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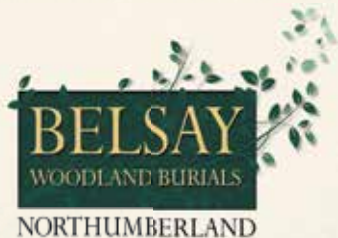


Over-50s recruitment
event a huge success

Extra summer patrols
to check on dog control

Marathon effort for car
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Glorious weather attracts record crowds to park party



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Cheers all round as organisers toast successful festival

By Ron Clarke

It was cheers all round as organisers toasted another hugely successful Ponteland Beer Festival.

And it really was a red hot ticket as thousands basked in glorious sunshine to taste the wide selection of drinks, tuck in to some fantastic street food and be treated to a glorious musical line-up from pipes and drums to choirs and rock.

It all took place on Friday June 2 and Saturday June 3, with the second day said to be the busiest on record as thousands flocked to enjoy the festival in the sun.

Now in its ninth year and rubber-stamped as a permanent fixture and a real community event, the festival retained the popular June slot after moving from April for the first time in 2022.

The crowds were catered for on a larger site on the main Ponteland Rugby Club field at the new combined school and leisure site in three marquees, including an extensive open seated area to make the most of the wonderful weather.

More than 150 real ales, ciders and lagers from local and national brewers were available alongside prosecco, Pimms, wine and artisan gin bars. There was also a huge selection of street food and a musical backdrop provided by live local bands to cater for all tastes.

Organiser Richard Moller said:

"Once again we would like to pay enormous tribute to the fantastic support we received from the local community to ensure the festival was another huge success.

"It is a real team effort involving Ponteland Rugby Club, local businesses, the huge army of volunteers and helpers and of course the many thousands who come along and add to the joyous spirit of the whole event.

"We would also like to thank the great support from our colleagues at Ponteland Cricket Club who so generously contributed to the planning, organisation and smooth running of festival.

"It was great to have the sunshine, especially on the Saturday when both the temperatures and the crowds really soared. Plans are already underway for the tenth anniversary next year!"

Photos by Barry Pells.

Matthew Yeend, Christina Rodda, Jason and Charlotte Yates



Stu and Georgina Holliday with Jools and Marc Defraigne



Clare Thomson and daughter Ellen



Rock Choir



Dementia social group for over 50s launched

A new dementia social group has been launched in Ponteland by Age UK Northumberland for people living with mild to moderate dementia.

The group sessions are designed for over 50s who are living with mild to moderate dementia and involve a range of fun and interactive activities such as games, music, art, cooking and exercise classes.

As well as helping with memory and mental activity, such as thoughts, emotions and behaviour, the sessions are a great opportunity to meet new people and socialise.

Amy Whyte, Chief Executive of Age UK Northumberland said: "We're delighted to launch this new social group in Ponteland. The weekly sessions are proven to improve mood and memory and provide a great opportunity to socialise and participate in fun and interactive activities."

The weekly group is running for the next five months and is free to attend every Thursday at Merton Hall from 10am till 12noon. Carers are welcome to stay and participate or drop off their loved one.

The sessions are developed in line with Maintenance Cognitive Stimulation Therapy guidance, which is the only non-drug treatment recommended to improve memory, thought processes, independence and well-being by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

To find out more email info@ageuk-northumberland.org.uk or call 01670 784800.

Bereaved families offered help through tough times

Bereaved families are to be offered pioneering step-by-step guidance and assistance to deal with the heavy admin burden following the death of a loved one.

A new partnership has been announced between Northumberland County Council Registrars and end-of-life admin service Settl'd.

The deal will provide end-to-end help for anyone dealing with the death of a loved one, from the point of that death being officially registered by the Registrar. Settl'd will provide a range of services including a detailed checklist for those handling a death and support in closing, transferring or changing financial, digital and household accounts.

Settl'd notifies more than 950 service providers, from banks and insurers to energy firms, mobile providers, subscription services, social media platforms and more. Its free online service also helps users close, transfer or amend accounts and obtain date of death balances for probate.

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"In order that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

Over-50s recruitment event a huge success

A recruitment event which attracted more than 60 employers, voluntary organisations and community groups has been hailed a huge success.

