

A vibrant night scene of a fireworks display over a harbor. The sky is filled with large, colorful fireworks in shades of purple, pink, and white. Below the fireworks, two large, multi-masted sailing ships are docked at a pier. The ships are illuminated with warm lights, and their masts and rigging are clearly visible. A large crowd of people is gathered on the pier in the foreground, looking up at the fireworks. The water in the harbor is dark, and the overall atmosphere is festive and celebratory.

# Investing in Northumberland

## Financial Plan and Budget for 2017–2018





**Investing in Northumberland**  
Financial Plan and Budget  
for 2017–2018

Introduction	2
Investing in education	4
Investing in housing	6
Investing in towns and jobs	8
Investing in health	10
Investing in leisure	12
Investing in digital	14
Investing in keeping you safe	16
About our partners: Arch	18
About our partners: Active Northumberland	20
Looking forward	22



# Different thinking for different times



Northumberland is a county made great by its residents. Our aim is to help you make it even better by using our budget to improve the lives of everyone who lives and works here.

Increasing financial cutbacks nationally are leading to severe pressures locally but despite that, Northumberland County Council is determined to deliver the best services and opportunities for everyone in the area – be that in health, education, affordable housing or benefiting from clean streets and good roads.

Different times require different thinking and solutions. We are being creative and ambitious in our methods of finding new sources of investment to fill the gaps where previous funding has been cut. By making a return on those investments, we are pumping money back into the local economy.

Thinking differently and innovatively means we are ensuring every pound we spend delivers the best possible value for our hard-working, hard-pressed taxpayers.

I am delighted to report that in spite of the challenges, there has been some outstanding progress over the past year. Read on to discover some of the achievements made by the people of Northumberland for the people of Northumberland as we work together to make a great county even greater.

Councillor Grant Davey  
Leader, Northumberland County Council



# Investing in education

Investing in children, young people and their families is vital not only for their futures but for that of Northumberland too.

### Early years childcare

We are trialling a pathfinder scheme offering 30 hours a week of free childcare to working parents of three and four year olds. Our Early Years Team was allocated 415 places ahead of the scheme starting in September 2016. The spaces were filled by July of last year so government funding was awarded for an additional 160 places.

We are one of just eight councils nationwide chosen to run the Department of Education scheme, which will provide valuable lessons for the national launch in September when the current 15 hours will be doubled.

Councillor Robert Arkless MBE, cabinet member for children's services, said: "We are delighted to be part of the initiative. The extra hours of childcare will make it easier for parents in the area to work."

### Primary school benefits

After more than a century on its Goosehill site, Morpeth First School is set to relocate to the current County Hall site in the town. With £5.7 million invested in the state-of-the-art complex, pupils will benefit from an extended curriculum, hard and soft play areas and sports pitches, while there will be plenty of parking space for parents dropping off their children. Darras Hall First School near Ponteland will be replaced and enlarged within its site ahead of its switch to primary status.

### High school investment

More than £12 million has been invested to open new high schools for communities in Alnwick, Bedlington and Prudhoe in 2017, as well as a £5 million extension to Ashington High School, after successful bids by the council for funding. In Ponteland, a landmark £57 million project to create a combined schools and leisure campus is in the pipeline.

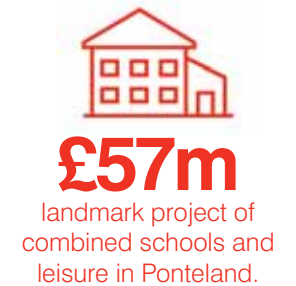
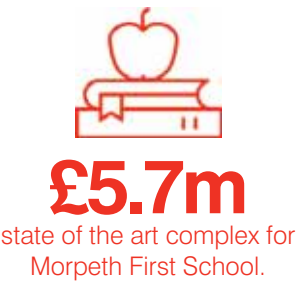
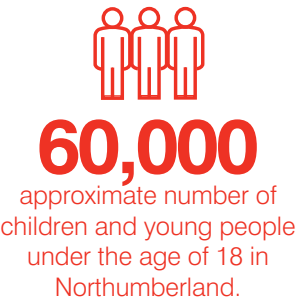


Top: Official opening of Prudhoe High School.  
Below: Early years care.

Balancing inequality in education will allow more of our children and young people to have access to the services and infrastructure they require to be successful in today's world. We will continue to invest in these key areas to ensure the prosperity and education of generations to come.



## Facts + Figures





# Investing in housing

We want to ensure Northumberland is a place where all residents have a home. No matter what their income, modern families require modern homes and we are determined to provide affordable housing, even in the face of severe financial restrictions.

