

Northumberland news

Winter 2019



A year in review

Be a savvy shopper

The gift of fitness

What's On?



Northumberland
County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk

A woman with dark hair and bangs, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark-colored top. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a shop or a community center.

Discover simple steps to look after **your mental health**

Every Mind Matters will get you started with a free online plan designed to help you deal with stress and anxiety, boost your mood, improve your sleep and feel more in control.

Find your way to better mental health.

Search every mind matters

The 'every mind matters' logo, featuring the words 'every mind' in blue and 'matters' in a larger, bold blue font, all contained within a yellow cloud-like shape.

**every mind
matters**

INSIDE *this issue*



Available online, by email or in print.

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

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FRONT COVER

Photo: Santa at Alnwick Garden





Our year in *review*

It's been a busy and exciting year for Northumberland.

Here's a snapshot of some of the work and events that took place during 2019 to help boost jobs, the local economy, improve our environment and our communities.



JANUARY

We launched the Discover our Land campaign to shine a spotlight on the county as a great place to visit, raise a family, to build a career and to establish, invest and grow a business.



FEBRUARY

A passenger train ran from Morpeth to Bedlington for the first time in decades, as the council continues to progress its plans for the Northumberland Line - a rail service which could connect Ashington with central Newcastle in just over half an hour.



MARCH

We secured an extra £8 million of government funding to improve the county's road network. This is in addition to the £19 million invested by the council to repair and maintain the county's roads and pathways.

**APRIL**

Work continued on the council's ambitious £65 million countywide investment programme to upgrade and transform sport and leisure facilities. This includes new leisure centres in Berwick, Morpeth and Ponteland and major investment in Blyth and Hexham.

**MAY**

Schools from around the county came together for a day of sport at the Northumberland Para School Games Festival, with more than 200 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities attending.

**JUNE**

The council declared a 'climate emergency' and vowed to halve its carbon footprint by 2025.

In a bold commitment to making the county greener and cleaner, the council is also aiming to make Northumberland carbon neutral by 2030.

**JULY**

Nine of Northumberland's parks gained the international Green Flag Award, showing they have the highest possible environmental standards, are beautifully maintained and have excellent visitor facilities.

**AUGUST**

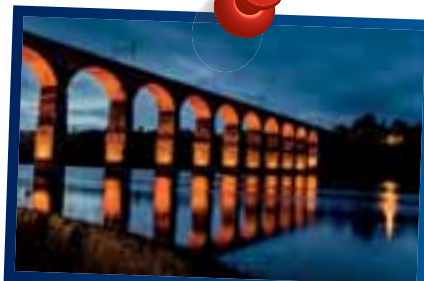
We set an ambitious target to help facilitate the building of up to 1,000 new affordable homes for rent in the county over the next four years which will include new housing built by the council.

**SEPTEMBER**

The Tour of Britain cycle race passed through Northumberland. The race was broadcast in 166 countries showcasing our wonderful county to an international audience and providing a multi-million pound boost to our economy.

**OCTOBER**

The Green Dog Walker Scheme, which encourages responsible dog ownership in Northumberland, signed up its 3,000th member. This is a community-led programme to reduce dog fouling.

**NOVEMBER**

The county played host to the second Borderlands Conference, a collaboration of five local authorities which have secured £345 million funding. The deal will bring thousands more jobs to the area, boost tourism, improve digital connectivity and unlock investment.

**DECEMBER**

Work is progressing on major school developments and improvements in Ponteland, Hexham and Haydon Bridge, and more are planned for other areas including Berwick, Amble and Seaton Delaval - all part of £130 million investment in schools across the county.

WHEN WILL MY BINS AND RECYCLING BE COLLECTED THIS CHRISTMAS 2019?



