

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Councillor quits after chief executive suspended

Duck race and flower show get the 'virtual' go-ahead

Entrepreneur proves first-class by snapping up Post Office

Flood defences boost as £450,000 project gets underway

Belsay Woodland Burials Now Available



FOR A COMPLETE FUNERAL & MEMORIAL SERVICE

- Funeral arrangements for cremation or burial - Religious or Humanist from £2650 inclusive
- 'Pre-need' funeral and memorial plans from £2899
- Advice on grave purchase - traditional or woodland
- Memorials in stone, marble, slate and granite - traditional or bespoke from £390 inclusive
- Memorial renovation, additional inscriptions etc.
- Statuary, vases, plaques and 'tomblets' - the remarkable miniature home memorial
- Memorial stone valuation/insurance
- Sympathy and funeral floral tributes

Office, Showroom and Chapels of Rest at:
15 West Road, Ponteland Tel: 01661 822015
450 West Road, Newcastle Tel: 0191 274 2471

24HR ENQUIRY LINE
(0191) 252 8222

GreenThumb
LAWN TREATMENT SERVICE

Want the best lawn ever?

SAVE UP TO
25%

All you have to do is sign up to our
Enhanced or Complete programmes
Find out more and visit greenthumb.co.uk

Prices from
£15*
per treatment



Who are GreenThumb:

As pioneers in British lawn care, we are the UK's largest and most recommended provider with millions of treatments taking place across the UK every year. With over 30 years of experience, you can rely on us to provide your lawn with the **very best care**

What we do:

Our lawn care experts apply bespoke, seasonal treatments to keep your lawn continually nourished and weed free. Whatever the size or condition, we ensure that every lawn receives the **love and attention it deserves**

Find out more and visit greenthumb.co.uk/treatments

For a **FREE** lawn analysis call 0191 4886202 or email newcastle@greenthumb.co.uk

*Based on a lawn size up to 40m²

greenthumb.co.uk



Thinking of retiring? Unsure of your options?

**Speak to
a pensions
expert**



independent
financial
advisers

For your free initial consultation
give us a call on **(01661) 821110** or
email us at **enquiries@cfs-ifa.co.uk**

Office 2a, Horton Park, Berwick Hill Road, Seaton Burn,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 6BU

Serving the Ponteland community since 1996.

**Kip
McGrath™**
EDUCATIONCENTRES

**ONLINE
TUTORING
NOW AVAILABLE**

Primary - Secondary • Qualified Teachers • Personalised Learning

✓English ✓Maths ✓Reading ✓Spelling ✓Comprehension

Book a **free** online assessment today

Kip McGrath - Newburn and Westerhope

Tel: 0191 4355 274

kipmcgrath.co.uk/newburn-and-westerhope

Pont News & Views is published by Ponteland Town Council in conjunction with Ponteland Community Partnership. Inclusion of articles and advertising in Pont News & Views does not imply Ponteland Town Council's or Ponteland Community Partnership's endorsement, agreement or approval of any opinions, statements or information provided. If you would like to submit an article, feature or advertise contact: T. (0191) 5191306 E. pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk Westray, 16 Sunnyside Lane, Cleadon Village, SR6 7XB.

Produced by Cian creative pr



Pub bosses toast of the town as outlet opens

The owners of Ponteland's newest watering hole have raised a glass to finally getting their dreams in motion – by opening after lockdown.

Mick and Angie Barnes, both 55, say they are thrilled to be pulling pints at The Pont Tap micro pub in West Road after a four-month enforced delay.

They had planned to open in late April, but had to delay until 2pm on Wednesday, August 5, before they could open their doors to their first thirsty punter.

And they insist it was all worth the wait, with customers flocking to try out their range of tasty ales and specialist lagers.

They say the only slight glitch has been the need to limit capacity from 35 to 23 until social distancing restrictions lift further.

Delighted Mick said: "It's fantastic to be open, we couldn't be happier, and the response to the business by the people of Ponteland has been great.

"We've been very busy since opening and our customers seem to be really enjoying the micro pub experience.

"We are having to limit numbers, but that has not in any way led to a change in the great atmosphere our drinkers are being part of.

"It was a huge relief to have finally been able to open, it has been everything we hoped it would be.

"I'd long dreamed of having my own business and it's wonderful to now be doing so. It's great to be in charge."

The couple, who have three children and are grandparents, invested £15,000 to transform a former interior design studio into The Pont Tap.

But they suffered disappointment when they could not open when originally planned due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Now, to ensure safety, customers, whether booking a table online or walking in off the street, must leave their contact details so to be traceable.

And hand sanitisers are also in abundance, including immediately inside the front door and in toilets.

Mick added: "We want to do things by the book and to be as safe as possible,

so all customers must leave their name and contact number.

"All have been very willing to comply and there have been no problems at all.

"Opening during the pandemic has not been a culture shock to us, we have experience in the industry and in a way have been thrown in at the deep end.

"If we can manage at a time like this, we certainly can when things get back to normal.

"I hope that is soon, because it would be so nice if people could mingle at the bar and experience the enjoyment of a micro pub in its entirety."

The Pont Tap is open from 4pm to 10.30pm, Monday to Thursday, 2pm to 11pm on Friday and Saturday, and 1pm to 10pm on Sundays.



The all new The Pont Tap, and, top, Mick and Angie Barnes toast their micro pub's opening

Excellence* starts here.

