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Friday 3rd April 2020 First Published in 1948 and still FREE

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## ON A BRIGHTER NOTE

Community Spirit Newton Aycliffe have this week received an amazing donation of over £500 from a local couple who organised an on-line Race Night with a large group of their friends.

This wonderful gesture by Shaun Sproates and his Wife Charlotte means that when we emerge from lockdown we can really take the bull by the horns and give the help that's needed to the most vulnerable in our Community. Another £500 was donated to the North East Air Ambulance.

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## INEOS HELP TO FIGHT THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- INEOS new hand sanitiser plant at Newton Aycliffe started up last weekend, well within the ten-day time frame promised. It is running three shifts around the clock.
- Free issue to the NHS commenced on Tuesday 31st March.
- Hand sanitisers are a crucial weapon in the fight against the Coronavirus and remain in critically short supply across the UK and Europe.
- A German sister plant is also in production and plans are being drawn up for a third plant in France.
- The INEOS Board has had a daily call on the progress of building the plants.

Sir Jim Ratcliffe, founder and chairman of INEOS says, "I am extremely proud of the INEOS team who have built these two major production facilities in literally a few days. I believe these hand sanitisers will play a key role in the fight against the Corona virus and will help protect our NHS front line staff who deserve all the help we can give them."

INEOS, one of the world's largest manufacturing companies, has this week announced that it has hit its ten day target to build a hand sanitiser plant in Newton Aycliffe and has started producing one million hand sanitisers a month.

Hand to mouth contamination is one of the main ways that the Coronavirus infects



people and there is a critical shortage of hand sanitisers across the UK and Europe. INEOS is focusing on meeting the needs of front line medical and care services as well as making "pocket bottle" hand sanitisers available for people's personal use. These will be produced to World Health Organisation specifications. Sir Jim Ratcliffe, founder and chairman of INEOS says, "Now that production of the INEOS hand sanitiser has started, we are working on the fastest way to get them to where they need to be. I am confident that within a few days our sanitiser will start to

be seen in hospitals, surgeries and people's homes". INEOS is the leading European producer of the two key raw materials needed for sanitisers – isopropyl alcohol (IPA) and ethanol, producing almost one million tonnes. The company is already running these plants flat out and have been diverting more of this product to essential medical use including in the new INEOS factories.

INEOS takes its corporate and social responsibilities extremely seriously. Its products are important to the production of essential healthcare products from rubber gloves, to PVC saline drips, syringes, ventilators, medical tubing. Its products purify the public's drinking water. It produces raw materials for soap, phenol for aspirin and paracetamol, and its acetonitrile is being used in pharmaceutical analysis essential in procedures necessary to find a vaccine. Sir Jim Ratcliffe, founder and chairman of INEOS adds, "INEOS is a company with enormous resources and manufacturing skills. If we can find other ways to help in the Coronavirus battle, we are absolutely committed to playing our part" For more information please go to our website: [www.ineoshandgel.com](http://www.ineoshandgel.com)

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**Paul Howell, Member of Parliament for Sedgefield**

Well what a week that was! Like just about everyone I have been on lockdown this week. Normally we would have been just entering recess and it would have been a fabulous opportunity to get out and about and meet people.

Not this time! In the last few days of Parliament sitting we had the almost unique situation of the Whips telling us to stay out of the Chamber, they are normally doing quite the reverse. My local team continue to work from home as we were unable to enter our new office before the lockdown. So for a couple of days I was in London working from my office, there and available in case any votes took place but unable to enter the Chamber. Legislation was expedited at pace and we were able to leave last Tuesday.

Some of the contents of the legislation passed has been extraordinary, not just in terms of the money that the Government has released to try and help as many people as possible but also in terms of civil liberties. We have all seen the "Police State" accusations from people and whilst we may see examples of over zealous enforcement on the news they have to

be considered in context and from the discussions I have had with our local Police I am very confident that their efforts will be proportionate. Once this is over though it is particularly important that we role back these powers and head back to normality.

For now though we all need to follow the advice given and stay at home and protect our NHS.

There are huge efforts being made to increase testing and the availability of PPE whilst also increasing the capacity of the health service but I can assure you that along with all MP's I am pushing for it to be achieved faster.

The response of people in staying home has been fantastic, but we need this to continue for a while yet. Can I also remind you of the earlier message to regularly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. The reason for this is the virus does not pass through your skin but if it gets on your hands then when you touch your face it can infect you.

Durham County Council has established help lines for you if required which are 03000 260 260 and email [help@durham.gov.uk](mailto:help@durham.gov.uk) or via their website at [www.durham.gov.uk/covid19help](http://www.durham.gov.uk/covid19help) or you can contact us at Paul.Howell.MP@Parliament.uk.

Please Stay Safe, Stay at Home and look after your neighbours  
**Paul Howell MP**  
Member of Parliament for Sedgefield

## New College Durham's Employer Breakfast



Businesses can benefit from a free workshop exploring current issues around change management at New College Durham's next Employer Breakfast.

'Surviving Organisational Change: It's not you, it's me' is a solution-focused workshop designed to give businesses ideas on how to attract, retain and motivate a productive workforce. The workshop will help employers consider how changes can impact staff and explore how to counterbalance any issues that may arise. The speakers, Neil White and Rebecca Dodds, are experts in Management and Human Resource Management and lecture at New College Durham.

The event takes place on Tuesday 24th March from 8am-10am, at New College Durham, Framwellgate Moor campus. This is the first in the College's 2020 series of employer networking breakfasts. Each event includes a networking breakfast, followed by a workshop or seminar.

Dawn Fairlamb, Vice Principal, commented:

"Business owners and employers are subject to constant change, most of which is outside of their control. Our workshop will focus on contemporary issues around change management and discuss solutions that exist through an engaged and motivated workforce."

Mark Anderson, Vice Principal, said: "Our employer breakfasts are very popular, attracting employers from a wide variety of sectors including finance, retail, public sector, the care sector, energy, the arts and more. We give businesses the chance to discuss their own experiences, network, share best practice and develop new relationships. We would encourage any type of company to come along and get involved."

The event is free of charge and open to all employers and businesses. Find out more and register for free at <https://bit.ly/39Bwbi3>.

The dates of the following events in the College's Employer Breakfast series are Thursday 21 May 2020 and Tuesday 24 November 2020.

## More Than £43 million Paid to County Durham Businesses

Business owners across County Durham have spoken of their relief at the quick processing of support grants by Durham County Council.

The grants were launched late last week to help businesses through the Coronavirus pandemic and council staff have since worked tirelessly to process payments.

To date, the council has already supported 3,575 businesses, paying more than £43 million and expects to exceed £50 million of payments by 5pm on 2nd April.

The grants are either £10,000 or £25,000, depending on the size of the company, and do not need to be repaid.

They're one-off payments designed to help small businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, many of which were the first to close or be affected by the Coronavirus outbreak.

A number of businesses have praised the council for the way it has worked with them to establish simple claims processes and over the speed in which the payments have been made. There are more than 8,000 properties across the county eligible for the grants and it's expected

that the council will have paid out £89 million once all applications have been processed.

That is in addition to the business rates reliefs which have already been processed in the week. Revised bills have been issued, providing a further £44 million of reductions to business rates bills in order to support local businesses even more.

Eligible businesses who haven't yet applied for the grants are being encouraged to as soon as possible to get the help they're entitled to during these challenging times.

Guidelines around which businesses are eligible for the grant have been set by the government. Details of this are available online at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/ndrgrants>

Cllr Carl Marshall, Portfolio holder for economic regeneration, said: "I'm delighted that we have been able to make a difference to so many businesses already. We know that these are difficult times and we know our local businesses need these support grants, which is why our staff are working

tirelessly to prioritise making payments to them. I would ask any eligible business who hasn't yet applied to please do so. We are committed to supporting all our businesses through this pandemic and these grants will go a long way in doing that. Companies can submit their details online and we will process their payment as quickly as possible.

"I have to again say thanks to our staff for all their hard work. They have been incredibly committed to supporting our local businesses in what are very difficult circumstances for themselves. We expect to have paid more than £50 million by the end of today, which is more than half of our estimated total - all within a week of receiving the government guidance on who was eligible for the payments. That is a tremendous achievement and highlights the dedication of our fantastic team who themselves are having to work flexibly from home as they follow the government advice on social distancing - they have been fantastic."



