

# 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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## Olympus Global Announces Start of Construction in Newton Aycliffe

European automotive component distributor, Olympus Global, has announced it is soon to break ground on its new multi-million pound distribution facility in the North East of England.

Ambitious growth plans, a significant £2.7m investment, and industrial architectural designs, civil engineering and project management expertise by Building Design Northern (BDN) all came together on Monday 6th October when construction started at the 16,000 sq ft Newton Aycliffe site.

The announcement coincides with the launch of this year's North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA) event which sees organisations from across the whole industry supply chain attend the annual expo held in Sunderland.

Olympus Global, a UK and European-wide distributor of high-quality engineered components, is building its second UK warehouse distribution facility (the first in the North East) to directly serve industrial, automotive and wider supply chain companies in northern and Scottish regions.

The bespoke build - designed, delivered and project managed collectively by architectural and engineering firm, BDN, will see prime brownfield land at Aycliffe Business Park in County Durham be fully transformed into a fit-for-purpose scheme with dedicated storage space and modern offices.

The site will facilitate existing international customers including Unipres, Thorn Lighting and Gestamp Tallent (located opposite), and is anticipated to ship more than £7m worth of parts and engineering components in the first year of operations alone. The new facility will create up to 10 new jobs making a significant contribution to the local economy.

Ryan Doyle, Director at Building Design Northern (BDN) which is working on behalf of major UK-wide industrial and commercial clients including Olympus Global, commented: "Being able to announce the start of construction onsite is fantastic and it'll be great to start seeing our designs coming out of the ground."

"We have worked closely with Olympus Global right from the start across all requirements to support this major scheme, and our knowledge, industry insight and technical expertise across different architectural and engineering disciplines has proved critical, given our client is also based outside the region. The main contractor is ready to go, so getting ready to break ground on the site is good news for Olympus Global, the industry



and the wider business community too." BDN has appointed Hall Construction as principal contractor to deliver the development which also includes bespoke 'green' features to align with Olympus Global's commitment to carbon reduction and sustainability. Olympus Global - a £38m turnover business - supplies engineering fasteners, precision-turned and machined components, castings, aluminium extrusions and forgings to major organisations within the industrial and automotive sectors. The Newton Aycliffe development will become the company's fifth site including its head office and distribution centre in the Midlands and further facilities in Spain and Hungary. Keith Rice, Managing Director at Olympus Global, said: "We are delighted to be breaking ground at Newton Aycliffe as it is a key strategic site for the company, and one which marks a new chapter in our 50+ year history. We work very closely with the region's automotive supply chain, so it is also very timely to announce the start of construction date at NEAA's expo event. "The North East and County Durham is a prime location, providing direct access to main transport routes and proximity to the industry's big players and cluster locations. Our clients are fast-paced organisations that require the highest level of turnaround, dispatch and efficiency, so we're delighted to be starting construction and making our mark here in the region."

## 3000 Baby Boxes Delivered

A child born during the festive season has become the 3000th in the region to receive a Baby Box.

North East charity 'The Children's Foundation' celebrated boosting the start in life for 3,000 babies at Christmas, with first-day essentials, information and support in the form of a Baby Box.

A third of children in the North East live in poverty and these boxes

are designed to level the playing field for all youngsters. Baby Boxes include developmentally rich toys, early learning materials, baby essentials and expert guidance to first-time parents.

The scheme has been backed by North East Mayor Kim McGuinness, since she came into office, she has expanded the initiative to benefit more families across the region and is becoming a cornerstone of her strategy to tackle child poverty.

The model combines financial relief with relationship-based support delivered through midwives, health visitors and community partners, easing the pressure on stretched public services and giving families the confidence, tools and knowledge to support their baby's development from birth.

Sean Soulsby, CEO of The Children's Foundation, said, "Reaching 3,000 Baby Boxes isn't just a number, it represents real, individual families whose babies are now starting life with the essentials, the learning tools and the support every child deserves."

What started as a local, community led initiative has benefitted from private sector collaboration with warehousing specialist Stiller bringing the Baby Box scheme to life.

Stiller now provide contract packing services to ready boxes for expecting families.

Thomas Prentice, Business Development Manager at Stiller, said: "When we first learned about the Baby Box project, we knew straight away it was something we wanted to support and the project has grown into something the whole Stiller team cares deeply about. We handle the logistics planning, from stock management to making sure each box leaves us safely and gets where it needs to be, when it needs to be there. It's the kind of behind-the-scenes work we do every day as a business, but knowing it directly supports new parents makes it feel incredibly meaningful."

"Stiller has been part of the Northeast community for 71 years, and being able to use our contract packing facility and the expertise of our people to help get these boxes safely packed and delivered feels like a very real, hands-on way of giving back. Seeing the project reach 3,000 Baby Boxes is fantastic, and we're proud to have played a part in making that happen. Knowing that every single one is heading to a family that will start their journey feeling a little more supported is a great feeling, especially at this time of year."





# Age UK Co. Durham Launches Workshop

Age UK County Durham is launching workshops across County Durham to share how exercise and adopting good habits can help the county's population stay healthy longer.

The 'Your Body, Your Chapter' workshops, designed for those aged around 50 to 70, will be full of practical advice on both physical and mental health.

Chloe Morton, Physiotherapist Assistant with Age UK County Durham, commented: "If we all have the right knowledge, we can get good habits in place. That's what these workshops are aiming to help with. They'll be fun, with quizzes and group activities and everyone will also have the opportunity to try various pieces of equipment such as light weights, balance equipment and resistance bands. These are the types of thing you can have at home and regular use could really help you stay fitter as you age."

"If we can help people understand the simple steps they can take to help keep themselves healthy, we will be reducing the demand on primary and secondary care providers in our communities. And, at the same time, we'll be helping people age with the confidence that they know how to look after themselves."

A workshop is planned for Bishop Auckland Four Clocks Tower in March, with more to be arranged in Sedgfield and Newton Aycliffe. To register, or express your interest for locations, please call 0191 386 3856 or email: [info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk)

Age UK County Durham is the 'go to' organisation for anyone aged 50 or over living in County Durham. Age UK County Durham is a stand-alone registered charitable organisation, and a brand partner of Age UK.



# Make Your Voice Count



When people talk to me about policing, they rarely talk in headlines or statistics. They talk about the things that affect their daily lives. Anti-social behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable in their own street. Speeding cars and dangerous driving outside schools and villages. Not seeing a police officer when they feel they need one. Noise, nuisance, intimidation, or repeat problems, that wear people down over time.

These issues may seem small to some, but for the people living with them they matter deeply. And they should matter to those responsible for setting policing priorities.