The inaugural Ponteland Over-50s Fair, sponsored by Newcastle International Airport and supported by MP Guy Opperman, Northumberland County Council and Newcastle Jobcentre, was held on Thursday June 1 at Ponteland Leisure Centre.

Employers looking for new recruits who took part included EE, Matten Hall, Ouseburn Farm, Northeast Fostering, Springfield Healthcare, St Cuthbert's Care, Home Instead and Groundworks Northeast.

Many local volunteering and hobby groups also attended the Fair. From Ponteland Friendly Stitchers and Ponteland Local History Society to the Ponteland Ramblers and the Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club, there was something for all of the 400 people who turned up looking for a job, a volunteering opportunity or a new hobby to take up.

Organisers said the atmosphere on the day was relaxed, people could just come and go as they pleased, and there was no pressure to sign up for anything. Some just came along for a coffee and a chat and the feedback was really positive.

Mr Opperman said: "I was delighted to help organise the Ponteland Over-50s Fair. The event was a huge success and brought the Ponteland community together - with employers, community groups and charities all networking with residents. I want to thank everyone involved in organising the event - I hope everyone that attended enjoyed it!"



MP Guy Opperman at the Ponteland Ukulele Band stall at the Over-50s Fair

Graeme Mason, Chief Sustainability and Communications Officer at Newcastle International Airport, added:

"From security officers to passenger assistance team members, we offer a range of full or part-time positions, comprehensive training and the opportunity to work in an energetic, feel-good environment.

"The Ponteland Over-50s fair was a fantastic platform for us to showcase the range of employment options available across the Airport teams, and we were delighted to see so many people sign up for our digital job alerts service."

"Thanking all customers for your continued support since we lost Fred in January."

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Extra summer patrols to monitor dog walkers

Dog owners are being urged to take particular care during the busy summer period when more families share the park, lanes and walkways.

Ponteland's environmental enforcement officer David Foy has issued a reminder of what is expected of those walking their pooch, including the use of a lead, clearing up fouling and staying alert.

He said: "Ponteland benefits from a lovely park and many lanes and walkways that allow for extensive recreation. These are spaces that are shared by all members of the community and are always busier in the summer period. Now is an appropriate time to consider what is expected of a responsible dog owner."

Anyone letting their dog off a lead needs to be able to recall their pet first time, see their pet at all times, not allow it to approach others without consent and use a lead when encountering livestock or wildlife.

Owners must always clear up after their dog and take bags home if no bins can be found. Any incidents where individuals are witnessed to fail to pick up their dog's waste will result in the issue of a fixed penalty of £100.

They must also stay alert for situations such as picnicking families and approaching dogs - and use the lead as required.

Following the introduction of the Northumberland County Council (Dog Control) Public Spaces Protection Order of 2020, dogs are not allowed in enclosed children's play areas at any time of the year.



Environmental enforcement officer David Foy.

You must always keep your dog on a lead when visiting memorial grounds, cemeteries or gardens of remembrance and on any land classified as an 'A' or 'B' road, together with adjoining verges etc.

It is an offence not to put and keep your dog on a lead at any time in any public place if a council official asks you to do so in the interest of public safety. Leads should be no more than 1.5m in length. Failure to do so will result in the issue of a fixed penalty of £100. Full details can

be found on the Northumberland County Council website.

David added: "The safest way to take your dog out in public is using a lead. It is the dog walker's responsibility to ensure that a dog is always under control and is not a risk to public safety.

"However, if the guidelines above are followed there should be no need for me to ask anyone to place their dog on a lead and we can all enjoy our walk in Ponteland. There will be extra patrols carried out during the summer months."

Urgent appeal for trainee guide dog foster homes

If you want all the benefits of having a loving pet at home without the financial commitments and other burdens they bring, charity Guide Dogs could have the ideal solution.

For it is seeking volunteer fosterers to house the guide dogs, which can transform the lives of people with sight loss, during their training.

The role involves taking the dog to 'school' for training in the morning and collecting them before 5pm during the working week, and spending time doing 'normal' dog activities like

walks, free runs and lots of play at the weekend.

