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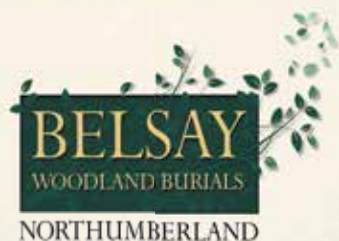


Four day celebration planned
for June Jubilee

.....
Consultation into 1,600-home
plan for Callerton

.....
Praise as Head Greenkeeper
retires after 35 years

Cancer surgery
inspires charity
challenge



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Four days of celebration planned for Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Plans are well underway for four days of celebration in Ponteland to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

From Thursday June 2 to Sunday June 5, people throughout Britain and further afield will be enjoying parties and activities, with an extra day's Bank Holiday to help everyone to celebrate.

Ponteland will be a Beacon Town, as it has been on previous special national occasions, including the Queen's 90th Birthday in 2016.

A chain of beacons will be lit across Britain at 9.45pm on Thursday June 2 and this will mark the start of Ponteland's celebrations, with live music being played on Coates Green from 8.30pm, so it's a must for everyone's diaries.

Ponteland Rugby Club will be holding its annual Beer Festival at the Leisure Centre on Friday and Saturday June 3 to 4, from 12noon to 11pm on both days. The £20 tickets include admission, a promotional glass, programme and four drinks tokens. The organisers say tickets always sell quickly so people are advised to book early.

There will also be two days of activities at the Leisure Centre on the Friday and Saturday.

The special weekend will end with Ponteland's popular Party in the Park, which has had to be cancelled for two years due to the Covid pandemic. But the organisers are hoping that the Party in the Park will return bigger and better than ever, with a royal-themed event, starting at 1pm on the Sunday.

There will be lots of stalls and activities plus a children's fancy dress parade for any royal costume - from princess to knight in armour, king to court jester. There will be a small prize for every entrant, sponsored by Ponteland Town Council.

The day will end with a Duck Race at 4.30pm, organised by the team at Ponteland Rotary.

The Town Council is asking shops and businesses to decorate their windows with a royal theme and Ponteland Town Council will be offering prizes for the best windows.

Groups and organisations throughout Ponteland, Darras Hall and the surrounding area are being urged to plan their own activities to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee and some groups of neighbours are already making plans for street and garden parties.

Ponteland Mayor Coun Christine Greenwell said: "Covid-19 has been

tough for everyone for a long time and we want to give people something to look forward to.

"We would like to see celebrations across the area. The village centre will have bunting, we'd like shops and businesses to decorate their windows and we hope there will be a large number of parties and plans to celebrate the Queen's 70 years on the throne."

How you can take part

The Town Council can help to promote Jubilee events – dinners, special meetings, walks, competitions and much more – by detailing them on its website and Facebook page.

Grants from £25 to £100 are available from Ponteland Town Council with application forms available from the council website at ponteland-tc.gov.uk or by calling the offices on 01661 825092.

Northumberland County Council is also offering grants through its Platinum Jubilee Fund to community groups, schools and charities.

To discuss the plans and what you or your organisation can do, email Events Working Party chair Coun Karen Overbury on k.overbury@ponteland-tc.gov.uk or email Ponteland Town Council at enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk.



The Coates Green floral display and beacon for the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations in 2016



Dog festival returning to Kirkley in September

A hugely popular canine gathering is set to return to Kirkley Hall this September.

The North East Dog Festival has announced its return with a spectacular outdoor weekend festival on Saturday and Sunday September 3 to 4 at the specialist animal and land-based training venue.

Directors Rebecca Ashworth Earle and Dawn Oliver Doyle said: "2021 was our biggest event to date, with over 8000 visitors and their pooches joining us across a weekend of shopping, entertainment and plenty of prize winning in the dog shows and activities.

"Plans are well underway for the 2022 event and we hope to bring even more to the dog lovers in the North East."

The event is again expected to attract thousands of visitors with returning favourites such as the display and demonstration arenas, have a go activities, wellness marquee, shopping villages and charity dog shows.

