

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Core strategy withdrawal gives
green belt campaigners hope

New Vicar and Minister for
Ponteland

Final preparations being made
for Britain in Bloom judging

Record turnout for Music in the Park

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Record crowds enjoy musical fun in the sun

Record crowds enjoyed fun in the sun at the eighth Music in the Park event.

Free musical entertainment at Ponteland Park came from Rendezvous Jazz Band, North Tyneside Steel Band, Ponteland Community Band, The Ringtones and Pete Brown.

An estimated 400 people who turned up with their deckchairs and picnic blankets included Mayor of Ponteland Alan Varley, pictured right with wife Linda.

The annual event is run as part of the Town Council's vision of giving residents a real sense of pride in Ponteland.

Cover shot and page 3 photos by The Image Farm.





Watch out for illegal door to door sellers and opportunist thieves

By Inspector Pam Bridges, Neighbourhood Inspector for East Tynedale and West Tynedale



As the inspector responsible for the policing in the Ponteland area, I am pleased to announce there are two new officers joining East Tynedale Neighbourhood Policing Team who will be stationed at Ponteland.

The officers are PC Ingrid Clayton from Hexham and PC Darren Fisher from Blyth Neighbourhood Policing Team.

There have been 35 crimes reported during the month of June for Ponteland and the surrounding area:

- three burglary other than dwelling
- seven thefts
- two taking a motor vehicle
- two make off without payment
- one shoplifting
- four criminal damage
- two public order
- eleven assaults
- one sexual offence
- one breach of non-molestation order
- one breach of duty of care.

Anti-social behaviour

There were 13 reports of anti-social behaviour in the Ponteland area in June. Northumbria Police continues to take positive action in all incidents where offenders have been identified and alcohol seizures have been made. We continue to conduct high visible patrols in these areas.

Door to door sellers

There have been recent reports of men in the area offering household cleaning products for sale. They outline they are on a 'back to work' programme or a similar scheme that allows them to get their life back on track. They routinely travel to the area from Cleveland area and are ex-offenders. Any person going door to door offering goods should have a valid Pedlar's Certificate or Hawker's licence. These men are likely not to have any legitimate licence and therefore are committing offences. Concerns are also raised regarding their intimidating behaviour and abuse directed toward residents. Prompt reporting of such persons allows police to attend an area and check out the validity or otherwise of these sellers. Two men were recently stopped, interviewed roadside and reported for summons following a similar

report. They can also have their goods seized. Please keep us informed of this type of activity.

Opportunist thieves

With the arrival of summer, opportunist criminals can target garden equipment and pedal cycles left unattended. Residents enjoying outdoor activities and gardening can often leave property unattended and property insecure. Please ensure when equipment is not in use that it is locked away. Mark your property so that if items are found they can be reunited with you. In summer months windows and doors to houses become an easier target for a would-be thief. Remember to lock and secure all doors and windows. Even when at home, please bear in mind that should you spend a lot of time in a rear garden, the front of your property is vulnerable if not secured properly.

If you have any information regarding the above or any other incidents, please email easttynedale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk or call us on 101.

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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Let's talk about Guide Dogs for the Blind

As opticians our aim is to make sure you see as clearly as possible. We monitor the health of your eyes through regular screening by examining and taking photographs of the back of your eyes for comparison between visits.

Tragically, it is not always possible to 'save' sight. The work of Guide Dogs for the Blind is extraordinary in helping those with sight loss.

What a guide dog does

Pup's first year. If puppies are to become good guide dogs they must not only have the right parents; they must also be brought up properly. Volunteer puppy walkers introduce the young pups to the sights, sounds and smells of a world in which they will play such an important part. This will mean taking the dogs on buses and trains, into shops and along busy streets. The puppy walker will also teach the puppy to walk ahead on the leash (not 'to heel') as it will once a guide dog, and to obey simple commands such as 'sit', 'down', 'stay' and 'come'. When the pup is about a year old it returns to Guide Dogs for the next part of its important training.



Back to school. Back at Guide Dogs, the young dogs learn the Guide Dogs In Action Back to School skills needed to guide people who are blind or partially-sighted. They learn:

- To walk in a straight line in the centre of the pavement unless there is an obstacle;
- Not to turn corners unless told to do so;
- To stop at kerbs and wait for the command to cross the road, or to turn left or right;
- To judge height and width so that its owner does not bump their head or shoulder;
- How to deal with traffic.

Out to work. Once qualified and at home, the guide dog and owner face new challenges. For the visually-impaired owner, this could be the first time they have been independent for a long time. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is there every step of the way and regular aftercare visits are standard. It is out at work that the owner and dog really become a team – especially when crossing roads. The dog has been taught to stop at a kerb and wait for the owner to decide when it is safe to cross and give the command 'forward'. Sometimes a guide dog owner needs help to cross a very busy road. If you think help is needed, please ask. If your offer is accepted, let the owner take your arm.

Guide dogs work in incredibly demanding situations and their owner's safety depends on the dog's concentration. If you see a guide dog working, please don't distract him with food or by talking to him.

'Having a guide dog has given me back my dignity, my reason to live. Until I had Isla I was ignored, had been attacked and was too frightened to leave the house. Now I feel like a human being again.'
Hilda Winters, 89-year-old guide dog owner

Almost two million people in the UK are living with sight loss.

Every hour another person in the UK goes blind. When someone loses their sight, Guide Dogs is here to make sure they don't lose their freedom as well.

