

**COUNCIL**  
**02 OCTOBER 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.

**Highway Maintenance Programme**

2. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
  - (a) Unc. Barnes Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.268km)
  - (b) Surface Dressing Contract: two sites (2.330km)
3. Highway Maintenance Schemes on site:
  - (a) Micro-Asphalt Contract: four sites (1.298km)
  - (b) B6290 Carmel Road North (Phase 3): Carriageway Resurfacing (0.620km)
  - (c) A1150 Stockton Road / Whinfield Road Roundabout: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.240km)
  - (d) A68 West Auckland Road (Phase 2): Carriageway Resurfacing (0.475km)
  - (e) Unc. Mary Court: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.038km)
  - (f) Unc. Willow Road North/ West Auckland Road East Back Lane: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.108km)
  - (g) Unc. Green Tree Yard: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.038km)
  - (h) Unc Daryngton Close: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.074km)
4. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
  - (a) Unc Welbeck Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.225km)
  - (b) C180 Parkside: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.435km)
  - (c) C88 Whessoe Road: Carriageway Resurfacing 0.928km)
  - (d) C38 Neasham Road, Neasham: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.877km)

## Bus Services

5. From the beginning of May, the 6 and 6A have seen an enhanced service with a daily evening service and an hourly daytime Sunday service introduced using funding from developments (Section 106). These enhancements will operate for a minimum three-year period. Tees Flex is continuing until March 2026, with a decision beyond this period to be made by TVCA.

## Safer Routes to School

6. **Table 1** below shows progress on all our Safe 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	Now complete
Abbey Infants and Junior School 20mph scheme	Complete	Complete	Complete	TROs advertised January 2025	April 2025	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. Any snagging work will be picked up in the Autumn half term break.
Stanhope Road North Puffin crossing	Public consultation September 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 in September.
St. Augustine's School 20mph scheme	Complete	Complete	Engagement report being collated	September 2025	December 2025	School Summer holidays 2026

St Bede's School 20mph scheme	Complete	Complete	Complete	TROs advertised January	April 2025	Currently programmed for Easter 2026 will coincide with maintenance scheme.
Longfield School Puffin crossing	March 2025	Complete	Awaiting outcome of consultation	No statutory consultation needed – resident and stakeholder consultation only	N/A No TROs required	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

## Resident Parking Zone (RPZ) Review

- Scrutiny Committee are investigating differential charging rates for permits depending on impacts from various vehicles. The scope has been considered, and the initial findings were presented to the committee in early April. Following previous reports and work by the Communities & Local Services Scrutiny Committee, a questionnaire for residents has been prepared and the consultation will run until 13 October. As well as the online consultation, paper copies of the questionnaire will be available from customer services in the Town Hall and the Cockerton and Crown Street libraries should people wish to complete the questionnaire and return it to us. A telephone number and email address have also been set up so that residents can contact us with specific queries or to request copies of the questionnaire in different formats if needed. It is hoped that this will help to inform a revision of our RPZ policy.

## Hopetown Darlington

- Hopetown Darlington had a busy summer period with lots of activities for families throughout the holidays including science workshops, animal encounters and craft activities. There were also fun activities on Foundry Green, including a bespoke 'Guess Who' game featuring the characters of Hopetown. Hopetown also hosted *The Kiosk - A Moving Workshop for a Moving Story*. Inspired by the E.D. Walker & Wilson newsagent's kiosk in the museum, local artist Adam Shaw reimagined *the kiosk* as a space to delve into the area's rich local history through conversation, creative activities and visual storytelling.
- Heritage Open Days activities took place at Hopetown on 13 and 14 September. Throughout the weekend, visitors were able to attend a Curator talk and tour led by our Collections Engagement Manager and participate in hands-on workshops, learning directly from skilled artisans including metalwork, willow weaving, clay modelling,

basketry and textile weaving.

10. We welcomed *Titans of Steam: Legends of the railway* to the site from 20 September. The world-famous locomotive Flying Scotsman joined other legends, including Tornado and Sir Nigel Gresley, celebrating Britain's engineering might. Some of the engines were in light steam and visitors were able to get up close to the locomotives as part of the footplate tour experience. *Titans of Steam* closes on 5 October.
11. *Ghost Train* and a *Night at the Museum* event took place at Hopetown on 20 September. Visitors were able to experience the site at night and greet the Ghost Train, a large-scale performance art installation, which made its way up from Darlington town centre on the evening.

*Ghost Train* featured performers, live music and a procession of large-scale art installations representing some of the world's most important inventions including Locomotion no 1. 8 coal wagons, created from converted cars, contained performers and artists in a carnival style providing an epic show for Darlington residents.