The 2022 festival is also welcoming interested businesses who may want to come on board as a headline sponsor. Trade stand applications can be made via the website northeastdogfestival.com.



One of the performing dogs from last year's show. Photo by Ben Heward Images.

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Bowling club launches recruitment drive

Ponteland Bowling Club has launched a recruitment drive as it approaches its centenary.

The mixed club was founded in 1923 at the newly opened Ponteland Memorial Hall and during its heyday it had a membership of 200 people.

But despite boasting one of the best greens in Northumberland, in recent years this has reduced to 80 members. The committee is trying to attract new members of all ages to come and join in the bowling by holding activities all week during the day and early evenings.

Bowls improves your overall fitness, improves coordination and skill development, increases confidence and esteem, and improves mental wellbeing with community-focused help and support.

The club plays a varied programme including mixed roll ups, friendly matches against other clubs, mens' and ladies' team league bowls and a mixed league on Thursday evenings.

It is introducing fun mixed games for all - bonkers bowls, two heads and mixed roll ups.

It also has social meetings throughout the year including barbeques, coffee mornings, quiz nights and an annual dinner.

New members are welcomed and FREE open taster sessions are being held during April and May when the club will supply the bowls, flat shoes and club mentors to explain the game. Come along and join in.



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Have you ever fancied trying **Bowls** but not been quite sure where to start? Or maybe you want to *get fit, meet new people or learn a new hobby?*

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Why not join us? Call (07940) 923286, email pontelandbowls@gmail.com or visit our website.

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Golf club pays tribute to retiring Head Greenkeeper after 35 years' service

Ponteland Golf Club has paid tribute to its long-serving Head Greenkeeper, who has retired after more than 35 years in the role.

Paddy Hetherington, who joined the club from Close House in December 1986, retired last month.

Club Captain Chris Espiner heaped praise on Paddy's work. He said: "Paddy has been a fantastic servant to the club.

"He has worked with 36 different captains, 36 greens committees and countless members - many of whom were quick to 'advise' him (in a mostly friendly way) by sharing their own 'knowledge and expertise'.

"Paddy has helped many members and all his colleagues over the years and he has educated us on the challenges of managing a golf course in the North



East of England. His unquestionable commitment to the club is widely recognised and throughout the pandemic his dedication to the club was outstanding."

The Hetherington family have an even longer association with the club. Paddy's father Stan was the Club Professional from 1956 to 1980, moving from his position as Professional and

Greenkeeper at Catterick Garrison Golf Club.

Continuing the family connection, Paddy's eldest son Richard worked with him on the course for four years up to 2005 and his youngest son Jack for 11 years up to 2016. Jack is now Head Greenkeeper at Chester-Le-Street Golf Club.

Chris added: "Countless guests and visitors over the years have been generous in their praise of the quality and presentation of the course and greens, and as a result the club has hosted and continues to host local, regional and national golfing events.

"The club continues to play a significant role within the community and Paddy and his family have been at the heart of that. Our challenge now is to appoint a successor to build on Paddy's excellent work to make sure Ponteland Golf Club remains one of Northumberland's leading clubs."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Looking down memory lane as we celebrate 30 years in business

By David Lamb CFP™ MCSI

It is a momentous month for Lamb Financial. For it's 30 years since I launched the business which went on to become Lamb and Associates (now Lamb Financial).

Back in February 1992 Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd signed the Maastricht Treaty that formed the EU, Her Majesty The Queen was celebrating her Ruby Jubilee and Kevin Keegan was Newcastle United's new manager.

The average price of a house in the UK was £56,500 while petrol cost around 40p per litre.

The cutting edge of communication was the fax machine, while our computer was an Amstrad PWC 8256 that you had to stop from printing if you needed to use the telephone as it was so noisy.

If we needed to obtain a quote or illustration we faxed the life insurance company, who would then post it.

Incidentally those illustrations did not reflect the actual charges for the product but merely 'industry averages'.

Commission disclosure was rightly introduced in the mid '90s and – even better – in 2012 advisers had to agree their fees with the clients.