The Association relies on donations to continue their life-changing work. Every pound raised makes a difference to people in the UK living with sight loss.

You can find out more about Guide Dogs: 'name a puppy' or 'sponsor a puppy' by calling their Newcastle office:

Tel: 0345 1430220

Email: newcastle@guidedogs.org.uk



Our Dispensing Optician and contact lens specialist, Donna Maughan, is raising money for the Guide Dogs for the Blind in the Great North Run on 10th September.

You can sponsor Donna online at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/donna-maughan1>

As a practice we are sponsoring a guide dog puppy.

Find out more about the work of Guide Dogs for the Blind online at www.guidedogs.org.uk



Green belt battle far from over

With the withdrawal of the Local Plan Core Strategy from Government, Northumberland County Council's new Conservative administration looks set to fundamentally change new housing development policy. But will this mean plans to build 2,400 new homes on Ponteland's green belt will be reversed? Chris Jennings reports.

To paraphrase Harold Wilson, four months is a long time in politics. In March the then Labour-controlled Northumberland County Council signalled its support for two huge housing schemes which would have seen 400 new homes built on green belt land at West Clickemin Farm and the 2,000-home Dissington Garden Village.

Both the Banks Property scheme for land behind Cheviot View and the ambitious Lugano Property plan for land it owns north of Ponteland and Darras Hall off Limestone Lane were supported by members of the Strategic Planning Committee.

They said they were 'minded to approve' both schemes - which attracted 937 objections and just seven in support of the Banks development, and 612 objections and 410 letters of support for the Dissington Garden Village plans.

But two weeks ago the county council withdrew the core strategy submitted to Government in April to undertake a full review of the housing and employment numbers and strategic land use allocations it had proposed up to 2031.

This had included a projected increase in housing in the county of 24,320 plus another 2,000 houses at Dissington Garden Village. This would have meant more than 3,000 new homes for the Ponteland area, with 228 hectares of green belt land released for development.

NCC had first taken advice from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which confirmed that a local planning authority can withdraw a submitted plan at any time prior to adoption. The council says the review of the

core strategy will be done as quickly as possible, so it can be re-submitted to Government as soon as is practicable.

Council Leader Peter Jackson explained the reasons behind the withdrawal: "Many residents were unhappy with the proposed core strategy and have been calling for a review. We are a council that listens and it is vital we get this right.

"The strategy will have a direct impact on future generations in Northumberland and we wanted to propose a review at the first opportunity. This council wants to protect our communities and to plan for a sustainable and prosperous future for our county and the wider region.

"While we believe the vast majority of the plan is fine, information currently available, and anticipated for release by the Government later this year, suggests to us that the requirement for housing in our county may very well not be as high as has been proposed previously.

"We want to use this information from Government and take into full account the latest regional plan in the form of the NE Strategic Economic Plan, to review the need to build on acres of green belt land.

"Ultimately we want to improve control of development within our county, not create a free for all which encroaches on our green belt."

Minister wants to increase housebuilding

Coun Jackson would appear to be at odds with Conservative colleagues in Government. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid

signalled in a speech to the Local Government Association's annual conference on July 4th new rules to force councils to increase housing targets, particularly in affluent areas where affordable housing was in short supply.

Another major problem for the council is that one of the key risks of the withdrawal of the local plan is the potential for speculative/unplanned development in the absence of a local plan, and an increased likelihood of significant planning appeals.

Such fears would appear to have foundation. The day after the decision to withdraw the local plan, Northumberland property consultant George F White issued the following 'free for all' call to landowners and developers:

"Whilst the review is being undertaken, the determination of planning applications will revert to existing local plan and Core Strategy policies of the former District and Boroughs, most of these being many years out of date and accordingly carry little weight in decision making, specifically where they do not accord with the National Planning Policy Framework.

"In the interim this provides an opportunity for developers and landowners to submit applications for residential developments in a now weakened decision-making policy framework, and if necessary, challenge any refusals through the appeal process."

The situation is so serious the DCLG has even suggested a Ministerial visit to discuss the implications with the Council leadership, with the potential threat of Government intervention.

So where does this all leave the outstanding proposals for West Clickemin Farm and Dissington Garden Village?

The Banks application has already been referred to the National Planning Casework Unit (NPCU), which is expected to indicate soon whether the proposals will be called in by the Secretary of State for decision or referred back to the county council for a final decision. So at present this is out of the county council's hands.

However, the Dissington Garden Village plans have not yet been referred to the NPCU due to a holding direction from Highways England. The county council has confirmed that this means it has the power to revisit the March decision.

An NCC spokesperson said: "There are currently a number of major development proposals that have a 'minded to approve' resolution from strategic planning committee that have not yet had a final decision issued and it is possible that some of these applications will require re-consideration by committee where the weight given to the emerging policy position in the officer recommendation had a material bearing on the members' decision."

If the NPCU sends the Banks application back to NCC, that scheme could also be reviewed and planning permission refused. This could lead to appeals from both developers and planning inquiries of an even greater scale than the two week long Birney Hill inquiry in 2015 or judicial reviews – a situation which could be replicated across the county.

There is also an outstanding planning application from Hellens Group to build 187 homes on a 22-acre site between Callerton Lane and Willow Way, from Callerton Court to Edge Hill, at the eastern edge of Darras Hall, awaiting determination.

