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Week Ending 6th March, 2009

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION FOLDS AT BURNHILL

Due to lack of interest sadly, the Burnhill Residents' Association has

had to close. Following the closure of the organisation the committee met and agreed to pass on their remaining funds to Burnhill Way Methodist Church to be given to organisations meeting on its premises that work with the local community. As a result of this generosity, financial help has been given to the Baby & Toddler Group, the Brownie Pack, the Thursday lunchtime Friendship Group and the JAFFA Club for school age children.

All the groups are very grateful for this boost to their funds to enable them to continue to work for the benefit of the local community and thank the Committee for their generosity.

The groups are all happy to have new members including Brownies (girls aged 7+) meet Mondays 6pm-7.30pm, JAFFA Club (blys & girls of school age) Mondays 3.30pm-4.45pm, Baby and Toddlers (mums, dads, carers, grandparents welcome, older siblings welcome in school holidays) Fridays 1pm-2.30pm, and Friendship Group (all ages welcome) Thursdays 12noon (inc food).

If you are interested in any group just turn up to one of their meetings and you will be made most welcome.

It is sad that there was so little interest in the local community in working for the good of all who live in the area. Thanks should go to all who over the years have done such sterling work in the Burnhill area, providing community events and campaigning for the new playground, etc.

Let us hope that one day there will be an upsurge of interest again in pulling together as a community. In the meantime the Police are planning to test the water with a monthly surgery on the church premises - the first being on 10th March 7pm-8pm.

TRANSFER OF HOUSING & LAND APPROVED

At their meetings last Friday, the Full Councils of Sedgefield Borough and Durham County gave their formal approval for the transfer of housing stock to Sedgefield Borough Homes.

This is an important step in a process that will see the ownership and management of over 8,000 homes transfer from Sedgefield Borough

Council to Sedgefield Borough Homes on 30 March 2009, subject to final approval from the Tenant Services Authority.

Councillor Agnes Armstrong, the Leader of Sedgefield Borough Council, stated, "The Council has always been fully supportive of the transfer, and today's decision formalises that sentiment. The Council recognises that transfer is the best way to secure valuable investment in our tenants' homes."

Brian Allen, Chief Executive of Sedgefield Borough Council added, "The decision made by both Councils is extremely important and means we have met another key milestone on the journey to providing the best deal for our tenants. It's a great deal for tenants and a great deal for Council tax payers. It protects open spaces by taking a belt and braces approach to future development, and it provides significant wider economic benefits at a time of recession and housing slump."

CLOTHING COLLECTION NOT FOR CHARITY

Dear Sir,
There are Clothing Collection Bags" being posted through the letterboxes of homes in Newton Aycliffe.

The number (59995054), is NOT a Registered Charity Number, and Helping Arms" is NOT a registered charity. According to Companies House, Helping Arms is a London based Limited Company, whose nature of business description is "Wholesale of Textiles". This company is currently active, but there is a proposal to strike it off the register. People should be on their guard against firms like this, as every bag of clothing they collect is one less for one of the worthwhile charities to collect. "Helping Hands" is doing nothing illegal, that is why charities, and Local Authorities up and down the country have had no success in stopping them trading in this way, although an Advertising Standards Authority ruling stopped them using the words "Charity", and "Authorised" on their collection packs. David Catleugh Honister Place

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New Trampolining Sessions in Ferryhill

A new series of trampolining sessions are being introduced at Ferryhill Leisure Centre each Wednesday evening, commencing Wednesday 25 March 2009. Each session will last for one hour between 7.30pm and 8.30pm.

The sessions are primarily targeted towards young women aged between 16 and 25, with the aim of promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity to young women within the Sedgefield Borough area. However, friends and family who fall outside of the above age group are more than welcome to attend the sessions. Each session will be supervised by a qualified trampolining coach, and will accommodate every level of ability, including complete beginners. As places are limited, booking in advance

is recommended.

For more information, or to book a session, please contact Marie Ramsey (Young Women's Coordinator, Sedgefield Borough Council) on 01388 816166 ext 4512.

RED NOSE DAY WALK

S&D Training are raising money for Red Nose Day by walking the 5 Centres Challenge (around 10 miles). The staff and clients will walk from Chester Street Bishop Auckland at 9.30am on Friday 13th March onto S&D Training South Church Enterprise Park, onto Shildon S&D Training then Eden Grange and the final destination S&D Training Newton Aycliffe.

COUNTY'S NEW AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS WILL LIVE UP TO THEIR NAME, PROMISES COUNCIL LEADER

New 'Area Action Partnerships' being set up to give people in County Durham a greater voice and choice in local affairs after the new unitary 'super council' comes into power in April will live up to their name, Council Leader Simon Henig pledged today.

Speaking after the County Council's Cabinet agreed the geographical boundaries of the 14 AAPs, and outlined arrangements for their function, governance and spending powers, Coun Henig said the new bodies "would not disappoint".

"Throughout the extensive consultation exercises we have held on AAPs since last summer, the single overriding message that came over loud and clear was the hope and expectation that they would actually lead to action and improvements," he added. "I am confident that the arrangements we have agreed today will offer the greatest chance of making this a reality and of enabling the AAPs to live up to their name."

