

Friday 2nd April 2021

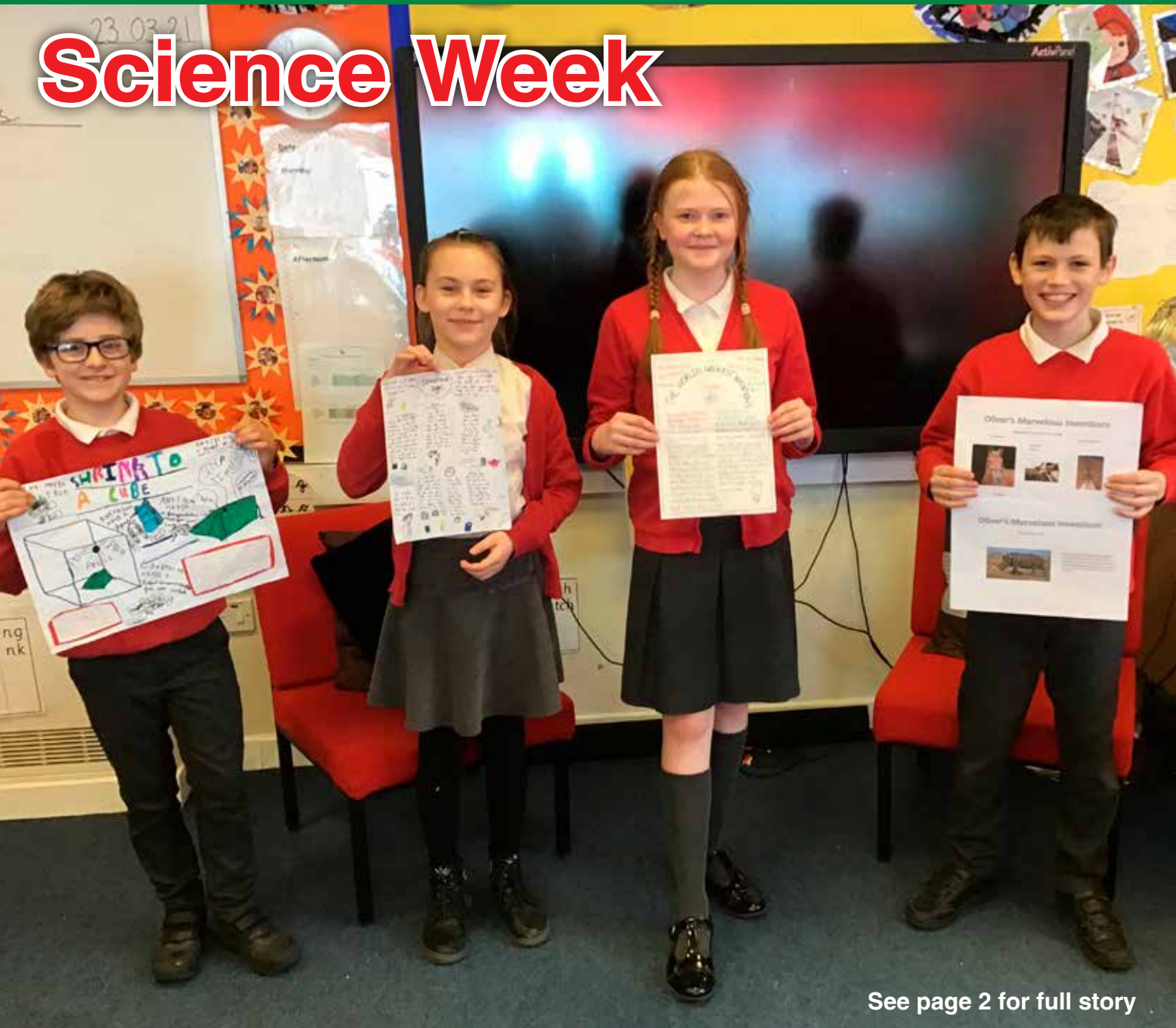
Established 1948

Newton News

Incorporating The Newtonian - Newton Aycliffe's Free Community Magazine

Editorial and Advertising contact: paul@newtonnews.co.uk - Telephone: 01325 300212 - www.newtonnews.co.uk

Science Week



See page 2 for full story

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PAUL HOWELL
MP for Sedgfield



Woodham Academy Promotes Science Week

National Science week was the 8th – 15th March 2021, and this year's concept was innovating the future. In the last few decades, science and technology have massively changed the way in which we live our lives, and will no doubt shape our future. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to ensure that even in these uncertain times, promotion of scientific developments and careers was paramount in our local education establishments.

Woodham Academy worked with a number of primary schools including Vane Road, Woodham Burn and Stephenson Way, during the week, to encourage local children to think about how they see their future. Ideas ranged from flying cars, water purification machines, and innovative ways to clean up the world's oceans. In a competition that would rival the apprentice, winners were gifted Easter eggs, but congratulations were extended to all the students, who ranged from 5-11, who took part in the event. All work produced was of a high quality and deserved commendation. Woodham Academy is investing heavily in the development and promotion of science



within schools across Newton Aycliffe and its surrounding areas. Mrs Nichola Jenkins, Head of cross phase Science at Woodham Academy, is working to bring practical science from the secondary schools to the primary schools, developing curriculums and providing external speakers to engage and enthuse students in the science and technology areas.



Junior Badminton

Stay safe and be happy playing Junior badminton. At last we are able to start our Junior Badminton Club, on Monday 12th April, 4.00pm at Newton Aycliffe Youth and Community Centre - £4.50 per week. So we know you are coming, please book at peterwalton1@aol.com - If you forget and would still like to attend, please just turn up on the day, bring your friends. All equipment provided.



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Local Charity Project Receives Generous Fundraising Support

A Newton Aycliffe based charity are delighted to receive a significant donation from a County Durham based solicitor. Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP), are thrilled to have received a generous donation from Hewitts Solicitors, following their fundraising efforts in aid of PCP's charity project, Together 21. Hewitts Solicitors partnered with Together 21 for a third year to raise an amazing £5,400 that will provide vital support to children with Down Syndrome and their families or care givers. Carol Gaskarth, Chief Executive of PCP, said: "We are over the moon to receive such generous support from Hewitts Solicitors and would like to thank them for all their fundraising efforts. "The children and families behind Together 21 will be thankful for such an amazing donation, that will no doubt support children with Down syndrome, their families and care givers with their learning and developmental needs." From Monday 1st March until World Down Syndrome Day on Sunday 21st March, Hewitts took part in extraordinary challenges to fundraise and put their fitness skills to the test. The team behind Together 21 will use the funds to offer a lifeline to many families in the North East, by delivering activities that promote confidence, social skills and learning for children with Down syndrome. Together 21 offer weekly term-time intervention groups for children and young people with Down syndrome including support with communication and Makaton



signing, development of numeracy, occupational therapy, speech and language skills, behaviour and social skills. Through Covid-19 the charitable project has adapted to bring its service users support virtually, which has proven to be popular. Discover more about Together 21 by visiting www.facebook.com/Together21PCP or www.pcp.uk.net/together-21 Find out more about PCP through their social media - Facebook page - www.facebook.com/PCPandCentre, PCP's Twitter and Instagram @PioneeringCare If you would like to find out more about PCP generally or to support our work please contact: Jenny Lee, Senior Marketing & Media Officer jenny.lee@pcp.uk.net

READERS' PHOTOGRAPH



This is Harrison, my two year old grandson, checking the local election candidates out. Nanna Lara

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Electoral Inequality and Santa Tours

Dear Sir,
I was shocked to read the letter in last weeks Newton News from Labour councillor Cllr Eddy Adam.

