

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



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attack on new play park

Happy ending for hit
and run damage victim

Police investigate
malicious banner

Minister signals hope for Darras Hall broadband campaign

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Produced by Cian creative pr

Your photos

Due to the latest lockdown there are no events and activities happening for us to capture. So we asked readers to send in their own photos for us all to enjoy. You didn't disappoint! We had so many we will publish more in the March issue.



Lillian Violet Gabbitus, who celebrates her 2nd birthday on February 2nd, has the giggles after falling in the snowy grass near her home in Ridgely Drive, Ponteland.



Mark Thomason, of Grenville Court, Darras Hall, sent us a superb selection of images of birds taken in his garden including this tree creeper feeding on a sycamore tree and the robin we have featured on our front cover.



Caleb Wilson, five, enjoying the snow on a break from home schooling at Jameson Fields, Ponteland.



Alastair Ruffman captured this lovely photo of a red squirrel feeding on nuts in his back garden in Deyncourt Close, Darras Hall.



Poppy Rogers, two, of Bedlington, whose grandparents Mick and Angie Barnes run The Pont Tap, playing peek-a-boo at Bolam Lake.



Zeeshan Alam sent up a drone from his home in Hadrian Court, Darras Hall, to take this wintry aerial shot looking towards Stamfordham Road.

Happy ending as garage repairs car damaged by hit and run driver

We are delighted to report a happy ending to the story in the January issue about an elderly widow whose beloved car was damaged in a hit and run style collision.

Pont News told how Norma Hall, 76, had been making a rare trip out during the pre-Christmas lockdown restrictions to visit the dentist and opticians in Darras Hall when the incident happened.

The mother-of-two and grandmother-of-two returned to her Peugeot 106 to find the front nearside wing had been crashed into. No note had been left with the offending driver's details.

It had been parked outside

Dobson's Estate Agents on Broadway between 3.45pm and 4.45pm on Tuesday December 8th.

Daughter Fiona Price told how her mum had owned the car for many years, had hardly done any mileage and kept the vehicle immaculate. But despite it being her pride and joy, due to its age if she made an insurance claim for damage estimated to be around £300 to £400 it would just be written off.

Fiona's anger and disbelief was echoed by local people commenting on the Darras Hall Facebook group, where she had posted an appeal for witnesses, who slammed the driver responsible.

Fortunately Triple 8 garage on Broadway have stepped in to save the day, repairing the damage to Norma's car.

Owner Dawn Nichol said: "Mrs Hall has collected her vehicle and she is very pleased with the work carried out. We have done the best we could for her due to not being a body repairer. We have carried this out as a

goodwill gesture, for which Mrs Hall was very grateful."

Fiona added: "We'd like to thank Steve and Dawn at Triple 8 for their kindness and support with the repair, which was very much appreciated."



Norma Hall, pictured with her car before the repair work.






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Darras Hall broadband campaign gets Ministerial boost

A campaign to secure full fibre broadband for Darras Hall has been boosted by news the estate could be included in a £5bn nationwide gigabit programme.

Digital Minister Matt Warman said it "is possible that Darras Hall will be connected" as part of the scheme in a letter to Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman following their meeting where the MP lobbied for gigabit capable broadband.

His intervention came in response to the Darras Hall Community Fibre Scheme campaign led by local resident Simon Tappin, which aims to improve the poor broadband that some areas of Darras Hall continue to suffer.

The group was launched in August 2019 to lobby for a much needed upgrade to the estate's telecommunications network provided by Openreach, which still uses copper telephone lines dating back to the 1960s.

There are currently no plans to update the last mile copper broadband cable service – known as Fibre to the Cabinet (FttC) or Superfast Broadband service – meaning many homes in Darras Hall will continue to suffer from poor and inconsistent mobile broadband.

The campaigners have conducted leaflet drops across the entire estate, issued email newsletters and set up a dedicated Facebook page. The group has also engaged with the MP and Northumberland County Council, and sought solutions from alternative broadband suppliers.

On December 22nd the Government launched plans to connect the first million homes and businesses without access to superfast broadband with gigabit speed broadband, maximising coverage in the hardest to reach 20 per cent of the UK by 2025.

Mr Warman said: "It is possible that Darras Hall will be connected through the procurements we are intending to run as part of our £5bn UK Gigabit Programme. I welcome the collaboration between Northumberland County Council and

my officials to date, and would be keen for the collaboration to continue, including exploring lessons learned from previous deployments including hubs and vouchers in the region."