## Greenfield Celebrate Class of 2020

Year 11 students at Greenfield Community College had an emotional day as they left the Greenfield Community College site last week.

However, they can be in no doubt that they are valued members of the Greenfield community as staff and students were quick to mark their last day on site in a number of ways.

Unknown to the Year 11, Deputy Headteachers, Mr John Moffatt and Miss Lisa Forkin, organised a wonderful 'guard of honour' as staff and students lined up to clap and cheer them as they finished for the day. This impromptu celebration brought tears and smiles to many and was a lovely experience; standing out in difficult times.

The moments were captured on camera and can be seen on Greenfield's twitter page @GreenfieldTweet alongside helpful links to learning resources and ideas for independent learning on the school website.

Although the day was filled with emotion students are well informed and well equipped to continue their studies and exciting next steps. Greenfield will look forward to welcoming back the year group later in the year to celebrate their time at Greenfield.

## BEING NEIGHBOURLY

Over the coming weeks/months more and more residents will become self-isolated. If you are aware of a neighbour who finds themselves in this predicament, you can still help. By filling in the form below and posting through their letter box you are showing your willingness to assist them. By working together we can help our neighbours, especially those in our area who are most vulnerable.

*Hello!* If you are self-isolating, I can help

My name is .....

I live locally, at .....

My phone number is .....

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19, I can help with:

☐ Picking up shopping

☐ Posting mail

☐ A friendly phone call

☐ Urgent supplies

Just call or text me and I will do my best to help you (for free!)

**Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on doorsteps.**

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- 12.30pm - Jenna Highfield
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- 1.15pm - Aycliffe Radio
- 1.30pm - Jenna Highfield
- 2pm - 1407 Cadets Drill
- 2.30pm - Aycliffe Radio
- 3pm - Piper Plays "Battle Cry"
- 3.15pm - Jenna Highfield
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- \* Vintage Vehicles



## Appreciation Shown for NHS Workers



Rose Lodge Care Home on Carer's Way, Cobblers Lane, Newton Aycliffe have always prided themselves on being part of the local community and were delighted to support our NHS colleagues for the 8.00pm round of applause for on Thursday 26th March. Our residents asked if we could have a sign outside the home so that the NHS workers knew how much they meant to us and how much we appreciated all they are doing for the

community and our loved ones and a sign was created. At 8.00pm all of our residents and staff of Rose Lodge clapped from the home and a few staff stood outside and were joined by our friends at the Co-op shop across the road, showing huge support for our community of key workers, NHS staff and carers. Thank you from Rose Lodge Care Home for all you do. Kindest regards Kerri

## Another Complaint About DCC 'Lack of Action'

Last week, a letter to the Newton News complained about lack of prompt action by Durham County Council after streetlights had been reported as 'out' on the A167.

I asked DCC to find out what had happened.

### TAKING ACTION

A report about A167 streetlights is indeed recorded for April 2018, when a prompt response was issued stating that further action was required, and that the job would be added to the ongoing works programme. Changing a light on the A167 – a 60mph former trunk road – is, as one would expect, not the same as changing a streetlight on a residential road. DCC workers need safeguarding with appropriate traffic management.

To replace a streetlight on the A167, therefore, requires an application for permission to erect traffic controls, and also to contract a traffic management company to do so.

This, moreover, makes changing that streetlight an operation costing hundreds of pounds, so residents will appreciate that DCC seeks to repair a number of lights at the same time. All of which means that, if you report a streetlight 'out'

on the A167, a team is not going to be out the next day. **USE YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR!**

(1) I will reiterate the point I made last week that, if work you have identified is not done to your satisfaction, you should nudge the system by referring your complaint to your local County Councillor – including me, seeing as last week's letter acknowledged me as "the best to complain to" because I am a Labour Councillor!(1) (2) Additionally, if your complaint is specifically about streetlights on the A167, since DCC maintains the lights on a Service Level Agreement for Great Aycliffe Town Council, I would suggest that you also contact GATC, who will be anxious to ensure that residents are getting the service they have paid for.

### THE PROBLEM OF NOW

Finally, with regard to this issue and indeed a number of other services, I would ask residents to please be patient at this difficult time. Unlike some bodies, DCC continues to clear fly-tipping, empty dog bins etc., but is having sometimes to prioritise frontline services where staffing has been hit by the Coronavirus crisis. Cllr John D Clare

## Council Announces £1.4m Community Funding Pot

Community and voluntary groups can now access an additional £1.4 million of funding to help provide much-needed support during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Durham County Council is giving each of its 14 area action partnerships (AAP) an extra £100,000 to allocate to groups who are working hard to provide support at a grass roots level across the county.

In addition, the council is providing local councillors with flexibility to use their neighbourhood budgets to support community groups and the voluntary sector by releasing revenue funding previously allocated for capital projects.

This flexibility, if fully utilised, will provide up to a further £1.76 million of financial support to County Durham communities.

The announcement follows the launch of County Durham Together last week. Led by the council, this is a virtual community hub that brings together groups, charities and volunteers to support vulnerable people who are self-isolating.

Cllr Simon Henig, Leader of the council, said "During these extremely difficult times, it is important that the council does all it can to help our local communities by bringing together the many groups that are providing much-needed day-to-day support. "We have already launched our community hubs and we are now setting out a package of additional financial support to help fund costs being incurred by community and voluntary groups right across County Durham. This will ensure the money will be directed to where it is most needed."

Cllr Alan Napier, Deputy Leader and the council's Cabinet member for resources, said: "This additional funding will help community groups to continue to provide

vital services during the coronavirus outbreak.

"We know that financial pressures are a challenge for many groups providing help to local communities and that is why we are committing these significant funds, which will be managed locally across the county.

"This is a considerable investment and builds upon the additional support we announced through our local council tax reduction scheme this week, as well as the work that is ongoing to pay grants to local businesses as quickly as possible."

Cllr Brian Stephens, Cabinet member for neighbourhoods and local partnerships, said: "Our AAPs are very much at the heart of the communities they serve, and, over the last ten years, they have provided practical and financial support for tens of thousands of projects benefiting people of all ages.

"At a time when the nation

is facing an unprecedented challenge, this support is more important than ever. This additional funding will help AAPs to support our communities to meet the challenge and help one another through this difficult and uncertain time."

AAPs will be working with groups to identify gaps in provision in their areas. More information can be provided by contacting AAPs directly. Contact details are available at [www.durham.gov.uk/aaps](http://www.durham.gov.uk/aaps), with groups encouraged to contact AAPs through their specific email addresses due to Coronavirus working arrangements.

For further details about the support on offer to communities and businesses in County Durham, visit [www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus). To request help or to volunteer for County Durham Together, contact [communityhub@durham.gov.uk](mailto:communityhub@durham.gov.uk) or call 03000 260 260.

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## KICKING CORONA

Covid 19 is happening here, but there is no need to fear.

If you follow the rules and isolate, take one walk a day to help you feel great.

Or follow a TV fitness prog, if you're not up to going out for a jog.

Everyone should be doing their bit, so no one in their family will become sick.

Children's rainbows are brightening the streets, they're thinking of us all although we can't meet.

Posties, chemists, bin men, food shop workers too, nurses and doctors, we all applaud you.

Stay safe, stay cheerful and keep in touch, a telephone call can mean so much.

Remember a video link or text, will mean your Gran won't be perplexed.

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MMK 2020

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# County Durham Community COVID-19 Fund Now Open

CDCF has just launched their COVID-19 Fund to support community groups and organisations through this period of uncertainty. The focus is to offer emergency funding to deal with emerging issues in the community as a result of the continuing threat of coronavirus.

<https://www.cdcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-Fund-Guidelines.pdf>

Grants up to £5,000 is available to support work in the community, and to help organisations survive over this period of closures and isolation.

## Theme 1: Proactive

- Organisations that are supporting older people and other vulnerable groups affected by the COVID-19 outbreak
- Additional costs of working remotely and adapting services delivered in the wider community including volunteer costs

- Activities to support community coordinated resources
- Initiatives working to combat poverty (e.g. initiatives to tackle food poverty or 'holiday' hunger etc.)
- Advisory services that complement those being put in place by statutory authorities such as directing people to local services or listening on the phone and giving emotional support.