At least 20 insurance companies had offices in Newcastle. Now only three names remain, and none have local offices.

Along the way there have been a few scandals – Equitable Life, pensions mis-selling, PPI and most recently the Neil Woodford saga. Many of those involved with these scandals have long since left financial services and, generally, the standard of advice is much higher.

But financial services is an industry geared to selling products and not a profession (yet), and will remain so until advisers do not rely on selling products to earn their income and provide genuine, impartial financial

planning advice.

Over the last 30 years I have learned a lot, including that product providers really only want to sell products; financial planning needs to be left to well qualified professional advisers, and how most managed funds do not provide good value for money.

Most importantly, I have found that all clients want to know how much is enough? Enough to give them the lifestyle that they want, without the fear of running out of money, whatever happens.

As a Certified Financial Planner accredited by the Chartered Institute for Securities and Investments – one of four firms in the North East and only 67 nationwide – I am confident that we are now one of the leading businesses of our type in the North of England.

And my final lesson? Time flies when you are having fun!

Score your financial planning at lambfinancial.co.uk



A plan of the proposed development, bordered to the north-east by the A696.



Public consultation launched into plans for 1,600 homes in Upper Callerton

An online public consultation has been launched into plans for a 1,600-home development in Upper Callerton, south-east of Darras Hall.

A consortium comprising Northumberland Estates, Persimmon Homes, Taylor Wimpey and the Quadrini family wants to build a mix of two, three, four and five bedroomed homes with a number of affordable properties.

The 97-hectare site is located south-west of the A696 between Whorlton Grange and Callerton Lane, and is one of four which form the Callerton Neighbourhood Growth Area which have been allocated for the development of 3,000 new homes.

New housing is already being built on two of the other sites off Stamfordham Road, at the Stephenson Meadows, St John's Manor and Church View developments.

When news of the masterplan first broke back in 2011, a green belt campaign group was formed supported by Ponteland's MP

Guy Opperman who said at the time the new housing would "significantly reduce the gap of green land between Newcastle and Ponteland".

If the latest plans are approved, an estimated 600 new construction and supply chain jobs could be created, with work on the latest phase of the overall housing allocation for Callerton potentially starting as early as the autumn of 2023.

Barry Spall, development planner at Northumberland Estates, said that the Upper Callerton development, which includes a new primary school and local retail centre at the centre of the scheme, will help to meet the urgent need for more quality housing for Newcastle.

He added: "We are engaging with local people to explain the consortium's plans and present the many benefits this latest phase of development offers. We are keen to hear the views of as many people as possible which will be considered before any plans are submitted to the planning authority.

"There are currently huge pressures on the housing sector and more properties are desperately needed to meet the shortage and provide local people with good quality homes in an area that they want to live in."

The public consultation, which is live at uppercallertonconsultation.com, will take into account initial comments from Newcastle City Council, Woolsington Parish Council and the Woolsington Residents' Association together with local youth groups.

A Hybrid Planning Application will then be prepared and submitted to Newcastle City Council for the proposals in Spring 2022.

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Marilyn Bint with husband Adrian.



Marilyn in the Sir Bobby Robson Cancer Trials Research Centre having bloods done by Clinical Trial Associate Lisa Brown-Schofield.

Grandmother joins clinical trial for cancer treatment

A Ponteland grandmother with brain and lung cancer is taking part in a national clinical trial using pioneering genetic tumour profiling, part-funded by the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation.

Former nurse Marilyn Bint was diagnosed with cancer in September 2020 and due to the location of her tumours it was decided it was too risky to undertake a biopsy.

It was at this stage that Dr Alastair Greystoke, Honorary Medical Oncologist at Newcastle's Northern Centre for Cancer and Senior Lecturer in Medical Oncology at Newcastle University, recommended the TARGET National clinical trial as an alternative.

The study is open to cancer patients with solid tumours who have exhausted all other treatment options and are considered by their oncologists to be suitable for early phase, experimental trials.

