

Newton News

Incorporating The Newtonian - Newton Aycliffe's Free Community Newspaper, published on the first and third Friday of each month.
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Esh Secures Additional £4m Contract at Greenfield Academy

Earlier this year, the contractor was awarded a contract to develop the academy's new education hub in Newton Aycliffe.

Esh Construction has been appointed to deliver a £4 million refurbishment programme at Greenfield Academy, complementing the ongoing new build project already underway in Newton Aycliffe.

The refurbishment works form part of a phased approach to modernising the school estate and will run alongside the construction of the new £14 million three-storey education hub. Esh was appointed to deliver the new school facility in June 2025 in partnership with Durham County Council and the Advance Learning Partnership Multi Academy Trust. The combined investment will provide state-of-the-art facilities for students and staff, supporting the school's ambition to create an inspiring learning environment for future generations.

Grant Watson, Construction Manager at Esh Construction, said: "We're delighted to extend our involvement at Greenfield Academy through this significant refurbishment programme. Alongside the new build, these works will transform key areas of the school, providing modern, high-quality spaces for teaching and learning. Our team is committed to delivering the project safely, efficiently, and to the highest standards, ensuring the school community benefits from improved facilities." The refurbishment contract will run in several phases to minimise disruption to school operations, with the initial phase focusing on the music and drama classrooms, followed by works to the main hall, reception, dining and kitchen areas in later phases. Work will include full roof replacement with new insulation and weatherproof membranes, upgraded ceilings and floor finishes, full decoration and the installation of new partitions to create



additional teaching spaces. Mechanical and electrical upgrades will be carried out, with LED lighting introduced throughout, new ventilation systems installed, and improved drainage to accommodate new toilet facilities.

James Keating, Executive Headteacher at Greenfield Academy, said "We are thrilled to see this next phase of investment in our school. The refurbishment works, alongside the new build facility, will completely transform our learning environment and provide exceptional facilities for both current pupils and future generations. This project reflects our commitment to delivering the very best opportunities for our young people and ensuring Greenfield Academy remains at the heart of the community."

Cllr Cathy Hunt, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for children and young people's services, added: "Staff, students and the whole community are quite rightly excited by the school's new build, and it's important that the entire school estate offers students a modern, fit for purpose and inspiring learning environment."

"This refurbishment project will help to deliver that, providing state-of-the-art facilities for those who currently attend, as well as future generations of learners. We look forward to seeing the project completed and witnessing the positive impact this will have on staff and students."

The new education hub is expected to complete in Autumn 2026 and will provide 19 classrooms, and specialist subject hubs for IT, art, design & technology and science, whilst a sports centre extension will enable the Academy to open the doors for community use outside of school hours.

To find out more about Esh Construction, visit: www.eshgroup.co.uk



Santa's Christmas Eve Tour of Great Aycliffe

The Town Council will deliver this year's Santa event using five Council-owned vehicles, each equipped with a Santa Sleigh and festive lighting. Three vehicles will operate with a Santa, driver and navigator, while two will run with Santa and a driver only.

Each route will include 2-3 fixed meeting locations - often community centres or pubs, with parking available. These venues are encouraged to host attendees with Santa meeting families both indoors and outdoors for 45-60 minutes at each stop. Between fixed points, vehicles will tour local streets without stopping, covering as many safe streets as possible. Areas requiring more street-by-street touring will use the three-cab vehicles with navigators.

A separate Christmas Eve morning tour will visit all care homes in the Parish. A new 'Find Santa' online tool will show route maps and meeting locations so residents can easily find the nearest stop.

In total, 24 volunteers will run the event:

- 6 Santa's (for the five main routes plus the care-home tour);
- 6 Drivers;
- 4 Navigators;
- 8 Support vehicle volunteers (two per route on four routes);

Key Improvements of the New Format - Safety Enhancements

Eliminates the risk of Santa riding on the back of moving vehicles. Avoids large vehicles navigating tight, parked-car-lined streets. Reduces the danger of children approaching moving vehicles by using fixed, static meeting points. Provides trained drivers and proper volunteer vetting, health checks and briefings.

Operational Benefits

Reduces volunteer requirements from 36 to 24, making recruitment more achievable. Uses only Council vehicles, removing risks associated with borrowed or donated vehicles. Ensures standby volunteers and support vehicles are available for quick response to issues. Enables the creation of a reserve pool of trained volunteers, improving reliability.

Community Experience Improvements

Fixed times and locations eliminate delays, missed streets or route overruns. Residents can choose the most convenient time or place to meet Santa, improving accessibility.

Two larger venues will offer extended stays and are accessible by car. Santa can interact more personally with children at ground level, rather than from a raised platform. Volunteers will spend a maximum of four hours outside instead of five or more.



Check page 5 to see where I will be on Christmas Eve in Great Aycliffe.
Merry Christmas.
Santa Claus

Santa Tours 2025

A New Format for Newton Aycliffe

Great Aycliffe Town Council proudly presents the much-loved Santa Tours, returning this Christmas with a brand-new format designed to spread festive cheer across the community.

Care Home Tour

On Christmas Eve morning between 10.00am and 11.30am, Santa will embark on a special Care Home Tour, visiting all six residential care homes in Newton Aycliffe. This heartfelt addition ensures that residents can enjoy the magic of Christmas with a visit from Santa himself.

Community Meet & Greet

Later that day, on Christmas Eve evening, Santa will be meeting and greeting families at 16 different locations around the Parish. This is a wonderful opportunity for children and adults alike to see Santa up close, share festive wishes, and soak in the magical atmosphere.

Street Tours

Adding to the excitement, Santa will also be driving along the main routes of Newton Aycliffe, waving from his cab as bells ring and Christmas music fills the air. Residents are encouraged to listen out for the sounds of the season and check the published maps and sections to find the best viewing spots.

Please note that street tour times are approximate, so keep an ear out for the jingling bells and festive tunes to catch Santa as he passes by.

Santa's Grotto

In addition, there will be a Santa's Grotto in the Town Centre on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, organised by All Disabilities Matter. This special event offers families another chance to meet Santa in a festive setting and enjoy the magic of Christmas together.

Santa Tours App

To make it even easier to join the fun, there's a Santa Tours app available at www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk - Just type in your postcode to find your nearest meet & greet point and view the route map that covers your address.

Thank You

We'd like to extend heartfelt thanks to the Community Centres, Pioneering Care Centre, Scouts Centre, and local Public Houses for opening their doors and providing refreshments, toilets, and indoor spaces - your support is greatly appreciated.

A big shout-out to this year's sponsors:

- K and L Travel
- The Personal Travel Agent
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- Anything Aycliffe

Santa Tours is made possible by the incredible and generous sponsors who help bring the magic of Christmas to Newton Aycliffe. Thank you for helping make this event so special!

A huge THANK YOU to all the amazing volunteers who make Santa Tours possible every year. Your dedication brings joy to the whole town! Great Aycliffe Town Council invites everyone to join in the celebrations, whether at care homes, community stops, or along the main routes. Together, let's make this Christmas Eve one to remember.

