

Cabinet

15 January 2020

Council Activity Report

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Terry Collins, Chief Executive

Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update on work to support some of the council's key priorities.

Executive summary

- 2 The report provides an update on progress towards delivering some of the council's key priorities.
- 3 This month's report covers:
 - (a) Tourism figures 2018
 - (b) #Durham19 - Year of Culture review
 - (c) Tackling fuel poverty
 - (d) Staff festive fundraising

Recommendation

- 4 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of this update.

Background

- 5 The council undertakes a great deal of work across the county.
- 6 This report offers an overview of some key projects.

Tourism figures



- 7 The visitor economy continues to be of the utmost importance to the prosperity of County Durham, with tourism spend continuing to increase.
- 8 The latest figures from Visit County Durham (VCD) show the economic impact of tourism increased in County Durham in 2018, despite national challenges to the sector.
- 9 In February of 2018, the 'Beast from the East' effectively closed England for a week and discouraged many people from leaving their homes. The heatwave over the summer also led to a fall in visitor numbers at attractions, parks, gardens, forests and the coast, with anecdotal feedback suggesting people preferring to stay at home and enjoy their own gardens. The football World Cup further contributed to this, with England's performance increasing interest in the tournament and resulting in more people staying inside to watch the games.

- 10 Despite these challenges, visitor spend in County Durham in 2018 was £913.8 million, an increase of 1.4 per cent from the previous year. In Durham City, visitor spend went up by 3.1 per cent.
- 11 Whilst the number of visitors to the county was the same as 2017, the number of people staying for one or more night increased by 4.2 per cent. In Durham City, the number of overnight visitors increased by 5.2 per cent, and in the Vale of Durham the average number of nights visitors stayed was up by 5.6 per cent.
- 12 The total number of people employed in tourism in 2018 was 11,998 – an increase of 2.7 per cent.
- 13 This continued success in the face of such challenges can be attributed to several factors. Once again, the council, its partners and other groups and organisations delivered a strong events programme, including new additions such as the North Pennines Stargazing Festival. The opening of Auckland Tower also prompted an increase in visitors to Bishop Auckland.
- 14 VCD's marketing strategy focused on short breaks and encouraged people to extend their visits. It also saw the adoption of a more joined up approach to promoting County Durham's diverse tourism offer, linking into national campaigns and Celebrate Durham. This was boosted by a grant from the Discover England Fund, which allowed VCD to create new online itineraries focusing on heritage and the county's outdoor offer.
- 15 Visitors who stay the night spend more money than those who visit for the day, which is why it is important to have diverse array of accommodation on offer. In 2018, 24 new accommodation establishments opened in the county, including Hotel Indigo in Durham City, providing an additional 1,268 beds.

#Durham19 - Year of Culture update

- 16 County Durham has seen continued growth and investment in cultural, sporting and heritage activity during the past few years thanks to support from the county council and its partners.
- 17 2019 saw the results of this sustained investment with an unprecedented year of openings, activities, festivals, events and anniversaries across the county. Designated as the county's Year of Culture, and badged as #Durham19, a year-long marketing campaign was delivered by Visit County Durham, Durham County Council, the County Durham Cultural Partnership and partners from across the county.
- 18 Whilst the tourism figures for 2019 are not available yet, the following gives an overview of some of the year's highlights and the impact it has had.

- 19 #Durham19 was launched at a celebration event in Durham Town Hall and showcased to a national audience as part of a reception at the Houses of Parliament in April.
- 20 It was promoted at Newcastle airport and in regional newspaper advertorials throughout the year, in a Times Christmas supplement, and also at Kings Cross and Westminster Tube Station in the run up to the Westminster reception raising the profile of Durham regionally and nationally as a visitor destination.
- 21 There was a great focus on our local food and drink offer and 2019 saw both the return of the Bishop Auckland Food Festival in April and the introduction of a new Food Festival in Seaham in June.
- 22 The ever-popular Bishop Auckland Food Festival's line-up included MasterChef presenter Gregg Wallace amongst other well-known TV chefs and celebrities. The festival saw a record turnout of over 29,000 during the two days.
- 23 The inaugural Seaham Food Festival line-up featured celebrity chefs John Torode and Phil Vickery. Unfortunately, terrible weather put pay to the first day, and with-it John Torode's appearance, but thankfully the weather improved dramatically on the Sunday and the festival was able to go ahead.
- 24 Almost 15,000 visited on Sunday. The turnout was so great that many traders sold two days' worth of produce in a single day, with some selling out altogether. Town centre businesses also reported a bumper day's trade.



