

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



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...as plans for another 180
houses revealed

Ponteland to represent
Northumbria at Britain in Bloom

250 dance school students to perform at charity show

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A nastiness of villains to raise cash for children's charities

More than 250 children from a Ponteland dance school are performing in a charity show at Newcastle's People's Theatre.

Jill Errington School of Dance is hosting dance school show 'Most Wanted' at the Heaton venue on the weekend of March 18th and 19th.

The plot of the show involves all the bad characters from films, books and musicals - so favourites such as the Child Catcher, Cat Woman and Scar all make an appearance.

In fact seven different characters are all played by one actor, Jonny Woolett from Ponteland Rep. Jonny treats each character he plays with a different costume, accent and mannerism and it is quite a feat!

Once again the show is raising money for charity and this time it is Together for Short Lives, which helps children with life limiting or life threatening conditions at St Oswald's Hospice in Gosforth, and international charity the Pegasus Children's Project which helps educate and home children near Kathmandu in Nepal.

Rehearsals are progressing well. Children aged two upwards will perform - the youngest playing Cruella De Vil's Dalmatians - up to the older students who are each taking on an iconic role of a villain.

The story has a nice twist in its tail in the end - so to find out you had better book tickets!

Tickets cost £8 each and can be purchased by contacting Jill Errington at jillyerrington@yahoo.co.uk

Cover shot by Joe Laws and group photos by Alan Errington.





Would you like to become a Police Cadet?

By PC 8950 Dean Rowell,
Ponteland Neighbourhood Beat Manager



The following 36 crimes were reported between January 1st and February 9th for Ponteland and the surrounding area:

- three burglary dwellings
- eight burglaries (other than dwellings)
- seven thefts (largely from unsecure outhouses)
- three shopliftings
- nine criminal damages including five on Main Street where items have been thrown at passing cars
- two public order offences with racial aspect (one offender identified and under investigation)
- one dangerous dog offence.
- one fraud
- two assaults.

Anti-social behaviour

There have been 30 reports of anti-social behaviour in the Ponteland area between January 1st and February 9th. Northumbria Police has taken positive action in all incidents where offenders have been identified, alcohol seizures have been made and a number of Dispersal Orders issued directing offenders to leave a certain area, otherwise face arrest. We continue to conduct highly visible patrols in these areas.

Would you like to be a Police Cadet?

Volunteer Police Cadets undertake a four year training programme and meet once a week during school term time – normally on a mid-week night. Each week you will be trained in a different subject. Your training will also include police topics, sport, and Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. After completing 10 weeks of induction training you attend a special Attestation evening where you will take the Cadet Oath in front of your family and friends.

As a Police Cadet you will help and assist in the community by being involved in stewarding local and high profile events

such as town shows, the Great North Run, Pride Events, and Mela.

You will also become involved with the Neighbourhood Policing Teams, undertaking activities including: attending events to offer crime prevention advice; test purchasing; neighbourhood patrols and leaflet drops.

Police Cadets are taught basic knowledge in a variety of policing activity such as law, definitions of robbery, burglary, theft and public order, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, along with arrest and custody procedures.

Cadets are taught how to be disciplined and independent regarding how to clean and maintain high standards in uniform. You will present yourself professionally at events and cadet weekly meetings.

You will also have the opportunity to visit different units in the police service, such as the Air Support Unit, the Marine Unit, Mounted (Horses), Firearms Unit, and Forensic Unit. You will also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and have the opportunity to go on expeditions.

Anyone aged 14 or 15 can apply. For more information visit: careers.northumbria.police.uk/cadets

Police surgeries

Local police surgeries will take place on the following dates:

- **Saturday March 4th – 10am to 11am Merton Hall, Ponteland with CSO Paul Cotterill**
- **Saturday March 4th – 11am to 12noon Co-op, Broadway, Ponteland with CSO Paul Cotterill**

If you have any information regarding the above or any other incidents, please call us on 101 or email easttynedale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk and for further information regarding events, local news, crime prevention advice and our Neighbourhood Priorities in the East Tynedale area, please visit our website at northumbria.police.uk



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Homes for downsizing among benefits Garden Village will bring

The lack of affordable housing and suitable homes for downsizing are two of the biggest problems facing people living in – or aspiring to live in – the Ponteland area.

Young people after leaving home find themselves unable to afford to live near their parents who, in turn, often cannot find smaller properties to downsize to once their children have ‘flown the nest’.

The Dissington Garden Village scheme offers a solution to both long standing problems.

Not only will it create 600 affordable homes, but also ‘key worker’ accommodation will be offered at 30% below market value to employees working in schools and health services within Ponteland – many of whom currently commute into work.

Further provision is to be made in the development of lifetime homes, with a specific commitment to the building of bungalows to facilitate downsizing.

Two long awaited infrastructure



Dissington ESTATE

improvements which will also be delivered by the Garden Village scheme are the Ponteland relief road that has been proposed, deferred, and postponed for over 40 years, and a new flood alleviation scheme.

New medical facilities, a new primary school and the creation of around 2,000 jobs from employment opportunities on site including an Innovation Centre that will stimulate investment in skills, education, and research targeted at the built and natural environment, are also earmarked.

