus passes for care leavers agreed and this is in the process of being finalised.

Safer Routes to School

8. **Table 1** below shows progress on all our Safer Routes to School (SRTS) schemes that are currently being developed. The construction dates are anticipated and will be dependent upon the outcome of consultation and the availability of construction resource at that time.

Scheme	Scheme Consultation	Ward Member Briefing	Portfolio Holder sign-off	Traffic Regulation Order consultation	Potential Cabinet (if we receive objections)	Construction (currently programmed)
Hurworth Academy School 20mph Zone	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Abbey Infants and Junior School 20mph scheme	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Cleveland Terrace and Abbey Road - some early enabling works undertaken during Easter 2025 holidays with remaining work to be carried out during the summer holiday period.
Stanhope Road North Puffin crossing	Public consultation July 2025	Complete	Awaiting outcome of consultation	November 2025	February 2026	A scheme has been drawn up and consultation with local residents and businesses to commence shortly.
St. Augustine's School 20mph scheme	Complete	Complete	Engagement report being collated	September 2025	December 2025	School Summer holidays 2026

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St Bede's School 20mph scheme	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Currently programmed for Easter 2026 will coincide with maintenance scheme.
Longfield School Puffin crossing	March 2025	Complete	Awaiting outcome of consultation	July 2025	October 2025	Looking to coordinate construction with highway maintenance scheme on Longfield Road. Date to be agreed.
Mowden Infant and Junior School 20mph scheme	Resident consultation to be determined, engagement with the school to be undertaken	Ward member briefing late January	Awaiting outcome of consultation and decision on funding	TBD	TBD	TBD

Table 1: Progress of the current programme of SRTS Schemes

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)

9. CRSTS project work continues to be developed with a number of bus improvement and active travel schemes being developed. These projects are at various stages of development, either concept, preliminary or detailed design and some have statutory support from Active Travel England. It is likely that Woodland Road (phase 2) Active Travel Infrastructure Scheme will be delivered on site this year.
10. The government has announced that the Tees Valley will receive £978million of transport funding for the period 2027 to 2032. This was originally earmarked to come as the second round of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS2). The Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet agreed a programme of works for the funding in January 2024.

Hopetown Darlington

11. 'Railway Pioneers - Celebrating the Railway Rockstars of the Past' closed on 22 June 2025. The first of two Stockton & Darlington Railway 200 (S&DR200) bicentennial anniversary festival exhibitions at Hopetown, we welcomed over 21,000 visitors to the exhibition which showcased the advancements of rail technology in the early 19th century as well as the engineering innovation which led to the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.
12. 'STEAM to the Future', the second S&DR200 bicentennial anniversary festival exhibition at Hopetown, opened on 11 July 2025. This family friendly exhibition takes a playful look at the near and BlueSky thinking using commissioned art pieces showcasing the design and science behind the rail industry. S&DR200 has commissioned an immersive installation by A.A.Murakami (AKA Studio Swine) inspired by steam as a source of power, and visitors will have the chance to create a 22nd century inspired locomotive using virtual reality software. The free-to-enter exhibition will take place in the Exhibition Hall in historic Grade II listed Carriage Works until 5 October 2025.
13. 'Experiment!', our railway-themed time travel immersive experience ride, was shortlisted for the prestigious Museums + Heritage Awards in the 'Best Use of Digital, UK' category. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful on this occasion, but we were honoured to be named among this year's finalists at the awards, which celebrates excellence across the global cultural sector.

Libraries

14. Libraries succeeded in gaining funding to encourage reading for enjoyment and celebrating our railway history. Targeted at youngsters who were at a crucial stage of development when they were heavily disadvantaged during the pandemic, *On Track for Storytime* re-engaged young readers, provided a shared experience from school to school, and showcased peer-to-peer role modelling of storytelling.
15. Libraries gifted an entire year group (Year 3) a special edition copy of the book *Little Loco's Big Day*, by local author, Caroline Hardie, in hopes it would inspire children to become the bold, enterprising innovators of the future. The book tells the story of Locomotion No 1 on her first journey 200 years ago.
16. A film was made of five school classes reading *Little Loco's Big Day* and acting out scenes. This film was used to gift the remaining school classes their book and was made available on YouTube and social media for families to learn about our railway heritage and inspire involvement in the wider celebrations and activity.
17. A leaflet detailing recommended reads and related events celebrating the S&DR200 festival were given to all families alongside information on joining and using the library. 1,300 children were gifted the book, including a group of home-schooled pupils.

