

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



£46m school and leisure scheme
delayed by a year

.....
Date set for public inquiry into
400-home development

.....
Tributes paid to well-loved teacher

.....
**Showers fail to
dampen spirits
at park party**

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Garden centre celebrates 40 years with site acquisition

A flourishing garden centre has secured its long-term future and safeguarded up to 50 jobs after acquiring its Woolsington site.

And it is a double celebration for award-winning Cowell's Garden Centre with the news it has purchased its site from the landowner coinciding with its 40th anniversary.

The family firm, which was established in 1978 by Alan and Mavis Cowell, had been left facing an uncertain future with the end of the business' current tenure drawing closer and the landlord pursuing plans to develop the site for residential housing.

The search to secure a new home for the business, which is now run by co-directors Martin Cowell and Jane Keating, Alan and Mavis' children,

alongside financial controller Darren Woodmass began in 2012.

With the family still struggling to find a suitable location by late 2017, legal advisor Gordon Brown recommended they put in an offer to the landlord to purchase the site – an offer which was accepted, with the deal completing in May.

Martin said: "Following a long period of uncertainty for the business, we can now call Woolsington our permanent home.

"We are delighted to have been able to safeguard the future of the business and our employees' livelihoods as we celebrate four great decades, and we look ahead to the next 40 years, and beyond.

"Securing the site forms a key part of our strategic growth plan which will allow the business to thrive, as we further expand

our range of plants and nursery products over the next three to five years, whilst creating new jobs."

The successful family business, which produces over 60,000 plants per year, has bloomed from its humble beginnings of selling plants and fertilizer in a Kenton Bank Foot post office to being housed in the nine-acre Woolsington site, with three generations of the Cowell family helping the business to grow.

Its hanging baskets have won gold medals at events such as the Chelsea Flower Show and the business has been awarded the prestigious Garden Centre of the Year Award by the Garden Centre Association as well as the Ruxley Rose Award for best plant area.

Gordon Brown from Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP with Cowell's Garden Centre's Darren Woodmass, Jane Keating, Mavis Cowell, Martin Cowell and Alan Cowell.



£46m schools and leisure scheme opening set back a year as project retendered

The opening of the £46m schools and leisure complex for Ponteland has been delayed by a year after the main contractor was told the whole scheme was being retendered.

Northumberland County Council has announced is going out to tender again “for commercial reasons” but did not give a further explanation.

Willmott Dixon had previously been identified as the preferred bidder for the project and over the last 18 months has been

working in a pre-construction phase with the council.

The three month tendering process means the new combined primary and high school will not now be ready for the new intake of Years 7 and 8 for the high school in September 2019 as part of the local education restructure to two tier.

The development will see the existing Ponteland leisure centre demolished and replaced with a much improved leisure centre and a state of the art secondary school and primary school. Other schools across the partnership will also benefit from significant investment in their buildings as part of the scheme.

It will consist of two brand new school buildings and a new leisure facility to include a swimming pool, fitness suite, badminton courts, outdoor sports fields, full size 3G pitch, library and a fire station, all based on the site of the existing leisure centre on Callerton Lane.

While the 12 week tendering process takes place the local authority says it will ensure preparatory work continues on site. Tree pruning and service investigations have already been carried out and applications are currently with Natural England for a licence to begin to trap newts. They need to be caught and re-homed in a nearby habitat before building work can start, because newts are protected under Natural England guidelines.

In addition, a planning application for temporary classrooms has been submitted to ensure sufficient accommodation for the extra secondary pupils in September 2019. The new development is now scheduled for completion by September 2020 – a year later than originally planned.

A spokesperson for Northumberland County Council said: “Completing this scheme quickly and to the highest standards are an absolute priority. Despite working closely with local and national partners, and regular contact with Government, the delay during the referral of the planning decision did have an impact on timescales. We highlighted this at that time, and made an application for temporary accommodation accordingly.