Cllr Adam states there isn't electoral inequality in Newton Aycliffe. This is simply untrue.

This refers to the number of electors (residents) needed to elect each town councillor. National guidelines are clear that the difference between one ward and another should wherever possible not exceed 10%.

This is to make sure we have democratically elected councils.

For example If Ward A has 1000 electors and two councillors that's 500 electors per councillor. If Ward B has 1500 electors and 3 councillors that's 500 as well per councillor and that's electoral equality. It will never be spot on the same, but should be reasonably similar.

So here are the figures the County Council have confirmed. Of course the electoral roll changes daily so there might be a few slight changes since last week but only by one or two in each area.

Aycliffe Central – 512

Aycliffe Village – 790

Neville – 775

Shafto St. Mary – 627

Simpasture – 645

West – 688

Woodham – 819

Byerley Park/Horndale/Cobblers Hall - 541

So the number of electors per councillor in Aycliffe Central ward is 512 whilst in Woodham it is 819.

Not my figures, the real figures. So there's massive electoral inequality.

Cllr Eddy Adam talks about the Santa Tours being provided by Labour, yet it was the very same Labour Councillors that were trying to stop this towns long tradition, citing Health and Safety as an excuse not to run them, this debate of a decision even reached National TV, and it then took the general public to find the solution, and turn this shameful decision around.

Name and address supplied

11Arches Daytime Attraction Launch in April

11ARCHES LAUNCHES BOLD NEW CORPORATE IDENTITY

11Arches, the registered charity producing the award-winning summer spectacular 'Kynren-an epic tale of England', unveiled today its new corporate identity ahead of the highly anticipated launch of 11Arches Park, the North East's newest visitor attraction. The refreshed corporate identity represents the company's continued progression to develop a world-class visitor attraction in the North East and heralds the next exciting chapter in that evolution, the development of a new daytime attraction.

"The development of 11Arches Park is a significant milestone for us as we expand our offering with the addition of a full blown daytime attraction, bolstering our current visitor relationships and reaching out to new audiences," said Anne-Isabelle Daulon, CEO and Co-Founder of 11Arches.

"We felt that it was only right that our corporate identity keeps pace with this transformation and strengthens our identity as a dynamic, positive, proud and passionate charity committed to being a positive force in the life of our community," she added.

The new logo throws a fresh and bold interpretation of the iconic arches of the viaduct that we took our name from: the Newton Cap viaduct in Bishop Auckland, with three of its eleven arches on our site, connects our production grounds to the town and the local community. Beyond the nod to the incredibly rich history on and around our site, the arches logo represents people together, underlining 11Arches' commitment to spur a thriving and proud community through its shows, attractions and events. It is a strong visual reminder of our belief that as a collective, all of us can achieve more than any single one of us.

Our community of volunteers, called Archers, are a living proof of this. "Archers come from all walks of life with a huge range of skills which they are happy to share in our one goal, working together to deliver a unique production to world class standards. Every Archer plays an important part and as testament to their year-round teamwork, dedication and passion we were awarded



the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, which we are extremely proud to have." "And finally, the new design also provides a brand platform ready for the launch of new events and attractions in the future, as part of our expansion plans", she said. Targeting families from across the region, 11Arches Park tickets will be available for sale from mid-April. Set in the beautifully landscaped grounds of award-winning Kynren, the park offers visitors an action-packed afternoon of outdoor fun with immersive family attractions and shows under the "Travel Through Time" theme. The electrifying new Horse Stunt Show – 'Fina and The Golden Cape' will premiere this summer on the Kynren panoramic stage, alongside an immersive walkthrough "The Maze of Fame" with its mysterious Library, a playground, a water show and brand new eating experiences which complement old favourites the Animal Croft and the Viking Village.

11Arches Park and Kynren will take place every Saturday from 7 August – 11 September 2021. To book tickets or to find out more, visit www.kynren.com - Tickets for Kynren are on sale now and start from just £15. Tickets for 11Arches Park will launch on the 16th April.

Hang On

What have you learnt about yourself,
As Covid worked its deadly stealth?
Have you learnt to prioritise?
Your family's health is a treasured prize.
We all are stronger than we think
Although at times our spirits sink,
Lockdown rules have seemed so strict,
But many folk have become so sick.
Since the nation's roadmap has been announced,
A selfish few, the rules have flouted.
But please hang on, we're almost there.
And soon our lives we can share,
If we proceed cautiously,
In order to once more feel free.

MMK March 2021

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Neighbourhood Policing

By PCSO Alfie Middleton

PACT Meeting: 10th February, 6pm, on Police Facebook page



My name is Alfie Middleton and I am the Police Community Support Officer for the West Ward of Newton Aycliffe.

Officers have increased mobile and foot patrols around Newton Aycliffe, and have even been conducting pedal bike patrols to monitor hard to reach areas of the town. In the next few weeks the team will be taking delivery of a couple of new Electric Bikes kindly funded by GAMP. These bikes will be invaluable for the team. We are working hard to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour, in particular the use of off-road bikes, which I know causes a great deal of distress to a lot of you. As part of our ongoing efforts an incentive has been agreed which will be offered through Crimestoppers for information leading to the seizure of off-road bikes and/or apprehension of the rider where criminal damage has been caused. The appeal for information must be specific, relating to a certain bike in a certain area at a certain time and is not an appeal for general info regarding off-road bikes. If this information proves to be beneficial to the police and results in seizures, the public will receive a small monetary reward.

We are working with partner agencies to secure funding and are always looking at new and innovative ways to tackle the problem. Have you heard of our online messaging service 'Keep in the Know'? By signing up to this service, for free, you can find out what's happening in your local area – receive regular crime updates, information on road closures and learn about what your local neighbourhood policing team is doing. You can decide what agencies you wish to receive messages off when you sign up to the service. Head over to www.keepintheknow.co.uk and click 'Sign up'. It doesn't take long and you can be kept up-to-date with many different things.

Have a lovely Easter.
PCSO Alfie Middleton

Greenfield Arts Embark on Exciting New Project

Greenfield Arts are delighted to have secured funding to engage in a creative project that explores personal development and how we engage with our environment. The project is supported by County Durham Community Foundation and Durham County Council and it is inspired by Finders, Seekers, a recent exhibition at Greenfield Arts by artist Bethan Maddocks.



