

Creative Darlington – Update to NECP cultural partnerships

1. Strategic

- 1.1 I attended a meeting which explored opportunities around the 2025 rail bi-centenary festival, alongside other Darlington stakeholders in January 2018. Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) has supported a brief for services to scope opportunities for the bi-centenary festival, and similar meetings have been held in County Durham, Stockton which will inform a report to stakeholders in the rail heritage group (A1 Trust, Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council, NRM, Northern Rail, Stockton Borough Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority, the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, Virgin Rail etc.) expected by summer 2018. Opportunities to promote a significant festival programme including original commissions, a railway pageant with live steam and legacy were discussed.
- 1.2 I attended a meeting of the Children and Young People's Plan Multi Agency Steering Group in January 2018, with opportunities to work around mental health and wellbeing and employability discussed. Creative Darlington has allocated modest budget in to support artist's services which support the promotion of the plan.
- 1.3 <https://commonxcollective.uk/> promoted a Q1 STEAMD Briefing event in February 2018 at the Mercure Kings Head Darlington as a morning of inspiration, practical advice and networking for those looking to start up or step up their Digital & Creative Businesses. Another creative network, co-ordinated by Alex Nicholson, Creative Connections met on 19 February 2018, at which appetite to bring work to market from a Darlington base and how creative sector businesses might work together to gain more profile and visibility were discussed.
- 1.4 I had an introductory meeting with Charlotte Kemp, from Tees Valley Combined Authority, in February 2018 I am meeting with Tees Valley Combined Authority on 7 March 2018 to look at development of a cultural commissioning proposal for Tees Valley.

2. Darlington Theatre Town

- 2.1 Creative Darlington supported a programme of engagement activity based in Darlington in the week before the performance of Encountering the Other at Darlington Hippodrome in November 2017. ODDMANOUT held 19 education, participation or training sessions, including work with CLIC and Darlington After Care Team students, north east artists, Teesside University students, Darlington Youth Theatre, Northern Stage Young Company and

Darlington Community Chorus. Darlington Hippodrome and the Heritage Lottery Fund supported 30 promenade performances of Anywhere at Darlington Hippodrome from 2 – 4 February 2018, reviews of both at <http://creativedarlington.org.uk/reviews/>

- 2.2 Theatre Hullabaloo provided an update on activity at The Hullabaloo and their plans for 2018/19, including their Tees Valley Great Place programme and valuable research work. Darlington Borough Council will support work, expected to include Darlington based activity delivered by international companies working with Theatre Hullabaloo, in 2018/19.
- 2.3 Darlington held a Pop-up TheatreTown programme featuring Jabberwocky Market and Paines Plough in the Roundabout in Darlington Market Place in October 2017. It was well received, when people were asked to score how likely they were to recommend attending an event of this type to others with 10 very likely and 0 not at all likely the average score of returns I processed was 9+. Darlington expects to participate in Paines Plough strategic touring programme and host Roundabout in 2018/19. Dates for the 2018 Roundabout visit are currently being scheduled for autumn 2018.

3. Greater Places

- 3.1 I have submitted a revised programme for the Heritage on Track programme which Darlington Borough Council submitted as part of the overall Greater Tees programme within the specified deadline. The programme will work with communities in close proximity to the track bed of the Stockton & Darlington Railway and creatively explore both their connection with this railway heritage and their community heritage. Subject to budget, Darlington Borough Council will secure overall project management services from Groundwork NE & Cumbria and budget will be allocated to Tees Valley Arts to develop a creative programme informed by the communities. Groundwork NE & Cumbria co-ordinated meetings of the Heritage on Track management group including Healthy Towns, The Head of Steam Railway Museum, Stockton & Darlington Railway, local heritage expertise (Chris Lloyd), Tees Valley Arts and Creative Darlington in November 2017 and January 2018 to assist in scoping project activity. We expect to begin work at Red Hall early in 2018/19 and for some elements of the programme to be shared within events at the Head of Steam to mark the anniversary of the first railway passenger journey on Locomotion No. 1 on the Stockton & Darlington railway.
- 3.2 Creative Darlington, Groundwork NE & Cumbria and Darlington Borough Council events service met with Juliet Hardy from Stockton Borough Council

in February 2018. Juliet is working on the SIRF (Stockton International Riverside Festival) programme, and we explored opportunities for their programme to engage with communities in Darlington during 2018/19.

4. Visual Arts transition

4.1 The Darlington Society of Arts exhibition, which ran from 16 December 2017 – 8 February 2018 with 2,992 visits, was the 49th exhibition staged in the gallery since it opened in May 2012, with 121,556 visits measured from 15 May 2012 to 11 February 2018 and an average of 2,481 visits per exhibition to date. Helen Winthorpe-Kendrick's 'Beginnings and Endings' exhibition is currently on display at the gallery until Thursday 29 March 2018. An exhibition by the Darlington Borough Council Community Arts Project (CAP) will follow. Fifteen artists from the CAP had works included in the 'Et Tu, Art Brute?' exhibition at the Andrew Edlin Gallery in New York. Andrew Edlin Gallery is one of the world's leading galleries of outsider art and 'Et Tu, Art Brute?' was a special project organised by curator and writer Jamie Sterns, which ran from 17 November 2017 to 28 January 2018. Further information on the Crown Street Library gallery programme is available at <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/creative-darlington/crown-street-art-gallery/current-and-upcoming-exhibitions/> .