“Through this re-tendering we will guarantee the best value for money for our residents and communities, allow further time for environmental preparations on the site, and meet the shortest possible timescales. We are doing everything we can to minimise impact on students.”

A visual of the new combined schools and leisure complex.

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Helping
HANDS





Phoebe Todryk, aged 10 from Chapel Park, handles a snake.

Showers fail to dampen spirits at Party in the Park

A few showers failed to dampen the spirits as hundreds of families gathered to enjoy an afternoon of entertainment in Ponteland Park.

The crowds were entertained by Ponteland Community Band, the Jill Errington Dancing Group and Richard Coates Middle School Orchestra and Choir at this year's Party in the Park, which was opened by MP Guy Opperman.

Other attractions included a fun fair, pony rides, Punch & Judy, a climbing wall, archery and a bouncy castle, alongside food and refreshments and various stalls promoting local organisations, charities and small businesses.

An estimated 2,000 people attended the event, which was organised by the Christian Churches together in Ponteland - St Mary's, St Mathew's Catholic Church, Ponteland Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

Barry Shaw from the organising committee said: "We would like to thank Newcastle Airport and Ponteland Town Council, along with all the other businesses, for their support as well as Richard Coates School, Ponteland Community Band and all other helpers along with the community for turning up and making the day a success."

Photos by Barry Pells.

Cover shot: Poppy McConville, aged four from West Denton, enjoys a pony ride.



Anna Reay, aged four from Darras Hall, enjoys a bounce.





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Planning meeting postponed as MPs join calls for inquiry into handling of 2,000-home scheme

A planning meeting to discuss the controversial 2,000-home Dissington Garden Village scheme has been postponed as MPs joined calls for an inquiry into Northumberland County Council's handling of the planning application and Local Plan.

The latest twist in the war of words has seen the Chairman of the Labour Party, Wansbeck MP Ian Lavery, write to Secretary of State James Brokenshire MP over issues which he said might affect a ministerial decision on whether to "intervene" in the council over its strategic planning.

This followed an Early Day Motion registered in the House of Commons by Blyth Labour MP Ronnie Campbell and party colleague Dennis Skinner MP on behalf of Lugano Developments.

The motion supports calls for a full independent investigation into "serious allegations made by Lugano group in relation to bullying, intimidation and corruption at Northumberland County Council connected to the removal of the county's emerging core strategy".

In May NCC advised Newcastle-based Lugano that their plans for Dissington Garden Village, which had been

supported under the previous Labour-led administration and were awaiting submission to the National Planning Casework Unit for a call-in decision, were being referred back to the council's Strategic Planning Committee on June 19th.

The move follows a major change of direction by the council on green belt development since the Conservatives took control last year. A new emerging Local Plan has removed proposals in the previous Core Strategy to enable housing development on more than 400 hectares of green belt land (see page 17).

The new Local Plan proposes nearly 7,000 less homes to be built over the next two decades across the county, which the council says means green belt development is not needed.

Lugano has issued a formal complaint against senior politicians and officers in two lengthy letters to the head of legal services which have been made public.

Allegations, which the council has strenuously denied, included claims pressure had been put on senior planning officials within the authority to scrap the Core Strategy (the long term strategic planning blueprint for the county) and reverse the Dissington Garden Village decision.

Lugano alleges it has secured evidence including documentation obtained via a

Freedom of Information request that there was an attempt to "unlawfully influence the statutory planning process" with cajoling, bullying and threats towards a senior officer who has since left the authority.

The firm said they had written to the Secretary of State asking him to intervene and were reporting the matter to the Crown Prosecution Service.

But the authority has refuted the claims, saying that "the process which it is following is lawful and reasonable" and that legal advice is being taken about the "very serious" allegations.

Meanwhile Council Leader Peter Jackson has claimed Lugano is simply "trying to subvert the normal planning process".

A council spokesperson said: "We have been committed all along to determine this matter in accordance with planning legislation. Following recent correspondence with the applicant we proposed a special meeting of the strategic planning committee to consider progress of outstanding matters.