CHRISTMAS BIN COLLECTIONS

- 🗑 Collections week commencing 16 December will be as usual.
- 🗑 Collections due on Monday 23 December and Tuesday 24 December will be carried out on those days as normal.
- 🗑 Collections later in the Christmas week will be two days late: Wednesday 25 December bins will be collected on Friday 27 and Thursday 26 December bins will be collected on Saturday 28.



NEW YEAR BIN COLLECTIONS

- 🗑 Collections due on Monday 30 December and Tuesday 31 December will be carried out on those days as usual.
- 🗑 Collections due later in the week of New Year will be one day late: Wednesday 1 January bins will be collected on Thursday 2 and Thursday 2 January bins will be collected on Friday 3.



CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING

Real Christmas trees can be recycled into good quality compost or soil conditioner, or into chippings. You can take them to your local household waste recovery centre during normal site opening times where they are collected and recycled along with other items of garden waste.



We have arranged over 30 additional collection points across the county where you can take your tree to be collected and recycled after christmas, making it easier for you to recycle.



TO FIND YOUR NEAREST COLLECTION POINT

and the date the tree needs to be deposited by, visit www.northumberland.gov.uk



FOR EXACT OPENING TIMES of your local household waste recovery centre over the festive period visit www.northumberland.gov.uk

HEPSCOTT PARK HORTICULTURAL SKILLS UNIT & GARDEN CAFÉ



Christmas trees ORDER YOURS NOW!



Nordmann Fir (cut)

5ft - £28.00 6ft - £34.00

Nordmann Fir (in a pot)

4ft - £26.00

1ST COME, 1ST SERVED!

We can deliver free within 5 miles of Hepscott Park



Horticultural Skills Unit, Hepscott Park, Morpeth NE61 6NF Tel: 01670 623911

Please put the following in your recycling bin

Paper, magazines, card, cardboard



Food & drink cans



Plastic bottles



Aerosols



Yoghurt pots &
meat trays



Shredded
paper



Coated juice &
milk cartons



Food
waste



Sacks &
carrier bags

CHRISTMAS SAFETY TIPS

Christmas is all about fun, family and friends – it should never be about fires.

And 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 on display.

Please follow these simple fire safety tips and take extra care over the festive period to keep your loved ones safe.



Keep candles, lighters and matches out of the reach of children and away from Christmas decorations. Never leave burning candles unattended.



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



Ensure you have a working smoke alarm installed on all levels of your home and that you check the alarms every week.



Decorations can burn easily. Don't attach them to, or near, lights or heaters.



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.



Never overload electrical sockets. Take special care with Christmas lights. Always switch them off and unplug them before you go to bed.



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

BE A SAVVY ONLINE SHOPPER

If you don't want your hard-earned cash to end up in the pocket of a scammer, follow these online shopping top tips.



Make sure the website is genuine. Some scammers are very good at designing websites to look like well-known brands and can fool the unwary. The best way to make sure you are shopping on the genuine website is to type in the address yourself rather than clicking on a link.



Check their reputation. If you are unfamiliar with the retailer, it is wise to do an online search to check recommendations and feedback from other customers to gauge their reputation.

Look for contact details. A telephone number and office address should be on the site.

Check the refund and returns policy before you place an order. This should be available on the website.

Keep your antivirus and firewall software up to date. The latest versions of web browsers help block spoof websites. Switch on the 'automatic updates' setting so your protection is kept up-to-date.



Ensure the checkout is secure. At the online check-out, before you type in your credit card details, make sure the web address bar has switched from 'http:' to 'https:' to indicate a secure, encrypted connection. Any legitimate online site processing payments always switch to a secure connection at this stage.

Guard your privacy. Do not disclose personal information unless you know who is receiving it, why they need it, and how they'll use it.

Keep a record of your transactions. Set up a folder on your computer where you can store all your transaction history. This way, if there is ever a dispute you have the information on hand.



FIGHTING FLY-TIPPING TOGETHER

We can all play a part when it comes to fighting fly tipping.

