



Northumberland news

Northumberland
a wedding
wonderland

Digital champions
get residents online

**Winterproof your
home**
top tips

What's on
Events and activities

In case you missed...

Clean up or face fine

Residents are enjoying cleaner and safer neighbourhoods as the council's zero tolerance approach to dog fouling continues.

Three people have been at court for not picking up after their dogs, while 105 fixed penalties have been issued to dog owners so far in 2014.

New bypass information boards

Information boards have gone up in two locations to show the plans for the construction of the new £30million Morpeth Northern bypass.

If full government approval is given, construction could begin on the new bypass in spring 2015. The boards can be seen on the A192 in a layby just north of Lancaster Park, Morpeth and in the layby opposite the Pegswood Moor Country Park, just north of Whorral Bank roundabout.

Top cycle race comes to county

One of the most famous events in the world of cycling is to come to Northumberland next year. The council is currently working with race organisers for The Friends Life Tour of Britain. More information will be announced next Spring.

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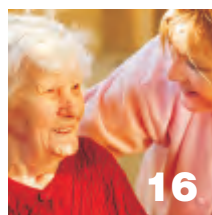
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Northumberland News

Now available online, by email or in print.

Northumberland News is a quarterly magazine packed with features and news articles written specifically for county residents.

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If you would like to receive Northumberland News in large print, Braille, audio, or in another format or language please contact us.

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www.northumberland.gov.uk/youtube

Front cover:

Helen and Phil Paisley's wedding at Woodhill Hall, Otterburn.
Photo by White Leaf Photography.

WHO IS YOUR LOCAL HERO?



- Do you have a neighbour who goes out of their way to help you?
- Can you think of someone who has worked hard to really improve your local area?
- Is a local business doing something positive for your community?

Then our new Local Heroes awards are the perfect way to say thank you!

What are the awards?

The awards are a way to recognise those people, or organisations, who are really going the extra mile in their communities.

Heroes can be nominated for lots of reasons – from small one-off acts of kindness, to people or local businesses who regularly make a big impact in their neighbourhood.

There are three different categories that you can nominate someone for:

1. **Good neighbours**
2. **Community champions**
3. **Businesses supporting their community**



How to nominate your hero

You can nominate your hero in two easy ways:

1. Go to hero.northumberland.gov.uk and fill in the short online form.
2. Pick up a form from any of our council buildings (eg libraries, customer information centres, tourist information centres) and either post it back to us or give it to a member of staff.

We'll look through all the details you give us and consider whether your nominee should receive the Northumberland Local Hero award. Heroes will be announced on a regular basis and we hope to have our first heroes before Christmas.

CLr Grant Davey, leader of the county council said: "I would urge everyone to really think about who has made a positive impact on their lives and nominate them for these new awards to make sure they get the thank you they deserve."

"We know there are a lot of heroes in our county but we need your help to find them and show them our appreciation."

Please go to hero.northumberland.gov.uk for more information.



Your Northumberland

We asked residents to share with us their favourite places to visit in the county at Christmas time and also their Christmas traditions.

Here are just a few of them...

Lyn Robertson

"A brisk walk on the beach, feeling blessed to be born in God's own county."

Julia Maugham

"We always go to the Christingle service on Christmas Eve and then home to get ready for Santa and read *The Night Before Christmas* by the light of the Christingle candle."

Rebecca Morton

"Seeing twinkly Christmas lights in the park and around Hexham Abbey!"

Linda Kidd

"The Morpeth lights switch on, mulled wine and a Christmas carol service where the whole community, old and young, join together and sing - just magic!"

Fiona May Spicer

"Lunch at the Alnwick Garden Treehouse, with fires roaring and lovely grounds to walk in after."

Claire Smith

"The Kielder Winter Wonderland event is always the start of Christmas for me!"

Christmas

Karen Sutton

"Tangerines are a 'must have' - when I was a nipper we got walnuts that no one could open without a hammer!"

Elizabeth Bell

"We always look forward to the Boxing Day 'fry up', with lashings of turkey and gravy."

Elsie Haggerty

"Midnight mass and wishing everyone a merry Christmas just as mass finishes."

Diane Lyons

"The kids get to open a pressie the night before and it is always new pyjamas to wear after their bath. They have to be clean and presentable for Santa!"

Elizabeth McAllister

The kids still come home for Christmas even though they're 27 and 23 and still drag a 3ft stocking into my room at 7am and jump on my bed to open them - wouldn't change a thing."

Janice Lynch

"New Year's morning on Bamburgh beach, then a cuppa in the local cafe is perfect every year."

Karen Swinbank

"Christmas Eve lunch in front of the fire in Barter Books is a highlight as well as a walk on the beach on Christmas day."

Hayley Munoz-Saiz

"Walks in the woods collecting pine cones and holly. Christmas at Seaton Delaval Hall, enjoying hot chocolate and picking up a few treats."

Winter proof your home

Temperatures may have fallen outside, but that doesn't mean they should fall in the home as well this winter.

With thousands of homes across the region living in fuel poverty, the landmark energy efficiency scheme Warm Up North is urging residents to find out how they could benefit from energy saving measures. It has already helped thousands of households by installing energy efficiency solutions, including cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, solar panels and new efficient boilers.