"However following further representations the applicant has requested that the meeting is postponed to allow them more time and that we have agreed to arrange a new date in due course."

War of words: a visual of the Garden Village at the centre of the dispute

Tributes paid to inspirational teacher

Tributes have been paid to a well-loved Ponteland First School teacher hailed as an inspiration by her pupils and colleagues.

Former Head of Early Years Sue Phipps died on June 6th following a long illness. She had taught at the Ponteland school for 14 years, retiring in 2016.

Colleagues paid tribute to Sue, who led the Early Years provision at Ponteland First School from 2002 to 2016 teaching in both nursery and reception classes.

Head Teacher Lynn Blain said: "Sue was an inspiration to everyone who met her, from children to parents and certainly to staff. Teaching was her passion and she was brilliant at it. Many of our children have been lucky enough to have been taught by her and have been given a great start to their education.

"Although Sue retired in 2016 her approach to inspirational teaching in early years continues and is reflected in our practice today. She has left a lasting legacy in our school and amongst our current and former staff which we are extremely proud of.

"Put quite simply, Sue Phipps was the teaching profession at its very best and I feel very fortunate to have worked with her over many years."

Prior to teaching in Ponteland, Sue taught for many years in Gateshead and while working there full time, she also achieved a Masters in Early Years Education.

She was extremely highly regarded in Northumberland and shared her excellent practice with many teachers across the county who visited her classroom as part of their professional development.

Deputy Head Teacher Claire Johnson added: "Mrs Phipps was a passionate and dedicated teacher who truly made a difference in the lives of those she taught. She loved the children and went above and beyond in her role to help them learn and to foster in them a love of school. She worked tirelessly to support children to achieve their potential and as a result she was a much loved teacher and colleague who will never be forgotten."

Inspirational teacher: Sue Phipps



Litter pick volunteers sought



Litter pick volunteers are being sought as Ponteland prepares for two days of judging for Northumbria In Bloom and Britain In Bloom.

Northumbria in Bloom judges will be visiting on Wednesday July 18th and Britain in Bloom judges on Friday August 3rd.

In preparation for the VIP visits two litter picks will be held - one on Saturday July 14th from 10am until 12noon - meeting at the Memorial Hall. A further litter pick will be held two weeks later on Saturday July 28th - again from 10am until 12noon - meeting at the Memorial Hall.

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



A suggestion of a one way system for Darras Hall in this month's letters...

Could a one way system for Darras Hall be the answer to traffic issues?

The Government has undertaken to review the practice of parking on pavements outside central London.

May I suggest that the appropriate bodies in Ponteland and Northumberland make themselves ready to respond to the Government's report by reviewing traffic management in our area?

In particular, would a one-way system on Middle Drive and Darras Road, with parking allowed on only one side of those roads, result in less risk to pedestrians, less traffic pollution and less frustration?

Peter Watson
Meadowvale, Ponteland

New housing development name reminiscent of former library

Perhaps the new luxury apartment scheme in Ponteland is being named 'Hemingway Court' after the American novelist and short story writer Ernest Hemingway?

This might help us to remember that we used to have a library. 'There is no friend as loyal as a book' was one of his famous quotations.

Ben Prior
Eastern Way, Darras Hall

August issue deadlines: Delivery of the August issue will start on Monday July 30th and be completed by Friday August 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday July 16th. If you are aware of any missed properties please contact the editor at pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk or call (0191) 5191306. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the August 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...

Music in the Park

Sunday July 1st from 2pm to 5pm at Ponteland Park. Free musical entertainment from Rendezvous Jazz Band, North Tyneside Steel Band, Ponteland Community Band, The Ringtones and Pete Brown.

Ponteland Leisure Learning – U3A

Our speaker at 2pm on Wednesday July 4th in St Mary's Church Hall is Roger Jermy and his topic is 'Forestry in WW1 and WW2'. On Wednesday August 8th Ann Wilson talks on 'The 19th Century on the Farne Islands'. Visitors always welcome, no charge. Visit u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or call (01661) 824953.

