


MARCH 2021 

Northumberland news



INVESTING IN NORTHUMBERLAND

ROADMAP OUT OF LOCKDOWN

SUPPORTING THE COUNTY'S RECOVERY

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

VACCINE ROLL OUT AND MYTH BUSTING



Northumberland
County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk



“Thank you Northumberland for not letting Covid win”

Brenda Naisby, Grandmother

Following the social distancing advice means I'll be safer when I have to go out.

Help us get to the future we all want at **[BeatCovidNE.co.uk](https://www.beatcovidne.co.uk)**

HELPFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

It is really important at this time that you know where to go for the help and advice you need, to support you and your family.

ONECALL

If you are worried about a child or adult's immediate welfare: **01670 536 400**

DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICE NORTHUMBERLAND

This service is available 24 hours a day, providing confidential support and advice for women and men who are at risk of domestic abuse **01670 820 199**

CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

If you need to contact the council in relation to council tax, bin collections, housing queries, report, apply, or pay for something. In the first instance, please use the council's website **www.northumberland.gov.uk**, alternatively call **0345 600 6400**

NORTHUMBERLAND BUSINESS HUB

If you have a business or are self-employed in Northumberland:
www.northumberland.gov.uk/businesshub

NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Working together to keep our communities safe and well.

If you, your family or neighbour needs support, please get in touch. We can connect you with a network of people in your local area.

To support with winter bills or financial pressures, making sure prescriptions are delivered, or if you are feeling lonely or struggling with mental health. Call **01670 620 015** 9am - 6pm, seven days a week.

NCT@Northumberland.gov.uk

www.northumberland.gov.uk/communitiestogether

CITIZENS ADVICE

For consumer service advice, free phone **0808 223 1133**. Helplines are open Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm.

RELATE

Free relationship advice and support
www.relate.org.uk/relationships-matter

DEBT

Don't ignore a debt problem - doing nothing could make things worse. Go to **www.northumberland.gov.uk/debt** for advice and support.



INSIDE

- 4-5 Four-step plan
- 6-7 Route map plots a course to recovery
- 8 Shop Local
- 9 Northumberland Business Hub
Local business grants
- 10-11 Northumberland country parks
- 12-13 Investing in Northumberland
- 14 New local rail scheme
- 15 Local census launched
Voting by post
- 16-17 Council plans to tackle climate change
- 18-19 Northumberland Communities Together
- 20-21 Key worker rapid tests
Local vaccine roll-out
Vaccine myth buster
- 22 Coping with loneliness
- 23 Getting creative
Back to school



KEEP IN TOUCH...

To keep up to date with the latest information on coronavirus, and stay informed on all our service developments, please follow us on our social media channels.

The County Council website www.northumberland.gov.uk is being updated each day to reflect the changing situation and is also a really good source of helpful information.



facebook.com/northumberlandCC



twitter.com/N_LandCouncil



instagram.com/NLandCC



youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV

“

I WANT TO START BY SAYING THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY RESIDENT FOR THEIR EFFORTS AND SUPPORT OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS.

”



FOREWORD BY **GLEN SANDERSON**

A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

It feels like we're now moving into more positive times, as the Covid vaccination roll-out continues apace and the country starts its gradual release from lockdown.

This has undoubtedly been a year like no other, bringing pain and suffering to so many, but it's also brought the very best out of everyone in Northumberland.

I want to start by saying thank you to each and every resident for their efforts and support over the past 12 months – the community spirit we've seen throughout this pandemic has been nothing short of tremendous.

I'd also like to pay tribute to the work and determination of all our staff who've worked tirelessly to keep services running and communities supported in these most difficult of times.

It's credit to our staff that despite a global crisis we've been able to maintain

business as usual, deliver on a vast range of projects and also plan for a brighter future.

Looking forward, there will be a big push on helping Northumberland to recover and grow economically, with an emphasis on delivering a green and sustainable future.

This includes multi-million pound investments in rail and transport links, the regeneration of our town centres, school improvements, new homes and a host of schemes relating to climate change.

We're proud of our ambitious plans for the coming years to improve the lives of everyone in all parts of the county.

It's going to be a challenging year, however we are absolutely committed to ensuring a long-lasting recovery from Covid-19 that all our residents can benefit from, where our communities and businesses can thrive once again.

STAY INFORMED

Please enter the link below to sign up for more frequent Covid updates, new grant and support information, changes to council services and important local news: **NLAND.UK/UPDATES**

THE FOUR-STEP PLAN TO BRING NORTHUMBERLAND OUT OF LOCKDOWN

The Government has revealed a roadmap for reopening England which will see Covid-19 restrictions eased over four steps, spread across at least four months.

The plans will be underpinned by four key “tests” that are linked to data, which will act like a checklist that must be met before moving onto the next step of reopening.

The Government has said it will be guided by data, not dates, so that

we don't undo the progress that has been achieved so far and risk a surge in infections, hospitalisations and deaths. For that reason, all the dates in the roadmap are indicative and subject to change.

THE FOUR STEPS – HOW WE MOVE THROUGH THE ROADMAP

STEP 1: MARCH 8



The priority in Step 1 is to make sure that all children and students return safely to face to face education in all schools and colleges from 8 March. Childcare and children's supervised activities can also resume.

People will be allowed to leave home for recreation and exercise outdoors with their household or support bubble, or with one person from outside their household. Care home residents will also be allowed one regular visitor.

as tennis and basketball courts, and open-air swimming pools, will also be allowed to reopen, and people will be able to take part in formally organised outdoor sports.

The 'stay at home' rule will end on March 29 but many restrictions will remain. People should continue to work from home where possible and minimise journeys.

Travel abroad will remain prohibited, other than for a small number of permitted reasons.



or in household groups); as will most outdoor attractions and settings including outdoor hospitality venues, zoos, theme parks, etc. Self-contained accommodation such as campsites and holiday lets, where indoor facilities are not shared with other households, can also reopen.