The creation of a series of Area Action Partnerships to serve the main natural communities of County Durham was a key feature of the proposal for a single unitary council. The Partnerships, which Coun Henig has previously emphasised will not be mini-councils or district councils by another name, will provide people with more say on the quality of life within their communities and perform an important link between local communities and the

public services which meet their needs.

The AAPs will comprise a balanced mix of key local representatives such as voluntary and community organisations, unitary and town and parish councillors, and local people.

Each one will be supported by an area co-ordination team responsible for encouraging community participation, facilitating local action and ensuring that the needs of the local community are effectively expressed to the extent that they influence public service provision.

The findings from more than six months' consultation fed into a report considered by members of the County Council's Cabinet today who agreed the basic building blocks of what they see as being a new era of community engagement. The 14 Area Action Partnerships will serve communities based in and around: Easington East Durham Rural Corridor (formerly the Sedgefield Rural Corridor AAP), Bishop Auckland and Shildon (formerly Bishop Auckland AAP), Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Willington and Tow Law (formerly Crook and Willington AAP) Durham City (including Bearpark), Ferryhill and Chilton, Mid-Durham Rural West (formerly Lanchester/Durham Rural West AAP), Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Stanley, Teesdale (including Etherley) & Weardale. The Partnerships are due to hold their first meetings in April, when one of their

first tasks will be to choose names for themselves with which local people will identify.

"There was a lot of feedback on the geographical boundaries of the Partnerships and, after using town and parish council boundaries as the basis for consultation, we have wherever practical, complied with the consensus view," said Coun Henig. Partnership budgets will be determined in February as part of the Council's budget setting process.

Each unitary councillor will also have an annual budget to support local initiatives. One of the key annual jobs of each Partnership will be to identify up to five local priorities where it feels it can have the greatest positive impact and to develop action plans setting out how they are to be addressed.

The Area Action Partnerships will go about their business at two levels. An Area Board will be expected to meet once a month to deliberate core business. They will comprise one third elected councillors, one third members of the public and one third representatives of partner organisations so that no one body will be able to dominate membership. Then, twice a year, Area Forums will meet where 'all comers' will be able to debate important issues, including what the local priorities should be and to review the Partnership's progress over the previous 12 months.

"Although the consultation exercise threw up many

differing views on certain aspects of the proposals, there was a general agreement about the role and function and structure of the Partnerships and the important part they could play in improving the quality of life in local communities," said Coun Henig.

"Further detail has to be developed and agreed, and if the AAPs are successful, as I am sure they will be, they will continue to evolve, and through

practice and experience - and with feedback from those directly involved - find their own optimum structures.

"This is an exciting part of the move to unitary status, and the beginning not just of a new era in local government, but of closer and more effective community engagement and local partnership working that I am sure will improve the quality of life for people throughout County Durham."



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NEVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Senior Citizens Forum meets on Monday 9th March at 1.30pm. Paula Woods from Butterwick Hospice is the guest speaker. Admission £1 to include Tea and Biscuits. Open to everyone. SALSA Dancing returns by popular demand starting 9th March from 7.30 till 8.30pm. Admission £3. Instructor Doria Coates. Line Dancing resumes on Thursday 5th march at 6.20pm. Beginners welcome.

New Mother and Toddlers group starts Wednesday 4th March 10am till 12 noon. £1 per family. To book ring 313924.

Kurling for Beginners every Tuesday 2pm till 4pm or Thursday 1 - 3 pm. Any age can enjoy this activity. £2 a session.

Family Kurling any Saturday from 2 till 4 pm. Teams of three or four. Please book on 313924.

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WOODHAM TAKE THE CHALLENGE

Young Engineers tackle transport problem

Sedgefield Engineering Forum (SEF) has been working with five Schools located in South West Durham to design key elements of a bespoke road transport system. The Engineering Challenge is made possible because of funding given by Aimhigher County Durham.

64, Year 9 students drawn from Woodham CTC, Ferryhill BEC, St John's RC School, Tudhoe and Spennymoor attended extracurricular sessions over a 12 week period, commencing at the beginning of November 2008.

Industrial Mentors from SEF Member Companies visited the schools on a weekly basis to work with the students to design and manufacture, bridges, remote controlled vehicles and a renewable energy source in the form of wind turbines.

The aim of the Engineering Challenge is to promote careers in Engineering and also allow the students to experience the exacting demands of the Engineering and Manufacturing sector. By working closely with the Industrial Mentors, the students were able to experience many different aspects of Engineering such as Design, Electronics and Fabrication.

The Grand Final was held on the 26th February at the Locomotion Museum in Shildon and was a huge success. Judges' from SEF Member Companies gave expert opinion on the teams work to determine the winning school. Also Judging and supporting the event were George Gray, Mayor of Aycliffe and Ian Harrington, Mayor of Spennymoor.

Special guest on the day was John Elliott, Managing Director of Ebac Ltd who helped to judge the competition and presented

the awards to the students. It was an extremely close run final with once again St John's edging the result primarily due to exceptional driving in the races. Woodham were runners up, Tudhoe and Spennymoor were third and Ferryhill 4th.

The students thoroughly enjoyed the competition having learned new skills, made new friends but most importantly equipped themselves with ideas to help them make informed decisions about their futures.

SEF plans to run the Engineering Challenge again in 2009-2010. If you would like to know more about the work of the Engineering Forum then please contact Michael Burnham, mb@sefor.org.uk, or visit the forum website, www.sefor.org.uk.