Ponteland Methodist Church BBQ

A BBQ is being held in the church garden on Sunday July 8th from 12noon. The £5 per person entrance fee includes a burger or sausage sandwich and a drink. Under fives free. Raffle, children's games, ices and stalls. Contact Ann Cooper for tickets on (01661) 824347.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Barry Mead will talk on 'Archaeological Digs I Have Been On' on Monday July 9th at 2.30pm in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall.

Ponteland WI

Our meeting this month in the lounge of the Memorial Hall will be presented by Blood Bikes at 7pm on Tuesday July 10th. Visitors are welcome.

Ponteland Village WI

Ponteland Village WI is a busy group with a wide variety of activities. In the summer members are off to the Theatre Royal to see Calendar Girls: The Musical. Our July meeting will be held at Kwikfit, learning about car maintenance. There will be no August meeting, but we'll be back on Tuesday September 11th, when we'll be hearing a talk on the history of handbags. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month (except August) at 7.30pm in St Marys Church Hall, Ponteland. Find us on Facebook: "Ponteland Village W.I."

Ponteland Lions Club

Our next business meeting will be on Wednesday July 11th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall. Visitors are welcome. Our

social meeting will be on Wednesday July 25th. The monthly charity fund bookstall will be at Waitrose on Saturday July 28th from 9am to 4pm where we collect spectacles and small hand tools for recycling to the third world. Contact us on 0845 833 9913.

Ponteland Community Partnership

Come to observe 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 July 18th. Web: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Embroiderers Guild Ponteland Branch

On Monday July 23rd from 2pm to 4pm at the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, we have a talk by Pat Ashton-Smith. All welcome. Contact Secretary Penny Ford at penelopeford636@btinternet.com or on (01670) 788278.

Dishforth Military Wives Choir concert

Dishforth Military Wives Choir is returning to the Memorial Hall for a concert recalling our brave men, so many of whom perished in the terrible carnage of WWI. The Choir has also produced a CD – 'Remember'. The concert is at 7.30pm on Saturday September 29th. Tickets costing £10 will be on sale at Geoff Steven & Son Opticians, Main Street, Ponteland and online through Eventbrite. Proceeds to The Royal Society for Blind Children.

Ponteland Ramblers

The Ponteland group of the Ramblers Association organises group walks in Northumberland and North Durham on alternate Sundays and two Wednesdays a month. Sunday walks are between seven and nine miles and always involve a stop for a picnic lunch. Wednesday walks are usually five to seven miles and sometimes offer the option of a pub lunch after the walk. For more information visit ramblers.org.uk/ponteland or contact Steve Edwards on (01661) 886310.

Ponteland Village Bridge Club

We would like to welcome you to join us at our friendly club for Duplicate Bridge. During the evening we play about 20 boards and can organise a

partner if you need one. Every Friday at 7pm at Merton Hall. Contact Pete Ford on peteford24@hotmail.com or on 07739 208308.

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.

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 in Ponteland Leisure Centre on the first Monday of each month from 10.30am-12noon. Membership is free. Contact Michelle Watson at mwatson@activenorthumberland.org.uk or (01670) 622562.

Ponteland writers

A friendly group with mixed writing ability and experience. We meet every Wednesday at Post Box coffee shop from 7pm to 9pm. New members welcome.

Ponteland Methodist Church Carpet Bowls Club

This friendly club meets on Mondays from 1.30pm to 3.30pm and Fridays from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. Experience not necessary. For further info contact Barbara on (01661) 824652.

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.

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.



Falklands veteran takes on gruelling charity challenge

A Falklands veteran has given himself a mountain to climb – literally – with a mammoth charity challenge.

John Mew, 60, from Dinnington, is taking part in the gruelling 24km Fan Dance Race in the Brecon Beacons where participants run over the Pen Y Fen, the highest mountain, not just once but twice – and with a full 25lb pack on their backs!