Try following these top 10 tips to help cut your energy bills this winter:

1. Shut curtains at dusk to shut out draughts and trap heat inside.
2. Choose a higher tog duvet in the winter to keep you feeling warmer.
3. Avoid heating unused rooms by closing internal doors. If there are gaps underneath doors use draught excluders to keep out chilly draughts.
4. Central heating can be a cheaper alternative to heating one room with a gas fire. Test the most efficient way to heat a property by comparing the meter readings using the two methods.
5. Up to 25 percent of a property's heat is lost through the roof, so if your loft insulation is looking a little thin an insulation top-up can help trap in extra heat.
6. Time your heating to turn on between 15 and 30 minutes before it's needed and to switch off 30 minutes before bedtime.
7. Invest in a cosy rug – not only is it a great excuse to spruce up a living room, but it will insulate cold flooring.
8. Line-drying is a big no-no in colder months, so use clothes horses to avoid suffocating heaters with damp and heavy items. Also, remember to wash at 30 degrees to save even more energy.
9. Turning the boiler down will not always save money. If there is a room thermostat then turn the boiler to its maximum setting, if not set the boiler as low as is comfortable.
10. Secondary glazing film can offer a cheaper alternative to double glazing. Film for four windows should cost around £8.

To find out more about Warm Up North call the team free on 0800 294 8073 or visit www.warmupnorth.com

Calls to an 0800 number are free from a BT Landline, calls from other lines and mobiles may vary.

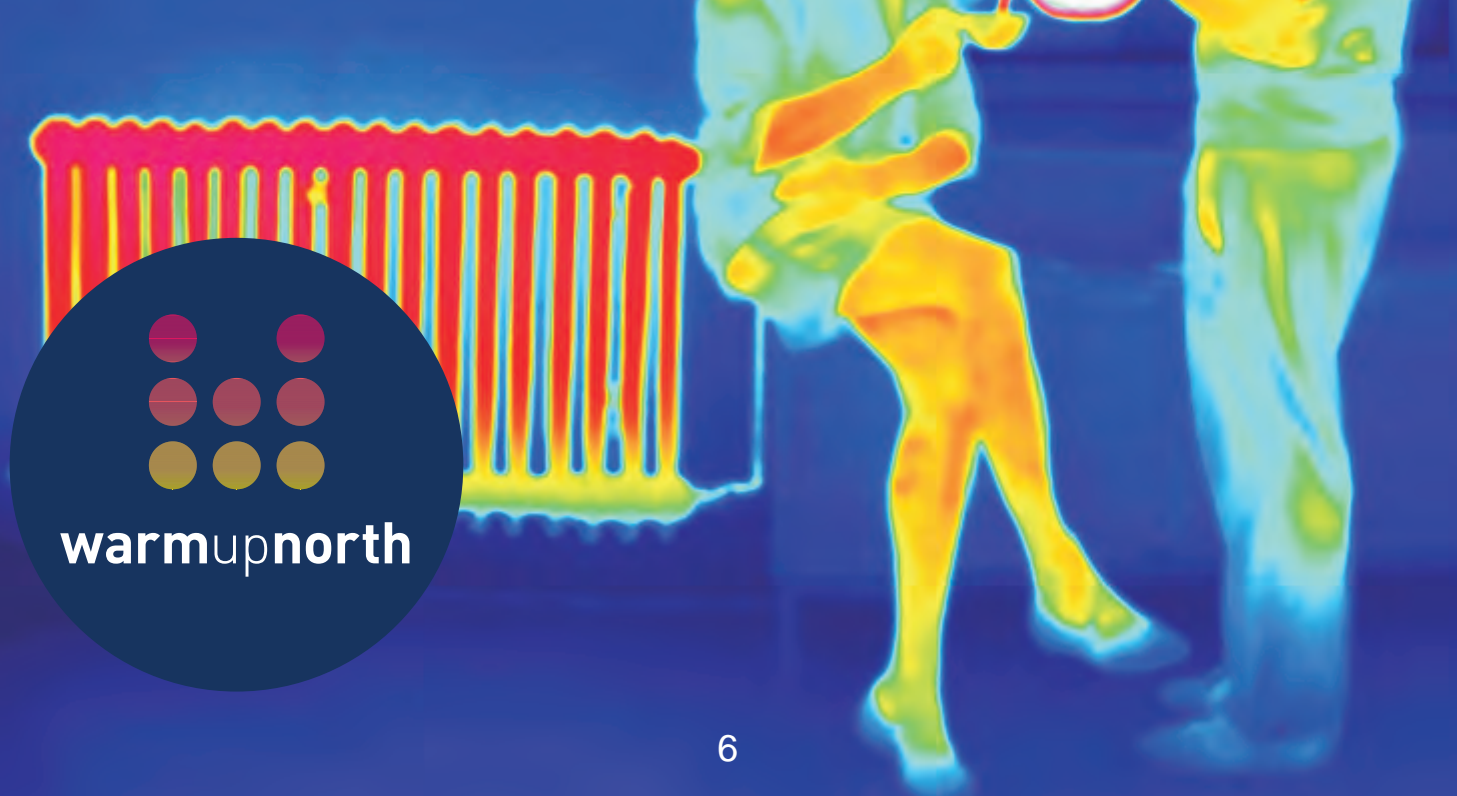




Photo: Elaine Sims, digital champion at Bellingham library, with student George Wilkinson

Digital champions get residents online

Around the county there are thousands of people who are digitally isolated because they don't know how to use their computers.

But that is all starting to change, thanks to Northumberland's digital champions who are helping people in all corners of the county to get online in the comfort of their local library.

Residents who don't have access to the internet, or the skills they need to make the most of it, can now get free help to open up the wonders of the web.

With a little help from our champions, residents are now learning how to upload digital photos, hunt for jobs, shop and bank online and keep in touch with family and friends using Facebook, email or Skype.

Alan Buller from Ashington said: "Many jobs are now advertised online. The training I have received has been really helpful and opened up more opportunities for me to find work."

