

Planning the
future of Broomley
and Stocksfield

Issue 68 December 2020

NE43news

Best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful & Prosperous 2021-Stocksfield Parish Council

The impact of COVID

It has been a difficult year for everyone and Covid-19 has impacted on us all in so many different ways. There will be those amongst us who have been devastated by Covid-19 – whether because they have lost loved ones or have been caught by the virus, and the thoughts of all of us who are members of or work for the Parish Council are with those who have been affected in this way. Others will be struggling financially and there is more on that below. Hopefully the arrival of NE43 News through your letterboxes will coincide with the removal of the nationwide restrictions that were imposed on 4 November. The caveat applied to much of the content of this newsletter is that it was drafted in mid November and much may have changed in the interim period. It will be easy to think of this as the 'Covid issue' but perhaps that may not be such a bad thing if, by the time of the next edition, the disease is something we can remember or even have adapted to live with. We need something to be hopeful about and, as we go to print, much is being made of the promising signs of a vaccine. Remember that if you ever have doubt about what restrictions apply where at any time, make sure you check the information provided by the Government. (www.gov.uk/coronavirus) rather than rely on word of mouth or social media.

The good news is that the Council has not been forced to close its play areas as a result of the most recent restrictions. The existing risk assessments have been reviewed and the Council considers its play areas remain 'Covid secure'. Much of the responsibility for social distancing and hand/face hygiene rests naturally with the users of the play areas, and the Council is grateful that our residents have acted sensibly in their continuing use of the facilities.

Since June the Council has been using new powers to enable it to meet remotely using video conferencing and, after a few months of less frequent meetings, has now returned to its normal pattern of meeting on the first Monday of each month. Every meeting is currently streamed on the Council's Facebook page which allows any member of the press or public to view and listen to

the proceedings. It is encouraging that the numbers 'viewing' the streamed meeting are significantly higher than the numbers who have attended Council meetings in person. For those who are online but who do not use Facebook, there is no need to have a Facebook account to view the meetings – just click on the Facebook logo on the Council's website. At the moment the legislation allows remote meetings to continue only until May 2021 although this could be extended by the Government.

The Council has been aware that there are people within the village who are finding it difficult to deal with the impact of Covid-19. The Council has limited powers and is unable to make awards to individuals. Where grants have been available for individuals from other sources, the Council has tried to make this information available as widely as possible. One example of this is the 'hardship fund' that has been established within Northumberland for those households suffering hardship as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The hardship must be because of the virus and a person's need can include a change in financial circumstances or employment, a breakdown in a relationship or delays in payments of benefits. Grants designed to have a direct and beneficial impact may be available. The funding in West Northumberland, which was provided initially by Bernicea Homes, is being administered by Adapt NE.



If you think you may qualify then please contact Citizens Advice Northumberland on 03444 111 444 for advice on how to apply.

As part of its contribution to individuals, the Council made a donation of £200 to the West Northumberland Food Bank whose area includes Stocksfield. The Council has also given approval in principle to set aside £20,000 in grant funding received from Central Government and to use it for local groups and organisations affected by Covid-19. Grants feature in another item within this newsletter.

Although the Council's day to day work has continued, a number of the Council's initiatives have suffered as a result of Covid-19. The project to install further defibrillators stalled due to Northumberland County Council's decision to undertake only emergency maintenance, as did the exploratory work around a new artificial pitch at the sports fields. Although there may be some further delays, the Council has approved the installation of eight new defibrillators, as can be seen elsewhere in this edition.