HERE'S HOW

EMPLOY LICENSED TRADERS TO REMOVE YOUR WASTE

If you are using an independent waste carrier you should always ask to see the operator's waste carrier licence, issued by the Environment Agency.

This is really important because, if you make the mistake of employing an unlicensed waste carrier and they dump your waste illegally - you could be fined along with them.

Be wary of:

- ⚠ Businesses that only operate through social media
- ⚠ Businesses that do not have a landline phone number or business address
- ⚠ Anyone coming to your door offering to remove rubbish on the cheap.

HOW TO CHECK A WASTE CARRIER IS REPUTABLE

Visit the Environment Agency's waste carrier register and enter the business name or, search for licensed waste operators near you on the public registers pages of the website.

BE VIGILANT AND REPORT ANY FLY-TIPPING SIGHTINGS IMMEDIATELY

You can do this online at www.northumberland.gov.uk or by ringing the Environment Agency on 03708 506506

LITTER CAMPAIGN TO CELEBRATE community heroes

A major campaign is encouraging people to play their part in keeping the county clean and green.



Councillors Glen Sanderson and Jeff Watson with pupils from Warkworth C of E Primary School, who recently won a LOVE Northumberland Award for their environmental efforts.



Home to more than 300,000 residents and attracting millions of visitors each year, Northumberland has a well-deserved reputation as a clean and tidy county.

However, clearing up litter costs the council around £2.6 million each year - some of which could be spent on other important council services.

And while the vast majority of residents dispose of their rubbish properly, the actions of a small minority are costing everyone.

As well as encouraging people not to drop litter and be proud of their county, this year's campaign will focus on community 'litter heroes' who go above and beyond to help keep Northumberland clean and tidy.

The initiative will be promoted on the backs of buses, as well as on bin wagons and online, reminding residents not to drop rubbish and to 'love their county'.

Clean-ups will be taking place and the impact of litter and rubbish to humans and animals will also be highlighted.

The council will continue to take enforcement action where they have evidence of littering. So far this year nearly 90 people have been fined or prosecuted for dropping litter.

We hope this campaign will act as a gentle reminder to everyone to play their part in keeping the county green and clean.

It's not difficult to put litter in a bin or take it home and when we catch offenders we will be taking tough action.

Let's keep our county beautiful...

Winter team take to the roads

Our people
The heart of Northumberland



They're the men and women who keep the county moving each winter - and this year they're better equipped than ever.



Over the past year the council has continued to invest in its winter service operations - building new salt barns and buying five new state-of-the-art gritters.

The barns, which can each store 4,000 tonnes of salt to be used to 'grit' the county's roads and paths, have been constructed at the council's depots in both Allendale and Blyth.

They were built to ensure the salt stays dry, as dry storage means better and more effective use of the salt. Being under cover also stops the rock salt being washed away by the rain. Over the course of a year up to 20% of salt can be lost in this way.

To help spread all this grit, five new 18 tonne gritter wagons have joined the council's 28-strong fleet to replace some of the older models. A sixth machine is on its way.

These new gritters will be based right across the county in Blyth, Morpeth, Stocksfield (Bearl), Haltwhistle and Rothbury.

All council gritters are fitted with tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at all times - providing an extra level of safety, especially for those working in more rural areas.

And leading the team are experienced, specialist winter service managers and decision makers who monitor all forecast weather and weather stations round-the-clock and co-ordinate operations across the county.

Whatever happens weather-wise during the coming months, our dedicated team will be hitting the road to keep you safe.



FOLLOW US... ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK FOR LIVE UPDATES ON:

• School closures • Severe weather warnings • Winter service information • Service disruptions & closures
 @northumberlands www.facebook.com/nccalerts

STAY WELL THIS WINTER

If you are eligible for the flu vaccine get it now – it's free because you need it. Contact your GP, pharmacist or midwife to get the flu jab or visit [nhs.uk/staywell](https://www.nhs.uk/staywell) for more information.