The project, drawing upon Bethan's work, will initially explore eco systems and environment as a metaphor for how we interact with each other and our environment, working alongside young people from Greenfield Community College. Artist Paul Theo Murray will be working alongside Year 10 design students to explore ideas and create resources that will cascade to a whole school project. It is an exciting but mindful approach that will explore a response to the current climate and the impact of Covid19. The students will benefit from working alongside a professional artist, exploring techniques and developing confidence to share ideas and have the opportunity to produce a creative stimulus that can be shared across the whole school and the wider community. Katy Milne, Creative Director at Greenfield Arts, is looking forward to the collaboration curiosity and thanks to funders????

Greenfield Arts are committed to providing high quality arts and creative opportunities that encourage creativity, questioning and curiosity. To find out more about us you can contact our friendly team by emailing info@greenfield-arts.co.uk or you can visit www.greenfield-arts.co.uk to find out about our full programme of projects and activities.

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**** Updates from MP Paul Howell at 12noon weekdays ****

SATURDAY

9-10am	Eurovision Show	Simon Harding
10-12am	Moderation	Jack & Garvey
"Kitchen Floorfillers" Sponsored by The Cleaning Group		
12-2pm	Kitchen Floorfillers	Caz Bojangles
2-4pm	Weekly Edition	Paul Baker
4-6pm	Motown, Northern & Classic Soul	Kevin Sowerby
"The Saturday Night Experience" Sponsored by Bengal Lounge Indian Restaurant & Takeaway		
6-8pm	Evening Session	Jimjams
8-9pm	Rock the House	Carl Booth
9-10pm	Retro Trance Mix	OZ-DJ
10-12am	Drum 'n' Bass Show	MC Supa
12-1am	Night Club Session	A DJ

SUNDAY

9-10am	Church Service	Xcel Centre
10-11am	Yesterdays Music Today	Alan Brown
11-12pm	Mystery Year	Paul Baker
12-2pm	Dave's Sunday Brunch	David Ringer
"Blues Show" Sponsored by Whitehouse Funeral Service		
2-4pm	Bear Blues Show	Colin & Monica
4-6pm	Folk/Celtic/Rock Show	Steve & Col
6-8pm	Jazz Time	Mike Dixon
8-10pm	Paul's Down Time	Paul Kjenstad
10-12am	Sean's Sunday Set List	Sean Lawless

* MONDAY to FRIDAY DAILY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop (Mon, Tues & Wed)	Richard Smith
12-1pm	Call Me No 1 (Tues & Thurs)	Richard Smith
1-2pm	Memory Lane	Colin McNeillie
2-4pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker

MONDAY

5-6pm	Euro Chart Show	Dave Graham
"Through the Decades" Sponsored by McDonalds Newton Park		
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

6-7pm	Mystery Year	Paul Baker
7-12am	Motown, Northern & Classic Soul	Kevin Sowerby

WEDNESDAY

5-7pm	Joey's Jukebox	Joey Collins
8-10pm	Alternative Aycliffe	Gaz n Alby

THURSDAY

6-8pm	The List	Colin McNeillie
8-10pm	BeatRoute	Graeme Roote
10-12am	Rock Night	Jonny Goldsmith

FRIDAY

6-8pm	Techno Trance Mix	PVR Studios
8-10pm	9th Apr - Martin Norris - movin' Melodies	
10-12am	Alternative Aycliffe (R)	Gaz n Alby
12-1am	Night Club Session	A DJ

Check our website for full schedule
www.ayclifferadio.co.uk

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READERS' PHOTOGRAPHS



A leisurely walk around Aycliffe Village with Yvonne Wood. Send your photos to paul@newtonnews.co.uk

Milestone Moment as Work Begins at £400m Business Park for County

Work is set to begin on a major business park for County Durham, paving the way for 4,000 new jobs and a £400 million boost to the economy.

Durham County Council is to begin work on the park at Aycliffe Heads, at Durham City, having already pledged £6 million to the project's first phase. The remaining £6 million for phase one comes from the government's Getting Building Fund, which aims to deliver jobs, skills and infrastructure across the country.

The milestone commencement of work has today been welcomed by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), North East England Chamber of Commerce and Durham University.

The vision for Aycliffe Heads is to create 'A Development for a Different World' – in recognition of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the way people work. It will offer a new and unique business location for the region that maximises economic growth in County Durham and delivers jobs in new and growing sectors. It is one of five designated strategic employment sites across the county and part of the council's ambitious mission to provide more and better jobs, bridging the gap in economic performance with other parts of the UK.

Aycliffe Heads is also evidence of the council's commitment to keeping major projects on track through the coronavirus pandemic, in recognition of how important they are to the county's long-term economic future.

The site's first two phases offer the prospect of a potential 4,000 jobs and it is estimated a further 1,800 will be supported in the construction of the park.

The first phase will see the creation of 3,500 square metres of flexible office space within a three-storey building and 124 car parking spaces to the north of the site.

Work on 'Plot C' will begin in the coming weeks with the commencement of groundworks ahead of the construction of the building.

Cllr Simon Henig, Leader of Durham County Council, said: "We are delighted to be starting work at Aycliffe Heads, a key strategic site which aims to deliver thousands of new high quality jobs for County Durham and the North East. Aycliffe Heads will offer 'A Development for a Different World' – in recognition of how the pandemic has changed the way people work. It will be a top-class destination for businesses by virtue of its location in a World Heritage City, excellent transport links and also the environment we are creating for staff which will be an attractive and environmentally friendly setting with plenty to enjoy indoors and out. We are also very pleased to be working with Durham University to explore how the park can deliver a unique digital offer for occupants.

"We know from our conversations with developers and investors that these are the kind of things they want in a business



park and that there is strong interest from companies in being part of Aycliffe Heads. This will only be strengthened by County Durham being included in a national top ten recently for fintech growth. The start of work on site signals our desire to continue to deliver and support schemes which bring economic growth and more and better jobs. Projects like Aycliffe Heads will be key to ensuring resilience and our long-term recovery."

A hybrid planning application for Aycliffe Heads was approved in December, giving full permission for Plot C and outline consent for the rest of the site.

This includes land currently occupied by the council's County Hall headquarters, with the authority having agreed to move to a new smaller headquarters in the heart of Durham City to pave the way for the business park. The new headquarters will provide a base for 1,000 council staff, boosting footfall and trade in the city centre, as well as in Crook, Seaham, Spennymoor and Meadowfield where other employees will be located.

The first two phases of Aycliffe Heads will, when complete, provide up to 38,468sq m of floorspace and be divided into six plots, with each providing office buildings and parking spaces. 'Character zoning' will be used to create distinctiveness, while green spaces and paths will be provided for the enjoyment of workers, residents and visitors.

Aycliffe Heads already benefits from close links to the A1, East Coast Main Line and other public transport, as well as cycling routes. These have already attracted a number of high profile firms to the vicinity, including the business and IT consultancy Waterstones, as well as Atom Bank and the Chamber of Commerce.

County Durham boasts four other strategic employment sites, with Jade Business Park near Seaham, Integra 61 at Bowburn, and Forrest Park at Newton Aycliffe all welcoming their first tenants last year. The £5 million expansion of NETPark at Sedgfield, is also underway and set to create up to 1,400 jobs. In total, the five sites are set to bring 15,000 jobs to the county.