Project may be new or something you currently deliver but it must respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The activity must also complement the support measures that are being put in place in your communities by the statutory authorities e.g. local authority led community hubs.

## Theme 2: Recovery and Resilience

- A contribution to charities and community organisations whose operations and finances are significantly affected by loss of income due to restrictions in place around COVID-19. This fund is expected to be heavily subscribed. In this first phase of emergency funding, priority will be given to applications that meet Theme 1. Applications for Theme 2 will be accepted but they will be given lower priority.

# Banks to Help Businesses Through the Pandemic

Dear Sir,  
Newton Aycliffe and Co Durham are experiencing one of the most challenging periods in its history. As a bank where many of our colleagues are neighbours, friends and even family to your readers and our customers, we want to make sure that we are doing all we can to help our communities and make banking as straightforward and as supportive as possible during these difficult times. We are monitoring the impact of coronavirus across Co Durham to ensure we can support everyone appropriately through this period of disruption. Whether young or old, a personal or a business customer, we are working with local authorities, governments, regulators and other banks to ensure we are doing everything that we can to support our communities and the local economy.

To help the public cope with these challenges, NatWest customers over 70 and those in isolation can now access a new dedicated support line. This has been set up so we can help those most in need and is open from 8am until 8pm, seven days a week. Those who need it can call NatWest on 0800 051 4176. The current situation has made everyone fully appreciate the impact and pressure our NHS staff are experiencing. To help them help the most vulnerable in our society at this time, we have introduced an emergency customer care line for NHS and critical workers to help with emergency banking support such as lending assistance and lost and stolen cards. This line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can be contacted on 0800 046 2418.

We understand the challenges and the circumstances those affected by coronavirus might face and we want to be there to make sure they don't fall into financial difficulty as a result. As such we want any customers who are affected to get in contact to allow us to understand their individual situation and to see what we can do to help them.

We want to help. Every single one of us is here to support you. We're doing everything we can to keep our services running for customers. Our branch network remains open but following relevant public health guidance, we have reviewed our opening hours and we're prioritising core opening hours from Monday to Friday, from 10am to 1pm. Our colleagues in branches are working incredibly hard in difficult circumstances and we're encouraging customers not to visit their branch unless it's critical and if they do, practice safe social distancing. This same guidance has

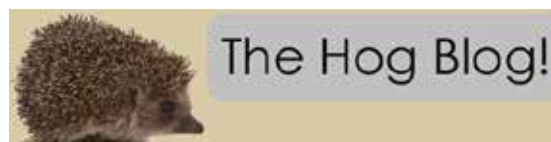
forced us to make the difficult decision to pause our mobile fleet with immediate effect. But customers can continue to access their banking services through our other channels including digital, mobile, ATMs, video banker, telephony and Post Office – and we are proactively keeping customers aware of any changes that affect their local service through our website.

Local businesses lie at the heart of our community and many readers face the responsibility of looking after their company as well as their colleagues. To assist we have set aside a support fund of £5 billion of working capital support. We're able to offer emergency fee free loans and overdrafts to relieve some of the pressure and through our consultants and relationship managers help offer advice and facilitate the support channels being offered by the Government and the Bank of England.

This is a fast-changing situation and could potentially change quickly. Our colleagues across the bank are working together throughout this challenging period to offer the public a service which makes banking as straightforward as possible during a difficult period.

I want to reassure you that the bank is doing all it can to help customers, your readers and communities across Co Durham. We are constantly reviewing all the actions we are taking to make sure they are having the right impact. We will also look for new ways of supporting our customers and will continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders, including governments and local authorities, to find solutions to the problems we are all facing and to plan for a positive and proactive future.

Yours sincerely,  
**Richard Topliss**  
Chairman of the North Regional Board



Most of us will have to be spending the majority of our time at home, and as the weather improves Joan, Viv and I would like to take this opportunity to wish everybody good health. We at Prickly Haven think that this is the opportunity to let you all know we are still business as usual, The British Hedgehog Preservation Society are too on 01584 890801.

As the weather is very nice and sunny during the day it is still very cold at night, too cold for any releases, but during the day people will be embarking on gardening etc which brings me to every rehabbers nightmare, powered cutting tools and football nets. Pictured above is a female who had been the victim of a strimmer, the gardener didn't check to see if she was there, she was sleeping when this had happened to her, she must have been out around 24 hours when a kind person found her still trying to walk to find help but by that time the flies had started to do their dirty work, she must have been in agony but they never cry! Because of her injuries she had to be put to sleep, it was the kindest thing to do. Had the person stopped to check before strimming, which would have taken him five minutes or so this little one would still be here with us possibly having Hoglets. Can I say this happened recently in another part of the country. We apologise for the graphic

# A HUGE THANK YOU

Dear Sir,  
A huge thank you to all of our staff, volunteers, donors and supporters. In a week where our resources have been severely challenged, your organisation, with Gods grace, has surpassed all expectations. The resilience, fortitude, dedication, prayer and goodwill you have all shown in this unprecedented time are beyond any mere words of thanks that I can express.

As we prepare for a possible spike in this outbreak before it recedes, and it will recede, may I request over this weekend that we take some private time to pray for our Country, our organisation and not least for yourselves and your loved ones.

Please be assured that it is always darkest before the dawn and he who brings the dawn each day to us is faithful and true. I cannot find the adequate words of appreciation for the support that you all are showing, except to simply say again, thank you and God bless.

Genesis 8 v22:

*"While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."*

Glenn Jones  
DCP Chairman

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**101 is now the number to call when you want to contact your local police - when it's less urgent than 999**

## WHEN SHOULD I CALL 101?

To report less urgent crime or disorder and for general police enquiries, for example:

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- if your property has been damaged;
- when you suspect drug use or dealing;
- to report a minor traffic collision;
- to give information about crime in your area;
- or
- if you would like to speak to your local police officer

# Scranimals Online Pet Competition

Scranimals will be running training challenges, game ideas and photo/video competitions, with the opportunity to win prizes for some of the above.

All free to take part in, and a way to keep pet dogs entertained and mentally tired since a lot of dogs won't be getting their usual routines and driving their families bonkers. We're also looking at games/crafts to do that kids can take part too. Photo is of one of our resident rescue dogs, Meg. Our Facebook page is [facebook.com/scranimals](https://facebook.com/scranimals)



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## BRIC-A-BRAC APPEAL

We are appealing for good quality items to use for auctions/raffles, car boot sales to help boost our funds and support more animals in need, as well as vert costs.

## WILD BIRD APPEAL

In order to help the wild bird population over the winter months, we are appealing for donations of fat balls, peanuts and bird seed.

## CAT FOOD APPEAL

We are in need off wet cat food, kitten food and cat litter to support the animals currently in our care.

## DROP OFF POINTS

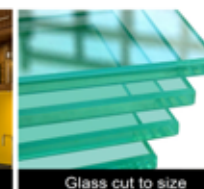
Any of the above items can be dropped off at Tesco's, Honest John, Julie's Pet Show or Grannies Choice - thank you for your support.

Please contact 01325 321855 or 01325 311215

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# PRESSING FORWARD WITH £25m FUNDING BID

Work to secure a major grant to strengthen a County Durham market town is continuing.

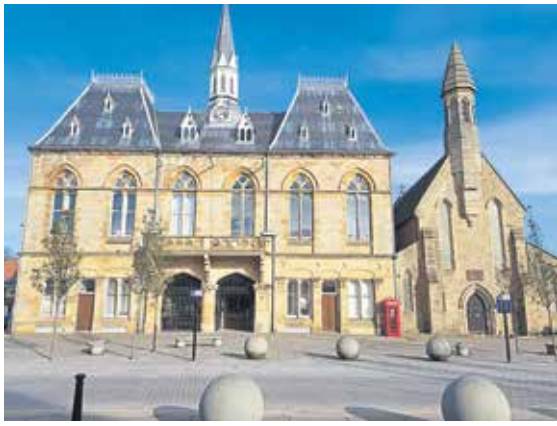
Durham County Council brought together key partners to start formulating a bid for up to £25 million from the Government's Stronger Towns Fund for Bishop Auckland.

The inaugural meeting of the Bishop Auckland Strong Town Board took place remotely using video conferencing technology to comply with national guidance on social distancing.