Winter can be challenging on our health, especially for older people and those with long-term conditions. But there are a number of things we can all do to help prepare for the cold weather and ward off common winter illnesses:



PROTECT AGAINST FLU

Don't put off getting the flu vaccination. If you're eligible get it FREE from your GP or local pharmacy offering the service.

Recommended for:

- ☒ Pregnant women
- ☒ Anyone over 65
- ☒ For your children if they're aged two to eight. This is not an injection, just a quick nasal spray
- ☒ If you're the main carer of an older or disabled person
- ☒ If you have a long term health condition such as bronchitis, diabetes, heart, kidney or liver disease.



FLU AND FIRST SIGNS

If you start to feel unwell, at the first sign of a winter illness, even if it is just a cough or cold, get expert confidential advice from your pharmacist before it gets more serious.

PICK UP A PRESCRIPTION

Pick up any prescription medicines before your GP or Pharmacy close for Christmas and keep stocked up with medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen so you can deal with common winter illnesses.

KEEP WARM AND WELL




It's important to keep warm in winter - both indoors and outdoors as it can help prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems.



BE A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Keep an eye on elderly or frail friends, neighbours and relatives. Make sure they are warm enough and have plenty of food and medication to see them through the winter period.

If you do need help over the holiday period:

-  GP surgeries offer extended opening hours into the evenings and weekends
-  If you need urgent medical help fast, call NHS 111 at any time
-  If it is life-threatening or an emergency, call 999

CATCH COUGHS OR SNEEZES IN A TISSUE AND THEN BIN THE USED TISSUES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
WASH YOUR HANDS REGULARLY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTION.

Not sure what to do?

Go straight to 111
Call or go online 111.nhs.uk

NHS

HELP US HELP YOU
KNOW WHAT TO DO

SIGN UP NOW AND GET READY TO GO DRY

After the excess of Christmas why not start the New Year with a clear head by signing 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 lost weight, some slept better, almost everyone saved cash and many said they naturally reduced their drinking for the rest of the year.

Alcohol is linked to more than 60 medical conditions and diseases including liver disease, various cancers, stomach ulcers, raised blood pressure, stroke and dementia.

It is also important to remember that most people who suffer alcohol-related health problems are not alcoholics or binge drinkers. They are people who have been drinking at or above the recommended daily limits for a number of years.

**GO ON
SIGN UP, JOIN US
AND GET READY
TO GO DRY**



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT:
www.dryjanuary.org.uk

EVERY MIND MATTERS

Did you know that one in four people in the UK experienced mental health issues in the last year? This means that most people in England know someone with mental health problems or have personally experienced them.

But we don't need to wait until we are struggling with our mental health; there are lots of things we can do to protect ourselves and prevent problems escalating, just as we do with our physical health.

The new Public Health England 'Every Mind Matters' campaign encourages us to be more aware of our mental health and gives us simple steps to look after our mental health and wellbeing.

There is also a free NHS-approved online tool, which helps to build an action plan to deal with stress and anxiety, boost your mood, improve sleep and help you feel more in control.



LEARN MORE AT
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>



The Gift of Fitness

Struggling to find the perfect present?
We have a range of gift cards available with FREE goodies!

Full membership gift cards



3

3 month membership

Access to all Active Northumberland gyms, fitness classes and swimming pools.

PLUS - FREE Secret Santa 'Lucky Dip' gift.

£96 or £78 concession*



6

6 month membership

Access to all Active Northumberland gyms, fitness classes and swimming pools.

PLUS - FREE Bag & Bottle and Secret Santa 'Lucky Dip' gift

£192 or £156 concession*



GIFT CARD

active
Northumberland

*Concessionary prices include all full time students and over 65's.
They are only applicable to the recipient of the voucher.

Gift vouchers on sale from Monday 4th November until 24th December 2019

#NoMoreSocks

Swimming gift card

10

10 swims

10 swims at any of Active Northumberland's swimming pools.