County Durham and Newcastle were recently named among the UK's ten highest growth 'clusters' in fintech – financial services and technology.

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International Industry Award For Sara



Sara Davies, MBE, has been acknowledged with an international industry award at the Association For Creative Industries' Industry Awards (AFCI).

The founder of Crafter's Companion was presented with the Industry Achievement Award, which recognises individuals within the sector that have done great things for the community, industry and humanity.

She was acknowledged with the accolade at international trade show, Creativation+ featuring Art Materials World, which took place virtually from 15-19 March.

Based in the US, AFCI is the premier trade association for the global creative arts products industries. As an organisation, AFCI strives to deliver innovative high value services as it supports its members who provide products and services to educate, entertain and inspire creative consumers. In addition to the Industry Achievement Award, AFCI's awards recognises individuals with its Special Recognition Awards, Hall of Fame Award, Brick and Mortar Retail Award, Meritorious Award of Honour and Emerging Leaders Awards, which recognises excellence in industry service and philanthropy.

Sara Davies "When I started Crafter's Companion 15 years ago, I knew that I wanted to take the business to the US and beyond, and that journey started for me with the Craft and Hobby Association (CHA), known today known as AFCI, so to receive this accolade 15 years later means so much to me.

"Speaking from personal experience, when you're trying to grow a business and make a name for yourself in the industry, organisations that provide resources and networks of support are so important and being able to connect with like-minded people is invaluable.

"I was honoured to serve on the board of CHA for two consecutive terms before I had my family, and in that time, I also founded the UK chapter of the association and became our founding board chair there. The work that CHA then, and AFCI now do in our industry is still very close to my heart, and I'm extremely proud and grateful to receive this award."

County Durham Proposed Plans to Build on Playing Field

Dear Sir,
I put pen to paper having recently reviewed the new County Durham Plan. This is a weighty document, setting out the planning intentions of Durham County Council (DCC) for the next ten years.

The principal development, planned for Newton Aycliffe, is on the Copelaw site. DCC's original plan was for 800 dwellings on this site. The new County Durham Plan is for 2,219 dwellings on the site. This will be around 5,000 residents - an increase of around 20% of the current town population. Secondary developments are listed on the former Avenue School playing fields. Two separate developments are proposed for the playing fields, totalling 147 dwellings. It is remarkable that the County Durham Plan describes the land as green open space. Under the former Sedgfield Borough Plan, the school playing fields were protected for future sports and amenity use.

Cllr. James Atkinson, who represents the area, as both a Town Councillor and County Councillor, does not appear to have consulted his constituents on this planning intention. When Tesco was built on the former Avenue School site, it was proposed to include a residential development to the north of Tesco car park.

Former Councillor Terry Hogan and I, together with Syd Howarth, challenged the residential development. As a result, no housing was built on the site. The Youth and Community Centre was built and the Town Centre Park developed. I doubt the residents of the Bousfield Crescent/ Washington Crescent area would welcome a large housing development on a site, where previously our children played after school and where many sporting events, by many organisations, have taken place.

This would be an ideal site for future youth and community sporting and recreational activities. Once lost, these amenities are lost forever. What is more, it is in contravention of the Great Aycliffe Plan, which protects our green open spaces. As the Leader of Great Aycliffe Town Council, I successfully prevented the transfer of our green open spaces to Livin.

Five years ago, myself, Cllr. Wendy Hillary and Cllr. Jed Hillary successfully challenged Livin's proposed development at Armstrong Close, which included removing garages and developing designated green open space. This was a planning landmark decision for the Great Aycliffe Plan.

As the Vice Chair of the DCC planning committee for the area covering Newton Aycliffe, Cllr. Atkinson must have been aware of the planned development on the former Avenue playing fields. He must have been aware of the proposals when the Plan went out to public consultation, but failed to

inform his constituents, who no doubt would have had an opportunity to challenge the proposal with a petition.

As I write this letter, Cllr. Atkinson has still not mentioned this proposal at all. When would he have mentioned it? Would it have been before or after the land was sold off to developers? Only Cllr. Atkinson can tell us that. He appears to have served DCC well, but not necessarily his constituents. If I am successful in the forthcoming election, I shall be putting a motion before the Town Council to oppose this development and obtain support from various agencies and professionals. This is going to be a very important issue and at this time I'm keeping my cards close to my chest.

Cllr Bob Fleming

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Volunteers on Litter Picking Duties

Dear Sir,

Whilst we are having people litter picking as a team, it is good to note that volunteers are now working a particular area of the Town that these volunteers choose.

I have received a report of a team of volunteers working the Woodham area down from Wolsey Close past the rear of Woodham Academy and down to the Burn along the Great Aycliffe Way walk. This was an area highlighted by local residents as an area of concern. One member of the group was a Eastern European man who works very hard; another group covered Greenfield Way area. The main group, which consists of 10 people, meet in areas decided by Cllr. Ian Gray, soon to be called candidate, as shortly we will have no Councillors, only prospective candidates.

If any person wishes to be involved then make sure that Cllr. Ian Gray has your details, he can be contacted via email at: ian.gray38@btinternet.com - although we have plenty at the moment, other local residents are welcome to come along, we usually meet at 10am on a Wednesday morning, but the work is not easy or clean. Since I decided to do something about the litter, whilst out walking, it has been good to find that there are some good people around who are concerned about the Town and the amount of fly tipping, as shown by the photos in a recent edition of Newton News.

We now need the help of local people to report the fly tippers and litterers, as it is not the school children alone because of what we have found; children would not fly tip such quantities of rubbish. We feel that DCC, who have the power, should take action, and everyone should get involved and bring these people to book.

Residents also have a duty to report fly tipping and litter dropping, as well as educating children and adults to take litter home and not spoil our town.

The group also give thanks to Ian Gray in helping with this project, also the officers at Great Aycliffe Town Council for their support and help.

Thank you
Vince Crosby

Beware of False Promises

Dear Sir,

The Lib Dems say they are standing to cut Council Tax . . . But won't say how. In 2010 the Lib Dems promised to put more police on the beat, promised to abolish student tuition fees and, of course, many other things. After that election, in return for some knighthoods and peerages, the Lib Dems entered into a coalition with the Tories and brought in austerity. Libraries closed, swimming pools closed, they promptly slashed the police force by 21,000, tripled student tuition fees and, by cutting government funding to Councils, they deliberately forced up your Council Tax.

They forced the Tories to hold the EU referendum, but then did everything possible to cancel the result, they are neither Liberal nor Democratic.

They say they want to save money, for example, by going paperless on the Town Council, they want to spend £30,000 plus on laptops and notepads for Councillors every 4 years. Did you know that the Council report shows that it would cost thousands more every year to go paperless, than to retain the present system. There would be software licences, fees, training, staffing, capital equipment replacement regularly, etc., not recyclable like paper, more harmful to the environment, it would cost more than the existing paper system - Why do it?