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THE HOOSIERS

Santa's Sleigh



As a newly formed Rotary club, but with many years of experience, beginning with only the clothes on our backs, it was decided that we wanted to get back to what we enjoyed doing, raise money to support local people at Christmas.

To do this, we needed a new sleigh!

Using an ex-builders box trailer and a lot of support from local companies, materials were donated and procured at heavily reduced costs, construction began.

Santa can feel proud riding high in his new conveyance while securely strapped in to his deeply padded seats, surrounded by flashing lights and seasonal music.

And now, with the appropriate permits, assessments and insurances in place, plus the support and participation of our local police force - let the festivities (and fund-raising) begin!

Council Tax Increases

Dear Sir,

A motion was on the agenda at the Full Council meeting on 10th December in which Great Aycliffe Town Council proposed increasing its Council Tax by no more than 2.8% for 2026/27 - below the rate of inflation. However, the new Reform UK administration at Durham County Council has reneged on its agreement regarding the LCTRS grants to parish and town councils. In effect, it is withholding money provided by the Government specifically to be passed on to these councils. This action is forcing parish and town councils to impose far higher Council Tax increases than would otherwise have been necessary.

Reform UK won control of Durham County Council on a pledge to freeze Council Tax. Yet the Government made it clear that, to receive additional funding under the Fair Funding Review, the Council must increase Council Tax by the maximum 4.99% each year for the next three years. If it failed to do so, it would be penalised through reduced funding. By choosing instead to withhold around £1 million each year from parish and town councils - money intended for them - Reform UK is creating a situation in which these councils face either significant cuts to services and facilities or substantial Council Tax rises for local residents. Furthermore, it has abandoned our three-year agreement a full year early.

Reform UK's actions have rendered its commitments meaningless and have damaged trust. The County Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils, representing more than 103 councils, shares this concern.

Regards,

Councillor Arun M. Chandran

Partnership Wins Award

A partnership that launched a pioneering recycling service in the region has won a prestigious gong at the National Recycling Awards 2025.

Durham County Council, and its partners Medequip and HW Martin Waste, won the Partnership Excellence: Public/Private Sector Award after launching the region's first medical equipment recycling service.

Through convenient drop off points at the local authority's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) across the county, the initiative addresses the significant financial losses faced by local NHS and social care services due to unreturned equipment. By recovering, safety testing, sterilising and reintegrating items into Medequip's inventory, the service promotes sustainability and resource efficiency. In its first three months, 360 items were recovered, saving the NHS £7,380, an average of £20.50 per item.

Since launch, the initiative has collected more than 4,300 items, delivering estimated savings of nearly £90,000. Meanwhile, during the 2024/25 period, nearly eight tonnes of medical equipment were diverted from disposal. Initially, due to funding limitations, Medequip was unable to provide receptacles at all the council's HWRCs, risking a backlog of equipment. However, HW Martins Waste Ltd resolved this by supplying 1100-litre receptacles, enabling a full-service rollout across all twelve permanent sites.

— DRS —
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Diamond Day for Janette and Kenny



Janette (née Williams) and Kenny Davies are celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary this month, marking a lifetime of love rooted in Newton Aycliffe.

Janette was born in Newton Aycliffe in 1957, while Kenny hails from Darlington. The pair first crossed paths through work at Kitsons Insulation in Darlington - Janette, then a 17-year-old junior in the office, and Kenny, a 26-year-old driver.

After marrying, Kenny moved to Aycliffe in 1975, and the town has been home ever since. Over the years, Kenny went on to work as a carer until an accident at a care home in Barnard Castle led to early retirement. Janette recently hung up her boots too, retiring from Livin Housing after 18 years of service.

Their interests keep them happily busy: Kenny is an avid gardener, while Janette has traced the family tree and even uncovered long-lost relatives.

Family is at the heart of their lives. They share two Sons, Dean and Christopher; Daughters-in-Law Rachael and Ruth; Grandchildren Imogen, Maya and Charlie; Janette's Sister, Yvonne and Brother-in-Law Davy Boy; and many Nephews, extended family and friends. Janette also fondly remembers her Brother Dave, who sadly passed away and her Sister-in-Law, Carole.

To mark their anniversary, the couple enjoyed a family meal at Redworth Hall Hotel on the Saturday 13th December.

As for the secret to a long and happy marriage, Janette offered one simple word 'tolerance', before laughing and adding that many years of loving and caring for each other have carried them through.

Jazz Milestone

Sunday 14th December saw the 300th episode of Mike Dixon's Jazz Time on Aycliffe Radio; a programme which has broadcast on Sundays from 6.30-8pm, repeated Tuesdays 8-9.30pm.

The programme is appreciated by the jazz fraternity in the North East and, being online, also has listeners around the world. It provides an opportunity for jazz fans to make their requests, listen to jazz chat with local musicians, recall the big jazz greats, preview new releases, as well as learn about the jazz events coming up in the North East. The programme is especially appreciated by older jazz fans who are not able to attend gigs. We send our condolences to the family of Brian, who recently died, a jazz fan from Barnard Castle, who eagerly looked forward to the programme, which brought a new dimension to his life; whilst Peter, a regular listener, living in Colorado Springs, finds the programme keeps him in touch with his beloved jazz and native North East. So, if you are a jazz fan who have not yet connected or if jazz is your thing, let's have those requests and jazz memories. Mike Dixon, Aycliffe Radio.

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Festive Times



A wonderful, fun, evening was had at The Hammer & Pincers for members of Aycliffe Bridge Club where the atmosphere was welcoming and so festive. Beautifully decorated tables created a lovely ambiance, with excellent food so well presented and served.

This was followed by 'Fun Bridge' where Andrew Maxwell partnered with Joanne Russell and Mary Hall with Alan, a visitor, who were the winners. A most enjoyable evening was appreciated by all.

We are always happy to welcome new members with a partner, join us at The OakLeaf Sports Complex on Monday evenings from 7.00pm.

Anyone wanting to learn how to play Bridge, please contact: Club Chairman, Linda Lawson on 07817 822196 or Secretary, Cynthia Scott on 07873 758087.

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Evidence Needed Ideal Gift

Dear Sir

Readers may have seen the leaflet distributed by Fornax to houses in our area, in its efforts to get the community on board with its incinerator plant. Readers may also have spotted the contradictory statements that high temperature will obliterate any harmful substances but there will be emissions of harmful substances.

To support their claim that emissions of the harmful substances will have 'no significant impact on local air quality', they say 'NOx gas, including dioxins and furans, released each year will be the same as from a single diesel HGV doing 20,000 miles a year'.

What is missing is any explanation of how that comparison was arrived at. There is no footnote referring to scientific evidence as a source for that, for example.

This is important because Fornax is using this information to persuade people that the plant is safe. Indeed, councillors from Heighington Parish recently visited the plant and are quoting the 'facts' given by Fornax in order to allay what they describe as residents' 'false concerns'.

So, Mr Jones, let's have some scientific evidence to back up your stats.