Anna was one of the stars of Woodham with 59 out of 60 possible marks and then won her race with really exceptional driving skills



TOWN GOLF PRO CAPTAIN OF NORTH ALLIANCE

Local golf professional Ernie Wilson has accepted the position of Vice Captain of the Northumberland and Durham Golf Alliance.

The Alliance was formed over 80 years ago and its membership is open to all professional and low handicap golfers in Durham and Northumberland. Ernie accepted this position at the Alliance AGM in February. During his acceptance speech he remarked that he was both delighted and proud to represent the Alliance as Vice Captain for 2009 and Captain for 2010, and that this great honour is a highlight in his career as a professional golfer.

During his career Ernie has represented Scotland, partnered Colin Montgomery and played alongside some of the best golfers in the world including Sandy Lyle and VJ Singh.

More recently Ernie has been the Pro at the Oak Leaf Complex Golf and



driving range and when his contract came to an end he was quickly employed by Woodham Golf club.

This was massive loss to the town, but a great asset to Woodham, where he continues to give lessons and advice from his shop on all matters of golf.

I am sure those who know Ernie wish him good luck and agree that there is no one more deserving of this position.

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Closing Date: Friday 27th March 2009

OUR M.P. MAKING SURE WORKERS ARE PAID FAIRLY

When families are struggling through the global economic down turn, it is more important than ever to have the National Minimum Wage.

Everyone should earn a fair wage for a fair day's work - there is no excuse not to pay up. And there were two welcome bits of news that will be a boost to workers in Newton Aycliffe.

The Government has said that it wants to change the current minimum wage rules on tipping so that in the future, tips will be in addition to the Minimum Wage.

For me, this is a matter of fairness and common sense. When you go to a restaurant or to have a hair cut and leave a tip, you expect it to go to the staff on top of their pay, not to be put through the payroll to make up the Minimum Wage.

This action on tips will benefit workers throughout my constituency, people we all rely on, but who sometimes don't have the strongest voice.

And as part of Labour's crackdown on those who try to exploit workers, tough new penalties for employers who underpay their staff have been made law.

I supported and voted for Labour's Employment Act because I wanted to see tougher action on rogue employers who con their staff. It has now become law. This will mean that the tough new penalties come into force in April.

There could be unlimited fines for the most serious cases rather than the current

maximum limit of £5,000. It will also mean a fairer way of dealing with national minimum wage arrears, calculated so workers do not lose out.

In the last year alone, the Government helped to restore £3.9 million in arrears to over 19,000 workers and has also increased the enforcement budget for the National Minimum Wage by almost £3m.

But to make sure people are getting the National Minimum Wage rogue employers need to be exposed. If you think a rogue employer is not paying up then get in touch with my office on 321603 or call the national minimum wage helpline on 0845 6000 678. And don't worry; you don't have to give your name or details. This year marks 10 years since Labour voted to introduce the National Minimum Wage in 1998. The National Minimum Wage for adult workers is £5.73, the rate for 18-21 year olds is £4.77 and the rate for 16-17 year olds is £3.53.

The adult minimum wage provides, with Working Tax Credits and other benefits, a guaranteed income of at least £292 per week for families with one child and one full time worker, which is equivalent to over £7.38 per hour.

I'm proud that, while the Tories opposed the minimum wage and still criticise it, our Labour Government is taking steps to strengthen it - ensuring that working people know their rights and employers know their responsibilities.

FREE Events to Help Local Businesses

South Durham Business Network (SDBN) has scheduled three FREE events following its successful launch on the 23rd of January 2009, which attracted over 180 local business leaders. The network is going from strength to strength and gaining new members constantly. If you're not already a member then why not register for one or all of the listed events to see if there's value in becoming a part of our business led, business focused group. The events are:

Is your PENSION working for you and your business? Tuesday 24th March 2009, registration from 18:00 at Spennymoor Town Hall. Many of us have pensions or investments but seldom review them, understand their value and assume they're locked up until we're too old to enjoy them. But is this assumption true?

Ask the Expert & Business Surgery Tuesday 28th April 2009, 15 minute appointments can be made for the one-to-one surgery with a broad range of experts from 15:00 to 17:00. Venue Spennymoor Town Hall.

This event provides an opportunity to meet a range of professionals covering services ranging from Accountancy, Book Keeping, Business Link, Tax, VAT, Legal, IT, Sales & Marketing, Training & Development, Business Improvement, Banking, Personal Financial Services, Website design, Human Resources and Health & Safety. The one-to-one appointments will be followed by networking and a Q&A session where the experts will take questions from the floor.

Are you doing the right things RIGHT? Thursday 14th of May 2009 at Whitworth Hall Hotel,

registration at 13:30. In these challenging economic times it can often be difficult to navigate the best course for you, your business and your employees.

Whether you're growing, down-sizing or not sure what to do, this event will provide some options, possibly solutions and the answers you are looking for. Are you and your staff motivated, focused and positive?

Is your sales and marketing pipeline robust and well planned and resourced? Are you operating within the law and taking advantage of the law where it suits your business circumstances?

The presenters include Simon Hartley, Olympic Sport Psychologist and Performance Coach. Jackie Wade, MD of Winning Sales and Peninsula who are regarded as one of the countries leading Employment Law and Health & Safety support

companies.

