

**COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2019**

OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

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

Highway Maintenance Programme

2. Highway Maintenance Schemes complete – with over 1.75km of road repairs:
 - (a) Denmark Street and Wales Street Back Lane – resurfacing
 - (b) C38 Elstob Lane. Viewley Farm to Carr House – Carriageway reconstruction and resurfacing
 - (c) C52 Yarm Road (Oak Tree Roundabout) Middleton St George – Carriageway resurfacing
 - (d) A167 Victoria Road and Grange Road (Commercial Area - Victoria Road to Coniscliffe Road) – Carriageway reconstruction and resurfacing
 - (e) Harris Street – Carriageway recycling/resurfacing
 - (f) The Fairway – Carriageway recycling/resurfacing
3. Highway Maintenance Schemes ongoing – totalling 18.7km of repairs:
 - (a) Micro-Asphalt Programme: Carriageway Surfacing – 103 sites
 - (b) B6280 Carmel Road North: Carriageway reconstruction
4. Highway Maintenance Schemes due to start – a further 4.3km of repairs:
 - (a) A167 North Road. Whessoe Road to Westmoreland Street: Carriageway retexturing
 - (b) C40a Burtree Lane: Carriageway reconstruction
 - (c) Unc. Abbey Road: Carriageway Reconstruction
 - (d) C39 School Aycliffe Lane. The Chestnuts to boundary (DCC): Carriageway reconstruction and resurfacing
 - (e) A1150 Whinfield Road: Carriageway resurfacing
 - (f) A6072 Main Road, Redworth: Carriageway reconstruction
 - (g) C34a C38 Great Stainton to Bishopton: Carriageway reconstruction
 - (h) B6280 Parkgate Phase 1: Carriageway reconstruction

Highway Improvement Schemes

5. Lingfield Way/Yarm Road traffic signalled controlled junction is currently under construction and is programmed to be complete by the end of November 2019. This includes a new footway/cycleway on Lingfield Way.

6. Works on an improvement scheme to change the B6279 Tornado Way thoroughabout to a conventional roundabout will commence in September 2019. The first phase of works will involve the reconstruction of a retaining wall and the diversion of underground services.
7. Allington Way Cycleway - funding has been secured from the Tees Valley Combined Authority's Sustainable Access to Employment Programme to construct a footway and cycle way alongside Allington Way. The route will connect the existing cycle route on McMullen Road to the newly completed cycle route alongside Lingfield Way.

Let's Go Tees Valley

8. The Let's Go Tees Valley behaviour change programme has promoted cycling to ladies across the Tees Valley under the Let's Go Ladies campaign – #Wheelwomen. The aim of the campaign has been to encourage and support women onto their bikes through cycle rides, bike maintenance courses, maps and information about cycle routes across the Tees Valley and hints and tips. The campaign has featured blogs written by women from across the area to encourage others to discover the benefits of cycling. Early indications are that the campaign has reached the target audience and women have signed up for courses and rides.
9. The second Let's Go Tees Valley Commuter Challenge took place between 16-22 September and involved businesses and employees from across the Tees Valley. The aim was for people who usually drive their car to work to try different ways of commuting for at least one day during the week. This included sharing a lift to work, catching the bus or train, or being more active and walking or cycling. The aim is to encourage people to make small changes to reduce their reliance on their car, with the wider benefits of improving air quality, reducing traffic levels and increasing levels of physical activity.

Sports Development

10. The Sports Development team worked with colleagues and partners to deliver The Holiday Enrichment Project, aimed at providing out of school holiday activity opportunities for Year 6 pupils in hard to reach wards, undertaken in the following schools: Skerne Park, Rydal Academy, Corporation Road and Northwood Primary. The aims of the project included: improving the children's diet, addressing concerns around children going hungry during the holidays when free school meals are not available and increasing children's physical activity during this period to improve their confidence and self-esteem. The programme engaged 50 children through a range of sports, physical activities, and healthy meals, combined with a food education programme delivered through activities such as 'Junior Kitchen'.

Events Management

Darlington By The Sea: Thursday 25 July – Saturday 27 July

11. Despite the cancellation of the Saturday programme, hundreds of families attended Darlington's Market Square to enjoy two full days of sand, street theatre and children's entertainment.

British Town Crier Competition: Friday 2 August – Saturday 3 August

12. Entrants from around the U.K. enjoyed an action-packed weekend of competitive activity that included tours of Darlington Hippodrome, Head of Steam and the Town Centre.

SG Petch Darlington 10km – Sunday 11 August

13. Following the record number of 2,100 entries for the 32nd anniversary of the Darlington 10k, the day was launched with the popular Family Fun Run and the Junior 3k which attracted over 150 participants. The main event attracted athletes and casual runners alike, where this year a new course record was set. A hugely successful event for the town, which this year welcomed S G Petch as a new sponsor.