Every Councillor has their own personal mobile phone, so why should you pay for them to have a Council one; every Councillor has a home computer with their own email, so why should you pay for theirs; every Councillor has their own internet access at home, so why should you pay for their internet; every Councillor can go on the Council's website and download agendas, reports and minutes at any time prior to meetings, (just like the public). Councillors can inform the Town Clerk, at any time, to stop posting them agenda and report papers, so why don't they? Well Mr. Lib Dem, why don't you go paperless at no cost to the Taxpayer?

The Independents will stop the Council Taxpayer from providing free laptops and note pads and mobile phones and Council email addresses as well as free internet for Councillors that the Lib Dems want so much - that's a promise by the way.

The £30,000 capital, which Labour set aside, will be used to reduce the Council Tax Precept in the next budget. We Independents say: "No more freebies for Councillors".


The Lib Dems do not tell the truth . . . They now claim that if you elect them they will fill the empty shops in the Town Centre. It's privately owned, MP's, Councillors and Councils have tried their best to influence it since it was sold off in the 1980s. They make promises that they have no intention of keeping.

Just ask them which Council services and facilities they intend to cut in order reduce your Council Tax, will it be play areas, parks, open spaces, cemeteries, allotments, pre-school places, are they planning to get rid of the free OAP bus trips, the fireworks display or Santa tours?


It appears all the Lib Dem candidates standing are businessmen. They will no doubt sell off public assets to private interests, like the golf course and open spaces for housing, a one-off small profit, but forever lost to the Community. They lied last time they were in government they make false promises, then and now. If you give them the power, they will cause an awful lot of irreparable damage to your local public services, never ever able to be undone, gone forever. They know the cost of everything but the value of nothing, houses built on green spaces.

As for claiming to want to reduce the number of Councillors, they say this, but why? If it's to save money, then simply abolish the Councillors allowance - it really is that simple. £39,600 saved each year, just like that, whoosh, gone. In the near future hundreds more houses will be built on the Copelaw site and other parts of the town. Now is not the time to reduce Councillors.

Independents Campaign Team




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Calling All Writers

Page Turner Awards is inviting creative writers to join their community of writers and get involved in the Page Turner Awards 2021.

The Page Turner Awards is an inclusive writing and book awards with one goal - to change the lives of as many writers as possible. Page Turner Awards passionately believes that talented writers can be from any background, age, race, religion, or interest. Members of the creative writing community contain talented writers and undiscovered literary gems. Whether you have a memoir, a gasp-inducing thriller or the next-big-thing comedy screenplay, Page Turner Awards can't wait to pass your story to their panel of influential literary judges and publishers.

If you've already written a manuscript or published a book and would like to reach a wider audience, you may want to enter for the possibility of winning a publishing deal or an audiobook production. The inaugural Page Turner Awards ceremony, held online in October 2020, was a huge success - both on the night, with writers winning high-value prizes, and in terms of how many lives it changed.

Success stories include three writers winning literary representation, six writers winning a writing mentorship, five writers winning a publishing contract and thirteen independent authors winning an audiobook production.

Beyond the life-changing prizes, Page Turner Awards writers have been most impressed with the scope of support offered to them - a rarity in the world of writing awards, which usually offer little beyond a letter confirming your submission. The Page Turner Awards offers so much more than a simple prize, but instead has created a supportive writing community and a "movement" focused on author growth and development.

The Page Turner Awards Fiction Writing Award 2020 winner Mark Stibbe, from Kent in England, has some words of advice: "I recommend all writers, especially aspiring writers, enter writing contests. I'm so glad I entered! Winning the Page Turner Fiction Writing Award and receiving a literary agent to represent me...wow!" Agent Yasmin Kane was immediately hooked on Stibbe's story, *A Book In Time*, and anticipates a bright publishing career ahead for the novelist.

Elizabeth Goodhue, from New Hampshire, USA, was also delighted to gain recognition for her memoir, *The Truth About Down Syndrome*, which is an emotive story showing how the lives of people with Down Syndrome can be as rich and rewarding as any other.

Elizabeth said, "When I heard a literary agent was interested in my book, I couldn't believe it. Now, having been announced as the Writing Award Non-Fiction Winner and with a literary agent representing my writing... I'm stunned! Anyone with a true-life story told well can be a writer and even win an award."

The Page Turner Awards gives writers and authors the chance to enter unpublished or published fiction and non-fiction books, to be read by a carefully curated judging panel made up of influential players in the publishing industry. Prizes span everything from mentorships to audiobook production and publishing packages. Screenwriters may also get their film script optioned.

Founder of Page Turner Awards and award-winning novelist, Paula Wynne, said: "There are writers from all walks of life, from manual labourers to academics, all with stories to tell, and most of them heart-warming and moving. We're proud that our awards celebrate excellent writing and helps writers and authors to get their stories discovered." There is no doubt that members of the creative writing community, with their unique life experiences and creative mindsets, also have some excellent and fascinating stories to share, and we would love to read them."

During the pandemic writers have been spending more time creating the stories they always dreamed they would tell. Page Turner Awards ran a survey of their writers and surprise findings showed that 61% of writers are able to write more since the pandemic started. Submissions for 2021 are now open. Find out more about The Page Turner <https://pageturnerawards.com>

Greenfield Raise More than a Smile for Comic Relief



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Students at Greenfield Community College have once again risen to the challenge to raise funds for good causes. As part of the charity effort for Comic Relief students have been taking part in activities that will benefit children in need, both locally and around the world, raising a smile at the same time.

Staff and students organised a selection of activities and events to inspire everyone and raise funds. This included games and quizzes, the chance to design a poster and superhero, online activities from the Comic Relief school events and a lovely 'pass on a smile' event. Fundraisers and donations from Red Nose Day brought in over £100. Students have returned to the school site with a very positive attitude to their learning and have demonstrated their resilience and care for others in a number of ways, Comic Relief being just one example. Well done to all involved.

Greenfield Community College are committed to Greenfield Community College are committed to supporting students to reach their full potential. The school promotes an inclusive curriculum encouraging students to work together to realise an outstanding learning experience. If you would like further information visit www.greenfieldschool.net or contact the school by emailing contact@greenfieldschool.net or by calling 01325 300378.



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Building Back ... For Ambition and Growth

Dear Sir,

You may have heard it said THAT Labour is "on the side of working people and small businesses" but, reading County Durham Labour's list of 120 Things Labour Has Done For County Durham, we were struck by just how forward-thinking and ambitiously growth-oriented a Council it is.

HELPING BUSINESSES

It is easy to notice the huge developments – Aykley Heads, Jade, Bowburn and, of course, in Sedgfield constituency, Forrest Park, Station Place, NETPark and the expansion of Hitachi. Despite being told in 2015 that the County should plan for decline, all of these are growing quickly and successfully. When fully outworked, these developments should provide County Durham residents with up to 30,000 job opportunities.

In addition, Business Durham (the council's business development arm) has supported 1,300 small local businesses and administrators the Finance Durham Fund (creating nearly 1,500 jobs). The

council's 'BEEP' team has helped hundreds of firms save money on their energy costs. On top of this the Council's DurhamWorks programme has supported 7,500 16-24-year-olds, and its Employment & Skills scheme a further 1,500 adults.