As Police and Crime Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington, one of my key responsibilities is to decide how policing is funded and what it focuses on each year. Around 30 per cent of police funding comes from council tax, so local people have a real stake in how that money is used. That is why I am asking residents to have their say. Policing faces increasing pressures. Officers are dealing with more complex crime, rising anti-social behaviour, violence linked to alcohol and drugs, and the very real dangers caused by speeding, drug driving and careless driving on our roads. At the same time, costs are rising, and resources are stretched. There are no simple answers, but the right decisions can only be made if they are informed by the people policing exists to serve. This public consultation is your opportunity to tell us what matters most to you. Whether it is more visible neighbourhood policing, tougher action on anti-social behaviour, greater focus on road safety, or better support for victims - your views will help shape the priorities for the year ahead.

It is also a chance to say what action you want to see taken. Policing is not just about responding when something goes wrong; it is about prevention, visibility and working with communities to stop problems escalating in the first place.

Too often, people feel their concerns are not heard or that decisions are made without understanding local realities. I want to change that. I want policing in County Durham and Darlington to reflect the experiences of people who live and work here - in our towns, villages, and rural communities.

Taking part is quick and straightforward, but it makes a real difference.

The consultation is now open and will close at 5pm on Thursday 15th January 2026. You can share your views online by visiting:

<https://tinyurl.com/495wv9sm>

This is your chance to shape policing priorities, influence how resources are used, and help ensure that issues like anti-social behaviour, police visibility and dangerous driving are taken seriously.

It is your police, so have your say and help your communities safer, stronger, and more resilient to alcohol and drug related crime and anti-social behaviour.

# 2026 PACT Meeting Dates

Please see below, a list of dates for our PACT meetings for 2026, where a member of the Neighbourhood Team will be present each time to discuss any issues.

**Held at The Big Club, Sheraton Road  
From 5.30pm to 6.30pm**

Thursday 22nd January

Thursday 26th February

Thursday 2nd April

Thursday 7th May

Thursday 11th June

Thursday 16th July

Thursday 20th August

Thursday 24th September

Thursday 29th October

Thursday 3rd December

We hope to see you there!

Thank you, PCSO 8372 Steven Kipling.

# New Member

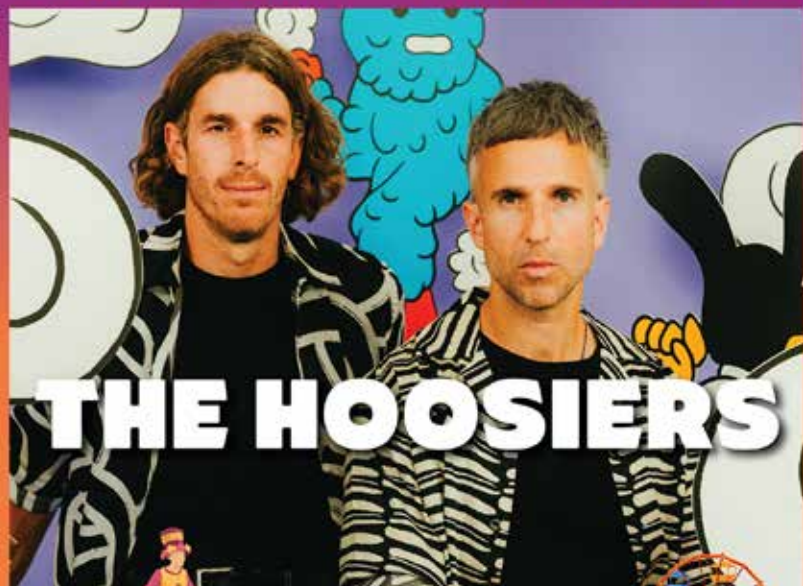


It was a privilege to welcome Charlotte Iceton to our Rotary family, the grand-daughter of Johnny Jones, a former Rotarian. Charlotte's parents Debbie and Gavin Iceton, both Paul Harris Fellows, quite an achievement in itself, attended her induction along with her partner, Andy Hickson.

Charlotte becomes the third generation of her family to join the Rotary family. Welcome from all of us, your Grandfather would be very proud of you - as we are. Watch out Mr President, she is after your seat!

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# Cuppa & Chat

Everyone is welcome to Aycliffe Village Hall for our New Year 'Cuppa and Chat' on Wednesday 14th January between 2.00pm and 3.00pm.  
We are looking forward to seeing you.

**HAVE YOU GOT NEWS FOR US?**  
We are always interested in local news stories. We like to feature **good** news and interesting items on achievements & community service  
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# New Health and Wellbeing Hub

A brand-new community hub is opening in the Western area of Newton Aycliffe, bringing a wide range of health initiatives, wellbeing support, and community resources directly to the local community.

According to the Director of Public Health for County Durham's latest annual report, 15.7% of the adult population in County Durham (72,302 people) have a clinical diagnosis of depression. This is projected to rise by a further 24% by 2040 if no action is taken to address mental health and wellbeing.

The Health and Wellbeing Hub, located at 10/11 Silverdale Place, is aiming to become a central point for health promotion and community connection.

Developed in collaboration with Durham County Council with support from the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance and Livin, which runs the Ark community space next door, the hub is part of a broader effort to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities in the area.

Clare Singlewood, Area Manager for Waythrough, said: "Health is about so much more than just the absence of physical illness - it's about feeling supported, connected, and part of a community. We're delighted to be launching our new Health and Wellbeing Hub to make that sense of belonging a reality for the people of Western Newton Aycliffe."

Open to people 16+, the hub will host group activities, wellbeing workshops, drop-in sessions tailored to the specific needs of residents, and a health and wellbeing book library. The space has been designed to welcome anyone from the community who needs it.

For more information about the Health and Wellbeing Hub or how to access its services, visit:

[waythrough.org.uk/find-support-near-me/health-wellbeing-hub](http://waythrough.org.uk/find-support-near-me/health-wellbeing-hub)

## Monday

11-1pm - Waythrough Health & Wellbeing Activity Sessions  
Contact Jan James 07843 341144

1.30-3pm - Bereavement Support Drop-in (age 16+)

## Tuesday

10-12 - Think Positive Counselling Sessions  
Contact Glenn Hailey 01207 280407

1-3pm - Waythrough Housing Drop-in

1.30-3.30pm - Mental Health Matters Employability Workshops  
Contact Tracey 07877 162809 or Rachel 07811 040094

## Wednesday

AM - Women's Substance Misuse Group  
Contact 03000 26 6666

PM - Structured Treatment Appointments (Drug & Alcohol Recovery)

## Thursday

AM - Home Group Home Achievement Programme  
Contact Linda Henderson 07730 761547

1-3pm - Hub Social Group  
Contact Jan James 07843 341144

## Friday

10-1 - Creative Support Welfare Application Support  
Contact The Team 01388 771502

# Town Cricket Club Seek Cover Sponsors



Newton Aycliffe Cricket Club's preparations are in full swing for the 2026 season and they are looking for new sponsors for their wicket covers. For a one off payment of £500, per cover, local businesses could have their logo emblazoned across one of the 8m covers for the next five years.

