

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district

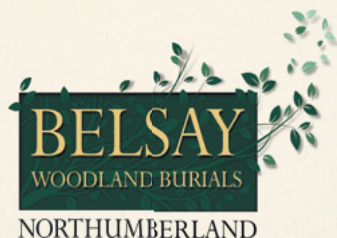


Plans for leisure and
retail scheme rejected

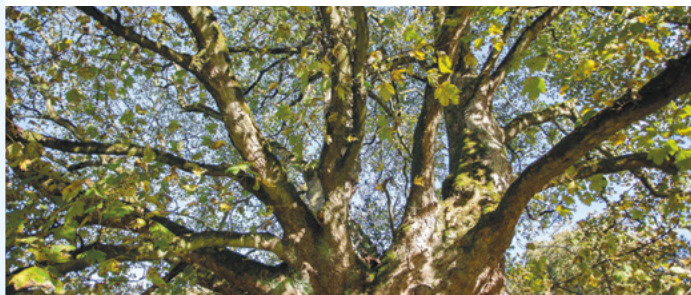
Police investigation launched
into Darras Hall burglaries

MP calls meeting over
£1.3m bridleway scheme

School celebrates outstanding verdict



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Generous students and families make huge donation to food bank



Needy households will receive much needed food parcels thanks to the generosity of Ponteland High School students and their families.

The annual Christmas hamper collection day, where students pack donations to be shared with local charities, has become a highlight of the school year.

Last month, 390kg of food was provided to Newcastle Food Bank for parcels for those in need over Christmas.

Kieran McGrane, CEO of the Pele Trust which PHS is part of, said: "It's one of the best days of the school year!"





Volunteers sought for speed gun scheme

By PC Cameron Makepeace, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

This national initiative, which plays a vital role in cutting the number of speeding vehicles, aims to educate drivers on the importance of road safety and help keep communities safe.

In my first column of the new year, I want to reiterate my priorities as your local neighbourhood officer.

I have been in the role for six months now and over that time have established links with residents, local businesses and the excellent schools and leisure facilities in the area. I will continue to do this into the new year and would welcome anybody to contact me and arrange a meeting.

As I often hear from residents that

speeding is a particular issue locally, I wanted to make you all aware of the Community Speedwatch Scheme. This national initiative, which plays a vital role in helping to reduce speeding vehicles, aims to educate drivers on the importance of road safety and help keep communities safe.

You can play a vital role in the scheme by volunteering your time to conduct high visibility speed checks on 20mph or 30mph roads in daylight hours and safe weather conditions.

Volunteers receive full training to operate a speed gun, accurately record and document information collected in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and help to deter speeding in your area.

Applications open in January - to apply contact the Citizens in Policing team at citizensinpolicing@northumbria.police.uk

and confirm your home location. A link to the online application form will be sent to you via email during the recruitment phase.

Successful applicants will then undergo a short telephone interview, and subsequent low-level vetting.

I am aware there may be some concern in the Darras Hall area after several burglaries. We have increased our patrols in the area and a full investigation is currently ongoing. I would urge everyone to remain vigilant, ensure buildings and vehicles are secure and report any concerns they have through 999, 101 or via the Northumbria Police website.

Readers can contact me through Northumbria Police's local neighbourhood policing team mailbox at the following address: easttynedale.npt@northumbria.police.uk.

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We are a specialist school dedicated to teaching, learning, and promoting wellbeing, offering outstanding facilities.

PCPS takes great pride in offering abundant opportunities alongside a first class education for both our children and their families.

Limited spaces are still available for the academic year 2023/2024. Children residing in the wider Ponteland catchment area have a geographical progression path to high school.

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

Rotary Christmas events raise more than £2,500 for charity

Rotary Ponteland's seasonal fundraising tour started with a visit from Santa for the Christmas lights switch-on at Coates Green.

Santa then embarked on a two-night sleigh run around Ponteland and Darras Hall which included a visit to the Royal Hampton care centre on Meadowfield.

The busy weekend continued with the Rotary Christmas Market at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Sunday December 3, which had a range of craft stalls, festive foods and Christmas gifts.