So, green belt campaigners taking down their 'Ponteland says no to green belt development' signs on Cheviot View two weeks ago may have been a tad premature. For whatever the county council decides in the coming months on these controversial schemes, the final decision could well be taken elsewhere.

Image: An aerial shot showing the land earmarked for development behind Cheviot View taken by The Image Farm.

Developer "disappointed" at local plan withdrawal

Philip Baker, planning director at The Banks Group, said: "It is disappointing to see the Northumberland Local Plan being withdrawn, as work on the plan started back in 2008, its adoption is already many years behind schedule, and its withdrawal will inevitably lead to further delays and uncertainty for businesses wanting to invest in the county.

"The Council report acknowledges the need to support an economic and housing growth agenda aimed at creating sustainable and successful communities across Northumberland, and as a North East business working in and employing people at different property and mining sites across the county, this is an objective with which we would very much agree.

"Having an effective Local Plan in place is an essential component of securing a sustainable and successful future for Northumberland, and we would hope that, if the present document is withdrawn, a robust alternative is developed and implemented at the earliest possible juncture.

"The need to underpin Northumberland's future economic prosperity through a positive planning policy framework, and to increase the available supply of quality homes right across the county as part of this, is not going to change, and we would strongly urge all national and regional bodies to work together in support of reaching the overarching objective of securing long-term, sustainable economic growth for Northumberland and the wider North East region.

"The West Clickemin Farm site has long been recognised as appropriate for the type of development we are proposing, and we will continue to take the project forward in line with the planning regime."

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Final preparations being made for Britain in Bloom judging

Final preparations are being made for the visit to Ponteland of the Britain in Bloom judges next week.

Ponteland is the region's hope for the small town category in the national competition, having won gold medals for the past five years in Northumbria in Bloom.

The NiB judges carried out their summer judging of Ponteland on July 18th, touring the area and looking at the park, Main Street and the cemetery. They also viewed the special entries including the Bowling and Tennis Club, The Blackbird, Peel House apartments, Prestwick Park and Prestwick Allotments.

The judges met with a range of volunteers who have helped out in various ways with weeding, litter picking and general tidying up, and the Friends of Ponteland Park. The results of the regional competition will be announced in September.

Meanwhile work is carrying on with the Britain in Bloom entry. Ponteland was honoured to be asked to be part of this prestigious competition at the beginning of the year. The judges for the small town category are Kate Dagnall and Brendan Mowforth and Ponteland is looking forward to welcoming them on Wednesday August 9th

when the judging will take place.

An awards event will be held in Llandudno on Friday 27th October.

The response from the businesses, organisations and the community has been overwhelming this year. Ponteland Town Council would like to thank our contractors, Iain Clough, Michael Champion, Jim Scott, and Derek and Calum Sherlock.

Support has come from the following organisations: Masons Castle Wardens; Inner Wheel; Ponteland Art Club; Ponteland Lions; Ponteland Rotary Club. Thanks also go to Elizabeth Foster, Peter and Pauline Sutcliffe, Ron and Kath Whittington and residents of Peel House and Cecil Court.

The Town Council is very grateful to Mrs Murphy from the art department at Ponteland High School and her pupils Yasmin Catley, Sophie Plumeridge, Sam Denyer, Helen Nicholson and teacher Karen Murphy, who have produced a mural for the sensory garden that will be temporarily displayed on both judging days. They did an excellent job!

A big thank you must go to former councillors Joyce Butcher and Robin Ramsay, who despite stepping down from the Town Council in May have provided a great deal of help with both entries which is much appreciated.

Finally, our gratitude also goes to the businesses and organisations listed below for their kindness in sponsoring the various floral displays throughout Ponteland:

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- Goodfellows
- Jan's Kitchen
- hb opticians
- Henry Robert Hairdressers
- Hooker & Young
- Darras Dental Practice
- S Hedley Design Services
- C Brumitt Architect
- Meadowfield Auto Centre
- Nationwide Taxi Rental Ltd
- Colette Stroud Family Law
- Samms Café
- Parklands Pharmacy
- Finerrans Electric
- Merton Hall
- Penny Pieces
- Taylors Pharmacy
- Post Box
- Newcastle Building Society
- Nicholson Morgan
- Ponteland Hardware
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- Behind the Scenes
- Sanderson Young
- Geoff Steven Opticians
- Dulais
- McColls
- Iain Nicholson
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- Honour Health
- New Rendezvous
- The Badger
- Seven Stars
- Rook Matthews Sayer
- The Blackbird
- Dobbies
- Ponteland Barbershop
- Poppies
- The Diamond Inn



Bridleway project wins LOVE Northumberland Award

A project to spruce up Ponteland Bridleway has received a regional award from the Duchess of Northumberland at a ceremony held at Alnwick Garden.

Ponteland Community Partnership's bridleway project was 'highly commended' at the LOVE Northumberland Awards, hosted by North East TV personality John Grundy.

It was nominated for 'Best New Project' - a project less than one year old that fits the LOVE Northumberland campaign: "To promote improving the environment of the county and create a sense of joint ownership around LOVE Northumberland".

The seven stage project has seen 75 new trees planted, two new heritage interpretation displays installed, wild flowers planted and new hard core laid this summer. But first, volunteers were sought to help clear away refuse and cut back overhanging branches.

More than 50 people turned up for this launch event, including members of the Footpath Users Group, Ponteland Wildlife Group, Friends of the Park, Ponteland Greenbelt Group, Ponteland Civic Society, Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Ponteland 1st Scouts.