- 25 In June and July, the country watched on as England won the Cricket World Cup after reaching their first world cup final in 27 years.
- 26 And for County Durham the matches played in the county at the Emirates Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street were also a major success. An estimated 70,000 people from around the world flocked to the county to enjoy the fixtures at the ground and to the fan zone in Durham City. Almost 70% of visitors were from out of county and even popstar Rihanna turned up to cheer on her team.

- 27 The county ground, with the beautiful backdrop of Lumley Castle, was showcased to a huge international TV audience of over 6.6 billion, with 68 hours of dedicated TV time to Durham matches.
- 28 Retailers in Chester-le-Street enjoyed a boost to business with cricket fans stopping off on their way to and from the ground. More than 27,000 people visited the free-to-enter Cricket World Cup fan zone in Durham City to experience the cricket on big screens, food, entertainers, music and cricket themed games and activities.



- 29 Through the AAPs, 100 tickets were given to community and voluntary groups across the county and two local heroes, Janice Nokni and Jan Vincent from Aspire, were chosen to lead the Cricket World Cup out at the first match, honouring their community work towards women's development.
- 30 As part of the work on the Cricket World Cup, #Durham19 was commended at national level by DCMS, VisitBritain and the England and Wales Cricket Board for combining sport and culture and using events as a driver for visitors. They also commended the level of stakeholder engagement across the county and the Team Durham attitude.
- 31 Visit County Durham was invited to present at a Cricket World Cup Host City and Destination Management Organisation meeting at The Guildhall, London, in recognition of its success in making the most of the opportunities presented by the international profile of the Cricket World Cup. The meeting was attended by representatives from DCMS, VisitBritain and cities around the UK.
- 32 The year culminated with the tenth anniversary edition of Lumiere, the UK's largest light festival. Favourite installations from the past, along with some brand-new ones were part of the biggest festival ever. 165,000 people came,

despite the exceptionally poor weather, and we also welcomed our millionth visitor since the festival began in 2009.



- 33 We do not have the economic impact figures yet for 2019 festival but the five previous Lumiere events brought joint economic benefits of £28.7million.
- 34 Along with many international artists who brought their artworks to the city, we were joined by other international visitors including representatives from Galway's 2020 Capital of Culture team, South African trade delegates, visitors from our Twin Town, Tübingen, and guests from Sweden.
- 35 #Durham19 was not just about promoting the county to visitors, we wanted to involve the community as much as possible and give all our residents the chance to participate in culture.
- 36 At Lumiere this included:
- (a) the BRILLIANT programme, whereby four local people had their creative ideas brought to life;
 - (b) various community initiatives including Bottle Festoon which involved around 1,000 children in its creation and Friendship Tree, a collaboration with the International Relations Team, involving young people from the county and our German Twin Town, Tübingen;
 - (c) many of the installations were also interactive, including the Keys of Light, where around 200 piano players of all ages and musical experience were invited to play to the crowds, whilst their music was turned into a colourful light projection on the walls of Rutherford Court.



- 37 Another example of community engagement was the programme of activity surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Apollo Pavilion at Peterlee's Sunny Blunts Estate. Celebrations kicked off in spectacular fashion at the end of March with Apollo 50, a light installation presented in partnership with Artichoke, the producers of Lumiere. German artists/architects Mader Wiermann were commissioned to present the installation that reflected the Brutalist architecture of the structure and its link to the moon landings.