Hopetown Darlington was at the centre of the bicentenary celebrations on 27 September as we celebrated the culmination of the S&DR200 festival. Thousands of visitors booked visits before and after the Anniversary Journey Celebration at Skerne Bridge, with the replica Locomotion No.1 celebrate the birthplace of passenger railways to re-enact the famous journey from 200 years ago.

### **On Track for Storytime**

12. 1,300 children were gifted a copy of *Little Loco's Big Day*, by Caroline Hardie, and a film was created of pupils reading and performing the book.
13. Evaluation of the project found that at the time of writing the report, the filmed performance of the story had reached 681 views on YouTube and over 7,500 on Facebook. A survey was conducted for children, parents and teachers which discovered that 44% of children reported that the project made them more excited about reading, 55% were more interested in trains and locomotives, and 33% expressed a desire to visit Hopetown and join the festival activities as a direct result of the project.
14. Parents and carers also reported strong engagement, with 71% of responders saying the book gifting encouraged them to read more with their child and 43% were inspired to read more themselves. All parent and carer respondents (100%) were more excited to visit the railway museum and participate in festival events as a direct result of the project.
15. Teachers observed clear benefits: 75% noted improvements in reading comprehension, as well as enhanced town pride and belonging. Others reported increased enthusiasm for reading, greater confidence in speaking and self-expression, and stronger performance skills.

### **Libraries Takeover Day**

16. Children and families visited the market square to enjoy Library Takeover Day with storytelling, performances, illustration workshops and book giftings. The author tent

attracted a range of audiences as visitors could buy a signed copy of a book from a selection of the towns great published writers.

### **Summer Activity Programme**

17. Over the Summer the libraries' annual feat to keep children reading over the long summer holidays took place. Children aged 0 -16 were able to enter our Summer Reading Challenge for free to win a host of exciting prizes including Jelly Cat branded soft toys, LEGO sets, Panto Tickets and a Nintendo Switch II. To encourage good role modelling, parents and carers could join in the fun to be in with a chance of winning a £100 Amazon voucher.

Over 100 activities, events and workshops have been provided by Libraries over the summer holidays including T-shirt and mug design, virtual reality experiences into Space and prehistoric times, animal encounters, Princess Parties and magic shows.

Darlington Library's digital innovation area, The Hive, offered a huge range of design and technology workshops during the Summer, with children utilising our Seed Library and creating "pet planters" using the laser cutter for their crops to grow in, and designing their own tote bags to replace plastic bags.

### **SEND Bags**

18. In response to Health Services noting a large increase in demand for support with potentially neurodivergent young children, we have launched SEND Grab Bags. The newest addition to our range of Grab Bags target preschool children within families who believe their baby or toddler to be neurodivergent, and who may benefit from increased speaking and listening, sensory tactile experiences, and parental bonding. The bags contain five specially chosen books which either discuss feelings and emotions, are tactile to touch, or are recommend by professional for neurodivergent children.

Linking with Health Services and the autism and neurodivergent charity Daisy Chain, we have included helpful information and links to support.

We hope these bags may in some cases decrease the likelihood and severity of concerns, and work as a tool to support families and the services around them.

### **Hippodrome**

19. The Hippodrome Membership scheme had a successful period with memberships almost doubling with the announcement of priority booking for *SIX the Musical* for members. The Membership Scheme creates an opportunity for audience development encouraging multiple visits to the Hippodrome across the year with benefits including 10% discount on selected shows, priority booking and special events and tours.
20. Major shows in the programme across the period include dramas *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* and *Little Women*, *Showstopper the Improvised Musical*, family show *In the Night Garden*, comedians Milton Jones and Stewart Lee, and musical tributes *Rumours of Fleetwood Mac* and *The James Bond Spectacular*

*concert.*

21. The Hippodrome worked in partnership with Curious Arts and Theatre Hullabaloo to deliver a Curious Takeover (family Pride event) in August. The event was a fun-packed, free creative day of activities for all the family. Including colourful arts and crafts, story times, workshops, lip-sync battles, face painting, and a dress-up station. The event was attended by over 500 people with wonderful feedback across the day.