18. Darlington Library successfully bid for funding to restore and frame an important item from the town's history collection. The large original testimonial document presented to Edward Pease, Father of the Railways, in 1857, is notable for the number of influential people to have signed it as well as the rare autography of the time. This item is on display as part of the bicentennial celebrations within Darlington Library.
19. A touring exhibition showcasing Stockton and Darlington Railway's momentous history is taking place in the Art Gallery within Darlington Library.
20. The documents have been brought together from archives across the UK and include engineer drawings and rarely seen maps, as well as a few amusing Victorian cartoons depicting the adventurous and strange inventions of the age.
21. The exhibition is complemented by other works from Darlington's historic collection, as well as completed peg dolls decorated to symbolise a memorable journey, produced by members of the public and community groups as part of the Memory of a Journey Project.
22. The Crossing the Tees Book Festival is delivered by Darlington, Stockton, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Libraries. The line-up kicked off in Darlington with a Stand-Up History Show from TV personality and Antique expert, David Harper, and concluded with an evening of live music and spoken word inspired by the Stockton and Darlington Railway and the people who ride it with Hark! The Sound of Stories 'Passengers and Pioneers'. Back for its 11th year, the festival also showcases a range of author talks, and poetry, writing and publishing workshops.

Hippodrome

23. Newcastle's Ballet Lorent performed at the Hippodrome on 16 - 17 May, with children from Heathfield Primary School performing alongside the professional dancers.
24. As part of our ongoing partnership with Orchestras Live, Royal Northern Sinfonia performed at the Hippodrome on Thursday 5 June. As a curtain-raiser to the concert, students from Sedgefield Community College performed a bespoke piece created in workshops with the orchestra; they then had the opportunity to watch the concert. 350 people attended the concert, with tickets priced at just £5 for the under-30s and for friends and family of the workshop participants.
25. Community hires included Melanie Edmenson and Tees Dance, giving hundreds of young people the opportunity to perform on the Hippodrome stage. English Youth Ballet also performed at the Hippodrome on 13 - 14 June, with 60 young dancers from the local area performing alongside professional dancers in *Giselle*.
26. The Hippodrome's Youth Theatre will perform in The Hullabaloo on 21 June, while Youth Dance participants will present a showcase in the Hippodrome on 2 July.
27. The Hippodrome has formed a new partnership with Blackbird Creative Arts to offer Key Stage Door, a performing arts alternative education provision for 11–16-year-olds in Darlington. The programme is aimed at students who struggle with Emotionally Based School Avoidance; it's run by Blackbird Creative Arts who are hiring the space at a reduced rate. The provision will begin from September 2025.

28. The Hippodrome has formed a partnership with Live Theatre, Newcastle, and the NHS Integrated Care Board. On behalf of the NHS Universal Family Programme, at the Hippodrome, Live Theatre will deliver a six-week workshop programme for care experienced young people who are based in the Darlington area. These workshops using creative learning are designed to enhance employability skills, including communication, building confidence and encourage teamwork, equipping young people with skills and knowledge in preparation for entering the world of work.
29. Heavily-sold performances during this period include Sir Tim Rice (Monday 26 May), Dianne and Vito – Red Hot and Ready (Sunday 13 July, 855 tickets sold thus far), Jools Holland (15 July, 734 tickets sold thus far) and Rumours of Fleetwood Mac (Friday 18 July, 813 tickets sold thus far).
30. Thus far during this period, the Hippodrome's sector-leading access scheme has enabled 76 Essential Companions to attend shows free of charge to support audience members with disabilities, with 21 Universal Credit recipients and two Pension Credit recipients attending at a 50% discount.