It is great to see that so many local residents have volunteered to help those who have been in need both during the periods of restrictions and beyond. All residents have been updated by letters from County Councillor Dale and Rev Pat Moran which have been delivered to all households. In case some are not aware, the Stocksfield businesses listed below are operating various delivery options:

Branch End Spar	01661 842124	Food/essentials/Post Office
Stocksfield Convenience Store (Opp Station)	01661 842110	Food/essentials/Post Office
Stocksfield Village Store	01661 842215	Food/essentials/Fruit & veg box
Boots Pharmacy	01661 842137	Pharmacy
Whitelaws	01661 842239	Butchers

Events can change things quickly and without warning, but we all hope that 2021 brings with it an effective vaccine against Covid-19 and at least the beginning of a return to normality or perhaps a new normality. The Council's two Christmas trees should be in place in early December and we wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and a prosperous and safe New Year, whether you are a resident, local business owner or employee or a visitor to the village.

GRANT Funding

Every year the Parish Council sets aside funds to be used to provide grants to local groups and organisations. Grants of up to £500 are available to groups for a range of purposes that will benefit the local community. Applications for this funding need to be made in writing using the forms that are available on the Council's website where you will also find information about eligibility, how decisions are made and the conditions which apply. If you don't have access to the internet, please contact the Clerk (contact details are on the last page).

This year the Council received £20,000 from Central Government due to Covid-19 and has agreed in principle that this money should be used to provide assistance to local groups who have suffered as a consequence of Covid-19. The eligibility criteria and application process are likely to be different from the usual grant funding mentioned above, and will be agreed at the next Council meeting on 7 December – too late for this edition of NE43 News. The information will be published on the Council's website and Facebook page after the next meeting so remember to check it.

Branch End Surgery update Patient Message

We realise that everyone is struggling due to Covid-19 and things are potentially going to get more difficult for us all during this lockdown.

However, please can you try to have a bit more patience with us? We have to follow the same Government guidelines as everyone else, and if we have a member of our team who needs to self-isolate, we do not always have the appropriate number of staff available to cover everything and will sometimes need to prioritise our workload based on a clinical need. We are trying to do our best in difficult times and would appreciate your patience. Thank you.

Flu vaccinations

We have ordered more flu vaccinations for the over 65s and the under 65s "at risk" groups. If you are in these groups and have not yet contacted the surgery, please do so to ensure you are either booked into a flu clinic or placed on the waiting list.

The 50-64 year olds who are not classed as 'at risk' are currently not being vaccinated. We are awaiting information from the Government on when and how this vaccination schedule will take place. Please see the government guidance at:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/

For the most up to date information regarding the surgery please visit www.branchendsurgery.co.uk/news

Stocksfield's Defibrillators

The Council's plans to extend the provision of defibrillators across the area took a big step forward at the November meeting with approval given to increase the number of defibrillators to ten.

It is vital that residents understand how they are accessed. If a person suffers a cardiac arrest then the first things to do are: phone for an ambulance and commence CPR (or cardiopulmonary resuscitation to give its correct name). When the call handler at the ambulance service logs the call, they will automatically see accessible defibrillators nearby. If there is somebody present at the scene who can collect the defibrillator, the call handler will provide the location and access code to the cabinet to enable the defibrillator to be collected. The new defibrillator cabinets are yellow and green although there are two older style cabinets in use at the sports fields and golf club.

The defibrillators can be used by anyone and no training is needed. There is a switch to adjust the unit for a child (8 years of age or younger) and pads that need to be attached to the patient. Once switched on, a voice instructs users what to do and when to do it. Using a defibrillator on a patient within five minutes of a cardiac arrest can produce survival rates as high as 70%.

The network of defibrillators has already been increased; they are now also located at the Community Centre at Guessburn and at St John's Church on Meadowfield Road.



The six further units will be located outside Branch End Play Area on the A695, on New Ridley Road at the junction with Meadowfield Road, on Ridley Mill Road at Ridley Mill, on Birkdene, at Hindley on the B6309 and at Broomley. These units all require connections to new electricity supplies or street lighting and will be fitted in the coming months.

When complete, the main areas of housing across Stocksfield will be within 500m of a defibrillator and, as over 80% of cardiac arrests happen at home, that could help to save lives for years to come. Some of the outlying settlements and more isolated dwellings are not covered but the Council will review the situation once the current phase is complete.