The town was invited by the Government to apply for a share of the £1.6 billion fund and the council and its partners were determined not to miss out on the opportunity.

With significant programmes of investment for the town already underway, the Stronger Towns Fund will build on this and help to maximise opportunities for local people and businesses.

Government guidance states the funding can be used for infrastructure, training and skills and digital investment. During



the meeting, the board discussed the opportunities this presents and the role its members will play over coming months and years. This will include creating an investment plan setting out priorities and ideas.

Board members include representatives from the county council, Bishop Auckland Town Council, Bishop Auckland College, The Auckland Project, Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership, Job Centre Plus, Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership, North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), believe housing and

the business community, along with Bishop Auckland MP Dehenna Davison.

Cllr Carl Marshall, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economic regeneration, said: "As the nation comes together to meet the challenge presented by the Coronavirus pandemic, we are working with regional partners and lobbying the Government to provide support to County Durham businesses and high streets. "It is also vital that we continue to pursue opportunities such as the Stronger Towns Fund to secure additional

investment for towns like Bishop Auckland. I am pleased the board meeting was able to take place and I look forward to working with our partners to develop a robust funding application."

David Land, a local businessman and chairman of the Engineering and Manufacturing Network, has been selected as chair of Bishop Auckland Strong Town Board.

David said: "It was good to bring all of the partners together to discuss how we can attract investment and provide the development Bishop Auckland needs. Everyone was incredibly enthusiastic and there was a strong sense of purpose not only for submitting the bid and the securing the opportunities this presents, but for working together to support the town."

For information about how Durham County Council is supporting businesses and workers across the county affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, visit [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk) or [www.businessdurham.co.uk/news-events-county-durham/covid-19-information](http://www.businessdurham.co.uk/news-events-county-durham/covid-19-information)

# ROMAN LAUNCH FLUTED GLASS WETROOM PANELS INTO THE LIBERTY RANGE

Europe's leading shower designer and manufacturer, Roman, has unveiled stunning fluted glass options on wetroom panels into the Liberty range which utilises this stylish decorative glass. The UK's main bathroom event, KBB, that took place from 1st to 4th March KBB 2020 saw Roman's new Liberty Fluted Glass Wetroom Panels awarded one of the 'most innovative product' titles and featured in the event's Design Trail by Designer Magazine.

The very on-trend wetroom panel is available in a silver chrome finish as well as matt black, which will coordinate beautifully with brassware across the bathroom. The optional pivoting deflector panel completes the look and is designed to increase water integrity around the wetroom area.

Roman have been supplying fluted glass for some time within the international hotel and hospitality market as designer brands are moving away from chrome and clear glass into coloured finishes and increasingly into textured and printed glass.



The nature of the fluted glass wetroom panel means it can be installed on a tray or straight to floor and it features a unique tape sealing system technology to eliminate all vertical, visible silicone. David Osborne, Managing Director at Roman: "Fluted glass has been re-emerging over the last few years in the higher end hotel sector.

The glass texture distorts light and therefore offers a degree of obscurity without reducing the light in the showering area, but moreover it is the finished look of the panels which demands attention and adds value."

*Photo: Liberty Wetroom Panels with Fluted Glass including pivoting deflector panel in silver chrome.*

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## Dogs Trust Thanks Loyal Supporters

Dear Sir,  
As the UK's largest dog welfare charity, Dogs Trust is so lucky to have the support of all of our dog loving friends. We want to say how thankful we are to each and every supporter all year round, but especially with the recent events and the uncertain circumstances we all find ourselves in.

Dogs Trust Darlington has been inundated with offers to foster our dogs, to drop off donations and even offers of cakes and chocolates for our hard-working staff who continue to show up for the dogs who need them in these difficult times.

We appreciate these kind gestures and although for the moment we can't accept them due to the need to limit social interactions, please be assured, your support is very much at the forefront of our minds.

The staff at the centre will

continue to care for the dogs, give them all the love, attention and training they need, while also making sure they're working at a safe distance from each other. It will certainly be quieter without visits from the dog loving public, but we promise we will open our doors again as soon as we can and are looking into ways we can do this as a matter of urgency. We are coping well at the moment, but know it is likely that there may be an increase in demand for our services in the coming weeks.

Although we are unsure how long our centre will be closed for, if anyone does want to support our work caring for dogs in the current crisis, please go to our website and help with a donation; it would make a big difference. Sue Embleton  
*Rehoming Centre Manager at Dogs Trust Darlington*

## Greenfield Arts Creative Campaign

Greenfield Arts are 20 this year and want to work together with the community to celebrate arts and creativity. We would like your help to make a new film that supports us to do this.

Katy Milne, Creative Director and Filmmaker Laura Degnan will be working (online) to bring together your contributions into a short film. The overall film is inspired by a piece of poetry by spoken word artist, Tony Gadd, who was commissioned by Greenfield Arts to capture the essence of the organisation, its work and its place within the community as part of its 20th birthday plans.

**Here is a short excerpt:**  
*'Out of little acorns grow mighty oaks;  
Twenty years ago  
Greenfield Arts was born;  
Roots and branches*

*extended, stretched out wide;*

*Providing a platform, a sense of place, and creative space;*

*Welcoming the community under its canopy.*

*... An artistic eco system, connecting communities;*

*Wild flowers open and show themselves;*

*In a caring, sharing hub or hive, theatre, studio or cove;*

*In a Lab 'In the Cloud' high above all those trees;*

*It creates a 'Forest of Wisdom'.*

Although Greenfield Arts Centre facility and community-based activity is on pause, Greenfield Arts are busy rethinking their programme and are still developing lots of exciting work, so there's no reason not to get creative and get involved. We would love you to get immersed in our creative campaign, to be inspired by the words from the poem and by community spirit, in a time when it is so important to come together and celebrate who we are and be creative.

Katy said, "we will be releasing a series of creative prompts and invitations via our social media over the next few weeks, which invites you to respond with a doodle, a word or an image. You don't have to be a confident artist or an acclaimed wordsmith, we want everyone to get involved. We look forward to gathering your responses to our prompts over the next few weeks and making a fabulous joint collaborative film to celebrate, not only Greenfield Arts 20th birthday, but the tremendous creativity, inspiration and inventiveness of the wider community".

Our connecting with creativity campaign can be found on our social media sites (Facebook and Twitter) and more information coming soon on our website. You can also be part of the mailing list to receive information directly to your inbox. To join, or find out more about this project contact us at [info@greenfield-arts.co.uk](mailto:info@greenfield-arts.co.uk)

## Residents Rate Defoe Court Care Home Top 20 in the North East



HC-One's Defoe Court care home located on Defoe Crescent in Newton Aycliffe has been chosen by residents and their families as one of the Top 20 care homes in the North East.

There are 735 homes in the North East, with the top 20 receiving an award from the UK's leading reviews guide to care homes, carehome.co.uk. The award is based on reviews of the care home written by their residents, as well as their friends and relatives.

Amanda Hopkins, reviews manager of carehome.co.uk, said: "We now have over 150,000 reviews of care homes on carehome.co.uk so we are able to give people a real insight in what a care home and its staff are like. Our reviews reveal the quality of their activities, nutrition and hydration as well as if the care home is value for money and the standard of their facilities.

"Choosing a care home can be time consuming and daunting so we hope our awards which are given to the highest rated homes will help make the search easier. "Reviews of Defoe Court care home show they provide a high standard of care and we would like to congratulate them on being a Top 20 care home in the North East! It is such a big achievement to be named as a top rated care home by the residents

receiving the care as well as their family and friends."

Stephen Butterworth, Managing Director of HC-One commented: "Well done to the team at Defoe Court! This fantastic achievement highlights the kind care and

support residents receive at the home each and every day."

Defoe Court offers long term care packages for older members of the community needing residential and residential dementia care.

## READERS' PHOTOGRAPHS



"I guess we won't be socialising any time soon!", by John Williamson.  
Send your local photos to [paul@newtonnews.co.uk](mailto:paul@newtonnews.co.uk)

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## Junction7 Foodbank

Junction 7 will continue to help the people of Newton Aycliffe and surrounding areas. The Foodbank can be accessed by people who have not enough money to buy food. A referral system has been put in place.