PLUS - FREE Bag

£40

Clip 'n Climb gift card

1

1 session at Clip'n Climb, Cramlington

Explore the dizzy heights of our fun climbing walls!
The perfect present for adventurous kids!

£10



Give the GIFT OF FITNESS this year!



#NoMoreSocks

01670 620200



@ActiveNland

activenorthumberland.org.uk/nomoresocks

Snap happy Northumberland

Throughout autumn Discover our Land asked for budding photographers to send in their favourite shots of days out in the county.

Almost 200 entries were received in the latest photo competition with snaps of everything from walks along the coast to the county's wonderful wildlife.

A phenomenal public vote on Facebook received more than 5,500 votes.

discover our Land

HERE ARE THE WINNING SHOTS AND SOME OF THE OTHER FANTASTIC ENTRIES:



ASHLEY CORR
Dark Skies at Holy Island
Overnight stay for 2 at Langley Castle Hotel



**CHARLOTTE CHRISTIAN,
AGE 12**
River Tyne at Ovingham Bridge
£50 Amazon Voucher



COLIN BALMBRO
Collie in the Cheviots
A 3-hour photography lesson with professional photographer Neil Denham



DAVID SOUTHERN
Waves at Dunstanburgh
A family pass for Enchanted Belsay



DON'T FORGET IF YOU ARE OUT AND ABOUT IN NORTHUMBERLAND WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOUR PHOTOS share them with us on social media @DiscoverNland

Great Northumberland

The Great Northumberland Winter Festival has a whole host of exciting events taking place until the end of March.

There's everything from music festivals, community workshops and street theatre. To find out more about events happening near you go to www.greatnorthumberland.co.uk



Northumberland wins silver at prestigious travel awards



THANKS FOR
YOUR **SUPPORT**

© DARREN CHAPMAN - BAMBURGH CASTLE

Northumberland has won silver in the UK Holiday Destination of the Year category at the British Travel Awards.



This is a fantastic achievement and we'd like to say a huge thank you to residents, businesses and visitors who showed their love for Northumberland by voting for the county.

Tourism is vital for Northumberland, bringing in over £900 million to the local economy each year and supporting nearly 15,000 jobs, so an award like this really helps to shine a spotlight on the county as a great place to visit.

Northumberland was pipped to the post by Cornwall, another stunning county - and although we may be a little biased - we still think we're the best!

The British Travel Awards are the largest and most influential poll of consumer opinion of leisure travel and tourism providers.

The accolade follows a major social media campaign led by the council and Northumberland Tourism to encourage the public to vote. It also comes hot on the heels of Northumberland being named Seaside Staycation of the Year at the first ever Staycation Awards.

NEWS in Brief

JANUARY OPENING FOR ALNWICK PLAYHOUSE AND COMMUNITY HUB

The Alnwick Playhouse and community hub is set to reopen to the public on January 3rd after a £3.3 million renovation. The theatre has undergone a major refurbishment while part of the ground floor space has been converted to accommodate the town's library and tourist information services. A grand opening weekend is currently being organised and details will be in the local press nearer the time.



BEING SCAM AWARE

Residents were invited to an event, held in SAFE week, to learn how to be scam aware.

They were provided with information about how criminals operate, how to protect themselves and other people from scams and what to do if they do become a victim.

There was also a visit from loan shark mascot Sharky, who handed out information about the perils of borrowing from unscrupulous lenders and the extremely high rates of interest they charge.

RESCUE DOGS TO BE STARS OF 2020 CHARITY CALENDAR

A charity calendar featuring dogs rescued in Northumberland is now on sale with the proceeds donated to four local animal charities.

The calendar features twelve dogs that have been rescued by Northumberland County Council's animal welfare team and partner charities. Each dog has their back story printed alongside their photograph.

The printing of the calendar has been funded by the fines collected for dog fouling offences in Northumberland.