The cost of the increased provision amounts to over £22,500. The Council is very grateful to Dr Lucy Booth, (a local resident, pictured above at St John's Church) who organised fundraising in Painshawfield Estate and raised over £4,700. A further £2,000 has been provided by the County Councillor's Members' Local Improvement Scheme with nearly £16,000 being provided by the Parish Council. The Council's Chair, Maggi Hunt (pictured left at the Community Centre) said, "We are very pleased and proud to be one of the first local Councils in the County to offer such comprehensive potentially life-saving defibrillator coverage, and we're really grateful to those who have helped us to pay for it."

INS and OUTS at the Council

There have been a few changes in councillors over the last few months. Julia Robson and Helen Rae have both left the Council and Prof Ray Thompson has stood down after many years representing Stocksfield, first as a county councillor and more recently as a parish councillor. Two new councillors, Tim Hills and Lindsey Joy, have been co-opted onto the Council. Whilst there are still vacancies on the Council, as things stand, there will be an election to the Council in May 2021, coinciding with elections to the County Council.



Tim Hills



Lindsey Joy

Community Bonds to Fund Local Transport Scheme

SCATA (Stocksfield Community Association Trading Arm) is considering creating Community Bonds in a bid to raise much needed funding for its proposed Community Transport Scheme.

Despite having made numerous funding applications, only a small number were approved, with other funders limiting their support to Covid-related projects. This has resulted in a marked shortfall in the project's target amount.

SCATA's transport project would offer a 'Dial a Ride' community transport service within the local area using its own vehicle and volunteer drivers. This would involve mainly local journeys such as trips to the shops, railway station, Community Centre or the doctors' surgery for example, although longer journeys would also be possible such as taking people to and from Hexham and Prudhoe.

An overall investment of £18,000 is needed to acquire and maintain the vehicle and cover administration and volunteer-related expenses (such as DBS checks).

Annual running costs will be covered by service users, using a membership and usage scheme.

SCATA is therefore inviting residents of Stocksfield to invest in a Community Bond Scheme. Each bond would be worth £250 and there is no limit to the number of bonds an individual can buy. No interest would be paid but monies would be refunded to the bond holder at any time after three years from the date of issue.

Norman Hooks, one of the SCATA Directors, said: "Despite these latest funding setbacks we are determined to explore every way possible to bring this project to fruition. We have been speaking to other community groups who have successfully raised money for their projects by offering community bonds.

"We hope this will appeal to the residents of Stocksfield. The reaction to this proposed scheme at a public meeting in 2019 was incredibly supportive, and now more than ever we need this support. We need to sell at least 50 bonds to make this viable but at this stage we are just looking at expressions of interest in the bond scheme. At a time when interest rates are close to zero it is hoped some residents might see this as a relatively low-cost way to support an important community project."

If you are interested in finding out more, please email alisoncrichardson@icloud.com by 29th January 2021 (or phone Norman on 01661 844863) and you will be sent an information sheet about the proposed Community Bond scheme.

Stocksfield Tuesday Club **REOPENS**



Stocksfield Tuesday Club took the opportunity to re-open on 25 August after the Community Centre was able to open for bookings. The trustees first consulted all our amazing volunteers (we have nearly 30) and almost all were able and very willing to return. Then members were approached to gauge the level of interest in returning, particularly as, following all government guidelines, Tuesday Club would now provide a very different experience. We would have to use the hall instead of the Richardson Room in order to maintain social distancing indoors; doors would remain open and no carpet bowls, scrabble or whist would be possible. It was also even more important that meals be booked beforehand as the number of places would be limited. Many of our regulars were only too pleased to come along. A few were understandably nervous and still more were unable to get transport to the Community Centre; normally volunteers provide that transport, but sharing cars is no longer allowed. Those not returning were offered a meal delivered to their home but very few took up that offer – it is obvious that people want the opportunity to meet friends and share a meal with them.