Agencies and professionals can refer clients. Clients can also self refer. All foodbank requests must be emailed to [junc7tion@gmail.com](mailto:junc7tion@gmail.com)

A few relevant questions need to be replied to.

If not possible to pick up we have a bank of volunteers who can deliver to homes. This will be all followed by government guidelines.

For the people who have enough money to buy food but can't get out to do shopping, we have set up a group of volunteers, with a current DBS that can do shopping. Money can be transferred into our charity bank or paypal account. All receipts will be returned. A list of shopping items can be emailed to us.

If people don't have access to the internet we can be contacted by phone. We will then do our best to get shopping to them.

We are also setting up a buddy service. This will involve a volunteer that has a DBS, contacting a client either by phone, text or social media. This is to check in how they are doing and if they need shopping or just a general chat. If this service is required or any other please contact us on [junc7tion@gmail.com](mailto:junc7tion@gmail.com)

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# Supporting Your Employees' Mental Health & Wellbeing

Whilst working from home is common in many businesses, I think we can all agree that the current situation surrounding COVID-19 is a once in a lifetime experience. As measures from the government have quickly become more stringent, we're seeing businesses leave their offices en-mass and set up a new way of working, with heavy reliance on the digital world to keep in touch with their staff and customers.

However, the thought of at least three weeks in isolation can have a huge impact on staff morale and employee health and wellbeing. Mental health can be hugely affected, for some going to work is a chance for social interaction. You might have staff members who live alone, so being told to only leave their house for essential trips could mean they go days without interaction with another human being. Luckily, we're reaching a stage where people are slowly becoming more open about their mental health. There's still a long way to go until we really break the taboo, but we're seeing positive movements in the right direction to creating an open and honest culture. There are so many ways that employers can support their staff with mental health, particularly at such a high stress time when we only seem to be hearing bad news.

At Learning Curve Group we've really worked to support our staff with mental health and wellbeing. We have an open attitude to mental health - so that if people don't feel okay, they know who they can speak to and how they could access help if they need it. There isn't a more important time than now for us all to check in on our colleagues more regularly. Here's a few things we've been doing at LCG to keep engagement with our staff high and ensure we are still supporting our employees as much as possible:

## Utilise Technology

We've been using 'Workplace by Facebook' for around 18 months now to share

informally within the business, but we're really seeing the benefits now all of our staff are working remotely. From staff sharing their new set-ups of their home offices, to company updates and motivational quotes - we've seen a huge increase of people using it so they feel less alone whilst working from home. Secondly, and I'm sure the rest of the UK is already on this bandwagon too, but Microsoft Teams has been great for taking meetings online. Where we'd usually have face to face meetings with staff or clients, we're sticking to our usual schedule but doing it digitally! It's a great tool for group video calls, as well as communicating within teams and ensuring tasks are completed.

## Encourage a Healthy Lifestyle

We've always been big on encouraging our staff to lead healthy lifestyles. At our head office, we have a clean desk policy with lunch being eaten in our dedicated recreational area to encourage staff to socialise and take time away from their desks, bikes for staff to use to cycle to work and numerous other initiatives like free fruit and filtered water. We wanted to continue with this as much as possible whilst working remotely. Our Fitness Tutors have been doing live workouts on Facebook Workplace at lunchtime to encourage staff to get away from their desks and move a little whilst they're stuck indoors. Exercise is great for mental health and it's also a great way to engage staff, although they're not working out in the same room, there is still a sense that they are working out together.

## Keep Staff Updated

Keep your staff updated regularly and in plain, simple English. It's a time of high stress and worry for everyone, so keeping staff up to date with how the business is moving is vital. Obviously the situation is very fast moving, but brief updates will provide staff with reassurance. I chair quarterly KIT (keep in touch) meetings where a rep from



each team attends and has the chance to ask any questions in an open forum. I didn't want to cancel so I have taken it online, live through our Facebook Workplace tool to ensure that staff still get the opportunity to ask me any questions they need. We've sent communications to all of our staff regularly, so they feel involved and in the loop.

## Encourage Talking

We're huge on ensuring that our staff are talking. We usually hold 'time to talk' sessions at our head office, and these will be now online sessions that all staff have the option to log on to. We've also invested in staff training, with Mental Health First Aiders that are trained in spotting the signs of poor mental health and know how to support people and where they can signpost them. This has been really useful as we understand that staff don't always feel comfortable confiding in their line managers, and of course working remotely can be isolating and detrimental to mental health. By having staff across the business who are Mental Health First Aiders, employees have more choice if they would like to confide in, including someone without any bias. No business is perfect, but we're making steps towards creating an environment that not only reduces stress, but where people feel safe to confide in others if they're not feeling their best and the results we've seen so far have been really positive.

## Sharing Our Knowledge

We've just launched a new qualification, NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health Advocacy in the Workplace, which is available to businesses for training for their staff and individuals. As we have access to government funding, it's also available at no cost which is brilliant as it opens the course up to so many more people. We've also opened online learning for this and all of our courses due to the current climate, so we'll hopefully see people completing this course whilst they're working from home or in isolation. Signing up is easy, just head to our website and click to enrol. I'm really looking forward to seeing people progress through these qualifications and I hope that we can really make a difference to the stigma around mental health.

How have you found working from home throughout the COVID-19 crisis, so far? Have you had to make major business changes or have you had a smooth transition to home working? Would love to hear thoughts from other businesses. Brenda Mcleish, Learning Curve, CEO

# Lucid Helps Law Firm With Cyber Security

Newcastle-based commercial law firm, Mincoffs Solicitors, has achieved government certification to protect client data from misuse and cyber attacks, working alongside cyber security specialists, Lucid Technology Solutions. The company now has the Cyber Essentials certificate which shows customers, potential customers and suppliers it has been through a rigorous testing and implementation process to ensure its cyber security is the best it can be. In line with the certification, Mincoffs has invested in new CyberSmart software which constantly monitors the company's IT systems, ensuring they never falls short of the Cyber Essentials standard. Helen Cunningham, Mincoffs IT manager, said that while the business already had robust systems in place, they felt it was important to have recognised, government backed certification that would offer added reassurance to current and future clients about Mincoffs' commitment to cyber security.

She said: "Due to the constantly evolving cyber security landscape, we wanted to ensure that as a business we had done absolutely everything possible to eliminate any potential cyber threat. Going through the Cyber Essentials certification process with Lucid has been incredibly helpful, offering assurances to our internal team as well as our clients and stakeholders." Mincoffs worked with North East based business IT solutions provider and

cyber security specialist, Lucid Technology Solutions to gain the certification, having enlisted them as their IT support partner in 2008. Lucid has offices in Newton Aycliffe, Stockton and Team Valley. Paul Alsop, technology director and cyber security expert at Lucid Technology commented: "We were pleased to be enlisted by Mincoffs to help them achieve Cyber Essentials certification. We were able to audit their existing systems and implement changes which mean they now have added peace of mind that there are no vulnerabilities in their network."

"In a climate where cyber crime is now outpacing offline crime, Cyber Essentials certification is becoming a must have for organisations who take their cyber security seriously, particularly as it is now a requirement of many government contracts. It shows that a business takes cyber security seriously and are doing all they can to best protect clients' valuable data. It also demonstrates they have data protection processes in place as required by GDPR." For further information about Cyber Essentials certification and details of the services provided by Lucid Technology Solutions contact Tel: 01642 792 567 (Stockton office), 0191 792 567 (Team Valley office) or 01325 792 567, hi@lucidgrp.co.uk or visit the website www.lucidgrp.co.uk. For further information about Mincoffs Solicitors visit www.mincoffs.co.uk

# HAVE YOUR SAY ON PSPO CONSULTATION

Members of the public are being asked to share their views on whether controls to tackle dog fouling and irresponsible dog ownership in County Durham should be extended.

A new consultation has been launched, which asks members of the public if they support the extension of an existing public space protection order (PSPO) to prevent dog-related anti-social behaviour. In 2017, Durham County Council introduced a PSPO that made it an offence to allow a dog to foul without picking it up or to allow a dog to stray. The order, which applies to all public spaces and play areas across the county, also enables authorised staff to request that dogs are put on leads when necessary.