Yours faithfully,
Eileen Brewis.

Seeing a stranger on the shore is normal. Actually stopping to speak to a stranger on the shore is a little unusual. When the stranger leads Neil into emotional turmoil threatening his very being; that is ... very, very strange indeed.

Main Character: Neil Collins. Neil is a genuinely nice guy. Romantic, chivalrous and tender hearted certainly undeserving of the heartaches he had endured as a child and would continue to endure as an adult. He was usually quite studious, thinking very carefully about each situation, before making a final decision.

However, he does have a contradictory side to his makeup. From time to time, this gives rise to impulsive episodes often leading to chaotic and/or comic situations. So the reader is in for a shock at the chaos, and humour created, when this contradictory yet lovable characteristic is on display.

The book was written by local author Leon Franklin and is available from 'Just The Perfect Gift' shop in Aycliffe town centre.

Rotary Grotto



What a fabulous time Rotary Great Aycliffe had on Friday 28th November at the Town Centre Christmas Lights event.

With a queue stretching across the town centre and hundreds of smiling faces, all waiting to see Santa Claus and his Elves the evening began. Everyone was in good humour and waited patiently.

Santa's sleigh proved to be very popular as a photo opportunity for all children, young and old, almost as popular as Santa and his free chocolate, donated by the Newton Aycliffe Town Centre management team.

Many letters to Santa, written by the children, which were either posted in the bright red post box beside the sleigh or given to the big man himself, have been taken back with him, so that he can read them and reply to them individually, expect to hear from him soon. Many thanks to everyone who took part in making this an extremely successful event with smiling faces all round. Here's to next year!



Newton Aycliffe Juniors

Week ending 7th December 2025

Under 7's faced Great Ayton, showing great attitude throughout to progress to the next round of the cup. Leo (4), Eli and Frankie scored Aycliffe's goals.

Under 9's Blues hosted Darlington Young Bulls, delivering an amazing performance with plenty of goals. Nate scored six goals and Leland scored five. PPOTM was a joint award to twins Nate and Carter. Nate for his goals and dominant display, Carter for a couple of great saves. POTM was joint, between Leland and Jude.

Under 9's Juniors travelled to Leven and faced a tough test. The team worked tirelessly throughout with Alfie scoring Aycliffe's goal.

Under 10's Reds played away to Billingham Synthonia Greens in a game of two halves. Billingham dominated the first half, with Aycliffe coming out fighting in the second half with two goals from Fox. POTM was Jan and PPOTM was Matthew.

Under 10's Juniors welcomed Stockton Town Yellows, putting in a fabulous performance with goals from Zeke, Fletcher and Kian. MOTM was Kian for magnificent work rate and a great goal.

Under 11's Whites faced Prissick Reds, putting in a dominant performance. Goals from Dexter, Brodie, Teddy, Rowan and James, showed the strength across the team.

Coaches MOTM was Fred for a world class save and MOTM was Ozzy who led the line brilliantly.

Under 12's Blues faced Spennymoor Knights in the third round of the league shield, Aycliffe battled hard against higher division opposition, winning 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw. MOTM was Yash.

Under 13's Blacks entertained Eaglescliffe Elementis Royals, with Aycliffe dominating from start to finish. A well-deserved 4-0 win for Aycliffe with goals from Kai, Ryley H, Lleyton and Levi. MOTM was Riley R.

Under 14's Juniors finished the years fixtures at a home game against North Ormesby, racing into a 3-0 half time lead with goals from Jake, Jonah and Ollie B. Dom, Dan and Lucas added to the goals in the second half, which sees Aycliffe going into the Christmas break joint top of the league. OMOTM was Jonah and MOTM was Sav and Olly B.

Week ending 14th December 2025

Under 8's played 21st Allstars in the cup, but could not progress to the next round. Jacob M scored Aycliffe's goal with Arron awarded MOTM.

Under 9's Blues a depleted squad took on Riverside Athletic Juniors, with all the available players putting in an impressive performance, working hard for each other. POTM was Carter who made some great saves.

Under 9's Juniors hosted a particularly good Riverside Milan in a well contested game, it was Cooper who scored Aycliffe's goal after a great ball from Alfie.

Under 10's Reds faced Cleveland Juniors Panthers in an amazing game. There was wonderful football on display from both teams, with goals from Fox (2) and Thomas. POTM was Jacob, PPORM was Orig.

Under 11's Whites played against Dormanstown in a feisty affair. Aycliffe dominated the first half with goals from Rowan, Ozzy (2) and Dexter. Into the second half Dormanstown fought back, but could not stop Aycliffe with MOMT Ozzy adding another couple of goals to bring his tally to four. Opposition MOTM was Dexter.

Under 12's Blues faced Consett, losing out 4-2. Charlie and Alfie scored the goals with Miles picking up MOTM.

Under 12's Blacks were at home to Great Ayton, narrowly losing 2-3. Despite pushing for an equaliser, Aycliffe could not get the goal. Jack B grabbed both Aycliffe goals, with JJ and Grayson assisting.

Under 14's Blacks entertained Shincliffe Juniors, coming away with a fabulous 7-2 win. Aycliffe showed great strength throughout to dominate. Connor (2), Kaylm (2), Kai, Olly and Sammy scored the goals. Parents MOTM were Olly and Connor, with Managers MOTM Alfie and Cody.



Trailblazers

We are Bridge Creative, a non-profit origination, with a goal to improve employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and autistic adults across County Durham. We are taking part in the new Economic Inactivity Trailblazer.

We will be hosting our first workshop in Newton Aycliffe, this is the confirmed location, date and time:

**Newton Aycliffe Youth & Community Centre
Wednesday 7th January, 10am-2pm**

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Be over the age of 18;
- Be autistic and/or have a learning disability (formal diagnosis, self-identification, or suspected);
- Be economically inactive (not currently working and not actively seeking work in the last four weeks and/or not ready to start work within the next two weeks);
- Live in County Durham.

Joy-Marie Hairdressing

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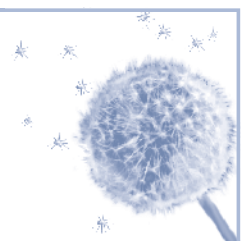
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**PAGE
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SECTION 1

Cobblers Hall, Woodham and Washington Crescent



3.45-4.15pm: Stop at Woodham Golf Club
4.15-4.30pm: Ryder Court, Burnhill Way, Woodham Way, The Bridle, Woodham Way
4.30-4.45pm: Stop at Huntsman Car Park
4.45-5.10pm: Pembleton Road, Stag Lane, Lowther Drive, The Swale, The Pasture, The Moorland, The Coppice, Woodham Way, Kings Drive, Well House Drive
5.15-6.00pm: Stop at Pioneering Care Centre
6.00-6.40pm: Burn Lane, Cobblers Hall Road, Well House Road, Sugarhill Crescent, Bluestone Close, Rope Moor Way, Wakenshaw Drive, Youens Crescent, Cobblers Hall Road, Burn Lane, Bousfield Crescent, Hardinge Road, Wiseman Walk, Defoe Crescent, Neile Road, Washington Crescent, Wren Close
6.45-7.30pm: Stop at St. Oswalds Park.