In all, there will be £90m of support for key infrastructure funded by the uplift in value of the 210-hectare site from planning approval for development. There will also be an estimated £40m annual spend from residents in the local economy.

Additionally, there will be more than 200 acres of accessible open space and new sports facilities.

We have been very pleased at the response to our public consultation over recent weeks and months, which has seen hundreds of residents, businesses and stakeholders attend a range of events and presentations at our Prestwick Park offices.

We have enjoyed meeting and talking to everyone and the feedback received has been invaluable in the further refinement of the project.

A dedicated, freephone consultation hotline has been set up where any questions you may have about the Garden Village plans can be answered. Call us on **0800 319 6162** or alternatively email info@dissingtonestate.co.uk or visit dissingtonestate.co.uk

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DuraVision Platinum has anti-reflective properties, offering premium quality for ultimate lens protection and makes these lenses extremely robust.

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DriveSafe individual lenses as standard worth up to £319

These lenses provide the best possible vision especially when driving at night. **DriveSafe** are tailor made single vision lenses to maximize the optical clarity and quality of the lenses by taking into account your frame and facial characteristics. The DriveSafe lens coating optimizes your vision while driving at night.

If the glasses are mainly used for reading, we recommend tailor-made, lightweight but robust lenses. Supplied with DuraVision Platinum lens coating, this lens provides clearer and more comfortable vision thanks to the inherent clarity of the lens. Reduced reflections improve the appearance of the lens and superior hardness make the lens robust and scratch-resistant.

Members of the 'My Glasses' programme see that the benefits are very clear. The best lenses and best coatings to give you the best possible vision at a very affordable monthly fee.

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Plans revealed for another housing development

187-home scheme proposed off Callerton Lane

Plans have been revealed for another large housing development in Ponteland.

The Hellens Group is planning to build 187 homes on land between Callerton Lane and Willow Way, from Callerton Court to Edge Hill, at the eastern edge of Darras Hall.

A mix of two, three, four and five-bed houses are proposed for the 22-acre site. They include 60 apartments for over 50s within a two storey complex with communal facilities, 50 3-4 bed houses for downsizers, 50 family homes, 17 bungalows and Dutch bungalows, and ten plots for sale for self builds.

The Washington-based developer says the proposals are “in keeping with the emerging Northumberland Core Strategy” and will include affordable housing and extra care facilities including ground floor ancillary retail.

Pont News first revealed Northumberland County Council was allocating the site for around 180 homes back in October 2015 when the authority published its revised core strategy.

Hellens held a six hour public exhibition at Ponteland Memorial Hall on February 2nd and an eight day online consultation which was later extended by a week to February 10th.

The firm, which had promoted the event and online consultation via a household leaflet drop, said it intends to lodge a planning application with NCC in February or March.

A visual of the scheme layout courtesy of Hellens Group.



A Taster Family Golf Day at Ponteland Golf Club

Have you ever wondered what is behind the beech hedge at Ponteland Golf Club?

After our highly successful day last year, the club is holding a Taster Family Golf Day on Sunday April 2nd to find out.

There is a free golf lesson, with clubs provided, and a tour of the clubhouse.

Refreshments will be served after your lesson when members will be on hand to answer your questions. Golf is a moderate physical activity and will improve your health and can be played by all ages together.

Research shows that golf is both mentally stimulating and physically challenging, with health benefits for people of all ages.

- Are you a lapsed golfer wishing to get back to golf?
- A young person (junior) who would like to learn how to play golf?
- Do you have members of your family who are golfers and would like to join them?
- Maybe you are you someone who enjoys walking, exercise and friendship and would like to learn how to play golf? Come with a friend.

If you answer yes to any of the questions, take this opportunity to accept the invitation and visit our course. To book your free lessons with our professionals Tel 01661 822689 Ext 2. These are limited on the day and booking is highly recommended. The lessons will be held in groups.

Make 2017 the year you discover golf and find out what goes on behind the beech hedge.



Club professionals Alan Robson-Crosby (right) and Richard Robson-Crosby



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Sunday 2nd April 2017, 10am - 4pm

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Alan & Richard Robson-Crosby and a tour of our Club House as part of the initiative to help you discover golf.

Booking for the lesson is essential

For more information contact Professionals

01661 822 689 ext 2

D-day looms for housing, education and leisure schemes

Major planning decisions on the future development of Ponteland are due to be made within the next few weeks.

Two Strategic Planning Committee meetings are being held at County Hall, Morpeth, on March 7th and 15th where the following planning applications are set to be determined:

- Dissington Garden Village - 2,000 homes
- West Clickemin Farm behind Cheviot View - 400 homes
- £57m education and leisure development off Callerton Lane
- New 1,900 sq m primary school off Middle Drive, Darras Hall.

A planning application for another 187 homes off Callerton Lane (see p7) is due to be lodged soon and another proposal for 27 one and two-bed apartments on the former Ponteland Library site is due to be determined imminently.

The county council cabinet has approved the submission of the

Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Draft Plan to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for Independent Examination, which was pending ratification of the Full Council on February 22nd as we went to print.

The controversial long term planning blueprint for the period 2011 to 2031 which proposes the release of land for the three major developments above has sparked hundreds of objections during various consultations held over the past two years on different drafts.