There are 22 new digital champions in the county who are recruited and managed by Northumberland County Council. Sharon Corson, is one of them and trains people at Bedlington Station library.

She said: "Being a champion has given me the opportunity to support my local community by sharing my IT skills and

knowledge. I enjoy engaging with different members of my local community, who have different needs and aspirations. It is both a rewarding and enjoyable role."

George Wilkinson, who has been receiving IT training at Bellingham library, said:

"The sessions take place on a one-to one basis so you can learn at your own pace and develop the skills that you need personally."

Councillor Dave Ledger, policy board member for corporate resources said: "As digital technology advances, more and more services are moving online. The internet is a tool that everyone can use for their benefit and we need to ensure all our residents have the skills to keep up with the digital revolution and stay socially included."

Every library in Northumberland has at least two public access computers which can be used free for two hours. You can book a session on the computer by contacting your local library.

Want to get involved?

Anybody who wants to find out more about becoming a digital champion or who feels they could benefit from the help of a champion should contact Nicola Tervit by emailing nicola.tervit@northumberland.gov.uk

Magic Carpet stimulates the senses

The 'Magic Carpet', a fantastic new interactive projection system designed to stimulate the senses, is proving a great hit among adults with learning disabilities.

The £8,000 carpet, combines images, sounds and movement and is the latest addition to the sensory room at the Blyth Riverside Resource Centre.

This system uses an overhead projector and sensors to create moving images onto a surface where users, with even limited movement, can play,

interact and control the games by movements over the projected image.

It has 60 programmes including: floating bubbles, falling leaves, swimming fish, flowers, water, football and star scatter. These can be easily customised to suit individual needs and preferences.

Louise Rees, a family member who helps care for Debbie who is pictured using the multi-sensory equipment, said:

"It builds her confidence and keeps her active. It's nice just to see her participating and I know that she is genuinely enjoying herself."

Blyth Riverside Resource Centre supports over 60 adults with learning difficulties. The centre offers companionship, support and opportunities to learn new skills.

Northumberland County Council runs eight learning day centres across the county where staff help over 170 adults with learning disabilities acquire new skills. These include learning to grow plants and vegetables, making jewellery, scented soaps, ceramics, cakes and artisan breads.

Photo: Debbie Connelly enjoys using the magic carpet.





IS THIS YOU?

You've raised a great family

**Your children might have left home
...but they still come to you for advice**

**You've got space in your home
...but it feels a little empty sometimes**

**You want something to keep you feeling young
...and to give a little back**

Having a bit of extra money would be helpful

YES?



**You know you could matter to other children, so please don't wait...
People like you are fantastic short-term or long-term foster carers
Learn more: family.northumberland.gov.uk | 01670 62 62 62**



Count Yourself In! Change Lives

NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

Northumberland –

Northumberland is a unique and special county and can offer the perfect backdrop for the perfect wedding.

Its breathtaking countryside, striking coastline and rich cultural heritage is intertwined with beautiful market towns and quaint villages making Northumberland a perfect location – whatever time of year you choose to tie the knot.

The choice of a marriage venue is very personal, however the county has a fantastic selection of over 70 stately homes, manor houses, castles, hotels and halls all approved for civil marriage and each with something different to offer.

Whether you live inside or outside the county, Northumberland really is a magical location for a dream wedding.



Photograph by Alan Mason



Photograph by Sarah Thew

Christmas romance

Langley Castle formed the beautiful backdrop for Michelle and Dave Bell's festive renewal of vows ceremony. The 14th Century Castle was beautifully decorated and proved the perfect venue for the couple, from Simonburn near Hexham.

Michelle said: "The day and the venue were magical and made all the more special because it was so near to Christmas. We were enormously grateful to everyone who helped us plan our special day, which fell on the 30th anniversary of our first meeting."



Photograph by David Lawson

Fly me to the moon

Airline pilot Andrew and cabin crew Jill were on cloud nine at their romantic Valentine's Day wedding at the beautiful Slaley Hall. They shared their big day with around 90 guests and went on to spend three days at the venue with family, making the most of the stunning location and its features.

Jill said: "The council's wedding co-ordination team were really helpful throughout the whole process of planning our big day. They were very reassuring so put any nerves we had at rest."

a wedding wonderland

The personal touch

In Northumberland we have a dedicated Wedding Ceremonies Co-ordination Team who offer a personal approach to your wedding arrangements. They are always on hand to answer any questions you may have prior to, and on, your special day.

Converting a civil partnership to a marriage

Couples in civil partnerships are able to convert these to a marriage, should they choose to do so, from 10th of December, when new laws come into effect.

If you are in a civil partnership and are considering converting this to a marriage, please contact our ceremonies team for more guidance and information .

For further information

To find out more about the amazing opportunities on offer, to speak to someone about arranging a wedding, or to receive a copy of our brochure outlining all the approved venues in Northumberland simply log on to www.mynorthumberlandwedding.co.uk or contact our Wedding Ceremonies Co-ordination Team on 01665 602870.



Morpeth Town Hall Wedding Fayre



Sunday
December 7th
11am – 3pm
FREE entry

Over 30 local companies will showcase their services including:

- Jewellers
- Photographers
- Wedding outfitters
- Cake makers
- Florists
- Car hire companies

Registrars will be available to meet couples and take them on a tour around Morpeth Town Hall's function rooms. For further information call 01665 602870.

Christmas fitness

We've got some great offers to keep you motivated

Over the Christmas period it can be very easy to give in to temptation by eating and drinking far more than you usually would. When this is combined with Christmas shopping and nights out to celebrate, lots of people don't quite manage to take part in their normal sports or fitness activities.