SECTION 4

Simpasture and Elmfield



3.30-3.40pm: Pease Way, Beechfield, Elmfield Place, Rowan Place, Pease Way, Oakfield
3.45-4.30pm: Stop at Morrisons, Oakfield
4.30-4.40pm: St Godrics, Cumby Road, Watson Road, Lowery Road, Crosby Road
4.45-5.15pm: Stop at Iron Horse
5.15-5.30pm: Simpasture Gate, Finchale Road, Lambton Close, Lee Green, Hopper Road, Dixon Road, Simpasture Gate.
5.30-5.55pm: Emerson Way, Butler Road, Merz Road, Bowes Road, Ritson Road, Bruce Road, Ebba Close, Carileph Close, Barrington Road, Ashfield, Paulinus Road, Tunstall Road, Macmillan Road
6.00-6.30pm: Stop at Greenwell Road Car Park
6.30-7.00pm: Greenwell Road, Dalton Way, Faulkner Road, Westmoreland Way, Hartley Road, Allington Road, Hullock Road, Walcher Road, Lilburne Crescent, Bertie Road, Priestman Road, Marshall Road, Macmillan Road, Lightfoot Road, Stephenson Way.

Care Home Visits

(Car Parks only)

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Lindisfarne Care Home | 10.00-10.10am |
| Aycliffe Care Home | 10.15-10.25am |
| Rose Lodge Care Home | 10.30-10.40am |
| Bethany House Care Home | 10.40-10.50am |
| Defoe Court Care Home | 10.55-11.05am |
| St Clare's Court Care Home | 11.10-11.20am |

SECTION 2

Aycliffe Village, School Aycliffe and Bewick Crescent Car Park



3.30-3.45pm: Durham Road, Atkinson Gardens, Durham Road
3.45-4.30pm: Stop at Aycliffe Village Green
4.30-4.50pm: The Wynd, Heighington Lane, Congreave Terrace, Bickford Terrace, Heighington Lane, School Aycliffe Lane, Eastfields
5.00-5.45pm: Stop at School Aycliffe Community Centre
5.45-6.00pm: Eastfields, School Aycliffe Lane, North Cottages, Horndale Avenue, St. Cuthberts Way
6.00-7.15pm: Stop at Bewick Crescent Car Park.

Santa Meet and Greet

| Sctn | Location | Time |
|------|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Woodham Golf Club (*, **, ***) | 3.45-4.15pm |
| 1 | Huntsman Car Park | 4.30-4.45pm |
| 1 | Pioneering Car Centre (*, **, ***) | 5.15-6.00pm |
| 1 | St Oswald's Park | 6.45-7.30pm |
| 2 | Aycliffe Village Green | 3.45-4.30pm |
| 2 | School Aycliffe CC (*, **, ***) | 5.00-5.45pm |
| 2 | Bewick Crescent Car Park | 6.00-7.15pm |
| 3 | Turbinia Car Park (*, **) | 3.30-4.15pm |
| 3 | Staintondale (Hammerhead) | 5.00-5.15pm |
| 3 | Scouts Centre Car Park (*, **, ***) | 5.45-6.30pm |
| 4 | Morrisons Daily - Oakfield | 3.45-4.30pm |
| 4 | Iron Horse Car Park | 4.45-5.15pm |
| 4 | Greenwell Road Car Park | 6.00-6.30pm |
| 5 | Town Park | 3.45-4.30pm |
| 5 | Church of JC Latter-Day Sts | 5.00-5.45pm |
| 5 | Neville Parade CC (*, **, ***) | 6.15-7.00pm |

* refreshments available, ** toilets, ***indoor space

SECTION 3

Byerley Park and Bluebell



3.30-4.15pm: Stop at The Turbinia
4.15-5.00pm: Malham Crescent, Airton Place, Keld Road, Burnhill Way, Meadowfield Way, Lisle Road, Cestria Way, Hareson Road, Stainmore Crescent, Meadowfield Way, Greenfield Way, Alston Crescent, Malvern Way, Belford Way, Greenfield Way, Staintondale
5.00-5.15pm: Stop at Staintondale
5.15pm-5.40pm: Greenfield Way, Lascelle Avenue, Colburn Avenue, Elwick Avenue, Middridge Road, Bluebell Way, Temple Way, Bluebell Close.
5.45-6.30pm: Stop at Scouts Centre
6.30-6.45pm: Stephenson Way, Hawkshead Place, Williamfield Way, Greenfield Way.

SECTION 5

Neville Parade and Shafto Way



3.45-4.30pm: Stop at Town Park
4.30-4.55pm: Burn Lane, Central Avenue, Welbury Grove, Vane Road, Langley Road, Eden Road, Stanfield Road, Auckland Place, Vane Road, Mellanby Crescent, Fowler Road, Shafto Way
5.00-5.45pm: Stop at Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
5.45-6.00pm: Shafto Way, Sheraton Way, Hatfield Road, Skirlaw Road, Biscop Crescent, Skirlaw Road, Bek Road, Central Avenue
6.00-6.15pm: Sheraton Road, Creighton Road, Moore Lane, Gunn Lane, Greathead Crescent, Van Mildert Road, Wilkinson Road, Bury Road, Neville Parade
6.15-7.00pm: Stop at Neville Parade Community Centre
7.00-7.30pm: Shafto Way, Sheraton Road, Crawford Road, Henderson Road, Crewe Road, Sharp Road, Hunter Road, Greville Way, Baliol Road, Anne Swyft Road, Bede Crescent, Travellers Green, Travellers Garden, Gilpin Road, Palmer Road, Clanny Road, Clarence Chare, Clarence Green.

Merry Christmas to all



Rotary Working Together Christmas Tree Collection for Hospice Funds



Rotary Newton Aycliffe has this week completed their Christmas charity collections. Grateful thanks to Tesco Supporting Newton Aycliffe - Shirley, Community Champion and Deanne, Community Champion at Tesco Bishop Auckland. Thanks also to Rotary Bishop Auckland President, Graham Barsby, and their members for all the support and, of course, our lovely community, without whom we would be nothing. We've had a blast.

Christmas Bin Collections

Residents in County Durham are being reminded of changes to bin collections over the Christmas period. Durham County Council's collections will take place as normal up to and including Wednesday 24th December. From Thursday 25th December to Friday 2nd January, residents are being made aware of the following changes to collections:

Normal collection day

Thursday 25th December
Friday 26th December
Tuesday 30th December
Wednesday 31st December
Thursday 1st January
Friday 2nd January

Revised collection day

Saturday 27th December
Monday 29th December
No change
No change
Friday 2nd January
Saturday 3rd January

Normal collections will resume from Tuesday 6th January.

Residents can check their collection dates online by entering their house number and postcode into the 'My Durham' section of the council's website at www.durham.gov.uk

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) across the county will be open as normal over the festive period, between 9.00am and 3.30pm, except for Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

The Thornley, Coxhoe and Horden HWRC sites are normally closed on Fridays, and will be closed Friday 26th December. The opening hours for these three sites are 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Thursday, and 9.00am to 3.30pm on a weekend.