Among the issues raised is the projected increase in housing in the county of 26,340 – 126 per cent higher than the Government's own starting point from local projections of 11,634. More than 3,000 of these new homes would be in the Ponteland area and 228 hectares of green belt land would be released for development.

The report to the NCC Cabinet meeting on February 16th said the Garden Village's 2,000 homes will not be included in the calculation of Northumberland's five year housing land supply, a key change to the core strategy which Ponteland Town Councillors challenged at their February meeting.

An NCC spokeswoman said: "Councils are required to assess their five year housing land supply position against their most up-to-date objectively assessed need (OAN).

"The Dissington Garden Village is being promoted through the emerging Northumberland Core Strategy as an opportunity to provide additional housing numbers over and above OAN in line with the objectives of the Government's prospectus on garden villages, published in March 2016, which sought to significantly accelerate the supply of housing nationally.

"On this basis, delivery of housing units at Dissington falls outside of the council's five year housing land supply calculations."

The timetable for the Core Strategy is submission to the DCLG in March, with examination in mid to late summer and adoption this December.

If the county council is 'minded to approve' any of the three major schemes they would be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit, which can either confirm that NCC can make that decision or say that the Secretary of State wishes to 'call it in' and take the decision.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Anger over planned housing developments and anti-social behaviour once again dominate this month's letters...

Localism being ignored in favour of commercialism

**Oh dear, here we go again!
More mayhem from the laughable
buffoons at Northumberland
County Council.**

Is the council throwing planning applications about in the style of a muck-spreader in the hope that one or more of them will stick? It clearly has difficulty in devising any sort of coherent strategic approach to development across the county as a whole and Ponteland in particular.

As such it seems to be adopting a "spray and pray" approach to planning. Does it perhaps hope to prevail by the sheer volume of ill-conceived proposals in this seemingly endless war of attrition on the beleaguered residents of Ponteland.

There isn't the need for the cumulative housing volumes proposed, there are no special/extraordinary circumstances that warrant use of green belt land, the local infrastructure cannot cope and the increased risk of flooding is courting disaster.

Consequently, the residents feel under siege from developers in cahoots with a council looking at the money to be made by exploiting the village. How on earth can this collection of outrageous schemes be justified when there are plenty of brownfield sites available but being ignored?

The authority's willingness to ignore inconvenient aspects of legislation, such as the School Organisation Regulations 2013 and the wishes of residents, indicate it is either incompetent or incapable of formulating a plan that meets genuine requirements, sits within national guidelines and stays within the law.

Northumberland County Council is ignoring localism in favour of commercialism and promoting greed

over need. Its behaviour towards the residents of Ponteland begs the question: is Northumberland County Council fit for purpose?

Andrew Garner
Carr Field, Eland Haugh, Ponteland

The assault on our village by developers must be stopped

Ponteland county councillors have been delighted with the support from local residents who have written in with objections to the three major planning applications for development in Ponteland; at Clickemin, the schools and leisure complex and the so called "Dissington Garden Village".

These applications together total over 3,000 houses as well as the destruction of the green belt both in and surrounding Ponteland. The plans for the new school and leisure complex will mean diminished and restricted sport and leisure facilities.

As councillors we are doing everything we can to put a stop to the march of the developers across Ponteland and we welcome the number of local residents who have told the council that this is not what we want for the community.

These developments, which follow the closure of the library and the unwanted changes to the three tier school system, show the total disregard that the Labour run council have for anywhere but Ashington and Blyth.

In Northumberland the planning system is out of control with little or no restraint, very often with the Labour county council now working hand in glove with large developers.

Planning is part of a democratic process and it is not responsible of the county council to work with developers in this way. Planning

decisions should be made locally not dictated by County Hall.

Together with other groups in Ponteland, we are actively lobbying the Secretary of State to ask that these applications are "called in" by the Government should they be granted.

We are asking the Government to intervene and consider the combined effect of the thousands of extra houses on our community and its infrastructure. The assault by developers on our village must be stopped.

Ponteland county councillors Veronica Jones, Peter Jackson, Eileen Armstrong and Richard Dodd

Time we had a new village hall

Very few organisations survive for 90 years and one cannot but congratulate Ponteland Rep for presenting a great variety of shows every year, more or less continuously, over such a long period of time.

Their productions have invariably been highly entertaining and have provided a great deal of pleasure to the residents of Ponteland. All this despite the serious constraints placed on the theatrical arts by the accommodation within which they are required to perform. The 100 year old Memorial Hall was never designed for this level of performance.

How much more exciting and sophisticated such presentations could be, and how much more rewarding for those involved, if we had a decent village hall capable of doing justice to this kind of activity?

Is it not time that the various local organisations - the Town Council, the Community Partnership, Rotary, the Lions, local business groups et al - got together with the county's education department to set in train a

process aimed at providing Ponteland with the kind of top quality 21st century community hall appropriate to our level of population, capable of accommodating not just theatre but the other arts as well?

It is something that the Rep has long deserved.

John Hague
High View, Ponteland

Sad to see mindless play park vandalism



I took my three year old boy to the park last Saturday (February 4th) and I was sad to see the mindless vandalism evident with graffiti and damage to the picnic benches and play equipment.