Researchers analyse the genetic characteristics of a patient's cancer from a blood sample, looking for any faulty genes that may help inform their suitability to receive an experimental treatment.

In Marilyn's case, the blood test helped identify the best treatment for her. The

73-year-old, from Ashdale, Darras Hall, said: "My diagnosis came out of the blue. I hadn't had any symptoms then felt suddenly unwell and it was discovered I had tumours in my brain and lungs.

"Because of the locations of the tumours, nobody really wanted to do a biopsy because it was deemed too risky. There wasn't another option until Dr Greystoke called about the blood test and to the relief of everyone my biopsy was cancelled.

"The blood test enabled the team to identify the best treatment for me and for the last year it's been effective on the cancer in both my brain and lungs."

The Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and The Christie NHS Foundation Trust in Manchester are working in partnership on the national research study, which is recruiting 6,000 cancer patients from across the UK through 18 cancer centres and will take five years to complete.

It follows on from the success of a TARGET trial run in Manchester, and the PROSPECT-NE study run in Newcastle that matched Sir Bobby Robson Cancer Trials Research Centre patients to experimental trials based on analysis of the tumour genetics.

Funded by the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation in 2017 with a grant of £892,000, PROSPECT-NE was based at

the Royal Victoria Infirmary's Pathology Hub and linked with the cancer drug trials undertaken by patients at the Sir Bobby Robson Cancer Trials Research Centre.

Sir Bobby launched his Foundation in 2008 as part of Newcastle Hospitals Charity and it has gone on to raise over £16m to find more effective ways to detect and treat cancer.

Dr Greystoke, who is helping deliver TARGET National and led PROSPECT-NE, said: "This is an area of cancer research that's evolving all the time... It will enable us to continue to offer our patients clinical trials based on genetic profiling, but also to work closely with colleagues in the North West to develop this hugely promising area of cancer research.

"Speed and accuracy are both incredibly important in helping us deliver effective treatments to patients who may have run out of other options and have limited time available."

Marilyn, who is married to Adrian and has two children and five grandchildren, added: "It's incredible the difference the treatment has made to my life and I cannot emphasise enough how good it's been. I've experienced very few side effects and can still play 18 holes of golf, and Adrian and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in June last year. In 2020, we simply didn't think that would be possible."

Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



A call to take part in a national tree planting initiative and thanks to workers who went above the call of duty during Storm Arwen in this month's postbag...

Let's leave a lasting legacy by taking part in tree planting initiative

Travelling around Darras and Pont, it is increasingly obvious how much of the green cover of the area – mature trees, shrubs and hedges – is being razed to the ground in the never ending 'development' of the area.

Sadly, ecology surveys may well be done after substantial clearing has already taken place, leaving little evidence of protected wildlife.

Trees do need to be managed and dangerous or diseased trees need to be removed, but the evidence of climate change means we should be planting, not destroying, our green cover. Storm Arwen has destroyed yet more of our trees.

Planting new saplings to replace 70+ year old trees will not offer the same carbon capture, moisture absorption and wildlife cover until your children and grandchildren are pensioners, but it is a positive step.

However, leaving areas to regenerate naturally is also important as the saplings that grow from natural regeneration will typically be a variety of the right native species and are important for wildlife.

Owners can make their own choices on how to manage their gardens but their choices affect everyone who lives nearby. Can we take a positive stand and look at how we as a community can keep this area as a semi-rural, green and pleasant space to live?

One of the most exciting opportunities would be to take part in the Queen's Green Canopy. This initiative offers help to individuals as well as groups and communities. Individuals can plant a tree and can add their tree to the QGC map.

Community groups (residents' associations, schools, youth and sports clubs, Rotary Clubs etc) are also encouraged to get involved. The Woodland Trust is a partner of the QGC and they have over three million free saplings in tree packs, available on a first come, first served basis.

Information on how to apply for the free saplings is available through the Woodland Trust website. Trees can also be planted and added to the interactive BBC Countryfile Plant Britain project site. The aim is to plant 750,000 trees in 2021/22.