Hospitality venues will be allowed to serve people outdoors and there will be no need for customers to order a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks and no curfew, although customers must order, eat and drink while seated (table service). Wider social contact rules will still apply in all these settings to prevent indoor mixing between different households.

Funerals can continue with up to 30 mourners. The number of people able to attend weddings, receptions and commemorative events such as wakes will rise to 15.

STEP 1b: MARCH 29

Outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either six people (the Rule of 6) or two households will also be allowed.

Outdoor sports facilities such



STEP 2: APRIL 12

Step 2 will see the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres.

Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms will also reopen (but only for use by people on their own

STEP 3: MAY 17

As part of Step 3, the Government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.



REMEMBER...IT'S NOT OVER!

We have all got a vital role to play in fighting this pandemic.

While it is great to see light at the end of the tunnel and have dates in the diary, residents should continue to follow current restrictions and not allow themselves to become complacent.

We have all seen how quickly rates can rise when we let down our guard and our hospitals are still under pressure.

Now is the time for us all to redouble our efforts.

Covid-19 is still here and remains part of our lives and therefore we must all continue to follow the rules laid down by the government.

Only if we all play our part will we see restrictions being lifted to the point that we can get back to doing the things we love and have missed.



continue wherever possible until this review is complete.

This means most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. **Indoors, the Rule of 6 or 2 households will apply** - the Government will keep under review whether it is safe to increase this. By no later than Step 3, the Government will update the advice on social distancing between friends and family.

Most businesses in all but the highest risk sectors will be able to reopen. In all sectors, COVID-Secure guidance will remain in place and businesses may not cater for groups bigger than the legal limits.

Indoor hospitality will reopen. As in Step 2, venues will not have to serve a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks, nor will there be a curfew. Customers will, however, still have to order, eat and drink while seated.

Other indoor locations to open up in Step 3 include indoor entertainment venues such as **cinemas and children's play areas**; the rest of the accommodation sector, including **hotels, hostels and B&Bs**; and indoor

adult group sports and exercise classes.

The Government will also allow some **larger performances and sporting events in indoor venues** with a capacity of 1,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number), and in outdoor venues with a capacity of 4,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number).

In the largest outdoor seated venues, where crowds can be spread out, **up to 10,000 people** will be able to attend (or a quarter-full, whichever is lower).

Up to 30 people will be able to attend **weddings, receptions and wakes**, as well as **funerals**. This limit will also apply to other types of significant life events including **bar mitzvahs and christenings**.

The Government will complete a review of social distancing and other measures that have been put in place to cut transmission, in order to inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which rules on one metre plus, the wearing of face coverings, etc, may be lifted. This will also inform guidance on working from home - which should

BY STEP 4: JUNE 21

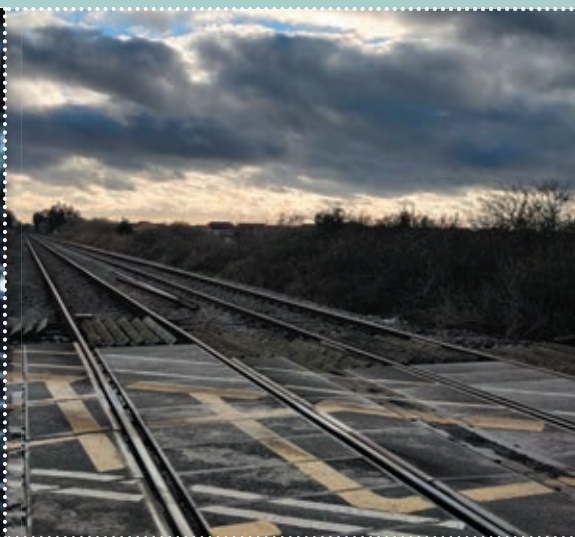
The Government expects to be in a position to **remove all legal limits on social contact**.

It is hoped to **reopen remaining premises**, including **nightclubs**, and ease the restrictions on **large events and performances** that apply in Step 3.

This will be subject to the results of a scientific Events Research Programme to test the outcome of certain pilot events through the spring and summer, where the Government will trial the use of testing and other techniques to cut the risk of infection. The same Events Research Programme will guide decisions on whether all limits can be removed on weddings and other life events.

The Government has published the 'Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021', setting out full details of the roadmap out of the current lockdown for England. www.gov.uk





NORTHUMBERLAND ROUTE MAP PLOTS ROAD TO RECOVERY

Last month the Government published its well-publicised road map to bring the country out of lockdown (read more on page 4 and 5).

On a more local level, we've also developed an ambitious plan to bring our county out of the pandemic in a stronger position - our Northumberland Covid-19 route-map 2021.

It sets out the challenges the county faces from a health and business perspective, as well as detailing what services and support you can expect now and into the future.

And unlike traditional council and government plans, this route-map will not be static or long-term. Instead, it will be regularly adapted and updated to reflect changing circumstances.

The route-map has a five-point plan for economic recovery, covering a range of growth plans:

You can read more on our route-map at: www.northumberland.gov.uk/routetorecovery



Investing in the transition to a future economy

This focuses on existing economic strengths which also have growth potential – clean energy and green growth; manufacturing; and life sciences and pharmaceuticals.

There will be a focus on Energy Central in the Blyth estuary as well as plans for a major investment at Ashington's Ashwood Business Park alongside developments at Berwick Ramparts Business Park and Fairmoor Business Park in Morpeth, which are both Enterprise Zones.

Investing in our places, culture and tourism

This covers the regeneration of town centres and rural growth in areas such as agri-tech and forestry.

Proposed investments include the Northumberland Line rail passenger service, a programme at Hadrian's Wall, a Supercharged Rural Scale Up scheme to provide bespoke support to rural firms which are looking to grow, and a project to establish a Rural Design Centre in partnership with the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise at Newcastle University.





“ WITH A PLEDGE TO HALF THE COUNCIL'S CARBON FOOTPRINT BY 2025 AND TO WORK WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO MAKE THE COUNTY CARBON-NEUTRAL BY 2030, A RAFT OF GREEN ENERGY PROJECTS ARE IN THE PIPELINE. ”

Investing in transport, digital and connectivity

This includes key transport upgrades such as the dualling of the A1, the Blyth relief road, increasing capacity at the A19 Moor Farm roundabout, and a walking and cycling investment package.