He is looking to raise at least £3,500 for the Armed Forces charity SSAFA and also Forward Assist, the specialist veteran's charity based in Dudley, Northumberland.

John, who was on board HMS Coventry in 1982 when it was hit by three Argentine bombs and sunk within 20 minutes with the loss of 20 crew members and nearly 30 injured, has suffered from anxiety and depression and was only recently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

His training includes a least one fully-loaded run a week up and around the Cheviots. He also been helped by the Newcastle Falcons Community Foundation and has regularly run and up down the main West Stand at the Kingston Park to build up his fitness.

John said: "I was on the bridge of HMS Coventry when we were hit by three 1,000lb bombs and the ship went down in just 20 minutes. I ran for the life rafts and the next thing I knew was waking up with a whisky in the Ward Room of HMS Broadsword which was alongside.

"It is all a blur but I do get flashbacks and still do not like to be in confined spaces where there are loud noises. I have suffered from anxiety and depression ever since but have received tremendous support from such charities as Forward Assist and have also undergone intensive rehabilitation in Scotland.

"The world of rugby has come together to help. The Newcastle Falcons Foundation has been a tremendous support and friends at Ponteland Rugby Club also asked me to join the back room staff for the 1st XV and this has given me something to focus on.

"Taking on this challenge has also given me a target and a focus and the chance to give back to what so many people have given to me. I was a broken man but I am now on the road to recovery and I am getting there.

"The one thing I have learned about mental illness is you have to talk about and open up. I do a lot of talks in a bid to help others who may be in a similar position to myself. It is good to know there is help out there."

John served in the Royal Navy for 12 years as a physical training instructor, ship's diver and as a member of the Portsmouth Command Field Gun Crew.

To donate and support John in his phenomenal challenge, which takes place on Saturday July 7, visit uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JohnMew

John trains for the Fan Dance Race.

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COMMEMORATION OF END OF WORLD WAR 1

The Clerk and Councillor Overbury submitted a report regarding progress to date and actions requiring the agreement of the Council. Discussions have been ongoing with Reverend Allinson in relation to events taking place to mark the commemoration. The three primary and middle schools had received letters regarding a poster competition and production of banners for a special church service on Friday November 9th. They had also been involved in planting out barrels with wildflower and poppy seed mix near to St Mary's Church and at Broadway. Some pupils had also assisted with planting out the wildflower beds in Merton Way and at Broadway. Large poppies have been acquired to hang on lampposts in the Main Street area during November. Five Perspex 'there but not there' silhouettes have been ordered, with one being given to each church in the parish. A commemorative bench had been offered to Ponteland from a fundraiser working with the North East War Memorials project. The Council agreed that this should be located near the entrance to the Memorial Hall, subject to agreement by the Hall Trustees, and a short dedication service would be held when it was installed. A suggestion had been made to have small wooden crosses which would be planted in the St Mary's Garden of Remembrance on Friday 9th November by schoolchildren attending the service. There will be one for each individual listed on the War Memorial and they will also be placed in the garden area of the War Memorial in time for the service on the 11th November. The Clerk was asked to pursue the possibility of grants towards the cost of providing a light projection show on the evening of November 11th when the beacon was being lit. The Council will be writing out to the various care homes in Ponteland asking if they were holding any commemorative events. A small grant would be provided by the Town Council to pay for entertainment if required. The Council also agreed to sponsor two commemorative kneelers for St Mary's Church at a cost of £135.

GRANTS: ST MARY'S CHURCH

The Council agreed to a £1,000 pledge following a grant application from St Mary's Church for funds towards the first phase of improvement works including new toilet and kitchen facilities that would have access for the disabled. The total cost of the first phase is £15,000.

ANNUAL AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2017-18

The Town Council considered documentation relating to the year-end audit for 2017-18. The information was approved and it was noted that the Annual Governance and Accountability was being published on the website on June 15th.