To find out more and join this forward thinking and pro-active group of businesses contact Darren Race on info@sdbn.org.uk or M: 07947 409838 or www.sdbn.org.uk. Contact details: Darren Race, Chairman of South Durham Business Network (SDBN) T: 07947 409838 E: info@sdbn.org.uk W: www.sdbn.org.uk

Labour Vote for Transfer

Dear Sir

Last Friday I attended the Borough Council Meeting for the discussion on the transfer of open spaces to the new Sedgefield Brough Homes company.

I attended because I was curious how our Councillors from Aycliffe would vote on this issue and whether or not they would vote against the transfer.

There were 11 Aycliffe Councillors there and out of these, 8 of them voted against the transfer, the other 3 who are Labour members voted for the transfer.

I wonder in April when they are no longer on the Borough, but are still town councillors whether they will vote in favour of the town council going for a judicial review on the transfer. Will they vote against this, and their fellow town councillors, or will they vote with them? Why didn't they vote with our other borough councillors to save our open spaces being transferred.

A Palmer

DID YOU SEE THE LIGHT?

Dear Sir,

Can somebody please tell me that I'm not going completely bonkers? On Saturday I was backing out of my drive on my way to Tesco at around 6.00pm when out of the corner of my eye I saw a bright light moving slowly across the sky.

At first I thought it was a firework and then possibly a flare (although why a flare would have been fired I have no idea). I then thought it could be an aircraft of some description crashing. (a bit far fetched I know).

The light then seemed to just fade away. I thought that my excitement had finished when another light came over and did exactly the same.

Someone else must have seen this and if so does anybody know what it was?

Please reassure me I have not just relived Close Encounters of the Fourth kind and that there is a simple explanation. I have not yet started building mash potato mountains but would be intrigued to find out just what is out there.

John Wilson

Historians Meeting

The Aycliffe Village Local History Society will meet in the Village Hall at Aycliffe at 7pm on Wednesday the 11th of March 2009. Ms Jo Bath will speak about "North Eastern Witchcraft".

There is on-street car parking, refreshments are provided, and the meeting will end at 9pm.

What is Council Tax for?

Dear Sir,

What has happened to our Town, when all you see is broken glass? Where do we the tax payer's stand in trying to get it removed? No matter where a person goes, be it on a path or on the side of a road,, there is shattered glass. Does a person have to fall to the ground and cut themselves or a dog owner having to visit the Vet with their injured pet before anything is done by the Council? Is there a policy on removing this danger? Is there no longer a Council brush team? If so the tax payers of Newton Aycliffe no nothing about it . . . are the paths and roads to be cleaned up by us?

Jane Parsonage

Ed: Please contact your local councillor or ring the Council "Street Scene" at Green Lane 01388 816166.

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GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN COUNCIL

**Dates and Times of Statutory Meetings
of the Town Council and its Committees**

**Tuesday 11th
March 2009**

Full Council Meeting - 7.15pm

QUESTION TIME

A period of up to 30 minutes has been set aside for electors of the Parish to ask questions of appropriate members of the Council at its Council Meeting. Questions should relate to the work of the Council or affect the Parish in some way and they should be given in writing to the Town Clerk at least five clear days prior to the date upon which they will be asked.

Agendas/Reports are available on the Council's Website on the Friday afternoon preceding the meeting.

www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk

The Press and Public are cordially invited to attend.

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STOP OLDER PEOPLE LOSING THEIR HOME TO PAY FOR CARE

The Government is being urged to look again at how inheritance tax could help fund a better care system in this country and stop older people losing their home to pay for a care home place.

It's estimated that over 60,000 older people pay for a place in a care home every year by selling their own home. That number is likely to increase as property ownership increases with younger age groups and more people are expected to pay for their own care. A care duty set at just 2.5% on estates valued between £25,000 and £312,000 could, for example, raise at least £1.7 billion a year to bridge the care funding gap. A care duty of 4.25% could generate almost £3 billion.

The collapse of the property market has meant many older people and their families are faced with even bigger problems paying for a care home place. If their local authority won't help with a loan through a deferred payment, then older people have to get a loan, rack up debts with the care home or sell their home below market prices. Growing numbers of enquiries to Counsel and Care's advice service are about problems paying for care home fees.

Stephen Burke said "Families want the right care and the right deal. An increasing number of older people and their families are faced with the prospect of huge care home bills which have to be paid by selling their home. This has been made even harder by the current economic crisis.

"It would be much fairer if better care was funded through a care duty on people's estates, with a small percentage paying for care. Rather than losing the family home, people would pay a bit more through inheritance tax. The care duty could top up current public spending or be ring-fenced and used as part of a new social insurance scheme to pay for care. This proposal makes sense because we already have a system for collection, and it would keep track with demographic changes and increased personal wealth.

"Alongside this reform we need to see much better use of public funding for care and support, with health and housing working closer together with care. We need more support for family carers and much earlier intervention to support people at the right time. And we need better information and advice for all older people and carers so they can get the support they need.

"The green paper this spring is a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a new care system that meet the needs of this generation and future generations of older people. The green paper must point the way to radical reform of care funding to meet the needs of our ageing population, with more older people living with dementia and disabilities. "The current economic downturn can't be used as an excuse to delay action any longer. We can't ignore the care crisis. It's one of the biggest challenges facing us all for decades to come and requires urgent and radical reform."