So can we all work together to be part of the Platinum Jubilee scheme, and the several similar projects, and leave a lasting legacy for those who live here now and in the future?

Hilary and Ian Shaw, Darras Road

John and Daphne Smith, Middle Drive

David Livingstone, Moor Lane

Sue and Andrew Wood, Eastern Way

Steve Haddon, Moor Lane

Celia and David Ormiston, Stonehaugh Way

Stephen Bell, Oaklands

Thelma Wareing, Moor Lane

Fond memories of Dorothy and Geoff Warner

I read with great interest John Haig's letter about Ponteland's past and Geoff and Dorothy Warner's very active involvement in the life of the village.

As a life member of Ponteland Repertory I knew Dorothy in my capacity as Rep Secretary when she was Patrons Secretary. Dorothy was a mine of information about all things Rep. and a lovely lady to deal with.

There is, however, one small error in Mr Haig's recollections of Dorothy's roles. She was not the Society's President when we celebrated our 90th Anniversary in 2017 - that role was held by Mrs Betty Nesbitt and the reason I know is that I was Secretary at the time. Betty, in her nineties, is still with us.

Those of us who knew Dorothy and Geoff will remember them with fondness.

Lynne Henderson

Beech Court, Darras Hall

Please pick up after your pooches

Please would you draw the attention of dog owners to watch their dogs while out walking.

There is regular dog fouling of footpaths on Fairney Edge and is very unpleasant for walkers and residents.

As past owners of dogs, is it not unreasonable to ask owners to be prepared with bags to pick up.

Mrs W Laws

Fairney Edge, Darras Hall

Great community effort during Storm Arwen

Good to hear how locals rallied together for Storm Arwen.

Also the workers who had no power in their homes for many days and still came out each day to help their community.

Many warriors also did the same – even delivering bricks in wheelbarrows and searching for building items. No easy task before work can commence. Until it happens to a neighbourhood no one can comment.

Thanks to all you workers whose help will continue.

ME Steele

Ryehaugh, Ponteland

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 Wildlife Group

Our talks are held on Zoom on the first Tuesday each month at 7.30pm. For information search 'Ponteland Wildlife Talks'. On Tuesday March 1 we have 'Birds of Peru' by Tim and Janet Dean and, on Tuesday April 5, Penelope Ford on 'Longhorsley Moor - a special heath'. This talk may be in St Mary's Parish Centre. Check our website to confirm.

Ponteland u3a

Meetings and talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm. Our next two talks will be: March 2 – Northumberland National Park Rescue by Dave Waters; April 6 – Gardening, Medieval to Georgian times by Angus Thompson. We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join Ponteland u3a - please call the membership secretary on 01661 824953.

Women's Day of Prayer Service

The Women's Day of Prayer Service for 2022 will be held at St. Matthew's Church on West Road on Friday March 4 at 2pm. This is half an hour earlier than usual in the hope that some people will be able to join us before collecting children from school! A tea party will be held afterwards in St. Matthew's church hall to which all are most welcome.

Ponteland WI

Ponteland WI has resumed meetings with a new time 2pm to 4pm on the second Tuesday in the month at Merton Hall. Our next meeting is on March 8 with a floral demonstration from Northumberland Federation Chairman Marjorie Read. We are also holding a coffee morning on Saturday April 2 from 10.30am to 12noon in Merton Hall. There will be coffee and scones with stalls selling cakes and books.

Ponteland Village WI

The next meeting will be on Tuesday March 8 in St Mary's Parish Centre at 7.30pm, when there will be a talk on vegan cheese. Social distancing will continue to be in place; until further notice we will not be allowing visitors. The sub-groups such as the Walking Group, Dining Out, Walking for Softies and Book Club are continuing. For more about us, email

pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

Rotary Ponteland

We meet at Ponteland Golf Club each Tuesday, alternating lunchtime and evenings. Our next meetings: March 8 - Dale Wighton 'Lloyds Bank'; March 15 - Newcastle Rape Crisis Centre; March 28 - new member event at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Visit rotaryponteland.org.uk.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

Our next meeting will be held in the Memorial Hall on Wednesday March 9 at 2pm with Sandra Dickinson demonstrating 'Spring is in the Air'. There will also be a produce stall and visitors are very welcome (£7).