The park was also littered with empty cider cans. Looks like they have even attempted to set fire to one of the benches.

I know it's the minority and not all teenagers are bad but I just hate seeing the kids facilities vandalised; it's such a waste.

Neil Povey
Ladywell Way, Ponteland

Please take your dog waste home

I thought it was about time I put pen to paper to express my annoyance and irritation at what seems to be an increasing problem around our streets.

I have lived on Darras Hall for approximately 22 years and in Ponteland for at least 30. Since being retired my wife and I have taken to walking around the estate on a regular route that takes in Willow Way, Eastern Way, Edge Hill, The Rise, Darras Road, Broadway, Moor Lane and Runnymede.

And what astounds me is the amount of dog waste that still pervades our environment; there is absolutely no need for it. And what is even more annoying is seeing filled poop bags just left at the side of the road or pavement or even worse hanging up like some fetid Christmas decoration in people's hedges.

What is wrong with these people? Do they think this is a responsible and appropriate behaviour? Do they think the bags will miraculously disappear? If they take the trouble to collect the mess in a bag why can't they just take it home and dispose of it responsibly.

It just beggars belief. Would they like it if other people left filled poop bags in their hedge, drive or garden? Whilst I accept that the majority of people probably do take their dog mess home there is a minority that don't.

So a plea to those folks; please be considerate to others, take your dog mess home and dump it in the bin. In the end reporting and fining those responsible may be the only way to curb this practice. It just isn't acceptable.

John Cornwall
Callerton Court, Darras Hall

Will you stop your dog fouling my garden?

This letter is directed at those dog owners who exercise their pets along the top section of Willow Way but specifically to the person who allows their dog to foul the pavement and, in my case, garden.

This has been going on for some considerable time, despite the fact that some of my neighbours have displayed 'polite notices' requesting that the dog owner demonstrates more responsibility and consideration and cleans up the mess, all to no avail.

The area that we live in is currently facing numerous challenges to our environment and it does not need irresponsible individuals displaying a flagrant breach, not only of the law but also common decency and respect. Stop it.

Alan Barker
Willow Way, Darras Hall

Not just dog walkers behaving anti-socially

Whilst I agree with a previous correspondent about the hazards of dog fouling I have to say I have not noticed an increase in frequency in Ladywell Way.

I walk the full circuit at least once a day and have, however, noticed a lot of litter including fast food packaging and drinks cans on the grass verges next to the fields.

One evening in early January I came across three young teenagers carrying a six foot Christmas tree and a black bin bag of rubbish. They were attempting to throw these items over the hedge into the farmer's field.

It is not just the odd dog walker behaving in an unacceptable anti-social manner.

Freda Wealleans
Ladywell Way, Ponteland

April issue deadlines: Delivery of the April issue will start on Monday March 27th and be completed by Friday March 31st. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday March 13th. If you are aware of any missed properties please contact the editor at pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk or call (0191) 3408422. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the April issue.

Letters on all issues are welcomed by Pont News & Views but the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher. The Editor reserves the right to amend any submitted letters for legal or other reasons. All letters submitted should include the writer's name and address.



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What's on...

Kirkley WI

Kirkley WI meets at Kirkley Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm. Our guest speaker on March 1st will be Clive Ringrose who will talk about his experiences training dogs to work as guides and aides to the severely visually impaired. Guests always welcome. Visit our website at kirkleywi.wordpress.com

Women's World Day of Prayer

The Women's World Day of Prayer service for 2017 will be held at the Methodist Church in Ponteland on Friday March 3rd at 2.15pm. There will be refreshments afterwards, to which everyone is cordially invited.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

The Wildlife Group will this month present an update on the archaeology at the NWT's Hauxley Reserve. 'Rescue from the sea' will show British archaeology at its finest, with some of the spectacular discoveries from the Bronze Age at Low Hauxley brought to life by local resident and archaeologist Barry Meade. The meeting will begin at 7.30pm on Tuesday March 7th in St Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland. £2 admittance includes refreshments.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

The beekeeping year, maintenance of bee health and vigour, behaviour, swarming and the famous 'waggle dance' are all included in the talk 'An insight into the life of a bee' by Hexham Beekeepers Association and organised by Friends of Kirkley Hall on Wednesday March 8th at 2pm at Kirkley Hall. Members of the public are very welcome. Cost £5 for non-members. To book email fokh@gmail.com or ring 07551 974955.

Plant Heritage North East

Plant Heritage North East will be hosting Gary McDermot of Harperley Hall Farm Nursery at their meeting at 2.30pm on Saturday March 11th in the Memorial Hall. Gary is a regular exhibitor at major shows and gold medal winner at Chelsea. He'll be talking about his top ten favourite plants and will bring plants for sale.

Railway and archive films

Railway and Archive Films, with a focus on holidays, will be shown on Saturday March 11th at 3.00pm and 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. Admission free.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

At our meeting at 2.30pm on Monday March 13th in the lounge of Ponteland

Memorial Hall, Darras Road, we have Mr K Bartlem and his subject 'Tales of an airline pilot'.