Guide Dogs (The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association) lead on training and provide everything when the dog moves in - food, bedding, a lead and vets' bills - and they're always on hand to support. The team can also arrange for holiday cover.

At the end of the training the dog will leave to start their next chapter. While this is the hardest part of being a fosterer, you know you have played a key role in the process to make a significant difference for someone with sight loss - and you can then foster another dog!

For more information visit guidedogs.org.uk.

Quiz night the answer for village hall fundraising

By Paula Hartford, Dalton Village Hall Secretary

Plans to give a village hall a new lease of life have been boosted after a new quiz night was a big hit.

The first quiz night at Dalton Village Hall was a great success, with an amazing 77 tickets sold and an impressive £1,162 raised which will go towards the continued refurbishment of the hall.

A massive thank you to all who attended and made it a memorable night - we have been blown away with the lovely comments and positive feedback.

Also a thank you to the following businesses who contributed to the raffle: Northumberland Family Butchers; Hooker & Young; Frosties Fish and Chips; Davisons of Ponteland; Barbour and F & M.

Keep an eye on the village hall website and Facebook for future events!

Packed out – the first Dalton Village Hall quiz night.



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Cashflow modelling: the next best thing to a crystal ball

By David Lamb CFP™ MCSI

In my job I use lots of different tools, from compound interest rate calculators to investment risk analysis systems.

But the one piece of equipment I would really like is a crystal ball. To see into my clients' futures would be invaluable. Unfortunately, despite years of searching, I can't find one that works anywhere!

The next best thing to a crystal ball is cashflow modelling, because with reasonable and robust assumptions they can tell you so much about a client's financial future and, therefore, the impact on their lifestyle.

Cashflow modelling should be at the core of a professionally structured financial plan.

Just about every financial decision you are ever likely to make will have an impact on your cashflow projections

and I don't think you should buy an investment or protection policy without understanding how that product will benefit your projections.

Building a detailed cashflow model can be time consuming but the benefits are huge and, combined with a bit of lifestyle planning, can change lives.

Cashflow modelling can tell you so much, for example:

- How much is enough to give you the lifestyle you want, without the fear of running out of money, whatever happens.
- When you can retire and stop doing the things you don't want to do and start doing the things you do want to do.
- How much you will leave on your death and how much you need to leave. Consideration can then be given to how much you want to leave and the implications if these numbers are different. It may be

that younger people with families need to think about contingency plans, such as life assurance. Older people, who may be leaving too much, can ask if they can spend more (think bucket lists!) or give money away during their lifetime, not when they die.

- How much money you will need at different stages of your life.
- How much risk you need to take with your investments. If you are never going to run out of money, you do not need to take unnecessary risks to get more!
- Whether you need to worry about money, or not.

Helping clients see into their financial future can have a massive positive impact on their lives, but it is essential that these projections are reviewed on a regular basis.

Build your own cashflow model at lambfinancial.truthaboutmoney.co.uk.



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Gorgeous sunshine attracts record crowds to Party in the Park

By Andy Anderson

Gorgeous sunshine attracted record crowds to one of Ponteland's favourite annual community events.

The Churches co-operated once again to organise a successful Party in the Park, with attractions including Ponteland Rock Choir, Ponteland Community Wind Band and Jill Errington Dance School.

The funfair and the bouncy castle were ever popular, the tea tent was busy all afternoon and the barbecue sold out. Other draws included the Army Cadets' climbing wall and Punch & Judy.

The admission charge was held at £1 and we estimate that nearly 3,000 people including stallholders and performers must have been in the park - better than ever before.

We are extremely grateful to Northumberland Fire Brigade for attending, Newcastle International Airport, Ponteland Churches Together and all the businesses who sponsored the event.

Our thanks also go to Ponteland Town Council, which designed and paid for the banners which advertised the event and allowed it to once again be held in the park.

Cover shot: Jamie, seven, and Sophia, five, on the shuggy boats. Photos by Barry Pells.



Christopher and Matilda Kidd on hook a duck (above)
Graham Hickman with daughter Grace, seven (below)



Graham and Joanne Atkinson with son Marlow, eight



Mason Moite, nine, with Bill Deacon of Northumbria Blood Bikes



Henry Lennox-Scott with Northumberland Fire Service



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Your letters

Support for the Police and Crime Commissioner over a Council Tax increase and a call for care for hedgehogs in this month's letters...