### Affordable housing

The number of new Northumberland homes is forecast to grow considerably over the next few years, generating millions in income by 2019–20 that will be reinvested into services for residents.

We have already reached our target of our first 1,000 affordable home in partnership with Homes for Northumberland and commercial development company Arch. Residents have already benefited from these housing schemes in many areas including Amble, Shilbottle and Embleton.

Building homes must be inclusive and in Blyth, we have invested £2.8 million to develop 26 affordable-living bungalows that are accessible to people with disabilities and incorporate dementia-friendly designs.

### Tackling the housing shortage

Northumberland was awarded £1.3 million from the Community Housing Fund to tackle shortages of affordable accommodation for local people in areas of high “second home” ownership, such as a Beadnell, Bamburgh and Alnmouth.

This funding will aid our work with Community Action Northumberland in providing homes that help residents remain in the area, therefore keeping the local economy and services viable.

It’s not just about providing new housing but also improving homes for all our residents. We have invested in a £35 million, five-year improvement plan for council housing stock that will replace old kitchens and bathrooms, outdated

wiring, inefficient heating systems, leaky windows and faulty roof coverings.

### Future living standards

With residents at the heart of our thinking the council has worked hard on our vision for future living standards. One such example is the support of a developer’s proposals for a “garden village” on Dissington Estate land outside Ponteland. This ambitious project will deliver 600 affordable homes among the 1,800 properties with shops and new on-site jobs, while the town would also be provided with a much needed relief road.



Below: Artist’s impression of Dissington Garden Village, Ponteland.

We know that continuing to invest in housing remains high on the agenda for Northumberland’s residents, and are committed to providing housing that allows everyone access to modern homes both now and in the future.

## Facts + Figures





# Investing in towns and jobs

Through creative and efficient investment in our towns we are boosting tourism and making sure services and infrastructure are of a high standard for people living and working there.

### Revitalising the county

Our Market Towns Initiative is a core programme that aims to revitalise the major population centres in Northumberland through a careful blend of new builds and remodelling outmoded council properties. Selling off unneeded buildings and surplus land assets will raise a further £33 million while saving £2 million a year in running costs – which will be ploughed back into providing high quality services.

Our development partner Arch is proposing a new retail complex for the redundant Tesco site in Bedlington, which will create dozens of much-needed jobs.

Hexham House is being reborn as a £1.5 million register office and wedding venue with seven luxury holiday flats that will bring in extra tourism revenue. And the refurbished Northumberland Hall in the heart of Alnwick now boasts one of the North East's most spectacular yet affordable venues for events and ceremonies.

### Increased spending

As part of the council moving into smaller, more cost-efficient headquarters in Ashington, hundreds of jobs providing frontline services to residents will be moved back into the county towns, further increasing spending in those areas.

### Transport

More people visiting market towns means better transport is required. Across the county, highways improvements such as the £30 million Morpeth Bypass are nearing completion, which will cut transport time for businesses and residents.

We have invested a further £5 million towards the next stage of plans for the Ashington-Blyth-Tyne rail line, which will see the opening of new stations and frequent passenger trains running. Once complete in 2021, the line will efficiently transport commuters and tourists around the county, benefiting them and the local economy.

### Potholes

More attention is being given to keeping thousands of miles of roads as pothole-free as possible. Specialist “jetpatcher” teams can repair around 145 spots of road damage every day, at around £10 per pothole.

If residents spot any potholes, they can notify us via the council website in the same way they can report a missed bin collection.

Local communities rightly expect these areas be given priority attention and we are determined to make that happen. We will continue to work alongside them as we reinvest in our market towns to the benefit of residents, businesses and people who visit this great county.

### Street lighting

An investment of £23 million will see 40,000 street lights replaced with the latest LED lamps, which are not only brighter but use less than 60% of the energy that current equipment uses and will save taxpayers £300,000 every year.

### Maintenance and litter

To keep Northumberland looking beautiful, it is important we invest time and funds to maintain it. Every year, we cut 8.5 million sq m of grass, clean 82,000 drains and empty more than 7.5 million household waste and recycling bins.

Litter can be an issue, so we are increasing our efforts in this area. Hundreds of people have been fined for littering and allowing dog fouling over the past year. We hope these measures will encourage more people to work with us to keep our county looking great.

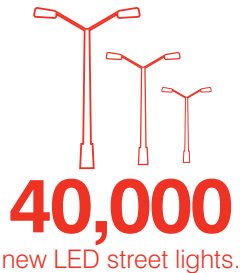
### Planning permission

We have made great strides in building a quicker, more efficient system in which proposed schemes are considered, with 92% of individuals' applications now being determined within the target dates.