These covers are visible throughout the summer and are used to protect the wicket from the rain and the sun, so spend a lot of time prominently standing in the middle of the ground.

Any business who would be interested in supporting their local Cricket Club, while gaining great exposure, should contact Ian Palmer by email at: [palmerian1959@gmail.com](mailto:palmerian1959@gmail.com)

# Free Fitness Boot Camp

Your 'new you' starts here.

Free classes for all patients registered with Bewick Crescent, Cobblers Hall, Hallgarth Surgery and Pease Way Surgery.

Monday: Sunnydale Leisure Centre 5.15pm

Thursday: Aycliffe Youth Centre 5.15pm

Contact Ian on 07756 294076 for more details or email [ian.mcgee@nhs.net](mailto:ian.mcgee@nhs.net)

## Joy-Marie Hairdressing

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## On Air . . .

### Aycliffe Radio Seeks Volunteers, Presenters and DJs!

Your local community radio station, Aycliffe Radio, is looking for enthusiastic volunteer presenters and DJs to join our vibrant on-air and behind-the-scenes team.

We're especially keen to hear from people with a love of music from all decades and genres - from golden oldies, soul, jazz and classic rock to 80s, 90s and 00s favourites, as well as indie, dance, hip-hop, electronic, folk, world music, alternative and emerging new sounds. If you have a passion for uncovering hidden gems or championing under-represented styles, we'd love to hear from you.

Whether you're interested in music, local news, arts, sport or community stories, this is your opportunity to share your voice and make a real difference. No previous broadcasting experience is required - just enthusiasm, reliability and a desire to connect with your community.

Station Manager, Paul said: "Community radio is all about giving local people a voice. We are here to reflect the diversity and energy of Newton Aycliffe, and that includes the music we play. We welcome anyone who would like to get involved - from total beginners to seasoned music lovers with a passion for any era or genre."

Volunteers will receive full training and ongoing support. Opportunities are available for live shows, pre-recorded programmes, specialist music shows, interviews, and a variety of production and technical roles behind the scenes.

As part of our commitment to providing a safe and professional environment, all new volunteers will be required to complete a simple vetting process.

#### About Aycliffe Radio CIC

Aycliffe Radio broadcasts 24 hours a day on Small Scale DAB and online platforms, delivering a unique mix of local music, talk and community content. As a not-for-profit community station, we are powered entirely by volunteers who are passionate about representing the many voices - and sounds - of our local area.

#### Interested?

To find out more, email:  
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## Putting Charity into Action at Christmas

Across the region last Christmas, Durham Freemasons were putting charity into action, demonstrating that the true spirit of Christmas lies not just in generosity, but in compassion, service, and human connection.

With support from individual Freemasons, local Lodges and the Durham Freemasons Charity, members came together to serve their communities at Christmas and throughout the festive period. Alongside financial support and community grants, Freemasons gave their time on Christmas Day through a range of activities, from serving meals in Spennymoor to offering companionship to those most in need in Sunderland.

This work builds on a long tradition of service across County Durham, Sunderland, Teesside, and South Tyneside, with Christmas support delivered throughout the region. Activities have included Feeding Families collections in Shildon, Hartlepool, Stockton, and Sunderland, as well as support for children's Christmas parties in South Shields, where 72 children were welcomed for a festive celebration, helping to bring joy to families facing difficult circumstances.

One powerful example is the "Wear Here to Support You This Christmas" programme in Sunderland, supported by a £1,500 grant from the Durham Freemasons Charity. Now in its twelfth year, the initiative was inspired by a volunteer who met a young man alone in Barnes Park on Christmas Day with nowhere to go. That moment led to the creation of a support network to ensure no-one in the community feels isolated during the festive season. With this funding, dedicated volunteers continue to provide free Christmas lunches, entertainment, and companionship to homeless, lonely, and vulnerable people. This commitment to service is further demonstrated through the Feeding Families project, in which Freemasons support food collections and the distribution of essential supplies in Shildon, Hartlepool, Stockton and Sunderland. By working alongside local partners, the project helps families experiencing financial hardship to cope with rising living costs and ensures that households across the region receive practical support at Christmas.

The spirit of putting charity into action is also reflected in Peterlee, where a £1,500 grant from the Durham Freemasons Charity supported a Christmas dinner hosted by FACT - Fighting All Cancers Together - bringing together families, carers and people living with cancer for an afternoon of companionship, celebration and reassurance that they are not alone.

As families gathered to celebrate Christmas, Durham Freemasons were out in their communities, giving their time on Christmas Day through activities ranging from serving meals in Spennymoor to offering companionship to those most in need in Sunderland. This is living proof that the true meaning of Christmas is found in service to others.



## Carvers Strengthen Team



Leading North East property firm Carvers has announced the appointment of Gary Stephenson as Valuer at its Darlington office, further strengthening the company's growing presence in the town and reinforcing its commitment to providing exceptional service to local buyers and sellers.

With over 33 years' experience in estate agency, Gary brings a wealth of knowledge to the role. Having started his property career as a sales negotiator in Durham City, he quickly progressed to Senior Valuer before being promoted to Branch Manager in Darlington in 2007. In this role, he combined hands-on market appraisals with the day-to-day management of the branch, a position he held until December last year.

Remarkably, throughout his career to date, Gary had worked for just one estate agency, making his move to Carvers an exciting new chapter.

Commenting on his appointment, Gary said: "After more than three decades with one company, joining Carvers marks a new and exciting step for me. Even from the outside, the quality of the business, its Directors, and its people, was clear to see, and that has only been reinforced since joining the team. I'm really looking forward to becoming an integral part of such a progressive and impressive company, growing its already exceptional reputation within the community and helping many more buyers and sellers achieve their goals."

Gary's wife, Sue Stephenson, also recently joined Carvers as a Senior Sales Negotiator at the firm's Northallerton office, bringing further experience and expertise into the wider Carvers team.

Henry Carver, Director at Carvers, added: "We are delighted to welcome Gary to our Darlington office. His depth of experience, local knowledge, and reputation within the area make him a fantastic addition to the team. This appointment reflects our continued investment in people and our commitment to delivering the highest levels of service across the region." The appointment underlines Carvers' ongoing growth in Darlington and its focus on building strong, experienced teams to support the town's active property market.

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# Middridge History Society

**Middridge Village Hall**  
**Wednesday 14th January at 7.30pm**

Chris Lloyd makes a welcome return and his subject is 'Attacking the Devil and Sinking the Unsinkable', WT Stead, the greatest Victorian reformer you've never heard of. He was responsible for getting the world's first children's protection act passed, but only by using scandalous tactics which he learned here in the North East as Editor of The Northern Echo.

