

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE and CULTURE

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 4 OCTOBER 2018

LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

Summer Activity Programme: In addition to the Mischief Makers Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), which has seen over 1,300 children participating, the library service has delivered holiday activities which include; scratch code clubs, Zoolab small animal handling sessions, Mad Scientist Slime Making sessions, performances of Little Red Riding Hood by Booster Cushion Theatre, craft and storytimes, Borrow Box demonstrations and, in keeping with the SRC theme, creative cartoon sessions with Beano artist Laura Howell. The holiday programme has been well received, offering something for children of all ages during the 6 week break.

Assisted Digital UK Visa Application service: Blackburn Library has joined over 100 libraries across the country in offering 1 to 1 support for referred applicants to navigate the GOV.UK website to find the visa application they need. The Assisted Digital programme is delivered on behalf of UK Visa and Immigration in collaboration with We Are Digital (WAD), a Digital and Financial inclusion training organisation and Libraries Connected, formally Society of Chief Librarians (SCL).

VENUES

Box Office Relocation – With the change of use of Blakeys to East z East, the main box office has been relocated to the front foyer of King George's Hall. This means that the front gates and doors are open again inviting people into the main entrance off Blakeys Moor. With increased visibility it is expected that more people will drop in to purchase / pick-up tickets to the great shows on offer, or simply pick up a What's On leaflet. Opening hours are 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 10.00am to 3.00pm on Saturdays.

Shows and Events - The Comedy programmed already for 2018/19 has exceeded target; achieving 9 shows (2 nights of Sarah Millican, Russell Brand, Joe Lycett, Dara O'Briain, Jason Manford, Milton Jones, Joanna Lumley and Rhod Gilbert). Music is becoming increasingly strong too with sell-outs for James, Jools Holland and the Proclaimers with exciting shows including Jake Bugg still to come.

Darts returned to KGH after a long break with a semi-professional tournament on 22nd September. This Grand Slam event saw a number of competitions run throughout the day attracting semi-professional dart players, and followers, from all over the Northwest.

LEISURE

easyCoffee opened at Darwen Leisure Centre. The first franchised coffee provider in Darwen opened at Darwen Leisure Centre in August.

Feedback from customers has been universally positive and the branded, good value and consistent service that easyCoffee offers has brought members of the local community into the centre for a brew! This is a first for Darwen, the first easyCoffee franchise in a leisure facility nationally and a great offer for leisure customers and the wider community.

Weavers Wheel Launch- The popular Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Festival this year saw the launch of the borough's circular Weaver Wheel cycle route. The event was well attended with great feedback from everyone involved – partners included local 3rd sector groups, re:refresh team, British Cycling and supported by staff and volunteers. On the back of the launch a regular inclusive cycle session has now been set up at Witton Park which is proving very popular.

Events and Tournaments – The summer has been extremely busy with family events, sporting activities and tournaments taking place across the borough. The warm weather brought people out into the borough's beautiful parks and countryside. There were 23 Schools athletics events, cross country races and fun runs held on the athletics track and in the wider park as well as the weekly Parkrun. An estimated 13,600 people attended to watch or participate.

Blackburn with Darwen Football Festival took place over the August bank holiday weekend. Once again bringing together over 70 teams from the borough and much further afield including Wales and Scotland. It's a competitive and friendly tournament which show cases the borough's sporting facilities and promotes participation for girls and boys from under 7s through to under 18s bringing 6,000 people into Pleasington.

The first "Witton Free Family Fun Day" took place supported by Big Lottery. An amazingly 5,000 people turned up from across the borough enjoying stalls selling food from around the world, go-carting, bouncy castles, and riding in a vintage bus.

Arts and Heritage

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery - Structures in Ceramic Exhibition

The new exhibition at Blackburn Museum and art Gallery celebrates the history and craft of architectural ceramic production in Darwen, and look at how the technology has been used by designers and artists today. The exhibition showcases locally produced pieces from the mid 20th century to the present day, from 1930s test pieces by Shaws of Darwen, to CNC-produced models made by Darwen Terracotta and Faience, alongside architectural artworks designed by artists Grayson Perry and James Bloomfield.

Turton Tower Ghost Stories

Turton Tower has always been a place of paranormal happenings and tales from the volunteers and staff who work there. In June we trialled a new event, an evening guided Ghost Tour of the Tower. This first one was booked up with a day and it is now a monthly event all of which have sold out quickly.

Blackburn Open Walls

This summer was the biggest and best of our street art festivals yet with over 20 artists working on pieces both big and small. From the archeologist on the back of the museum to the trail of tiny characters hidden on walls across the town there is work of all scales and styles. We had artists come from as far as Portugal and Australia as well as showcasing many local artists. This was the 3rd year and attracted Arts Council Funding as well as national press coverage.