

LEISURE & CULTURE UPDATE: APRIL 2010**Facility Improvements****Darwen Leisure Centre**

Official opening Friday 29th opened by BwD Mayor and Tommy Duckworth the original 1933 “First swimmer” - Eight 2010 “First swimmers” and over 200 guests, with activities provided by Darwen Vale High school, Darwen Academy, String Sextet from the Music service, Darwen Marching Band , Holy Trinity school and Motivate.

Open weekend 1st and 2nd February:

Very busy, over 5,000 visitors looking around the centre. Lots of very positive comments and suggestions for activities:

“Think it is an amazing facility and a bonus to Darwen. Love the airy feel of the building”

“Absolutely amazing, very impressed with the swimming pool. Wonderful achievement for Darwen. Perfect location”

“Great – Darwen should be proud, especially like the art work and old pictures/photos of Darwen. Look forward to using the facilities.”

First month of Operation - The centre has been exceedingly busy. A number of factors contributed to this including:

- General interest for the public,
- Darwen now has a complete centre with re:refresh access. This generated a huge volume of applications for beeZ cards.
- An enthusiastic influx of enquiries for gym memberships.
- As reported the gym has proved a very popular element of the new centre.
- Current membership total for the centre is 870 members (figure correct 3rd March 2010)

beeZ cards - The borough’s beeZ card provides customers with access to the re:refresh scheme and gives discounted leisure participation outside of re:refresh.

- Total new beeZ cards issued since the opening of Darwen Leisure Centre is 3,284
- Total beeZ card holders now on the database is 107, 219

Future work planned:

- Easter opening both bank holidays with our usual holiday programme on offer.
- School swimming will move from Bank Hey after Easter Holidays

- Adults services sessions commence prior to Easter.
- Launch of Health suite therapies after Easter
- Launch of Birthday Party packages
- Scoreboard training completed and the staging of our first 'high level' competition.
- Further planned staff development and training.
- Achieve QUEST accreditation together with IIP and other industry award standards.

Roman Road Community Centre

The £1 million refurbishment and extension of Roman Road Community Centre and former Access Point is now complete and the formal asset transfer will take place in the next few days, with Community & Business partners then becoming the legal tenant of the building. The first three social enterprises opened for business on 12th April.

Healthy Living

Award Winning re:refresh

The Council and PCT's re:refresh initiative has won a 2010 Community Partnership Award for the best Sporting Community project.

These national awards, evolved from the prestigious Sustainable Communities Awards and in association with the Local Government Chronicle and Health Services Journal focussed on the importance and impact of working in community partnerships.

Blackburn with Darwen's groundbreaking re:refresh initiative was recognised for its "*wide range of activities on offer and demonstrable impact on increasing levels of participation in the community*" it beat four other short listed partnerships including Maidstone Borough Council and Birmingham City Council in partnership with Heart of Birmingham PCT.

Healthy Community Partnership & Blackburn Rovers Football Club

The partnership with Blackburn Rovers Football Club continues to develop following the recent free tickets promotion for the Birmingham match the Healthy Communities Partnership and health Trainers will be supporting NHS colleagues Blackburn Rovers Community Trust staff and a host of other organisations, for a major health awareness event to be staged on Saturday 17th April at Ewood Park for the home match against Everton. This forms part of the borough wide re:refresh your health and wellbeing initiative.

Festivals & Events

Darwen Live

The arrangements for Darwen Live are progressing to schedule and very positively. The event will be held this year on May 30th and 31st. There have been a number of rumours circulating around Darwen suggesting, for example that the event might not be held or that it would be held on only one day, all of which are untrue.

Positive Activities for Children & Young People

Easter Off for Fun provision

A wide range of additional provision was made available for children and young people across the borough. This includes some exciting extra youth provision such as climbing wall/high ropes and other adventure learning as well as free swimming and play ranger activities at many of our parks. In addition, there were activities at our libraries, children's centres and at the Museum, all targeted at particular ages and interests.

Taken together, this represents a significant level of positive diversionary and educational activity, responding directly to the requests and needs of families and neighbourhoods.

Play Pathfinder - Witton

The final element of the play pathfinder programme is the prestigious and innovative environmentally friendly play area at Witton.

The anticipated completion date is on target, after renegotiation with DCSF, due to inclement winter weather, for the end of April and it is anticipated that a formal opening will take place in June 2010.

Young Peoples Services - New Youth MP for Blackburn with Darwen

Young voters have chosen Blackburn College student Shabaz Khan to be their new Youth MP.

Shabaz campaigned on a number of issues including better youth employment and training opportunities and increased understanding between younger and older people.

His two new deputies are Darwen Vale pupil Jade Fielding and Blakewater College student Haidar Iqball.

More young people than ever voted in the elections that took place in schools, colleges and the Council's partner organisations last week.

Following the count, which took place at Blackburn Town Hall it was revealed that the number of vote was 9551 which was up by around 800 on last year's count.