Gatherings for Christian meditation

A welcoming group meet in St Mary's Church for short times of meditation from 2pm to 3pm on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next dates are March 9 and April 13. All are invited to join us. We hold the space for each other in meditation, and explore together some of the rich inheritance of this Christian tradition which reaches back to the early church.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

In the Memorial Hall at 2.30pm on Monday March 14, Diana Finley will give a talk about her novel 'The Loneliness of Survival'. This is partly based on the experiences of her mother, who was a refugee from Nazi Austria.

Ponteland Local History Society

Ponteland Local History Society will host a talk on Thursday March 17 at 7.30pm at St. Mary's Parish Centre. Visitors welcome £2.

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

From 2.15pm to 4.15pm on Monday March 28 we have a talk entitled 'Lines and Wrinkles' by Deb Cooper at The

Studio (1), First Floor, Ponteland Leisure Centre. You can become a member or come to a meeting as a visitor for £5. Contact Secretary Penny Ford at pontelandfriendlystitchers@mail.com.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

The National Open Gardens Scheme was set up in 1927 to raise funds for district nurses, more than 20 years before the foundation of the NHS. Today more than 3,600 gardens open annually and raise more than £3.5m. The talk, being held at 7pm on Wednesday April 13 at Kirkley Hall, will tell how gardens are selected for entry into the 'Yellow Book' for the North East. The chosen gardens open on specific dates to be enjoyed by the paying public and information will be given on how monies raised are donated to nursing, caring and those in need. Cost: £2 for members and £3 for non members. All are welcome and no booking is necessary. Visit friendsofkirkleyhall.org.

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

Part of a women's voluntary organisation we are a small club founded on friendship. Meetings held on the first Monday of the month at St Mary's Parish Centre at 2pm include members spending social time together and talks, and occasional meals in a local restaurant and small fundraising events for charities are also held. New members and visitors are always welcome - contact 07568 743653.

Ponteland Health Walks

Ponteland Health Walks meet every Tuesday at 10.30am outside Ponteland Leisure Centre. The free walks take 60 to 90 minutes on local footpaths. A good opportunity to walk safely, improve fitness and make new friends. Assistance dogs only please. Contact Gordon Allan on 07936 135469 for more information or just turn up, no notice required.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday worship - 10am and 6.30pm. Monday 1pm to 4pm - 'Open Door' friendship cafe. Tuesday - Boys' Brigade with a Girls' Association. Thursday - Toddlers, Men's Forum, Women Together. Saturday - walking groups and various Bible study and House Groups. Also prayer and Fairtrade groups, pilates, Zumba, dance, room hire. Contact anncooperx@gmail.com or 01661 824347.

April issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the April issue is Monday March 14. Door to door distribution will be from Monday March 28 to Friday April 1. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the April issue. Please visit ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views for online issues and all updates.

Economic recovery and looking after most vulnerable focus for county council this year

Economic recovery, protecting frontline services and looking after the most vulnerable are the main focus of next year's budget approved by Northumberland County Council's Cabinet.

Proposals will see an emphasis on delivering a green and sustainable future for the county, with the council's climate change action a main driver behind the plans, the authority said.

Among the priorities for the year ahead are:

- Attracting investment and high-quality jobs to the county
- Delivering the Borderlands Place Programme alongside other initiatives to drive rural economic growth
- Continuing work to reopen the Northumberland Line rail project
- Securing funding for major road and junction infrastructure in the county
- Delivering planned school builds
- Investing in parks, open spaces, public conveniences and town-centre parking.

The budget proposals include a £307m capital programme for 2022/23 to

include major investment in affordable housing, continued improvements to leisure centres and a range of renewable energy schemes to make the county greener and cleaner.

Savings of £9.7m are also earmarked, although these will not be at the expense of frontline services.