A Freeport around the Port of Blyth would play a role in supporting a number of other ambitions, while digital infrastructure include



addressing the gaps in 4G through the Borderlands programme, extending delivery of the existing Local Full Fibre programme, and working with the North of Tyne Combined Authority on 5G investment.

Investing in a green recovery

With a pledge to half the council's carbon footprint by 2025 and to work with central government to make the county carbon-neutral by 2030, a raft of green energy projects are in the pipeline.

These will include Low Carbon Heat Networks, the creation of a new Great Northumberland Forest where the first step will be to plant up to one million trees by 2024. There's also commitment to investing in renewable energy sources such as a potential hydro-electric scheme in the Tyne Valley, solar energy on commercial and residential property and off-shore wind generation.



Investing in our people, jobs, skills and livelihoods

This includes a major 'sectoral change programme' planned to reach 6,000 people, focusing on transitioning to emerging green jobs.

There'll be Business Support programmes which respond to post-covid needs of business and specific rural support, while maximising apprenticeships based on what businesses need and an Education Challenge are other goals.





SHOP LOCAL. SHOP NORTHUMBERLAND.



As our town centres and communities start to reopen there are lots of different ways you can continue to support our businesses.

By choosing to Shop Local, Shop Northumberland you can help the local economy in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic.

From April 12, non-essential retailers will be able to reopen as well as self-contained accommodation, most outdoor attractions as well as indoor leisure facilities.

Instead of travelling miles to shop in one of the giant retailers, why not stay closer to home and take advantage of the independent businesses on your doorstep.

Statistics show that for every £1 spent with a local, independent business, between 50p-70p circulates back into

that local economy. This not only helps to support the businesses, but also jobs in the local area as well as suppliers.

Independent retailers and small businesses need our support now more than ever. There are lots of ways you can still support your local high street:

- Choose to Shop Local on your local high street, using independent retailers as much as possible.
- Buy your local produce from butchers, farm shops or local markets. In this way you'll also be supporting local farmers.
- Find out if they are offering an online shop.
- Find out if they are offering a click and collect service.
- If you have a birthday or a special occasion why not ask friends and

family for vouchers for your favourite local shop, restaurant, bookshop or hotel.

- Support local businesses on social media. Share, Like and Follow their posts and add recommendations.

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS:

You could also join the Northumberland Let's Keep Supporting Local Businesses Facebook page.

Set-up by Chrissie Havis of Morpeth, just before Christmas, the group is bringing together businesses and shoppers in the county. It continues to grow with more than 18k followers.

There's also the Produced in Northumberland initiative where you can find out about local producers in your area:

producedin.northumberland.gov.uk





NORTHUMBERLAND BUSINESS HUB

At the start of the Covid-19 outbreak the council and partner organisations quickly established the Northumberland Business Hub – a central resource which is there to support companies and employees in the county throughout the pandemic and beyond.

As well as details of all of the business grants, the Hub provides a wide range of information, advice and guidance including:

- Working safely during coronavirus
- Training, recruitment and redundancy
- Other types of financial support available

Find full details at www.northumberland.gov.uk/businesshub

LOCAL BUSINESSES RECEIVE SUPPORT GRANTS TO HELP THEM THROUGH PANDEMIC

Around 30,000 grants totalling nearly £138 million have been paid to businesses in Northumberland to support them through the coronavirus pandemic in the past year.



There have been wide-ranging implications for many businesses in the county, as some have been required to close due to legal restrictions, while others have been able to stay open, but how they can operate has been severely impacted by Covid-19.

The Government has announced a number of support schemes and provided funding to councils to deliver these to businesses in their areas.

In the first lockdown, in Spring 2020, the council paid out £94.418 million to 8,426 businesses in small business, retail, hospitality and leisure, and also local discretionary grants.

Since November 2020 council teams have been delivering a further range of restrictions support grants as well as grants providing support for specific sectors which have been particularly badly hit.

Up to the date of publication, 20,893 grants have been paid totalling £40.428 million.

Grant schemes have largely been targeted at businesses in the hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure sectors, as well as at those which were required by law to close, including non-essential retail, leisure and sports facilities, entertainment

venues, visitor attractions and personal care services.

Councils have also been allocated additional funding to support other sectors in their areas which have been severely affected, and this money is to cover financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Northumberland has worked with other councils in the North East, to ensure that in the main there is consistency in the types of business which can be supported. This additional funding has already helped many businesses in the hospitality, accommodation and leisure sectors which don't pay business rates, and also those which directly supply these sectors.

In late February the council launched a further grant from this additional funding pot – the Business Resilience Grant.

This grant aims to support some of the companies which have not been eligible for previous schemes, but which are still liable for business rates and have ongoing fixed property costs.

For more details of all the grants available visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/businessgrants



OPEN SPACES PROVIDING AN OASIS OF CALM

One of the brightspots for many people over the past year has been the opportunity to explore the open spaces on their doorstep.

Whether it's been within walking distance or further afield when restrictions allowed, our coastline, countryside and parks have provided much needed havens for exercise and mindfulness.

Northumberland's country parks have proved particularly popular, with three of the most popular benefiting from substantial improvements - with Druridge Bay Country Park's visitor centre re-opening after a £300,000 refurbishment last summer.

Other parks have benefited from new play areas, improved paths and parking and enhancements to visitor centres – all of which have been well used.



Staff and volunteers have been working throughout the year, under often testing conditions, to keep the parks in tip-top condition and ensure they're green and pleasant spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Along with our country parks, the whole county has experienced an upturn in visitor numbers and the council is now working with a range of partners to prepare for an influx of visitors over the coming months.