Mr Opperman responded: "I welcome this confirmation from the Minister that the Government is committed to rolling out gigabit broadband right across our region, and the prospect of local investment through the £5bn Gigabit Programme. My hope is that all of our efforts – particularly that of Simon, the local community in Darras Hall and Northumberland County Council – will deliver a much improved service soon."

Mr Tappin, a Technical Services Director, from Lynwood Close, Darras Hall, added: "We thank Guy and his team for their continued full support of the Darras Hall Community Fibre Scheme, as well as Councillors Nick Oliver and Peter Jackson, iNorthumberland and the county council.

"We hope that with their continued support and the soon to be announced new DCMS GVS scheme we can push this project forward in 2021, and resolve the misery of poor broadband for the residents of Darras Hall."

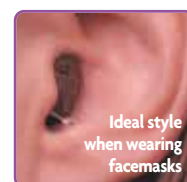
Darras Hall residents are being encouraged to register their interest in getting faster broadband on the estate via the campaign group's Facebook page. Visit: facebook.com/DarrasHallCommunityFibreScheme

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*Full hearing assessment and demonstration is £75, refundable against hearing aid purchase. In addition, a £20 Peace of Mind surcharge applies to all face to face appointments.



A Darras Hall FttC broadband cabinet

Investigation ongoing into malicious banner



PC Tom Ward, Ponteland Neighbourhood Police Officer

During December we received much information regarding the placement of a banner on Broadway.

This was of a malicious nature and has since been removed. I am able to inform readers your reports have been heard and a criminal investigation is ongoing.

In the past few weeks our area has been hit with colder conditions and periods of snow. This has impacted the safety of our roads and poses a risk to drivers, walkers and everyone who uses our highways.

I would like to advise our readers to be mindful of these conditions, and take reasonable measures when walking or driving to account for this. This can be maintaining a greater distance between vehicles, and being aware of the impact greater speeds can have on our ability to react to potential hazards.



It is also important to ensure the maintenance of your vehicle, ensuring that tyres are in good repair and correctly inflated and that the mechanical workings of your car are appropriately maintained.

On behalf of myself and our team we would like to wish you all the best for the

coming year. The past months have put a significant strain on us all, having been removed from loved ones and our day to day activities we all enjoy.

During this time we have seen a great deal of community cohesion, and acts of kindness that have added some positivity to difficult times. From myself, I wish you the best for the upcoming year.

How to get in touch

Readers can get in touch through 101 or web submission by visiting northumbria.police.uk. If your call is of an emergency nature this should always be done through 999. You may also speak with our team by emailing northernprudhoeptmailbox@northumbria.pnn.police.uk. You can also provide information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via the Crimestoppers website.

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Partnership grant funds new tents for scouts

Ponteland Scouts will certainly be prepared for their next camping expedition after a donation to fund three new tents by the Community Partnership.

Eighty beavers and explorers will be the latest to benefit from the partnership's physical and mental wellbeing youth project, following the purchase of a Kin-Ball for Ponteland High School which was featured in last month's issue.

Outside activities including overnight camps are a key part of the scouting experience, providing opportunities to work in teams while gaining confidence and independence. The tents can also be used in Scouts and Girl Guides Duke of Edinburgh Awards activities.

Alma Dunigan, Chairman of Ponteland Community Partnership, said: "When we heard the scouts had been using some tents that were 25 years old on their activities we knew that we could help as it fitted the criteria of our youth project.



"Although these activities at the moment are not allowed to take place, at some time in the future with relaxed restrictions these tents will be needed to complete Duke of Edinburgh Awards and international camp activities. The partnership is delighted to support such a good cause."

The idea for the partnership's youth project stemmed from identifying something which could be delivered

during the ongoing social distancing restrictions which would fund creative activities to improve young people's wellbeing. A number of schools and youth organisations responded to the offer of support to help fund their activities and further grant allocations will follow into the spring.

Scout Group Quartermaster Andrew Pile, responsible for providing equipment for scouting activities, said: "Our existing tents are for multiple occupancies. The new tents provided by the generosity of Ponteland Community Partnership are for single occupancy and will thus allow camping with 'social distancing' when we are allowed to restart again."

Barry Hirst, Group Scout Leader for 1st Ponteland Scout Group, added: "I am delighted that the Community Partnership has been able to support us, as we plan for safe camping as soon as we can. Outside activities are very important for our youth members and these new tents will go a long way to allow for that, hopefully in the near future."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

It is relationships that make you truly happy

By David Lamb

In my last two columns in Pont News I considered the importance of health - both physical and emotional - as part of your lifestyle. This month I'm focusing on the importance of relationships.