People can see opening times for their nearest HWRC, and check how busy a site is in advance, at www.durham.gov.uk/hwrc

Real Christmas tree collections will also be available from Monday 5th January. Residents can book a free collection in advance at: www.durham.gov.uk/christmastreecollections

Christmas Tree Collection for Hospice Funds

Newton Aycliffe households will, next month, be invited to easily dispose of their real Christmas Trees and, at the same time, help support the region's most valued hospice. Every January, Darlington Rotary Club teams up with Darlington's St. Teresa's Hospice to tour streets in Newton and School Aycliffe, plus Heighington, collecting used Christmas Trees, saving homeowners the mess of their trees' disposal. In return, residents offer the hospice a small donation.

"This is a win-win venture for everyone", said Rotary club organiser David Hayward. "We effortlessly take away all the trees and the hospice gains from much needed funds. I have 80 volunteers and 17 large vans all ready to go for our collection on Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th January."

Hospice Chief Executive Nicola Myers said: "This project has become an essential addition to our fundraising calendar. We are very grateful to Darlington Rotary for their invaluable support."

Over three quarters of the hospice's £4m annual running costs must be raised in-house to allow them to continue treating, totally free, over 1200 local residents who have life-limiting illnesses. And, over the last 14 years, the tree collection scheme has raised over £100,000 for hospice funds.

To register your tree visit: www.darlingtonhospice.org.uk/ctc



NAFC REPORT



Thanks to the recent wet weather, Newton Aycliffe have a packed schedule ahead with ten games due to be played before the end of January. The highlight will be the Boxing Day local derby against Bishop Auckland. That game will kick off at the earlier time of 1pm.

December 13th

Newton Aycliffe 1 v Garforth Town 3

A late Tom Henson consolation goal was all Aycliffe left this contest with. Early in the first half Kyle Seymour was lucky that his cross, that hit the midriff of Charlie Marshall, narrowly rebounded past the post. Seymour denied Marshall whilst one on one, yet again, a few minutes later after debutant George Wilkinson was outpaced.

Jonny White had Aycliffe's first big chance, but his low, long range shot, from out the box, went wide. Garforth's first goal came when Oli Patrick in the box passed to Rinor Ejuji who deftly crossed to Luke Aldrich who fired it home in the 35th minute. Aycliffe had the next chance when Charlie Dawson fired the ball at Harry Flatters, Flatters could only parry it to the feet of Andrew Nelson, but his strike hit the post and then the hands of Flatters. Jack Robertson was also denied by Flatters.

The second half saw Garforth score two more, firstly from Marshall, receiving a Aldrich cross and firing home, and then Oli Patrick found substitute Joe Allerton unmarked in the midfield who burst forward to chop the ball over Seymour. The final goal came from Aycliffe when Charlie Dawson found Tom Henson in a promising position and Henson skilfully broke through Jordan Emery and Max Tweddle to fire past Flatters, the final whistle blew soon after.

Match report by Ryan Livingston. Photo by Yvonne Wood of new signing Jake Orrell making his debut against Garforth Town.

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Carvers Expands



Leading North East property firm Carvers has announced the significant expansion of its town centre office in Darlington, ushering in an exciting new phase of growth and investment for the business. The company's move into the top floor of its St. Cuthberts Way office strategically positions Carvers at the heart of Darlington's thriving business community and ongoing regeneration efforts. This expansion builds on the company's well-established presence in the town and demonstrates its commitment to supporting Darlington's development.

The latest expansion reflects Carvers' continued growth and dedication to serving the needs of the region's evolving property market. Coinciding with this development are recent additions to both the residential lettings and commercial & surveying divisions, which further enhance the firm's ability to provide specialist advice and tailored property solutions to clients across the North East. To maintain this momentum, Carvers has recently made a series of key appointments to strengthen its residential lettings and commercial property teams.

James Carver, Head of Lettings and Director of Carvers, shared his enthusiasm about the company's growth: "We're delighted to be expanding our footprint in the town centre at such an exciting time for Darlington. With the Treasury North development right next door, and so much investment happening locally, there's a real sense of momentum. We're proud to be part of Darlington's continued success story, the town is experiencing significant growth and attracting national attention, so it's the perfect time for us to expand our presence. Our new office enhances our visibility and accessibility in the town centre, while our growing lettings and commercial teams mean that we can continue to deliver exceptional service to clients across the North East."

Carvers has long been a trusted name in property, supporting local businesses, investors, and residents throughout the community. The new office provides a modern, central hub for client meetings, business development, and property management services. This expansion complements Carvers' established base and enables closer collaboration with Darlington's growing business community.

Photo: Carvers team, (L-R) James Carver, Director, Chris Farlow, Director, Carver Commercial, Grace Wilkinson, Fine & Country, Peter Thompson, Lettings Manager.



Aycliffe Youth Football News

U11 Wildcats v Shincliffe Juniors

Unfortunately, the opposition scored first but the girls kept defending, with both teams evenly matched. A volley over Anna put Shincliffe two goals ahead. Then Aycliffe showed some great teamwork and determination as they scored twice to level the game, 2-2 final result. Players of the Match: Isla Dinsdale and Maia Popple.

Cockfield v U11 Eagles

After five weeks of missed games, thanks to fixtures and weather, the boys were understandably a little rusty and in the first twenty minutes it showed. However, they built back into the game 2-2 at half time. The second half, the lads played more like themselves and took a deserved 3-2 lead. The last fifteen minutes was a battle and either team could have nicked it, but, in the end, a 4-4 draw was a fair result overall.

U11 Falcons v Prissick Rovers

A good start for the Falcons, with a goal by Ollie in the second minute. Bradley made it two in the fifth with a fantastic shot from some distance. Then another goal from Ollie, and some very good saves from Lucas M, kept the Falcons with a clean sheet. Second half, Ibrahim struck in the 43rd minute with a well placed shot and rounding off the game for a 5-0 win. Man of the Match was Ollie.

U16 Angels v Beamish Lionesses

The last match of 2025 saw a great performance. Three goals in each half and a clean sheet. A hat trick for Faith, a brace from Georgia and one from Emily. Assists from Emily (2), Heidi, Hannah, Georgia and Faith. The players voted Hannah and Heidi as star players with the parents voting for Faith. A nice way to round off the calendar year.

U8 Wildcats v Washington Juniors

An even contest that the girls managed to win by scoring the only goal through Lydia. They hit the post in the last minute preventing them from doubling their lead. A first clean sheet was the most pleasing aspect of this win. A big step in the team's development by being resilient and wanting to get the clean sheet. POTM: Our goalkeeper, Jess.

Cargo Fleet 3 v U12 Falcons 2

A cold, windy morning against a challenging team only beaten twice (once by us). 2-0 down at HT, but did have our own chances. Their third goal was a good one, scored on the break after Falcons had looked like scoring at the other end. We fought back to 3-2 and nearly snatched a point right at the end when the keeper somehow kept the ball on the line. Opposition POM: Harry M. Coaches: Joseph and Leo.