At the council's latest coastal summit, it was agreed there was a need for a countywide approach to cope with the expected high level of day trippers and holidaymakers



“ ALONG WITH OUR COUNTRY PARKS, THE WHOLE COUNTY HAS EXPERIENCED AN UPTURN IN VISITOR NUMBERS AND THE COUNCIL IS NOW WORKING WITH A RANGE OF PARTNERS TO PREPARE FOR AN INFLUX OF VISITORS OVER THE COMING MONTHS. ”

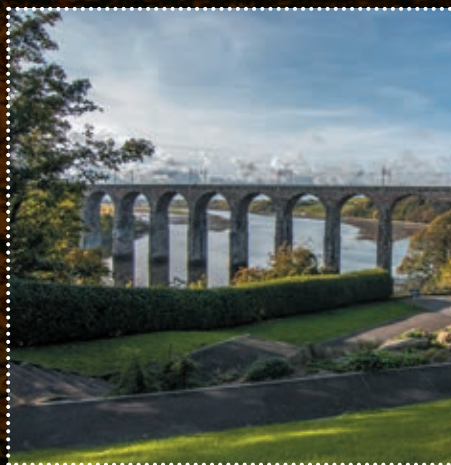
to Northumberland this summer.

While Covid lockdown restrictions are being eased slowly over the coming months, it's still expected that "staycations" will be extremely popular this year, meaning a bumper period for the county's hospitality industry and a real boost to Northumberland's economy.

However, feedback from last summer showed although there were many benefits, the influx of visitors placed some strain on the local infrastructure and created issues for some communities, along with impacts on the natural environment and landscape along the coast.

Now an action plan is being developed to balance the needs of visitors and local communities.

There will be a countywide approach involving Visit



Northumberland along with other key partners to 'attract and disperse' visitors across the county to spread the pressures and promote the benefits of increased tourism across the whole county.

At the same time there will be a push on the promotion of active travel and using public transport to reduce reliance on car journeys.

To cope with the expected increase in visitor numbers the council is looking to support town and parish councils and local landowners to provide more temporary 'overflow' car parks for use in peak seasons, where this can be achieved safely and without impacting on the local environment.

A consultation will also be starting soon looking at a pilot scheme to allow some limited overnight parking by self-contained motorcaravans/camper vans in car parks where this might be considered acceptable.

And more visitors also means more rubbish and more toilet users, with plans for extra bins and more frequent collections and a proposed £1m investment programme over the next two years in repairs and improvements to the council's public toilets.

TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT ALL OUR FANTASTIC GREEN SPACES SEARCH 'COUNTRY PARKS' ON OUR WEBSITE: WWW.NORTHUMBERLAND.GOV.UK



INVESTING IN NORTHUMBERLAND

It's been a year like no other! Despite the pandemic we have pushed ahead, whenever we have been able to do so safely, with major investment schemes and a wide range of improvements for the county.



RURAL ROADS

An extra £15 million funding was earmarked for rural roads and path repairs across the county on top of the £18.5m of funding for roads, walking and cycling in the annual Local Transport Plan.



GRANTS

We issued 30,000 grants totalling nearly £138m of government funding to local businesses to support them through the coronavirus pandemic.



SCHOOLS

Students at Haydon Bridge High School were wowed by its makeover following a multi-million pound improvement project. The council committed over £4m to the project which has seen vast improvements to the school.



HOUSING

We are improving the quantity and quality of affordable housing to help create more homes for rent. In addition to annual investment of over £9million in existing council houses, an ambitious housing programme is bringing forward new affordable homes.



LEARN & LEISURE

A multi-million-pound learning and leisure campus opened in Ponteland. This ground-breaking scheme is the very first of its kind in the country and will provide a state-of-the-art sport and learning environment for the local community.



SCHOOLS

In Hexham, one of the largest new school developments in Northumberland is well underway, with a £36.1m project bringing Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth High school together on the site of the current high school.



SPORT & LEISURE

The second phase of a £5m scheme to improve facilities in Blyth Sports Centre is nearing completion. Work includes the creation of a new gym and two new fitness studios, new spa facilities and changing rooms.



COMMUNITY

Plans are progressing on a £1.5m scheme to upgrade and refurbish Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre to provide modern leisure, library and community spaces.

We're not resting on our laurels and recently agreed to an ambitious three year Capital Programme totalling more than £747m, which includes multi-million pound investments in rail and transport links, the regeneration of

town centres, school improvements and a host of schemes relating to climate change.

In the meantime, here's just a snapshot of some of the work that has taken place over the past 12 months to

help protect jobs, the local economy, improve the environment and our communities.



LEISURE

Plans to transform sport and leisure in Berwick took another step forward with the completion of a full size 3G football pitch. Work is also progressing quickly on the new £22.65m council funded sports and leisure centre.



PARKS

11 of Northumberland's parks were awarded prestigious Green Flag Awards by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, which recognises them as some of the very best in the country.



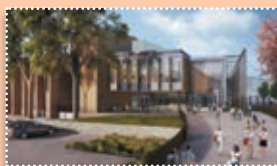
CHILDREN

Children's play facilities in the county continued to be upgraded, including at this playpark in Prudhoe which got new equipment, safety features and secure fencing.



ENVIRONMENT

We've begun replacing our fleet with electric vehicles and are installing more solar panels onto council buildings. We've also delivered central heating systems into 132 fuel poor homes, and have also helped thousands plant more trees across our county.



LEISURE

Work has started on Morpeth's £21m leisure centre and community hub. It will include swimming and learner pools, spa facilities, a sports hall, a fitness suite, spinning studio, a cafe area and soft play. A customer service centre, learning facility and library will also be in the centre.



TOWN CENTRE

The Hexham High Streets Heritage Action Zone is underway to revitalise the town's historic core. A £2.4m investment will include grants to improve buildings, improvements to public spaces and activities to celebrate the heritage of Hexham.



PARKING

Increasing car parking in the county's towns remains a focus, with work starting on a new 250-space facility in Hexham and plans in place for a new car park in Morpeth.



TOWN CENTRE

A major funding bid unlocking up to £31m investment to transform Blyth town centre was approved by government. The town was shortlisted to benefit from the £1bn Future High Streets Fund and awarded £11.12m, complemented by £20m from the County Council.