During the pandemic, the Labour-led County Council was praised by the government for the efficient and rapid way it distributed business support, helping more than 8,000 firms across the county. The Council is currently trying to find ways to support those businesses ignored by the Tory government, and has funded a £5million Business Recovery Grant.

It is tempting to compare all this to the Tories' efforts in the recent Budget (750 Treasury employees being told to relocate to Darlington, and a freeport which might actually harm Aycliffe Business Park), which look less about levelling-up and more a Houchen re-election campaign.

THINKING OF FAMILIES

Housing developments can be controversial, but young families need somewhere to live; the County Durham Plan seeks to put in the right places 5,390 houses, 10-25% of them affordable. In addition, the Council has recently approved a £70million five-year plan to create 500 council houses. At the same time, extra money is being put into keeping neighbourhoods smart and clean, into community safety ... into making communities that people will want to live in.

BUILDING BACK AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Coronavirus has shown us what matters most. As we emerge from the crisis, we need to create opportunities for families to settle and to prosper, and we need to build a future society which will see business growth, rising household incomes, and fulfilling jobs.

#BuildBackLabour

Sedgfield CLP Campaigns team

A Tale of Two Standards

Dear Sir,

The Tories got slagged off at the elections in 2017 because, for the County Council, they put two people forward in the Aycliffe North & Middridge Ward who actually lived in Darlington and are Darlington Borough Councillors.

Funnily though, they still got elected here in Newton Aycliffe. In Aycliffe West they put up a person from Barnard Castle, and in Aycliffe East they put up a person from Peterlee, luckily they didn't get elected. Imagine having four County Councillors representing Aycliffe, none of whom live in the Town.

As I said previously, check the candidates address on the Ballot Paper, and never vote for people who don't live on the town, otherwise don't complain if you never hear or see them, and they still collect their allowances.

Labour continuously slag off the two Tories from Darlington who got elected for not doing anything. But here's the rub ... Labour is putting up a Labour candidate who lives in Newton Aycliffe, to stand in Barnard Castle, for the County Council. That same Labour person, Cllr David Hardaker, (yes you've guessed it, a Corbyn supporter), who represents Simpasture Ward on the Town Council, is also again standing for the Town Council here. Still with me so far?

So, my question is this ... how is Labour any different from the Tories? Will Labour in Barnard Castle slag him off if he gets elected for not living there and doing nothing but claim his allowance, whilst at the same time getting elected here on the Town Council?

Local Labour's double standards.

In the 1980's we had several Tories on the Town Council in Newton Aycliffe, who all lived here, they were good, honest, decent people, indeed the then Cllr David Warren, Tory, and a good friend of mine, pushed for us to buy the Town Centre before it was sold to private developers. The Government would not allow Councils to buy it, but it was a good idea. (Thatcher needed the money from the highest bidder).

Ask yourself what sort of party has the local Labour Party become? It is no longer the decent representative Party that Labour voters, or their parents or grandparents, would recognise.

Vote selectively and wisely. You've proved on Brexit and the General election you can. VOTE INDEPENDENT where possible, but don't vote Labour (Democratic Socialism, as described by one Labour Councillor recently), because there never was nor is a country that was Socialist and Democratic.

Arun M Chandran

Independent

Great Aycliffe & Middridge Partnership

Dear Sir,

As part of my tenure with Durham County Council, I had the pleasure of being a member of the Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership Board.

It would be remiss of me at this point therefore not to reflect on how much pleasure I derive from that privilege and also to comment on the highly professional team who run it, Brian Riley, Victoria Grieves and Paula Stockport.

In addition, I also applaud the huge contributions made to that Board by volunteers and members of the public. The job roles have many facets and entail a great deal of work which makes volunteers contributions invaluable.

Then we come to the members of the public who not only give their free time to run community organisations but also fill out all the documentation to apply for grant funding requiring their having to identify the need for a project then develop the structure for that project to work and become sustainable, something that in itself can be an onerous task.

Finally, I would like to congratulate everyone contributing to this community effort, not only for what they have already done, but for being so good at it. They have been so successful at directing all of the funding available to working community projects, that Durham County Council has increased the amount they will be awarding, to the Area Action Partnership for the next financial term to over a half-million pounds.

Cllr Jim Atkinson



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Politics is About Character and Perception

Dear Sir,
Politics is about character and perception. The character of the politicians and the perception of their behaviour by the electorate. Rude and aggressive behaviour is justified as being acceptable and part and parcel of politics in general when in fact it's just thinly veiled abusive behaviour. This kind of behaviour wouldn't be accepted from children in school, or tolerated in the workplace, yet when it comes to politics the public perception appears to be rude and confrontational behaviour goes with the job. It doesn't and when we don't question this kind of behaviour we condone and approve it by default and give the person permission to do what they do.

We live in a country where the right to free speech is still possible but with every right comes an underpinning responsibility in the way that right is exercised. We have a right to form and voice our opinions but that right doesn't entitle us to attack or denigrate a person for no other reason than their opinions and beliefs are different to ours. Such behaviour rarely, if ever, comes from a position of strength for the biggest bully hides the greatest fear and personal insecurities, and the loudest voice a desperation to be heard above all others. Maybe the solution to the problem is exercising a little personal responsibility and accepting no one has the monopoly on good ideas or the right answer to every question. Maybe what we need to do is listen more and incorporate compromise into our way of working instead of confrontation. Defending your own beliefs by attacking others is never a good thing, and does it really matter whose idea it was or the colour banner they stand under as long as the electorate are served to the best of their ability.

Who knows, the idea might catch on and raise not only expectations but standards as well, but when you think of it isn't that what government of the people by the people really means and stands for?

Phillip Hawkins
Independent Candidate



We have now passed another stage post in the way out of lockdown but please, as I have said before, we need to remember these are steps that need to be followed slowly and we need to be careful not to push the limits. As we start to see a few people again please respect others with social distancing etc and remember everyone has had different experiences through lockdown. Some have been literally housebound, and some have never stopped working, in the case of some workloads have been through the roof. Be considerate as we reengage with each other and let's value some of the little things in life we had taken for granted. Last week I said I had spent time encouraging the team at Durham County Council that we should be compiling a bid to the Levelling Up Fund urgently, to remind you that my belief here is that it should be firmly focused on the need to regenerate our Town Centre. Whilst I am pleased to see a number of other County Council candidates for the upcoming elections setting out similar intentions, it was disappointing to read last week from Councillor Clare that his, and I assume therefore the Labour party position, is not to invest in our town centre. I would be interested in readers feedback as to whether the town centre should be the target or if they have other ideas? The more support on this the better. I had my regular discussions with the senior management team of Durham County Council this week and I will continue to drive this hard unless residents tell me otherwise.