Ponteland WI

Ponteland WI meets in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall at 7pm on the second Tuesday of the month. Our speaker on March 14th is Tim Thorpe with a talk and slideshow on 'St James' Way'. The competition is for a walking stick. Visitors welcome.

Ponteland Village WI

We meet on the second Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. On Tuesday March 14th we will be learning how to make sugar flowers. Contact us via email at pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or on our Facebook page 'PontelandVillageWI'.

Ponteland Community Partnership

Come to a meeting and share your ideas, concerns and expectations for improving the quality of life in our community. All welcome. We next meet at Ponteland Town Council offices at 7pm on Wednesday March 15th. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk or shirley@reevehill.plus.com

Embroiderers' Guild

Ponteland branch

From 2pm to 4pm on Monday March 27th at Ponteland Memorial Hall we have Easter Sewing with Lindy Barker - an afternoon of stitching. Visitors welcome - cost £4. Contact ponteland.eg@btinternet.com or (01661) 881395.

Ponteland Civic Society

Our next meeting will be held on Monday March 27th at 7.30pm in Ponteland CIU club. This is our AGM which will be followed by Ian Hancock of the Ladycross Nature Reserve speaking about the interesting history of the still productive sandstone quarry, worked by hand for over 300 years, and its further development into a valuable nature reserve. Visitors are most welcome, for whom there is a nominal charge of £2. Refreshments are available.

Ponteland Lions

March activities: business meeting, Wednesday 8th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall. Charity bookstall 9am to 4pm Saturday 25th at Waitrose. Social fundraising meal at the New Rendevous Wednesday 20th. Tickets £17. For details phone 0845 8339913.

Ponteland U3A

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday April 5th and our speaker will be John Johnson and his topic 'The Gateshead Millennium Bridge'. We meet in St Mary's Church Hall at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month and visitors are welcome, there is no charge. Visit our website at u3asites.ork.uk/ponteland or ring our Membership Secretary on (01661) 824953.

Pont Badminton Club

Pont Badminton Club meets every Friday evening between 7.30pm and 9pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Adults of all ages will be assured of a warm welcome. Just come along or contact 07986 388822 for more information.

Ponteland Village Bridge Club

Would you like a friendly game of bridge? Ponteland Village Bridge Club meets every Friday evening in Merton Hall. Play starts at 7pm. We play 20 boards of relaxed duplicate bridge. If you don't have a partner you can still come along - please telephone Pete Ford our Chairman on 07739 208308 and he will fix you up with a partner.

Beading group

Are you looking for a new hobby or want to improve on your skills? Why not join our beading group? We meet at Merton Hall on Tuesdays from 7pm to 9pm. Contact Marijke Shrivastava at mshrivastava@blueyonder.co.uk or on 0191 284 7266. Booking is essential.

Ponteland Methodist Church

The Bridge is a relaxed church service which welcomes everyone. We meet most Sundays in Ponteland Methodist Church Hall at 10am for tea, coffee, catch up, music and a short talk with separate activities for children. For more info email bridge.ponteland@gmail.com or find us on Facebook as The Bridge at Ponteland Methodist Church. Our new Sunday Club is for kids in Reception to Y8. Have fun, make friends, learn about Jesus and the Bible - 4pm Sundays. For more info contact rchudson@btinternet.com

Audio Book Group

The group is for people who have visual impairment or face barriers in reading printed books. Each month members take home an audio book, then return to the next meeting for an informal and relaxed discussion lead by the group leader. We meet at Ponteland Library on the first Monday of each month from 10.30am-12noon. Membership is free. Contact Michelle Watson at: mwatson@activenorthumberland.org.uk or (01670) 620250.

Ponteland to represent Northumbria at Britain in Bloom

Ponteland has been selected to represent Northumbria in the small town category in the Royal Horticultural Society Britain in Bloom UK Finals 2017.

The invitation follows gold awards in the 'small towns' category in Northumbria in Bloom for the last five years running.

The Town Council agreed to a request from the Northumbria in Bloom Trustees to be the region's entry for the 'small town' category in the national competition as well as the entry in the small town category for Northumbria in Bloom.

Ponteland will join 78 other Britain in Bloom finalists competing to be crowned one of the cleanest, greenest and most beautiful places in the UK.

The efforts of everyone involved will contribute to the millions of bulbs, seasonal plants, perennials, shrubs and trees being planted around the UK by over 2,500 Britain in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups transforming areas into green spaces that benefit both people and the environment.

We would like to encourage as many groups as possible to enter "It's Your Neighbourhood". Details can be found on the Town Council website or on the RHS site: rhs.org.uk/Communities/Campaigns/Britain-in-Bloom/Get-Involved

Coun Carl Rawlings, Mayor of Ponteland, said: "Ponteland is honoured to be selected to enter this competition and it is hoped that this will produce a feel good factor amongst the community."

Coun Joyce Butcher, who has co-ordinated the council's entry in Northumbria in Bloom since 2003, added: "I am really pleased that all of the hard work that goes into our Northumbria in Bloom entry has been recognised in this way.

"It is hoped that residents, businesses and community groups will get involved in the entry and demonstrate to the judges that Ponteland is worthy of an award in this competition."