The calendars are available for a minimum donation of £3.99 from council information centres or by contacting the animal welfare team on 0345 600 6400.



MEMORIAL TREE COMMEMORATES FALLEN HEROES

A memorial tree has been planted in the grounds of County Hall, Morpeth and dedicated to all those who have died in wars past and present.

The Copper Beech tree, donated by Forestry England, was planted by 96 year old war veteran Fred Jewett during a Remembrance Day service in November.



JOIN YOUR LOCAL AREA FACEBOOK PAGE

You can keep up-to-date with council activities in your area by joining Local Area News Facebook pages. To join, go to: www.northumberland.gov.uk/LAC



LEST WE FORGET

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service has had a Remembrance wrap fitted to one of its appliances to show support and respect for all those who have been affected by conflict and also those that have, and are still bravely serving in the armed forces.



REPORT AN EMPTY HOME NEAR YOU

Do you own or live near a long-term empty property? The council would like to help get it back on the rental market and find new tenants. Assistance and various incentive schemes are available. For information call 01670 622299 or email privatesectorhousing@northumberland.gov.uk



COMMUNITY GRANT DEADLINE

Community groups, charities and young people in the county can apply for funding from our much valued community grant scheme.

Grants of up to £5,000 are available to help deliver activities that benefit residents and communities. Visit: www.northumberland.gov.uk and search 'community chest'.

SAVE TIME DO IT ONLINE

Visit our website to use online services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week www.northumberland.gov.uk

Could you help and support local children?

There are a variety of paid foster care roles you could choose from to help children and young people.

Whether you want to give a youngster temporary support or can commit to a long term role bringing up a child, there are options available for you - and our foster care team will be there to support you all the way.



FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT EVENT

Our foster care team is running a series of recruitment events in early 2020. Those attending can meet foster families and find out more about the different foster care roles.

THURS 16TH JANUARY

5pm - 5.15pm sign in and refreshments

5.15pm - 6.30pm information session

Bedlington Community Centre, 60 Front St West, Bedlington, NE22 5UB

DENISE FROM TYNE DALE SHARES A SNIPPET OF HER FOSTER CARE JOURNEY SO FAR...

I started fostering while working in education. I wanted to give some of my free time to help children - something the local community would value. I missed my own children living at home - respite foster care was a perfect option. From 2015, on selected weekends and school holidays my home was filled with youngsters again!

It's so rewarding to see the children become more confident and happy, so when I took early retirement in 2018, I asked the team what my options would be for fostering full time.

I am lucky to have more than one spare bedroom, so now offer different types of full time foster care, while continuing to offer respite care. Having more than one bedroom means I can offer a home to single children or look after siblings which helps to keep them together.

My family and friends have been great too and enjoyed playing their part, welcoming the children and helping them feel a part of the family. They see and often comment upon the difference being a foster carer makes and are a great support to me during the challenging moments!

The roles are so varied. With planned respite care, I have cared for the same children for the last four years. With

ad-hoc respite care, I help lots of different children and support their foster carers. With full time care, children can stay for a number of months while we support them and their families. I have also had children stay on an emergency basis for up to six weeks. This is while the team, the family and the children work out what the best living arrangements are for them. Whatever type of foster care I am offering, the team are there to ensure success for both the children I look after and for myself.

With each child, every day is different. I am learning and growing as much as they are. Life is never dull with both its challenges and good times. Fostering is always well worth the role when you see the children's smiles and know you are a part of their laughter!



READ MORE ONLINE about Denise's experiences as a foster carer at www.northumberland.gov.uk/foster



TO FIND OUT MORE DATES AND VENUES or to book onto a recruitment event call Caroline Matthews on 01670 62 62 62, email foster@northumberland.gov.uk or read more at www.northumberland.gov.uk/foster

Northumberland schools are travel STARS

Ten Northumberland schools achieved Modeshift STARS accreditation last term - marking them out for excellence in promoting sustainable and active travel.