*Rated Excellent by the Independent Schools Inspectorate

**Book your Virtual Open Day
at dameallans.co.uk**

Junior School and Nursery:
19th September

Boys' and Girls' Schools:
26th September

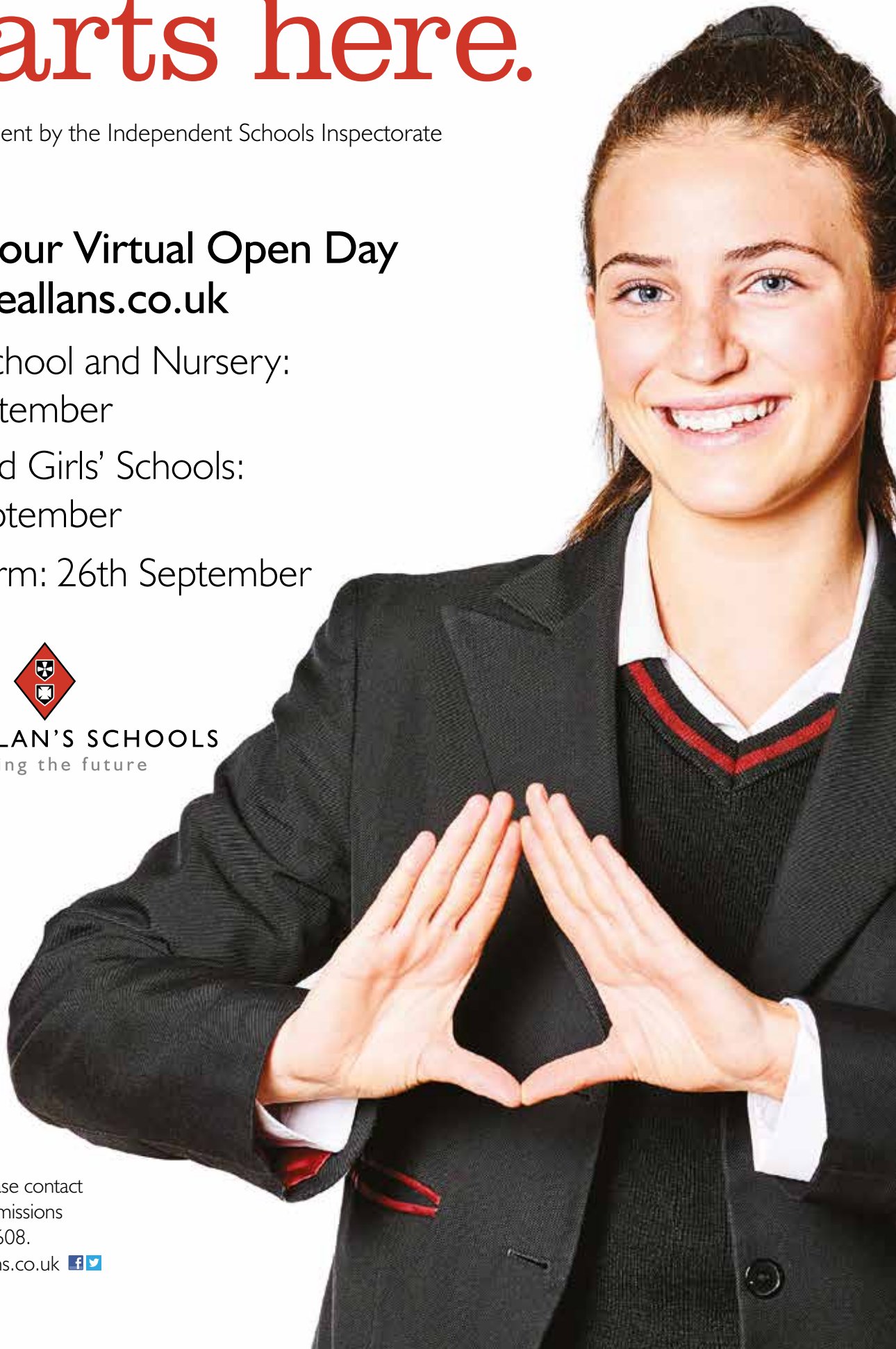
Sixth Form: 26th September



DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS
building the future

For any further
information please contact
the Head of Admissions
on 0191 275 0608.

www.dameallans.co.uk  



Head slams “poorly handled” exams process

The headteacher of Ponteland High School has slammed the exams fiasco which left dozens of local students fearing for their university places.

Kieran McGrane said the way the Government and Ofqual managed the end of year exam results process was “poorly handled” and added that the chaos which followed A-level results day “could and should have been avoided”.

After the embarrassing u-turn by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, reverting from the algorithm which wrongly penalised so many to the Centre Assessment Grades teachers led, Ponteland High’s GCSE results showed an impressive improvement over last year.

The proportion of students achieving Grade 5 or better in English and Maths increased from 54% to 60% and the proportion of students achieving Grade 4 or better in English and Maths increased from 72% to 81%.

The overall picture this year for A-levels is in line with previous years, with 25% of all grades awarded A*-A or equivalent; 50% A*-B and 70% A*-C.

Mr McGrane said: “This exam results season has been unlike any other in my 30 years’ experience as a teacher and headteacher.

“But I am very pleased that the results for our Y11 cohort have been awarded based on their Centre Assessment Grades and not through the blunt tool of Ofqual’s statistical standardisation model and algorithm that created so much anger and frustration when used to set A-level grades last week.

“This whole episode has been poorly handled and it is now obvious that those in charge were all too aware of the large scale downgrading that the statistical standardisation model had arrived at.

“Schools with very small 6th form numbers benefited as their Centre Assessment Grades were accepted without question, whereas schools with larger 6th form cohorts such as



Ponteland High School
headteacher Kieran McGrane

ours were penalised as CAGs were completely ignored in favour of using the rank order combined with an algorithm.

“This same algorithm did not account for individual prior attainment, which meant that it was a blunt tool. As a result of these decisions a number of our students experienced a very disappointing day; first with their results and secondly with failing to secure their firm university choices. All of this could and should have been avoided.

“We know that our Year 11 cohort has been a brilliant year group and we have been predicting for some time that they would achieve better results than any previous year group. If applied, the algorithm would have limited their successes due to the historical performance of previous year groups whereas the CAGs have enabled us to reflect the potential and high expectations we have always had for this cohort.

“We also want to pay tribute to our wonderful Year 13 cohort whose last year with us has been so blighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted

in school closures since mid-March and the cancellation of public exams. This was not the way we would have wished them to finish their five years with us.

“They have been fantastic ambassadors during their time with us and have added greatly to our school community and culture. They have been excellent role models for our younger students, particularly this year when we welcomed Year 7 and Year 8 into our school.

“We know that this year group was set to have a brilliant year and predicted to achieve better than any previous cohort; it is so disappointing that they were not able to do just that by sitting their exams and proving this beyond any doubt.

“My remaining concern relates to the fact that the problem has now shifted, without much notice, to universities as many students will now wish to revisit their initial firm offers but their courses may be full. I hope that the universities can provide additional capacity for this year to honour as many offers as possible; we need to see deferral for a year as an option but not the default position.”

Rural crime patrols net poachers

By PC Phil Oliver, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer

The East Tynedale Neighbourhood Policing Team has teamed up with Rural Crime Volunteers and the Environment Agency to disrupt rural crime through Operation Poacher and Operation Checkpoint.