Top: Artist's impression of new County Hall, Ashington.  
Below: Hexham House, Hexham.



## Facts + Figures





# Investing in health

Good health is vital for residents of all ages and the council is once again leading the way with some creative approaches in our provision of care to residents enabling them to live healthier lives.

### Improving quality of life

We have been working with local communities to understand what services they need and have invested in the likes of drug, alcohol and sexual health programmes. We have also continued our support to stop smoking initiatives to help people to stop smoking. By ensuring residents have access to these facilities we are working together to improve their quality of life.

### Combined health and social care

Ever-closer integration with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has led our staff to be chosen to take the lead in a national scheme to transform caring for patients.

We have been awarded £4.29 million from NHS England to further combine health and social care throughout Northumberland. These funds will allow us to continue the pioneering work we are doing, while also sharing the programme across the county.

We have seen significant improvements in patient care in Northumberland, including residents engaging in the way services are designed and delivered and improved GP access.

To deliver these services, council employees are working closely with the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group, GPs and other key partners including the ambulance service. In doing so, we are delivering efficient, high-quality local services while helping residents live longer and healthier lives.

Our Hospital to Home project has been extended across the county to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, increase support for residents at going home time and help people regain independence following a health crisis.

Duncan Selbie, chief executive of Public Health England, said: "Northumberland is well advanced in how it integrates health and social care. There is a lot to be proud of and the team here is exceptional."

With Northumberland setting the standard for health and social care, other local authorities across the country are taking note of our leadership and creative strategies. We will continue to provide choice and opportunities for residents while striving to deliver the best possible services.

Top: Hospital to Home team.  
Below: Stoptober quit smoking campaign.



## Facts + Figures



95%

of respondents said the care and support they received helped to improve their quality of life.



£4.29m

available to further combine health and social care in Northumberland.



# Investing in leisure

One of our top priorities is the wellbeing of our residents. We are delivering a multimillion-pound programme of improvements to make first-class leisure, sports and social facilities available to communities across the county, delivered by our partner Active Northumberland.

## Gyms and leisure centres

After the opening of the award-winning £21 million leisure and community centre at Ashington, refurbishments and new builds have also taken place at other venues, including Concordia in Cramlington and Prudhoe Waterworld, with a huge range of activities from athletics to Zumba on offer. Meanwhile, the £500,000 extension and rebuild of the community leisure centre in Hadston is on course to be completed in spring 2017.

We also recently announced plans to build three new leisure centres in Berwick, Blyth and Morpeth, giving local residents access to state-of-the-art equipment and modern facilities, at a combined cost of £59 million.

In Ponteland, the gym has been revamped and the town's new library has opened inside the leisure centre. As with other combined sites, this has triggered a rise in library membership due to easier access, with plentiful free parking and longer opening hours benefiting residents.

This “one-stop shop” approach for customer services is being rolled out across Northumberland and means communities have access to a thriving library network despite financial cuts that have led to other local authorities permanently closing branches.

## Parks and public spaces

We are determined to maintain this county’s beauty even in our more urban areas and have invested more than £2.5 million into improving public parks in Amble, Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Hexham and Morpeth. This is attracting increasing numbers of locals and tourists, while generating more money for the local economy.

Eleven urban and rural parks in the county were awarded the coveted Green Flag status by environment charity Keep Britain Tidy after meeting the highest possible standards for facilities and maintenance, something we are very proud of.

Residents and visitors are benefiting from green spaces of the very highest quality. We are extremely grateful for the support and commitment of local people, park users, friends' groups and volunteers who help to keep our parks vibrant.

We’ve announced plans to build three leisure centres in Berwick, Blyth and Morpeth, giving local residents access to state-of-the-art equipment and modern facilities.



Clockwise from left:  
Junior gym. Ashington Leisure  
Centre. Badminton.



## Facts + Figures



**£59m**

set to be spent on building three new leisure centres in Berwick, Blyth and Morpeth with

**£21m**

already spent on building our award-winning leisure and community centre in Ashington.



**£2.5m**

ploughed into improving public parks and facilities in towns across Northumberland.



# Investing in digital

For Northumberland's residents and businesses to thrive in today's digital world, they need access to fast broadband. It is a key service and one that should be available to people living and working in all parts of the county.

## Overcoming challenges

Northumberland is one of the country's most rural and least-populated areas and staying digitally connected to the wider world is a particular challenge. Tackling this has been a key priority and we're delighted to report that 91% of homes and companies in the county can now access the fast broadband that is essential to daily life due to more than £7 million of council funding. It is an ongoing priority.