- 38 The Apollo Pavilion's 50th actual birthday celebration was held in July - at the same time as the anniversary of the moon landing. A free musical extravaganza took place at the structure featuring performances from Mr Wilson's Second Liners and Oompah Brass, as part of Durham's BRASS Festival, and Barry Hyde, lead singer of the Futureheads, who worked with local schools to create a new song to mark the occasion.

- 39 In September, the Pavilion was once again in the spotlight when the structure became the subject of another art installation, in this instance Steve Messam's Apollo.



- 40 The activity came full circle in November when students from East Durham College, who had worked with Artichoke and the London Guild Hall for Art and Design, saw results of their work projected onto the side of Dunelm House, another brutalist structure, as part of Lumiere.
- 41 Many more events and activities took place in our local communities throughout the year - far too many to list here but here are some of the highlights:
- (a) A year of celebratory activity marking Norman Cornish's centenary including a Cornish Trail in his hometown of Spennymoor, exhibitions in Spennymoor Town Hall, at Greenfield Gallery at Newton Aycliffe, at the Mining Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland, at Palace Green Library and Gala Gallery in Durham City, and at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle all marking the centenary of the internationally-recognised painter's birth. Beamish Museum is also rebuilding Cornish's house as part of the museum's new 1950s town.
- (b) The first event of the year, Durham Vocal Festival, saw Durham reverberating with the sound of world class vocal performances taking place at 14 venues around the county including the Cathedral and Gala Theatre. More than 3,500 of our children and young people were involved, many of whom took part in activities linked to the 66 schools which participated in a variety of events and activities.

(c) During February, more than 3,400 people visited Durham Town Hall and 1,400 visited Clayport Library as part of the city's Chinese New Year celebrations.

(d) Towards the end of February, the annual Fire and Ice festival took place in Durham, with intricate sculptures of heroes and villains dotted around the city. A spectacular ice sculpture of Grace Darling brought Durham to the nation's attention when it was featured in The Times on Saturday 23 February.

(e) The second Durham Adventure Festival attracted thousands of people to the city centre for three action-packed days of talks, film screenings and more at the end of April. Legendary climber Sir Chris Bonington head-lined a packed programme.

(f) The annual OVO Tour Series returned on Saturday May 18. Thousands of spectators turned out to watch the thrills of competitive cycling in Durham City.

(g) On 1 June, Durham Cathedral's central tower reopened to the public following a three-year renovation project.

(h) Celebrations to mark five decades of partnership between County Durham and its German twin town, Tübingen, took place in June with as part of Tübingen50.

(i) Record-breaking crowds of more than 40,000 experienced the excitement and diversity of 21st century brass thanks to BRASS - County Durham's liveliest music festival in July.



(j) During the first weekend of BRASS, the annual Durham Miners' Gala, celebrated the county's industrial heritage. Organised by Durham Miners' Association, it drew tens of thousands to the city. In July the council's Cabinet

agreed a £1.1million contribution towards plans to restore the magnificent Redhills: Durham Miners Hall into a vibrant community and arts hub helping to preserve its rich heritage for generations to come.

(k) The Durham City Running Festival took place at the end of the July. This year it was extended to a three-day celebration incorporating the annual Durham City 5k and 10k Run and a new family activity event, headed-up by three-time London marathon winner Paula Radcliffe, amongst other activities. Almost 3,000 runners took part in the Durham City Run in sweltering conditions on what was the hottest day of the year.



(l) A visit from The Flying Scotsman to Locomotion at Shildon for just over two weeks from the end of July celebrated the museum's 15th anniversary.

(m) Spectacular performances of Kynren: an epic tale of England took place every Saturday evening from June until mid – September in Bishop Auckland.

(n) September saw several agricultural shows taking place including the biggest of the year at Wolsingham which attracted record numbers, providing a boost to the Weardale economy.

(o) In October, the annual Durham Book Festival saw a must-see line-up of writers, artists and thinkers entertain and inspire people of all tastes and ages. Headliners included Alexander McCall Smith, Joanne Harris and Mark Haddon.