The most challenging part of my week relates to the difficulties in Wingate this week. You may have seen that one of my constituents, an ex-marine, had his house, car and motorhome burnt out for speaking up against some local antisocial behaviour. The community reaction has been fantastic, but we need to deliver some support for them and whilst in the short term the neighbourhood Police reaction has been superb there is long term work needed and I am standing with Sean and others on this. Moving on to Westminster, BEIS this week was a subject close to many of my constituents, being the first of two sessions taking evidence regarding the Mineworkers Pension Fund, this time from Unions and Trustees. After saying last week that I had listened to the Head of Woodham Academy on Tuesday and that I would

take his messages to Westminster, I could not have anticipated that the very next day the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, would sit down next to me in the tearoom. He therefore got the messages direct!

Whilst in Westminster this week I had a question in the chamber re women and equalities and promoted the value of our UTC in STEM careers for girls. I then spoke in a Westminster Hall debate on the support for places like the Life centre in Newcastle, stimulating young minds into STEM and was able to reference the UTC again but also to shout out for businesses in Aycliffe and Sedgefield. Before another debate in the chamber on support for the hospitality trade. This last one was a very busy session, with a 3 minute speaking limit it's quite challenging, timing your words to get the maximum without over running! Friday was a strange day in that, amongst other things, I finally managed to visit a couple of schools. We ran a competition last November to design the Christmas card and this was the first chance I had to go and thank the winners. It was a bit strange talking about Christmas cards when they were all wearing the Easter bonnets they had just made. I also had a call with the local leaders from the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions), what a fantastic team they are and so enthusiastic about matching people to available jobs. Thanks Alison, Christine and Janet.

Finishing, as I started, remember it is all about lifting the restrictions in a slow and controlled way, as the Prime Minister has said we want this to be irreversible. Please follow the rule of 6 guidelines and stay safe.

Paul Howell
Member of Parliament for Sedgefield



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Paul Howell
Member of Parliament for Sedgefield

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Risking the Ongoing Continued Success

Dear Sir,
I write in response to the letter from Lib Dem aspiring Councillors, listing the tensions and problems that we all face and encounter in Newton Aycliffe and the County.

We nod sagely in agreement - BUT what solutions do these potential Councillors offer - nothing; they have no policy, strategy or idea how to resolve these countrywide (indeed worldwide) issues.

There is no acknowledgment of the efforts which have been, and are being made, by multi agency interventions - enterprise partnerships, redevelopment agencies, GAMP, police, social workers, educationalists; there is no acknowledgement of how Durham County Council is a lead, and exemplary authority in fiscal rectitude and climate change (thanks to Aycliffe's own Councillor John Clare). AND this from people who have no experience of any level of governance in any Council.

Voting for populists is risking the ongoing continued success, development and

growth of Durham County Council; something which is recognised in Whitehall if not in its own county.

Mike Dixon

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	6				9	7	4	
3	4			1				2
	2	9					8	6
6	3	1	2					
		2	9	6				1
		7			3			9

Greenfield College Nominated
for Creative Awards

Greenfield Community College are thrilled to be nominated for a prestigious award. The TES School Awards (Times Education Supplement) celebrate the outstanding work carried out in schools and Greenfield have been put forward for their exceptional achievement in creative learning. TES describe their awards "as a fantastic way to join together in these isolating times to celebrate your school's achievements with colleagues and the wider education community, boost morale and get national recognition for your hard work and successes." Students and staff at Greenfield

certainly fall into this category, achieving great things in challenging times with support from families and expert staff. The school have continued to provide creative stimulus through whole school projects in 2020/2021 that have brought



positive learning experiences that promote creativity for a healthy and inspiring learning experience. Initiatives such as How Can I Help produced a campaign that allowed all students to be inspired by The Big Draw's 'climate of change' which encourage creativity and artwork that explored changes they wanted to see. Students were given the opportunity during their T4S (Time for Success) tutor group lesson to create their own artwork, learning new skills and developing curiosity about themselves, culminating in an online exhibition. T4S is a strength of Greenfield's curriculum as a dedicated time each day for students to develop their learning attributes, develop their reading and receive mentoring and support from tutors and staff. Students have also been involved in the production of the school's student learning journal. The design and content was created by the students themselves working alongside creative practitioners and Greenfield Arts. The project included whole school research and the findings informed the journal itself. This led to enquiries from global organisations who were interested to work with students and develop further educational tools.

Student leaders have recently worked alongside Greenfield Arts and have designed and developed 'A Creative Space' platform that is a creative online resource for their peers. The space is available for staff and students to access to promote and encourage well-being through creativity. Creative learning has proved hugely beneficial, building confidence and decision-making skills for those involved and new everyday tools that students across the school have to support their wellbeing and development. Their dedication and creativity has also led to a nomination for the student leader group who have been recognised in a nomination for the Durham Youth Council Young People's Awards 2021.

Greenfield Community College are committed to Greenfield Community College are committed to supporting students to reach their full potential The school promotes an inclusive curriculum encouraging students to work together to realise an outstanding learning experience. If you would like further information visit www.greenfieldschool.net or contact the school by emailing contact@greenfieldschool.net or by calling 01325 300378.

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Dogs Trust Rescues 1500+ Through Puppy Pilot Scheme

The UK's largest dog welfare charity is demanding that the Government acts now to end the cruel puppy smuggling trade, as demand for dogs continues to soar

- In just five years, Dogs Trust has rescued 1,500 puppies who were being illegally imported across UK borders, many in terrible conditions – and this is likely to be the tip of the iceberg

- Since the rescue scheme began in late 2015, the street value of the puppies intercepted is more than £3 million

- In 2020, Dogs Trust saw a 66% increase in dogs coming through the scheme compared to 2019

- The charity is - once again - calling for urgent Government action to end puppy smuggling and for buyers to do their research to avoid inadvertently fuelling this cruel trade

Dogs Trust is demanding that the Government takes urgent action to end puppy smuggling as the charity reaches the milestone of 1,500 smuggled puppies rescued and re-homed through its Puppy Pilot scheme – with an approximate street value of £3 million if they had been sold by their dealers. Dogs Trust is calling for the Government to:

- Raise the minimum age for puppies to enter the UK to six months

- Increase penalties for those caught illegally importing dogs

The Puppy Pilot scheme was originally set up in 2015 to aid the interception of illegally imported puppies by APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) at the ports and provide care and rehabilitation for them prior to finding them new homes. Five years on and the 'pilot' scheme is still needed more than ever as demand for dogs during the pandemic continues to fuel the trade.

In 2020, Dog Trust saw a 66% increase in dogs rescued through the scheme, compared to the previous year - from 204 in 2019 to 338 in 2020. The average age of puppies being seized in 2020 was around eight weeks, compared to around 11 weeks in 2019. The legal age for puppies to enter the country is 15 weeks from another EU country and the youngest puppies seized were just four weeks old; far too young to have been taken away from their mother let alone transported thousands of miles across borders.

In the five years Dogs Trust has been running the programme, the most common breed to be intercepted and cared for through the scheme has been the Dachshund, with around 425 puppies being re-homed since 2015 – over a quarter (28%) of the total number of dogs. The second most popular was the French Bulldog (21%) and the third was the English Bulldog (10%). The puppies that were seized at the border and went into quarantine primarily came from Hungary (16%), Poland (12%), Romania (10%) and Slovakia (5%).