He played a fascinating part in making mass murderer, Mary Ann Cotton appear such a devil and took an extraordinary interest in a ghost which punched a human.

He was also the most famous British person to drown on the Titanic and just as his journalism skills were forged in Darlington, so were large parts of The Titanic forged here - although the company responsible later tried to airbrush out its involvement in the world's greatest maritime disaster.

Everyone is most welcome: Admission £3 which includes refreshments.



**newtonnews**

Over 15,000 Newton News papers are delivered to all homes and businesses in Newton Aycliffe and the surrounding villages.

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# North East Ambulance Service

Every minute counts when there's a life-threatening emergency, and the actions you take to help during those first few moments can have a major impact on the patient's chances of recovery.

Calling 999 in a life-threatening emergency is something that you hope you never have to do; and equally knowing who to call if it's not life-threatening can ensure that the ambulance is available for the next patient who needs it. The North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) has produced this information card to help you make the right choice if you, or a loved one, need help or come across someone else who does.

Andrew Eales, a public governor at NEAS, has the responsibility of representing his local community at governor meetings, challenging the board of directors and holding non-executives to account for the performance of the Board.

On sharing this information, he said: "I am not responsible for operations or day-to-day decisions at the ambulance service, but I am keen to ensure that this community feels assured of what to do if there is an emergency."

NEAS is one of fastest responding ambulance services in the country; reaching potentially life-threatening calls, on average, in less than seven minutes; and getting to seriously ill patients, on average, in just over 20 minutes. NEAS covers an area of 3,200 square miles from the Scottish border to North Yorkshire, serving a population of more than 2.7 million people. The service answered more than 1.4m calls to 999 and NHS111 last year, as well as transporting non-emergency patients to appointments, delivering training and providing medical support at events.

Andrew Eales  
Public Governor, Durham Area.

**Useful Contact Information**

Website: [www.neas.nhs.uk](http://www.neas.nhs.uk)

Headquarters: 0191 430 2000

Public relations: [publicrelations@neas.nhs.uk](mailto:publicrelations@neas.nhs.uk)

Recruitment: [recruitment@neas.nhs.uk](mailto:recruitment@neas.nhs.uk)

Volunteer: [volunteer.department@neas.nhs.uk](mailto:volunteer.department@neas.nhs.uk)

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[www.neas.nhs.uk/patient-info.aspx](http://www.neas.nhs.uk/patient-info.aspx)

**Call 999 - Life Threatening Emergency**

Always call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. Examples of medical emergencies include, but are not limited to: Chest pain, difficulty breathing, unconsciousness, severe loss of blood, severe burns or scalds, choking, fitting or concussion, drowning, severe allergic reaction.

**When it's less urgent call 111**

You should use this service if you need urgent medical help or advice, but it's not life-threatening. You can access the service online via [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) or call 111.

Examples of urgent care needs include: You need medical help fast, but it's not a 999 emergency; You think you need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service; You don't know who to call or you don't have a GP to call, you require health information.

# CDDFT Sets Out Major Reform Programme

County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) has apologised to patients and their families who have been affected by failings in the Breast Surgery Service.

The apology comes as the Trust publishes and responds to an independent external review into leadership and governance failings. Alongside this, the new Chief Executive and new Interim Chair have set out their determination and commitment to take action with a comprehensive programme of reform and improvement.

The review, commissioned by the Trust and conducted by governance specialist Mary Aubrey, identified serious and long-standing weaknesses in clinical oversight, leadership action and accountability, and governance processes. This enabled poor clinical practice to persist. The Trust has accepted the findings of the review and, in addition to having implemented improvements to the Breast Service so that patients can be confident they will receive care in line with national standards, is outlining further plans to deliver organisation-wide change. The Trust has acknowledged the failings and is focused on overhauling its governance and leadership, delivering meaningful reform and restoring public confidence.

The Trust has already begun implementing a comprehensive action plan aligned with the review's recommendations. Immediate priorities include:

- Strengthening leadership capacity and capability and improving corporate governance
- Improving clinical governance and how we listen to the voices of our patients experience and communication
- Creating a safe and open culture where the voices of our staff are heard, where we have professional curiosity and take action promptly
- Improving how we manage contracts for services
- Improving medical leadership and management as well as the support to Consultants through job planning, appraisal and revalidation

CDDFT will publish progress updates through its Board and website, ensuring full transparency as reforms are delivered. This began with an open Board meeting on Wednesday 26th November. The Trust is also working closely with system partners, including NHS England, the Care Quality Commission, and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, to provide independent assurance of progress.


A dedicated call line and email address are in place for any patients who have concerns about the care they have received through the breast surgery service: 0191 3332126, or email the team at:

[cddft.breastservices@nhs.net](mailto:cddft.breastservices@nhs.net)

The Trust recognises that rebuilding confidence and embedding a change in culture will take time, but its leadership team has made it clear that this marks a turning point.

Steve added: "This is about ensuring that what happened here can never happen again and that it brings a cultural reset for the Trust. We will be open and transparent, we will listen, and, fundamentally, we will deliver the changes needed to make our services safer and stronger for the future for our communities."

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## Folk Night

A new year Folk Night will be held at the Navy Club, Bluebell Way on Wednesday 21st January from 8.00pm to 10.30pm. The headline for this event is 'Jez Lowe' supported by the 'Richmond Hillbillies'. Please reserve tickets by contacting Joan Edmundson on 01740 621347.

## 20 Years of Durham Brass



A North East music festival promises to be bigger and better than ever as it celebrates two decades of bringing one of the biggest celebrations of brass to the region. Durham Brass Festival is back this year, from Sunday 12th to Sunday 19th July, for a week packed with spectacular performances, new commissions, free concerts, community activities and lively street bands. The Durham County Council festival will be marking a major milestone this year - 20 years since the Durham Brass Festival first brought world-class music to the county. With performances taking place across Durham City and in towns and villages throughout the county, the festival will feature events in streets, parks, historic venues, care homes and schools, creating unforgettable experiences for audiences of all ages. In preparation for the year, the council is looking for acts to take part in the festival's Brassed On event, which showcases emerging artists and returns for its fourth year. Last year Brassed On featured Faithful Johannes, Amateur Ornithologist and Liz Corney. The council is putting a call out for musicians to express an interest in being part of the event. Musicians and artists interested in performing at Brassed On can fill out a form at: [www.brassfestival.co.uk](http://www.brassfestival.co.uk) The headline acts for the 2026 Durham Brass Festival will be announced in the spring.