Alma Dunigan, Chairman of Ponteland Community Partnership, said: "We have done very well to be awarded 'highly commended' in our category, with so many excellent entries across the county.

"We feel very lucky to have received funding from the Community Chest and the support of the community who got involved during February and March. It truly was a community event which will support Ponteland in its Britain in Bloom bid this year."

PCP is now planning to take on the next part of the Old Railway Line from Rotary Way to the Airport, starting in the autumn. Register your interest at pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Pictured with the Duchess are: Frank Harrington, Heather Thomas, Shirley Hill and Alma Dunigan of Ponteland Community Partnership.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Neighbours slam plans for a new eatery in
The Verger's Cottage in this month's letters...

Plan for eatery in The Verger's Cottage is 'preposterous'

Dear Mr Mate, Chairman of Darras Hall Estate Committee, would you care to explain why you support and intend to 'mentor' a proposed food outlet in the grounds of the historic Pele Tower, whilst extolling the 'good practises' of banning any inferior/undesirable business within the 1,014 acres of Darras Hall Estate?

I have read the marketing information on Darras Hall Estate website, along with the many rules and regulations you and your committee adopt, and am flabbergasted that the 'rules' you care so deeply and passionate about cease to exist in Ponteland.

There are over 20 businesses in Ponteland village alone, as you must be fully aware of, which offer some form of refreshment, and to suggest another in the grounds of the ruins of Pele Tower, with the hope of also placing a 'Vintage Citroen Food Truck' in the grounds is preposterous.

I am sure as a man with such high standards and principles, it would never be allowed to pass the Darras Hall Estate Committee planning regulations. To quote your website: "The Committee prevents developments that are universally objected to such as high rise flats, public houses, fish/chip shops and a host of others."

Under your committee's strict rules, none of these are allowed in Darras Hall, thus depriving residents of these amenities.

I also see that an Emma Mate (a relative of yours?) is hoping to part run this venture, with yourself as 'mentor' of course, and would suggest that as you think that this is such a marvellous, brilliant idea/amenity for Ponteland, why don't you park one of these vintage food trucks in Darras Hall's Broadway shopping centre or its confines? There are several empty premises available for

such ventures.

Once again, it's a case of NIMBY syndrome Mr Mate, certainly not good enough for Darras Hall, heaven forbid, but good enough for the village of Ponteland.

Derek and Hilary Wood

Peel House, Main Street, Ponteland

Bringing street food to Ponteland will be a positive move

My daughter Emma and her fiance Andy are looking for a venue to bring Andy's superb cuisine to the area.

Temporarily, for the summer, 'Aude' the vintage Citroen food truck is in residency at The Old School Gallery in Alnmouth after starting life in the Languedoc in south west France. You can read all about it on Facebook: facebook.com/pg/adventuresinaude

Here's the most recent review, there are many more in a similar vein: "Visiting this beautiful van, having amazing food and top quality friendly service makes a visit to the coast extra special! We had top quality BBQ'd seabass on a super healthy and tasty salad and chorizo and charcoal roll. All incredible! The patatas bravas with hot sauce are amazing too and the fratata was like none I'd ever had before. Can't rave about it enough. The best food you'll pick up for lunch whilst out for a walk. I'd recommend ditching the egg sarnies and heading to the old school house at Alnmouth!"

Aude, the vintage HY van receives admiring comments wherever it goes, Darras Hall and Ponteland included. So I'm not alone in thinking it would make a positive rather than a preposterous contribution to the Ponteland street scene.

But it's not the van that is the main event, it is Andy's cooking. The street food style is an eclectic mix of cuisines from Andy's travels in Mediterranean Europe, North Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. This healthy yet exciting cuisine will be a great contribution to the food scene and the diets of residents in the area.

Yes I will help my family to prosper as much as I possibly can! Verger's Cottage is the ideal location for this business, and it would bring back to life a historic building much in need of some TLC - just as cafes and restaurants already do in Durham and Newcastle Cathedrals, Hexham Abbey et al.

So everyone gains, especially the local residents who will reap the benefits of this new eatery more than anyone else.

I would like to extend an invitation to Derek and Hilary Wood to visit Aude at The Old School Gallery, Alnmouth to try the food, take in the ambiance of the van in a historic setting, enjoy the service and a chat with Andy about his cuisine. Only then will they be fully informed and qualified to question/comment on our planning application.

Andrew Mate

Greenacres, Darras Hall

Have you lost a set of keys?

A set of keys has been found on the Eland Haugh estate, on a grassed area between Paddock Hill and Eland Edge.

They have a pink metallic oblong fob, a Nissan car key and a Yale house key. If the person they belong to recognises the description, please contact me on (01661) 824386.

Mavis Cowell

Carr Field, Ponteland

September issue deadlines: Delivery of the September issue will start on Monday September 4th and be completed by Friday September 8th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday August 21st. 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 September 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.

What's on...

Ponteland U3A

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month in St. Mary's Church Hall at 2pm. On August 2nd Colin Buxton will speak on 'Naval 8 Squadron. RNAS Air Fights in World War I' and on September 6th Tom Martin's subject is 'Planting Autumn Pots and Baskets'. Visitors are always welcome; there is no charge. For more information visit u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland or call (01661) 824953.