Active Northumberland is trying to encourage you to keep up the exercise habit with some great offers throughout December:

12 Days of Fitness Voucher

Available during December you can experience 12 days of a fitness membership at Active Northumberland Leisure Centres for £12. A great way to treat yourself to a bit of 'me' time in the run up to the festive period, a 12 days of fitness voucher allows you use of the gyms, fitness classes and swimming pools. Alternatively, they make great stocking fillers as they can be used in the New Year to help get your friends and family back into the exercise habit. You can buy the vouchers from all Active Northumberland leisure centre receptions.

Earn free gifts by being a December fitness guru

To help keep you focused on your fitness during December we are offering goodies to all those people who attend exercise classes during the month.

- If you attend three classes between December 1 – 7 you will receive an Active Northumberland water bottle
- If you attend three classes between December 8 – 14 you will receive an Active Northumberland gym towel
- We know that the Christmas weeks are particularly hard so if you attend five classes between December 15 – 31 you will receive an Active Northumberland Fitness Guru t-shirt.

To claim your prizes you will need to collect an attendance card from the reception at the beginning of each week.



Active Northumberland Leisure Facilities include:

- Ashington Leisure Centre
- Blyth Sports Centre
- Berwick Swan Centre
- Concordia Leisure Centre
- Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre
- Prudhoe Waterworld
- Rothbury Pool and Gym
- Sporting Club Blyth
- Sporting Club Cramlington
- Wentworth Leisure Centre
- Willowburn Sports and Community Centre.

Visit www.activenorthumberland.org.uk for more details



Five ways to beat the January Blues

January can make even the most energetic of us feel down in the dumps.

Cold, dreary weather, echoing bank accounts and too much food and drink can leave us feeling out of sorts.

Psychologists have even declared January 24 to be the most depressing day of the year.

Here we provide you with five top tips that have been scientifically proven to help improve your state of mind and help you feel better and brighter than ever this winter.

- 1 Stay connected.** It is important to stay in touch with family and friends, especially if you are feeling down. Spend time developing these relationships;
- 2 Be active.** Regular physical activity has been proven to have a positive effect on your mental health and wellbeing. Find an activity that you enjoy, and make it a part of your life;
- 3 Keep learning.** Achieving a goal, or learning something new can increase your confidence as well as being fun;
- 4 Give to others.** It feels good to give. Giving your time can be very rewarding and can connect you to your community. Research shows doing an act of kindness every week boosts your mood; and
- 5 Take notice.** Be in the moment. Whether you're sharing a coffee with colleagues or talking with friends, be aware of the present instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.



If you feel you are struggling and need some extra help, don't suffer in silence. There are some excellent professional support services in the county that can assist you through these times. Please visit your local GP who can advise you further.

Health and Well

Developing sport in Berwick is a priority

Developing sporting activity in Berwick is a priority for Active Northumberland, the new charitable trust that has recently taken over the running of the town's Swan Leisure Centre.

Residents in and around the town are currently being consulted to find out the type of sports and leisure activities they would like to take part in.

It is planned that a varied selection of exciting new activities will start to be introduced in the centre in Spring.

Depending on the outcome of the consultation, this could include conventional sports such as football and table tennis, or more innovative activities such as dance and waveboarding.

Councillor Scott Dickinson, in his role as chair of the county's health and wellbeing board, called in to the Swan Centre to chat to staff and those taking part in sporting activities.

He said: "It was fantastic to see so many children enjoying their sports classes and to meet the dedicated teachers and volunteers who run them.

"One of Active Northumberland's priorities is to introduce new activities into the spring programme and encourage more people to take part in exercise and activity."



If anyone has any suggestions about activities they would like to see at the Berwick Swan Centre, please email them to Graham Keefe at GKeefe@activenorthumberland.org.uk



Fitness programme takes gold for completion rates



Photo: Fitness instructor Tracey Mortimer with David Hawkins and Councillor Scott Dickinson.

Alnwick's Exercise on Referral scheme, which works with local GP surgeries to encourage residents with health concerns to become more active, has the highest completion rate in the county.

The nationwide initiative, where doctors and other health professionals can refer individuals who they feel would benefit from physical activity to help them improve their medical conditions, is run by all leisure centres in the county.

Willowburn Sports and Leisure Centre in Alnwick has one of the highest success rates in the county, with 65% of those who are referred, completing the six month scheme, made up of two supervised activity sessions a week.

Councillor Scott Dickinson, chair of the county's health and wellbeing board said: "Most people are aware that

being active is good for your health, but knowing what activities are suitable can be very daunting if you have a medical condition such as high blood pressure or heart disease. The Northumberland exercise on referral scheme is there to help, support and encourage people to make activity a regular part of their life."

David Hawkins, aged 52 has recently completed his exercise on referral programme at the Willowburn Sports and Leisure Centre

"The exercise programme has been enjoyable and beneficial to my health. I am fitter, more mobile and it has been great to get out of the house to meet new people," he said.



If you are interested in finding out more about the scheme contact your GP or practice nurse to see if you are eligible. Alternatively contact Coral Hanson, at Active Northumberland on Tel: 01670 622188 email: CHanson@activenorthumberland.org.uk

Health and Wellbeing



Health and care teams have robust plans for winter care

Health and social care bosses have been working together to put plans in place to cope with the extra pressures placed on services by the winter weather.

Additional staff and resources have been made available to ensure that residents and patients get the very best of care, come rain, snow or shine.