COUNTY ON TRACK TO BENEFIT FROM NEW LOCAL RAIL SCHEME

The county is set for a huge economic boost after the green light was given to multi-million pound funding towards the Northumberland Line rail scheme.

The Government has committed £34m funding towards re-introducing a regular rail passenger service between Ashington and central Newcastle.

The County Council is leading the ambitious scheme, in partnership with Network Rail, with the rail line set to open by 2024 boosting education, employment and housing prospects for both the county and the wider region.

The whole scheme is projected to deliver economic benefits of up to £470m.

The ambitious scheme includes new stations at:

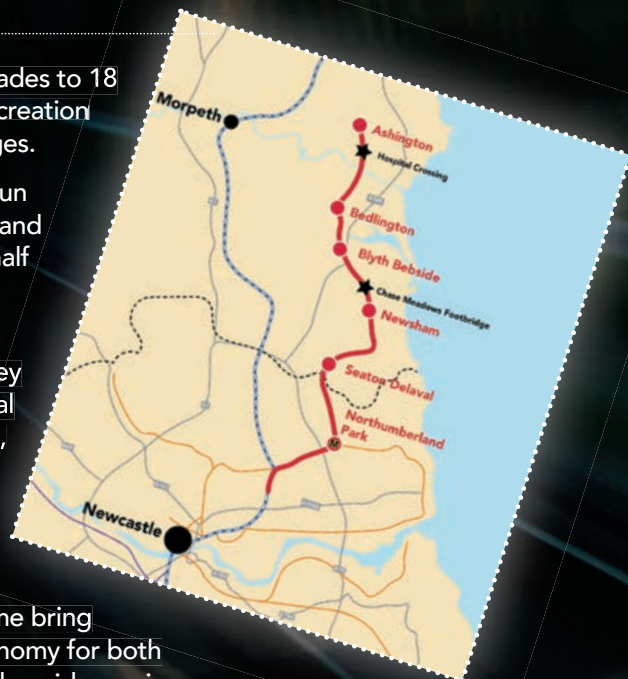
- Ashington
- Bedlington
- Blyth Bebside
- Newsham
- Seaton Delaval
- Northumberland Park, North Tyneside

Also planned are upgrades to 18 miles of track and the creation of three new footbridges.

Once open trains will run between Northumberland and Newcastle every half hour throughout the day.

The Government money will go towards the final scheme cost of £166m, with further funding to follow once design works are concluded.

Not only will the scheme bring a big boost to the economy for both Northumberland and the wider region, it will also have a positive long-term environmental impact, helping with the move away from cars to greater public transport use and cutting congestion in bottleneck areas.



EVERYONE WILL BENEFIT FROM THE CENSUS

Census 2021 is in full swing in Northumberland. The census is a survey that takes place every ten years to give the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales.

Census information helps decide how vital services are planned and funded across Northumberland so it is really important you take the time to fill it in.

Each household has been sent a letter with an access code and a help leaflet so you can go online and complete the census questionnaire. There are also paper questionnaires available for those who need them and help available should you need it. Help information is built into the

online form, further help can be found at: www.census.gov.uk or by ringing the telephone contact centre on **0800 141 2021**.

The census will include questions about your age, employment status, health, education, household size and ethnicity.

Understanding the needs of the nation helps everyone from central government to organisations, such as councils and health authorities, plan and fund public services across England and Wales. Census outputs inform where billions of pounds of public funding is spent on services like transport, education and health – on cycle routes, schools and dental surgeries.



It's about the future of our communities

Census Day is **21 March**

The answers you give help plan public services you and your family need.

it's about us
census 2021



HAVE YOU REMEMBERED TO APPLY FOR A POSTAL VOTE?

On 6 May 2021, there will be Local Government elections and the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Northumbria Police Area.

If you are concerned at all about voting in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic, or you are unable to get to a polling station on election day you can choose to vote by post. Everyone who is a registered elector and does not currently vote by post should have received a postal vote application from us.

If you wish to vote by post, please complete the form ASAP supplying your date of birth and signature and return it in the enclosed prepaid envelope as soon as possible. For any queries email: elections@northumberland.gov.uk





COUNCIL SETTING OUT PLANS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE



Plans to tackle climate change over the next two years have been laid out in detail in a new Climate Change Action Plan.



Each year approximately 1,823,000 tonnes of carbon is emitted into Northumberland's atmosphere, causing devastating effects to our natural environment and our health. But together we can fix this.

Northumberland has pledged to become a carbon neutral county by 2030.

The Climate Change Action Plan focuses on seven priority action areas:

- Council policy
- Engagement and partnership
- Heating
- Transport
- Renewable energy generation
- Natural resource-based carbon sequestration
- Waste reduction

Several projects are already underway including the decarbonisation of the council fleet, the installation of 12 additional public EV charging points across the county and the first free tree giveaway to households, community groups and schools.

A number of major schemes have received match funding from grants, including a £2.9m solar car port at County Hall, a £2m Hexham hydro-electric project and £8.6m for renewable heat schemes.

The council will work with residents, communities, businesses, visitors, strategic partners, third sector organisations and central government to develop and progress further projects and initiatives to maximise opportunities to reduce emissions in Northumberland.

But we need everyone to do their bit. Every resident, business and visitor will need to make their contribution to see Northumberland become the UK's greenest county.

You can help lower carbon emissions and cut down on your bills simply by shopping locally, or insulating your home, we've got loads of tips to help save you money while you help save our planet...