(p) Also, in October The Take-Off Festival, the country's leading children's theatre festival, returned to the county for a week of world-class shows for families which included over 70 performances in 10 venues across the county and a spectacular Family Day finale.

(q) November saw the completion of The Auckland Project's multi-million-pound redevelopment of Auckland Castle. The reopening brought national press coverage.

(r) A variety of Christmas activities including Crook Winter Light Parade, Durham City and Barnard Castle Christmas Festivals, Raby Castle Christmas Market and Gala Theatre's pantomime, Aladdin rounded up the year.

42 In 2020, the council, Visit County Durham and cultural partners are once again looking at a programme activity across the year. 'Year of Cathedrals, Year of Pilgrimage 2020' is a national theme that is being celebrated in the county as Durham's Year of Pilgrimage. Part of the celebrations will see the launch of new walking trails across the region, which tell the fascinating stories of the Northern Saints.

Tackling fuel poverty



43 Between April 2018 and September 2019, the council's housing solutions team co-ordinated and delivered a range of intervention programmes to tackle fuel poverty across the county.

44 Fuel poverty occurs when a household cannot afford to maintain an internal household temperature adequate for the health and wellbeing of the occupants (21c). In County Durham 33,500 (14 per cent) of households are in fuel poverty.

- 45 The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act introduced a national fuel poverty strategy funded by the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) at £1.9b up to 2022.
- 46 The council's Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan co-ordinates the delivery of local and national fuel poverty intervention programmes to provide vulnerable residents with warmer, healthier homes and reduced energy costs.
- 47 Between April 2018 and September 2019, more than £3.08m of external funding has been secured in County Durham to assist 1,389 fuel poor households who received ECO grants for new oil or gas boilers and cavity wall loft insulation measures.
- 48 The league table for fuel poverty grant uptake from the Department of Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) shows the council is eighth nationally due to the actions it has taken to tackle fuel poverty.

Warm Homes campaign

- 49 The County Durham Warm Homes campaign, managed by the housing solutions team, co-ordinates countywide promotions of fuel poverty intervention programmes. It promotes uptake and awareness and provides support for fuel poor households. Countywide mail-outs in partnership with the council's revenues and benefits service are just one of the ways in which grants are promoted to vulnerable households.

Working in partnership

- 50 The housing solutions team has worked with public health on the following fuel poverty and health intervention projects.
 - (a) **Managing Money Better (MMB)** – part of the Warmer Homes initiative, the service assists households in switching to lower energy tariffs and switching energy providers. During 2018/19 MMB helped 386 households save more than £66,000 on their energy bills and fuel debt write off.

In quarters one and two of 2019/20, a further 242 households received assistance from MMB saving a total of £56,690 off their energy bills.

In recognition of this support to residents the MMB service received a national "Heat Hero" award from the national fuel poverty charity for the work to assist fuel poor households.

The council is planning to extend the MMB service to assist more residents in County Durham and will be recruiting an additional officer in the following months.

- (b) **Energy Company Obligation Flexible Health Criteria (ECO Flex)** - ECO Flex provides low income households with grants for new oil or gas boilers, central heating and insulation measures to make their homes warmer and reduce their energy bills. In 2018/19, a total of 912 fuel poor households received energy efficiency measures equating to £2.6m of external grant funding.

Government figures show this is the highest uptake in the north east and the council recently received an award in recognition.

In quarters one and two of 2019/20, a further 452 households received boiler and insulation grants totalling £479,920 of external funding drawn down into County Durham.

- (c) **GP mail-out** – In 2018, the Durham Dales Easington and Sedgefield Clinical Commissioning Group agreed that all GP surgeries would work with the council's Warm Homes Campaign to assist their patients with fuel poverty and cold related ill health.

This has resulted in a rolling programme where GP surgeries write to their patients with COPD or asthma to offer advice and support from through the council's Warm Homes team. To date, 388 patients have contacted the campaign for assistance.