## Aycliffe Radio Exclusive

By 1976 Bob Dylan was at the peak of his powers. After controversially going Electric in 1965, his fan base had only grown bigger and stronger. In 1975, Dylan had his 8th (UK & US inclusive) No 1 Album - Blood on The Tracks, and was touring with legendary - The Band - as his backing musicians. Enjoying the experience, but with a yearning to facilitate his own touring band, Dylan auditioned a succession of established session men and women, with the goal of recording his next studio album - Desire, and subsequently embarking on a 50 state American + Canada nationwide tour .... Rob Stoner had made his name on the 1970 No1 American Pie hit single, playing Bass Guitar on the Don McLean international worldwide hit. In 1975, with a string of subsequent musical highs, to what was already a stellar career, one day Rob got a call out of the blue from Dylan who was busy putting his master plan in place. Both Rob and Dylan soon realised that a band leader was essential to manage the day-to-day issues of the band, and so, Rob took up the mantle ... January 5th 2026 - is the 50th Anniversary of the release of Bob Dylans 9th No1 album - 1976s Desire.



In the spring of 2024, Aycliffe Radios Stephen Hindle interviewed Rob Stoner in his New York City home, the interview with Rob covers this Mid 70s period, and is a first hand account of what life was like with the biggest music superstar the world has ever known, both in the studio and on the road. This exclusive interview is now ready for broadcast - this Sunday 11th January on the Steve & Col Folk/Rock Show: 4pm-6pm on local DAB channels as Aycliffe Radio, or listen live on the Aycliffe-Radio webcast link: <https://www.ayclifferadio.co.uk/listen>

## Foodbank Update

Over the course of 2025 donations averaged out just under a massive 650kg per month (just over 102 stone in old money) with some bumper months.

Our spikes came from:

- \* Harvest Festival collections - 537.20kg from local schools, colleges and churches
- \* Christmas collections - 927.65kg donated directly to us (excluding Tesco donations) from local businesses, schools and churches
- \* Individuals dropped by with 97kg of Christmas donations too
- \* The Tesco basket donations topped 400kg (from individuals in the community)

These levels are more than we have ever seen, and every single item goes out to local families and individuals who need the support.

This year's donations equated to approx. 9000 meals.

We thank each and every person who donated, even one tin makes a difference to someone.

The Foodbank is open every Wednesday and Friday 1.30pm - 3.30pm in St Clare's Church Hall. The kettle is always on and we have some wonderful support groups to chat to as well as ourselves.

You can also follow us on Facebook for up-to-date information at 'Aycliffe Foodbank and Drop In'.

## S.A.C.A.

*School Aycliffe Community Association*

Community Hall located at the bottom of Eastfields, School Aycliffe (please follow the brown/white information signs).

### 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 are £12 each, 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 during 2025 and wish you a Happy New Year.

## Hazardous Waste

Dear Sir,

Like many local residents, I was concerned to receive an unsolicited leaflet through my door from Fornax promoting its Hazardous Waste Incinerator.

The leaflet makes confident assurances without giving any scientific sources or calculations in support of their claims, for example, even the leaflet's claim that emissions are 'equivalent to one HGV doing 20,000 miles a year' doesn't match up to Fornax's own published emissions modelling, nor UK Government vehicle emissions data. How can they produce a leaflet which makes such claims and more, yet with nothing to back it up? No references - no real, comparable data?

It seems as if we are the Guinea pigs, and Fornax is just softening us up with this latest PR stunt.

Ian Jones openly scoffing at our community during recent press interviews, referring to our concerns as 'baseless rumours' and 'misinformation', tells us all we need to know about this fake 'good neighbour' rhetorical spin from Fornax - when, in reality, local people are having genuine, INFORMED conversations and are rightfully concerned around the local impact of this Incinerator.

Fornax is taking us (or trying to) for fools.

Yours Faithfully,  
Charlotte Russell.

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# Wheelchairs

In the UK, it is estimated 4.3 million people experience a short-term mobility need that could benefit from a wheelchair. 44% of these people believed they would have benefitted from one, to attend appointments or to continue in their normal social environment. The NHS provides wheelchairs for long-term users, but those in temporary need often have to apply privately, some have a waiting list and most have a charge. If the need for a wheelchair is unplanned, such as after an accident, a wait or a charge might have a dramatic effect on their lives. Community Spirit Newton Aycliffe can supply transit and self propelled wheelchairs, children's and bariatric chairs on a temporary loan basis, free of charge - and, they can be delivered to the door, if you live within Newton Aycliffe.

Please contact, email:  
communityspiritaycliffe@gmail.com  
or call Anne on 07506 123561.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

By PCSO Steven Kipling

Here is a brief overview of what we have been up to over the past week or so;  
On Monday, Neighbourhood Officers responded to a shoplifting at a store in Woodham. Within 15 minutes of the call, a male was arrested and transported to custody.  
On Tuesday, Neighbourhood Officers located and arrested a male who was wanted. The male was also driving a car with no insurance at the time, and the car was subsequently seized and recovered.  
In the early hours of New Years Day, a male was arrested for multiple offences including criminal damage, assault and breaching a restraining order following an incident in Honister Place.  
Also, around the same time, a male was arrested on suspicion of assaulting two emergency workers.  
The team have responded to several calls of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage over the weekend relating to youths in the town centre. This behaviour will not be tolerated, and we are in the process of identifying those involved and they will be dealt with robustly. Extra patrols are being carried out in this area.  
On Saturday, PC Tyers interviewed a male youth in relation to an assault and criminal damage in Woodham. The male admitted to the offences and will be dealt with by working with the Youth Offending Service.  
On Sunday morning, a female was arrested on suspicion of assault following a domestic related incident.  
PCSO 8372 Steven Kipling.

## Aycliffe Youth Football News



The recent cold weather has meant that no games have been played at the OakLeaf since mid December, but hoping we can restart as we head into January. Even central venues have had similar issues.

However, we are sad to report the passing of Brian Rose, a founder member of the football club and Honorary President. Brian along with Eddie Turner and joined by Joe Blackett set up our first team in 1989 and they competed in the Bishop Auckland Northern Echo League as an Under 13 Boys team. Brian became the first club secretary and set the foundations for the club to grow to where we are today. Members of the club attended the Darlington Crematorium on 5th January, joined by players that played for that first team. Amongst the photos on display from Brian's life, was the montage of photos of that first team. Many boys and girls have had the opportunity to play football in Newton Aycliffe because of the hard work put in by those early founders of the club and our thanks goes to all of them.  
RIP Brian Rose, 1948-2025.