COLD TIME AT CAMP FROSTY

A cold weekend at the end of February saw eight Scouts from 1st Newton Aycliffe Scout Troop join with other Scouts from the Bishop Auckland District on the annual Camp Frosty at Holwick near Middleton-in-Teesdale.

Simon Howe, Andrew Turnbull, Callum Howe, James Foster, Shannon Hamilton, Richie Howe, Liam Brown and Lorna Bennett along with a hardy group of Leaders and parent helpers braved the elements for a back to basics camp.

On the Saturday, they took part in a 10-mile incident hike starting from Cow Green Reservoir and passing Cauldron Snout, High Force and Low Force on the way. It finished back at base with them cooking their own meal on outdoor stoves.

On Sunday they were set six different challenges ranging from dismantling the tents to car maintenance and including other teamwork exercises.

The weekend finished with four of the older Scouts who have been together since joining Cub Scouts winning



the challenge trophy. Praising Simon, Andrew, Callum and James, Shannon summarised the weekend, "It was awesome".

1st Newton Aycliffe Scout Troop currently has some space for new members (both boys and girls from the age of 10 1/2 - 14).

More information on the Scout Movement including opportunities for young people and adults alike can be obtained locally from Ian Johnson on 0845 0944 084 or from 1stnewtonaycliffe@durhamscouts.org.uk

POLICE PACT MEETINGS

Police and Communities Together meetings (PACTS) are to be held in the Neville/Simpasture Wards as follows:

Saturday 14th March, 2009 at Aycliffe Village Hall. 10am until 12noon. This will incorporate the Village Beat Surgery.

Thursday 19th March, 2009 at Neville Parade Methodist Church Lounge. Commencing 6.30pm.

The intention of these meetings is to discuss and agree local policing priorities identified by the community. Local Councillors will also be invited to discuss any community related issues.

NEWTON NEWS

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Editorial WAITING FOR DETAILS ON LAND TRANSFER

There were some odd goings on last Friday at the Borough and County Council surrounding the meeting which decided on the transfer of houses and land to Sedgfield Brough Homes.

Coincidentally, the County Council had a meeting at the same time, taking away Councillors from Newton Aycliffe who serve on both authorities who should have been at Green Lane debating this important issue. Apparently they were approving the Council Tax increase for next year. We are not saying this was contrived, but it did seem odd and let Councillors from the town off the hook. Then again, we are told, the transfer was all cut and dried with the Labour whip out to carry the vote, with only opposition members voting against.

Three Newton Aycliffe Labour councillors, George Gray, Helen Hutchinson and Vince Crosby voted for the transfer and we hope they can justify this decision.

There has been no reaction from the Town Council, who are so passionately against the transfer of large pieces of land, but we understand they are keeping their powder dry to see the detail of the actual proposal as it is not fully concluded.

A reader contacted Newton News to pose a question on the vote by tenants on the transfer. He understood only they could vote, but on hearing the transfer also included garages wondered why he was not allowed to vote as he has rented his garage for many years.

There is still much to say and do on this contentious issue and Newton News will attempt to keep readers informed.

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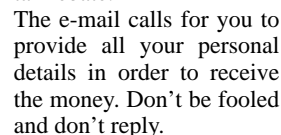
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Disappointing Defeat for Aycliffe Rugby

Chester le Street 14 Newton Aycliffe 10



out, Luke Tinkler crossed the line but was held up. Two further attacks in the closing seconds were stopped inches short and the game ended 14 – 10 to Chester.

This was a disappointing result for Aycliffe who will hope to reverse the trend when they visit Houghton 2nd XV in a Durham Junior League

game on 7th March, kick-off 3pm. Newton Aycliffe Rugby Club would like to thank their sponsors Aston Hotels and ServiceForce. More information is available on the website at www.ayclifferrugby.co.uk

COUNTY CONFIRM AVERAGE 2.9% COUNCIL TAX INCREASE

Durham County Councillors today confirmed an average 2.9 per cent increase in their share of Council Tax bills for next year.

Members of the authority met to consider the first budget of the new unitary authority which, from April 1, will bring together all seven district councils and the county council – and their individual spending plans.

Council Leader Simon Henig said bringing the eight budgets together had been “an extremely difficult” process, but one which had avoided the cuts to frontline services and compulsory redundancies that many other councils throughout the country were having to make to cope with the economic downturn.

“We have actually been able to improve our services, and at the same time equalise our share of the Council Tax, support the introduction of

free swimming for under-18s and over-60s, and introduce demand-responsive public transport which will reconnect vulnerable people to bus services,” he added.

“I am confident that this budget will stand us in good stead as we move into a new unitary era of local government in County Durham.”

To equalise the authority's Council Tax demand and achieve the average 2.9 per cent increase will mean, just this year, some households paying a lower increase than others, some paying more, and those in Derwentside actually paying around one per cent less than they are currently paying.

But it means that, for the first time, everyone in the same Council Tax Band will pay the same, no matter where they live in the county.

Until this year, local authority Council Tax demands differed

throughout the county because each of the district councils added their own precept on top of the bill for County Council services.

But from April 1 this year, under the new unitary system, there will only be one council and one bill.

And in future, everyone will pay exactly the same variation whether Council Tax bills go up or down from one year to the next.

“When the bills for County Council services drop through people's letterboxes this year, no-one will be paying more than anyone else who lives in a house in the same Council Tax Band . . . and that has got to be fairer than the present system,” said Coun Henig, who praised the co-operation between elected members and officers of all councils involved in the budget-making process.