Police and Crime Commissioner not to blame for tax increase

Kevin Wilson and Hilary Wood (Your letters issues 213 and 212) are mistaken to blame the 10% increase in the Police and Crime Commissioner's precept on our PCC Kim McGuinness.

This precept funds our police service and was effectively set by the Government who decided on the policing grant.

The Government has cut 1,100 police from the Northumbria force since 2010 and even after a partial U-turn our force will still be 400 short. The lesson must be that if you want fewer police, vote Conservative!

Kim McGuinness has overseen Northumbria Police's move from 'needs improvement' to 'good', established a violence

reduction unit reaching out to 30,000 young people to steer them away from knife crime and launched a successful safer transport project.

Penny pinching on police only costs the community dearly in the long run, in money and lives ruined.

Bob Turner
Lynwood Close, Ponteland

Help our hedgehogs

Just a friendly reminder to do all we can to protect our four-legged prickly garden friends, who still remain on the endangered species list.

We are in that time of year where breeding is high on the agenda for hedgehogs, with little hoglets currently or soon to be roaming around our gardens and streets.

Please help them by making highways (13 inch holes) between garden fences so they have a larger area to roam and forage and by putting out a shallow bowl of fresh water and some cat dry/wet food in the evenings.

See the British Hedgehog Preservation Society website on what to feed/not to feed hedgehogs: www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/feeding.


At this time of year, many hedgehogs are also sadly killed or seriously injured by gardening equipment.

Please check your gardens before mowing, strimming or using hedgecutters and if you should find a hedgehog out in the daytime, please collect it and put it in a box with a small dish of water and call a local wildlife rehab centre, such as Hope for Hedgehogs in Woodside.

K. Johnstone
Eland Edge, Ponteland

August issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the August issue is Friday July 14. Door to door distribution will be from Monday July 31 to Friday August 4. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the August 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.



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MP**

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Any problems or issues? Get in touch

guy.opperman@parliament.uk

What's on...

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 are on July 5 'Happy Days Digging Up Northumberland's Past' by Barry Mead and on August 2 'Performance Poet & Comedian' - David Roe. We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join Ponteland u3a by calling the membership secretary on 01661 824953.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday July 10 at 2.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre we have John Sadler talking on 'The Border Reivers'.

Ponteland WI

Visitors are welcome to our next meeting on Tuesday July 11 at 2pm in Merton Hall where speaker Emily Toth will tell us about the Victoria Tunnel. Our competition is for a commemorative item. Join us for our lunches on Monday July 3 and Monday August 7, both at Plants Plus at 12.30pm.

Ponteland Village WI

A town crier will be addressing the meeting on Tuesday July 11 at St Mary's Parish Centre. The Darlington Town Crier, Peter Stemmer, will explain his duties. We meet at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of every month (except August). If you would like to give us a try, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com. Look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

Plant Heritage North East Group

We are holding a Plant Fair at Blagdon Estate (NE13 6DE) on Sunday July 16 from 1pm until 4.30pm. £5 entry, children under 16 free and free for Plant Heritage members on production of current membership card. Entry fee allows access to grounds and gardens. Dogs on lead welcome. Refreshments available.

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

Our next meeting is on Monday July 24 between 2pm and 4pm in St Mary's Parish Centre when Chris Powell from the Cone Exchange will give a talk 'From Trash to Treasure/From Packer to Pirate'. Visitors are welcome - £5 fee.

Kirkley Carvers

Join us to chip and chat at Whalton Village Hall, NE61 3XA, on Thursdays from 1pm to 3pm. Contact Bob on 0191 267 1930 for more information.

Merton Hall library and coffee morning

Merton Hall's coffee morning and free library is now open on Fridays from 9.30am

to 11.30am. Due to the generosity of residents Merton Hall cannot accept any more books at this time. We are pleased to report the free library is now full.

Ponteland Social Group

Come to our fantastic social group - a great chance for older people who live in the area to get together and enjoy friendship, a whole host of great activities, crafts, music or even just have a nice cuppa. You can find us every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12noon at St Mary's Parish Centre. Contact email friends@ageuk-northumberland.org.uk or call 01670 784800.