To find out more about Northumberland's climate change plans go to:



www.northumberland.gov.uk/climatechange






Quick wins

-  Cycle, walk or scoot to work or school
-  Wash your clothes on 30°C or cooler
-  Help spread climate change awareness with your friends, family, colleagues and neighbours





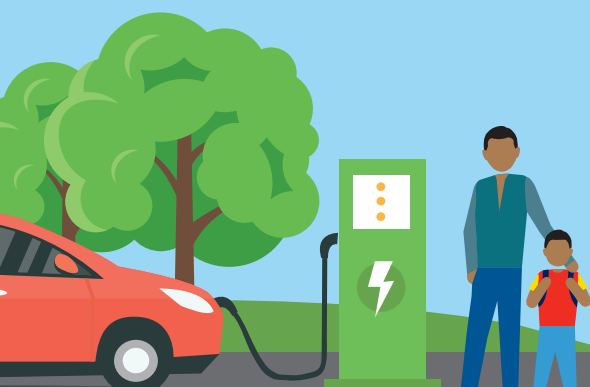
Medium-term wins:

-  Plant a tree
-  Compost your food waste
-  Switch to a green energy provider



Long-term wins:

-  Switch to an electric vehicle
-  Invest in making your home more energy efficient with cavity wall insulation, solar panels, a ground or air source heat pump and more



Northumberland
County Council

Find out more ways you can
make a difference to our planet:

northumberland.gov.uk/climatechange



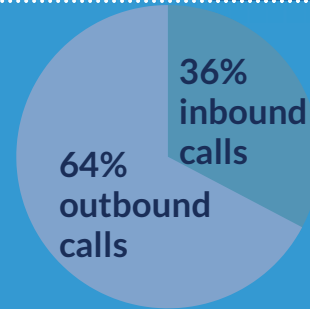
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) has been working alongside fantastic volunteers, community groups and other partners across Northumberland. Here is, how together, we've supported communities through this crisis.



20,000+ Calls made and received

Out of those calls approximately...



2,813 unique households helped



57 key partners connected with eg. community groups



14,400+ COVID winter support grants



543 self isolation grants



15,500+ business grants



175+ COVID secure pop-up enrichment events



50+ partners worked alongside us at our events



12,000+ attendees across our events



23+ COVID Community Champions to help spread trusted messages virtually



24,515+ Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents continue to be supported with access to priority shopping slots and assistance with prescriptions

Contact us:
(01670) 620015
9am-6pm,
7 days a week
or email:
NCT@northumberland.gov.uk

Northumberland Communities Together was launched in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure our residents were kept safe and well through the crisis.

Working alongside volunteers, community groups and partners, the initiative helps co-ordinate and connect residents with the support they need. Northumberland Communities Together will continue into the future connecting residents to amazing local organisations, volunteers, charities and council services to improve health and wellbeing and build strong resilient communities.

If you need support, you're not alone, please pick up the phone, we'll listen.

Perhaps your financial circumstances have changed with reduced hours, redundancy or benefit changes; you may have concerns around shopping, getting out and about after lockdown, or worried about winter bills or financial pressure, feeling lonely overwhelmed or struggling with mental health. Or, you may be really worried about someone experiencing domestic abuse or concerned about a neighbour.

You may simply want to call and ask us a question about how we are connecting to communities and our residents. You may volunteer or run a support or community group, we'd love to hear from you.



You can call Northumberland Communities Together on 01670 620 015 between 9am to 6pm, seven days a week, and we'll be here to listen, here to connect.

W: [northumberland.gov.uk/communitiestogether](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/communitiestogether)

E: communitiestogether@northumberland.gov.uk

Language translator: If English is not your preferred language you can ask the advisor to use a translator while on the call.

Type talk: **01800 10845 600 6400**

If you are deaf or can't speak on the phone, contact us using Relay UK. Download the **Relay UK app** or using your existing text phone prefix our dedicated text Relay number:

018001 01670 623 515

SPREADING TRUSTED COVID-19 MESSAGES THROUGHOUT NORTHUMBERLAND

We know that the pandemic has been hard on everyone, but it has brought many of us closer together and fuelled a desire to help one another in our communities.

Northumberland Covid Community Champions have been helping us spread trusted messages amongst our communities. There's so much information out there that some people have said they find it confusing and don't know what to believe.

It's so much more powerful when people hear messages from people they trust. A couple of our Northumberland Covid Community Champions tell us why they got involved.

Kerry Noble (above), who is a Parish Councillor, heard that the council were looking for champions in his area and wanted to help. He's been very active in promoting the 'stay at home' messages in particular and advocating shopping locally at local butchers and farm shops in his area.



"It's something I really enjoy doing as I follow very closely the infection rates in the eight northern wards. It's important to cascade information that you know has come directly from the health teams that look at this every day."



Graham Huntley (left) has been working with Northumberland Community Voluntary Action to reduce isolation felt by some providing technology to those that need it the most.

"The team there thought I would make a good Covid Community Champion, because of my involvement in the community, so I signed up!

"I've had some great feedback from the network groups that I'm connected too. They've told me that they have learnt from the information that I've provided and that feels good."

We are looking for more champions right across Northumberland. If you are interested in becoming a Northumberland Covid Community Champion, find more information on how to sign up here: **www.northumberland.gov.uk/Community-Champions**

KEY WORKERS INVITED FOR RAPID TESTS

Key workers in Northumberland are being invited to book themselves free Covid tests and play their part in helping to reduce the spread of the virus.

Our targeted community testing programme is offering testing to help detect cases of Covid in people who are not showing any symptoms.

Around one in three people who have coronavirus show no symptoms and could be spreading the virus without knowing.

Regularly testing those who are at greater risk of exposure to the virus will help to identify cases which would otherwise go undetected.

The key groups we're expecting to take up the offer are:

- Education or childcare settings
- Carers
- Small or local public or voluntary sector organisations eg food banks
- Small businesses providing key services eg taxi firms, funeral directors
- Small businesses (less than 50 staff), sole traders or self-employed people
- Medium-sized local businesses (businesses between 50-250 staff) unable to practically access institutional testing

Those being tested will be informed of their result within 30 minutes of taking the test.



BOOKING INFORMATION:

Key workers who cannot work from home and are not showing any symptoms of Covid can take up the offer of free testing by booking a test online at:

<https://nland.uk/ncctest>

There are no walk-in slots.

Testing sites are open at:

- Ashington Leisure Centre
- Berwick Children's Centre
- Alnwick Leisure Centre
- Hexham Leisure Centre



Nicola Summers, an Admin Assistant at Sure Start Berwick said: "We all have to do our bit to fight this virus. Getting tested helps me to play my part in keeping the people I am close to and come into contact with safe and well."