## Dangerous

Dear Sir,  
My granddaughter attends Byerley Park Primary School in Newton Aycliffe.  
Unfortunately, there are no safe places to cross and cars park so closely together it makes it even harder to cross safely. Recently, my daughter's toddler fell in the middle of the road. My five year old granddaughter is autistic and continued to cross. A grey car came speeding up the road outside of Byerley Park school where hundreds of children were trying to cross. It almost hit my grandchild, if it wasn't for the quick thinking of another parent, she would be dead.  
After working in schools myself for 22 years, I cannot believe there is nowhere safe for these young children and families to cross. I am urging you to please put a crossing guard or crossing in place. The police have been informed as this isn't the first near miss. This is a massive safeguarding concern and our children are being let down.  
Name and address supplied.

# Become Foster 'Aunt' or 'Uncle'

A North East council is to be one of the first in the UK to recruit a new type of foster carer. Durham County Council is working in partnership with Now Foster to introduce the Weekenders Programme, a flexible way for people to foster.

The new programme allows people to play an 'aunt' or 'uncle' role for a child in care, spending one weekend each month doing fun things together such as days out, swimming and sports, and other activities.

The initiative is designed to strengthen the support for children in care by giving them wider, family-style relationships while offering a flexible way for residents to become part of a child's circle of care.

Cllr Cathy Hunt, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for children and young people's services, said: "As the Durham Family, we are always looking for new and effective ways in which we can improve the lives and outcomes of our children and young people. Therefore, we are delighted to be one of the first local authorities in the UK to trial the Weekenders Programme.

"We know that many people would consider fostering, but are unsure if they have the capacity to offer full-time care. This scheme will open up our recruitment of foster carers by offering a more flexible way to support a child. It also allows our children to feel connected to trusted adults who can offer consistency, emotional stability, and a sense of belonging in a warm, fun, family environment.

"The scheme does not replace full time foster care and the valuable benefits and stability that come with it. The Weekender Programme is designed to build on the foundations of full-time foster caring, allowing the weekenders to play a grandparent, aunt or uncle role and give the child a wider sense of family."

Sara Fernandez, chief executive of Now Foster, said: "Many people want to support children, but aren't sure where to begin. Weekenders makes that possible – it's about connection and care, a really good way to step into fostering.

"We're delighted to partner with Durham County Council to help more children build the lasting, trusted relationships they deserve."

The programme has been designed with social work professionals, experienced foster carers and care-experienced individuals. Weekender foster carers will be matched with a child or young person and receive full training to ensure they have all the skills they need to support them.

For more information about fostering in County Durham, visit:  
www.durham.gov.uk/fostering

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Email: [alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk)

My very best wishes for a Happy New Year to all readers of the Newton News.

I hope you had a relaxing Christmas.

After a busy year in Parliament I was pleased to have a nice Christmas at my home in Aycliffe with my family and friends. Over the festive period, it was also great to join community Christmas events in Aycliffe and across our constituency. We have a very strong sense of community in Newton Aycliffe and Aycliffe Village, which was clearer than ever over Christmas.

I've been reading the Newton News - or the Newtonian, as I was brought up to call it - since I was a kid growing up on the town and it's a pleasure to contribute this column again for 2026.

I'm looking forward to continuing working hard to stand up for our area in the year ahead. The latest figures show that, in 2025, I secured nearly £80,000 for local residents by working with my team to fight for local people who had been shortchanged by utilities companies, pension providers, the benefits system and other organisations. That's an incredible amount of money to return to local families and shows the value of a visible, active Member of Parliament not taking no for an answer when residents have been let down.

Working to support our business community, I was delighted to secure a £160,000 tax refund for a really prominent family-run manufacturing business on the industrial estate. After the company raised concerns with me that officials had got their bills wrong, I met with the relevant government minister in Whitehall to point out the areas where I felt mistakes had been made and ask for an urgent review. This led to a major correction and I'm glad to have secured this win for one of our brilliant local businesses.

In the year ahead I'll continue to push for improved public services, building on the additional police officers that have been funded and the reductions in NHS waiting lists that we've seen since the election. I was also very pleased that Health Secretary Wes Streeting announced a full statutory public inquiry into the appalling treatment received by some residents from the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Mental Health Trust. The last government failed to act. This government is cracking down on failure in the NHS and those who failed vulnerable young people with mental health issues.

Another priority is to keep campaigning for action to tackle the cost of living. I'm proud that the government has doubled free childcare from 15 to 30 hours, saving local families with young kids thousands of pounds a year; capped the cost of school uniforms, increased the minimum wage and living wage and increased the state pension by another £575 this year. All of this will put money in people's pockets.

It's been a privilege to pick up thousands of constituency cases for residents since I was elected and I'm proud to have held 50 constituency surgeries at community venues across the constituency. These are opportunities for residents to sit down with me to discuss in detail particular problems or issues - if you'd like to book a surgery

appointment for the coming weeks, you can email me: [alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk) or call my office in Aycliffe on 01325 344185.

I've also launched an e-mail newsletter for 2026. To sign-up, drop me an email.

Thank you to the many Aycliffe residents who supported me and my hardworking team in 2025. I look forward to serving our community in the year ahead. Please get in touch if there's an issue, affecting you or your family, you'd like my help with.

## Inspiring Assemblies



Before the Christmas holidays, we were delighted to welcome assemblies delivered by our Year 11 Student Leadership Team to each year group.

The team, consisting of Joseph C (Head Boy), Pippa M (Head Girl), Evan A and Max M (Deputy Head Boys), and Kitty W-L and Brooke B (Deputy Head Girls), independently planned and delivered a series of assemblies throughout the week. Each presentation was delivered with a high level of confidence, professionalism and composure.

The assemblies focused on key stages of the Woodham Academy journey, including starting in Year 7, developing positive habits, making the most of opportunities, selecting GCSE options and preparing for the transition into Year 11. The content was both informative and reflective, providing valuable guidance for students at each stage of their education. Mr Patterson (Lead Practitioner for Character and Culture) said, "We would like to congratulate the Student Leadership Team on their exemplary conduct and dedication, and to thank them for their positive contribution to the wider school community."

This opportunity came about as part of our student leadership pathway, through which students can gain leadership experience during their time at Woodham Academy in a range of roles, such as ambassadors, form or year group representatives, and members of the Student Leadership Team.

## Heighington Matters

### Fornax

As many of you know, a Hazardous and Clinical Waste Incinerator is being constructed on Heighington Lane. Understandably, this has prompted significant concern within our community. Much has been written in the press and on social media - some informed, but much based on speculation - which has added to the anxiety many residents feel.

As your Ward Councillor, I established a group of local residents back in 2021 to oppose the original planning application. I remain deeply aware of the strength of feeling in our parish and the importance of addressing these concerns openly. From experience, I believe that constructive engagement with Fornax, should the Environment Agency grant them a permit to operate, will be vital in ensuring accountability and reassurance.

To that end, I arranged a meeting with Fornax with three clear objectives:

- To establish a small Steering Committee of councillors and residents, meeting regularly to scrutinise operations.
- To secure real-time access to site monitoring data at the Environment Agency's Newcastle office.
- To ensure Fornax meet directly with local people to listen and respond to their concerns.