Creative Darlington

31. Heritage and Culture fund budget has been committed to the Orchestras Live Darlo Creates programme in 2025/26 involving Darlington Hippodrome, Durham Music Service, Royal Northern Sinfonia who will deliver projects in summer 2025 and spring 2026 and Opera North who will begin a *From Rail to Stage* project which will involve Haughton Academy and Hopetown Darlington.
32. In May 2024 we were advised by another party that an application has secured an Arts Council England Project funding grant offer with budget support from the Heritage and Culture fund budget support in kind from Darlington Hippodrome to undertake a research and development project, expected to take place at Darlington Hippodrome between 22 and 30 September 2025, investigating the viability of adapting 'Second Hand Rose', a radio play by Philip Meeks shared on BBC Radio 4, for performance on stage.
33. *Where in the North?* by Darlington Photography Association ran Saturday 12 April 2025 - Thursday 8 May 2025, presenting unlabelled photographs and asking visitors to guess where in the North (from Ripon/York to Northumberland, Cockermouth to Redcar) they were taken. Several photographs in Darlington Borough Art Collection were shown alongside this exhibition. Visitor comments on this exhibition included 'First time visit – not living in Darlington so wouldn't use Library but enjoyed the exhibition + reading the history of the building' and 'what I have seen here cannot get any better'.
34. An exhibition featuring 3 quilts created by Speak Their Name North East ran from Saturday 10 May 2025 to Thursday 12 June 2025. The three quilt panels contained 120 squares created by some of those who have lost loved ones to suicide in our region. Alongside the quilts, 20 works from Darlington Borough Art Collection were displayed on the Art Gallery exhibition boards. Information on Speak Their Name and signposting to suicide prevention services was shared within the space. Their exhibition drew a selection of comments including "what a wonderful tribute and a reminder to all of us how suicide affects many, many people", "great to see such a display designed to challenge the stigma".

Town Centre Partnership and Events

35. Darlington Community Carnival brought together schools, organisations and residents to enjoy this year's carnival celebrations 'All Aboard the Carnival Express' including a procession through the town centre followed by entertainment and stalls in Stanhope Park throughout the day. The carnival worked alongside a number of schools and groups with artist Yvonne Preston to create costumes and props for the occasion.
36. South Park hosted Proms in the Park on 6 July, with a fantastic programme of tunes performed by the Royal Signals Northern Band in support of the Army Benevolent Fund. Local cadets volunteered at the event, adding to the strong community spirit. Thousands of attendees gathered with their picnics to enjoy an evening of music in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.
37. The GOLD Tea Dance welcomed hundreds of attendees who enjoyed tea and freshly baked scones while listening to vintage music, dancing in the square, and exploring a variety of information stalls and local service providers present at the event.
38. The Darlington Vintage Car Rally showcased nearly 200 classic vehicles throughout the town centre. This annual event attracts thousands of visitors, encouraging them to explore the town and enjoy extended visits - providing a valuable boost to local retail and hospitality businesses. The rally featured a wide range of impressive vehicles, organised into categories, with awards presented to the top entries. Many motoring clubs also attend regularly, as the event is a well-established highlight on the vintage car calendar.
39. Throughout the summer, the town centre offers a packed programme of events, including much-loved staples like *Darlington by the Sea* and the *10K*. In addition, a range of events are delivered in partnership with local organisations such as Darlington Healthwatch. The programme features various animation days designed to encourage visitors to explore the entire town centre and support high street businesses. All events are listed on www.enjoydarlington.co.uk and the communications and marketing teamwork in the social media platforms to help promote Darlington.
40. The Events Team is working closely with the S&DR200 Festival team to plan and deliver two major events—*Ghost Train* and *Anniversary Journey*—this September. These large-scale celebrations are expected to attract thousands of visitors from across the UK and internationally.

Environmental Services

41. As part of the national Simpler Recycling reforms, plans are progressing for the commencement of weekly food waste collections from April 2026. Various procurement exercises are underway across the Tees Valley for containers, vehicles and treatment facilities. The introduction of food waste collections will also see a move to the weekly collection of recyclable materials. To support this, a dedicated communications and engagement programme will be developed.

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Local Services Portfolio