Coldcotes Moor Farm Open Garden

We are opening our garden in support of the charities associated with the National Garden Scheme on Sunday, August 6th from 1pm to 5pm. Admission £5, children free. Home-made teas. Most areas can be accessed though sometimes by circuitous routes or an occasional step. WC access involves three steps. Postcode for satnav NE20 0DF.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

At our meeting at 2.30pm on Monday August 14th in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, we have Richard Stevenson and his subject 'The Great Fire of Newcastle and Gateshead'. On Monday September 11th Aimee Nicholson will talk about The RSPB Hen Harrier Life Project.

Ponteland Lions Club

Ponteland Lions does not meet in August. However we will run our charity fund book stall on the usual last Saturday of the month (August 26th) from 9am to 4pm at Waitrose.

Stamfordham Village Fayre

Stamfordham Village Fayre, relaunched last year after 30 years, is on again this August Bank Holiday Monday – August 28th from 1pm to 4pm.

Ponteland Duck Races

This year's event is being held from 12.30pm on Sunday September 3rd when 500 numbered plastic ducks will be cheered down the River Pont in Ponteland Park. See article on page 12.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

Ponteland Wildlife Group will be meeting again on Tuesday September 5th with an illustrated talk about how

the winter rains transform the desert in South Africa. October will be in the magical world of mushrooms in Northumberland, November will be about a fascinating period in the history of breeding birds on The Farnes and December will concentrate on a study of Arctic terns. These are open meetings and everyone is welcome at St Mary's Church Hall at 7.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month.

Ponteland Parish Flower Show

The 40th Ponteland Parish Flower Show is being held at the Memorial Hall on Saturday September 9th. See article on page 14.

Ponteland Photographic Society

Ponteland Photographic Society's monthly meetings restart on Monday September 11th at Merton Hall, starting at 7.30pm. New members welcome. See pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk

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 September 20th – there is no meeting in August. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk or shirley@reevehill.plus.com

Merton Hall needs you!

Would you like to help out on a Friday one day a month or more? If Friday is no good to you, we can look at a day to suit you from 9.15am to 11.45am serving tea and coffee. We have a great team of volunteers but urgently need more. Contact Val on (01661) 825836.

Line dancing

We meet every Wednesday at 6.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland. We have lots of laughs, friendship and exercise to music. The cost is £20 for ten sessions. Dancing is at beginner and intermediate level and new dancers are always welcome. Free taster session offered. Contact Rosemary Gray (01661) 822493.

Rotary Club of Ponteland

Rotary Club of Ponteland meet every

Tuesday at Ponteland Golf Club. The meetings alternate between lunch times (1st and 3rd Tuesdays) and evenings (2nd and 4th Tuesdays). New people members are very welcome. Contact Alan Hall at alanhalleef@msn.com or on (01661) 860284.

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

We meet the first Tuesday of each month. Speakers, cup of tea and sometimes an outing etc. Any lady interested should contact Eleanor Carr on (01661) 871768 for further information.

Ponteland Floral Art Club

Ponteland Floral Art Club meets on the third Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall, Ponteland. There will also be a jewellery stall that evening with items suitable for Christmas gifts.

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

Ponteland Duck Races: Sunday September 3rd

It's one of the liveliest events in the village calendar as hundreds gather in Ponteland Park by the River Pont to pin their hopes on a yellow plastic duck.

There will be 500 of the numbered ducks gliding down the Pont, cheered on by the crowds hoping to finish first and win us a prize.

With a number of races there are lots of opportunities to win from 12.30pm onwards, with other attractions including refreshment stalls, a bouncy castle, market stalls - all the fun of the fair!

The Rotary Club, Scouts, Guides and local schools all take part in aid of many worthwhile charities. Full details from Rotary President Suzanne Marshall on (01661) 824454.

Families cheer on their ducks at last year's event.



Review underway on post-16 travel charges

A comprehensive review is now underway on a council policy which sees some students in Northumberland paying £600 a year to travel to school and college.

The review will focus on delivering the new administration's commitment to introducing a zero charge within the council term.

Over 100 students in the county currently have to pay an annual sum of £600 for travel organised by the authority, and other Post 16 students who are able to use public transport are having to pay for their own travel.

It was not possible for the new administration to bring in any changes to its Post 16 Transport Policy ahead of the statutory deadline for the 2017/18 school year, which came just days after the new council was formed.

However work has now started on reviewing the whole policy and in the interim the council has implemented an additional payment option which allows families to spread payments more evenly.

From September 2017 students can opt to make eight payments of £75 via direct debit - as opposed to paying the whole amount as a lump sum or with £200 up front.



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Bishop welcomes new Vicar of Ponteland

The Bishop of Newcastle joined a full congregation to welcome the new Vicar of Ponteland at his service of institution.

The Reverend Captain Paul T Allinson joins St Mary's Ponteland from Durham Diocese, where he was Priest-in-Charge of Holy Trinity Seaton Carew, Hartlepool and of St. John the Baptist, Greatham, and Chaplain to the Hospital of God at Greatham.

Prior to ordination Paul was a Church Army Captain in Darlington (a commission he still holds) where he focused predominantly on children's and youth work.

Following ordination in 1991 he was a Curate in Peterlee for three years before being invited to be the Bishop's Adviser in Children's Ministry for the Diocese of Durham – a post he held for 15 years – combined with parish ministry.

His work focused predominantly on encouraging and resourcing parishes to engage creatively with children and young people to grow in faith/spirituality and to be full and active members of the church family.