I am pleased to report that Fornax has agreed to the Steering Committee and to making their remote monitoring data available to the council. The live-streaming technology exists, but the EA have to be funded properly to receive it. It may well be a condition of the permit that Fornax have to stream the data directly to the EA office, but the EA is in control of how it gets data from Fornax and if in the future that is live-streaming then they can and will willingly comply. Until then, the EA has legislative powers to demand any data at any time and Fornax has to provide that data as and when asked for it, but I will continue to press this point. While many residents may never welcome the incinerator's presence, visible and verifiable monitoring would at least demonstrate compliance with Government and DEFRA standards. In recent months, I have arranged two further meetings between Fornax, members of Heighington Parish Council, and local residents. These discussions have been open and informative. I remain committed to trying to ensure that as many voices are heard and as much accurate information about the Incinerator is fed into the Community.

As such, I would like to thank one of our Parish Councillors for writing a detailed summary which took a considerable amount of time researching and writing up the account of our last meeting. I commend the Report to you.

The Report has now been emailed to everyone in my address book. Although some concerns were raised, the overwhelming majority asked me to pass on their thanks to the Report's author. Many said it has significantly eased their anxiety about the Incinerator

### Chris Lloyd is coming to Heighington

Join us for another enjoyable way to spend an evening, to help raise funds to keep St Michaels looking so good - Chris Lloyd will be giving one of his fascinating talks 'Four Scandals and a Gooseberry' in St. Michaels Church, Heighington on 31st January, with doors opening at 6pm for wine and refreshments and a 7pm start. Cost is £10 with tickets from the Church Wardens, Ruth & Gerald Lee 01325 314622 (email: [gerald.lee@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:gerald.lee@darlington.gov.uk)) - but hurry, tickets are selling well.

### Christmas Joy in St Michael's

Our thanks to all of the 461 adults, plus children, who came into church for the fun 3.00pm Carol Service. It was a wonderful joyous way to celebrate Christmas with lots of singing, fun and oodles of laughter.

Cllr Gerald Lee

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# Funding Boost Hopes To Get People Active



Durham County Council has partnered with Sport England to get people in County Durham moving by increasing accessibility to sport and physical activity.

Durham County Council has received nearly £500,000 in funding from the sporting body to help increase physical activity for those who need it most, particularly in the county's most inactive communities.

County Durham is one of 27 areas in England set to benefit from Sport England's £250 million investment. The national initiative seeks to make sport, physical activity and movement accessible to everyone by working at the heart of local communities.

The local authority was successful in applying for the funding and, in partnership with a range of local organisations, will use it to create new community-based roles. These posts will focus on researching barriers to physical activity and developing tailored solutions to overcome them.

This will build on the success of a pilot project in Peterlee, where the council works closely with residents and local stakeholders to understand what prevents people from being active and how it can support healthier lifestyles.

The new funding will help to expand this place-based model to more towns across County Durham, including Shildon, Bishop Auckland, Newton Aycliffe, Stanley and Seaham.

Cllr Karen Allison, Durham County Council Cabinet member for leisure, tourism, regeneration and high street, said: "This significant funding boost will go a long way to improving our efforts to bring physical activity to as many communities as possible, while ensuring they are as accessible as possible. We already have a successful pilot project in Peterlee to support healthier lifestyles, and we're excited to bring this model to wider areas across the county. Together with Sport England, we aim to break down barriers and create more opportunities for everyone to enjoy the benefits of being active."

Research by Sport England highlights the importance of an active lifestyle, estimating that physical activity saves the healthcare system £8 billion annually by preventing illness. It also helps avoid more than 3.3 million cases of chronic health conditions each year.

Despite these benefits, less than half of children meet the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines for daily physical activity. Meanwhile, women, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and Black and Asian communities remain less likely to be active than other adults.

In Memoriam

**Jean Fisher**

11th January 2023  
Three years without you Mam. Always in our thoughts.  
Love you.  
John, Christine and family

**Samantha Maddison**

12th January 1994  
Another year without you Sam. Nothing has changed, still remembered, loved and missed every day.  
Love always,  
Mam, Dad and family

**Billy Relton**

5th January 2025  
From Brother David, Sisters Josephine, Ann and Irene and families.  
Rest in peace.

**Laurence Green (Loi)**

11th January 2003  
Aged 54 years  
Loved and remembered.  
From Sue and your Wallsend family xxx

Birthday Remembrance

**Elizabeth Gray (Betty) - 13th January**

Happy heavenly birthday Mum. Another year without you.  
From your loving family.

Obituary

**James Alderson (Jimmy)**

Peacefully, surrounded by his family on 20th December 2025, aged 85 years.  
Beloved Husband of the late Avril Alderson; much loved Dad of Michelle and Richard; special Grandad to Thomas and Katherine and a special Father-in-Law and friend to many.  
Funeral on Monday 19th January at Durham Crematorium at 1.00pm. Afterwards at The Phoenix Club.  
Family flowers only please, donations in his memory to Great North Air Ambulance Service.

**Millie Rose Hedley**

Of Newton Aycliffe, passed away suddenly surrounded by family on Monday 22nd December 2025, following a short battle with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia at The Great North Children's Hospital, Newcastle, aged 9 years.  
Treasured Daughter of Kimberley; much loved little Sister to Makayla.  
Private funeral service to take place. Donations in memory of Millie, will be gratefully received for The Great North Children's Hospital.

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## PUZZLE CORNER

### Sudoku

2			6					
	6				3		5	
	9			8		3		
		3	8	6		7		
5		1				9		3
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					6			7

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**Alice Springs**



**Happy 21st Birthday**  
10-10-10

to our beautiful Daughter on your 21st birthday. Lots of love from Mam & Dad xxx

**Bonny and Clyde Cunningham**



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ations Mam and Dad on your Golden Wedding on 1st January 2011. With all our love forever, thers, Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren.



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## NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

By PCSO Steven Kipling



**A look back at 2025, we would like to thank our community for your continued support throughout 2025:**

Here are just some highlights from the year:

- 7,300+ incidents reported and responded to.
- Numerous warrants carried out.
- High number of arrests, with a strong focus on shoplifting to protect local businesses.
- Police drone deployed regularly, helping locate missing persons and identify off-road bikes linked to anti-social behaviour.
- Multiple partner agencies engaged to support problem-solving and safeguarding across the town.
- From a Neighbourhood Policing Team perspective, we have made over 100 arrests, conducted 88 stop searches and resolved over 60% of crimes.
- The Knife Angel arriving in Newton Aycliffe, bringing the sculpture to County Durham for the very first time. Children from schools across the counties visited and received talks on knife crime.
- Every Primary and Secondary School engaged with by Neighbourhood Officers. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our officers, police staff and the co-operation of residents and businesses across Newton Aycliffe.