As we enter a new year we always remember the celebrities we lost last year. In 2020 they included Sir Sean Connery, Dame Barbara Windsor, Jack Charlton OBE, Diego Maradona and Little Richard to name a few (I heard a rumour that there were a lot of celebs trying to change their name by deed poll to Keith Richards!)

Current Covid restrictions prevent mass gatherings but it is notable that whenever we lose legends of music, sport and TV they rarely seem to have big, lavish funerals. I think that this is

because, once they do not have their health, it doesn't matter what car they drove, how big their house was, how many records they sold or how much money they had in the bank. What mattered was the people around them.

Unfortunately, in this modern world, it is far too easy to lose sight of what is important because there is so much pressure to focus on consumerism, work, the stress of life and money.

My wife is a family lawyer and she sees a lot of business and career focused people who have spent years on building their business, climbing the career ladder and accumulating wealth. All of a sudden they find themselves in the divorce process because they forgot why they started out in business or on their careers in the first place; to provide a good

lifestyle for their family. And then it is too late.

So how does financial planning fit in with relationships? Think about what you want to do for, and with, your partner, your children, grandchildren and your friends. Do you have a bucket list? What is on it? What is on your partner's bucket list? How much are these things going to cost? When are you going to need the money? Do you need to spend so many hours at work? How much do you really need? How much is 'enough'?

Once you know how much is enough, you will know how much time you need to spend on work and can then build a more balanced lifestyle.

It is important to remember; money could make you happier, but it is relationships that will make you truly happy.



A school year unlike any other

Teachers and students continue to face unprecedented disruption to normal school life more than ten months after the Covid pandemic reached our shores. Pont News asked Kieran McGrane, head of Ponteland High School and CEO of the Pele Trust, how they were coping.

We thought 2019-20 was a school year unlike any other... until we welcomed 2020-21.

Pre-September, before we could even start thinking about the return to full time education, we had examination results for Y11, 12 and 13 to contend with. This was the fiasco involving algorithms, mock exams, Centre Assessment Grades and multiple government U-turns. The less said about this time the better.

We also had to develop robust risk assessments to give staff, students and parents confidence in returning to school. This included designing one-way systems, planning for different break and lunch times, segregated year group zones and purchasing as much PPE as we could get our hands on. Thankfully, the start of school in September

went very smoothly and the systems worked as designed.

By October, with instances of positive cases on the rise across society, we began to see cases within school. The process of identifying close contacts, isolating them, contacting parents to pick up their children and arranging for online access to lessons during periods of self-isolation was time consuming but manageable as the tasks were shared by many. Being informed of a positive case over a weekend, however, was a very different matter - often taking up much of the weekend identifying close contacts and phoning parents ensuring their child didn't attend school on the Monday.

Everyone was in need of some respite but for our staff in Ponteland Primary and High School, much of half term

week was taken up moving to the new schools and leisure complex. An updated risk assessment was needed to reflect the new school environment and amended procedures to match the layout of the new school. The second new start of the year proceeded incredibly well, with everyone enjoying the benefits of the new buildings. But infections started increasing within society and this was reflected in school.

We maintained a strong link with self-isolating students by inviting them to join their lessons via Google Meet so they didn't miss out on their learning. This enabled staff to trial new approaches, which became extremely useful in January.

As we approached the end of term there was much speculation about whether schools should close early but the Government instead announced plans for mass testing of all staff and students in January. This was helpfully shared on the penultimate day of term, leaving little or no time to plan.

As we prepared to return on January 4th the DfE made a late announcement that secondary schools would delay the return of Y11 and Y13 to provide a week to put in place mass testing arrangements, whilst primary schools would remain open to all students.

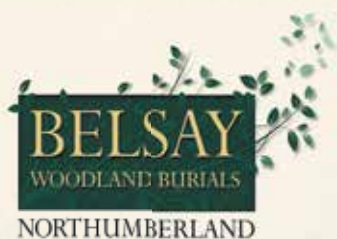
By Monday 4th the Covid situation appeared untenable and, after one day back, that evening the Prime Minister announced all schools would close until February half term at least. This brought with it a degree of clarity for the foreseeable future, but the one thing that I hadn't expected was the cancellation of all GCSE and A-level exams. My thoughts immediately turned to managing the process of awarding grades, something I had hoped we would not be doing this year.