As the winter weather begins to bite, hospitals across the country become much busier, with more people coming through the doors of A&E departments, either because of accidents in the wet and icy conditions or the annual rise in seasonal illnesses.

The Northumberland Urgent Care Operations Group comprising all health and social care providers, has been working to ensure the necessary medical cover and community support is in place during the busy winter months.

For example hospitals are increasing the number of staffing in A&E to cope with additional demand and continue to provide alternative services in order to reduce unnecessary attendances at A&E.

Plans are also in place to ensure that the most vulnerable residents receive the care they require in the community – whatever the weather!

Be a winter friend

We are calling on residents to have some good old-fashioned community spirit to ease the chill of loneliness this winter by checking that a vulnerable neighbour or relative is eating well and is safe and warm.

It is easy for our busy lives to take over, but it only takes a few minutes to look in on a neighbour or relative.

By helping them to keep warm, picking up essentials like food or medicine to prevent them going out unnecessarily, or making sure they can safely get in and out of their home in icy conditions, you could really make a difference.



If you're worried about a neighbour, ask if there's a relative or close friend you can telephone, or call the doctor or NHS 111.

- If someone has a serious problem and needs more than neighbourly help, contact the Single Point of Access for Social Care on 01670 536 400 or email Socialcare@northumbria.nhs.uk

Sign up to Dry January

After the excess of Christmas why not sign up to the Dry January challenge, either on your own or as a group, to give up drinking for a month.

Last year people told us they enjoyed the challenge; some people lost weight, some slept better, almost everyone saved cash and many said they naturally reduced their drinking for the rest of the year.



So go on, sign up, join us and get ready to go dry. For further information visit: www.dryjanuary.org.uk

Celebrating a year smoke free

A Northumberland man is celebrating over a year smoke free after breaking a 30-year habit.

David Lightley, 56, from Stakeford, quit smoking with support from the Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service.

David, started smoking in his 20s and made the decision to quit to celebrate his retirement.

He said: "I smoked for a long time and at one point I smoked as many as 20-a-day. When I retired I wanted to make a fresh start, so I contacted the NHS Stop Smoking Service in Northumberland.

"Giving up takes a lot of will-power but it made it easier to have their support and I would encourage anyone who is

thinking of quitting smoking to contact them."

David, a former carer, has diabetes, high blood pressure and developed a related asthma.

"Now I feel that quitting has set me free," he said.

Brenda Warner, manager of Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service, said: "If you want to stop smoking and are considering using an e-cigarette, or are confused about which products are licensed as medicines and what to do about your smoking, then we are here to support you."



For more information on stopping smoking and Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service call 01670 813135 or visit www.northumbria.nhs.uk/stopsmoking

Making plans for winter

Northumbria Healthcare is making plans for winter which aim to ensure that all residents living across the county are well prepared and looked after during the cold season.

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust invested in a fleet of 30 4x4 vehicles in 2011 and adult social care services have arrangements in place to work with partners to increase access to 4x4's should adverse weather make it difficult for staff to reach rural Northumberland residents. Services include district nurses, home care and the short term support service.

Residents are urged to keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet and can ask their local pharmacist for health advice and over the counter medicine. No appointment is needed and many are open during evenings and weekends.

Pharmacists will refer people to other NHS services if necessary including NHS 111 which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from land lines and mobile phones.



If someone has a serious problem and needs more than neighbourly help, they are asked to contact the Single Point of Access for Social Care on 01670 536 400 or email: Socialcare@northumbria.nhs.uk



Gearing up for

With winter rapidly approaching, our plans are in place to keep the roads clear and deliver vital services to residents.

Council staff are ready to respond appropriately to forecast weather conditions and we have sufficient manpower and resources available during periods of bad weather.

Our fleet of 29 multi-purpose gritting vehicles with plough attachments, including nine new frontline gritters, is serviced and ready for use. We have two snow blowers based in the rural areas of the north and west. In addition there are five state of the art gully tankers which are available to assist anywhere in the county where flooding is caused by rapid snow melt.

Weather reports

To help us make decisions on where roads need to be treated, we use a combination of daily and weekly reports from the Meteorological Office and thermal mapping. During heavy snow as well as information from our own weather stations, a 'snow room' is normally set up to coordinate our response.

Salt stocks

By November there were 36,000 tonnes of salt in stock at 11 depots across the county. If necessary, additional salt can be ordered throughout the season.

Grit bin refills

More than 1600 grit bins and 200 grit heaps are provided at locations with steep gradients, exposed sites, steps or difficult junctions. This allows residents to treat footpaths and roads themselves during severe weather. If a salt bin near you needs refilling, you can report it online at www.northumberland.gov.uk or by phoning 0845 600 6400. Please quote the serial number painted on either the top or side of the bin.

Additional support

When dealing with heavy snowfall additional support is also provided by





winter

farmers or heavy plant contractors in some of the more rural areas. There are five voluntary groups, known as 'snow squads' who help with clearing snow from footpaths in villages such as Wooler, Belford and Bamburgh. Hexham Town Council also assists with snow clearance.

Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment said:


"With more than 3,000 miles of roads in the county, our workforce is always well prepared to meet the challenges of winter weather.


"When we get bad weather it can really have an impact so we make sure our alerts page and social media channels give residents clear information."

The council information leaflet 'Highway Services in Winter' is available at libraries, information centres and contact centres and outlines all our gritting routes.

Sign up to Twitter or Facebook and we'll send you information on:

- School closures
- Severe weather warnings
- Winter service information
- Service disruptions and closures

 @northumberlands

 @northumberlands/nccalerts

Join the thousands already in the know



Photo: winter services staff: left to right Paul Swaddle driver, Ali Johnson, duty supervisor, south east area and Nicky Freeman, driver.