The existing order, which applies to all dogs except trained assistance dogs, is due to expire in June and the council is proposing to extend the controls for a further three years. Since the introduction of the order the council has seen:

- A 32 per cent reduction in stray dog reports
- A 45 per cent reduction on dog fouling service requests
- An 18 per cent reduction

in dog fouling warden investigations. Ian Hoults, the council's Neighbourhood Protection Manager, said: "Despite the improvements we have made, we continue to receive service requests about dog fouling and members of the public tell us that dog-related anti-social behaviour remains a key area of concern for our communities. "Extending the current PSPO for a further three years would enable us to continue to make improvements, working in partnership with parish and town councils and communities across the county."

Residents have until 10pm on Friday 24 April 2020 to have their say, with the proposed changes due to come into effect from June. Feedback on the proposed extension can be submitted online at [www.durham.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation). Durham County Council was also asked by Seaham Town Council to consider introducing a seasonal ban for dogs on Seaham beaches. After careful consideration, the county council has chosen not to pursue this at the current time.



## Programme Schedule

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## SATURDAY

9-10am	Eurovision Show	Simon Harding
10-12am	Moderation	Jack & Garvey
12-2pm	Kitchen Floorfillers	Cazbo Jangles
2-4pm	Weekly Edition	Paul Baker
4-6pm	Northern & Classic Soul (R)	Kevin Sowerby
<b>"The Saturday Night Experience" Sponsored by Bengal Lounge Indian Restaurant &amp; Takeaway</b>		
6-8pm	Evening Session	JimJams
8-9pm	Rock the House	Carl Booth
9-10pm	Retro Trance Mix	OZ-DJ
10-12am	Street 'n' Drum 'n' Bass	MC Supa

## SUNDAY

9-10am	Church Service	Xcel Centre
<b>Yesterdays Music Today Sponsored by MV Mobility</b>		
10-11am	Yesterdays Music Today	Alan Brown
11-12pm	Mystery Year	Paul Baker
12-2pm	Country & Americana Show	David Ringer
<b>Blues Show Sponsored by Whitehouse Funeral Service</b>		
2-4pm	Bear Blues Show	Colin & Monica
4-6pm	Folk/Celtic/Rock Show	Steve & Col
6-7.30pm	Jazz Time	Mike Dixon
8-10pm	The Rock Show	CAD
10-12am	Paul's Down Time	Paul Kjenstad

## MONDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-3pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-7pm	60s Show	Karl Simons
7-8pm	70s Show	Peter Rush
8-9pm	80s Show	Gary Avery
9-10pm	90s Show	Paul Baker
10-11pm	00s Show	Producer Dan
11-12am	Teens Show	Andy Fittes

## TUESDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-3pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-7pm	All About the 60s	Honest John
<i>(sports talk cancelled until sports start up again)</i>		
7.30-9.30pm	Northern & Classic Soul	Kevin Sowerby

## WEDNESDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-3pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
8-10pm	Alternative Aycliffe	Gaz n Alby

## THURSDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-3pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-8pm	The List	Colin McNeillie
8-10pm	BeatRoote	Graeme Roote

## FRIDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-3pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-8pm	Techno Trance Mix	PVR Studios
8-10pm	<b>Guest Presenter Session</b>	
10th April	<b>Martin Norris - Movin' Melodies</b>	
10-12am	Alternative Aycliffe (R)	Gaz n Alby

**Check our website for full schedule  
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# Northern Powergrid Supporting Customers During Pandemic

Northern Powergrid sets out its approach to supporting customers during the (COVID-19) pandemic: Northern Powergrid, chains As a provider of critical national infrastructure, Northern Powergrid is reassuring its customers that it will continue to be there for them throughout the coronavirus pandemic. The company said that its

first priority will always be response to power cuts and urgent safety issues. It confirmed that it will continue to respond as a priority to any unplanned power cuts or electrical emergency calls through its 24/7 operations whilst taking all the necessary safety precautions to ensure that its employees and customers are safe. Work needed to maintain network resilience and respond to urgent customer requests will also continue wherever possible. However the company said that it will look to postpone work that requires a planned power cut if deferring the work doesn't

impact network resilience in the near term. It will also put back plans for any non-urgent projects where the process of carrying out the work itself steps up the risk to customer supplies whilst it is carried out. Coronavirus pandemic is a rapidly developing situation, Northern Powergrid will continue to actively monitor and review its approach to new connections and planned work. It is likely that the electricity network operator will need to adapt its approach over the coming week and months. This will include responding to any potential changes in access permissions or emergency powers

implemented nationally. Customers can continue to contact Northern Powergrid 24/7 on social media (Facebook and Twitter @NorthPowergrid) or by calling 105. Its website - www.northernpowergrid.com - offers online support to customers who need to report a power cut or get updates about what's happening to restore their supplies. Customers who may need extra support in a power cut due to their medical or personal circumstances can join Northern Powergrid's free Priority Services Register by visiting https://www.northernpowergrid.com/care or calling 0800 169 2996.

# Pest Control Critical to Public Health During Covid-19 Crisis

A national trade body is calling for urgent action to ensure pest control management can continue to be administered in Newton during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the British Pest Control Association (BPCA), the activity remains as essential as ever for protecting public health. But in the UK, pest management professionals are not explicitly listed as key workers, despite the fact they have been in the USA, France, Germany, Italy and other countries. If the UK Government

enacts further lockdown measures, pest professionals everywhere may have to stop protecting public health. Ian Andrew, chief executive of BPCA, said: "There are many ways pest control underpins safe communities and facilities, which are critical to the way we live. That does not stop due to the pandemic."

"For example, from stopping pests destroying seeds, to protecting supermarkets from infestation, no part of the food supply chain goes untouched by professional pest management companies. Pests destroy and contaminate food and disrupt and close down food businesses."

"It's our job to keep our food safe and plentiful for British citizens. During this pandemic, it's as important as ever that we help food manufacturers and distributors minimise waste. Our work also protects other essential workers."

"Hospitals, supermarkets, care homes and key public services need support, as well as local and national Government, transport, utilities, communication and financial services. Pest infestations put these organisations, their employees and users, at risk and have the potential to close the services completely and it is our job to stop them."

"Furthermore, with much of the nation in effective lockdown in their homes, the impact of a mouse, rat or insect infestation in their property would create a great deal of mental anguish."

Being trapped inside homes with an acute infestation is unacceptable.

"We need to be able to continue to protect people's homes and families from pest infestations. BPCA members are highly trained, qualified and audited to the British and European standard in pest management (EN 16636), meaning they are best placed to control and manage public health pests during the Covid-19 pandemic. BPCA is asking the Prime Minister and ministers to recognise the essential work pest professionals do to protect our nation during this crisis."

The Association has also written to Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) - multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others - to explain pest management is essential and offer our support in all pest-related matters.

For more information or to find a professional pest management company visit [www.bPCA.org.uk](http://www.bPCA.org.uk)

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# GOVERNMENT ENSURES TICKET REFUNDS FOR RAIL PASSENGERS

Government steps in to provide stability and certainty on key services and to rail staff during Covid-19 outbreak. All train operators presented with opportunity to temporarily transition onto Emergency Measures Agreements, enabling greater flexibility and transferring revenue

and cost risk to the government. Offer includes measures to provide fee-free refund of all Advance tickets as passengers follow Government advice and work from home. The Government is taking emergency measures to support and sustain necessary rail services as operators face significant

drops in their income.

The Department for Transport will temporarily suspend normal franchise agreements and transfer all revenue and cost risk to the government for a limited period, initially six months. Operators will continue to run services day-to-day for a small predetermined management fee.

This will allow us to ensure that trains necessary for key workers and essential travel continue to operate. No other passengers should travel. As we have already announced, services will be reduced from today. Anyone holding an Advance ticket will be able to refund it free of charge. All season ticket holders can claim a refund for time unused on their tickets free of administrative charges. Ticket holders should contact their operator for details.

The railways have already seen up to a 70% drop in passenger numbers. Rail fares revenue has also reduced as people increasingly work from home and adopt social distancing, with total ticket sales down by two-thirds from the equivalent date in 2019. The Government has

provided today's offer to minimise disruption to the rail sector, vital to the wider UK economy, through these difficult times. Allowing operators to enter insolvency would cause significantly more disruption to passengers and higher costs to the taxpayer. The management fee will allow operators to act in the national interest in tackling Covid-19.