## **Creative Darlington**

22. There were 2,327 visits to Darlington Library Art Gallery during the *Whistle Stop* exhibition which ran from 14 June 2025 to 23 July 2025 offering insight into the Stockton & Darlington railway and the impact of railways across the wider world. A selection of railway related works held in Darlington Borough Council's Borough Art Collection and Local Studies Collection were displayed alongside this. Of 19 respondents to the statement 'I enjoyed my visit to Darlington Library Art Gallery' by questionnaire during this exhibition 17 selected Strongly Agree and two selected Tend to agree. We will support a second sharing of this exhibition, which is touring across County Durham and Tees Valley, at Darlington Friends Community Hub in late August.
23. The *British Railways, Alan Kitching in Darlington* exhibition was on display in Darlington Library Art Gallery Saturday 26 July 2025 to Thursday 4 September 2025. Born in Darlington in 1940, Alan is amongst the UK's leading letterpress artists and begun his career as a teenage apprentice at a print shop on Post House Wynd. Now a Royal Designer for Industry (RDI) and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Art and Visiting Professor at University of the Arts London 46 people attended the exhibition private view on 31 July, including those travelling from Scotland and London to attend. The third in a trio of railway themed exhibitions at Darlington Library Art Gallery, *On Track*, by Darlington Stitch and Create opened on Saturday 6 September 2025 and will remain on display until Thursday 16 October 2025.
24. Darlington Borough Council Heritage & Culture fund budget supported the commission of a new mural by The Arthur Wharton Foundation from Illumination Wall Art focused on Darlington's contributions to railway and sporting heritage, entitled *We changed the world from here*, which was unveiled on Wednesday 10 September 2025.
25. Darlington Borough Council Heritage & Culture fund budget has supported participatory activities and projects led by local creatives, which have also secured S&DR Community Grant support and/or support through the Community Rail Officer. These include:
  - (a) *Write on Track*, led by Ann Cuthbert and Pam Plumb which concluded with an awards ceremony at Hopetown Darlington on 13 July 2025, following a writing competition open to adults and children (82 entrants from Darlington borough) and eight writing workshops involving 60 participants.
  - (b) The *Bi-Centennial Pen Pals & Love Letters* project led by writer Bob Beagrie delivered participatory sessions for writers and events to showcase some of the results were at Hopetown Darlington on Saturday 20 September 2025 and Darlington Library on Wednesday 24 September 2025.

- (c) A temporary public artwork, *Kiosk* by Adam Shaw was on display between July and August 2025, offering visitors to Hopetown Darlington opportunities to explore printmaking with a variety of drop-in sessions. *Kiosk* activities have also been shared with pupils at Rydal School and students at Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

### **Town Centre Partnership and Events**

26. The summer stage and events programme attracted thousands of visitors to Darlington through the summer holidays including *Darlington by the Sea*, Darlington Pride Weekender, and over 2,500 entrants joined the 10k at the beginning of August town centre accommodation was fully booked. Specialist event *Making Sense Together*, which is programmed for neurodivergent families, saw many organisations and charities connecting with families whilst offering sensory and tailored activities for its audience. Showcasing the independent retailers on our high street saw the return of the *Mega Misfits Market* organised by Rage and Love across a weekend attracting thousands of visitors to Darlington. The *Rhythm and Tunes* weekend attracted visitors nationally and this event fills hotels across Darlington.
27. The Events Team has worked closely with the S&DR200 Festival team to plan and deliver two major events—*Ghost Train* and *Anniversary Journey* in September. These large-scale celebrations attracted visitors from across the UK and internationally.
28. The town centre has recently welcomed several new businesses, further enhancing Darlington's independent offering. Additional units have also been let, with more new openings expected in the coming months. Among the latest additions are *Unlocking Treasures* on Skinnergate and *Kate's Accessories* on Queen Street. Meanwhile, *Andy's Candy* and *Renne* are celebrating five successful years of trading in the town.
29. 11 September saw the northern launch of the High Street Positives campaign welcoming agents, experts and retailers to Darlington, for a presentation and networking event to highlight the high street and positive news to help increase people's perceptions of town centre, share best practise, ideas and find out how the high streets are evolving.

### **Environmental Services**

30. Members will be aware of concerns about the condition of the brick train and surrounding area that had been previously received by the council. Although the land in question is not in the council's ownership, Officers have led in meetings with the private sector to revitalise *Train* and the immediate area. This work is due to be completed by the end of September.
31. On 31 March 2026, the statutory requirement to collect food waste separately comes into force. Officers are currently in the process of overseeing the transformation in collections to accommodate this practice. From the aforementioned date, food waste collections will be introduced to all residential properties, along with recycling collections increasing from fortnightly to weekly. This latter element seeks to improve the borough's recycling rate and behaviour change. A campaign is being developed to push increased recycling.

32. The Council was asked to represent the Northumbrian region in the national 'Britain in Bloom' awards. Judging for this took place in August, and we await the outcome which will be announced at the end of October.

**Councillor Libby McCollom**  
**Local Services Portfolio**