His role immediately prior to coming to Ponteland combined being priest of the seaside parish of Seaton Carew for 13 years and the adjoining village of Greatham where he was also Chaplain to



the Hospital of God.

The charity provides supported living and residential/day care centres with a particular focus in supporting people with dementia. He is looking forward to utilising the skills he brings from his broad ministry into his new role.

Paul said: "I am excited and thrilled – if not a little nervous – to be beginning a new phase of my ministry as your Priest and Pastor. I am thankful that God has called me to serve alongside you.

"It will take me some time to get to know the Parish and I know there are lots of new things I need to discover. Please hold me and the whole Parish Team in your Prayers. I am looking forward very much to getting to know you all in the months ahead. I feel blessed to embark on my ministry with you surrounded by an immense feeling of warmth, purpose and friendship as we journey forward together under God."

The Venerable Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle, with Reverend Captain Paul T Allinson at his service of institution. Photo by The Image Farm.

New Minister for Methodist Church



Ponteland Methodist Church will soon be welcoming a new Minister.

Rev Jona Sewell, who joins in September, will also be Superintendent of the Newcastle (West) Methodist Circuit which covers churches from Westerhope, Lemington and Denton Burn to Scots Gap and Milbourne.

Jona (short for Jonathan) comes to us after spending many years in the North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit, starting as a probationer and latterly, the last two years as their Superintendent.

He is passionate about faith and justice and believes the Church should be welcoming and inclusive, reflecting God's love for all people. To relax he enjoys hiking, reading, music, sampling real ale and supporting Newcastle United.

The welcome service for Jona will be on Tuesday September 5th at 7pm led by the Chair of the District, Rev. Stephen Lindridge. His first preaching appointment is on Sunday September 3rd at 10am. All are welcome to come and meet him at either service.

Jona replaces Rev Tim Thorpe, who came to us five years ago and is moving to live in Heddon during his last year before retiring. Tim will have pastoral care of Blucher, Heddon, Milbourne and Scots Gap Methodist Churches.

Flower show celebrates 40 years

The 40th Ponteland Parish Flower Show is being held at the Memorial Hall on Saturday September 9th.

Started on the instigation of Dr Jack White in 1977, the first show was held on Saturday September 9th 1978 and has always been held on the second Saturday in September.

By way of celebration the voluntary committee is inviting children to design a 40th anniversary card and in cookery there will be a class for a 40th anniversary cake where only the decoration will be judged.

There are also new classes this year, with a vase of Autumn foliage and a vase of ornamental grasses in the flower classes, while the dahlia classes

have been simplified to pompom, cactus and decorative, and heathers will be either white or coloured.

In vegetables, a small cucumber class and vase of herbs are introduced. The children's classes are completely revised but still include some baking and "Me and My Pet" is added in photography.

There have only been three chairmen of the voluntary show committee during the event's history, and new volunteers are now being invited to join and ensure the continuation of the show. For details on this and submitting entries, please email Show Chairman Syd Cowan at syd.cowan@btinternet.com or call him on (01661) 824459.

Show Chairman Syd Cowan at last year's show.



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International violinist to perform in Ponteland in October

A world renowned award winning Polish violinist is making her third visit to Ponteland in October.

Kate Chruscicka first performed here aged 16 and is once again refusing to accept a fee, to maximise funds for charity Cancer Research.

This time she is being accompanied by a double bass player and horn player, and supported by singer Pete Brown who performed at Music in the Park recently.

Kate, who obtained an Honours degree at Leeds University and Masters at the Royal College of Music in Manchester, has completed three marathons and is currently training to tackle Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania – all for charity.

The afternoon concert is being held at Ponteland Social Club on Merton Way on Sunday October 15th and tickets can be obtained on the day or by contacting concert secretary Bruce Grant on (01661) 823606.



Radio legend launches Darras Hall podcasts

Regional radio legend John Myers has launched a new website and monthly podcast to promote 'all that's good about' Darras Hall.



Best known on the airwaves as 'Morgan in the morning' John has led some of the best-known local radio stations in the UK including Smooth Radio, Real Radio, Century Radio and Rock Radio during his near 40-year career.

Hailing from Carlisle, he has lived in Darras Hall for 25 years and, now retired, John has launched website mydarrashall.com and the monthly podcast it will host to feature the people of the estate.

The first podcast, released at the end of June, featured among others former Newcastle United and Liverpool legend Terry McDermott and the Chair of Darras Hall Estate Committee Andrew Mate.

It had enjoyed more than 1,750 downloads from the NE20 area within two weeks of going live – a tremendous response. Plans for future podcasts include a regular feature promoting the next issue of Pont News.

Father-of-two John said: "I've lived here for over 25 years and love it. This is a non-profit website with a mission to promote all that is good about Darras Hall and Ponteland. I'm happy to promote events, blogs or information that may be useful to residents."

Find the website and podcasts at mydarrashall.com

£57m schools and leisure scheme to go ahead despite plans being withdrawn

Northumberland County Council has confirmed it remains committed to the £57m education and leisure scheme for Ponteland despite withdrawing its own planning application.

Last month the new Conservative administration announced it was pulling the council's outline application, which it had been 'minded to grant' back in March.

It is unclear whether this is linked to the £5m in financial support pledged for the scheme by Banks Property as part of its planning application for 400 homes to the south-east of the existing schools and leisure centre, given the potential for that planning decision to be reviewed following the core strategy withdrawal from Government (see p6-7).