U10 Pumas v Sunderland West End

Final game before Christmas was a close contest in a game with lots of goals, the Puma's just missing out on getting a result.

Wildcats Girls Development and Little Eagles Boys Development

We now have spaces available for Year 1 boys and girls at our development academies. If you are interested and need more information, please contact Berni on 07939 045242.



Masfix Expand into Aycliffe

Masfix, the North East's trusted name in fasteners and industrial supplies, has officially opened a new 5,000 sq ft facility on Aycliffe Business Park, marking a major step forward in the company's continued growth. Backed by a £150,000 investment, the expansion adds a second site to Masfix's operation, with over £1 million in combined stock now available to customers across the region. The Aycliffe base is stocked daily from Masfix's Newburn HQ, ensuring fast, reliable access to more than 30,000 products - including tools, fixings, PPE and engineered parts.

"This move helps us respond more quickly to the businesses we already serve in Newton Aycliffe and gives us room to build new relationships," said Ian Mordue, director and co-owner. "It's a strategic and personal milestone for our team."

Three new full-time positions have been created and the site will be overseen by local account manager Rebecca Head, who brings valuable knowledge of the area's business community.

Masfix's services go beyond stock supply. Their innovative vendor-managed inventory system installs vending machines directly into client premises - automatically restocking based on real-time usage to cut downtime and simplify procurement.

"Customers get what they need, when they need it - without leaving site," added sales director Richard Ward. "It's a smarter, faster way to manage inventory."

Founded in 1982 by George Mordue and Ron Slater, Masfix remains a proud family business. For co-director Mark Slater, the Newton Aycliffe opening is a meaningful next step in a journey that began over 40 years ago.

"We started small, with nothing but ambition. Now, we're part of one of the region's busiest business parks - fully stocked and ready to grow," he said. "Our fathers built the foundation. We're building the future." Masfix is now firmly rooted in one of the North East's most vibrant business parks - and ready to support companies across County Durham with expert service, fast delivery and a personal approach.



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As Christmas approaches and families gather to celebrate the festive season, I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. This is also a moment to reflect on a positive year for our community and highlight what we have achieved together. One of the most important milestones was working with factory workers, union members and other staff at Hitachi to secure a £300 million deal in April. This agreement helps protect hundreds of skilled jobs at the factory. It follows the £500 million deal signed last December and shows strong support for Hitachi and clear backing of our local workforce. It was great to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in September. I was proud to lead a debate in Parliament highlighting the contribution that our area made to travel around the world. It was a privilege to join the Lord Lieutenant in welcoming 1,500 residents to the Hitachi Open Day so our community could see for themselves modern rail manufacturing taking place so close to where passenger rail began. Heighington Station was the world's first railway station, but for too long had been left to decay. The brilliant volunteers at the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway have been raising money to save the station. It was a real pleasure to highlight their campaign in parliament and work with industry to help them secure the final major donation they needed to protect the historic buildings for the future. Supporting families has been central to my work this year too. I am proud to have worked with the Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson MP as her Parliamentary Private Secretary to help give every child the opportunities they deserve and families the support they need. In the year ahead I hope the changes, including 30 hours of free childcare, expanding school-based nurseries and removing the two-child benefit cap, start to make a real difference to families in Aycliffe. Over the past year I've been proud to help local residents with 6,500 issues from housing and benefits to transport and healthcare. In 2026 I'm committed to continuing to work hard to serve our community and push for a strong future for our area. My office remains open throughout the Christmas period to support residents - if I can help with anything please email me on: alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family.

Aycliffe Fell Walkers

We were in North Yorkshire to walk between Ugthorpe and Whitby. My group took a walk from Barton Howl on the A171 heading south via Egton and Egton Bridge where we joined the Esk Valley Way. The weather was stunning, with clear blue skies and no rain, but there were some slippery places underfoot from early morning ice and mid-afternoon mud! Others took a route via Ugthorpe, Mulgrave Woods and Castle to end up on the coast at Sandsend with a nice walk down to Whitby.

We all had a great day, but later we all met up for a Christmas meal at the Granby Hotel. The superb team of chefs and servers, led by manager Debbie, delivered 36 meals in record time and of such quality that I can highly recommend the Granby to anyone visiting Whitby. The coach journey home was a happy one, with a short raffle for free walks next year, lots of singing and warm conversations. We look forward to next year's calendar (see below).

AFWC WALK CALENDAR 2026

| Walk | Date | Area |
|------|------------|---|
| 426 | Jan 10th | Runswick Bay to Redcar |
| 427 | Feb 14th | Hadrian's Wall to Corbridge |
| 428 | March 14th | Rothbury to Warkworth |
| 429 | April 11th | Masham to Pateley Bridge |
| 430 | May 9th | Helvellyn to Grasmere |
| 431 | June 13th | Helmsley to Osmotherley |
| 432 | July 11th | Grisdale Horseshoe: Glenridding to Patterdale |
| 433 | Aug 8th | Bamburgh to Alnmouth |
| 434 | Sept 12th | Coniston Fells |
| 435 | Oct 10th | Kirkstone Pass to Staveley |
| 436 | Nov 14th | Fountains Abbey and Ripon Rowel Walk |
| 437 | Dec 12th | Middleham to Masham |

Please visit our [website: aycliffefellwalkingclub.com](http://www.aycliffefellwalkingclub.com)

for further details or if you are interested in joining us. Annual membership of £10 runs from January to December with each walk outing costing £15 to cover the cost of the coach. Feel free to join us on the next walk. We look forward to your interest.



Last week I took a call from my daughter, who lives just fifteen minutes away. She was worried about driving to work because the roads were already turning white and the snow was falling heavily. She asked what it was like where I lived - and at that moment it was perfectly clear: no snow, dry roads, blue skies. But within ten minutes, everything changed. The weather closed in, visibility dropped, and the landscape was transformed. That sudden shift was a stark reminder that winter conditions can change rapidly and without warning, and why every journey, even the familiar ones, requires preparation. Here are practical steps, echoing National Highways' **Safe T.R.I.P.** campaign and TyreSafe guidance, that every driver should adopt.

• Follow the **T.R.I.P.** check before every journey

T: Top Up. Ensure your vehicle has plenty of fuel or, for electric vehicles, adequate charge, allowing for diversions or delays. Top up screen wash with freeze resistant fluid and check oil, coolant and anti-freeze.

R: Rest. Fatigue reduces reaction times, especially in long night drives, fog or heavy rain. Build in rest stops on longer routes.

I: Inspect. Check tyre tread (legal minimum 1.6mm, but aim for 3mm), air pressure and condition. Make sure lights work, wipers are effective, and your windscreen is fully cleared before moving off.