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Last year we invested heavily with 28 brand new low floor easy access buses for our Darlington depot and some of these buses are used on services in Newton Aycliffe and this year we are buying another 100 brand new buses. All our new buses are fitted with the latest low emissions engines (Euro 5 standard) and these buses will be running on services 5/5a and 7/7a which run through Newton Aycliffe. We work hard to meet our customers expectations by running our buses on time and by providing them with good customer service when they travel with us. So that we can monitor our standards we commission an annual survey from independent research consultants GfK/NOP. Our results from 2008 have been excellent with some highlights being :- **Highest ever Overall Satisfaction, Reliability of Service and Value for Money ratings, Highest ever Personal Safety and Cleanliness of Buses ratings, Highest ever Punctuality and Frequency of Service ratings,**

35% of our customers believe their service has improved in the past 6 months with a higher score of 44% for services in Darlington, 93% of customers would recommend us (highest score in comparison to our competitors). We also have our drivers and vehicles assessed by an external agent and we've seen some excellent results in 2008, especially at Darlington depot. Over 70% of assessments showed satisfactory or excellent driving standards with over 95% showing good or excellent customer service skills. Over 80% of assessments showed good or excellent service standard skills. In total 73 assessments were carried out at our Darlington depot with each assessment being carried out without prior knowledge by the company or the driver. We are committed to providing our customers with the very best in customer service. Mark Ellis Commercial Manager Arriva North East

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OPPOSITION GIVEN LITTLE TIME TO SPEAK

Dear Sir,
As you may well know the transfer to Sedgfield Borough Homes of our houses and land has gone through. but the most distressing points are as follows.
The opposition were only allowed three minutes to ask questions and the Borough Solicitor ruled that members of the Sedgfield Borough Homes Shadow Board could vote, when previously they have withdrawn.
The Council were informed there was an enquiry already from a Building Company but no details given, but the point is that builders have already taken an interest.
The request for a named vote was rejected yet in the past named votes have been printed and shown, for and against any proposal.
The Mayor of the Borough was heard to say we may be back in a couple of years as Sedefield Borough Council! Is this an admission of failure already for the new Unitary Authority. Has Labour woken up at long last that it was a folly to change or is it the fact they

may lose the next Election? The protection of the Green Spaces has now been handed over to the County Council, who may or may not give planning permission.
I suggest that you write, phone or e-mail your elected representative when the County Council take over and make the point that you do not want any construction on open spaces. Hammer our MP also as he may want his photo in the paper. Gordon saved the world - Can Phil Save Aycliffe?
I can well imagine that Labour will use this against me at future elections but I was proud and stood up to be counted as an elected member for Newton Aycliffe.
Alan Warburton
Independent Councillor.

NEWTON NEWS

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NINTENDO Wii FIT only used twice, still under warranty, £50. Tel 320479
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LITTLE GIRLS bed in ivory with side panel which can be removed. 1 year old. Please phone for details 324978
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2 SEATER cream leather sofa, good condition, £80 Tel 311541
SONY 24" colour TV with dolby surround sound, £15. Tel 310864
GIRLS BIKE suit 6-9 years, good condition, £15 Tel 310864
MEXICAN pine dressing table and four chairs, excellent condition, £50. Tel 07947 424196
WHITE MARBLE carved fireplace with white marble hearth, £75 ono Tel 07947 424196
PARKINSON COWAN gas cooker, very good working order, four rings, grill oven, £40 Tel 315361
NEED An old domestic appliance removing? Can't wait for the Council? Tel. 321678.

Good Service From Tesco

Dear Sir,
May I thank the Tesco staff who were on duty on the 14th February in the Electrical Department.
I returned a Laptop which I had purchased, as faulty, and the staff were so helpful and pleasant, going the extra mile to exchange it for another.
There are so many complaints these days about customer care, but in this instance I give Tesco staff 100 out of 100.
Your bossess should know what good staff they have as you gave excellent service.
K. Curry
Stainforth Close

Town Bowls Pair in Finals

Ann Brown and Esther Helm from Great Aycliffe Indoor Bowls Club, which meets at the Oakleaf Sports Complex, have progressed to the last 16 teams left in the Ladies National Unbadged Pairs Competition 2009.
They beat a team from Gateshead on Monday 23 February 2009 at Hartlepool Indoor Bowls Club in a thrilling finish, with the last shot of the last end requiring a measure to win by one shot.
Congratulations to them both and every success for the final games in Nottingham on Wed 1 April 2009.

AS GOOD AS NEW

KRD Valeting goes from strength to strength, after only 3 weeks from opening, there has been a steady stream of customers. Tracey Firth, who works for Durham Lifting company, phoned to book her car for a full deluxe valet. She didn't realise it would take 4-6 hours to get it looking like new.
She obviously didn't want to wait all that time and was absolutely delighted that she was able to drop her car off and get a lift to work. Russell Belton, operations manager said "It's been very busy and to get a car in pristine condition takes some time and a lot of hard work. Customers need to get on with their every day lives so we can arrange to drop them off at work, shopping, home or even the hairdressers. In fact anywhere in Newton Aycliffe and surrounding areas at no extra cost."
When Tracey received her valeted car at work she came out to inspect it and as she walked towards it she squealed, "Oh my god, is that my car?" When she opened the door to look inside she said "It just looked, felt and smelled the same as the day I bought it"