More than 146,000 people in Northumberland have access to the latest fibre technology, which provides the fastest broadband speeds, and another 3,700 are due to be connected by summer 2017.

## Digital frontline care

Digital technology is also helping our frontline care staff provide residents with a more flexible and efficient service. An investment of £300,000 saw tablet computers issued to over 350 employees, including social workers and occupational therapists, to replace their desktop computers.

As a result staff members are now more mobile which means they can spend more time getting out to directly help patients and service users. The technology allows employees to work out of any social care building across the county, reducing travelling time and costs, and cutting down on duplicate data recording.

Right: Funding for faster rural broadband in Northumberland.



First-class digital services are important if Northumberland is to prosper and we will continue to invest in the best services possible to make that a reality for the people who live and work here.

## Facts + Figures

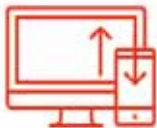


91%

Homes and businesses with fast broadband with

146,000

linked to the latest fibre technology.



£7m

invested in bringing fast broadband to the county.



# Investing in keeping you safe

By working efficiently, we are providing the infrastructure to protect homes in the region and allow residents and businesses to function as normal in times of adverse weather.

### Flood defences

Parts of Northumberland suffered substantial damage in the wake of Storm Desmond in 2015, with severe weather leaving a clear-up bill of £24 million after the Tyne Valley experienced its worst floods since 1771.

Over 200 homes were flooded and more than 50 were evacuated in Corbridge, with bridges and vital roads put out of action. Repairs continued throughout 2016, with hundreds of council staff working tirelessly on over 80 community schemes, including roads, bridges and footpaths, as well as assisting dozens of smaller businesses to protect jobs and operations via flood recovery grants.

The £26 million Morpeth Flood Alleviation Scheme played its part in keeping floodwaters at bay. We invested £12 million in the dam, which provided protection to many businesses and households and continues to do so today.

### Winter hazards

To tackle snow and ice, we have invested £1 million in seven state-of-the-art gritting lorries as part of our rolling fleet renewal. In total, we have 29 of these vehicles that aim to keep more than 3,000 miles of road open.

The gritters are fitted with all-round video cameras and screens for increased efficiency and safety and they can monitor in real time from central depots so crews can be switched to areas of greatest need. To make sure local communities are kept up to date with the latest weather warnings, we provide regular updates via social media.

It is important for the local economy, our businesses and our residents that we keep them safe and keep Northumberland moving when there are hazards to contend with. By thinking creatively and investing in the necessary services, we can stay ahead of issues that would otherwise bring the county to a standstill.

It is important for the local economy, our businesses and our residents that we keep them safe and keep Northumberland moving when there are hazards to contend with.

Top: Morpeth Flood Alleviation Scheme.  
Below: Gritter lorry.



## Facts + Figures



36,000

tonnes of special salt.



£1m

spent on state-of-the-art trucks with satellite tracking technology to tackle the worst routes first, boosting the council's 29-vehicle fleet.



3,000

miles of county roads to keep clear in winter.



£24m

spent on Storm Desmond clean up bill.



# About our partners: Arch

Arch is an innovative commercial company wholly owned by Northumberland County Council to create opportunities to generate income due to reduced funding from Central Government.

Top: Arch Homes, Milburn Mews, Ashington.  
Below: Walkergate, Berwick.

The development company operates as an investment and asset-based business, and it has a portfolio of commercial and residential properties. The profits Arch makes are reinvested into the growing asset base and this in turn helps to deliver regeneration projects and business development opportunities across Northumberland.

Arch is driving business growth, regeneration and capital economic development across the county without taking money away from council services. As an arms-length development company, it poses no risk to the council. The council receives a percentage of Arch's profits, which it can invest into essential services and infrastructure.

With a remit to deliver development and regeneration across the county, while also attracting investment, Arch is well placed to help the council meet its goal of making Northumberland an even greater place for residents, businesses and tourists.

Arch's plans and achievements span the county, from the reborn Walkergate offices in Berwick, a shopping complex proposed for Bedlington to recently purchased busy retail parks in Cramlington and Hexham.

They also include the Portland Park office and retail campus in Ashington and smaller projects such as building new homes on the old library site in Ponteland. The company's most ambitious project to date, which will create up to 500 jobs, will see the former Blyth Power Station turn into a hub for the energy and marine sectors.

With Arch focused on attracting new investment, jobs and opportunities to Northumberland, whilst also balancing inequalities by regenerating areas in need, residents and businesses will continue to benefit from the outcomes of the development company's work.