Then on Friday December 8 Rotary members toured local pubs and clubs with their collecting buckets, with a Christmas Disco at The Diamond Inn the following night. The final sum raised is expected to be over £2,500, with the main beneficiary being Children North East.

The Bedlington Salvation Army Band also benefited, receiving the proceeds of the Rotary Carol Concert at Ponteland Methodist Church on Thursday December 14.

Santa Claus at the Coates Green Christmas lights switch-on with Ponteland Mayor Karen Overbury and Rotary members. Photo by Barry Pells.



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Counselling or 1:1 support for adults and children experiencing grief



We can help with:

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Free and confidential support for under 18s experiencing pre or post bereavement.

Adult Support

Face-to-face support or counselling for those dealing with the loss of loved one.

Bereavement café

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tyndalehospice.com
01434 600388

Charity Number: 1034170, Company Number: 02870776

Revised plans for leisure and retail scheme rejected

Revised plans for a food, drink and retail development behind Rialto restaurant in Ponteland have been rejected by planners.

In October 2021, Northumberland County Council's Licensing Sub-Committee approved a licensing application for the proposed market square, known as 'The Orchard', made up of market stalls, retail units and food vendors which could accommodate 350 people.

The agreed licence stated alcohol sales in the outside area must stop at 11pm on Fridays and Saturdays and 10.30pm the rest of the week, while hot food service must cease at 11.30pm.

A follow-up planning application in early 2022 proposing double height shipping containers and a large canopy with a large advertising screen generated more than 110 objections and revised plans were submitted in January 2023.

The overall footprint had been reduced by 32 per cent and capacity from 350 to 250, while black larch timber cladding, light buff multi brick face and an anthracite canvas canopy had replaced the shipping container concept.

The accompanying design and access statement said the scheme would reinstate a village centre in Ponteland with the introduction of a 'farmers style market' with carts and stalls including a servery, florist, artisan bakery, coffee stall and three street food stands under a large canopy.



A visual of 'The Orchard' scheme.

The revised planning application generated 58 objections, including the Environment Agency, the county council's environmental protection team and Ponteland Town Council, with none in support.

Reasons for refusal by delegated decision set out in the NCC report included the scale, density, siting and layout being out of character in the area, the potential increase in noise, disturbance, light and odour having a significantly harmful effect and a possible increase to the risk of flooding.

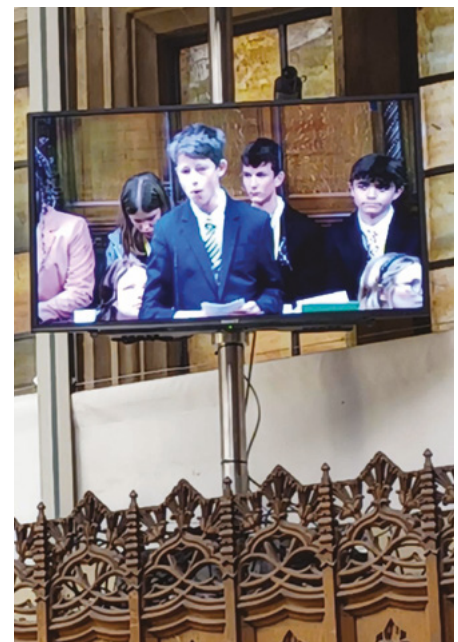
Elected member for Northumberland enjoys first day in the chamber

Budding MP James Hickie has enjoyed his first day in the House of Commons – at the tender age of 15.

As elected member of the Youth Cabinet for Northumberland he took part in a full day of debating in the chamber, sitting on the famous green leather benches.

James, a student at Ponteland High School, said: "I got the opportunity to speak in the chamber about holiday hunger – children not having access to food and activities during the holidays when school meals are taken away."

The experience has given the teenager a real taste for politics. He added: "In the future I would like to study a politics-related course and eventually end up in the field."



Anxious wait for villagers as decision on quarry plan postponed

Villagers face an anxious wait after a decision on a planning application for a major new quarry development was postponed for three months.

Revised plans for the extraction of four million tonnes of dolerite from a 28-hectare site half a mile south-west of Kirkwhelpington by North East Concrete Ltd were due to go before the December 5 meeting of Northumberland County Council's Strategic Planning Committee.

