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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 Sedgfield Borough and Durham County gave their formal approval for the transfer of housing stock to Sedgfield Borough Council.

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

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

Councillor Agnes Armstrong, the Leader of Sedgfield 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 Sedgfield 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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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. Teams book on 313924.

Childrens Birthday Party special offer - ring for details.

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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, mdb@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



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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.

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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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 the countries leading Employment Law and Health & Safety support

companies.

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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 Sedgfield 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.

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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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Local Hero Saves Puppy from Drowning



Shaun Coulthard of Colwell Court suffered 2 brain hemorrhages 3 years ago and is registered disabled, but that did not stop him jumping in a lake to save his 8 month old Cocker Spaniel puppy who was drowning. Shaun and his wife Julia were taking a walk in Preston Park when "Bailey" one of the two puppies, they had purchased 6 months ago, went swimming and soon got into trouble. Shaun saw the dog go under and without hesitation jumped in, fully clothed, to rescue his dog. The water was 5 feet deep and Shaun was completely sodden and

had to get back to the car to get his clothes off to be wrapped in a rug. "I was very wet and the water was icy cold, so much so it took my breath away when I jumped in, but faced with the same situation I would do exactly the same again. Next time I must remember to take my mobile phone out of my pocket as it is ruined", said Shaun. Following the incident Shaun, a former Technician at Fujitsu, needed an anti-tetanus injection, but that was the only bad result from the experience, other than needing a new phone.

HELP DISABLED ON GREAT NORTH RUN

Dear Sir,
I am writing to see whether you might be able to help Leonard Cheshire Disability in our bid to recruit 200 runners for the Great North Run, which is taking place on

20 September 2009. We only have a limited time to fill our team up so in the next few weeks it is crucial that we promote our places as widely as possible.

KIND HELP

Dear Sir,
A big thank you to all those lovely people who helped pick up the loose change that fell out of my pocket on Friday. Not one bit of my money was missing as all age groups bent down to help when I just felt like walking away. So many willing hands for which I am very grateful.
Marge Mason

You're probably familiar with at least one of the local Leonard Cheshire Disability services in your area. But you may be unaware that Leonard Cheshire Disability is the UK's leading disability charity, providing direct support to over 22,000 disabled people. With services ranging from residential care and care at home support to innovative skills training and employment schemes, the charity is committed to helping disabled people to live life their way. If we fill our Great North Run team we hope to raise around £78,000 for the charity - crucial funds that will make a real difference to those we support.

Jazz Band Drag Attack

On Wednesday 15th April, the Northern Citrines Jazz Band are hosting a "Drag Attack" show incorporating two north east Drag Queens. The show is to be held at Elm Road Club, Shildon from 7-11pm, tickets are priced at £4 each and are available by contacting 01388 775728 or at Micks Computer Shop in Shildon. To complement the show there will be a cash bingo and raffles.

We are working hard to change attitudes to disability and to improve the lives of disabled people. With many thanks,
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COUNTY COUNCIL LEADER UNHAPPY WITH RENT RISE

REVIEW OF HOUSING POLICY REQUESTED

Durham County Council has helped secure a review of Government policy that could take the sting out of any council house rent increases in the future. Changes in the Government's rent structuring scheme for 2009/10 resulted in the new unitary council-elect having no option but to agree an above-average rent increase of six per cent for its 19,000 tenants next year. But just hours after announcing the move last Friday, Council Leader Simon Henig sought an urgent meeting with Housing Minister Margaret Beckett over the weekend. And at Labour's National Policy Forum in Bristol on Saturday, he found he wasn't alone in seeking changes to the Government's current policy.

"I shared the concerns of my fellow county councillors about the size of the rent increase we were being required to make when we met to discuss it on Friday as part of our annual budget meeting for the coming year," said Coun Henig. "And when I met the Minister, it was clear we weren't the only council that was unhappy about having to make council house rent increases of this level, especially given the economic downturn. "While we weren't able to secure any immediate changes to Government policy that would soften the

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Scam Email from Inland Revenue

Readers are warned to watch out for a scam e-mail supposedly from the Inland Revenue advising them of a tax rebate. The e-mail calls for you to provide all your personal details in order to receive the money. Don't be fooled and don't reply.

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Disappointing Defeat for Aycliffe Rugby

Chester le Street 14 Newton Aycliffe 10



Newton Aycliffe travelled to Chester le Street to play their second team. After two big victories over the same opposition, Aycliffe were expecting to win. The hosts had a stronger than expected team and put Aycliffe under pressure early on. Breaks by the speedy Aycliffe backs came to naught and there were no points scored until near half-time. Phill Sangster was able to offload after begin heavily tackled, captain Andy Newman collected the ball and scored in the corner. The

half time score was 5 - 0. In the second half, the home team put more pressure on Aycliffe and score a try under the posts after their big number 8 broke through a number of tackles. Aycliffe then suffered two sin-binnings and conceded a second try when down to 13 men. With a quarter of an hour to go, Aycliffe finally began to play well. When the ball was sent wide, Mark Silvester was on hand to score with a well angled run, but the conversion was missed. With time running

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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In response to the letter in the Newton News of the 27th February 2009, I would like to say that we are working hard to improve our bus services in Newton Aycliffe. We operated some very frequent services to both Durham and Darlington with 4 buses an hour to Durham during the day and 8 per hour to Darlington.