RESIDENTS CAN HAVE THEIR COVID-19 VACCINE LOCALLY

Northumberland residents are being reassured that they will be able to have their Covid-19 vaccine locally if they need to.

The government is prioritising people by age, and as they work through the different age groups, people will receive a letter from the national booking system inviting them to go to a large vaccination centre for their Covid-19 vaccination, and are being asked to book an appointment via a national booking system. The nearest

of these vaccination centres to most Northumberland residents is the Centre for Life in Newcastle.

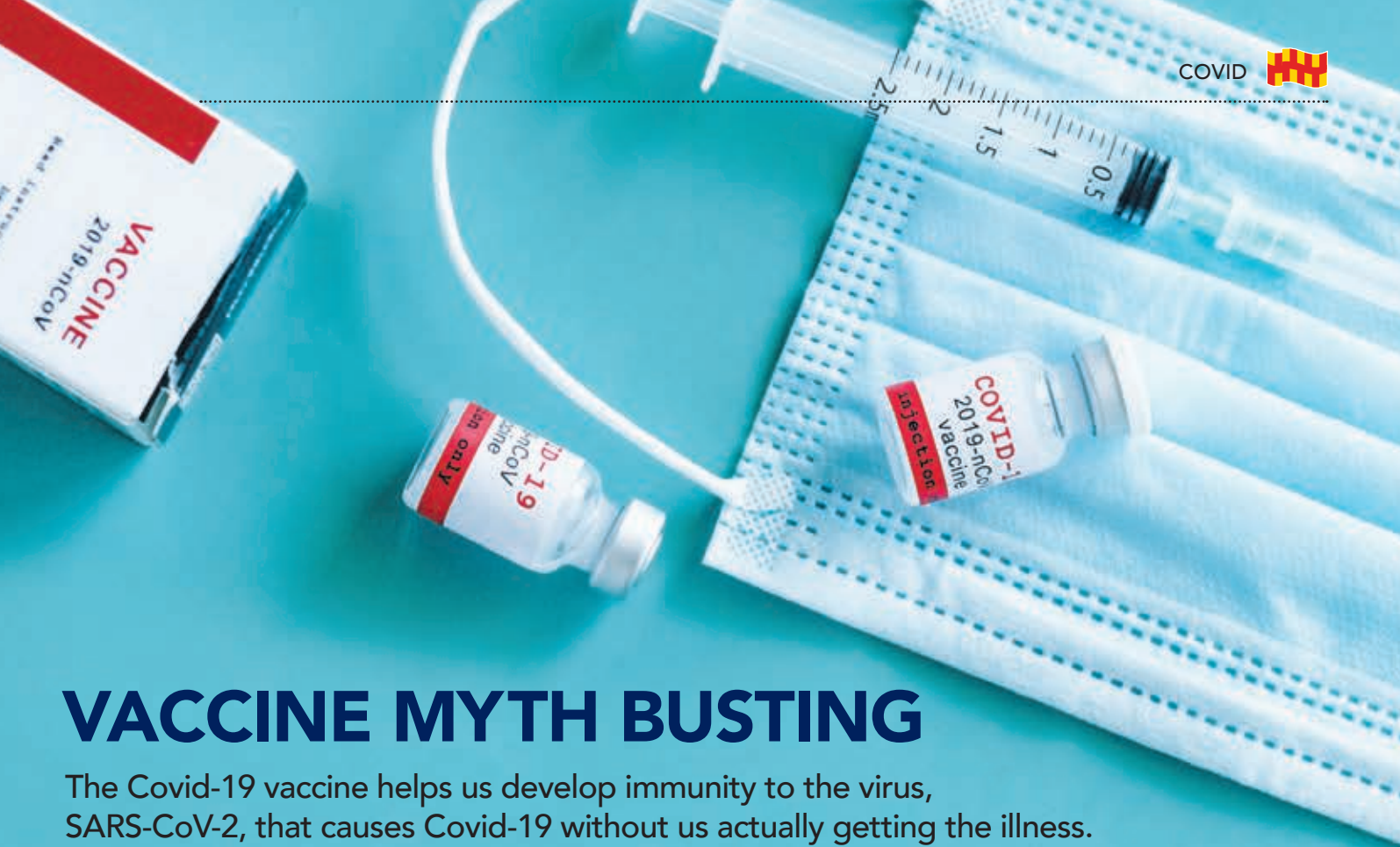
If you find getting to a large vaccination centre difficult, you can wait and have your vaccine locally. Ignore the invitation to book via the national booking system and wait for your GP practice to contact you.

These appointments won't be offered quite as quickly as those from the large vaccination centre, so please

(Above) Jean Jones, the first person in Northumberland to receive her Covid jab.

be patient and do not call your GP practice.

Over the next week or so, second doses will also start being delivered to the most vulnerable groups and frontline health and social care staff who were vaccinated during December and January.



VACCINE MYTH BUSTING

The Covid-19 vaccine helps us develop immunity to the virus, SARS-CoV-2, that causes Covid-19 without us actually getting the illness. Here, we address any worries or concerns you may have about the vaccines.

MYTH 1: Covid vaccines are unsafe because they have been fast-tracked into production.

TRUTH: Covid vaccines have been produced quickly because of a global effort between governments, scientists and vaccine manufacturers which has ensured information we already had about coronaviruses and designs for vaccines could be shared; clinical trials fast-tracked; and data monitored by the licensing authority during the trials rather than at the end. As with any medicine, vaccines are checked at every stage in the development and manufacturing process and there is ongoing monitoring once they have been authorised and are being used in the wider population.

MYTH 2: The Covid-19 vaccine contains a live version of the virus, so you can actually get infected from the virus.

TRUTH: The vaccine cannot give you Covid-19. Having one dose will significantly reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill in the future and having the second dose will reduce that risk further. Sometimes this process can cause side effects, such as a temperature, but these symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

MYTH 3: If I've had Covid-19, I don't need to have the vaccine.