P: Prepare. Carry a winter-ready kit: warm clothing, blanket, high visibility jacket, warning triangle, de-icer, scraper, torch, charger/power bank, water, snacks, first-aid kit, jump leads and a small shovel for rural areas. Winter conditions can vary sharply, even a few miles apart, as my daughter and I discovered. Before travelling: Check traffic alerts, accidents and road closures. Review Met Office warnings for snow, ice or freezing fog. Stick to main roads where possible, as they are more likely to be gritted.

If conditions worsen, delay or reconsider your journey. The sun sits low in the sky, creating dangerous glare. Always keep sunglasses in the car and ensure your windscreen is spotless. Modern LED headlights and wet roads can dazzle. If you are sensitive to glare, consider anti-glare night-driving glasses. Drive for the weather, not the clock. Reduce speed and leave significantly more space. Brake early and accelerate gently. Expect black ice on bridges, shaded bends and rural roads. Avoid harsh steering or sudden manoeuvres. If travelling in severe weather, tell someone where you're going and when you expect to arrive. Build in extra time and never feel pressured to take risks.



Messy Christmas



On Saturday 20th December at 4.00pm - why not join us as we celebrate 'Joy To The World' through crafts, story and songs?

We will be making angels, edible nativities, glittery stars, gingerbread Play Doh and more. With a party tea to follow.

All are welcome, free family festive fellowship and fun - St. Clare's Church, Newton Aycliffe.

Church Services

Churches in the Great Aycliffe team have made a great start to their Christmas services, with Mayor Ken attending and reading at the Civic Carol service on 7th December.

Members of St. Clare's Church, led by Change Rector Rev John Musson and Team Vicar Rev Helen Musson, have taken Carol Services in the Care Homes in the town, accompanied by our organist Gordon Bell, who then led the singing of Christmas favourites.

There's still time to come along to Christmas services within the parish:

Saturday 20th we will be holding Messy Christmas in St. Clare's, Newton Aycliffe for all the family from 4-6pm.

On Christmas Eve it is a 'Carols by Candlelight' at St. Andrew's, Aycliffe Village at 3pm and our ever popular Christingle Service in St. Clare's, Newton Aycliffe at 4pm.

Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve takes place at 11.30pm both in St. Clare's and St. Andrew's - this is a great way of welcoming in Christmas Day.

On Christmas Day there's an all-age service at St. Elizabeth's, Woodham at 10am. We would love to see you as we celebrate Christmas together in the town.

Happy Christmas.

Rev John Musson, Change Rector
Parish of Great Aycliffe.

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Feed & Read



This week Rotary Newton Aycliffe installed a bookcase in the Thames Diner. The shelves are now full of books (CDs and DVDs to follow). Swap, return, borrow a best seller, with a suggested donation of £1.00. Many thanks to Marion and Rachael in the Thames Diner. Thanks also to Angela Fryer of Rotary Furness Peninsula and Pat de Martino from Darlington Lions for all the advice and encouragement.

Christmas Greetings

Heather Merchant

Merry Christmas to all friends, and all the best for 2026. From Heather Merchant xx (Simpasture Court).

Michael and Pam Lovelass

Wish to send all the blessings of the season to all our family, friends and neighbours. If you wish, please send a donation to your favourite charity instead of sending us a card. Although cards are lovely to receive, we always donate instead of sending them to those we think of at this holy time of year. Much love and God bless you all. Have a Happy Christmas xxx

Lol Storey

I won't be sending Christmas cards this year as I will donate to charity. I would like to thank Chris and Gill for caring. Also remembering my beautiful Wife, Marilyn as 18th December was our Wedding Anniversary. Love you forever, miss you so much.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all family, friends and neighbours. From Ian and Betty.

For all your print requirements, call Newton Press 300212

In Memoriam

David Atkinson

12th April 1953 - 26th December 2024



Remembering our beloved Dad and Grandad on our first Christmas without you. How has it been a whole year already? There are so many stories left unshared, cuppas left undrunk and pork pies left uneaten. You are missed beyond measure and more so at this time of year. What we would give for one more Christmas with you, it's a little less merry without you here. Merry Christmas David, forever in our hearts. Lots of love, Joanne, Zara, Brogan, Kacey, Alfie and Amelia xxx

Obituary

Doreen MacKay

Peacefully on 30th November, Doreen, aged 97 years (formerly of Broomlee Close). Much loved Wife of the late Donald. She will be sadly missed by all of her family and friends. Funeral on Wednesday 7th January. Would friends kindly meet for service in Darlington Crematorium at 11.00am.

Brian Rose

Of Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland, passed away on 8th December 2025, aged 77. Much loved Father to Andrew & Stuart; Father-in-Law to Stephanie & Fiona and beloved Grandad to Charlotte & Florence. Friends and family to meet at Darlington Crematorium on 5th January 2026 at 11.00am. Family flowers only and any donations to please go to Dementia UK.

Sylvia Pedelty

Passed away on 20th December 2015. Missed and loved always by your loving Son, David.

In Memory of Margaret Teresa Young (Candeliter)



Sept 1936-Dec 2024 Darling Margaret it is almost a year that we were parted and I am missing you just as much as ever. Yet your spirit, love and kindness are still here with me, as are the many memories of happy times we enjoyed together. Rest in peace my darling. All my love, Hubby Walt.

David Preston

21st December It's been a whole year since you left us, you have been in our thoughts everyday, love always. Your loving Wife, Pat and family.

For Sale

Black corner electric recliner sofa, 220cm x 240cm, immaculate condition, £250. **Samsung** 40" TV UE40F6740, £100. **TV Table** 600 x 460, wooden, black glass top and one shelf, £40. **X-Box One** and Kinnect, £80. **Bose Solo** TV sound system, £50. Tel 07572 614466.

Brenda Milburn

1st January 2018 Remembering a dear Mother, Nana, and Great Nana. Love and miss you always. John, Kevin and family.

Arnold Milburn

15th January 2010 Remembering a dear Dad, Grandad, and Great Grandad. Love and miss you always. John, Kevin and family.

Christmas Remembrance

Always remembering family and friends that are no longer with us. Patsy, Sheila & Ann.

Les & Barbara Sutton

As we all had a fantastic Mother, Nana, Dad and Grandad - all our memories of our great Christmas days. We will all never forget and we all still miss you both and wish you were here on Christmas Day again, to eat our sprouts. Never forgotten, All the family.

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S.A.C.A.

School Aycliffe Community Association

December Events - Santa Tour - Santa and his merry elves will be at School Aycliffe Community Hall approximately, between 5.00pm to 5.4-5pm on Christmas Eve. A small amount of refreshments will be on sale, cash only please, looking forward to seeing you there. Hall will be open between 4.30pm to 6.15pm.

January - Community Choir held fortnightly 7.00pm to 8.30pm, £3 per session including refreshments, please contact Julie on 07742 015609.

Indoor Table Top Sale - Sunday 25th - further details to follow. A great opportunity to declutter and start the year clutter free. Tables £12. 10.00am to 1.00pm. Please contact Georgette on 07951 758118 for further details.