For more than six years, Dogs Trust has been calling on the Government to end puppy smuggling, an illegal practice whereby puppies, generally under the legal minimum of 15 weeks of age, are brought into Great Britain for sale with either no or falsified paperwork and often without having received the necessary treatments, including rabies vaccination. These puppies are forced to travel for long journeys in squalid, cramped conditions with no toilet breaks, no food and insufficient water, so they can be sold to unsuspecting buyers.

Another disturbing and increasing trend is

heavily pregnant dogs being transported illegally into the country in the late stages of pregnancy, causing significant suffering and health implications to both mum and puppies. Not only will importing one dog attract less suspicion at the border, but as responsible buyers will ask to see the puppies with their mother, this tactic allows criminals to give the impression of being legitimate breeders and avoid being reported to Trading Standards. Since August 2017 Dogs Trust has cared for 41 pregnant mums on the Puppy Pilot. 217 puppies have been born, of which 41 sadly died (to end September 2020). It is illegal to transport a pregnant dog in the last 10% of her pregnancy, and yet this is still happening due to lack of action from the Government.

Books with the Ducks!



Local partners Supportive (www.supportive.co.uk) and Great Aycliffe Town Council worked together recently with author and education consultant, Catherine Lenahan, to gift books and work with Year 3 children and staff of Stephenson Way Academy & Nursery School. The children had an online question and answer session with Great Aycliffe Town Council's, Steve Cooper, to talk about local eco-issues linked to the West Ward Lakes and then heard from Catherine about her new eco super-hero comics, which will be gifted to the class after the Easter holidays.

To end the day, the children went on a book treasure hunt, before working together as a class to distribute the gifted books to all year groups throughout the school. Following the event, Catherine commented that "Local partners working with local children to promote a love of learning and reading made this event great fun and a huge success. I can't wait to meet the children in person when restrictions allow".

Birthday Remembrance

Ronny Mayoh

Happy 65th Birthday - 28th March
Love from Rose, Maria, Christine, Ian, Anita and Granddaughter Kimberley xxxxx

Rotary in Motion - Moving Forward

Hopefully, you will have seen and read about the latest initiative from Rotary Newton Aycliffe - the **Amazon Smile** advert - which is reminding all our loyal supporters, and anyone else, that when you buy from Amazon, you can support our charitable work in the community by signing up to Amazon Smile on their website. You are then able to type in the search box, 'The Rotary Club of Newton Aycliffe Trust Fund', (a bit of a mouth full we know).

Subsequently, Amazon, without any charges to you, will then pay to our funds, 0.5% of the price of your purchases. Simple isn't it? At no extra cost, you get to support Rotary and Rotary get to support the community and we know you trust us to spend the money wisely.

Obituary

Thomas Stevens
(Tom)

Passed away on 23rd March, Tom, aged 89 years.

Beloved Husband of Joyce for 62 years; much loved Dad of Carol and the late Michael; a much respected Father-in-Law; a loving Grandad; Great Grandad and also a dear Brother who will be sadly missed.

Funeral Service to take place in Wear Valley Crematorium Chapel on Friday 9th April. Family flowers only please, by request. Any enquiries to John Meynell Funeral Directors Tel: 01325 382542.

In Memoriam

Jean Gutteridge

2nd April 2020

We can't believe a year has passed but it doesn't need a special day to bring you to our mind. For days without a thought of you Are very hard to find. Missing you so much. Lots of love, Bill, Kim, Charlie, Jamie Jade and Adam xxx

Mike Warner

15th September 1964 to 1st April 2020

Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us everyday. Unseen, unheard, but always near, so loved, so missed, so very dear. Mam, Dad, Dave and Heather

Sheila Parker
Newton Aycliffe

Peacefully at home on 27th March 2021.

Sheila was a much loved Wife of Keith and cherished Mam of Gail and Gavin; adored Grandma of Grant, Samantha and Danielle and proud Great-Grandma of Kyle, Layla and Lana. Funeral Service is taking place at Wear Valley Crematorium, Coundon on Thursday 8th April at 12.30pm. Due to current Covid-19 restrictions, we regret that this is by invitation only.

Tommy Harbottle

Died 7th April 2005

Happy memories remain in our hearts. Your laughter and smiles will live on forever Dad. Vera, Lavinia and Andy xxx



Back to School with Yoga!

It was so lovely to open our school doors to all our pupils again on Monday 8th March. There is a real buzz in the air with busy classrooms again! Remote learning has been a real challenge for everyone, and as emotional wellbeing is high on our agenda at Sugar Hill, Mr Foxton and Miss Middleton, our Sport and PE leads, organised yoga sessions for children in Years 2 - 6 when they returned to school.

The sessions were run by Emma from the company Yoga Mike. Children were able to try out a range of moves, as well as take part in a period of relaxation, giving them time to think about their return to school and reflect on the time they have spent at home. The 30-minute sessions focussed on the children's mental health and wellbeing, which has been an important factor considered by all the staff as children have returned to the classroom. We have been left wondering, when all restrictions are lifted, if these taster sessions lead to any budding yoga enthusiasts. Watch this space!



A huge thank you to Mr Foxton, Miss Middleton and Emma. Children and staff loved the sessions and it's certainly something that would be welcomed on a more regular basis. After such a challenging year, anything that helps us pause, reflect and 'be in the moment', truly supports our mental health and wellbeing. At Sugar Hill we recognise that we are never too young to learn these skills for life and we hope to offer more experiences to all children across school very soon.

Thank You All

In 2015 I received, from my fellow Councillors, the award of Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Great Aycliffe. I was proud to receive this award as I am the only living Freeman of the township. I was awarded this for outstanding work and achievements on behalf of the people of Great Aycliffe.

I realise that such achievements were only possible with the support of fellow Councillors, past and present, but, most of all, those employees of the Council who are in plain sight, but often unrecognised.

The clerical and finance staff at the Council Offices, the staff in the Recreation, Environment and Horticultural departments, and those wonderful ladies in the Pre-School.

These are the people who make Aycliffe such a good place to work, live and bring up our children in a safe and beautiful environment.

Last, but not least, you the voters who placed your trust in me in the ballot box on many occasions.

God bless you all and keep you safe.
Bob Fleming
Freeman and Councillor

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Register to Vote For May Elections

People in County Durham are being reminded to register to vote ahead of upcoming elections.

Elections for county councillors, parish and town councillors and a Police and Crime Commissioner for the Durham force area are taking place on Thursday 6 May 2021 and those wanting to vote must be registered.

Poll cards are being delivered to residents from today onwards. Anyone currently registered on the electoral register and eligible to vote in the elections will receive a poll card providing details of their allocated polling station.

Anyone who is not registered or has recently moved house and has not informed electoral services is encouraged to register at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote by midnight on Monday 19 April.

Anyone who is listed on the electoral register can request a postal vote or proxy vote if they are unable to vote in person.

The deadline for postal vote applications is 5pm on Tuesday 20 April, while for proxy vote applications the deadline is 5pm on Tuesday 27 April.

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