Ponteland Ladies Choir

We meet on Mondays, term time, at 7.30pm at Ponteland Community Primary School, Callerton Lane. We sing a wide variety of music. Please contact Susan on 07710 418780 for more details. New members welcome - no auditions required.

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 Ukulele Band

We are a friendly group of mixed ability ukulele players and meet every Tuesday at the CIU Club from 1pm to 3pm. New members welcome.

Knit & Natter Group

Knit & Natter on Tuesday afternoons from 1pm to 3pm at Ponteland Library. For more information contact Library Assistant Julie Ennis at ponteland.library@northumberland.gov.uk

Ponteland Writers

We regularly write to prompts and also have a visiting published author for more in-depth sessions. Some of us write purely for pleasure and others have had work published. Come and join us for motivation and practice. £2 a week. We now meet

every Monday from 11am to 1pm at Ponteland Social Club in Merton Way.

Creative Writing Classes

Places currently available for one or two new members; beginners and more experienced writers are equally welcome. These classes will inspire and encourage you to write poetry, short fiction and memoir and to share and develop your writing through stimulating workshop sessions in a friendly and supportive group. We meet on Wednesday mornings in Ponteland and Dinnington. Email Claire@claire276.plus.com for more information or to arrange a free taster session.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday worship 10am and 6.30pm. First Sunday each month Bouncy Church 9am onwards - lovely breakfast, bouncy castle, crafts, all age short service 9.40am in addition to normal church service. Monday - 1pm to 4pm 'Open Door' friendship café/warm space. Tuesday - Boys Brigade with Girls' Association. Thursday - Toddlers, Men's Forum, Women Together. Saturday - walking group and Coffee Shop Strollers. Room hire: contact anncooperx@gmail.com or call 01661 613502. For Minister Rev Jona Sewell email revjsewell@gmail.com or call 01661 822057.

Line dancing

We meet on Wednesdays at 6.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre where we have lots of laughs, friendship and exercise to music. The cost is £3 per session. Dancing is at beginner and intermediate level. New dancers are always welcome. Free taster session offered. Contact Rosemary Gray (01661) 822493.

Rotary Ponteland

Rotary Ponteland meets at the Britannia Hotel, Newcastle Airport, each Tuesday, alternating lunchtime and evenings. The club is involved with wide range of activities in the community, our schools and newly formed environmental group PAGE. We also organise a number of events in the village to raise funds to support local charities. If you are not able to attend regular meetings, we hold occasional Zoom meetings where you can "drop in". To learn more please visit rotaryponteland.org.uk or contact John Cooper at info@rotaryponteland.org.uk.

Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers is the local branch of the national charity Ramblers, dedicated to removing barriers so everyone can enjoy the pleasures of walking. We organise walks in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and north Durham led by local members. These are usually of 5-6 miles on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month and longer walks every other Sunday. Why not join us - you can come on a couple of walks without any obligation to join - you will be very welcome. For details of forthcoming walks, please visit our website ramblers.org.uk/ponteland.

So what does the Town Council do?

By Coun Karen Overbury, Mayor of Ponteland

Being Mayor is a privilege. I was voted in at the May meeting of Ponteland Town Council and have already met some wonderful, inspirational people – and eaten some delicious cake!

A lot of people have congratulated me on my appointment, but then asked: "So what does the Council do?"

And when I start to explain, most are surprised by the variety of duties the Town Council has.

Residents seem to know that the Town Council owns and manages Ponteland Park, granting - and occasionally refusing - permission for organisations to use the park.

The Council also owns the play parks in Ponteland, beside the Leisure Centre and on Twizell Place. Contractors check them every day and, sadly, a big issue they have to deal with is vandalism - removing glass from beside the equipment, repairing equipment and replacing damaged fencing. Of course, all this costs each and every one of us as Council Tax payers.

The Callerton Lane play park is monitored by Council CCTV cameras and the police regularly look at the recordings. There are also CCTV cameras along Main Street, Merton Way, the Broadway shops and other key areas.

The Town Council owns and manages Prestwick Cemetery and the allotments. It also owns all the waste bins in the area.