The 12 Safe Ways of Christmas

While it's lovely to get your home sparkling over the festive period, it's also the time when extra fire hazards such as fairy lights, candles and decorations are brought inside.

In England, Government figures show there are more deaths from accidental house fires during the Christmas period than at any other time of year.

Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to accidental fires in the home, which is why Northumberland

Fire and Rescue Service is reminding people to take extra care over the festive season and follow their simple fire safety tips to keep their families and loved ones protected.



On the 1st day of Christmas - Check your Christmas tree lights conform to the British Standard. Always use a residual current device (safety device that can save lives by instantly switching off the power) on outdoor electrical equipment.



On the 7th day of Christmas - Most fires start in the kitchen. Never leave a cooker unattended.



On the 2nd day of Christmas - Keep candles, lighters and matches out of the reach of children. Never leave burning candles unattended.



On the 8th day of Christmas - If you are planning to celebrate with fireworks, store them in a metal box, read the instructions, never go back to a lit firework and keep a bucket of water nearby.



On the 3rd day of Christmas - Ensure you have a working smoke alarm installed on all levels of your home and that you check the alarms every week.



On the 9th day of Christmas - Make sure cigarettes are completely extinguished before going to bed. Take care when tired or after a few drinks. It is very easy to fall asleep while your cigarette is still burning.



On the 4th day of Christmas - Decorations can burn easily. Don't attach them to, or near, lights or heaters.



On the 10th day of Christmas - Never place burning candles near your Christmas tree or furnishings.



On the 5th day of Christmas - Never overload electrical sockets. Take special care with Christmas lights. Always switch them off and unplug them before you go to bed.



On the 11th day of Christmas - Take time to check on elderly relatives and neighbours this Christmas to ensure their safety too.



On the 6th day of Christmas - Celebrate Christmas and New Year safely. The risk of accidents, especially in the kitchen, is greater after alcohol is consumed.



On the 12th day of Christmas - Make sure you have an escape plan and remember to keep escape routes clear. Finally, in the event of fire: get out, stay out and call 999.

Winter cycling – be bright & be seen

A new bike may be on many children's Christmas wish list to Santa. But please remember the safety essentials. With gloomy days and dark winter nights upon us it is more important than ever to make sure they can be seen if they have to be out and about or near roads.

- A cycle helmet is a must
- For winter cycling high-visibility clothing is essential
- Lights are essential in poor weather and required by law at night

Please keep your child safe on the roads. For more road safety tips, games and videos, visit <http://www.direct.gov.uk/talesoftheroad>.

Go Smarter Northumberland is our scheme to help people to make smarter travel choices by leaving the car at home and looking for cheaper, greener, healthier ways to travel to work and school. For more information, including bike loans, sessions to improve your cycling skills and cycle maintenance classes go to www.gosmarternorthumberland.co.uk



Prepare for festivities at your local library

With preparations for the festive season starting to heat up, why not pop in to your local library for a little free help and inspiration.

Northumberland County Council's libraries stock a wide range of Christmas themed books that can help with your seasonal planning.

There are cook books galore to help you perfect that special festive feast and crafts books full of hints and ideas on how to decorate your home.

To keep excited children entertained and amused, there is also a range of winter and children's books.

For a small charge you can borrow DVDs and music too.

It is free to join your local library. To find out more about the services on offer and the events taking place, log on to www.mylibrary.co.uk





Health Check

No alcohol is safest pregnancy option

No alcohol is the safest option prior to and during pregnancy. This is the advice from leading North East health professionals as they call for clearer drinking guidelines for parents-to-be.

All 12 directors of public health in the North East have signed an open letter to support the no alcohol during pregnancy advice – and to call for consistent advice to be given by all healthcare providers from conception to birth.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a series of preventable birth defects, both mental and physical, caused by drinking alcohol at any time during pregnancy.

Fact: Around one baby is born with FASD each day in the North East and it has a higher incidence rate than autism, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida and sudden infant death syndrome combined.



Blood in your pee? Call your GP!



If you spot blood in your pee, even if it is just once, then tell your doctor straight away.

Each year over 1,000 people in the North East are diagnosed with either bladder or kidney cancer and around 400 people die from these diseases annually.

How to spot it

Blood in your pee is the most common symptom of both types of cancer. Other kidney cancer symptoms include:

- a pain below the ribs that doesn't go away; and
- a lump in your stomach.

Other bladder cancer symptoms include:

- needing to pee very often or very suddenly; and
- pain while peeing.

See your doctor

If you notice blood in your pee, even if it is just once, tell your doctor straight away. The chances are that it will be nothing serious, but these cancers are more treatable if they are found early.

You can find more details at [nhs.uk/bloodinpee](https://www.nhs.uk/bloodinpee)

The NHS state that if exercise was a pill, it would be one of the most cost effective drugs ever made. Studies show that being physically active can boost self esteem, mood, energy levels and sleep quality, as well as reducing your risk of stress, anxiety and depression.



Reduce your waste this Christmas!

With Christmas nearly here, it's inevitable that there will be an abundance of bin bags full of wrapping paper and packaging by the end of December.

This is the season when more material is thrown away than any other time of year, but with a little bit of planning and creative thinking we can all reduce, re-use or recycle more this Christmas!

To find out more visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/waste

When will my bins be collected this Christmas?

All Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday collections will take place as normal during the Christmas and New Year weeks. Bins normally collected on a Thursday will be collected on Saturday 27th December (ie two days late) and on Friday 2nd January (ie one day late.)