As well as the two inspections for Northumbria in Bloom earlier in the year, in August there will be a tour with the Britain in Bloom judges as Ponteland bids to win an award. The winners will be announced at the Britain in Bloom awards ceremony in Llandudno on October 27th.

Big plans are underway and over the next few months we will let you know the details through the Town Council website and Facebook as well as in Pont News.

It is hoped to involve the schools in this venture, even perhaps entering for an award. This involvement has already started as Year 12 at the High School is preparing proposals for the proposed new sensory garden at Coates Institute building.

We are also looking at the possibility of various schemes such as making display barrels available at cost to those who would like to make a roadside statement.

We hope to involve residents, businesses and organisations in this exciting venture. If you would like to get involved please contact the Clerk to the Council Kath Mavin at enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk or ring (01661) 825092.

A floral display on Main Street, Ponteland. Picture by Brian Edlin of Ponteland Photographic Society.



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Blood biker meets Lions

At a recent meeting of Ponteland Lions Club the members found out a lot they did not know about Northumbria Blood Bikes.

Blood Biker Nigel Barlow explained that although they have only been in existence for just over three years their work has grown rapidly.

Blood Bikes operates all through the weekend and from 7pm to 7am each weekday; effectively when the Blood Transfusion service is not in operation.

Growing from servicing the needs of Gateshead's QE Hospital, the service now transports blood to where it is needed for all the hospitals in Northumberland and Durham. It also links in to the Great North Air Ambulance Service and Cumbrian colleagues.

Northumbria Blood Bikes is reliant on donations and is completely free to NHS trusts. Starting with three bikes, they now have ten bikes plus four cars and an ex-NHS van.

The bikers and their associates are volunteers and the riders and drivers all have Advance Biking or Motoring qualifications. Petrol costs alone for the fleet run at £2,500 each month.

Ponteland Lions has made a donation of £200 to Northumbria Blood Bikes.

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Celebrating 25 years in Newcastle

The region's leading bathroom specialists The Bathroom Studio are this year celebrating 25 years since they opened their luxurious bathroom showroom in Kingston Park, Newcastle.

And to help celebrate they are offering readers of Pont News & Views 20% off during March and April 2017.

The Bathroom Studio is still family owned and now run by husband and wife team Graham and Michelle Shanks.

Michelle said: "It was my father Jim Mongan who opened our first bathroom showroom in Durham way back in 1972. At the time he also manufactured luxury baths so travelled the country and the world seeing how the most successful showrooms operated.

"It was his ambition to bring the best products and services to the North East and we believe we achieved that with the opening of our Kingston Park Showroom in 1992."

The showroom proudly boasts over 65 stunning displays where you can find inspiration ranging from stylish contemporary wet rooms to traditional hand painted bathroom furniture. Each display is finished with full tiling and accessories so you can visualize how your own bathroom could look.

World renowned brands such as Duravit, Vitra, Hans Grohe and Laura Ashley mean

that the quality and variety of choice offers something to suit everyone's style and budget.

Michelle added: "We pride ourselves on offering the very best products and because we are an independent specialist we can choose to deal with not only the best brands but we can also offer a wider choice of specialist products such as Dansani, Bagno Design and Waters Baths."

So for those homeowners wanting to invest in a new bathroom in 2017 the expert advice and guidance provided by the team at The Bathroom Studio is truly invaluable.

Offering a complete turnkey solution of design/supply and installation right through to supply only of individual products. They offer professional advice to each and every client from design and layout to making sure the product specification best meets each individual's requirements and budget; and can even help with the all-important decisions such as tile choices and colour schemes.

If you are looking to upgrade your bathroom or ensuite this Spring then a visit to The Bathroom Studio is an absolute must and remember to mention your 20% discount from Pont News & Views.



T. 0191 271 5800

E. michelle.shanks@thebathroomstudio.co.uk

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More than 30 activities and 300 members at Ponteland's U3A

By Muriel Sobo

Ponteland Leisure Learning is the local branch of the countrywide U3A, which is an organisation for anyone not in work but who have time and skills to share with like-minded people.

PLL has over 300 members and more than 30 activities from art classes to walking groups. There is a monthly meeting with a speaker and an opportunity to find out more about our activities.

Come and join us on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Make new friends and take up new interests or just share your talents!

Chairman Brian Prickett hands over to the new chairman Janet McCann at the AGM of Ponteland Leisure Learning held last month.

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Drama in their DNA

Year 13 students recently took to the stage in a spine tingling version of DNA by Dennis Kelly.

The pupils turned the drama studio into a woodland forest decorating the floor with over 2,000 artificial leaves, atmospheric lighting and woodland sounds.

The group performed the play to several different audiences made up of parents and students in Years 10 and 11. The performance was coursework for the Y13 A level drama course but also allowed other students from different year groups to collaborate and gain the experience of performing in an A level piece.

The Y13s were joined by Y11 students Kyle Yates and Jack Wallace, alongside three Y12 students Izzy Viney, Andrew Potter and Meenoo Razaei. All of the students gave up their spare time after school and at lunch time to rehearse to be part of the performance. Tom Kelly in Y10 helped with lighting and sound!