Coffee, Cake & Stuff being held on Thursday 29th January, 11am to 2pm. Please come and join us at our ever popular monthly Coffee, Cake & Stuff where we will be selling our gorgeous homemade sweet and savoury bakes and the opportunity to catch up with friends and neighbours. Please contact Elizabeth on 07813 523050 or Christine on 07981 992686 for details.

The committee would also like to thank you for your continued support and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Are you Affected by Diabetes?

Whether you are at risk, living with, or caring for someone with diabetes - come along to our 'Peer Support Group'. A safe place to meet and chat about your experience with others who are also affected. Held on the first Tuesday of each month, next meeting is Tuesday 6th January 2026 from 1-3pm at PCP, Carers Way, Newton Aycliffe. No need to book, just turn up!

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Withdrawal of Council Tax Support Grant

Withdrawal of Council Tax Support Grant by Durham County Council leaves Town Council facing a £145,000 Revenue Budget Shortfall.

The Town Council is in the process of developing its Revenue and Capital Budget for the 2026/27 financial year. In overall terms, the Town Council is preparing the Revenue Budget on the principle of protecting and maintaining all of our current services, facilities, and events next year.

The Council is also prudently planning to maintain some surplus resources in the budget which will allow it to replenish its balances and reserves.

This will help ensure that we can continue to make capital investment in valued community assets such as cemeteries, allotments, parks and play areas, for the benefit of the community, in the coming years.

In order to do so, the Council was proposing to raise the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax bill by around £5.61 per year (equating to an increase of 2.8%) for the vast majority of local taxpayers i.e. those living in Band A properties. The Town Council Tax currently amounts to 11p in every £1 of Council Tax paid.

This increase would have been below the current rate of inflation and as a result of the Council's ongoing efforts to cut costs, increase income and deliver value-for-money services.

Sadly, however, the new Reform Administration at Durham County Council has made a decision to withdraw, in full, the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant funding paid to town and parish councils, despite an expectation by Central Government that this funding is passed on, which will result in a £145,250 loss of revenue for the Town Council next year (representing 7% of the current Council Precept). This action is effectively forcing parish and town councils to make a choice, at very late notice, between making significant cuts to services and facilities or considering substantial council tax rises for local residents.

The grant cut, if offset via the Council Precept would regrettably result in the Town Council Tax increase rising to £13.86 per year (an increase of 6.92%).

The Town Council is of the view that this grant cut is being imposed on the Town Council with little notice or consultation at a very late stage in the budget setting process, and that making cuts to valued town council services and events is not an acceptable course of action, and has therefore taken the decision to fund the grant cut via the council tax. This one-off increase will fully offset the financial impact of the grant cut and make the Town Council financially self-sufficient moving forwards. We hope you will agree that a monthly increase of £1.16 in the Band A

Town Council Tax bill is a small price to pay to ensure that all the existing services provided by the Town Council can be protected for another year, despite the actions of Durham County Council in withdrawing the Council Tax Support Grant.

There is more information on the Council's draft 2026/27 budget proposals, should you wish to read this, on the meetings section of the Council's website.

Have Your Say

Our annual Budget Survey is your opportunity to tell us what you think.

You can access the survey via this link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/32K01S>

The survey is also available in paper form at various community facilities around the town including the Oak Leaf Sports and Golf Complexes, the Town Council Offices and via our website at www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk or on our social media pages.

The survey will close at 12 noon on Wednesday 31st December 2025.

Mayor's Update



It's been a busy year so far, there is so much going on around our town and it's an honour to be invited to come along and be a part of celebrating residents' special days and anniversaries.

The Mayoress and I have been along to many of our Town Council events, including Fun in the Parks during the summer holidays, our annual fireworks display, Remembrance Day and our Carol Service, to name a few, and I received a special invitation to visit the troops at Catterick Garrison which was fantastic. There is plenty to look forward to in 2026 including the Charity Civic Dinner at Redworth Hall Hotel on Friday 20th February.

This year we have live music from Micky Rich and Fully Loaded Disco, and I would like to take this opportunity to invite residents to come along and join us for a lovely three course dinner with wine. Tickets cost £40.00 and there will also be a raffle and tombola to raise funds for my chosen good causes which are Wishing Well and Options. Email: info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk for a reservation form. As this year's Mayor of Great Aycliffe, it gives me great pleasure to wish all of our residents a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Mayor, Councillor Ken Robson.

Santa's ADM Grotto

All Disabilities Matter Charity has once again created an immersive Winter Wonderland & Santa's Grotto this year, located in Newton Aycliffe Town Centre (Unit 35). This has been made possible with the kind support of our amazing volunteers, the fantastic fabrication work completed by Kingfisher (Carlos and Andy) and the continued support of the Town Centre Management.

The Grotto has been designed for everyone to enjoy, with a particular focus on inclusion and accessibility. Our aim was to consider and accommodate as many different types of disabilities as possible, supported by our dedicated team of volunteers.

In collaboration with, and with the agreement of, Great Aycliffe Town Council and its Councillors, we have also extended access to the Grotto and Winter Wonderland on Christmas Eve from 11am to 3pm. This extension is intended to provide additional support following the required changes to this year's Santa Tours, due to updated Elf and Safety requirements.

With the unanimous support of all local parish councillors, those few families who may be affected by the changes to the Council-run Santa Tours will instead be able to access the Town Centre Grotto, meet Santa and enjoy the festive experience.

At 3pm, Santa will leave the Winter Wonderland Grotto and begin the Santa Tours around the town.

Donation buckets will be available, but contributions are entirely optional.



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Local Hero Honoured

Great Aycliffe Town Council is proud to celebrate local hero Emma Williams, the latest recipient of the Community Recognition Award.

This award acknowledges individuals whose dedication and outstanding contributions make Great Aycliffe a better place for everyone to live and work.

Emma, founder and principal of Aycliffe Dance Academy since 2010, has created a safe and welcoming space for children and adults to express themselves freely through dance. For many, the academy is more than a dance school - it is a community hub that promotes social connection and supports mental health. Emma's many contributions to the community include providing opportunities for students to take part in dance exams, pantomimes, annual shows and displays, helping them grow in confidence and ability. She also organises fun days and activity events for both dance students and the wider community.

Notably, this year the Dance Academy collaborated with Durham Constabulary to create a moving dance piece performed at the launch of the Knife Angel in Newton Aycliffe town centre.

Emma also serves as a school governor at Sugar Hill Primary School, advocating for learning initiatives such as mini medics, arranging care home visits at Christmas, and involving children in local events like VE Day celebrations.

Amy Errington, who nominated Emma, said: "Emma opened the dance school back in 2010 and has played a vital role in creating a safe place for many children and adults in the community to come along and to express themselves freely and without judgement. For many, it's a place to come to socialise and improve their mental health and welfare."

The Mayor, Councillor Ken Robson, presented Emma with a medal and certificate at the Council offices, saying: "It is fabulous to be able to reward Emma for her hard work on behalf of the community. We have some wonderful talented young people, and Emma brings out the best in them."

Nominate a Local Hero

Know someone making a difference in Great Aycliffe? Nominate them for a Community Recognition Award by emailing info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk or visiting www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk



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