- (d) **Solid Wall Insulation Project** – The solid wall innovation project received £2.5m of European funding and aims to provide 220 homes in the county with the latest technology in solid wall insulation.

- (e) **Warm and Healthy Homes** – This project supports low income households with grant assistance for boiler repairs and assistance with gap funding or any client contribution requirement for warmer homes. This funding is provided from the council and public health contributions.

- (f) **Clinical Commissioning Group, Warm Homes champion** – To ensure fuel poverty is embedded into CCG actions the council has recruited a Warm and Healthy Homes Champion from the CCG Patient Reference Group (PRG). The champion, who promotes fuel poverty grants from within GP practices, recently received an award for this work from the national fuel poverty charity.

The council hopes to recruit warm homes champions from other GP practices and has begun work with the Patient Reference Groups to commence recruitment.

- (g) Housing and Health Matrix** – This uses countywide housing data from the fuel poverty database, housing condition database and health data to assess the localities with the worst housing and health conditions. This matrix is currently being used to assist with the GP mail out.
- (h) Funding opportunities** – The housing solutions team has successfully bid for £2.2m of funding to install fully funded central heating measures in the homes of low-income private residents with ill health.

The funding will also allow the joint working with GP surgeries to continue and expand using the existing mechanisms described in this report.

Staff festive fundraising

- 51 The council's staff and elected members have a history of working with partners to support local charities all-year-round, but particularly in the run-up to Christmas. In 2019, the authority held several festive charity appeals, with people once again demonstrating overwhelming generosity.
- 52 There were four corporate charity appeals, all of which aimed to help County Durham residents facing hardship over the festive season.



- 53 For the first time, staff and members were asked to donate to an advent calendar collection. Between 11 and 29 November, more than 500 advent calendars were donated at collection points at the council's main strategic sites. The calendars were then distributed by foodbanks across the county to children who wouldn't otherwise have been able to join in the fun of a traditional Christmas countdown.
- 54 Donations included non-chocolate advent calendars and calendars which were suitable for children with allergies too, to ensure nobody missed out.



- 55 Between 18 and 29 November there were also donations made to a collection for local foodbanks, which support families who are unable to afford the type of items that many people take for granted. As well as providing emergency food parcels to families throughout the year, the foodbanks also help them celebrate Christmas by supplying special festive hampers.
- 56 In an effort to ensure no one in the local community went hungry at Christmas, people were asked to purchase an extra item from the foodbank Christmas shopping list, such as a box of crackers or festive biscuits, with their regular grocery shop.
- 57 The donations were collected at foodbank drop-off points in strategic council sites around the county and used by County Durham Foodbank, East Durham Trust, Junction 7, Salvation Army Crook, Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre, Weardale Foodbank, PACT House and our One Point hubs and family centres to create special Christmas parcels for those in need.

- 58 Outside of the festive period, donations of other non-perishable goods are made at council buildings all-year round.
- 59 The council continued its annual tradition of helping the Salvation Army bring festive cheer to youngsters by holding a toy collection. Between 2 and 13 December, hundreds of new toys for children and gifts for teenagers were left under the Christmas Tree in County Hall or dropped off at the members support office.
- 60 People were asked to leave their donated toys unwrapped so that they could be sorted appropriately but also so that families in need could wrap the presents themselves.
- 61 Cllr Katie Corrigan, Chairman of the council, visited The Salvation Army, in Consett, to join them in sorting the presents before they were distributed.



- 62 Staff in members support also sold raffle tickets in aid of the toy appeal, raising money for extra toys.
- 63 Finally, staff helped to raise almost £1,000 for the Chairman's charity, Age UK County Durham, on Wednesday 18 December, by taking part in the council's own Christmas Jumper Day. In return for a minimum donation of £1, people were encouraged to swap their suits for their best festive gear, including Christmas jumpers, t-shirts, jewellery or even a bit of tinsel.

Background papers

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Not applicable.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Climate Change

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.