To gain the national accreditation, schools have to complete a range of walking and cycling activities including: Walk to School Week, Bike Week, Bikers Breakfasts, Smarter Parker Campaigns and setting up Five Minute Walking Zones. All these initiatives are designed to improve air quality, reduce traffic and encourage pupils to get active every day.

A total of 25 schools have now achieved the accreditation.

THE LATEST SCHOOLS TO ACHIEVE BRONZE AWARDS ARE:

- ★ Barndale House School, Alnwick
- ★ Cramlington Eastlea Primary School
- ★ Morpeth First School
- ★ NCEA Bishops Josephine Butler Primary School
- ★ Stannington First School
- ★ Hexham Priory School
- ★ Malvins Close Academy, Blyth
- ★ Whittingham C of E Primary School

SCHOOLS THAT HAVE ACHIEVED GOLD AWARDS ARE:

- ★ Hareside Primary in Cramlington
- ★ Allendale Primary



Young pupils from Stannington First School receiving their award from Deputy Leader of Northumberland County Council, Wayne Daley.



Pupils and staff from Allendale Primary with Henry Walker from the Department for Transport

Allendale Primary, Tweedmouth Middle, Barndale House and Hareside Primary have also represented Northumberland in the regional Modeshift STARS Awards 2019. Allendale won the Best Primary category, Tweedmouth Middle the Best Middle/Secondary and Barndale House Local Authority SEND School of the Year.

BEN'S MUSICAL JOURNEY

A local boy has overcome challenges with the help of a music partnership with schools in Northumberland.

15-year-old Ben from Stakeford has faced many challenges throughout his life, including a heart murmur, fainting fits, asthma and hypermobility in his fingers.

Ben's life was turned around when he began learning to play the cornet, which helped strengthen his fingers and has drastically reduced the impact of the hypermobility. His musical journey began at the age of seven when his class at Stakeford First School took part in cornet

lessons. Ben continued to play cornet when moving onto Meadowdale Academy, where he joined a mini brass band. Now a pupil at St Benet Biscop High School, Ben has been an invaluable member of the Bedlington Brass Community Band since 2014.

All of this was made possible thanks to the funding received from Youth Music, which saw Music Partnership North run a building brass project for the past six years.

Ben said: "I feel my self belief has gained a lot throughout the project and being in the band because I have met new people who have faith in me to play my part and also help me when I need it. My musical ability is really good now thanks to the project and looking back to when I first started I didn't understand music at all. Now I really understand it."

Ben's mum, Lynne, added: "I was amazed to see how much effort and determination

Ben put into his first solo in school at the age of seven. I knew then that music was something that he needed to pursue. Ben continued playing and with the help of the free teaching Music Partnership North provided, I have watched his confidence grow over the years and his musical ability increase.

"Being part of Bedlington Community Brass Band has given him even more confidence and has grown friendships. Ben has had many obstacles in his life but the consistency of being able to play an instrument and play in a band has really helped him overcome these. It's wonderful what this project has done for children in the North East. I hope it can continue for many more years."

Ben is currently studying for his Grade 5 theory exam, and is an invaluable member of his school brass band as well as the community band. Ben also performed with his school brass band at Brass in Concert at The Sage, Gateshead.



What's ON

December

Watch the Birdie

Until Sunday 15 December
Bailiffgate Museum, Alnwick
An exhibition of Victorian
photography featuring some of
Alnwick's noteworthy residents
£4 entry
www.bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk
10am - 4pm



The Alnwick Garden Light Show

13 - 22 December
The Alnwick Garden will come to life with sound and light like you have never seen before! This after dark spectacular is fun for all the family.

Guide price £8.95
www.alnwickgarden.org.uk
4.30pm - 8.30pm

A Viking Christmas

13 - 28 December
Queen's Hall, Hexham
A magical, mythical tale from the frozen land of the Nordic Kings, evil wizards and the Great Warriors of the Kingdom of Northumbria. With music, magic, action and laughter. Suitable for all the family.