In recent weeks, these two operations, which target crimes such as thefts, poaching and other wildlife matters, have led to vehicle stops - and several suspects dealt with for poaching and fishing offences.

This work with partner agencies will continue so that all forms of rural crime can be tackled and communities safeguarded.

Suspects are legal fish sellers

Residents' concerns that dog thieves are leaving a chalk trail to mark out possible targets in Ponteland have proved unfounded.

We acted on several reports that van-driving suspects had been seen leaving the tell-tale signs outside properties, with a view to stealing beloved pooches.

The policing team located this vehicle and found the occupants were fish sellers who regular work in the neighbourhood and were acting in accordance with the law, and there were no concerns regarding their behaviour.

We are aware of messages on social media purporting to be

describing the 'criminals code' of paint or chalk markings left outside properties, identifying future potential targets, known informally as 'The Da Pinchi Code'.

However, there is no evidence to link these symbols to anything other than innocent and easily explainable activities, usually ground works markings used by gas, electricity, water, cable and telecoms contractors.

Whilst there is anecdotal evidence that thefts of pets have risen nationwide during lockdown, there is no specific issue identified in Ponteland or across the Northumbria force area.

Residents are asked to remain vigilant and to keep their pets secure, both at home and when out and about.

Harassing letters

The policing team has been alerted to a Cheviot View resident being subjected to harassing and abusive letters in recent weeks, concerning their works vehicle.

We have been in attendance and confirmed there are no issues with this resident's motor.

I ask that the person responsible for this misinformation ceases their activity and, if they have genuine concerns regarding this vehicle which have not been allayed by the police, raises the issue with Environmental Health at Northumberland County Council.

We are treating this matter as harassment and any further such correspondence will lead to police action against the individual responsible.

Police and public partnership

Police, support agencies and the public have worked in tandem to make a success of a community engagement event in Ponteland.

Officers from the East Tynedale Neighbourhood Policing Team partnered with staff from Northumberland County Council at the event in Merton Way.

Contact the team

At present, the public enquiry desk at the team's base within the Spetchells Centre in Front Street, Prudhoe, is closed.

The nearest open enquiry desks are at Hexham and Bedlington police stations.

However, residents should not hesitate to contact the team in relation to any community issues via northernprudhoeenptmailbox@northumbria.pnn.police.uk.

For any other issues, they can report incidents or provide information via the force website northumbria.police.uk or call 999 or 101 as usual.

Information in relation to crime can also be reported, confidentially, to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via the Crimestoppers website.



24/7 service

Checked & Vetted
Trading Standards Approved

Established in 1976, NS Security Systems is a local, family run business which serves both domestic and commercial clients.

Installation, servicing, maintenance, repair and upgrade of alarm and CCTV systems.

W. nssecuritysystems.co.uk
E. enquiries@nssecuritysystems.co.uk
T. **01670 732 666 (24 hr)**

Installer of the only police approved hybrid alarm system - **Risco LightSYS 2**

Free car park proves just the ticket!

Council chiefs have invested £430,000 in a new free-to-stay car park project in Ponteland - just months after a nearby facility was forced to introduce charges.

An extra 54 spaces have been created at the Merton Road town centre site, taking its total to around 100.

Northumbria County Council claims the upgrade will boost Ponteland's retail sector and improve life for residents.

Completion comes just two months after bosses at Ponteland Memorial Hall, an independent self-financing trust, made parking payment obligatory.

Although precise figures are not available, they say it has resulted in driver numbers falling, even taking into account coronavirus lockdown.

However, they insist they do not begrudge the council investing in its own car park services in the town.

Memorial Hall chairman Robin Ramsay said: "It is an entirely separate thing. Car parking at the hall is intended mainly for our users.

"We have to finance the car park and last year it cost about £6,000 to fill in holes and patches.

"Current usage is quite low, lower than it would have been normally, though of course we didn't record numbers when parking was free.

"Obviously, people haven't wanted to pay for a facility that previously was free, but we need to pay for repairs."

The hall's car park had around 260 paying customers a week, with an extra 210 capitalising on its first 15 minutes free rule.

After that, the first hour is just 20p, rising to £1 for four hours.

The Merton Road car park includes an extra seven disability bays, and improvements have also been made to surrounding access roads.

Its layout has also been changed



to create easier access into the car park's recycling facilities, while nearby Meadowfield Road has been upgraded to improve access for delivery vehicles.

All that remains to be done over the coming months is some final tidying of footpaths around the car park and those within Meadowfield Road.

Coun Richard Dodd said: "I'm pleased this work is now almost complete and will benefit shoppers, traders and the local community.

"We've had positive feedback locally and it's good to see the expanded carpark area being well used."

Coun Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services, said: "Across the county our annual Local Transport Plan is making improvements to roads and footpaths.

"It's really positive to see schemes like this making a real difference to local communities."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Fees wipe out investment fund gains: the investment reality

By David Lamb, Lamb Financial

The investment industry is full of people promising above average returns to get you to buy their products, but half of them must be wrong.

It is very hard to beat the markets consistently and attempting this is not much different to betting. Who has a crystal ball?

Consider the following research. Professor David Blake from the Cass Business School in London found that very few funds beat the market over the longer term and those that did wiped out any advantage by charging higher fees.

Professor Eugene Farmer researched over 3,000 mutual funds in the US to find that, on average, the funds lagged the market by roughly the same amount as their fees.

Standard and Poor's Index verses Active regular reports show that actively managed funds around the world tend to underperform their benchmarks over short and long periods and that those funds that did outperform over some periods do not do so consistently.

If it is so difficult to beat the markets, why even try, especially when you are probably going to pay the investment industry a small fortune to fail?

Using cash flow modelling to support lifestyle financial planning, it is possible to calculate the amount of growth you need to achieve your desired standard of living (and if you are never going to run out of money, why take a risk to get more?)

When we understand the growth required, we can then consider the

asset allocation (which has been found to be the overwhelming driver of a portfolio's returns) and then build a portfolio of predominantly low-cost passive funds to achieve these objectives.

We can also project a capacity for loss scenario so you can understand the effects on your lifestyle if there was a stock market crash.

If you would like to read more about investing, based upon sound evidence, we have a very interesting document, written by the Evidenced Based Investor that we can email you.

If you would like a copy, please email us at laura.fairley@lambfinancial.co.uk or call us on (01661) 860438.