But they will not now be decided on until March, following further discussions between the applicant and senior planners. If approved, the new quarry could generate dozens of HGV journeys a day through the centre of Ponteland.

Named Northside after a local farm, the proposal site is currently used for cattle and sheep grazing and is also home to bats, skylarks, meadow pipits, linnets,

brown hares and hedgehogs. Mitigation measures would include checking habitats before their removal to ensure no species are present.

Dolerite - also known as whinstone - is a hard stone that is used widely as a crushed aggregate in the construction industry, including as a key part of the production of concrete.

Last May the company, which supplies a range of concrete, asphalt and aggregates and services to the construction, commercial and domestic customer sectors, amended its original planning application.

This included a reduction in the tonnage of mineral proposed for extraction from four million to three million tonnes and the volume of infill material needing to be brought into the site by 30% from 1.3m cubic metres to 900,000m cubic metres. The working area has also been reduced from 24.7 hectares to 19 hectares and the duration from 25 to 20 years.

The site, allocated for the extraction of crushed rock aggregates in the newly adopted Northumberland Local Plan to meet the county's mineral needs to 2036, would operate from 7am to 6pm weekdays and 7am to 1pm on Saturdays, but not on Sundays or bank holidays.

Last summer objectors launched a campaign against the proposal under the banner Kirkwhelpington Residents Against Needless Extraction (Krane). There have been 40 submissions of support and 170 objections lodged on NCC's planning portal, with more than 30 from Ponteland residents.

Ponteland Town Council is also objecting, raising concerns regarding the volume of traffic movements, the proposed routes and the environmental impact, while Kirkwhelpington Parish Council said it was "dismayed" it had not been consulted about the changed plans.

The plans can be viewed on the portal with the reference 22/01909/CCMEA.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

How you can turn your grief into a lasting legacy



The loss of a life partner is one of the most traumatic experiences we can have. But out of the resulting grief can emerge a lasting legacy, as our latest client case study shows.

With no children or close relatives, Kathleen and husband Martin were absolutely devoted to each other and did everything together.

One of their favourite holiday destinations was Speyside in Scotland, but three years after Martin passed away Kathleen had still not returned to the area – saying it would be just too painful to visit.

Financial planning projections showed Kathleen was financially secure, and her plan was to bequeath donations to Dogs Trust and other charities in her will.

We suggested to Kathleen that the charities could have a long wait and she may enjoy seeing the beneficiaries of her wealth by making donations now – an idea she loved. As this was

also Martin's money, we asked what he would have wanted.

He was very keen on rugby and hill walking and Kathleen felt sure that he would have liked to support his local rugby club and also to help to get underprivileged children out of the city and into his beloved mountains.

She emailed the secretary of Martin's first rugby club, while we contacted Glenmore Lodge, one of the country's leading outward-bound centres.

We also suggested to Kathleen that, if we were going to help kids get into the mountains, we should also think about getting them down - so we also contacted Cairngorm Mountain Rescue.

After discussions Kathleen decided to

fund a minibus for the rugby club and an expensive drone for the Mountain Rescue team. Glenmore Lodge are also developing a course, to run over 10 years, to train children in mountain skills, which will be in Martin's name, with a plaque dedicated to him at the lodge.

The donations left a lasting legacy for Martin which gave Kathleen a huge morale boost and she is following the students' progress with a keen interest.

Next month: find out how you can secure your place at an invitation-only seminar where we'll reveal five things the financial services industry doesn't want you to know.

Model your financial future with our free online tool at lambfinancial.co.uk.

New management for Ponteland Leisure Centre announced

New management for Ponteland Leisure Centre has been announced just weeks after it was named one of the best in the country.

Northumberland County Council's leisure services are to be managed by Places for People Leisure Management Limited (PfPLM) from April, following a major review which the authority said seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

The change is part of a countywide strategy to tackle inequalities, increase physical activity, improve access and encourage greater participation in physical activity, working with a range of partners.

Charitable leisure and cultural trust Active Northumberland has managed ten leisure facilities and services for the county council for nine years.