Fees will be set at a maximum of 2 per cent of the cost base of the franchise before the Covid-19 pandemic began, intended to incentivise operators to meet reliability, punctuality and other targets. The maximum fee attainable will be far less than recent profits earned by train operators. In the event that an operator does not wish to accept an Emergency Measures Agreement, the Government's Operator of Last Resort stands ready to step in.

# Fund to Support Regeneration of Vacant Buildings

A £300,000 funding pot is being made available to help bring empty buildings in Bishop Auckland back into use.

The Conservation Area Grant Scheme has been set up as part of the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone to support the owners of historic properties in the town centre refurbish and redevelop them for business, residential or retail use. Jointly funded by Durham County Council and Historic England, it aims to improve the appearance of the high street but also support new businesses and create and safeguard jobs.

Cllr Carl Marshall, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economic regeneration, said: "This really important funding will enable us to invest in the very heart of the town, an area which has been hit hard by changing shopping habits and the national decline of the high street."

"The town's fortunes are already changing with recent developments set to

significantly boost the visitor economy.

"This in turn will create significant opportunities for the development of new service, hospitality and leisure businesses which could operate from those buildings which are currently vacant."

The launch of the fund by Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) follows an economic study, including condition surveys of several empty building, which identified three key areas for investment – Fore Bondgate; Market Place to the Newgate Centre; and the area around 80 Newgate and the former Beales department store.

Money is available for internal and external refurbishment work, with grants provided for up to 70 per cent of the cost of the scheme.

Maximum funding is dependent on the size of the project but could range between £20,000 and £30,000.

Jules Brown, historic places advisor for Historic England,

said: "This fund will help breathe new life into Bishop Auckland's historic town centre, by realising the potential of its vacant and underused historic buildings, making it a place that local people want to visit and where businesses have the opportunity to thrive."

Architect Graeme Dodd has been appointed by the council to help with the delivery of the scheme, advising grant applicants, supporting the grant team and carrying out final inspection visits at grant aided properties.

Applicants are encouraged to provide opportunities for people to develop new or existing heritage skills within their proposed scheme and to consider how they can engage with the community, for example through site tours or displays providing information on the history and heritage of the building.

To apply for a share of the £300,000 funding, email [bishopaucklandhaz@durham.gov.uk](mailto:bishopaucklandhaz@durham.gov.uk)

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# CPI and the University of Oxford Partner

CPI Newton Aycliffe has collaborated with Professor Kylie Vincent and Dr Holly Reeve at the University of Oxford to support the scale-up of a technology named HydRegen, a novel means of recycling NADH, a critical but very expensive component of many biocatalytic reactions. Biocatalysis provides safer and more sustainable chemical processing by using enzymes in place of metal-based catalysts (which are often toxic) and replacing flammable organic solvents with water. Scaling up production of HydRegen will allow the University of Oxford to evaluate the technology in an industrial setting. Enzyme catalysts produce highly pure chemical products, thus minimising the need for expensive purification. They are therefore of particular interest in the production

of pharmaceuticals, flavourings and fragrances. However, a constant feed of the expensive cofactor NADH is a requirement in many biocatalytic reactions and this has hindered industrial adoption of the technology. HydRegen overcomes this limitation and provides an inexpensive solution for large-scale biocatalytic reactions. The technology immobilises enzymes from the bacterium *Cupriavidus necator* onto carbon beads. In the presence of hydrogen gas these enzymes readily recycle the NADH consumed in the reaction, creating a much more efficient biocatalytic platform. The immobilised enzymes are easily recovered from the final product, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and cost-effective process. Initially, CPI has worked to adapt Oxford's bacterial growth protocol in order to attain the biomass concentration needed for large-scale production

of the enzymes. CPI's extensive experience in scaling up biotechnologies at the National Industrial Biotechnology Facility enabled them to successfully achieve a 10-fold higher biomass than previously reported. Further work aims to increase the yield of enzymes harnessed from these cultures.

Kylie Vincent, Professor in Inorganic Chemistry at University of Oxford, said: "This collaboration is exciting because it will allow us to fully evaluate HydRegen in an industrially-relevant setting. If HydRegen outperforms traditional chemical synthesis as expected, then it will open the door to the use of enzymes across the chemical industry, which is a crucial step for a more sustainable future". BaiJia Tang, Project Manager at CPI, said: "Our team at the National Industrial Biotechnology Facility has extensive experience in the scale-up of biomanufacturing processes, and we are delighted to be working alongside the Vincent Group to produce their HydRegen technology. We are very interested in the potential that HydRegen has for making biocatalysis more economically viable."

**Entertainment****For Sale**

**"ALL SORTS"** Charity Shop next to St. Clare's Church Hall is open 10.00am to 1.00pm every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Every penny made from my sales will continue to be donated to good causes. The shop is run and funded solely by Godfrey Bennett who would like to thank all his many supporters. **Shop Closed Until Further Notice.**  
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# Over 7,000 Households Benefit From Council Tax Support Scheme

Thousands of households across County Durham are set to benefit from extra help in covering the cost of their council tax bills during the coronavirus pandemic.

Durham County Council already provides council tax discounts of up to 100 per cent to eligible households through its Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) and is one of only a small number of councils to provide this level of support. Following the government's announcement last week of an additional £500 million Hardship Fund to support people across the country struggling to pay their bills due to coronavirus, the council is now offering additional support.

Households who currently receive assistance through CTRS but still pay some money towards their council tax bills will receive a further reduction of up to £300.

This will mean an estimated 1,600 extra households will now benefit from a 100 per cent reduction on their council tax bills, while a further 5,700 or so families

will see their bills reduced by an additional £300.

Cllr Alan Napier, Deputy Leader of Durham County Council and Cabinet member for resources, said: "We have one of the best schemes in the country for helping people with council tax support. Our staff have been working hard since the government's announcement to ensure those eligible to receive additional help to pay their council tax bills are able to access this as soon as possible. We are already one of only a handful of councils across the country that do not cap the level of support available to residents, with almost 26,000 families receiving a 100 per cent discount on their bills – that's 78 per cent of the total number of households signed up to the scheme.

"This additional funding from government means that an expected 7,300 more households will now see their bills reduced, with a significant number now having nothing to pay. "This means we are providing double the support

to people in receipt of CTRS than the Government is recommending. This is only possible because of the level of support already available through our existing scheme."

The council has already postponed debt recovery for anyone falling into arrears with their council tax bills and is encouraging anyone with concerns about their payments to get in touch.

A range of options are available to support residents who need help, including spreading payments evenly over 12 months or starting payments from June instead of April. Many residents have already taken up this offer.

The authority is also investing an additional £1m from the government Hardship Fund into its Welfare Assistance Scheme, which provides short-term cash awards to people in crisis situations. This includes those impacted by benefit sanctions, vulnerable people who need help to cover daily living expenses and residents

unable to purchase essential furniture and appliances.

Cllr Angela Surtees, Cabinet member for social inclusion, said: "It's always important that we provide help to those who most need it but particularly at times such as these. I'm pleased that we are able to use some of the money awarded through the government's Hardship Fund to further support our Welfare Assistance Scheme."

For more information, visit [www.durham.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction](http://www.durham.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction).

Meanwhile, the council has updated information on other service areas affected: • Pathways Day Centres at Stanley, Spennymoor, Peterlee and Newton Aycliffe are closed until further notice. Durham Pathways at Abbey Road, Pity Me, remains open but is providing a restricted service.

• Following reports of scams related to coronavirus, the council is advising people to report concerns to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. Advice is also available from the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133.

# Council's Disability Support Receives Government Status

Durham County Council has received government recognition for its inclusive approach in recruiting and retaining staff with a disability or health condition.

Awarded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the status of Level 3 Disability Confident Leader acknowledges the council's commitment towards disabled staff and forward-thinking attitudes.

Following a voluntary application by the council, an assessment was conducted by the validating group, County Durham's Disability Partnership. The evaluation highlighted valuable procedures put in place for employees and job applicants.

These include a guaranteed interview scheme for all disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria, ensuring lead officers involved in recruitment undergo mandatory equality and diversity training, employee wellbeing programmes such as Better Health at Work Award and awareness campaigns on mental health and specific disabilities such as autism. Initiatives, including the recent launch of the Reasonable Adjustment Passport, a live record of up to date and appropriate

reasonable adjustments agreed between a manager and an employee, also contributed to the successful application.