The cast of Y13 students involved were: Adina Birbeck, Tia Hall, Oliver Jennings, Ellen McBean, Matthew Nicholson, Kate Parkhouse, Alex Tolman, Catherine Young.



Emma Lee, who directed the performance, said: "The pupils were all incredibly focused throughout the rehearsal process and this definitely showed in their final performances. It was great to see pupils working collaboratively across the different year groups and the enthusiasm they had towards supporting each other to achieve their end goal was amazing to see as a teacher."

Runners qualify for Inter-County Championships

Four Ponteland High School runners have qualified to represent Northumberland County at the Inter-County Championships.

Sam Edmondson, Suzannah Fielding, Chloe Wellings and Hannah Tumia qualified after their performances at the recent County Cross Country Championships at Temple Park, South Shields.

All of our Year 9, 10 and 11 competitors improved on their personal best performances and special mention goes to our most improved runner, Joe Green, who came 46th out of a field of 100.

Allan Atkinson, Raising Achievement Leader for PE, said: "This is a very competitive event and the standard is set very high. All runners deserve credit for their efforts, especially those going on to represent Northumberland. Well done and good luck to them all."

Rachel wins two bronzes at England U15 Badminton tournament

Year 9 student Rachel Brogan won two bronze medals at the England U15 Badminton Tournament in the Tees Valley.

She won bronze medals in both the Girls' Singles and Girls' Doubles, then the following day at the Northumberland Badminton Association U16 County Restricted Tournament, Rachel and her partner won the Mixed Doubles. Rachel was also runner-up in the Girls' Singles!

Headteacher Kieran McGrane said: "Rachel is a modest student but also extremely talented and competitive. It is fantastic to see how well she is doing in badminton alongside being an excellent student in school."

Boccia team qualify for regional finals for second year running

Ponteland's Boccia team tasted success for the second year in a row as they once again qualified for the regional competition after a fantastic victory at Cardinal Hume School on February 3rd.

Jack Wallace, Conor Wright, Jake Cooper and William Fretwell made it through the group stages after victories against Cedars, Southlands, and Gibside, with only George Stephenson defeating them at the early stage.

The semi-finals saw them face George Stephenson and after a close game they made it through by a single point. The final against Southlands was equally as nail-

biting, with the two teams inseparable after three ends, which meant a tie break. Conor Wright sealed the crucial throw right at the end to secure victory.

The boys represented the school impeccably with excellent team spirit, leadership and sportsmanship on display. The team were ecstatic after the victory and now look forward to the regional competition at Gateshead Stadium in March.



Fratelli fundraising leads to large cheque for children's cancer charity

Staff at Ponteland's Ristorante Fratelli have handed over a cheque for £1,690 to a local cancer charity after a year of fundraising.


The restaurant held various raffle draws and sponsorship events last year to raise the cash for the TOMA Fund, which supports children, teenagers, young people and their families in the North East and Cumbria who have been affected by a diagnosis of childhood cancer.


The charity is dedicated to the memory of Jordan David Thompson and Sophie Ela Atay, cousins who tragically died from childhood cancers. Jordan was 15 when he lost his battle with leukaemia in September 2007 and Sophie was just two when she died of neuroblastoma in March 2010.




This year Fratelli is raising funds for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, with other raffles and sponsorships being held over Easter and this summer.

Pictured (l-r) are Liam Rutherford, Paul Carr, Andrea Thompson (from the Toma Fund) and Jose Manuel Zalba.







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DETAILS OF VARIOUS PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

A list of planning applications and consultations that had been ongoing since December was presented to the Council for information. The Town Council had met all of the deadlines for responses.

PONTELAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The final draft version of the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan following the recent Pre Submission Consultation in November was circulated to councillors for approval. Subject to a minor amendment, the Town Council approved the final draft version which is being submitted for Northumberland County Council (NCC) to publicise prior to an independent inspection.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

There were no recommendations to approve from the Working Party's meeting on January 13th but the proposed modifications to the car park at the back of Merton Way shops were discussed. Coun Dodd reported that he had most of the funding in place to be able to carry out this work and he hoped the Town Council would be able to offer some funding towards landscaping works etc. There will be a public consultation carried out by NCC before work is started.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council approved various recommendations from the Working Party meeting on January 23rd including proceeding with six park signs subject to sufficient funds being available to complete the project at the year-end. The Council also agreed to revised fees for memorial seats and picnic tables which would cover all of the council's costs. The cost of a new recycled plastic seat, plaque and 10 year lease would be £1,125. This included the cost of the seat, a plaque, 10 year maintenance cost, a sum for asset replacement and

administration costs. An extension of the lease for a further 10 years would be £500. It was agreed to introduce a new charge for placing a plaque on an existing recycled plastic seat that did not currently have one. This charge would be £690 for 10 years. It was also agreed to move two seats that were felt to be surplus to requirements in their current position and the West ward councillors were asked for their opinion on whether a seat should be installed at Medburn.