With reductions in funding from Central Government to contend with, it is important we work creatively and efficiently on projects that will make a positive impact on the county. In doing so, we can make sure Northumberland is a place that is great for residents, businesses and tourists.





# About our partners: Active Northumberland

**Active Northumberland is a charitable leisure trust that works on behalf of Northumberland County Council to efficiently manage leisure facilities and services. It promotes healthy lifestyles.**

Across the county, Active Northumberland manages swimming pools and leisure centres, sports facilities, libraries, parks and gardens, beach facilities and tourist attractions.

The trust provides a large sports development service to deliver activity sessions to children and young people and it supports local sports clubs and community groups.

Active Northumberland is committed to helping people make healthy lifestyle choices and does so by offering expertise. It supports the development of physical activity across the county and its leisure facilities encourage a physical lifestyle.

Northumberland County Council invested £20 million into the award-winning Ashington Leisure Centre alongside an additional £1 million of funding secured from Sport England. As a result of the excellent facilities on offer to residents, memberships have more than tripled.

The council has also invested in Cramlington's Concordia Leisure Centre (£3.5 million), Prudhoe Waterworld (£650,000), Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre (£600,000) and Ponteland Leisure Centre (£104,000).

It has also invested in three new state-of-the-art leisure centres for Morpeth, Blyth and Berwick. As this report went to print, residents were being asked for their views on these exciting developments, which are set to replace current leisure centres which have outlived their planned lives.

A number of smaller projects have been carried out across all the leisure centres around the county, including the introduction of state-of-the-art gym equipment, and further investment is planned over the coming year.



**With surplus funds reinvested back into leisure activities due to Active Northumberland's trust status, residents can enjoy the benefits of modern services and infrastructure at affordable prices.**

Clockwise from left:  
Concordia's clip and climb.  
Ashington Leisure Centre's  
state-of-the-art equipment.  
Swimmers having a dip.





# Looking forward

Investing in Northumberland's future is vital if we want to see it prosper. By doing so, we can generate jobs, build affordable housing, attract tourists and improve services in areas including education and health.



Left: Artist's impression of County Hall, Ashington.

## Dissington Garden Village

A new garden village in Northumberland would truly benefit the county. We are working with a developer on proposals to create Dissington Garden Village, which if it goes ahead, would be located on land just outside Ponteland.

The county would benefit from the development of 1,800 properties, of which 600 would be affordable homes. The plan includes business, retail, leisure, education and medical services and a badly needed relief road, which will bypass Ponteland.

More residents, businesses and visitors to the new area would lead to more money being available to reinvest in essential services and infrastructure across Northumberland.

## Moving County Hall to Ashington

Plans are in place for us to relocate our Morpeth-based council headquarters to a new site in Ashington, in a move that will benefit residents and business across the county.

By investing in the new building, we will save money on the essential refurbishments and operational costs that would be required at the current headquarters. Factor in the sale of the County Hall site – which will be used for the relocated Morpeth First School and a retail and housing development – and taxpayers will save around £16 million over 25 years.

The move will enable more of our frontline staff to be based in towns across Northumberland, restoring local services to residents and businesses as part of our Market Towns Initiative. The new headquarters are scheduled to be ready in 2019.

## New home for Morpeth First School

Morpeth First School is set to relocate from its Goosehill home, where it has been based for more than a century, to the current County Hall site. The new two-storey building is expected to open in September 2018.

With £5.7 million invested in the project, pupils, parents and the local economy will reap the rewards. Staff will be offered an extended curriculum, while facilities include a dedicated Early Years suite, sports pitches, hard and soft play areas and plenty of space for parents to park when dropping off and picking up their children.

The Goosehill site requires significant investment and lacks the opportunity for expansion, hence the need for the school to move to a site that can offer clear benefits.

## Welcome to Lilidorei

The Alnwick Garden is going to be home to a new and magical fairy-tale village for children. Lilidorei is a multimillion-pound, world-leading visitor attraction that will set the standard for outdoor play. It will include Elphic, the world's largest play structure, which will house tunnels, slides and climbing nets.

In partnership with the Duchess of Northumberland, we are contributing an £8.5 million loan towards the permanent development, which will attract tourists to the venue and help to boost tourism across the county. The loan will be paid back in instalments once the visitor attraction is open.




We have invested in this project because it will make a significant contribution to regeneration plans for Northumberland. Lilidorei will also create around 25 permanent jobs and the equivalent of 10 additional seasonal positions. At least another 20 jobs will be created in the area due to the development.

Subject to planning permission approval, work is scheduled to begin in the coming months and Lilidorei is due to open in spring 2019.



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