However, this is not like the first lockdown last March. The number of students attending has increased substantially - especially in primary schools where up to one third of pupils are in school. At the high school we have averaged over 60 students each day compared to four or five last year. The expansion of criteria for both critical workers and what constitutes a vulnerable learner have both contributed to the increased demands on school.

We know that exams have been cancelled but it now looks as though schools are being directed to replace them with mini school-based assessments - exams by any other name! The emphasis is now on awarding a grade based on the standard at which a student is performing as opposed to the grade we believe they would receive if they sat the exam, the latter being what we had to do in 2020.

Our emphasis this year has been on trying to do our very best for our students so that their learning doesn't suffer more than it already has through not attending school. Staff have been excellent at rapidly developing new skills in video conferencing and use of technological teaching aids such as graphic tablets and visualisers. I am very proud of what we have put in place for our students but, like my colleagues, I've had enough of screens to last me a lifetime!



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The importance of transition across Pele Trust Schools

We know that the move from primary to secondary school is a significant change for pupils and parents. Academic research also tells us that poor transition arrangements can result in a dip in achievement levels. Pele Trust is committed to ensuring that transition is given a high priority so that our children can move seamlessly from primary school to secondary continuing to excel.

In order to achieve high quality transition we focus on a few important areas including:

Key staff

Ponteland High School has a senior leader, Mrs Routledge, with responsibility for transition. She works closely with Y6 staff in our Pele Trust primary schools as they meet regularly to discuss key actions and plan events to support the process of transition.

Raising awareness

We share a monthly transition newsletter with primary schools and parents to showcase the things that Y7 pupils are doing in secondary school. These are shared with Y6 pupils to help provide an insight to life in secondary school.

Curriculum continuity

Y6 teaching staff work closely with high school subject staff to review curriculum plans to ensure clear continuity and progression in learning as pupils move from Y6 to Y7. We have initially focused these efforts on the core subjects of English, Maths, Science and MFL. We have also run a Y6 Bee Project during the last half of the summer term that is then picked up in Y7 through Biology, Geography, Art and English lessons.

Pastoral support

We create opportunities for primary pupils to spend time in secondary school so that they get to know staff and the layout of the buildings. These half-day sessions build confidence and take some of the anxiety out of moving schools.

Please visit ponthigh.org.uk/transition to find out more about transition from primary to secondary school.



Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Appeals to address a waterlogged route and increase tree cover in this month's letters...

Waterlocked bridleway needs attention

I am sure that, like me, many keen walkers in Ponteland, were looking forward to the (delayed) reopening of the bridleway between Callerton Lane and Rotary Way, following development works.

On November 19th I walked the new route, only to find that where the path dips beneath the footbridge connecting the two school sites it was nothing short of a muddy quagmire.

When tackling the route again on Christmas Day, this stretch of the bridleway had further degenerated into a totally impassible lake.

Surely it must have been obvious to everyone concerned that, without proper drainage and surfacing, this problem was inevitable.

I am not sure who is responsible for this incompetent mess, but can we ask, through the pages of Pont News, what is going to be done to rectify the situation (which is effectively blocking a public right of way), by whom and, most importantly, when?

Graham Snowdon
Church Chare, Ponteland

Town Council and Estate Committee urged to increase tree cover

Many readers will have watched 'Perfect Planet' and other documentaries discussing the awful consequences of climate change and global warming.

Events in the Amazon rainforest or in the Arctic may seem far removed from our lives here in the North East, but the need for all of us to react is urgent. Time is not on our side.

We have a wonderful environment to live in, but it is constantly being eroded and de-greened as dangerously as other worldwide sites.

Can the Town Council and the Darras Hall Estate Committee commit to not only planting more trees, but perhaps more importantly to stopping the destruction of old trees on plots that are being developed?

Just replacing 60 or 80 year old trees with new saplings may not have the desired effect, although there should be a two pronged action.

Preserving what we already have – and not only relying on Tree Preservation Orders alone to protect our environment – but also perhaps to take part in the following project to increase tree cover.

There is a national tree initiative led by Cool Earth in partnership with the Government and Woodland Trust, to develop The Queen's Green Canopy which will encourage community groups, charities, schools, councils, cities, businesses and landowners across the UK to come together with the common purpose of "greening" their local and national environments.

It will be officially launched in May 2021 in advance of the Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

This is a fantastic opportunity for our community to make a difference and to celebrate the Jubilee.

Hilary Shaw
Darras Road, Darras Hall

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March issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the March issue is Monday February 15th. Door to door distribution will be from Monday March 1st to Friday March 5th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the March issue. Please visit ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views for online issues and all updates.