Tickets from £10
For tickets and times go to
www.queenshall.co.uk



Santa Specials at Heatherslaw Light Railway

14, 15, 21, 22 December
Heatherslaw Light Railway,
Ford and Etal Estate, TD12 4TJ
Passengers are invited to travel from Heatherslaw to Etal Station and back on a festive train. Fun for all the family.

£12 per person
Ticket includes train journey, light refreshments and family visit to Santa with a quality gift for each child.

Pre-booking essential via the website, email or by calling 01890 820244.

www.heatherslawlightrailway.co.uk/santa-specials
Trains run 11am - 2pm



Alnwick Garden Winter Stalls

Every weekend until Sunday 22 December
Alnwick Garden, Denwick Lane
Selected local traders with unique gifts to help tick off some of those items from your Christmas gift list.
www.alnwickgarden.com
10am - 6pm

Festive Tales with Father Christmas

Woodhorn Museum, Ashington
This magical event of festive fun is for children under 5 years.

Tickets £6.50 per child which includes a 30 minute session with Father Christmas including seasonal stories, a photo opportunity and a gift.
For dates, times, booking and further information go to:
www.museumsnorthumberland.org.uk

Enchanted Belsay

Belsay Hall Castle & Gardens
Explore the grounds of Belsay Hall after dark. Wrap up warm and head out on an adventure through a wonderland of light and colour. Join in the atmosphere of the Stable Yard near the hall for mulled wine and marshmallows, enjoy a fairground ride and browse for Christmas gifts.

For prices, dates and booking go to www.english-heritage.org.uk





Pit Yard Skating

Throughout December and Christmas Eve Woodhorn Museum, Ashington Enjoy a fun and unique skating experience on the Pit Yard Skating Rink, right in the heart of the stunning historic colliery site.

Adult £5 Child £4
10am - 4pm, half hourly sessions
For full details go to www.museumsnorthumberland.org.uk



Christmas Fayre

Sunday 22 December
Hay Farm Heavy Horse Centre
Ford and Etal Estate, TD12 4TR
Traditional Christmas market with locally produced goods. Children can see Santa and his grotto and Merlin the horse pulling his special Christmas carriage.

FREE entry but donations welcome.
www.hayfarmheavies.co.uk
10am - 4pm



Winter Bumpers

Throughout December until Sunday 5 January
Alnwick Gardens, Alnwick
Winter Bumpers are inflatable land boats that collide and bounce - fun for everyone! Each bumper accommodates one person who will be secured with a seatbelt.

£3 per session
www.alnwickgarden.com
10am - 4pm

Kielder Zip Coaster

Experience the exhilaration of Europe's 1st AvatarOne! Kielder ZipCoaster mimics the ups, downs, twists and turns of a rollercoaster and the free-flying sensation of a zip wire to give riders the ultimate experience.

Booking essential
For dates and activity package prices go to www.visitkielder.com

Coal Town

Woodhorn Museum, Ashington
Find out about an industry and a way of life that has vanished forever. Explore Coal Town, a long running, interactive exhibition.

www.museumsnorthumberland.org.uk
10am - 3pm



January

Peter Pan

17 - 25 January
Alnwick Playhouse
Alnwick Theatre Club celebrate their 70th anniversary by presenting their own version of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan. A totally original script that sticks faithfully to Barrie's original storyline.

Adults £13.50
Concession £12.50
Child £8.50

For tickets go to www.alnwickplayhouse.co.uk



Ingram Cafe Music Sessions

Last Saturday of every month
Ingram Cafe, Warden's Lodge,
Ingram Alnwick, NE66 4LT
Live music with local musicians. A selection of hot food to purchase and a range of hot and cold beverages including wine and ales.

FREE entry
Tel: 01665 578100
5pm - 8pm



Northumberland
County Council



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