The toilets in Thornhill Road car park, which are often praised, are owned and run by the Council, which pays for repairs, water charges and security.

It has noticeboards in key areas, including Main Street, Broadway shops, Prestwick, Medburn and Milbourne. These keep residents up to date with Town Council news – some notices may appear to be rather dull but there is a statutory obligation to display them and they help to ensure that everything the Council does and every penny it spends are reported and monitored.

The Remembrance Sunday parade and service are organised by the Town Council, as are one-off events such as last year's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and the May Coronation.

It offers monies for events such as street or tea parties as councillors feel it is important to help people to get together.

A floral display on Coates Green.



It also gives grants to a variety of groups, organisations and charities, from church halls to the Scouts.

For some years, the Council has paid for Christmas lights that have helped to brighten our streets.

And the floral displays created by Council contractors are spectacular. They plant in various areas including on Coates Green, on Broadway and as far as Cheviot View to the east and along Main Street to the west. The team's imagination and dedication are wonderful, although a major problem is dealing with the vandalism by a small group of youths.

Councillors, who are all volunteers, sit on a variety of committees and working parties, from Highways to Planning, Events to Environment, and they provide a link to Northumberland County Council.

Ponteland Town Council gives an annual award to people who have gone "the extra mile" for the community. These awards have been made to individuals such as Scout and Guide leaders and organisers of community events.

The Town Council meets the cost of

providing youth workers for two nights a week. On one of these nights a youth club is usually held in Merton Hall.

Paperwork, administration, compliance and accounts are just a few of the tasks of the Town Council staff, who also deal with enquiries from the public on a wide range of subjects, many of them not related to Town Council duties or obligations. Without our staff's dedication, life in the parish of Ponteland would be much poorer.

Many concerns are the responsibility of Northumberland County Council, which has recently introduced a platform called Fix My Street to report problems such as potholes, fly tipping, broken street lights and planning and building issues. Simply download the app or log on to fixmystreet.com to report a concern, see what has been reported and read updates.

This is just the tip of the Town Council iceberg. Being its leader, its Mayor, is challenging and occasionally time-consuming. But I'm enjoying the tasks plus meeting people. It's a fascinating role and I feel it's important to give back to your community – and, of course, there's the cake

Courageous car crash survivor's marathon effort

A courageous Darras Hall woman is taking thousands of small steps on her road to recovery from a horror road accident – by competing in this year's Great North Run.

Julia Waddell, 52, says she is determined to complete the gruelling half-marathon in September – and is already almost up to speed.

Married Julia is getting into the best possible shape by jogging almost seven miles at a time while training on the streets around her home.

She believes she will possess the physical and mental endurance required to conquer the full run course come the big day.

To do so would be a remarkable victory for Julia, who completed 10 GNRs in the years before she narrowly survived a car crash in Newcastle in July 2021.

Two men travelling in a stolen car died when their vehicle smashed into hers, leaving blameless Julia with severe injuries and trapped in an ongoing battle to regain her health.



Julia suffered a stroke due to the accident's impact on her body and is aiming to support the Stroke Association by raising hundreds of pounds from the run – and is seeking further sponsorship.

She said: "I shouldn't have survived the accident. As a result of the stroke, I lost all movement in my left side. I now have limited use of my left hand and

have regained the use of my left leg. My vision and my memory are also affected.

"I was extremely fit before the accident. Doing this year's Great North Run is about motivating myself to get back to some form of fitness. I used to run three or four times a week, covering around 25 miles, and I would cycle and do yoga, but now I can't do either.

"I was on the run's mailing list, and I found out about the Stroke Association appealing for people to do the run. They have been very helpful to me, and they wanted me to do the event.

"I found out in January that I had my place. I am apprehensive about doing it, but I am also determined that I will. As long as they haven't taken the gantry down by the time I get through, I'll take it as a good result."

Julia, who has been medically retired from her job as an NHS blood donor carer, is aiming for a time of around three hours, against a best pre-accident time of sub 1hr 54mins.

She has already had over £350 pledged by wellwishers. Anyone who would like to donate can do so by searching for her by name on the JustGiving website.

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Pothole pilot scheme set to hit the road

A trial aiming to further improve road repairs in Northumberland is set to be agreed by the County Council.