We will not contact you or keep your contact details.

GAROLLA
ROLLER SHUTTER DOORS

Great For:
 Space Saving
 Kerb Appeal
 Ease of Use
0800 468 1982

THERMALLY INSULATED ELECTRIC GARAGE DOORS

Garolla can save a lot of space inside your garage. Rolls up vertically into a box. Takes only 8 inches of headroom! Opens vertically so you can park up close to the door. Remotely open/close the garage even from inside your car.

Acoustic & Thermal Insulation
 Brush Sealed Rails
 Pay on Completion
 Two Remote Controls
 18 Colours Available

CE Approved

Free Disposal of Old Door!

LIMITED OFFER - was £1354
NOW ONLY £895 INC. VAT & FULL FITTING
 MADE TO MEASURE, CALL US NOW!

0191 394 0076 07537 149 128
 Phone Lines Open 7 Days a Week

- Offer valid for openings up to 2.6m wide & inc: 2 Remote Keys, 55mm White slats, Internal manual Override -

Save £459



Asad Ali, left, the new owner of the Ponteland Post Office branch, and Andrew Birnie, of Christie & Co

Business as usual after Post Office deal

In-store postal services in Ponteland have been secured and will remain first class - thanks to the forward thinking of a convenience store entrepreneur.

Experienced retailer Asad Ali has snapped up the Post Office's Merton Road outlet, which had a £70,000 asking price.

His new business, which was on sale through property adviser Christie & Co, comprises a post office, travel agency and a newsagent.

Asad, who has lots of experience operating one other post office and several convenience stores, plans to retain current staff.

Real estate bosses say it is no surprise Asad went ahead and secured the premises, confirming demand for business opportunities has soared rather than faltered during the coronavirus pandemic.

Of his new deal, Asad said: "I am very happy to have completed on this great Post Office.

"My plan is for all current staff to be retained and to improve on the business's retail offering, adding more variety to what is already available.

"We also look forward to booking holidays for our customers, as there are some great deals to be had this summer and next."

Andrew Birnie, director of retail at Christie & Co, said the sale was a "great example" of the retail sector continuing to successfully operate during the coronavirus crisis.

He added: "This deal was agreed pre Covid-19. We have been lucky in our specialist area of retail in that buyers have not pulled out.

"In fact, demand has increased dramatically due to these businesses remaining open throughout the pandemic and turnover has increased due to changing shopping habits."

fratelli
 RISTORANTE • BAR • CAFE

Open
FOR BOOKINGS AND
PRE-ORDERED TAKEAWAYS

MONDAY - SUNDAY
 01661 872195

Visit our website for more information
fratelliponteland.co.uk

Ponteland councillor quits as chief executive suspended

A Ponteland councillor has quit her senior post amid a top level rift at County Hall.

Veronica Jones has resigned as Northumberland County Council's portfolio holder for adult wellbeing and health, one of two shock departures.

She stood down along with fellow cabinet member and deputy leader Coun Wayne Daley, who was responsible for children's services.

Their exits come in a period of turmoil during which the council has suspended chief executive Daljit Lally OBE.

The authority said Mrs Lally, who has been chief executive since 2017 in a dual role which also sees her as Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's executive director of delivery, is "on a period of extended leave" but gave no further details.

Her suspension follows two emails she sent on Friday August 7th which Pont News & Views has obtained. The first was sent to Cabinet members and raised concerns about Active Northumberland, the council's development division, and alleged bias and potential conflict on the part of council leader Peter Jackson due to an alleged personal relationship.

The email, copied to deputy chief executive Kelly Angus, claimed Mrs Lally had no option but to follow advice and "put in place some referrals, investigations and measures to protect the council".

She wrote: "For some weeks and following advice from the monitoring offer I have discussed with the Leader the need to consider the issue of possible bias due to a possible conflicted personal relationship that he may have.

"I have also raised other issues of concern which remain un-responded to. I have notified significant concerns about Advance and a failure to act in the best interests of the council. My advice and that of my exec team has been ignored.

"I would also advise you that I will be contacting Northumbria Police in relation to some of (the) matters. Poor treatment of myself and exec staff team members has escalated probably due to some of these concerns and we are in the process of considering the action we need to take.



Council leader Peter Jackson

"I have no option but to advise you of these issues as the member for governance has not responded to me about meeting and as you as a cabinet are collectively responsible for strategic oversight and governance.

"I have suggested to exec team members/senior staff that for their own protection that the key actions from any discussions that you/they have are followed up in writing so there is no possibility of misinformation or miscommunication."

In a second email later the same day, sent to all councillors, she states: "I have significant whistle blowing concerns that I have raised and that I am further raising as I am concerned about some issues in relation to the operation of the Council.

"I have received some limited responses to my concerns but I remain very concerned about my welfare and that of my exec/senior team and council business."

Pont News understands that the breakdown in relations between Mrs Lally and Coun Jackson was linked to major policy differences, including the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and the reopening of council land and facilities. It is also understood that there have been complaints alleging bullying of Cabinet members by Mrs Lally.

The Ponteland South with Heddon ward councillor strenuously denied Mrs Lally's allegations, saying: "All such claims are completely without foundation or evidence."

A formal disciplinary process is now underway and, following national



Coun Veronica Jones

regulations, a committee of county councillors under an independent investigator has been established as a part of the disciplinary process. Kelly Angus has been appointed acting chief executive.

In a statement, Northumberland's Labour opposition group said: "Daljit is a well-respected officer, locally, regionally and nationally in local government and the NHS.

"We are saddened to see that, hours after raising concerns with all members about activity within the council and subsidiary companies, she is then put on leave.

"We have no faith in the political leadership of this council after carrying out this act of silencing and urge them to rethink this course of action in the interests of the Northumberland residents.

"In the middle of a global pandemic, Mrs Lally has been recognised and applauded locally, nationally and by all political parties for her handling. The last thing we need is a second wave and not having someone so experienced at the helm."

A Northumbria Police spokeswoman added: "On Friday, August 7, we received an email from an official at Northumberland County Council in regard to Advance. However, as we are yet to speak to the individual about their correspondence, we are unable to add anything further."

We have been unable to contact Coun Jones for comment.

Grant application

The town council agreed a grant of £3,000 to Ponteland Community Primary School, formerly Ponteland Community Middle School.

The funds will help with items to assist a larger project that involves the refurbishment of three classrooms and the improvement of community facilities at the site.