TRUTH: We don't know if having Covid-19 protects you from catching it again so we encourage everyone to get the vaccine when they are invited to do so. If you have symptoms that could be coronavirus you should get a test and not get your vaccine until your period of self-isolation has ended. Where people are suffering from 'Long Covid' - significant ongoing complications from having had Covid-19 - they should discuss whether or not to have a vaccine now with their doctor.

MYTH 4: Being vaccinated could make me infertile.

TRUTH: There is absolutely no evidence, and no theoretical reason, that any of the Covid-19 vaccines can affect the fertility of women or men.

MYTH 5: Covid vaccines can give severe side-effects.

TRUTH: The Covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective for the vast majority of people – they have been tested on tens of thousands of people and assessed by experts.

Some people might feel slightly unwell with mild side effects which could

include a sore arm where the needle went in, feeling tired, a headache or feeling achy.

Any person with a history of immediate anaphylaxis (allergic reaction) to the ingredients contained in the vaccines should not receive them.

All vaccinators have the training they need to deal with any rare cases of allergic reactions, and all venues will be equipped to care for people who need it – just like with any other vaccine.

MYTH 6: The vaccines won't protect against the new strains of coronavirus?

TRUTH: There is no evidence currently that the vaccine will not work against the new strains of Covid-19, so we are continuing to vaccinate people as normal. Some vaccines may be less effective against specific strains but they're still much better than not having the vaccine at all and will protect from severe disease in the vast majority of people. The vaccines will probably need to be tweaked over time to accommodate different strains but the vaccine designers tell us that could be done in a matter of weeks or months. In the meantime, studies are looking at how the different vaccines react to different strains.



COPING WITH LONELINESS

The coronavirus outbreak has made it harder to be with others which can cause feelings of loneliness – particularly if you are at home alone.



If you're feeling lonely, the following tips can help. Different things work for different people, so try to find what suits you, and seek further support if you feel you need it.

1. Explore ways to spend time together

There are lots of ways to reach out to friends and family without having to meet in person. Chatting on the phone, video-calling and using social media can remind you that you're not alone.



2. Share your feelings

Being able to share your feelings with others can help with loneliness and hearing a familiar voice or seeing a friendly face makes us feel less isolated.

3. Do more things you enjoy

Exercise can lift your mood and help take your mind off things, so try walking, cycle or running outdoors if you can – or make an indoor class part of your daily routine.

If you enjoy cycling, sign up to Love to Ride and compete against friends and colleagues to win prizes: www.lovetoride.net

4. Be more social and check in regularly

Creating a regular routine of checking in with others can be good as it can make it easier to reach out at the time you feel lonely.

5. Stay busy by learning something new

Why not pursue a hobby or something you have always wanted to do. If you enjoy learning with others, you could join an online class for arts and crafts, cookery, DIY or gardening.

6. Volunteer to help others

You can volunteer during the coronavirus outbreak from home or in your community but follow the government guidelines if you are going out. You could volunteer to be a phone buddy to someone. Some charities run groups, like Age UK's Call in Time, that put volunteers in touch with people for a chat.

7. Join an online community

Join an online community or peer-support group so you can talk to others about how you feel. Groups like Side by Side and SANE Support Forum are available 24 hours a day.

If you cannot wait to see a doctor and feel unable to cope, there is urgent support available.

FURTHER SUPPORT AND ADVICE

- Cygnus Support www.cygnussupport.com
- Mind www.mind.org.uk
- Let's Talk Loneliness www.letstalkloneliness.co.uk
- The Campaign to End Loneliness www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk
- Northumberland Communities Together 01670 620 015

NORTHUMBERLAND GETS CREATIVE DURING LOCKDOWN



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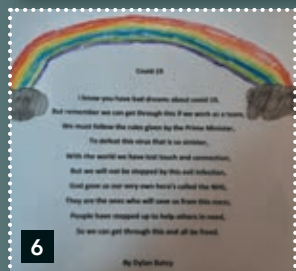
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- 1 Jenny Blake 2 Heather Bolton 3 Iona Francis 4 Heather Bolton
5 Julie Simpson 6 Dylan Batey 7 Headway Arts 8 Harriet Marley

With more time spent at home many of us have been thinking of creative and fun ways to pass the time and stay busy.

A new exhibition, led by Northumberland Archives and the Discover Our Land campaign, will highlight the many ways in which residents have been coping with lockdowns.

A call out for diaries, short stories, poetry, artwork, knitting and any other creative hobbies saw more than 150 items submitted for inclusion in the exhibition.

Some of these pieces will be saved into the Northumberland Archives so that future generations can look back and know what it was like during lockdown, providing a vital piece of social history.

Other pieces will be featured in an exhibition on the Discover Our Land website - www.discoverourland.co.uk

As well as artwork submitted, the exhibition will also include audio and videos from people who have been volunteering or working through the lockdowns.

SCHOOLS WELCOME PUPILS BACK

Schools across the county were pleased to welcome back all pupils for face-to-face learning this month.

The health and wellbeing of pupils and staff across all schools remains a priority and all schools have in place risk assessments, Covid-19 secure measures and support to ensure this.

The Government made a couple of announcements at the end of February in regard to funding to ensure a summer programme and how qualifications will be awarded for 2021. Information on what this will look like for Northumberland and resources to support children and young people in their return to school will be available on our website at: www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus



LIBRARY UPDATE

For the latest information on library openings and opening times go to www.mylibrary.co.uk



Northumberland
County Council

**Your
future
starts
here**



DESIGNED TO HELP YOU LEARN
NEW SKILLS, GET JOB READY OR
REBUILD CONFIDENCE - PLUS MANY
OF OUR COURSES ARE FREE AND
RUNNING ONLINE.



ENROL NOW ON A PART-TIME
COURSE WITH NORTHUMBERLAND
LEARNING & SKILLS.



**Where
learning
works
for you**

#LiveAndLearnLocal



**WHY GO ANYWHERE ELSE WHEN YOU CAN
#LIVEANDLEARNLOCAL**

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