A three-month 'invest to save' project would be trialled in the north and west of the county, where affected areas of road will be cut out and patched, rather than using the current method of filling and repairing the pothole itself.

While more expensive and time consuming, the aim is that the cut and patch technique will be smoother for road users and more hard-wearing so less likely to re-occur.

At present, cutting and patching for repair of defects identified through inspections or reports from the public is used less widely than the fill and repair method.

The Council's Cabinet is being recommended to set aside £492,600 from the council's severe weather reserve to fund the pilot scheme which, if approved, will get underway in late June.

The planned trial is the latest in a series of investments the council has made to tackle issues on the county's 3,500 miles of roads.

These include four new gully tankers and the PotholePro, a multi-functional mobile repair machine which is being used in the South-East of the county, as well as the Council investing an additional £17.2m of its own funds for a minor roads maintenance programme.

Recently the council also launched its new public reporting system, FixMyStreets Pro - to make it easier for the public to pinpoint and report repairs and get feedback on what action is being taken.

Coun John Riddle, Cabinet Member for Improving our Roads and Highways, said: "We know potholes and road defects are a big issue for residents and every year we spend millions carrying out thousands of repairs and improvements to our road network across the county.

"We're always looking at ways of improving the service we provide and, if approved, this trial will allow us to create more longer-lasting repairs and create smoother road surfaces for users.

"This new approach does require a step change in operations due to the nature and scope of the additional works involved, as the repair technique used takes longer to complete and involves traffic management, such as temporary traffic lights, to allow teams to work safely.

"The trial would be closely monitored to help further understand the effects and impacts of carrying out more pothole repairs using this patch repair technique."

The report to Cabinet states that the operational, financial and logistical constraints mean that the application of this repair technique would be limited to a proportion of road defects during the trial with other defects continuing to be repaired using the fill and repair method.

The outcome and implications of the trial and the repair techniques used will then be evaluated and considered as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2024/25.

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Local businesses urged to support Duck Race

Local businesses are being urged to support a popular annual event which traditionally marks the end of the school holidays.

This year Rotary Ponteland's Duck Race will be raising funds for regional charity Children North East and organisers hope to mirror last year's hugely successful day, which raised around £3,000 for the Great North Children's Hospital Foundation.

The ducks will once again be set free on the River Pont in Ponteland Park on the afternoon of Sunday September 3.

Incoming Rotary President Peter Tincombe is looking forward to the first fundraising event of his presidential year. He said: "It is a wonderful event for all the family and will provide a fitting finale to the school summer holidays."

Rotary Ponteland are once again calling upon local businesses to support the event by sponsoring a race or entering a boat in a dedicated race. Anyone interested in sponsoring a race or a boat is asked to email Rotary Ponteland at events@rotaryponteland.org.uk.

More details of the event and how you can purchase duck race tickets online and take part in Duck Race competitions can be found at rotaryponteland.org.uk and Rotary Ponteland's Facebook page.

Joanne King, Events and Community Co-ordinator at Children North East, added: "The support of Rotary Ponteland over the years has helped us continue our mission of providing life-changing services and support to babies, children and young families within the North East and we look forward to once again being part of this super day out for all the family."

Families at last year's Duck Race in Ponteland Park.



September deadline for community grant applications

Voluntary and community groups that need financial assistance are being invited to apply for funding from Northumberland County Council's community chest scheme.

The money can be used for a wide range of community causes including those which enhance the environment and promote health and wellbeing. The grant has also been particularly helpful to youth groups and sports groups.

Grants of up to 75% up to a maximum of £5,000 are available and there is no minimum amount for applications, however, recipients must be able to fund the other 25% from other sources.

The deadline for the next round of funding is September 29 and the application process is very straightforward.

Council Leader Glen Sanderson said: "Community groups are often enthusiastic to do more to meet the needs of their communities, but lack of money can be a major obstacle for them.

"The community chest is a popular grant fund and is aimed at helping these hard-working groups finance worthwhile community causes. We have made it as simple as possible to apply for the grant and would ask people to get in touch if they think they have a project, we may be able to help fund."

For more information or to apply to the fund email communitychest@northumberland.gov.uk or visit nland.cc/Chest.

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