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

What's on...

Ponteland U3A

Due to the current situation we cannot meet at St Mary's Church Hall until it is safe to do so. However, using Zoom, we are able to give our monthly talks on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm. The next two events are: Wednesday February 3rd – AGM including the Chairman's summary and the projects for 2021; Wednesday March 3rd – 'Greggs - from its beginnings to the present day' by Michelle Dobson. Links to these talks, available for members and non-members alike, will be placed in the relevant Ponteland Facebook groups and on the Ponteland U3A website. We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join - the contact number is (01661) 824953.

Virtual talks by Northumberland Archive

Northumberland Archives are being brought to life in a series of free online talks hosted by staff from the archives and library teams. The virtual sessions, funded by a £48,000 grant from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, continue with a talk on Thursday February 11th by Local Studies Librarian Kate St. Clair Gibson entitled 'An Introduction to Local Studies: Northumberland's Heritage at your Fingertips'. To book a place on the talks visit eventbrite.co.uk and search for Northumberland Archives.

Wilde Farm Outdoor Market

Wilde Farm's Outdoor Market will be held at Ponteland Memorial Hall from 10am to 2pm on Sunday February 14th and Sunday February 28th. Organisers promise a delicious range of produce from Wilde Farm as well as goodies and gifts from other local businesses. Hot and cold food and drinks will be served. Free entry, dog friendly, pay by phone parking. Visit: wildefarm.co.uk.

Ponteland Village WI

The latest Covid lockdown came as no surprise, but Ponteland Village WI members are keeping busy. A monthly newsletter help members to stay in touch, find out what's going on in the group and share tips and ideas. Zoom coffee mornings allow members to chat informally and a series of Zoom talks with speakers is underway. The book club has been meeting monthly on Zoom plus the Cycling for Softies and Walking groups have met when restrictions have allowed. Many friendships have formed since lockdown and the group is proud that members have supported each other so well during the crisis. For updates, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or find us on Facebook - Ponteland Village WI.

Ponteland Senior Gentleman's Club

As the lockdown drags on with no prospect of us being able to resume meetings in the

Memorial Hall, we have decided to hold online Zoom meetings at our usual meeting times – the second Monday of every month at 2.30pm. These will take the form of a short talk followed by an opportunity to ask questions and to chat. As with our normal meetings, we will welcome senior gentlemen as guests. Enquiries to pontelandsgc@gmail.com.

Ponteland Rotary

Rotarians in Ponteland are holding their meetings online using Zoom every two weeks on a Tuesday morning. Visit rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=155

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

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

To mark World Inner Wheel Day on January 10th the club, as in a number of previous years, will be making a donation to local charity Cornerstone. Situated in Benwell, Cornerstone has throughout this difficult time continued to provide hot meals and to deliver food support to the most vulnerable in their local community, which is so needed and will be greatly appreciated.

PONTELAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

In 2019 listings, PCMS is in the top 1% of ALL primary and middle schools in England and under its new name, PCPS, is proud to continue this legacy offering specialist teaching and spacious facilities.

Limited places still available for September 2021 from Nursery (age 3) through to Year 4. Children living in local catchment have a pathway to Ponteland High.

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"You are the family I miss having around"
A new parent.

Families walk two million steps to raise nearly £500 for charity

Families walked two million steps to raise nearly £500 for a North East cancer charity.



Taking a hike: Rotarians Janet and Bruce Cusworth with daughter Helen and dog Max.

Rotary Ponteland's 'A Step into Christmas' appeal encouraged villagers to take a sponsored walk during the Christmas holidays to support Daft as a Brush, which transports chemotherapy and radiotherapy patients to and from hospital free of charge.

The club issued advice to ensure that Government guidelines on social distancing and maintaining family bubbles were properly observed and booklets giving details of local walks were suggested.

Club President John Muir said: "As our Christmas Market was cancelled we wanted to hold a community event which was safe and felt that a short walk with the family to work off the festive calories could only be a good thing. We are delighted that so many people took part."

The Virgin Money donation site will be kept open for further donations until the

end of February if anyone else wants to lend their support at virginmoneygiving.com/fund/stepintochristmas

Rotary Ponteland also arranged a 'Snowman and Robin Hunt', placing small wooden figures in the trees in Ponteland Park for children to find. The names of children spotting the most Snowmen and Robins were placed in a draw.