Councillors were impressed by the level of fundraising that had already taken place and wished the school well in its endeavours.

Projects report

Councillors agreed to proceed with works to strengthen the riverbank in Ponteland Park, which will be carried out by the Tyne Rivers Trust in September.

They were pleased to note work to clear some of the Oxbow lake would also be carried out the same month.

Annual Audit

The council considered documentation relating to the year-end audit for 2019-20. The information was approved, and it was noted the Annual Governance and Accountability Statement and Accounting Statement would be published on the council's website from August 13th.

The period for the exercise of public rights started on Monday, August 17th and ended on Monday, September 28th.

Information is on the council's website at ponteland-tc.gov.uk and on notice boards.

Remembrance Sunday 2020

A report, prepared by Coun Karen Overbury, was discussed. It related to possible options for Remembrance Sunday and how this could proceed in the current crisis, taking into account the potential for a second coronavirus wave in the winter.

Guidance was due to be produced by the Royal British Legion in early autumn, but there were concerns about the practicality of last-minute risk assessments and the ability to contact organisations and the public, especially as guidance could change quickly.

Four options were presented and after a long and detailed discussion it was felt sensible to cancel the parade and service in Ponteland for this year, due to insurance issues and the need to ensure public safety.

A wreath from Ponteland Town Council will be laid informally on the morning of November 8th and other organisations will be asked to lay their wreaths over the following week.

The council will arrange for a photograph to be taken of all wreaths at the end of the week commencing November 9th. Wreaths will also be laid on the Commonwealth War Graves in St Mary's Churchyard, as in previous years.

Northumberland County Council report

Coun Veronica Jones provided an update on the current Covid-19 situation. She reported that numbers of cases in Northumberland were comparatively low.

The county council has a Covid-19 protection plan in place that includes protection of high-risk areas such as schools, care homes, workplaces and prisons.

It is hoped there will be more input locally about where testing should take place to ensure the right areas can access the facility.

The county council has a full recovery plan in place which can be viewed at northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/Roadto-recovery.aspx

Meetings have been held remotely since lockdown, including Scrutiny and Strategic Planning meetings.

The council's intention is to get the Local Area Council meetings arranged, and to look at holding a full council meeting either remotely or with councillors present.

The Local Transport Plan is operational again and details of what has been agreed for Ponteland have been sent to the town council.

.....
This report is based on the minutes of the town council meeting on August 12th.
.....



Robson & Cowan



A Great Range Of Cutting Edge Products Available At Your Local Country Store



Scots Gap, Morpeth, NE61 4DT - 01670 774205
Robotic Mower, Garden Machinery & Chainsaw Specialists
www.robsonandcowan.co.uk



What's on...

Ponteland Local History Society

It is hoped members can be kept engaged with local history matters through Ponteland Historian, with the August edition now available. Ruth Baldasera will give a presentation on Zoom, entitled 'Parsons: Genius of Power; the untold story of the Parsons family', at 6.30pm on Thursday September 17th. Anyone who would like to hear the talk is invited to register their interest with Mike Brown at mike@brownzponteland.co.uk

Ponteland Senior Gentleman's Club

Club activities are suspended but may resume in October with a Zoom online meeting, with meetings at Ponteland Memorial Hall in November and December. The Monday programme offered is: October 12th at 2.30pm - A Zoom meeting for members; November 9th at 2.30pm - Annual General Meeting, with Speaker Prof John Derry, and; December 14th at 2.30pm - Social meeting with singing group Imagine Five and refreshments. Meetings will only be held if it is safe to do so.

Ponteland Rotary

Rotarians in Ponteland are holding their meetings online using Zoom technology. Incoming President John Muir said: "Club members have adapted very quickly and online meetings take place every two weeks on a Tuesday morning. It means we can keep the wheels of Rotary still turning and try to work around all the social distancing measures.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

The monthly talks at Kirkley Hall remain cancelled, but the safety situation is being reviewed and the resumption of scheduled speakers will happen when safe. Supporters will be informed via the press, website, posters and other means when the situation improves. Please look out for announcements.

St Mary's Church

Due to Covid-19, all regular services at St Mary's Church and Holy Saviour have ceased, but St Mary's Church is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, between 10am and 1pm, and from 1pm to 3pm on Sundays. All access to the building must be supervised. For national online Church of England services, streamed every Sunday, visit churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online.

Ponteland Area Action Group

It is with regret that the group has announced the cancellation of its Bible Society Autumn lunch in October, due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis. The group is also withdrawing from all future activities.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Ponteland Methodist Church is closed until further notice, but its YouTube services are available each week. Search YouTube for 'Newcastle West Methodist Circuit'. Services are usually available from Saturday night and can be viewed anytime. A monthly magazine, Cornerstone, is published on the church's website at ponteland-methodist-church.org.uk. For more information,

contact anncooperx@gmail.com or contact the Rev Jona Sewell on (01661) 822057.

Ponteland Village WI

The committee has been working via online meetings to draw up plans for the group to meet again, and members are being updated by email. A support network means members have been in touch and a monthly newsletter has been emailed to them. Some members are enjoying socially-distanced walks, the Cycling for Softies group has restarted and the book club is using Zoom for meetings. For updates and information, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or find it on Facebook - Ponteland Village WI.

Ponteland U3A

Due to the current Covid-19 situation, first Wednesday-of-the-month meetings at St Mary's Parish Centre are cancelled. However, thanks to Zoom, members can enjoy monthly talks, and it is hoped talks will take place at 2pm on the first Wednesday of each month. For more information visit u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or call (01661) 824953. Talks are available for members and non-members.

Ponteland Community Partnership

The partnership continues to work for the benefit of the community, but because of Covid-19 distancing restrictions, it is holding virtual meetings via Zoom. All residents are invited to view its activities on its website, where many facets of its work may be of interest. Comments and ideas are always welcomed. Visit pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Alpine Garden Society

The Autumn Alpine Show, a gardening competition popular with Ponteland residents and planned to take place at Hexham Mart on behalf of the Alpine Garden Society on Saturday, September 26, has been cancelled.

Looking after your legal needs for 40 years

At this difficult time for us all we wanted to offer reassurance that the team at Nicholson & Morgan have adapted our working methods to ensure we can continue to work for all our clients.

We are available to offer specialist advice on Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney, Residential and Commercial Property, and Contract Disputes throughout the current lockdown.