The county council said the withdrawal of the outline planning application was to facilitate design changes which would assuage concerns raised by residents – the plans attracted 422 objections and only three supporters.

But these will not include moving the proposed location of the new primary and high school from the existing leisure centre site or constitute a fundamental redesign of the scheme.

The county council said refined and detailed plans are being developed, and will be submitted as part of a detailed planning application to be brought forward as soon as possible.

This will ensure that educational provision for the students on roll at the schools is secured by enabling the construction of the buildings to take place along the shortest achievable timescale.

With the new primary and high school set to open in September 2019, the potential for the need for temporary accommodation while building works are completed has been highlighted, but NCC says this will be kept to a minimum.

Coun Wayne Daley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, said: "While we remain committed to the investment of £57m into local education and leisure in Ponteland, we have to be sure that this is going to deliver the best possible educational environment for pupils across Northumberland.

"We are working hard to ensure we address all of the concerns raised by parents and residents in Ponteland to achieve the best possible educational outcome for the young people there."

The county council would not comment on how a £5m funding gap would be addressed if the Banks scheme did not go ahead, simply saying "a review of the overall capital programme is underway".

A map of the original proposed schools and leisure development from the outline planning application.



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PONTELAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – INDEPENDENT EXAMINER’S REPORT

The Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan has now been through independent examination and the examiner provided a report to Northumberland County Council and the Town Council on June 30th. The report made a number of recommendations for modification to policies in the draft plan. The Examiner confirmed that, subject to implementation of these modifications, he is satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the ‘basic conditions’, which are set out in legislation. A schedule showing the modifications was circulated to the Council. The Chairman of the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Alma Dunigan presented to the Council to recommend that members accepted the modifications as presented to enable the Plan to continue through the process towards referendum. The Town Council approved the modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan as proposed by the Examiner.

FINAL CONSULTATION RE PONTELAND COMMUNITY MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMY STATUS

Information was received from Ponteland Community Middle School regarding the need to re-consult on academy conversion. The school was granted an Academy order in April 2016 and carried out initial consultation between June and July 2016, then on moving to foundation status from November 2016 to January 2017. The school is in final negotiations with Northumberland County Council on the transfer of land to the school. The re-consultation on academy conversion ran from June 19th to July 17th. It was agreed that a formal response endorsing the proposals would be sent from the Town Council.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed the following recommendations put forward by the Working Party, which had met on June 16th:

- to proceed with the painting of the Darras Road bridge as soon as possible, to be funded from the existing budget and contingencies and carried out as soon as possible.
- to spend £200 on a leaflet to be delivered to residents if sufficient evidence of parking on pavements in the area around the Thornhill Road area and adjoining streets was produced, given concerns about blocking emergency vehicles and impeding pedestrians.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed a recommendation by the Working Party which had met on June 19th to proceed with installation of two more nameplates on notable trees in the park. One was a beech tree at Fox Covert Bridge and the other an English oak at the Fox Covert entrance.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Coun Veronica Jones highlighted the recent decision made to withdraw the Core Strategy pending additional work being carried out in relation to the housing and employment numbers. This work will be carried out as quickly as possible. NCC had published a statement on its website. Coun Jones

reported that a pothole fund had been established. Day to day maintenance would continue, however each councillor would be able to select three potholes in their area which they felt required urgent repair. She also reported that the Community Chest was operational again. Organisations can bid for grants of up to £5,000 and a sum had also been allocated for small grants for individuals. The closing date for Community Chest applications is September 29th. Coun Richard Dodd reported that the consultation regarding the car park modifications at the back of Merton Way was almost complete. He stated that the library would not return to its original site as the plans for the site were too far advanced. He did, however, say that it was hoped that some discussions would take place regarding possible future investment in Ponteland in relation to a community hub. Coun Dodd also referred to the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council meetings and urged councillors to attend if possible.

MAYOR’S REPORT

The Mayor provided details of his diary commitments in June and July and forthcoming events in August. He also provided a comprehensive briefing of the meeting he had attended at NCC when the withdrawal of the Core Strategy had been discussed.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on July 12th.



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Ponteland's first all-electric taxi has started taking fares, and it promises a swift luxurious drive which doesn't cost the earth.

For the spacious £70,000 Tesla purchased by Darras Hall Taxis has zero emissions and a 300-mile range.

The firm, celebrating its fifth birthday this month, has 13 vehicles and as well as private hire has county council contracts for schools and social services.

Owner Doug Walton said: "We felt it was important that we looked at ways to be eco-friendly and cut emissions in the Ponteland area and we chose the Tesla due to its fantastic space and comfort with a 300 mile range. We are currently looking to increase our electric vehicle range."



Darras Hall Taxis' driver Adam Goldwater with the new electric Tesla



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Ponteland High rowers celebrate Durham Regatta win

Pont High rowers Sophia Riley and Elizabeth Quigley and coxswain Amelia McKenna celebrated a win in the recent Durham Regatta.

They were part of the victorious Tyne United Rowing Club's Women's Junior Oct (8s), winning a straight final by beating Yarm School by over a length.

A major event in the rowing calendar, Durham Regatta is viewed as it is one of the most prestigious competitions in the northern racing calendar and is affectionately referred to as the 'Henley of the North'.