The council was formally presented with a certificate and badge, with the newly acquired status valid for three years. The presentation was attended by senior managers of the DWP Helen Hopper and Sue Ellingsen, along with Disability Employment Advisor Keith Walton, members of the Disability Partnership which is facilitated by Durham County Council.

Cllr Surtees, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, said: "The recognition that we have stepped up to being a Disability Confident Leader shows staff, disabled people, our customers and the wider community that we have carried out a validated assessment of how Disability Confident we are and that we have a leadership action plan in place to advance our commitment towards disabled people.

"We will be a champion for Disability Confident within the local business community and we will be encouraging and supporting other businesses in our supply chains and networks to become Disability Confident."

"The launch event marks the start of three years of work to focus on disability employment and reducing the disability employment gap."

Len Shield, Disability Partnership member, said: "As a representative of the Disability Partnership and Durham Access For All, may I congratulate the council and staff for their dedication in achieving level three to become a Disability Confident Leader. The process has not been easy, but they have risen to the challenge that has been put before them."

Dr John Clarke, also a member of the Disability Partnership, said: "The achievement of the highest level of this award reflects my experience, in that Durham County Council's equality and diversity team tries to improve access, and listen to the issues that the Durham City Access Group raise at the Disability Forum."

## In Memoriam

**Sue Gourley**  
28th March 1981

We both said "I Do".  
Would have been 39 years  
celebrating our marriage  
this year.  
RIP my darling,  
"all my love", Colin x

**Ann McLuckie**  
10th April

Still loved,  
Still missed,  
Still very dear.  
Hugs from Mam,  
Tony and family.

**Harry Bain**  
4th April 2019

A year on we think of you  
every day. You weren't  
just a Father, you were my  
best friend.  
Love and miss you always  
Dad. Love from David and  
Jane xxx

## READERS' PHOTOGRAPHS



A quartet of new Azuma's at Hitachi Factory, by John Williamson.  
Send your photo to [paul@newtonnews.co.uk](mailto:paul@newtonnews.co.uk)

## Obituary

### Billy Ward

John William, aged 70 years, suddenly at home on 23rd March.

A dearly loved Brother, Brother-in-Law, Uncle, Great-Uncle and friend to many.

Due to current circumstances a small gathering for a family funeral will take place. An announcement will be made at a later date for a celebration of Billy's life.

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Presentation with DWP, Disability Partnership members, Durham County Council equality and diversity team and Cllr Angela Surtees.

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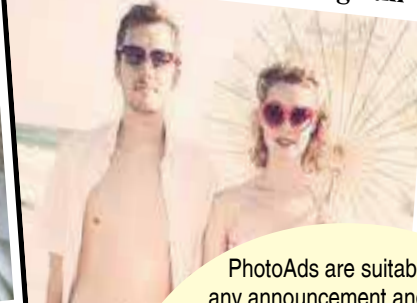
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We are currently working on an archive site which will bring you ALL the past issues of the Newton News as far back as 1948!



# "No Dogs Foul Please"

Dear Sir,  
It was not my intention to offend responsible dog owners, I had spent hours clearing out behind my and my neighbours fence, picking up lots of litter including cans, paper and used black plastic dog bags

which had just been flung in by irresponsible dog owners. I returned later the same day to find someone had allowed their pet dog to do its business right where I had been going in and out of the trees. It must have been

a large dog as the mess was huge and disgusting. Worse still, the owner had not even attempted to pick it up. I then posted a sign in the area asking dog owners to not leave their dog mess or allow dogs to foul on this piece of land.

After only a short while of the sign being up, another irresponsible dog owner had hung his dogs mess bag on it, showing their total disregard for the clean up efforts. Please take your dog muck home or to a bin provided and dispose of it properly - remember this does cause disease and we have all had enough of that.

G. R. Robinson

*Editor: County Council ask for dog owners to take the bags home with them as the dog waste bins are not currently not being emptied on a regular basis. Please act responsibly with your dog waste.*



# GO WILD AT HOME



Durham Wildlife Trust is launching a new initiative to help keep people entertained during the restrictions in place to cope with the coronavirus crisis. Wild@Home has been designed to help everyone spot plants and creatures, in their own gardens, yards or nearby green spaces.

Free resources will be shared every Monday, from Monday March 30, on the Trust website, and topics will include everything from tips on how to identify plants and trees bursting into life and spotting garden birds, to when and where to watch for bats becoming more active after the long winter and how to survey the mini-beasts that are emerging.

Children - and adults - are being urged to share the information they gather by completing online surveys and on Durham Wildlife Trust's social media sites using the hashtag #dwtwildathome

www.facebook.com/DurhamWildlifeTrust  
www.twitter.com/durhamwildlife

People taking part can find lots of information to assist with their wildlife identification at www.durhamwt.com/wildathome and, if any help is needed with identification, the Trust's staff are hand to help via social media and email (mail@durhamwt.co.uk).

Durham Wildlife Trust Director Jim Cokill said: "We know that this is an anxious time for many people and keeping the mind active will be vital in the weeks and months to come."

"Spring is a terrific time to spot animals and plants as the world comes back to life and sharing details of what we see is an excellent way of focusing the mind on something other than the virus. Of course, gardens are teeming with wildlife, but you can spot wildlife through your window or along any street if you take time to look and if the Durham Wildlife Trust team can assist with identification that will help to keep their skills sharp, too."

"Keep an eye out for house sparrows, blackbirds, the first swallows returning, red admiral and small tortoiseshell butterflies, or, during early evening, bats."

"Alternatively, if getting outside is not possible, 'kittiwake cam' is now online where you can view the most inland breeding

colony of kittiwakes in the world. These fantastic birds spend Autumn and Winter out at sea and return to nest on building and bridge ledges along the Tyne in late February through to August. You can visit our website to view the camera live."

Durham Wildlife Trust, which is active across County Durham, the City of Sunderland and the boroughs of Gateshead, South Tyneside and Darlington, has 37 Nature Reserves and also supports management across a number of other sites. The Trust is currently offering a pack of six wildlife activity booklets free with new membership; details can be found on the Trust website.

The Trust has urged people to follow the latest Government guidance on social distancing if they are visiting its sites and also that any visitors respect and protect the wildlife by adhering to the usual guidelines as marked on signs and taking any litter home.

The Trust's two visitor centres, at Rainton Meadows near Houghton le Spring, and Low Barns near Witton le Wear, are closed. Jim Cokill said: "At a time like this, many people are seeking to get out into the open air, which has always been good for wellbeing. However, people do need to be sensible in these testing times. The quicker we overcome coronavirus, the quicker we can all get back to enjoying our region's wildlife."

# RSPB BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH

• The house sparrow was top of the County Durham Big Garden Birdwatch rankings.

• Almost half a million people across the UK, including 3,671 in County Durham, spent an hour watching the birds that visit their garden or outdoor space as part of the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch, counting nearly 8 million birds in total.

• For many people, garden birds remain an important link to nature and the RSPB will be helping people to share their wildlife encounters and provide ideas for things you can do for wildlife close to home.

The latest results from the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch have revealed smaller birds such as long-tailed tits, wrens and coal tits were seen in greater numbers than in 2019, thanks to the milder winter.

Now in its 41st year, the Big Garden Birdwatch is a chance for people of all ages to count the number of birds that visit their garden helping the RSPB build up a picture of how they are doing. This year, almost half a million people across the country, including 3,671 in County

Durham, took part counting nearly 8 million birds.

The event held over the last weekend in January revealed the house sparrow was in the number one spot in County Durham, whilst there was an increase in garden sightings of long-tailed tits, wrens, and coal tits, three of the smallest species to visit our gardens. The milder weather we experienced at the start of the year appears to have helped populations of these species as small birds are more susceptible to spells of cold weather.

Throughout the first half of the spring term the nation's school children took part in the RSPB's Big Schools Birdwatch. The UK-wide survey of birds in school grounds saw close to 70,000 school children and their teachers spend an hour in nature counting the birds. The Blackbird was the most numerous species seen in UK school grounds, with an average of 5 per school; and was seen in 85% of the schools that took part.

For a full round-up of all the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch results and to see which birds were visiting gardens where you live, visit [www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](http://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch)

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