**N&M NICHOLSON
& MORGAN**
— S O L I C I T O R S —

You can contact us by email at law@nicholsonmorgan.co.uk or by calling **01661 871012** and for more information visit nicholsonmorgan.com

14 Bell Villas, Ponteland, Northumberland, NE20 9BE

Regional Building Northern Project / Community Update



Welcome to the project and community update

Over the past month, we have continued to make good progress with works on site. Output and resource levels have been maintained through this period and works are well advanced to all areas in preparation for the revised handover and completion of the building in early November 2020.

August has continued to see good progress to all areas – internal and external – with finishing works advancing throughout the site. Both Primary and Secondary School teaching wings are in their final stages of completion and close-out, along with the shared spaces to the Crescent. The public areas to the Crescent have progressed well, with the installation completed for the Clip 'n' Climb activity. September will see this area completed with the installation of the Soft play and all furnishings to the public spaces.

The Pool Hall continues to make good progress with the progression of the finishes, and preparation works for pool deck tiling to progress. High level finishing works are being progressed ahead of the install of the ceramic tiling to the main deck areas in early September. The installation of the pool liners are due to progress from mid-September and the height adjustable floor in the main pool installed towards the end of September, with commissioning to be completed by early October.

The external areas have made good progress through August, with hard landscaping finishes at an advanced stage around the schools and to the Crescent Avenue areas. We have also made good progress with the planned works to the southern car park and the new play park to the end of the public pedestrian bridgeway. We are targeting completion of these areas by the end of September.

Works are ongoing to the public pedestrian bridgeway, with the overbridge to the Primary School installed mid-August. Works are now progressing with the installation of the gabion baskets to clad the bridge piers, as well as the shaping and regrading of the path and landscape batters.

Works have progressed well for the formation of the new sports pitches with the good weather through August being a real benefit. The works for the playing surfaces to the 3G sports pitch and the MUGA's will progress through September and into early October, in order that they are complete for the opening of the campus later in the year.

Ponteland Schools & Leisure Development

Site Address:
Kier Construction
Callerton Lane
Ponteland
NE20 9EG

Site Contacts:
Roddy Graham
Project Leader
07849 098786



Andy Todhunter
Operations Lead
07773 243081



Kier Website:
www.kier.co.uk



What works will progress in the next 4 weeks?

- Complete snagging to the Primary School teaching wing.
- Complete snagging to the Secondary School teaching wing.
- Continue Live Testing and Commissioning to Primary and Secondary teaching wings.
- Complete internal finishes and snagging to Crescent areas
- Complete finishes works to the Pool Hall.
- Complete specialist Spa installation works.
- Progress snagging to the Pool Hall and specialist leisure facilities.
- Complete works to the Bridgeway.
- Complete construction of the South Car Park (northern section) and new Play Park.
- Continue construction of the external artificial and natural Sports Pitches.
- Continue to progress External Works and Soft Landscaping to all areas.



We value your feedback and comments or questions on this project, please email: ksne.ponteland@kier.co.uk



Feather and flower power help annual shows go ahead

Vegetables are going virtual and fruit will be framed in photographs - and ducks will flap differently - to ensure the success of two much-loved Ponteland events.

The Ponteland Parish Flower Show and the Ponteland Rotary Annual Duck Race are to be staged online due to coronavirus public gathering fears.

Flower show treasurer Victoria James is confident the 43rd annual event will blossom by technology.

She has helped compile a 'virtual' show where entrants can send images of their prized produce to a special email address.

The show's 100-plus classes also include bakery, handicrafts and woodwork.

From there, entries will be assessed by judges in the comfort of their homes.

Victoria said: "They will work remotely from home, studying the images submitted by entrants via their computers.

"The committee has been keen for the show to go ahead, albeit in a different format. We feel it is an important community event.

"It will serve as an historical record,

showing how the show was done this year, and the new format may even attract a slightly different type of entrant."

Duck race organisers have also refused to pull the plug on the much-loved river-based competition, also moving it online – but concede it will be much changed.

Instead of the buzz of spectators and competitors at the River Pont, there will be online footage of ducks racing on Sunday, October 4.

Residents can enter the races for free by signing up for tickets online, with a random draw generator picking the winners.

There is also a 'Design & Build a Boat' competition for primary schoolchildren - and a virtual 'Spot the Duck' challenge is planned.

Rotary club president John Muir said: "We cannot run the usual public event this year, as we cannot put the public at risk.

"However, we know how popular the

Duck Race event is, so we are working on plans to stage some virtual duck races.

"We are working on producing some footage so that children can go online and see the ducks racing."

The flower show's 'live' class list is at pontelandflowershow.co.uk, as is the email entry address.

The deadline for entries is Saturday, September 5, and results are expected by the end of the month.

Funds raised from the duck race will go to the Dragonfly Cancer Trust, which supports palliative cancer patients, aged under 25.

Householders are being offered free entry via duckrace@outlook.com.

All will get five numbers - one for each race - and there will be cash prizes, decided using a random number generator.

Information and rules are at rotaryponteland.org.uk.

Never forgotten, but virus causes war event cancellation

Plans for Ponteland's annual Remembrance Day parade have been beaten into a retreat – by the global coronavirus pandemic.

Organisers have admitted defeat in their efforts to stage the event, which usually attracts hundreds of well-wishers and spectators, as usual this year.

They say safety concerns around the spreading of the virus among those lining the parade route and at the official commemorative service, are too powerful to ignore.

Instead, the town's Mayor, Coun Alan Varley, will lay a wreath on behalf of Ponteland Town Council, informally on the morning of Sunday, November 8.

Organisations and individuals can then do likewise at the War Memorial over the following week.

Coun Karen Overbury, who helps to organise the event, said councillors had discussed options for staging the parade, following a report into it being prepared.

She confirmed worries regarding people lining the route, especially the older and more vulnerable, plus ensuring safe social distancing, meant even a scaled-down parade was not possible.

And she added: "None of the councillors wanted to cancel the parade, but there were many uncertainties.

"These included the approach of colder weather, an increase in Covid numbers and the chance of last-minute instructions to amend or cancel parades.

"There were considerable concerns about insurance issues, risk assessments and public safety.

"Ponteland has always honoured those who gave their lives in the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts, but the safety of residents today had to be paramount."

A photograph of all the wreaths will be taken in mid-November. Wreaths will also be laid on the Commonwealth War Graves in St Mary's Cemetery.