The appointment of a landscape consultant to provide a planting scheme for the sensory garden planned at Coates Institute was also approved and it was agreed to carry out some tree work at one of the allotments.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Coun Dodd reported that he was still in discussions with officers at NCC about the problems at a particular spot on the A696 where there had been a recent fatal road accident. Coun Jackson reported that the County Council were in the process of agreeing their budget for 2017-18 and this would be discussed at a Council meeting on February 22nd. It looked likely that there would be a huge expansion of the capital programme. An allowance was to be included to start the relief road and the flood works for the Dissington application. The final version of the Core Strategy was to be discussed by Cabinet and there was a suggested amendment not to include the proposed housing numbers for the Dissington application as part of the calculation for Objectively Assessed Need (OAN). The reason for the exclusion amendment is not clear to the Town Council. Concern was also expressed about the suggestion that the fire station in Ponteland was not to be replaced. Councillors also expressed concern at the rising level of capital debt, the proposed authorisation level of expenditure and the felling of trees at the County Hall site.

This column is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on February 8th.

Councillors approve final draft of Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan

Thanks to the community and stakeholders for taking time out to respond to the Pre-Submission Consultation held from November 1st– 16th.

The analysis of the responses was completed after the New Year, allowing amendments to be reviewed into the final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This was presented to the Town Council at its February 8th meeting and, subject to a minor amendment, this document was approved for the next stage.

What happens next?

- Submission by the Town Council of the final draft plan to Northumberland County Council for publicity – Feb/March 2017
- Examination of the plan by an independent examiner – spring/summer 2017 (examiner recommendations may require amendments to the plan)
- (Subject to passing examination) Neighbourhood Plan proceeds to Referendum – autumn 2017
- Neighbourhood Plan 'made' (brought into legal force) by Northumberland County Council – autumn 2017.

Club running recruitment campaign open evening

By David Buffham

Ponteland Runners is holding an open evening in March as we aim to attract new members to join.

The club has been around for a number of years and we now have more than 100 members, drawn from in and around Ponteland.

And what did most of them say when they heard about us for the first time? "I am not good enough to run with a club."

But, of course, they were. And, without exception, they are better runners than they were before joining us and probably much fitter as well. They enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the club whether they are beginners (our qualified leaders run bespoke courses for beginners, based upon the successful 'Couch to 5K' programme) or regular marathon runners.

Running is set to become the most popular participation sport in the country this year, overtaking swimming for the first time. And, as we have all discovered, it is much more fun as a club member.

We have runners in their teens and runners in their 60s. We have more women members than men. We even have Sunderland supporters, so we really are a very diverse bunch!

But we would like to encourage more local people to give us a try and are having an 'open evening' session at 7pm on Wednesday March 29th at Ponteland Leisure Centre car park.

It is completely free, as it is for your first few weeks anyway (after that you pay just £10 per year to be a member, which we

think is the lowest public running club membership fee in the country!)

You will be able to join any of our running groups that evening (based on your pace, and including a slow jog pace) and we will also have a walking group, intended for those who want to try us out but who aren't currently runners.

So, as long as you can walk about three miles at a reasonable pace, we will have a group for you on the 29th. We don't expect you to have lots of fancy kit, although you will need some running/training shoes. That's about it.

If you would like some more information, look us up on Facebook, email chairman@pontelandrunners.org.uk or call me on (01661) 820780. I hope to see you on the 29th. If you can't make the evening but want to try us out, please just get in touch.



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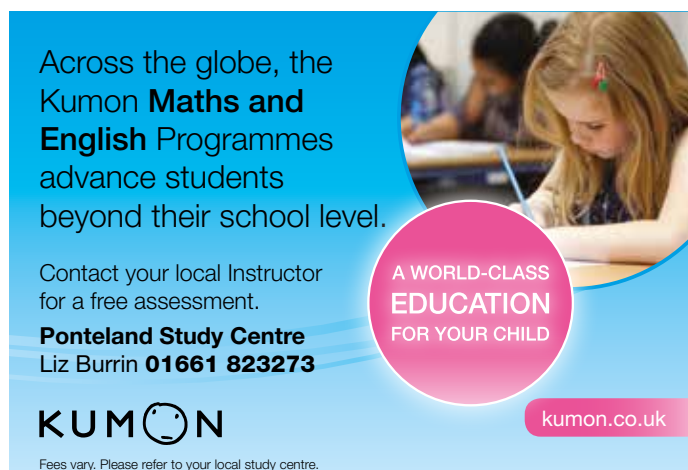


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Free self help guide for over-50s

The Golden Guide for over-50s is out now in Northumberland and as usual is packed with practical information.

The free self-help guide has the lowdown on local activities, and groups, as well as getting help with issues about Health, Money, Care and Your Home.

Newly updated, this year's activities include basket making and boat building, gardening and guitar playing as well as the latest contacts for health and social care.

And as a special feature the new Golden Guide includes the Moneymaker - a lighthearted look at money and how to make a bit more in your spare time. How about selling your holiday snaps, or renting your home as a film location?

Copies are available at: library branches; Northumbria Healthcare care teams; Carers' Northumberland; Healthwatch Northumberland; Royal Voluntary Service Centres; Alzheimer's Society; British Red Cross; Citizens Advice Bureaux; Northumberland CVA; practice nurses in GP surgeries; the Pension Visiting Team; selected Boots pharmacies.

If you can't get out, or can't find a copy - ring Age UK Northumberland on 01670 784821 and they will post one out to you free. The full edition is online at goldenguide.org.uk



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