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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COUNTY COUNCIL 'SIGNS-OFF' WITH FOUR STAR RATING

Durham County Council will 'sign-off' as one of the best local authorities in the country, it was confirmed today. With just weeks to go before the authority merges with the county's seven district councils to become a single unitary council, it learned today it had retained the highest possible four-star rating in the Government's Comprehensive Performance Assessment

(CPA) – the tough annual measure of efficiency and effectiveness. It is the *fifth year in succession that the County Council has retained its ranking in local government's premier league. And Council Leader Simon Henig said it was a remarkable record considering it had been achieved against the backdrop of local

government reorganisation. "The process of moving towards unitary status over the past year has involved elected members and officers working under significant pressure and extraordinary workloads to achieve the transition by the end of this month," he added. "Nevertheless, we have managed it without any detrimental impact on our frontline services, and the Audit Commission's assessment report says we have continued to improve in most of our priority areas".

The CPA tests were introduced by the Government in 2002 to independently assess and compare the performance of councils across the country. Since 2005, they have been made progressively tougher each year to encourage continuous improvement. In announcing its four-star findings today, the Audit Commission said the Durham County Council was continuing to "improve well".

It found that:

- new political and managerial leadership had invigorated progress in moving towards unitary status
 - services for children and young people had improved
 - educational attainment had continued to increase
 - household waste had been reduced
 - the council's work in promoting economic wellbeing had delivered improvements, with an increase in both the employment rate and the number of new business start-ups
 - the council was performing well in delivering value for money
- "This latest four star rating is a fitting tribute to the tremendous effort made over the past 12 months by everyone associated with the authority," said Coun Henig. "It will be the task of the new unitary council to continue this record of progress and keep delivering first class services for the people of County Durham."

SCHOOLS' DANCE FESTIVAL AT AYCLIFFE



The pupils in Year 2 of Stephenson Way Community Primary School took part in the Sedgefield Dance Festival at the Leisure Centre in Newton Aycliffe on Tuesday 3rd March. Many schools in the area took part and the routines were well supported by parents. The youngsters performed a dance routine to the song "The Locomotion" by Kylie Minogue. The routine was learned in six one hour rehearsals which is an incredible achievement for children of this age. It was a most enjoyable experience for the children which gave an opportunity for them to extend their skills to a wider audience.

AYCLIFFE VILLAGE HALL A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting of Great Aycliffe Village Hall Association will be held in the Village Hall on Monday next, 9th March 2009. The meeting is open to all members of the Village Hall Association but if you are not yet a member and can assist with and implement constructive ideas and events to aid the Village Hall then you are most welcome. Doors open at 6.45 for a 7.00pm meeting.

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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 Sedgfield 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.

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.

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18 SPEED Mountain bike, as new, hardly used, £50 ono Tel 07901 623847
ACOUSTIC Guitar Sunburst in colour, excellent condition, £25 Tel 07901 623847
MAXIM Electric keyboard as new, used twice, £30 ono Tel 317465
CANON fit Sigma, 10-20mm lens and filter, £285; York AB Crunch sit-up bench, £30. Tel 07860 280915
LITTLE GIRLS bed in ivory with side panel which can be removed. 1 year old. Please phone for details 324978
RECONDITIONED Automatic washers, delivered and installed from £99. Tel 07789 132707
PRIDE Victory mobility scooter, £250 ono; 28" widescreen Nicam TV + surround sound and stand, £90 ono; Proline TCE 610v ceramic hob, brand new, in bo, £100. Tel 320747
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.

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

LUCYROLLO 27th February. Happy 2nd birthday Princess. Lots of love and kisses, Mammy and Daddy xxx
LUCY ROLLO Happy birthday darling. Love always, Nanny Pops and Sam xxxx
LUCY ROLLO Happy birthday hope you enjoy your day. Love, Nanna and Grandad xxx
TIMOTHY GALLACHER 5th March. To a wonderful Husband on this your big 50. Still love you loads, Tracey xxx
TIMOTHY GALLACHER 5th March. To a special Dad, happy 50th birthday. Lots of love, Vanessa, Catherine, Timothy, Melissa, Helen and Callum xxx
TIMOTHY GALLACHER To a special Brother, happy 50th Birthday. Love from George, Tommy and Lyn xxx
LUKE PRESCOTT To our wonderful Son, happy 8th birthday. Lots of love, Mam, Dad and Jake xxx
LUKE PRESCOTT Happy 8th birthday. Lots of love, Grandma, Grandad, Karen, Matt, Cousin James, Kim and Adam xxxx
ANNE KEMP Happy birthday, have a great day. It's not every day you reach 30. Loads of love, Dave, Kieren and Matthew xxxx

Gerrard Cameron

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

Barraclough 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

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

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

Ged Cameron

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

Sheila Armstrong

Happy 80th Birthday MAM
11th March 2009
With all our love and best wishes from Joan, Colin and K.C.

Dad - PJ

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

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

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.

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

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

Clairvoyance

SPiritualist Meetings are held at Morrison Close Community Centre every Monday evening starting 7pm sharp (closed Bank Holiday Monday). Details from Ann on 313654.

Opticians

K. McGuinness
OPTICIAN
Town Centre
Newton Aycliffe
Tel: 316600