Racing takes place over 700m with the most fantastic views over the river looking out to the Cathedral. This year there were over 200

events over a weekend in June with many amazing competitors.

To celebrate the win the girls attended an awards ceremony at the Gala Theatre in Durham, with over 500 people in the venue cheering on the winners as they received a silver tankard.

Jess Eddie with Maisie Aspinall, Georgia Abbott, Charlotte Hudson, Marnie Rooney, Ella Helme, Amelia McKenna, Elizabeth Quigley, Sophia Riley, Hayley from Hexham and Nathaniel Riley O'Donnell.

The nearside boat is the winning TURC WJ14 Team.

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Our Patient Representative Group (PRG) looks at how we can develop and improve our services to give you, our patients, the best experience we can. We have now created a 'virtual' patient representative panel to work alongside our PRG which will enable more of you to let us know what really matters and what your priorities for the practice are.

What is a 'virtual' patient representative panel?

It's a way of us gathering your views on what you feel are the priorities of the practice. If you choose to join, you will be added to a mailing list and prior to every PRG meeting you will be sent a short questionnaire asking for your views on the topics to be discussed. You then return the questionnaire to us - the results are collated and are then presented at the PRG.

It means your views will help us make decisions on how best to take the practice forward. You don't have to answer every questionnaire, however the more information we get, the more information we have about what you want.

Interested? Please email pontelandmedicalgroup.A84007@nhs.net with your details.

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If you are already registered with our online booking service for appointments and repeat prescriptions, you don't need to re-register. However as this is a different system, you will need new log-in details – please request these now by contacting the surgery either in person or by telephone on 01661 825 513.

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Local clubs offer great days out

By Muriel Sobo

There are many ways of spending time exploring and enjoying our great countryside and indulging in good food and hospitality.

In the last month the Local History members went on a visit to Killhope Wheel and lead mining museum in Upper Weardale. An introductory talk was given by one of the guides and was followed by a unique tour underground to explore the old workings. We 'plodged' through several inches of water!

The whole site is fascinating. A fine day was finished off by driving a few miles down the Dale to Ireshopeburn to visit to one of the earliest Methodist Chapels, founded in 1791. Next door the Manse has been converted into the Weardale Museum of household artefacts from the last century. Fascinating!

The ride over from Ponteland on the A68 is a scenic feast, enhanced in August when the heather on the moors turns purple.

The U3A walkers went to Simonburn near Wark for a leisurely three miles walk through patches of woodland and pastures with grazing sheep. Great views were admired between the chat that flows almost non-stop! St Mungo's church has a long history and a fascinating graveyard. A Georgian rectory and a converted tithe barn speak of earlier times.

Refreshments were taken at the Village Tea Rooms which under new ownership have had a pleasing and welcoming revamp.

The Lions Club combined the annual change of President with a fine lunch at the Duke of Wellington in Newton. Frank Harrington passed the Chain of Office to the new President, Geoff Lisle and wished him well. The Lions welcome men and women of all ages to help with their community activities and fund raising events.

These societies welcome new members. Meetings begin again in September and details can be found in Pont News.





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Darras Hall in Bloom GARDEN COMPETITION

Ponteland has secured the coveted gold award in the 'small towns' category in Northumbria in Bloom each year since 2012 and the Town Council has 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. Ponteland is also entered 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.

As Darras Hall is traditionally referred to as The Garden City of the North, and to demonstrate our support for Northumbria in Bloom, **Darras Hall Estate Committee** have joined forces with **Dobbies** to organise our own Darras Hall in Bloom Competition.

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CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES – Friday 18 August 2017

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Neighbourhood Plan ready for referendum vote

Residents could soon be voting on whether to support the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan following its approval by an independent examiner.

The plan, a culmination of over four years' work from a steering group working on behalf of the Town Council, was subject to some modifications to its 32 planning policies recommended by the examiner which have all been accepted.

It was presented with the independent examiner's report to the Town Council on July 12th and the Town Council has notified Northumberland County Council of its support. NCC will now decide if the plan can proceed to referendum.

Over the past four years, residents have helped the neighbourhood planning process by supporting

consultations and events giving us their views and comments. Now we have a community led framework containing vision, aims and planning policies for improving the area.

Like a local election, voting cards will be sent out for the referendum stating where your polling station is, and details on what you are voting for will be available via Pont News.

A successful referendum will help the Neighbourhood Plan forming part of the Local Development Plan. This statutory status gives neighbourhood planning far more weight than some other local planning documents.

Pont High head and staff chosen to support struggling schools



The headteacher and staff at Ponteland High School have been selected for top roles supporting schools in challenging circumstances and training new teachers.

Kieran McGrane, pictured, is one of more than 75 headteachers to be appointed to the role of national leader of education in the latest recruitment round.

National leaders of education along with staff in their school – appointed as national support schools – use their knowledge and experience to provide additional leadership capability in other schools in need of support.

The type of support provided is flexible and tailored to meet the needs of each individual school. National leaders of education also have responsibility for developing the next generation of NLEs and national support schools.

Mr McGrane said: "Being designated as a National Support School is testament to the quality of our staff and recognises the strengths we have developed over the last few years. We are committed to ensuring our students receive the best possible educational experience and are keen to support other schools where we can."

The National College for Teaching and Leadership, an executive agency of the Department for Education, has responsibility for the appointment of NLEs and the quality of the NLE programme. There are now over 1,250 NLEs across England.



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