Remember to recycle this Christmas

Have your say on Northumberland Local Plan

The latest round of consultation on future planning policies for Northumberland is starting and residents, businesses and community groups will have the opportunity to have their say.

Over 20 drop in sessions have been organised across the county. Find out where and when they are, on our website.

Once adopted, the Core Strategy will identify the levels of new housing and economic development in the future and where they will be. Policies within the plan will be used to guide planning decisions.

Through the Core Strategy the council wants to protect the special environmental qualities of Northumberland while encouraging a stronger economy, with new housing and jobs and thriving local communities.

You can read the full strategy and make your comments online at www.northumberland.gov.uk/corestrategy or pick up a copy from your local council office. Consultation closes on February 11, 2015.





Grants for community projects

Are you looking for help to fund a worthwhile local project or cause?

Our community chest grant scheme is open to any voluntary or community, not-for-profit groups based in, or predominantly serving Northumberland.

The money can be used for a range of purposes including events, or for the purchase of equipment. Grants of up to £10,000 are available and there is no minimum amount for applications.

The deadlines for the next round of applications is January 9. For more information or for an application form, log on to www.northumberland.gov.uk

Photo: Allendale Cricket Club recently received a grant of £2,000 from the council to buy mowing equipment to keep its pitches in pristine condition.

E-book lending at local libraries



Northumberland library service offers a free e-book lending service which is perfect for those who have received an eReader, iPad or tablet this Christmas.

A fantastic choice of over 2,000 eBooks are available to download from Northumberland County Council's website.

To use the service, visit www.mylibrary.co.uk and enter your library membership number on the back of your card and PIN number. You can join the library online at www.mylibrary.co.uk for free.

First tenants open door to new life

The first tenants have moved into their new homes on Tynedale Drive, part of the Ark Royal Close development in Blyth.

The £5million project will see a total of 60 homes built on the former Tynedale Middle School site.

The development is part of Northumberland County Council's affordable homes programme, and is managed by Homes for Northumberland.

This development complements two further sites in Blyth at Hodgsons Road Estate and South Newsham, with a total of 180 brand new homes being built across the three schemes.



In case you missed...

New school dining hall



Rothbury First School pupils are enjoying mealtimes and other activities in the newly refurbished dining and multi-use hall - thanks to £340,000 funding from the council.

The fully refurbished building has had the roof removed, the walls stripped out and new good quality storage and accessible toilet facilities installed.

Victoria Cross recipient remembered



A moving service at St Mary's Church in Ovingham remembered Victoria Cross recipient Frederick William Dobson, who was born nearby. Northumberland County Council handed over a memorial stone which will be laid by the church at a later date in conjunction with the Diocese of Newcastle.



Photo: Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment, and highways staff Leyton Rahman and Gary Marshall.

Northumberland tops national county roads survey

In an independent survey of residents the council has been named as the most improved county council in the country for its highways and transportation services.

Maintaining and repairing more than 3,000 miles of roads is a constant challenge but the survey results are a recognition of the efforts of our workforce across the county.

The highways and transportation public satisfaction survey 2014 was sent out to 3,500 Northumberland residents. The annual survey compared the performance of 78 highways authorities in England and Scotland.

Step closer for fire station



A brand new community fire station for Hexham moved a step closer when detailed planning proposals were submitted to the council in October.

The plan to relocate Hexham Community Fire Station to a site at Hexham General Hospital from the current facility on the Tyne Mills Industrial Estate will be considered by the council's planning committee early next year.

December

Alnwick Garden Christmas Market

Visit the traditional Christmas market, taste the Gluhwein and get your Christmas gifts sorted.

[Sunday 23 November to Wednesday 24 December](#)

Phone - 01665 511350
email - info@alnwickgarden.com
Website: www.alnwickgarden.com

Willow Lantern Making

Make an enchanted willow lantern with Santa's elves to help Santa find his way to your home for Christmas.

[Every weekend in December up to Sunday 21 December](#)

Phone - 01665 511350
email - info@alnwickgarden.com
Website: www.alnwickgarden.com

Santa's special train ride

Take a ride on the steam train to meet Santa, and receive a present!

[Train runs every weekend in December up to Sunday 21 December](#)

Ford and Etal Estates,
Cornhill-on-Tweed
Phone - 01890 820338 email - tourism@ford-and-etale.co.uk
Website: www.ford-and-etale.co.uk

Shoo Shoo Baby's Christmas Cabaret

A musical packed with laughs as a double act host a sparkly Christmas party.

[Friday 5 December, 7:30pm](#)

Middleton Village Hall, Middleton,
Price: £7.50
Phone: 01670 772600

Christmas Market by the Sea

Get all your Christmas goodies at the Christmas Market by the sea.

[Friday 5, Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December](#)

Newbiggin Maritime Centre, Newbiggin
Phone: 01670 811951
email - enquiry@newbigginmaritimecentre.org.uk
Website: www.newbigginmaritimecentre.org.uk

Christmas at Seaton Delaval Hall

Join them for a traditional Delaval Christmas and get your wish list ready if you want to visit Santa!

[Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December](#)

Seaton Delaval Hall, Seaton Delaval.

Booking required.

Phone - 0191 237 9100

Email- seatondelavalhall@nationaltrust.org.uk

Website:

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/seaton-delaval-hall

Mrs Beeton's Victorian Christmas

Belsay's own Mrs Beeton will be able to show you the ropes in her kitchen and give you hints and tips for your Christmas feast.

[Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December, 11am, 1pm and 3pm](#)

Belsay Hall and Gardens, Belsay

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

Christmas Garland Making at Kirkley

Embrace your creative side and create your own Christmas garland with special help from professional Meg Ellison.

[Sunday 7 December, 10am-4pm](#)

Kirkley Hall, Ponteland

Phone: 01670 841235

Visit www.kirkleyhall.co.uk

Berwick Library Christmas Health Fair

[Wednesday 10th December](#)

Enjoy Christmas entertainment and table top displays from local societies 11 – 4 pm

Phone: 01289 334051

Hepscott Christmas Fair

Head down to Hepscott Park as their heated greenhouse will be decked out with seasonal treats and gifts.

[Thursday 11 December](#)

Hepscott Park Garden Café, Hepscott Park, Morpeth

Phone : 01670 514255

Website:

www.hepscottparkgardencafe.co.uk

Hexham Christmas Market

Make your Christmas a truly Northumbrian feast with plenty of local treats, carol singing, Santa's Grotto and even real reindeers!

[Friday 12 – 2pm-8pm and Saturday 13 December, 9am-3pm](#)

Hexham Town Centre

Website: www.visithexham.net

Christmas Carols at Belsay Hall

Step into the Christmas spirit and join the local choir groups singing some seasonal festive favourites in Belsay Hall's library

[Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December, 2pm and 3pm](#)

Belsay Hall and Gardens, Belsay

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk



Rudolph's Rustic Reindeer and Christmas Crafts at Plessey

Give your home a handmade Christmas gift, make your own rustic reindeers, Christmas tree decorations, wreaths, candle holders and Christmas cards.

Sunday 14 December, 10:30am-12pm

Plessey Woods Country Park

Price: £15 booking prior to event is required

Phone: 01670 824793

email: plesseywoods@northumberland.gov.uk



Children's Christmas Confectionery Workshop

Make your own scrumptious yuletide treats including gingerbread reindeers, biscuits and cupcakes.

Saturday 20 December

10am-11am, 1pm-2pm

Kirkley Hall, Ponteland

Phone: 01670 841235

Visit www.kirkleyhall.co.uk

Dickens' Feast of Festive Frighteners

Gather in Belsay Hall's atmospheric library for some of Dickens' classic ghost stories for a festive fright.

Saturday 20 December

7pm and 9:30pm

Belsay Hall and Gardens, Belsay

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

Christmas Special at the Netherton Folk Club

A Christmas party time event with plenty of music and fun.

Saturday 20 December 7:30pm-11pm

Netherton Memorial Hall, Netherton

Price: £2 , Phone: 01669 630238

A Belsay Christmas Carol and Father Christmas Send Off

Dickens' Christmas classic is brought to life in this performance, with Father Christmas giving Scrooge the send off he deserves!

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 December, 12pm, 2pm and 3pm

Belsay Hall and Gardens, Belsay

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

Santa's Christmas Lunch and Dinner

Pull your crackers, don your party hat and enjoy a delicious four course Christmas lunch with all your family and friends, including a special visit from the big man in red himself.

Sunday 21 December, 12pm-2pm

Kirkley Hall, Ponteland

Phone: 01670 841235

Visit www.kirkleyhall.co.uk

Grand Lantern Parade

Watch the enchanted lantern procession throughout the Alnwick Garden.

Sunday 21 December

The Alnwick Garden, Alnwick

Phone: 01665 511350

email - info@alnwickgarden.com

Website: www.alnwickgarden.com

Boxing Day Dip

Throw caution to the sea breeze and get involved in this annual tradition.

Friday 26 December

Spittal Beach, Berwick-upon-Tweed

Phone: 01670 622155

Visit www.visitberwick.com

Victorian Christmas Songs

Have a jolly Christmas sing-a-long with some Victorian musicians getting you into the spirit.

Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 December, 11am-4pm

Belsay Hall and Gardens, Belsay

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

January

Ghostly Happenings in Northumbria

Geoff Hughes takes you on a spooky talk around the Great Hall of Hexham Abbey.

Monday 19 January, 2pm-4pm

Hexham Abbey new building,

Beaumont Street

Phone: 01434 608277

New Hartley Calamity Memorial Concert

The annual concert commemorating the 1862 pit disaster is happening once again, with special guest Jez Lowe.

Saturday 17 January, 7:30pm-10pm

New Hartley Club

Price: £5 booking prior to the event is required

Phone: Keith Blackburn on

07894428401

February

Victorian Butler School

Do you have what it takes to be a Victorian butler? Get trained up to be the very best.

Saturday 14 February to Sunday 22 February, 11am-4pm

Belsay Hall and Gardens, Belsay

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

Children's Roman Soldier Week

Get your children trained in how to be a Roman soldier with plenty of fun activities.

Saturday 14 February to Sunday 22 February, 11am-4pm

Chesters Roman Fort and Museum, Hadrian's Wall

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

CHRISTMAS AT BELSAY

Mrs Beeton's Victorian Christmas

Sat 6 – Sun 7 December

Performances at 11am, 1pm & 3pm

Christmas Carols

Sat 13 – Sun 14 December

Performances at 2pm & 3pm

'A Christmas Carol' & Father Christmas Send Off

Sat 20 – Sun 21 December

Performances at 12noon & 2pm

Father Christmas send off at 3pm

Ghost Stories for Christmas: Dickens' Feast of Festive Frighteners*

Sat 20 December

Performances at 7pm & 9.30pm

Victorian Christmas Songs

Sat 27 – Sun 28 December

11am – 4pm



* Booking essential: 0870 333 1183



ENGLISH HERITAGE

BELSAY HALL

CASTLE & GARDENS

Step into England's story