In November both Ponteland and Morpeth leisure centres were graded 'Excellent' by Sport England's toughest quality assessment, Quest, after providing evidence of high quality and continuous improvements across a number of benchmarks during a mystery visit and one-day assessment.

Under procurement law the authority has to conduct a procurement process to ensure the authority is receiving good value for money and the best services possible. NCC has used this opportunity to transform the current provision to a Community Leisure and Wellbeing Service.



PfPLM is one of the UK's leading social enterprises and leading leisure management contractors, currently employing over 6,000 staff and operating over 100 sites on behalf of 33 local authorities.

Coun Jeff Watson, cabinet member with responsibility for Healthy Lives said: "For the last nine years Active Northumberland have operated as the leisure provider and we thank them for their very good service to date.

"Staff who work across our leisure centres already do a fabulous job in supporting customers and will continue to do so as we make this transition. All permanent staff will be transferred over to the new operator on the same terms and conditions - as required by employment law. All transferring staff will retain their current terms and conditions."

*Hats &
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Head 'delighted' after school retains 'Outstanding' status

The headteacher of Darras Hall Primary School has spoken of her 'delight' after it retained 'Outstanding' status in its first Ofsted inspection in 15 years.

The 446-pupil school, which caters for children aged three to 11 years and is part of the Pele Trust, was visited by four Ofsted inspectors on November 14 to 15.

Their report opened: "This is a welcoming school with a true spirit of community. The school works together with parents and carers to meet pupils' needs. Staff know the pupils well. They show a genuine care for them. Pupils thrive at this school.

"The school has the highest of expectations for all pupils. It provides pupils with a first-rate education that is both knowledge rich and culturally diverse. Pupils enjoy their learning. They are eager to contribute to discussion and debate. Pupils produce work of a high quality. They achieve exceptionally well."

It added: "Pupils behave in an exemplary fashion. They are polite, friendly and respectful of others...Pupils build strong friendships and support each other's well-being."

Other areas singled out for praise included 'a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests' such as sports, dance, choir and forest school, residential trips, trips abroad and pupil councils: "The school listens to pupils.



Outstanding! Pupils celebrate the Ofsted report. Photos by Barry Pells.

It values their opinions."

Inspectors also said that the school had established a broad and ambitious curriculum 'that provides pupils with a deep body of knowledge'.

Headteacher Victoria Parr said: "During recent years the school has successfully navigated a series of significant changes - an age range reorganisation from first to primary, the move to a brand new school building and the formation of a multi academy trust.

"I am delighted that our commitment to ensuring that our pupils receive a first rate school experience has been recognised with an 'Outstanding' judgement. Our pupils' thirst for learning, care for one another and exemplary behaviour is highlighted in the report. They are thoroughly deserving of this recognition.

"I am hugely proud of what we have achieved, together with the support of governors and Pele Trust colleagues. It is a privilege to work with such talented and committed individuals within our school community and I am thankful for the contribution that each of them has made to our school."

Pele Trust CEO Kieran McGrane added: "Darras Hall has been waiting since December 2008 to be re-inspected, having been exempt from inspection as an outstanding school.

"We know that the vast majority of outstanding schools inspected under the current more challenging Ofsted framework have been downgraded. Therefore it is a wonderful testament to the professionalism, drive and ambition of school leaders, staff and governors that the school has made sustained progress."

Ponteland High School named in region's top four

There was also good news for the Pele Trust's Ponteland High School, which is in fourth place in the latest Times (Parent Power) Secondary Schools League Table while Northumberland schools have been jointly ranked as the best in the region for the first time.

A table showing the performance of schools ranked by local authority area puts Northumberland at the top for schools achieving 'good' or 'outstanding' ratings. It showed 94% of schools in Northumberland are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' since their last inspections, the highest in the LA7 combined

authority area and above the England average of 89%.

LA7 authorities include Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland and County Durham.

MP Guy Opperman singled out PHS for praise, saying: "These results are great news for young people across Northumberland, but Ponteland High School stands out in particular for the incredible hard work that staff, pupils, and parents have put in to truly transform the school.

"Following £43m of funding, 2,000 pupils now have access to state-of-the-art facilities, including a brand-new leisure centre, a swimming pool, and a modern library. The school rightly has pride of place at the heart of the local community in Ponteland."

Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



The backlash correspondent Steve Eglon predicted in his letter last month attacking the £1.3m bridleway project has duly arrived in the January postbag.

Any improvements to walking and cycling routes should be welcomed

I am astounded, even in these times of fake news, that some are unable to marshal a few simple facts into a coherent opinion

I'm referring to Steve Eglon's letter 'Please justify the spend, disruption and impact of bridleway revamp' - December issue - lamenting 'the need to pander to the odd cyclist' for the Rotary Way bridleway improvements.

It is not pedal cycles that cause potholes, that damage pavements, grass verges and kerbs. It is not pedal cycles that pollute the air and affect children's respiratory systems.

It is not pedal cycles that kill and seriously injure thousands of pedestrians and animals, and damage street furniture and other vehicles. It is not pedal cycles that create long traffic queues on Ponteland's roads.

I agree it seems an inordinate amount of money for the current works and with some consultation better use may have been made of it - e.g. widening and improving the Ponteland to Darras bridleway creating a less muddy, safer walking, pram pushing and cycling route (especially for students attending the new schools).

Nevertheless, any improvements to encourage walking and cycling should be welcomed for residents, visitors and the planet.

Stewart Hamilton
Parklands, Darras Hall

So where would you like cyclists to ride?

It is bizarre to read Steve Eglon's complaint about the bridlepath being redeveloped for 'the odd cyclist' when it would appear he doesn't think they should be on the road either - apparently because they don't pay a tax that was abolished in 1937.

He should really seek a rebate if he thinks he's been paying "road tax" since then. Perhaps he means Vehicle Excise Duty, which is charged on the carbon dioxide emissions of engines.

Bicycles obviously don't produce any, so are exempt - just as electric vehicles are not charged. Presumably he's equally angry about disabled drivers and the police, who are also exempt from the charge, and so must not be, by his estimation, 'actual road users'. Roads are funded from general taxation, i.e. by all road users.

It is a shame in this day and age that people like Mr Eglon continue to try to justify their dislike for people just getting

around on a different mode of transport than him with this false notion, as well as the lazy 'lycra warriors' stereotyping.

Simon Crisp
Wentworth Court, Darras Hall

Baffling lack of funds for youth facilities

With respect to the development of the bridleway, I too share the concerns of other citizens about the environmental impact this is having and the costs.

There are two things that particularly frustrate and amaze me, however. Firstly, the appalling state of the path through Ponteland Park that leads up to the crossing across Callerton Lane.

This path is used by many hundreds of people every school day and many other users outside of school times. Yet it is constantly flooded and filthy as well as too narrow and uneven in places. Why was this not addressed at the time the work was being done on the exact opposite side of the road?

Secondly, £1.3m is found to create a cycle and pedestrian route and I genuinely hope that this becomes popular and well used. However, I wonder if some funds might not be found to increase the number and quality of facilities available to the younger people of Ponteland?

Could funds not be found to extend and improve the playgrounds or even create a new one? Could we not provide a skate park? Could we not provide a multi use games area (MUGA)?

I find the lack of such facilities in such an affluent area baffling.

Stephen Warner
Whinbank, Darras Hall

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.

February issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the February issue is Monday January 15. Door to door distribution will be from Monday January 29 to Friday February 2. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the February issue. Please visit ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views for online issues and all updates.

What's on...

Ponteland Wildlife Group

On Tuesday January 2 George Dodds will give a talk on 'College Valley Estates: The Cheviot Jewel and on February 6 John Hartshome will present 'Northumberland Peat Partnership. Both start at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre. Admission £2 including refreshments. Open to all.

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: January 3 - The Japanese Experience (Culture & Lifestyle) by Denise Howe; February 7 - AGM, a talk on 'Fraud' by PC Brian Collins and Faith Tea. 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 January 8 at 2.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre we have David Gold speaking on 'Lady Mary Wortley Montague'.

Ponteland WI

Visitors are welcome to attend our next monthly meeting on Tuesday January 9 at 2pm in Merton Hall. Our speaker Jenny Thomas will tell us the history of greyhounds; large, fairly fast when they can be bothered, but canine couch potatoes if given the chance. The competition item is a bangle or bracelet. Our next lunch dates are Monday January 8 and Monday February 5, meeting in Plants Plus at 12.30pm. Join us for a chew and chat.