NEWCASTLE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT MASTERPLAN 2035

Consultation on the Airport Masterplan commenced on May 10th until September 13th. The Town Council agreed

to form a small Working Party specifically to review the Masterplan, formulate a response and report back to the Council in advance of the deadline. Councillors were reminded that there was a public consultation event being held on Wednesday July 4th at Ponteland Leisure Centre from 3pm to 7pm.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Council approved a recommendation from the Working Party which had met on May 11th to install 14 new street name signs in various locations. This was part of an ongoing programme to replace street name signs in and around Ponteland. It is hoped that the improvement scheme for the car park at Merton Way will proceed as planned and a recommendation from the Highways Working Party to formally request disc parking for this car park has been withdrawn for the time being.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed two recommendations put forward by the Working Party, which had met on 21 May 2018. The first was to proceed with bank erosion works in the park at an area just before the Millennium Bridge in the copse area. They agreed to accept a quote from the Tyne Rivers Trust who would carry out the work in consultation with the Environment Agency. The second was not to proceed with the installation of a path from the Scout Hut to the second timber footbridge in the park. Members felt that the path is unnecessary and it is hoped that available funds could be used to carry out maintenance on some of the existing footpaths in the park.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Dodd reported that he hoped works to the car park at the back of Merton Way would proceed as planned later this year. He reported on discussions that were taking place between NCC and the NHS regarding funding for hospitals in various locations abroad and in the UK. He stated that potholes were being dealt with as quickly as possible and additional funds had been allocated to this task.

MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor thanked everyone who had been involved in the organisation for Party in the Park, which had been a great success.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on June 13th.



Girls win national cup final

A Ponteland girls' football team has won a national cup final at Coventry City's Ricoh Arena, coming top of 6,000 teams.

The players from Ponteland Academy faced some of the most talented primary school footballers in the country in the ESFA Danone Nations Cup National Finals.

They won three matches in a round robin against the other regional winners before a nailbiting semi-final was settled on penalties with the winning spot kick by Katie Bullock. The girls then went on to beat Gerrard's Cross School 1-0 in the final.

The competition is the world's biggest football tournament for 10-12 year olds, and gave 32 primary school teams a taste of a 'professional football' experience playing at the former Premier League side's stadium.

Ponteland Academy had to progress through a demanding qualifying process with 6,000 other teams, with district rounds, county rounds and regional finals to qualify for the national finals.

The girls now have the opportunity to participate in the 2019 Danone World Cup hosted in Barcelona.

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Green belt housing plans scrapped

Plans for green belt housing development in Ponteland have been removed from a long term planning blueprint for Northumberland.

A six week consultation launches for the county's new Local Plan on Wednesday July 4th which has slashed the target for new homes over the next two decades by over a quarter from the Core Strategy it replaces.

By cutting the number of houses to be built by 2036 from 24,320 to 17,700 the county council says it no longer needs to release 411 hectares of green belt land as previously proposed.

The number of new homes allocated for Ponteland Parish, including Medburn, is 530. Of these, 28 were built in 2016-17 and 275 are still to be built at the former police HQ.

The former Labour-led council also 'minded to approve' the 2000-home Dissington Garden Village and the 400-home scheme at Clickemin Farm. The garden village is due to be redetermined by the authority (see page 8) and the Banks scheme has been called in by the Secretary of State. So no other sites are being allocated for housing in the parish.

The move fulfils a key pledge by the incoming Conservative administration which took over at County Hall last year, having campaigned at the local elections against green belt development.

The plan includes policies and proposals aimed at creating up to 15,000 new jobs in the county by 2036. It sets out strategic planning policies and planning principles for the whole county, the general scale and distribution of new development, and the detail of where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located.

Northumberland was one of 15 councils named and shamed by former Communities Secretary Sajid Javid last year as having failed to get local plans in place despite repeated deadlines and threatened with external intervention.

However, in March, the county council avoided further action from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, but was told by Javid to clarify and accelerate



its plan-making timetable. The authority hopes to resubmit the plan for examination in May 2019.

The draft plan says that "it is not considered that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the alteration of green belt boundaries for residential development. Therefore, while the plan aims to direct most housing to the larger settlements, and villages with a number of key services, this is done so without delivering housing in the green belt".

However, it adds that "in order to support economic growth, it is proposed that limited changes in past green belt boundaries are required in a number of locations", which include Ponteland.

Coun Peter Jackson, leader of Northumberland County Council (pictured), said: "We want a local development plan that is truly fit to address our future housing and economic needs, whilst respecting and protecting our beautiful county.

"We've used a number of measures to accelerate production - which will lead to the shorter timescale overall and the final plan being in place by March 2020."

A drop-in event is being held at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Wednesday July 25th from 2pm to 7pm as part of the Local Plan consultation. More details can be found at northumberland.gov.uk/localplan

Badminton team wins bronze at national finals

Ponteland Academy Under 14s badminton mixed team has won bronze at the National Badminton England finals.

The team recently won the local Walbottle/Northumberland League to qualify for the finals, which were held at Milton Keynes.

In the group stage they won 5-0, 4-1 and then lost 3-2 to Chew Valley from Avon, the silver medal winners. In the third/fourth play off the Academy defeated Kesteven Superzone from Lincs 3-2.

In the finals the team of Jamie Grant, Daniel Burn, Ollie Edmondson, Hugh Twelves, Lucy Dodd and Eve Beechinor-Collins won bronze medals.

All the players live locally and train with coach Phil Hall at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Several have represented the county and Lucy Dodd who is currently rated 8th in the country at under 12 won all her games of singles and doubles.

They all started playing badminton three or four years ago at school during pre or after school sessions, have put in a lot of hard work training and now it has paid off.





Brownies raise over £500 for animal shelter

Brownies have raised more than £500 for Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter by completing a sponsored walk around the Ponteland Middle School school field.

The girls presented their cheque for £508.50 at a visit to the shelter where as well as dogs, cats and kittens, they saw horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, pigs, and hens.

The 2nd Ponteland Brownies meet each Monday at 6pm at the High School and the 4th Ponteland Brownies meets at 5.45pm on a Thursday at PCMS. We would be very glad of some more adult volunteers.



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More than 100 sign up for new sprint triathlon

More than 100 entrants have signed up for a new sprint triathlon event being held in July in Ponteland in support of the Sally Allan Fund.

Ponteland Triathlon Club is hosting its first 'Sprint-Tri Ponteland' event on Sunday July 1st, with a 400m pool swim, 20km local bike ride and 5km village run.

With over 110 athletes taking part, together with marshals and supporters, it's expected up to 400 people will attend the Event Hub at Ponteland Leisure Centre, boosting the local economy.

The Sprint-Tri, which it is hoped will become a regular feature in the North East regional triathlon calendar, is the brainchild of club secretary and keen triathlete Sue Heppell and is being supported by Waitrose and local restaurant Rialtos.

Dancers win medals at World Irish Dancing Championships

Ponteland performers returned from the 2018 World Irish Dancing Championships in Glasgow with a clutch of world medals.

The championships took place in Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall, with more than 14,500 dancers and supporters attending.

Solo performers Emily Green, Thomas Boden, Jess Healy,

Lucia Capocci and Lexie Russell all won medals, alongside the Minor Girls Team with dancers Lucia Capocci, Emily Green, Daisy Shevill, Erin Gallagher, Lexie Russell, Niamh Goodacre, Ciara Ho and Poppy Old.

All are members of the Mason-Cummins Academy of Irish Dancing in Ponteland, which holds classes at Darras Hall Primary School every Monday and Wednesday evening. For more information visit masoncumminsacademy.com





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Date set for public inquiry into Clickemin housing plans

A date has been set for a public inquiry into controversial plans for a 400-home development on green belt land at West Clickemin Farm in Ponteland.

There will be an eight day hearing starting on January 29th 2019 at a local venue to be confirmed, presided over by Planning Inspector Martin Whitehead.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had announced the scheme would be determined by the Secretary of State in a letter to developer Banks Property and other interested parties in mid-April.

The public inquiry should be similar in format to the one held over the Birney Hill housing scheme which was rejected in 2015.

Northumberland County Council's Strategic Planning Committee said it was 'minded to approve' the planning application in March last year but it had to be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit due to the size of the scheme and its location on green belt land.

However, given the major shift in policy on green belt development since the election of the new Conservative administration last May, the county council may no longer support the scheme when it comes to the public inquiry itself.

The 21-hectare site is located to the west of the A696 at Cheviot View and north of the B6545 Rotary Way. Banks Property said it would include 50 two-bedroom properties, 232 threebed, 86 four-bed and 32 five-bed, with 15% expected to match the 'affordable housing' criterion.

The application said approximately 60 dwellings would be built per year from 2018/19 to 2023/24 and 40 in 2024/25.

Stressing support of the county council's planning officers and planning committee members for the scheme, Justin Hancock, principal development planner at Banks Property, said: "The decision to hold a public inquiry will unnecessarily delay both the building of much-needed new homes and the delivery of the substantial community benefits associated with the scheme.

"The West Clickemin Farm site has long been recognised as being appropriate for development of the type we are proposing...and we continue to believe that this project should be allowed to move forward as planned."

Lesley Noble, from Ponteland Green Belt Group, had reacted positively to the call-in announcement, saying: "We feel that this is a positive decision. We will continue to work with the Ponteland groups to ensure that we are fully represented at the inquiry."

A visual of the proposed housing development.



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By PC Ingrid Clayton,
Neighbourhood Officer
for Ponteland and the
surrounding area

Increased reports of 'fishy' door to door salesmen

Over the last month we have had an increase of reporting of door to door sellers, and specifically fish sellers.

The reports have included residents paying excessive prices for fish that do not meet trading standards.

From a police perspective the concern is high pressure sales of fish to vulnerable persons. It is often overpriced, misdescribed and in excessive quantities. This is often linked to crimes of fraud by deception and the possible link to activities associated with distraction burglary, targeting vulnerable elderly residents.

If you do decide to purchase from a fish seller, as there are genuine sellers who maintain high standards, please take note of the following.

Pre-packed fish must include on the label: name of the fish; any treatment (eg frozen/filleted); use by date (this must not be exceeded even if frozen); any additives (eg smoked or treated); weight in kg or gm; storage conditions (minimum is 'keep refrigerated'); price (must include cost per kilo, weight, package price).

If any of the above items are missing refer it to the Environmental Health Service at Northumberland County Council on 0345 600 6400.

Such sellers are required to obtain 'consent to trade' from Public Protection Licensing before selling door to door. They should have this permit in their possession at all times when selling in Northumberland.

For the latest reported crime figures right down to street level please visit northumbria.police.uk/crime_mapping

If you have any concerns or you want to report a crime please call 101 or in an emergency 999. You can also contact independent victim referral service Victims First Northumbria by calling 0800 011 3116 (Mon – Fri 8am–7pm and Sat 9am–4pm) or email me direct at ingrid.clayton.109@northumbria.pnn.police.uk.

Mayor joins students at awards ceremony

It was an occasion for celebration as the Mayor of Ponteland Coun Alan Varley joined students and their families at the annual Kumon awards ceremony at Ponteland Memorial Hall.

More than 125 students received awards, many for studying and mastering work in advance of their school age. With parents and grandparents there to celebrate with them, it was a truly inspirational and motivational event.

With a quiz for the guests, Student of the Year Awards, Parents Awards and Programme Completion Awards it was a packed and happy morning for the children and a proud one for the parents.

The event was hosted by Liz Burrin (pictured), who has been the local Kumon maths and English instructor for 13 years, who said was delighted to welcome so many smiling and excited faces on stage to receive their awards from the Mayor, who summarised the occasion as 'a great community event'.

For more information on Kumon, please call Liz Burrin on 07765 051136.



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