4.2 The group show of artists working at Dalkeith House and Oban Court, ran from Monday 23 October 2017 to Friday 9 February 2018, and showcased creativity of residents at two of the borough's extra care housing schemes, Dalkeith House and Oban Court, which support older people to live independently. Art classes began in 2016 and are run by local artist and volunteer Alan Cooke. A new solo exhibition by local painter Roz Hall was installed at the Town Hall exhibition space on Saturday 10 February 2018. This is the 21st exhibition to be held in the Town Hall exhibition space, since the exhibition programme began in July 2014. Further information on these exhibitions is available at <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/creative-darlington/town-hall-exhibition-space/> .

4.3 Creative Darlington met with Darlington Borough Council's events service, County Durham Community Foundation, a representative of the Dover Art Prize panel and artists Shaun Doyle and Mally Mallinson <https://www.facebook.com/shaundoyleandmallymallinson/> to discuss delivery of new work supported with the Dover Art Prize award in 2016 within Darlington in late summer 2018. The Dover Art Prize is a major award of £10,000 to support artists in developing new work which is shared in Darlington, with the programme managed by County Durham Community

Foundation. The artists are proposing to develop new work inspired by the Bulmer Stone (a way marking stone) which is currently located at the bottom or North Road. Calls for artist's proposals for the next Dover Art Prize are expected to go out in late 2018.

4.4 We are currently in the process of updating the valuation of Darlington Borough Art Collection working with Thomas Watsons, as per an audit recommendation. There are over 500 pieces in the collection, some of which have been loaned in 2017/18 like 'The Entombment' by John Minton <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-entombment-44095/search/venue:darlington-library-3284/page/8> to the Centenary exhibition at Pallant House gallery <http://pallant.org.uk/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/2017/john-minton-a-centenary/john-minton-a-centenary> .

4.5 The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts and Darlington Borough Council have reached agreement for them to manage the building, which houses Council services including the Community Arts Project, and artist led creative group activity (including courses, workshops and an exhibition programme), from 2017/18 onwards. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts is now established as a charity and aims to provide a vibrant community led venue to support artists and encourage visual arts involvement for Darlington. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts opened in July 2012, since when volunteers have played a key role in taking the venue forward. It houses a number of workshop/activity spaces and dedicated facilities including a ceramics studio and etching press.

5. Audience Development

5.1 Creative Darlington supported the development of an original dance performance developed by artist Debbie Harbin and pupils from St. Bede's school, which was shared in the Cornmill Centre, Darlington, as part of a Holocaust Memorial Ceremony on Monday 29 January 2018, as part of an event co-ordinated by Darlington Borough Council events service. Debbie delivered a number of workshops to develop the performance.

5.2 Creative Darlington supported the development of a successful application by Darlington based Tracks, a new music collective aiming to develop activities and services for the benefit of local musicians, music organisations and audiences living, working and visiting the area, which has secured a Grants for the Arts offer from Arts Council England. Tracks organised a Noisy Daughters event at The Hullabaloo in Darlington on Saturday 3 March 2018, with further information at <http://creativedarlington.org.uk/reviews/>

5.3 A number of theatre groups, including Darlington Green Theatre and Applause Theatre are proposing to deliver activity within Darlington Arts

Festival 2018 which will run from 19 May to 3 June 2018. The Festival has previously run from late April throughout May, and is an umbrella arts festival with many different events across the borough, co-ordinated by Darlington for Culture. This will be the sixth festival to date.

<http://www.darlingtonforculture.org/festival-fortnight-2018/>

6. Darlington for Culture - Small arts grants

6.1 Darlington for Culture's small arts grants scheme was launched on 27 April 2017. The scheme was informed by the success of Creative Darlington's Developing Finance for Arts Activity scheme which concluded in 2014/15 and helped artists and organisations secure c £3 of additional finance from every £1 of strategic arts budget allocated through Creative Darlington (the majority through artists/arts organisations securing additional funding from the Lottery). The Darlington for Culture scheme criteria have been modified with less focus on securing match funding. Awards of up to £500 are available from the Darlington for Culture small arts grants programme, which is supported by a business with connections to Darlington (c £6,400 has been committed to proposals since the launch of the scheme). To date Creative Darlington has assessed 14 proposals and made recommendations to Darlington for Culture on whether to support and on conditions of support from their small arts grant programme. Darlington for Culture make the decision on grants and manage the budget and payments of grants. Further information on the scheme is available at <http://www.darlingtonforculture.org/?s=small+arts+grants> . To date offers have been made to c 75% of proposals which have been assessed.

7. Website and promotion

7.1 Updates to the Creative Darlington website, <http://creativedarlington.org.uk/> are ongoing. The primary audiences which informed site design are artists and arts organisations and those organisations or businesses who may have an interest in supporting arts activity in Darlington. We have not sought to duplicate the networking and listings work of other organisations, particularly the work of Darlington for Culture. Creative Darlington currently has 1,810 followers on Twitter. Limited capacity is allocated to promoting Creative Darlington activity via Facebook.

Stephen Wiper, Creative Darlington Manager, 14 February 2018