Darlington Night Time Pride Event – Monday 12 August

14. An outdoor pride performance event was organised in partnership with local businesses to support the night time Pride celebrations. The event encompassed various musical and dance performances on an outdoor stage from early evening until 10.15pm, following which those in attendance continued their evening in the bars and clubs in the locality where additional entertainment was organised. We anticipate linking this with the Day Time Pride events next year to facilitate a week celebrating Darlington's diversity.

Darlo Drum Festival – Friday 16 August

15. Darlington's first drum festival was held in the Town Centre and Market Square, attracting both local residents and visitors to a range of drumming, community workshops and promenade performances. The successful event was brought to a close in the early evening with a grand finale featuring lion dancing, fire eating, stilt walkers and a joint performance in the Market Square from the drumming bands in attendance.

Darlington Hippodrome

16. Darlington Hippodrome's fundraising scheme, 'A Place for Everyone' has currently raised £6,500 in donations from individuals, businesses and charitable trusts. The fund opens up the theatre to audiences, practitioners and performers, regardless of social, physical or economic barriers. To date, 112 people have benefited from the scheme, watching Joseph and Peter Pan; for many – in particular children and young people – this was their first theatre experience.
17. The Autumn brochure was signed off during August and became available to the public in September. Highlights of the Autumn Season, include: the whodunnit Musical, 'Curtains', starring Jason Manford, the spine-chilling 'The Woman in Black', and Jools Holland and His Rhythm and Blues Orchestra.

18. Darlington Hippodrome's Youth Theatre celebrated the success of their end of year performances, which this year included three plays performed to audiences in The Hullabaloo Theatre. With a total audience in attendance of 223, the performances were a great step forward for the young members, who welcomed the opportunity to perform on the stage with professional technical support. Two of the three youth theatre groups are now fully subscribed as a result of the excellent programme of activities on offer.

Visual Art

19. The Darlington Association of Photographers exhibition, 'Resurgence', ran from Saturday 13 July 2019 to Thursday 15 August 2019.
20. Resurgence explored how the Tees Valley looks now and included images of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton and Staithes.
21. During July, Creative Darlington supported the delivery of the 'Slime Tango' programme by Anton Hecht and colleagues, during the Festival of Ingenuity 2019. Slime Tango is a game with particular rules wherein two people aim to step backwards in synchronicity whilst accompanied by live music and holding slime to see how far they can travel before the slime breaks. The process was filmed, edited and compiled in a final film, which alongside other works Anton has created (including a tango in the indoor market and a trolley dance in the market square) has secured coverage in South Korea, with the video also being shared in the United States and Germany.
22. The 'Trace Lines' activity explored the heritage of Darlington and involved Darlington Library, Darlington Markets and a number of Darlington schools. This included a Big Draw event, inviting people to explore how they might picture Darlington in the future, and a Mandala event encouraging people to work collectively to develop one large artwork using lentils and pulses, exploring Darlington heritage and their current interests.

Head of Steam

23. A new exhibition opened in September at Head of Steam celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the North Eastern Railway Cottage Homes and Benefit Fund. The exhibition was produced in partnership with the Railway Housing Association and visitors had the opportunity to see objects from the housing association's archives.
24. During the summer holidays, a busy events and activity programme took place including 'All the Fun of the Fair' on 21 July that attracted over 1000 people to the museum. Events in Darlington also included a Model Railway Exhibition on Saturday 31 August and Sunday 1 September.
25. The museum hosted placements for a teacher training student from York St John University, and four students from the QE Sixth Form College. 180 pupils are already booked in for workshops in September.
26. Volunteer hours for this period have exceeded 500 hours.

Libraries

27. Darlington Libraries organised a reading challenge for children aged 2-16 years to help maintain their reading scores over the long summer break. This year's incentives included a free ticket to Create and Paint or the Gamers Lounge.
28. In addition to the summer reading challenge, Darlington Libraries also organised over 60 events for children and young people, many of which sold out.
29. During July/August, The Centre for Local Studies hosted the Teesside University-led 'Rememorial WW1' Exhibition. The exhibition explored the experiences of Tees Valley residents in the months after the Armistice of November 1918, and built upon contributions gathered at workshop events held earlier in the year at Crown Street Library.

Environmental Services

Garden Waste Collection Service

30. In April this year, the Council introduced a new chargeable Garden Waste Collection Service, with more than 4500 residents signing up to the scheme. To date, there have been no major issues with the service and it is hoped it will expand further in 2020.

Rural Road Servicing

31. This year's programme of servicing rural roads in relation to the cutting of grass verges, gulley emptying, litter picking and mechanical sweeping, commenced on the 29 July and it is anticipated this will be complete within twelve weeks.

Meadow Areas

32. For a number of years the Council have provided wildflower meadow areas at various locations across the borough. In addition to adding new areas, this year the Council has made a concentrated effort to improve existing meadow areas. At the time of writing, a range of positive feedback has been received for meadow areas across the borough: in particular the areas on A68, at Great Burdon, and on the ring road around the town centre.

Councillor Paul Howell
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio