

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Investigation into
suspicious Broadway blaze

Family marks Charlie's first
anniversary

Kirkley housing plans
deferred

End of the road for Garden Village dream?

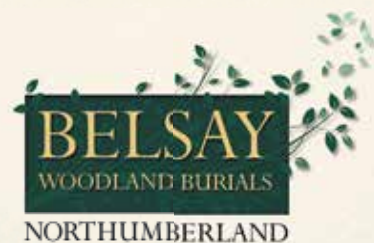
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Produced by Cian creative pr



River race rowers beat the elements and the opposition

Rowers from Ponteland High School beat the elements and the opposition in a river race on the Wear in Durham City.

The girls were participating in Durham Amateur Rowing Club's Small Boats Head, one of the most popular head races in the north of England.

The course, which regularly attracts around 400 entries, covers an 1,800m stretch of the River Wear and requires a competent cox to navigate through the arches of the Elvet Bridge.

The girls were rowing in conditions more suited to the Baltic region or the Arctic Circle but, despite the freezing temperatures on

Saturday February 2nd, Anna Styles and her partner won the WJ16 Division 4.

Amelia McKenna and Elizabeth Quigley also performed excellently, coming a close 2nd, while Eloise Wood put in a great effort rowing in a quad that she hadn't been in before to help out a poorly crew mate.

Head of PE Allan Atkinson said: "All of the girls continue to excel in their chosen sport and we are very proud of their achievements."

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Boost for safety campaign as family mark anniversary of tragic canal death

The family of a Ponteland teenager who died after falling into a Manchester canal have received a boost for their safety campaign as they mark the first anniversary of his death.

Charlie Pope, 19, was found in the city's Rochdale Canal on March 2nd last year, having gone missing in the early hours of the previous day after leaving the Zombie Shack bar.

His tragic death once again thrust canal safety into the spotlight - the University of Manchester student was one of 76 people to have died in the city's canals and waterways since 2007, with a further 35 people rescued from them in the past five years.

The inquest held in December at Manchester Coroner's Court was told CCTV captured Charlie walking on to the canal towpath near Rain Bar, heading in the direction of his student halls in Fallowfield, in the early hours after a night out with friends. Coroner Nigel Meadows recorded a verdict of accidental death.

The teenager's father Nick has been campaigning over the past year for safety barriers to be installed around the canal's banks. The high profile crusade won the support of Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham and a change.org petition has amassed nearly 100,000 signatures.

And, as the family prepare for the first anniversary of Charlie's death, they have been given a much needed boost after plans for fencing at the stretch of canal where Charlie died were submitted to Manchester City Council. The Canal and River Trust has applied for listed building consent to put up the barrier near Lock 89.

Nick said: "The Manchester Water Safety Partnership commissioned RoSPA to do a survey of the entire inner city canal network and to recommend safety improvements, which they did.

"The MWSP have agreed to implement all recommendations in full, which is wonderful news and will undoubtedly save lives in the future. It is a great outcome – probably better than we could have hoped for and is a real tribute to everyone who got behind the campaign and who we would really like to send our



Daisy, Andriá, Joe, Nick and Charlie Pope.

thanks and gratitude to.

"We are delighted with the decision to put barriers up around Charlie's lock and they are going to put a memorial up to Charlie as well, which will be very touching. Also, hopefully, it will be a reminder to people to take care.



"To mark Charlie's anniversary, we are asking people to do a random act of kindness in his name. We are publicising it on Twitter and Facebook."

The 'Good Deed Day' message can be shared via:
twitter.com/AndriaCP11/status/1087657703844052993?s=09



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Garden village plans withdrawn amid legal battle

Plans for a 2,000-home development on the outskirts of Ponteland have been withdrawn amid a bitter legal battle between the developer and local authority.

Lugano Dissington Estate Limited pulled its planning application for the Dissington Garden Village scheme, which had been due to go back to Northumberland County Council's Strategic Planning Committee in February.

The authority's previous minority Labour-led administration had signalled support for the scheme, entering into a Planning Performance agreement with Lugano in April 2016 after the Government invited expressions of interest (EOIs) for garden villages. The EOI was submitted by NCC in July 2016.

A hybrid planning application was then submitted to NCC in December 2016 for a 2,000-home garden village, which the authority's Strategic Planning Committee said it was 'minded to approve' in March 2017. The following month the Homes and Communities Agency granted £75,000 to NCC to support the development of the project, although the scheme had not been included in a list of 14 garden villages given formal Government backing, announced in January 2017.

But following the election of a new Conservative-led minority administration in 2017 which had the protection of green belt as a key campaign pledge, the long term planning strategy for the county - the Core Strategy - was withdrawn.

The replacement Draft Local Plan removed its proposals to delete more than 400 hectares of green belt land including on Dissington Estate, paving the way for new housing development.

NCC said the policy change, which proposed 7,000 fewer new homes across the county over the next two decades, necessitated redetermination of the planning application.

Lugano Dissington Estate Limited had purchased the 2,537-acre estate, which has 19 residential properties and six farm steadings, for £18m in 2007 and borrowed £25m in 2016 to discharge debt on the purchase and fund ongoing work promoting the scheme.

Last August the firm served a High Court writ against both the authority and its Leader Coun Peter Jackson, Chief Executive Daljit Lally and the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Resilience Councillor John Riddle, claiming nearly £10m in damages.

The firm alleges that delays to the planning process caused by "outrageous and arbitrary conduct

amounting to misfeasance in public office" by all three have led to serious financial loss and damage.

The writ claims the credit agreements were entered into with the expectation outline planning permission would be granted by October or November 2017. It states that the estimated value of the estate on receipt of outline planning permission or the adoption of the Core Strategy would have been £190m.

The county council has consistently denied the allegations of misconduct, describing them as "inappropriate, untrue and defamatory" and saying senior officers and politicians were "appalled" and "astounded" they were made public.

The authority has taken legal advice and has indemnified all three named from the legal action, with an initial £10,000 indemnity for each and further indemnities in tranches of £15,000 for each for the purposes of obtaining independent legal advice and representation, to be funded from general contingencies.

Last September Dissington Estate tenants received a letter saying fixed charge receivers had been appointed for Lugano Dissington Estate Ltd and all rent payments were now to be made to the receivers.

The appointment was made by Topland

Jupiter Ltd, the company which Lugano Dissington Estate Ltd entered into a credit agreement with in 2016. Lugano Developments Ltd said the letter related to a loan arrangement between Lugano and its lenders, adding that discussions were ongoing relating to the longer-term re-financing of the estate.

In a statement, Lugano Developments Ltd said: "The planning application for Dissington Garden Village has been withdrawn. In a letter to the Council the company's professional advisors express serious concern over the Council's apparent reversal of position over the past months, despite the positive conclusions and recommendation reached on essentially the same evidence by Northumberland County Council planning officers previously.

"They note that County Council has refused to meet or engage in any meaningful way, since the Conservative administration took control and can only conclude that this change of position is purely politically driven.

"The company has stated its intention to resubmit plans in the future, but for now will concentrate on ongoing litigation against the Council, its Leader, Chief Executive and Cabinet Member for Planning.

"The decision to withdraw was not taken

lightly, but the company expressed that it could no longer tolerate continued attempts to harm its business, reputation and this highly-regarded project.

"Indeed, the company further noted that as a result of continuous erroneous and misleading statements being made by various members of the administration, it had submitted formal complaints to the Council's Standards Board noting numerous breaches of the Code of Conduct.

"...The green belt has been preserved in the face of rapacious and unjustified development."

Coun Peter Jackson

"Lugano remains focused on delivering an exemplar Garden Village scheme that will showcase the development of garden communities nationally as well as providing much-needed affordable homes and driving innovation, economic growth and the creation of high-quality jobs in the North East."

Leader Coun Peter Jackson added: "This statement has to be the most humiliating admission of defeat by Lugano. Despite all of the bullying

tactics and threats and all of the money thrown at this huge development, which would have had such a negative impact upon our community in Ponteland, they have finally come to the conclusion that their planning case is so weak that it has little chance of progressing through an impartial and fair planning process.

"This Dissington scheme was always a brazen attempt to build on hundreds of acres of valued green belt, changing our countryside for ever. It never did meet all of the criteria to qualify as a garden village proposal. Their crude attempts to bully both Council members and officers, who have been doing their proper jobs, has failed dramatically. Lugano's claims through the Council's Standards procedure have been found to be lacking in substance and proper evidence and have been ruled out. It is highly likely that their court action will fail as it will be fought robustly and with confidence.

"This has been a long saga which has concerned many in the local community. They will be delighted that the planning system in Northumberland has been shown to be both robust and fair, not bending to the demands of the large developers, treating all applications according to clear criteria without fear or favour. The green belt has been preserved in the face of rapacious and unjustified development."



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Suspected arson attack delays Darras Hall restaurant launch

The launch of a new restaurant in Darras Hall has been delayed by several months after a blaze believed to have been started deliberately.

The fire caused tens of thousands of pounds worth of damage to an unoccupied two storey flat above the former Cafe Lowrey in Broadway, spreading to the commercial premises below which was being refitted.

Crews from Ponteland fire station and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service were called after neighbours reported the blaze at 8pm on Sunday February 10th.

The building, along with all the flats and commercial properties on Broadway, is owned by Newcastle property landlord Zara Commercial. Director Sunil Mehra said: "Based on the information we have, it's virtually certain this was arson.

"The fire appears to have started

upstairs resulting in an explosion before spreading downstairs. We're very grateful to the Fire Brigade who arrived and acted promptly to get the blaze under control quickly.

"The commercial unit downstairs was being fitted out as a new high quality Chinese restaurant. It's a massive shame but the damage can be fixed; we're just very fortunate that nobody was hurt. A structural engineer will conduct a survey to assess the integrity of the building before any work can be commenced but we aim to have the building fixed as soon as possible."

Witness Jamie Winks, a 30-year-old customer service advisor from Darras Hall, told the Evening Chronicle he saw a fireball burst out of the end flat and heard an explosion shortly after leaving the nearby Co-op shop.

He said: "I ran across to the two guys from the flat next door as they came out. I saw it was an actual explosion and a big ball of fire smashed all the windows. Luckily there was nobody in the flats."



A neighbouring flat appears to have been relatively unscathed, due to the hard work of firefighters to stop the flames from spreading. During the fire, crews who were searching the flat had to be evacuated due to an internal floor collapsing. However, nobody was injured.

A specialist aerial appliance was used by firefighters to douse the fire from above and bring it under control.

A spokesperson for Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service said: "The swift, professional actions of both fire and rescue services working together meant the fire was brought under control to minimise damage to surrounding properties."

An advertisement for Home Instead Senior Care. It features a photograph of a young woman with red hair, wearing a purple polo shirt, smiling and talking to an elderly woman with short grey hair, wearing a patterned cardigan over a pink top. They are in a kitchen, and the young woman is holding a green colander with vegetables. The Home Instead logo is in the top right, with the tagline "To us, it's personal." Below the logo is a CareQuality Commission badge that says "Inspected and rated Outstanding" with a star icon. At the bottom right, there is contact information for Guy or Carole Kirk.

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



In this month's letters a reader is stumped by the decision to fell a line of trees at the new schools/leisure scheme site...

Butchered trees a sad loss

The photograph that fronted the January issue of Pont News was symptomatic.

It showed the Leader of Northumberland County Council proudly promoting the start of the school/leisure development while in the background one could see

a row of trees that had been butchered prior to their final chop. The start of many.

This particular line of mature sycamores sat on a grassy bank and partly enclosed the cricket ground. As under this new development the cricket ground is to remain more or less where it is, there was absolutely no need to fell these splendid trees.

Here is a picture of those

same trees, taken a few summers ago. A sad loss.

On a more cheerful note I was delighted to see earlier this year that the Department for Environment has issued a consultation document under the heading: "Protecting and enhancing England's trees and woodland."

It includes a foreword by the Minister responsible which reads as follows:

"Trees are a critical component of the country's green infrastructure network and a precious asset which we must protect for future generations. In urban areas trees play a pivotal role in creating healthy and economically successful communities,

helping to clean and cool the air, reduce flooding and improve people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. We recognise that local communities often feel passionate about trees in their local area. While tree felling is an essential part of the cycle of tree management it can generate local concern, especially when there is a lack of clarity about why a tree is being felled."

David Rutley MP
Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State

I could not agree more. Sadly it comes a bit too late to save those sycamores.

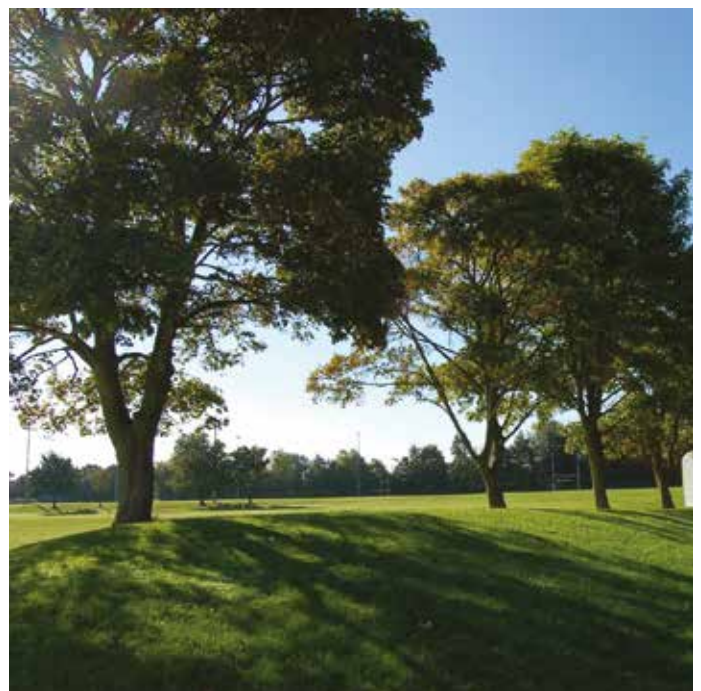
John Hague
High View, Darras Hall

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April issue deadlines: Delivery of the April issue will start on Thursday March 28th and be completed by Wednesday April 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Thursday March 14th. 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 April issue.

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

What's on...

World Day of Prayer Service

The World Day of Prayer Service is to be held in St Mary the Virgin Church, Ponteland, on Friday March 1st at 2.15pm. Everyone is most welcome and tea will be served in St Mary's Parish Centre afterwards. We look forward very much to seeing you there.

Ponteland Lions Club

We had to cancel the charity fund book stall on February 23rd and this will now be at Waitrose on Saturday March 2nd with another being held there on Saturday March 30th. We will also have a social meeting during the month. Visitors are welcome. Contact us on 0845 833 9913 or visit our website.

Ponteland Memorial Hall fundraising event

We are holding a fundraising evening on Monday March 4th at Fratellis. Price for a 3 course meal is £20 and tickets are available from the secretary's office – email info@pontelandmemorialhall.com or tel (01661) 822603.

Ponteland Leisure Learning (U3A)

At our meeting at 2pm on Wednesday March 5th at St Mary's Parish Hall, Peter Stemmer will talk on 'The Town Crier of Darlington'. On Wednesday April 3rd Brian Ridgley will talk on 'Bees' Lives and their contribution to ours'. Visitors always welcome - no charge. Visit u3asites.org.uk/953 or call (01661) 824953.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

On Tuesday March 5th Janet Simkin will give a talk on Northumbrian Whin Grassland at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. On Tuesday April 2nd Kelly Hollings is giving a talk about 'Ratty Returns', re-introducing water voles to Kielder. Admission £2 including refreshments. Open to all.

Kirkley WI

Our guest speakers at our meeting at 7pm on Wednesday March 6th at Kirkley Hall will be 'The Tyne Valley Rug Makers'. Members have been invited to enter handmade mats into a competition. Guests and visitors always welcome. Check out our website for more information at kirkleywi.wordpress.com

Railway and Archive Films

Railway and Archive Films will be shown on Saturday March 9th at 3pm and 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. Admission free.

Darras Hall WI

At our meeting at 2pm on Monday March 11th in Merton Hall, Sandra Dickinson will be welcoming the lighter days with a flower arranging demonstration entitled 'Spring Flowers'. The competition is 'A Floral Scarf'. Visitors pay £1 to include tea and biscuits.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Michael Porteous will speak on 'Arthur' on Monday March 11th at 2.30pm in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall. On Wednesday March 13th we have our Annual Dinner and Ladies Night. Visit: pontelandsgc.co.uk

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

At our meeting at 7.30pm on Monday March 11th at Ponteland Social Club (CIU), Merton Way, eminent alpine plantsman Ian Christie, who runs a successful nursery in Kirriemuir, Scotland, will be sharing with us his great knowledge of this fauna. Charge to visitors £2. Contact: neegroup@agsgroups.org or visit alpinegardensociety.net/groups/North-East-England or facebook.com/groups/AGSNEE.

Ponteland WI

Our speaker in the lounge of the Memorial Hall at 7pm on Tuesday March 12th is Geoff Hughes, who will be giving a talk and slide show on 'Strange and ghostly happenings in Northumberland'. All very mysterious! Visitors welcome.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

Our demonstrator at our meeting at 2pm on Wednesday March 13th in the lounge at Ponteland Memorial Hall will be Heather Curry from Gosforth and her theme will be 'Basket Case'. There will also be a produce stall this month. Visitors (£7) are always welcome.

Ponteland Village WI

Our meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday March 19th at St. Mary's Parish Centre will include a talk on mindfulness. Our friendly group also has dining out, walking, book and theatre/film groups, so come along and give us a try. Find us on Facebook: Ponteland Village WI.

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. Our next meeting at the Memorial Hall is at 7pm on Wednesday March 20th (enter via back door). Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Ponteland Local History Society

Janet Brown will talk about 'The North East War Memorial Project' at 7.30pm on Thursday March 21st at St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. On April 18th Duncan Hutt will speak on 'Wind and Water Mills in North East England'. Visitors welcome: £2. Find us on Facebook.

Ponteland Embroiderers' Guild

At our meeting at 2pm on Monday March 25th at the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, we have a mini workshop - small flower scene (kit available on day) by Kate Slaughter. All welcome, cost £4. Contact: Secretary Penny Ford at penelopeford636@btinternet.com or (01670) 788278

Ponteland Civic Society

We hold our AGM at 7.30pm on Monday March 25th at Ponteland CIU Club, Merton Way, followed by a lecture by Les Brunton entitled 'Beamish Tramway – its history and development'. Visitors are most welcome, for whom there is a nominal charge of £2.

Alpine Garden Society and Scottish Rock Garden Club

On Saturday March 30th our Spring Show will be held at Hexham Mart, Tyne Green, Hexham, NE46 3SG. There will be a wide variety of plants on show, from alpinists to woodland plants and bulbs and dwarf shrubs in flower, as well as rare plant nurseries from around the country. The show opens at 11am until 3.30pm. Plant sales from 11am. Admission is £3 payable on the door. Children and Members free.

Ponteland Beer Festival

From Friday to Sunday April 26th to 28th at Ponteland Leisure Centre Rugby Pitch. Choose from over 150 beers, lagers and ciders, plus prosecco and wine bar and soft drinks and gin bar. Four food suppliers. Live music and rugby entertainment throughout the weekend. Children's funfair on Sunday. Visit pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk and see ad on p7.

Royal Northern Sinfonia: Gran Partita

A concert at St Mary the Virgin, Ponteland, on Saturday May 11th at 7.30pm. Mozart's much-loved Gran Partita and pieces by Debussy, Strauss, and more. Standard tickets £15, Under 18s £5 available at sagegateshead.com/event/rns-spring-chamber-tour or via the ticket office on (0191) 443 4661.

Cash boost for Memorial Hall appeal

By Robin Ramsay MBE

A fundraising appeal for Ponteland Memorial Hall received a huge boost during an event to celebrate village halls.

The venue, which opened in 1922, has been awarded £20,000 for the upgrading of fire safety measures from the National Lottery Community Fund.

The grant is part of a £420,000 payout to Community Action Northumberland for its Northumberland Village Halls project, funding vital improvement and refurbishment works.

The news was announced



during CAN's Village Halls Week celebration, which saw events held at community venues across Northumberland as part of a nationwide awareness campaign.

They included a 'Know

your Hall' open day at the Memorial Hall featuring the people and organisations who use the facility, ranging from ballet classes, language classes, floral art groups, embroiderers, knitters and yoga to judo sessions.

There were displays from many of the hall's users and the History Society put on a slide show showing records and events in its early days. A further event was held at Stanington the following day.

Spaces are still available for a Memorial Hall fundraising dinner at Fratelli restaurant on Monday March 4th. Tickets costing £20 are available from the hall office or via the website: pontelandmemorialhall.com/fundraising-dinner

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Book chronicles school's tricentenary

By Muriel Sobo

The first Coates School still stands, much altered, on the roundabout and is still used as the office of an estate agent.

In 1719 Richard Coates died, having left his estate for the establishment of a charity school in Ponteland in his will.

A Newcastle man, he died at Horton Grange where his wife's family lived. He had made money working on the River Tyne and by the time of his death he owned at least a dozen properties near St John's Church in Newcastle.

His wife had the task of creating this school using the rents from the properties. The school was free, the children were clothed and the master was paid. This first Coates School, much altered, still occupies the site on the side of the roundabout in Ponteland.

The Coates School of today on Thornhill Road is the third build. The second build was in front of St Mary's Church, which is all well grassed today and is the village green.



Former pupils and teaching staff have contributed to the story and there are many illustrations in my commemorative book, which costs £5 and can be purchased from Coates School or the Town Council offices. You can also

get a copy direct from me by ringing (01661) 871969.

All monies from the sale of books will go to the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association for the benefit of pupils.

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The
Cotswood

Latest news from Ponteland Town Council

Decision due on planning application for new fire station

An update on the ongoing work at the school and leisure complex was given by County Councillor Richard Dodd, who reported that the planning application for the new fire station would be considered by the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council meeting in March and that the piling works for the school and leisure development would be starting soon.

New litter bin to be installed

A litter bin is to be installed at the seat opposite Clickemin on Cheviot View, subject to the County Council's agreement to empty it. The decision by the Town Council followed a recommendation by the Environment Working Party which had met on January 21st.

Tree survey

A survey of trees on all Town Council owned land outside Ponteland Park is to be carried out. A quotation for a further survey within the park has also been sought. The decision to carry out the work follows recent advice from the Northumberland Association of Local Councils.


Northumberland Local Plan – Publication Draft

Town Councillors agreed to attend a public consultation event to discuss the Northumberland Local Plan – Publication Draft with County Council planning officials. The long term planning and development blueprint for the county is out for consultation until March 13th, including the drop-in event held on Tuesday February 26th at Ponteland Memorial Hall. The Town Council had considered the Northumberland Design Guide and the Highways & Transportation Design & Delivery Guidance - two Scoping Documents which are also part of the consultation process. Town Councillors agreed to raise any issues they had at the drop-in event and comments were also sent to the Clerk to ensure a response was made in advance of the deadline date.

Grant application – Ponteland Community Partnership

A grant of £650 towards running costs was approved by the Council following an application by Ponteland Community Partnership.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on February 15th.



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Jog down to Ponteland Runners taster evening

By Abby Dorani

Ponteland Runners is inviting local runners and wannabe runners to don their trainers and jog along to their annual taster evening next month.

The running club, which launched in 2005, has since expanded to include a triathlon club and has seen its membership grow to nearly 200 members.

Sessions are held on Mondays and Wednesdays at 7pm, as well as long runs on Sunday mornings. There are a number of differently paced groups, making the sessions accessible to runners of all abilities, the only requirement being that you can run three miles comfortably.

A beginners' course based on the couch to 5km programme starts on Wednesday April 24th - ideal for anyone looking to start running from scratch or returning from running after a hiatus.

The open evening starts at 7pm on Wednesday April 3rd and is open to total beginners and current runners. It is a free session and involves no commitment to join the club.

Runners meet in the Leisure Centre car park, where sessions for a range of paces will be led by the club's qualified volunteer run leaders and coaches, with a walk/run option available for novices.

Find out more at facebook.com/PontelandRunners or contact Abby Dorani at chairman@pontelandrunners.org.uk with any queries.

Third lifesaving device installed by Lions

By Andy Anderson, Ponteland Lions

A Ponteland charity has installed a potentially lifesaving device at the Memorial Hall.

The defibrillator fitted to the outside wall of the venue is the third device installed by Ponteland Lions, with the others at Merton Way and the Methodist Church. There are plans for a fourth at Broadway, Darras Hall.

Funding was provided by Co-op Food and Ponteland Town Council and installation by the Memorial Hall. Thanks to all those who have made it possible from Ponteland Lions Club.





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Flooding concerns delay Kirkley housing scheme decision

Plans for a small housing development in Kirkley have been delayed following concerns about unresolved flooding issues.

Applicant Stan Dawson is seeking outline permission for up to nine homes on around one-third of the Kirkley Sawmill plot, near Kirkley Hall, as he is retiring and intends to close the business.

Planning officers had recommended approval, subject to outstanding matters relating to surface water being resolved, but members of Castle Morpeth Local Area Council decided to defer the decision by six weeks.

A site visit will be carried out before the application is brought back to committee.

The meeting, on February 11th, heard that the Cadger Burn runs alongside the site but that the houses could be built

outside of the flood plain.

Ponteland Town Council objected to the plans on the grounds Kirkley is a small settlement located within an open countryside location without any services, only a limited bus service and poor paths for cyclists and pedestrians.

It argued the development would have a detrimental impact on the area's rural and undeveloped character, and said careful assessment and consideration must be taken to ensure the scheme did not adversely impact flood levels for neighbouring properties.

However, the applicant's agent, Chris Megson, from ELG Planning, said that they had 'worked closely with officers to develop a quality scheme' which

'fully addresses the opportunities and constraints presented'. He added that the housing proposals, if approved, would represent 'a far more sensitive and appropriate use in the green belt'.

Planning officer Geoff Horsman said questions around the sustainability of the location had to be balanced against its status as a brownfield site coupled with the fact that the site benefits from planning permission for unrestricted industrial use with no planning conditions limiting hours of operation, for example.

Councillors said they wanted to take a look themselves as well as receive confirmation that the flooding issues had been addressed before giving the go-ahead.

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Take the first steps to a healthier lifestyle

People looking to take the first steps towards a healthier lifestyle are being signposted to Ponteland's old railway track.

For the latest stage in the revamp of the bridleway has seen the installation of five way markers setting out the distance by steps between each.

The wildlife corridor has been refurbished over the past two years by volunteers, Northumberland County Council and land owners to encourage its recreational use.

The waymarkers have been installed by Ponteland Community Partnership, supported by the Community Foundation and Northumberland County Council's 'Ageing Well Strategy', in a project aimed to help residents improve their general health or as an aid in a health recovery programme.

The way markers are positioned at each pedestal from Callerton Lane to the Airport, advising the number of steps in both directions still to be walked. The perch bench allows walkers to catch their breath, if needed, and take in the scenery before moving on.

The initiative is the latest of a number of projects by Ponteland Community Partnership to encourage greater community participation in activities and improve the quality of life for those who live and work in Ponteland.

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