Public Notice

"NO FUN"

Appearing at
The Iron Horse
on
Saturday 7th March
Free Entry

Woodham Community Assoc.
**ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**
Wednesday 18th March '09
6.30pm
*Free refreshments served
All Woodham residents invited*

WATCH BATTERIES now available at Taylors Newsforce
DONATIONS needed of Bric-a-Brac and other good condition items for Newton Aycliffe good causes. Ring John 316630
RSPCA Durham and District cats and kittens for adoption, fee applies to cover 1st and 2nd vaccination, also neutering and id chip. Please Tel 311215
AYCLIFFE Angling Club, Annual General Meeting. Navy Club, Burnhill Way on Tuesday 10th March at 7.30pm. Members please attend

Pets

TWO HAMSTERS brown, female, with cages, water bottles and food bowls. Each in separate cages, £5 each. Tel 321916 after 5pm


Birthday Remembrance

RITATHOMPSON 5-3-1926. If roses grow in Heaven Lord, please pick 3, place them in my Sister's hand, she'll know they are from me. Tell her I still love her, tell her I still care and I'll treasure every moment of the time on Earth we shared. Love you, Doris and family xxx

In Memoriam
PETER SOULSBY 10-3-1999. I think about you often, I talk about you still. You haven't been forgotten, you know you never will. Loved always, Valerie x
MALCOLM HENDERSON Died 7-3-2007. A dear Husband, Dad and Grandad. Always remembered and sadly missed. Anne, Linda, Carol, Brian, Susan, Louise, Graham, Davy and Gemma xxx

Congratulations

Gerrard Cameron



Happy 18th Birthday
8-3-2008
Have a great holiday. Lots of love, Mam and Dad xxx

Ged Cameron



Happy 18th Birthday
Lots of love from Kathleen, Chris the bump and Roxy xxxx
Happy 18th Ged. Hope you enjoy your holiday. Love, Nanna xxx

Ged Cameron



Happy 18th Birthday
Hope you have a great time in Spain. Love, Stu and Jimmy xxx

Tim Gallacher



Happy 50th Birthday
Still looking great! Bria says she can't count to that number it's too big! Have a great day LOL. Jenny, Bria and Katie xxx

Thank You

I WOULD like to thank friends, family and workmates who helped me celebrate my retirement party. Special thanks go to my family for all the help and support, buffet and great cake - thanks Glyn. Also thanks to all for the great gifts. David Stevens
THANK YOU DAD for saving Bailey, it means a lot. Hope you will both be okay. Nicole
DANIEL DIXON Would like to thank all his amazing family and friends for a fantastic 21st birthday party. Thank you all for coming and all the fab presents. Will miss you all loads, but will see you all in a few months. Love, Daniel xxx

Barracrough and Young



Congratulations Paul and Emma
On your Engagement. All the best for the future.
Happy 21st for Friday to Emma - It was a great night!
Lots of love from both Families

Amber Marshall



Happy 16th Birthday
5-3-1993
With lots of love to a very special Daughter and Sister on your 16th birthday from Mam, Dad and Jake xxx

Sharon Dickinson (Nee Palmer)



Ho Ho, The Big 40!
Lots of love on your 40th birthday. Hope you enjoy your party. From Mam, Dad, Husband Alan, Daughters Amy and Stacey. Darren, Craig, Julie, Charley, Jean, Gary and Susan

Dad - PJ



Happy 40th Birthday
3-3-2009
All our love on your special day. Love, Gail, Lee, Craig and Danielle

Mark Cunliffe



Still got the same hair do!
Lots of love on your 21st birthday. Have a great time at your party. Love you loads, Mam, Dad, David, Stephen and Lucy xxxxx

Margaret Bennett



Happy 60th Birthday
GOTCHA
11th March 2009
From all the family
Have a great day

Obituary

ATHERTON, 25th February, died peacefully surrounded by her loving family, after an illness fought with courage and determination, of Walcher Road. Ellen aged 93 years. Dearly loved Wife of the late Fred, much loved Mum of Margaret, Mary, Hugh, Dennis, Agnes and Eleanor, a dear Mother-in-Law, Grandma and Great-Grandma. The Funeral and burial took place in Newton Aycliffe on Friday 6th March 2009.
HESLOP, 25th February, died peacefully, of Simpature Court, Alice nee Lowes aged 82 years, Beloved Wife of the late George, much loved Mum of Maureen, Kenneth and his wife Jan, loving Grandma of Tracy, Kerry and Jonathon and Great-Grandma of Aaron. Much missed by Jessie, May and Sid and their families. Funeral Monday 9th March, would friends kindly meet for Service in St Clares Church 1.15pm followed by Cremation in Darlington Crematorium 2.15pm. Family flowers only please. Donations in lieu in aid of Diabetic Research or The Royal British Legion will be accepted by Audrey Dodds c/o The Royal British Legion, Macmillan Road, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4LG.