Wreaths can be ordered from britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give/shop.

Plans for the displays of knitted and crochet poppies in Ponteland are well underway.

Patterns are available on the town council website and completed poppies can be delivered to the council offices, opposite the doctors' surgery at Meadowfield Industrial Estate, from 9.30am to 1pm, Monday to Thursday.



Respects being paid at last year's ceremony

Money floods in for new river defence scheme

Ponteland's flood protection is to be bolstered through a new £450,000 barrier building scheme - putting 250 at-risk homes out of harm's reach.

Environment Agency experts have started updating existing defences on the south bank of the River Pont which are coming to the end of their operational lives.

Improvements will be mainly on a stretch of private land at the rear of Lane Nurseries and the Auberne property, between Callerton Lane and the foot bridge at Ponteland Memorial Hall.

And more limited work is likely on land owned by Ponteland Town Council, again adjacent to the hall.

The project began on Monday, August 24, with piling planned for completion by the end of November and the entire project scheduled to end in April.

Kirsty Harwood, Environment Agency project manager, said: "The project team will be following all current Coronavirus government guidelines to keep them and the community safe.

"The community can help by keeping out of the site area."

Catherine Saxon, Area Director for the Environment Agency in the North East, added: "Ponteland Flood Scheme replaces the town's flood defences that have reached the end of their life.

"The new walls will complement the existing ones and will continue to protect Ponteland both now and into the future.

"The project team has continued working on this scheme throughout lockdown and we're delighted that we can now get started with work on the ground.

"The recent government funding boost that the scheme recently received shows just how vital the completion of this work is.

"We understand just how devastating it is to be flooded - we know there is a history of flooding in Ponteland - and we are committed to ensuring residents are protected."

Ponteland suffered devastating flooding in 2008, and further downpours brought havoc in early 2016.

The new barrier will consist of a continuous sheet piled wall, similar to those on the opposite bank and downstream before the Diamond Inn.

Engineers believe the scheme will deliver a more climate resilient standard of protection, which will also protect businesses on Ponteland's High Street.

The contractor, BAM Nuttall, will maintain a temporary flood defence throughout construction.

The scheme is one of three in the North East being improved through extra funding.

More information can be found by visiting our Citizen Space page at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/north-east/ponteland-flood-alleviation-scheme-information>

Kirsty Harwood can also be contacted for inquiries at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Cover shot: Kirsty Harwood, Environment Agency project manager at the River Pont. Photo by Barry Pells.



Ponteland Flood Alleviation Scheme

The Environment Agency is working to improve existing flood defences in Ponteland. The scheme will ensure the better protection of more than 250 residential properties in the Ponteland area.

Works will largely take place on private land at the rear of Lane Nurseries and the Auberne property, between Callerton Lane and the foot bridge at the Memorial Hall. A small amount of work is also proposed on land owned by Ponteland Town Council, adjacent to the Memorial Hall.

Local residents will start to see construction works in September 2020 to replace the assets on the south bank of the River Pont. The current assets are a mix of red brick covered flood walls and a flood embankment. The new assets will be one continuous sheet piled wall covered with a stone effect and coloured concrete, more similar to those on the opposite bank and downstream before the Diamond Inn.

More information can be found by visiting our Citizen Space page at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/north-east/ponteland-flood-alleviation-scheme-information>

For any queries on the scheme, please email Kirsty Harwood, Project Manager, at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk. Please reference Ponteland Flood Alleviation Scheme in your email subject.

To find out if you are living in a flood risk area and for information on how to sign up for flood alerts, visit <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>

Good work praised as church-backed group ceases

A Ponteland group which raised £91,000 over 55 years to buy Bibles has brought its activities to a sudden close.

The Ponteland Area Action Group has called time on its work, primarily due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Its committee says it has had to cancel all 2020 fundraising lunch programmes due to the virus – and that there is little prospect of activities safely resuming.

Formed in 1965, support came mainly from Ponteland's four churches - St Mary's Parish Church, United Reformed Church, St Matthew's RC Church and Ponteland Methodist Church.

Every penny was donated to the international Bible Society, which used the cash to purchase Bibles in countries other than the UK.

Group chairman, the Rev Jona Sewell, of Ponteland Methodist Church, said: "The majority of the organisers have served the committee for many years.

"With the passage of time, they have found it increasingly difficult to fulfil their role.

"With the emergence of the Covid virus, the lunch programme for 2020 has been cancelled, and due to uncertainty, the future of the 2021 lunch programme was in doubt.

"For these reasons, the group has reluctantly taken the decision to bring the Ponteland fundraising committee to a close."

He added: "Since its beginning, the Ponteland Area Action Group has raised and sent to the Bible Society a staggering £91,000.

"This is a huge sum of money, raised by committed volunteers and many participants over the years.

"It is hugely creditable, and everyone should be proud of this achievement.

"The committee thank the many people

who, over the years, have loyally supported them."

A small committee, with members from each of the churches, organised lunches and coffee mornings.

By the late 1990s, the committee increased in number, and the biannual lunches grew to around 100 participants.

During the past 15 years, the committee organised a two-course lunch twice-a-year, known as the Spring and Autumn lunches, which were the main focus of raising money.

The Rev Sewell said diners enjoyed a generous mixed salad first course, followed by an abundance of desserts, and that the gatherings were a beacon of inter church fellowship, generating much goodwill, friendship and fun.



A fundraising lunch in 2017 showed strong support

PONTELAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

(Previously PCMS)

...give them
space to grow!