Council Leader Glen Sanderson (pictured) said: "We're pleased that Cabinet has approved this budget and look forward to presenting it to Full Council later this month."

"The proposals were fully discussed by a cross-party scrutiny committee this week who made a number of useful comments and suggestions we'll be addressing before Full Council."

The budget plans were due to be put before Full Council and discussed on February 23.

To read the full budget report go to nland.uk/budgetreport



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One kidney, two legs! Mum-of-three takes on Great North Run after cancer surgery

A mum-of-three who had an emergency operation to remove a kidney after a tumour was discovered is taking part in this year's Great North Run to raise funds for Kidney Cancer UK.

Kate Richards received the shock diagnosis after spotting blood in her urine in July 2020. After initial treatment for a suspected urinary tract infection, her GP at White Medical Group in Ponteland referred her for blood tests and an ultrasound at the Freeman Hospital.

The blood tests came back in normal ranges but the ultrasound showed a mass on her left kidney.

Kate, 39, of Darras Road, Darras Hall, said: "The hospital acted quickly and called me in for an appointment to break the news of a probable cancer diagnosis in person. They were really compassionate and supportive. I was referred for a CT scan to check if it was cancer and if it had spread. This would help determine treatment.

"The CT scan did confirm cancer, but suggested it was localised to the kidney. The surgeon decided to remove the entire kidney - a radical nephrectomy - by open surgery. This was to ensure the greatest chance of removing all the cancer while checking the surrounding area.

"I had the surgery on September 4 2020. Fifty days from suspected UTI to kidney removal is phenomenal work by the NHS - particularly during a pandemic."

Kate and "really supportive" husband David took their three boys (now aged four, seven and nine) camping in South-East England and caught up with family and friends in an effort to try to keep things as normal as possible, during the nine days they awaited confirmation of the cancer and treatment plan.

Kate, a solicitor working in shipping law, added: "As soon as I knew it was treatable, we told the boys I needed an operation to remove the kidney and a disease. But that once that was over, I'd be ok.

"When I was discharged from hospital seven days after my operation, the boys were mainly fascinated by seeing my scar from the surgery! I never wanted to scare them but I didn't want to hide anything from them either."

Eighteen months on, Kate is fully recovered and has had no recurrence of the cancer. As part of her 40th birthday celebrations this autumn she is taking part in the Newcastle to South Shields half marathon to fundraise for the charity that helped her and to raise awareness of kidney cancer.

Kate said: "There's a misconception it mainly happens to older people - predominantly men - but I was a woman in my thirties when I got my diagnosis and treatment. I have done the GNR before, but it's my first time post surgery. I'm trying to document my training on an Instagram account '1kidney2legs'."

She will be joined by friend Becky Coe, who is travelling up from Bedfordshire to run for Dementia UK.

Kidney Cancer UK also tries to raise awareness by lighting up famous landmarks in green light. On February 11, the Gateshead Millennium Bridge was one of the region's local landmarks lit up in green, as captured in this month's cover shot by Barry Pells.

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WWII bomb disposal engineer celebrates centenary

A retired Darras Hall engineer whose remarkable career included time in the Bomb Disposal Unit during WWII turns 100 on March 7.

After his Army service, university and professional training under the City Engineer of Hull, John Gill joined the Colonial Service (later renamed Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service) and served in Nigeria and the Cameroons for ten years during the 1950s.

He then worked in British local government, rising to be City Engineer and Surveyor of Nottingham and then Director of Technical Services for Tyne & Wear Metropolitan County Council, which included time working on the new Tyne Tunnel in the mid-60s.

On retirement he served for nine years as a member of the Lord Chancellor's Panel of Independent Inquiry Inspectors. He has published a number of technical

papers and magazine articles and has been an active lay preacher for many years.

John is also a successful past president of Ponteland Rotary, having been a member since 1994.

He was very happily married to Nancy for 66 years, who died five years ago, and has two daughters, two sons, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. John's home on Darras Road is well known for his many tree carvings and sculptures!