Mothering Sunday, 22nd March

Three Course Menu only £16.95 per person

Served from 12noon-3.00pm and 6.00pm - 9.00pm

The County, 13 The Green, Aycliffe Village, County Durham DL5 6LX. Telephone:01325 312 273

Early Bird Menu

2 courses £9.95

Available Monday to Sunday 6pm -7pm

Food now served Sunday's

6pm-9pm

www.the-county.co.uk

CRACKDOWN ON LOAN SHARKS

New measures to tackle criminals illegally lending money were announced today by Consumer Affairs Minister Gareth Thomas. The national hotline - which is confidential - is now up and running and gives consumers one single point of contact. A new website has also been launched providing information on managing finances and how to borrow money safely. The Stop Loan Sharks teams have successfully prosecuted more than 60 people with a further 90 prosecutions underway. This amounts to nearly 40 years of custodial sentences for illegal lending and associated crimes. The teams have supported more than 7,000 victims of illegal money lenders. The first two pilot schemes were launched in September 2004 and then rolled out to every region of England, Wales and Scotland in 2007. Their work has meant around £14million has been saved for consumers who were locked in illegal deals with these money lenders. Consumer Affairs Minister, Gareth Thomas, said: “Loan sharks fleece hard-earned cash from their victims causing great distress and anguish. “Calling this hotline gives victims the chance to talk in confidence. They get advice and support and the information provided helps the team to take action to stop illegal money lending. “The teams are having huge success in bringing these criminals to justice and are saving consumers significant amounts of money.” The national hotline - which is confidential - is: 0300 555 2222. And the website is: www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks Consumers can also text ‘loan (space) shark (space) and your message’ to 60003.

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Place your Mothers Day Greetings in your local newspaper the “NEWTON NEWS”

MA BAKER

To a Mum in a Million

Happy Mothers Day

Lots of love from

Danny, Anita and Kenny

xxxxxxxxxxxx

Write out your copy in the box below, add up the words, put the total cost on and hand in to:

NEWTON PRESS

St. Cuthberts Way

TAYLORS NEWSFORCE

Town Centre or

WALKERS BUTCHERS

Simpasturegate

Deadline: 5pm Wednesday, 18th March

To be printed weekend 22nd March 2009

Above example:

£12.00 (inclusive)

(maximum 15 words)

MOTHER BROWN - Happy Mothers Day to the best Mum in the World. All our love forever and ever. Love from Chas and Dave xxxxx

Above example:

15p per word

MOTHER NATURE

Have a great day on Sunday,

All our love,

Violet, Hyacinth & Rose

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Above example:

30p per word

No of words ©p = £..... - Box advert is required YES/NO = £12.00

WORK STARTS ON NEW CENTRE SOON

Line Dancing is now on each Tuesday 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm with qualified instructor at the Agnew Community Centre. You can just turn up on the day, all genders and ages welcome, or contact Councillor Lileen Cuthbertson on 07961733524, Margaret Lovelady on 01325-319857 to answer any questions you may have. Cost is £2 for the tuition or £3 for tuition plus a raffle ticket and a cuppa at the end of the session. Come along enjoy and make new friends or meet old friends. As promised I have tried to talk to the people who hired our premises on Tuesday 24th February and did not arrive. They had sent a text on the day saying they would not be coming due to not having a Van, but I did not pick this up until I went home on that night. I have reported this to the Committee and as the booking agent I will endeavour to reduce the risk on further bookings of this type although it is impossible to completely eliminate. On behalf of the Agnew Community Association I apologise for any inconvenience to those of you who turned up in droves on the night. Better news regarding our new Centre which looks likely to start very soon. John Freeman Homes are the contractors and the building will blend in with our new neighbours, Woodham Heights flats. For hall hire starting at £6 per hour ring the Secretary on 07518 035320 Ron Mitchie

A Nice Little Earner

Newton Aycliffe Mobility Club is for people with walking problems and its aim is to get you out and about for pleasure trips. We urgently need helpers for our wheelchair bound members and expenses are paid. If you are unemployed this could be a way to help your income. For more details contact 01325 301125.

WHO DO I RING? ON WHAT NUMBER?

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Richard Brown

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Street Scene

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01388 816166 Ext 8850

LITTER ENFORCEMENT :

Richard Brown

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ABANDONED VEHICLES

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UNTAXED VEHICLES:

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Durham County Council

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Durham County Council

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GETTING OFF SCOT FREE!

The new Unitary Authoprity has harmonised Council Tax through the County and come up with a 2.9% increase, yet Scotland have managed to freeze this tax until 2012. Changing to Unitary was to save £21 million and they could have shown willing by helping Council taxpayers during the present economic downturn by holding a tax increase. Scots seem to be enjoying many benefits over those south of the border including free eye care, free dental check-ups, free access to cancer drugs and free care homes for the elderly.

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at Newton Aycliffe Market

until 31st May 2009 stalls are

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Slumberland Blue Seal	RRP £249.00	NOW £199.00
Slumberland Red Seal	RRP £299.00	NOW £229.00
Slumberland Ortho Seal	RRP £349.00	NOW £249.00
4'0" and 4'6" MATTRESSES		
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A&S Winchester	RRP £199.00	NOW £99.00
A&S Dorchester	RRP £199.00	NOW £139.00
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Slumberland Blue Seal	RRP £299.00	NOW £249.00
Slumberland Red Seal	RRP £349.00	NOW £299.00
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A&S Majestic	RRP £249.00	NOW £199.00
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Slumberland Red Seal	RRP £399.00	NOW £299.00
Slumberland Ortho Seal	RRP £449.00	NOW £359.00
4'0" and 4'6" BED SET		
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A&S Winchester	RRP £159.00	NOW £139.00
A&S Dorchester	RRP £299.00	NOW £209.00
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