Ponteland Village WI

The Hepplewhite Gin company will be giving a talk at our next meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday January 9 in St Mary's Parish Centre. Subgroups include our Book Club, Walking, Dining Out and Walking with Dogs. Due to number of members, we can no longer allow visitors but we have a waiting list. For more information, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com. Look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

Our January meeting will take place at Ponteland CIU Club on Wednesday January 10 at 2pm. Club members will demonstrate what can be achieved using a supermarket bunch, which will be raffled off later in the afternoon. It would be lovely to see some new faces. Refreshments are available in the lounge. Visitors always welcome - fee £7.

Plant Heritage NE Group

On Saturday January 13 at 2.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, the NE Group AGM will be followed by a talk from Richard Barnes covering garden design ideas and plants for the winter months. Visitors welcome £5. Contact pat.skews@btinternet.com for further information.

Ponteland Cricket Club U11s

Winter training starts Sunday January 14 from 5.30pm to 7pm at Ponteland Community Primary School gym. Open to boys and girls aged under 11 (school years 4-6), new players welcome. Come and join the fun! Contact: steven.j.sowden@gmail.com.

Ponteland Local History Society

On Thursday January 18 at 7.30pm Freda Thompson will give her talk 'Grainger Town - a look at the legacy of Richard Grainger' at St Mary's Parish Centre. Visitors welcome £2.

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

Our next meeting will be on Monday January 22 between 2pm and 4pm in St Mary's Parish Centre. Visitors are welcome - fee £5. Contact emmadenham52@gmail.com.

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 Photographic Society

We welcome anyone interested in photography to join us on Monday evenings at 7.30pm at Merton Hall. The season's programme runs right through until the end of March and can be viewed on the club website.

Creative writing classes

We have places available for new members, both beginners and more experienced writers. 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. Tasks are set weekly and feedback given by an experienced teacher and published poet. We meet on Wednesday mornings in Ponteland and

Dinnington. Contact 01434 605276 or claire@claire276.plus.com.

Ponteland Badminton

New players are welcome to join our sessions at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Adults play on Mondays from 8pm to 10pm, Tuesdays 1.30pm to 2.30pm (no strings) and 7.30pm to 8.30pm. Juniors play on Mondays from 4pm-5pm (term time), Thursdays from 5pm to 6pm (no strings) and Saturdays from 10am to 11.30am (Sept -July). Adults also play at Ponteland Community Primary School on Fridays from 10am to 11am. Contact: Phil Hall 078100 84153.

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.

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.

Event showcases local social groups and support services

People are being invited to an event at Ponteland Library as part of a 'stay well this winter' initiative.

'We're Here For You' is being held from 10am to 12noon on Tuesday February 6 to showcase the wide range of events, social groups and services on offer through the Northumberland Libraries service, as well as the support available to residents via Northumberland Communities Together.

Partners taking part include Age UK, Citizens Advice, Green Doctors and Health Trainers.

The latest community initiative follows the launch of Northumberland County Council's Warm Welcome campaign, which has seen the creation of over 100 'warm spaces' – community venues where residents can pop in, get a hot drink, have a chat and access impartial advice and support should they need it.

They include Merton Hall, Ponteland Leisure Centre and Ponteland Library.

Coun Veronica Jones, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing and a Ponteland West ward councillor, said: "For many people, the winter months can be incredibly challenging. Financial pressures around the festive season coupled with

rising household bills, colder weather and darker nights can leave many people feeling isolated.

"The work that Northumberland Communities Together and our amazing community partners are doing, through mediums like these community events and the warm space network, is vital to ensuring that residents can continue to access services and advice that will support them with rising costs, keeping warm and their mental health and wellbeing."

Established in 2020, Northumberland Communities Together works with statutory and community partners to support residents who may be in need of assistance.

For more information and to view the current list of community events, visit <https://nland.cc/communityevents> and to find Warm Spaces, visit <https://nland.cc/findwarmspaces>.