An estimated 100 families took part and brother and sister Oliver and Lucy Smith, aged seven and three, from Ponteland, who both spotted all ten snowmen and robins, each received a £10 book token.

Organiser John Cooper added: "We wanted the children to have some outdoor fun and it was a pleasure to see many family groups making their way through the park trying to spot the Snowmen and Robins."

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Installation of CCTV at Callerton Lane play area

The Council had discussed the newly opened play area at Callerton Lane at their December meeting and some of the issues that had arisen since the opening on November 16th. It was agreed to monitor the situation with the play area and discuss any issues at subsequent meetings. After the meeting, it was suggested that the Town Council should consider the installation of CCTV at the play area. Funds were available that had been carried forward from previous years for CCTV at the skate park, and the Clerk had obtained a quote from the Town Council's CCTV providers. Details of how the footage would be relayed to the Town Council offices was reported, with two options which had to be explored further. The camera could be sited on a lamp post quite close to the play area, but this had to be discussed with Northumberland County Council. Planning permission may also have to be sought. Details of the 12 guiding principles for the installation of CCTV from the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice document will need to be examined and policies will have to be prepared. Other Town Councils in the county and beyond had installed CCTV at their play areas in order to protect their assets - there had already been some instances of vandalism after only a few weeks at Callerton Lane. Councillors agreed with the suggestion to install CCTV at the new play area subject to the various issues outlined above being examined further.

Request from St. Mary's Church for financial assistance towards path works

The Council discussed a request from a churchwarden at St Mary's Church for financial assistance from the Town Council towards works to the path which runs from North Road opposite the Blackbird up to the porch of the church. The Friends of St. Mary's

group have some funds available for this work and the church is also fundraising for this purpose. Some clearing works have recently been carried out and this has shown that the path is in a poor condition. Northumberland County Council is responsible for the churchyard as it is closed, and a request has been made for help from NCC with carrying out these works. It was felt that the works were necessary as this footpath had a higher footfall than previously as children were using it to walk to and from the new schools on Callerton Lane. There were no costs available at present, and it was suggested that one or two local contractors could be approached to obtain a reasonable price for the work. Various suggestions were made for the surface of the path, however this would be left to the church to decide what they felt was most suitable. Councillors were in favour of offering some financial assistance towards this project and funds are available to carry forward from the small grants budget heading this year and some of this carry forward figure could be used to provide some financial assistance from the Council. The Council also agreed it would help with finding a suitable contractor if the church required assistance.

Funding agreed for additional giant poppy displays this year

A proposal for additional funding to create more giant poppy displays for Ponteland this year by Councillor Karen Overbury was unanimously supported by the Council. Three giant poppies had been displayed leading up to Remembrance Sunday last November and it is intended to re-use these this year. The suggestion is to create three more this year and suitable locations being examined include sites at the War Memorial at Ponteland Memorial Hall and at Broadway. Residents and people from farther afield responded very well to the request for poppies last year, and a fresh appeal encouraging people to knit or crochet poppies while the country is again under lockdown restrictions was included in the January issue of Pont News. At least 10 requests for wool and patterns offered by the Council, given it is difficult to get out to shops at present, have already been received in response. The budget from last year's cancelled Remembrance event will be carried forward to 2021 to fund the additional displays.

Transfer of pedestals on the bridle path from Ponteland Community Partnership

A decision was taken at the October meeting of Ponteland Community Partnership to dissolve the Partnership after the AGM in April. The Chairman of PCP has asked the Town Council to take responsibility of the pedestals etc on the bridle path after PCP has been dissolved. This would mean that the pedestals would need to be added to the Council's insurance policy and included on the asset replacement register. The Council agreed to accept responsibility for the items as requested but stated that if there were excessive problems with vandalism, they would need to review the situation. It was also suggested that PCP should be asked that if it had any surplus funds in April 2021, if these could be transferred to the Town Council to offset the additional insurance costs.

Northumberland County Council report

Councillors Richard Dodd and Veronica Jones were present at the meeting. Coun Dodd reported that the Covid-19 crisis continued to dominate the work of the County Council, with the vaccinations programme the main issue at the moment. NCC is also examining a recovery plan for when things returned to some sort of normality, with concerns at the damage to businesses and to the mental health of some residents during this difficult time. Coun Jones reported the Northumberland Communities together team was working very hard to help those in need and who were vulnerable, assisting residents who were shielding again and those who had found themselves in difficulty due to the pandemic. Town Councillors congratulated the County Council on the work and assistance it had provided during the current crisis.

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



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