01661 824853 www.ponteland.academy

Limited places are available from September 2020
in all year groups - from EY to Y6+Y8 - CALL NOW



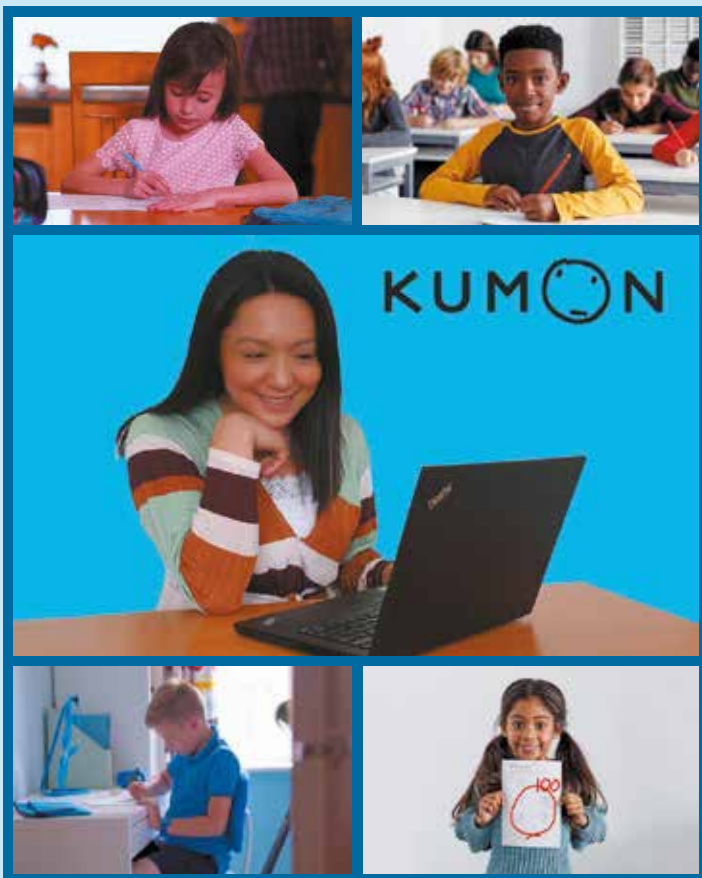
KUMON

MATHS ENGLISH

— DON'T MISS OUT ON —
FREE TRIAL

This summer is a great opportunity to **prepare your child** for the **new school year**, with **Kumon maths and English study programmes**

CONFIDENCE



CONCENTRATION

MOTIVATION

INDEPENDENCE

Your local, expert Instructor can guide and develop your child.
Book your Free Trial today!

Ponteland Study and Gateshead Low Fell Study Centres
Liz Burrin 07765 051136

Ability development for any child at any age

Terms and conditions apply. Fees vary. Participating study centres only.
Please refer to your local study centre. Subject to availability.

kumon.co.uk

Youngsters eager to beaver away outdoors

Scouts have proved patience is a virtue by overcoming months of coronavirus lockdown to get back on the adventure trail.

Youngsters from the 1st Ponteland Scout Group jumped for joy after being let loose – while respecting social distancing – at Northumberland's Bolam Lake Country Park.

It was the first time they had been together outside since mid-March, when all face-to-face scouting activities abruptly stopped due to the virus.

Since then Beavers, Cubs and Scouts have met regularly, albeit from their homes and using Zoom video conferencing technology.

While the weekly sessions have been welcomed by the youth members and parents, leaders admit it has not competed with life in the great outdoors.

Scout Leader Vanessa Linnett, an NHS Intensive Care consultant, said she had been keen to kick-start scouting for her section.

She said: "I was determined to provide an outdoor opportunity for the scouts as soon as this was allowed.

"With the support from the other leaders, I could make sure this could go ahead safely and securely

"The engagement of our scouts and the support of their parents made it all worthwhile."

Throughout April's lockdown, over 60 members of 1st Ponteland Scout Group took part in the Northumberland Scouts Camp At Home event.

In one day, on April 30, participants from 68 countries - and a total of 95,342 people - were involved, setting a record for the largest camp ever.

Outdoor Scouting in the UK was allowed to re-start on July 6, with a rigorous safety process having to be followed.

In Northumberland, this included a risk assessment around Covid-19, which required sign-off by the Ponteland Scout Group Executive and approval by the Castle Morpeth Scouts District Commissioner.

Information about the 1st Ponteland Scout Group is available from Leader Barry Hirst at barry.hirst@northumberlandscoouts.org.uk and 07710 104697.



The clean-up begins after months of lockdown



Lakeside views for Ponteland's Scouts

PONTELAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Limited places are available from September 2020 in all year groups from NURSERY to Y6 +Y8

01661 824853
admin@ponteland.academy
www.ponteland.academy



"It is health that is the real wealth"
Mahatma Gandhi

Residents praised for animal rescue!

A born and bred Ponteland squirrel



Experts have heralded quick-acting Darras Hall householders whose actions saved the day for a family of squirrels caught up in a tree collapse drama.

They say the neighbours' prompt response, after the tree's cutting down accidentally disturbed the squirrels' home or nest - known as a drey - ensured the animals could safely relocate.

Volunteers at support group Ponteland Red Squirrels were contacted for advice by residents within minutes of the incident in Errington Road.

The team advised them to place the drey into the remains of the tree, which they did by adding a sling to keep it in place, in the hope the mum would return.

Sally Hardy, co-founder of Ponteland Red Squirrels, said: "Two of our team, Andy and Donna, raced

to the site and were on hand, should the mother not return by nightfall.

"Luckily, mum soon showed up looking for her youngsters. After locating the drey, she collected the four babies.

"She did this one at a time, carrying each by her mouth to another drey, so disaster was averted.

"Red squirrels usually build several dreys in an area which they often share."

Sadly it was not all good news on the Ponteland squirrel front, according to Sally.

She confirmed three of the animals had been hit by cars and killed in the past few months, including in Whinell Road – and urged motorists to be on their guard.

Sally added: "Please drive carefully around the estate. Red squirrels have no road sense."

Local information about red squirrels is available from Sally on 07878 061880, Donna on 07751 822038, and Drew on 07799 900713.



**YOUR LOCAL TOOL
HIRE AND GARDEN
EQUIPMENT SPECIALISTS**



Main dealers for Atco, Briggs, Stratton and Karcher



ATCO

KÄRCHER

Hæ

Coopies Lane, Morpeth NE61 6JN

T. 01670 512793 maxhire.co.uk





HEMINGWAY COURT

A SELECTION OF TWO BEDROOM
APARTMENTS FROM **£227,950**

THORNHILL ROAD • PONTELAND

FINAL 8 TWO BEDROOM APARTMENTS - READY TO MOVE INTO



FLOORING NOW INCLUDED IN ALL APARTMENTS

- STUNNING HIGH QUALITY SPECIFICATION
- SHOPS, PUBS & RESTAURANTS ON YOUR DOORSTEP
- PRIVATE PARKING
- HELP TO BUY AVAILABLE (UNTIL FEBRUARY 2021)
- NO STAMP DUTY TO PAY (UNTIL MARCH 2021)



Ascent Homes

WWW.ASCENT-HOMES.CO.UK

CALL VICTORIA ON: **07951 184 144** FOR MORE INFORMATION