As we move into 2026, we remain committed to keeping Newton Aycliffe safe. Thank you again for supporting your local police in 2025, have a safe and Happy New Year.  
PCSO Steven Kipling.

## Open Letter to MP

Dear Sir,  
Since the 18 months Labour have taken office, our Country has been transformed into chaos and misery and fear, but none of the chaos and misery is happening in isolation or by accident. The old are persuaded to hate the young. The young are persuaded to hate the old. Racial tension is deliberately created, and nothing is happening by accident. There are no coincidences.  
Whenever this government does anything which seems strange or inexplicable, all you have to do is ask yourself: "How does this fit in with the Agenda?" or "How does this benefit the conspirators?" You will quickly find yourself understanding exactly what is happening and why. Miliband has put the Country into a race to Net Zero and, from there, into the inhumane, unimaginable horrors of the Great Reset.

The clue is that everything bad that is happening everywhere in our Country, like Digital ID surreptitiously reversing Brexit, social credit schemes, euthanasia, re-wilding, food shortages and the unrelenting invasion of illegal immigration, is all part of the Globalist agenda the Labour Party have embraced. None of this was in the Manifesto and Labour are taking more and more power.  
Fear is now being used as a tool to create obedience and compliance. New laws are being introduced to limit our freedoms, but we are being told they are being introduced to protect us from some imagined or created threat.

The Electorate have had enough and now Labour have illegally brought into our Country Afghan families no-one knew anything about, in the dead of night on unscheduled flights. Some of these families have arrived in Spennymoor without consultation or addressing the local community taking preference on local peoples housing, NHS, Schooling, benefits. This is an outrage and indicates the total contempt in which you hold your own constituents and local community in. We demand a response to this total disregard of our local communities.  
Clive Taylor Sholl. (Reform Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor Branch Chairman).



## Newton Aycliffe Juniors

### Week Ending 21st December 2025

**Under 9's Blues** travelled to face a well organised Cleveland Juniors, despite an impressive first half performance, found themselves trailing at the break. At half time, with Carter having to come off, Oliver stepped up. Into the second half, Aycliffe came out flying, with two goals each, Nate and Leland. POTM was Harrison for his greatest performance in an Aycliffe shirt. PPOTM was Reggie for working hard across the pitch.



**Under 9's Juniors** hosted an improved Bishop Auckland St Mary's, a good first half performance saw Aycliffe in cruise control by half time. The second half proved to be more evenly matched. Cooper scored another hat-trick, with Lewis and Theo adding the other goals.

**Under 10's Reds** played their final game of 2025 away to Billingham Juniors Whites and put in a battling display. Fox scored two goals with assists from Michael and Thomas. POTM was Jacob for an amazing display in defence. PPOTM was Leo, was also great in defence.

**Under 10's Juniors** welcomed in form Leven Royals in what turned out to be a great game. Aycliffe started well, playing fast tempo, high pressure football, with goals from Lincoln (3), Connor (2) and Kian. A fantastic way for the team to finish 2025. The opposition awarded MOTM to Connor and Lincoln for fantastic work ethic and great goals.

**Under 23's** travelled to face Sacriston, who sat one place behind Aycliffe in the league. After a goalless first half, a slip in defence let Sacriston in to take the lead. Despite pressure from Aycliffe, Sacriston scored a second late on.

### Week Ending 28th December 2025

**Under 9's Blues** entered a Christmas tournament at Washington Hub, which ended up with Semi Final heartbreak. The day proved to have a bit of everything, with outstanding team goals, great comebacks and great goalkeeping. It was a test for Aycliffe who were playing teams from higher leagues, coming away with their heads held high.

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## 'Invisible MP'?

Dear Sir,  
Having read the article from our 'invisible' so called MP, Allan Strickland, isn't it time he worked on our future and not live in the past, praising what he did for Hitachi Rail?  
The last Labour MP tried this and lost out at the next election. What we really want to know is he going to follow whatever his mate Starmer does or listen and start to represent the people who voted him in? Remember some of the things he voted for, loss of money for pensioners, a budget that has done harm to our economy, the loss of finance to our councils and financial help to areas which never seem to get to Newton Aycliffe.

I noticed he has his name now on the window of his secured office, but, unlike the last two MPs, has no direct phone advertised. We need Mr Strickland to take the blinkers off, stop being a novice MP and get out, why not have an open meeting somewhere local and speak to the people who are paying his wages and expenses?  
If he is afraid to do this, then he should resign and let the constituents choose someone they think can. Remember that the Starmer led, along with his Labour MPs government is now on its knees with support at the lowest level any government has ever had and is running our country to the dogs.

Let's hope for a happy New Year!

John Armstrong, Newton Aycliffe.

### RESPONSE FROM MP, ALAN STRICKLAND

Dear Sir,  
I'm proud to be the Member of Parliament for your town and to be out and about every week, visiting schools, businesses, voluntary groups and a range of other brilliant local organisations.  
It was a privilege, just before Christmas, to hold my 50th advice surgery with residents. These are held in community venues across the many towns and villages in the constituency. My team and I are highly accessible to residents, as demonstrated by the over 6,500 resident cases and enquiries we've handled since the election and the many wins delivered for constituents.

All of this, and summaries of my wider work as your local MP, has been set out clearly in the columns I've written for every edition of the Newton News since the election, my Aycliffe Radio slots and my daily posts on a range of social media platforms.

Happy New Year.

Alan Strickland MP,

Member of Parliament for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor.



# End-of-Term Reward Visits

In December, Woodham Academy celebrated the hard work and positive conduct of its students with end-of-term reward visits for each year group. These trips gave students the chance to enjoy some well-earned fun and mark the end of a successful autumn term. Students headed to Planet Leisure for a bowling experience and to Valhalla North for axe throwing, enjoying exciting activities as a reward for their efforts. Staff at both venues



were impressed by how polite and well-behaved the students were and Woodham staff, who accompanied the visits, described the students as an absolute pleasure to be with. Mr Patterson, Lead Practitioner for Character and Culture, said, "We recognise the importance of celebrating our students' positive efforts and attitudes, as they demonstrate our school values and strive to become the best version of themselves. While we offer a variety of rewards throughout the term, it is always rewarding to finish the term with a memorable experience for those students who consistently complete their homework, attend school regularly and show excellent behaviour." We are incredibly proud of our students for representing Woodham Academy so positively within the local community. More reward opportunities will be organised at the end of the spring and summer terms, allowing us to continue recognising and celebrating students' achievements.

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**June 27th/28th**  
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**July 11th/12th**  
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**September 5th/6th**  
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**November 29th**  
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