Planned celebrations include a family trip to the Whitby area, a special Ponteland Rotary Club lunch on March 8 at the Golf Club and an informal presentation to John at the Methodist Church on March 13.

Friend and fellow Rotarian Archie McGlynn said: "John has had an amazing career. He was in the Bomb Disposal Unit in the Second



John pictured on Remembrance Sunday in 2018 and (top) at a flying lesson for his 90th birthday.

World War, worked as Lead Engineer in Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria, and held chief civil engineer posts in local authorities including, towards the end of his working career, Tyneside. He was, for example, an engineer on the Tyne Tunnel!

"John continues to be a very strong member of our club. He is sharp of mind and memory and continues to record video sermons for his Methodist Church here in Ponteland, and the link goes out on YouTube."



Police appeal for witnesses to New Year's Day assault

Police are appealing for witnesses after an alleged assault in Ponteland.

It was reported a man was approached outside the Diamond Inn, Main Street, at 1am on January 1 by another man he didn't know, who headbutted him before fleeing.

Enquiries are ongoing and now officers want to speak to this man who was in the area at the time and could help with their enquiries.

Anyone who can help is asked to contact Northumbria Police at beta.northumbria.police.uk/contact-us using ref 000145W/22.

Hall seeks fresh blood and donations as it approaches centenary

One of Ponteland's key venues has launched an appeal for fresh blood and donations as it prepares for its centenary celebrations.

Ponteland Memorial Hall has fully reopened after a major struggle to survive the pandemic, like many local community hubs of its kind. Government grants and furlough have been most welcome and have helped to maintain the hall as a going concern.

The Trustees also received generous grants and donations totalling nearly £25,000 from the Town Council, a major local benefactor, the Sir James Knott Trust, Community Chest, a local county councillor, the Memorial Hall 200 club, Ponteland Lions and from many local residents and organisations.

This support has enabled the hall to keep going and also carry out essential improvements. These include new carpet to the lower lounge, an external sign system to advertise hirers' events, a hearing loop to the lower lounge and the main hall and refurbishment of the gents' toilets.

In addition the licensee has made major improvements to the bar which has been renamed 'Unity Bar'.

Regular hirers are returning. But because of its age (the hall will be 100 years old in December) there remain a number of major renewals for which grants and donations will be sought, not least repairs to the roof which will cost more than £50,000.

However, controversial charges introduced at the venue's car park are now generating sufficient funds to cover maintenance costs so it no longer needs to be subsidised from the hall hire charges.

Chairman of the Trustees Robin Ramsay said: "We are delighted to see our hirers back and we're also seeing new bookings for weddings and parties but we still have some way to go to achieve the same number of hirers that we had before the Covid pandemic. We hope to see more organisations and people in the near future."

The hall is also urgently seeking new trustees to replace long standing trustees who wish to retire, including the

Chairman and Treasurer (both in their 80s).

Members of the community who could help to take the hall into its second century would be most welcome. As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, the hall's trustees are no longer personally liable for any debts.

Anyone interested in becoming a trustee or offering financial support to the hall can contact Mr Ramsay at ramsayrobert976@gmail.com or on 01661 821877. Meanwhile queries about hiring can be made through the website at pontelandmemorialhall.com.uk or Facebook page, or by calling 01661 822603.

Open evening

The Trust will be holding an open evening on Tuesday March 22 at 7pm, open to hall users and all members of the public. It will involve a presentation on rooms and facilities and its current financial situation including the car park, followed by a question and answer session. The bar will be open and tea or coffee will also be provided.



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8th July - 4 Days

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15th July - 4 Days

Longleat Safari Park
5th August - 3 Days

Chester & Shrewsbury Flower show
12th August - 3 Days

Southport Flower show
21st August - 2 Days

Charming Cornwall
11th September - 6 Days

Scotland & the Cairngorms
7th October - 4 Days

Killarney & The Ring of Kerry
16th October - 7 Days

Cadbury World & Midland Safari Park
23rd October - 2 Days

Harrogate Fizz & Fayre
11th November - 4 Days

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