Double dose of good news for county fire service

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service is celebrating two pieces of good news with the appointment of a new Deputy Chief Fire Officer and an improved inspection result.

After two years as Assistant CFO, Jim McNeil is the service's new Deputy CFO. He supported NFRS during the detailed inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services between May and August.

It was rated as 'good' in four areas and 'adequate' in seven areas of service, having been found to be 'requires improvement' in all but one area at a previous inspection in 2018.

Coun Gordon Stewart, Chair of the Fire Authority and Cabinet Member for Looking after our Communities, said it was "a brilliant outcome" for the service.



**GUY OPPERMAN
MP**

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Any problems or issues? Get in touch

guy.opperman@parliament.uk



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MP seeks restoration of wildlife corridor after council works

A public meeting has been called to discuss a controversial £1.3m scheme to create a cycle and pedestrian route from Ponteland to Callerton.

MP Guy Opperman has arranged the 'informal discussion' to discuss the restoration of the bridleway area along Rotary Way after the Ponteland

to Callerton Cycleway construction is completed in Spring 2024.

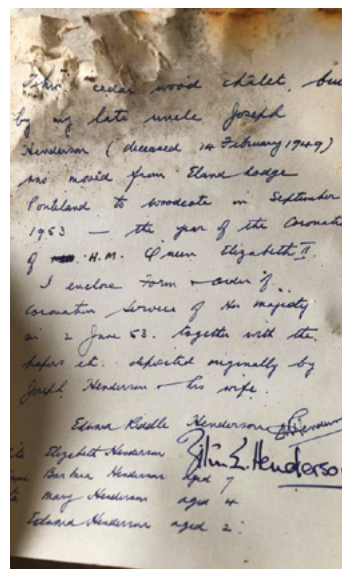
He will be joined by a Northumberland County Council officer responsible for the Walking and Cycling Strategy.

The focus of the discussion will be what residents would like the area to look like in terms of plants, trees, and wildflowers.

Mr Opperman visited the route on November 9 after receiving several complaints from local residents

concerned about the impact of the works on the wildlife corridor. Pont News has also received a number of letters from correspondents unhappy with both the impact of the NCC project, funded by the Department for Transport, and its cost.

- Anyone wishing to attend the event, which is being held at the Memorial Hall from 6pm to 7pm on Friday January 19, is asked to email the MP at guy.opperman@parliament.uk.



Builders unearth 1930s time capsule

Builders unearthed a little piece of history during works at a home in North Road recently.

For they found a time capsule dating back to 1937 under an old summerhouse which had been pulled down.

A letter inside it explains how the summerhouse (or 'chalet') was built by the writer's uncle Joseph Henderson in 1937 and how it was moved from a neighbouring property (Eland Lodge) in 1953.

The capsule also contained a newspaper from 1937 reporting George VI's coronation and Queen Elizabeth II's coronation memorabilia from 1953, added on the date in which it was moved.

Home owner Rob Kay said: "There are quite a few names mentioned in the letter too, so it would be interesting to see if there are still local connections."

Do you recognise the family? Email pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk.

New digital service launched to support unpaid carers

A new digital service has been launched to support unpaid carers.

Playing a vital role in supporting families and friends to live independently in their own homes, many do not see themselves as 'carers' and may not realise there is information, advice, guidance and support there if they need it.

Northumberland County Council has launched the new digital service for carers who are not currently supported or known by the council or local carer support organisations.

The service is free and led by carers themselves. It runs alongside services provided by local carer support organisations, offering a range of online support, from website guides, regular contact through emails, a guide to caring e-course, 'virtual cuppas' and even individual support calls - seven days a week.

The pilot project with Mobilise will use social media and digital marketing to help to find and identify 'unpaid carers', connecting them immediately with others in a similar position, and providing relevant, timely support.

Wendy Pattison, Portfolio Holder for Caring for Adults, said: "Many Northumberland residents who provide unpaid care are not accessing the support available to them. We want to identify more carers and offer additional support, so carers can continue to provide their crucial care and enjoy positive lives."

The Mobilise service is free for residents of Northumberland and can be accessed at <https://support.mobiliseonline.co.uk/Northumberland>



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THE MANOR HOUSE GOSFORTH

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