As we could not provide any activities, we agreed we would only be open from 11.30 am until 1.00 pm with a cooked lunch as usual at 12.00. Other guidelines required

volunteers to wear face masks and, to maintain social distancing in the kitchen, the number of volunteer cooks was reduced from three to two. Using the hall makes social distancing easy but can make conversation difficult when you are sitting 2 metres from your friends. Being served by volunteers wearing face masks was hardly ideal and we soon changed to using clear plastic visors. The photo shows the hall set up for use as members were arriving – tables set up in a cross so that groups of four were able to be together.

Taking the decision to re-open was not an easy one but we are so glad we did. Although Tuesday Club in a pandemic is a very different experience, numbers attending have been stable and all those coming along have got so much pleasure from this semblance of normality in their lives – and that most definitely includes the volunteers.

The trustees always feared a second lockdown but we managed 11 weeks before it happened and we all hope it really will be only for 4 weeks and we can share food and friendship together again in December. Sadly it is unlikely we will be able to hold our annual Christmas Dinner for everyone at Stocksfield Golf Club.

Anyone interested in volunteering or joining us at Tuesday Club, please contact Christine 01661 844863 or Melna 01661 844040

Parking on Grass Verges

The Parish Council works with Northumberland County Council (NCC) to manage and maintain the areas around the village including many of the grassed verges. In some cases the Council arranges for grass cutting by our grounds services contractor and in others NCC provides the service. In certain areas the Council pays

NCC to make additional cuts to enhance the minimum service provided.

The Council asks drivers to be aware of the damage that is caused by parking on grass verges and the impact this has on the appearance of the village. It asks that drivers refrain from parking on verges. This applies to goods vehicles too – please ask delivery drivers to houses or other premises to avoid parking on grassed areas and together we can keep the village looking attractive.

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

- Proud to Protect



Tynedale has a new Inspector

Northumbria Police would like to introduce the new Neighbourhood Inspector for Tynedale following the retirement of Inspector Pam Bridges.

Inspector Garry Neill (pictured) has been appointed to this role following 25 years service within Northumbria Police covering many different roles in policing.

Inspector Neill is excited to get involved in the challenges of rural policing and is committed to targeting head-on criminals who operate in rural areas. He has already started making links with our partner agencies to ensure there is a joint approach in preventing and solving crime. He is keen to work with our local Rural Crime Volunteers who are the eyes and ears in the areas they live and work in.



National Lockdown

A new England-wide lockdown came into effect on 4 November, significantly changing the way we all live and work. We understand this has been a difficult year with lots of change, disruption and sacrifice, and we want to thank the community for their efforts so far. However, during this second lockdown it is important that everyone continues to do their bit and follows regulations to protect the NHS and ultimately save lives. Northern area command has a dedicated Covid Task Force which is pro-actively and reactively dealing with breaches.

Demand in Tynedale has remained relatively low: the demographics of the community mean we are not seeing as much risky behaviour or reported breaches. A lot of the reports we are seeing are down to a lack of understanding from the public around restrictions such as how support bubbles work. Despite this we are still reporting people for breaching regulations, particularly around households mixing/socialising when they should know better, and as a Force our approach to this second lockdown is clear - no ifs, no buts, no maybes. We must do all we can to protect each other, our families and our communities.

Darker nights

Now the clocks have gone back and as the nights start to get dark even earlier, I want to make sure burglars don't have an opportunity to commit crime under the cover of darkness.

The overwhelming majority of burglaries happen because a door has been left unlocked; this includes overnight and during the day when people are out, whether at work or if they've just popped to the shops, which really is an open invitation for burglars. I can't stress enough how much of a difference it could make to lock the front and back doors, even when you are in the house. Residential burglary in Tynedale remains relatively low.



East Tynedale also has a new Sergeant !

Sergeant David Humble (pictured) has taken over the reins in the Neighbourhood team covering East Tynedale. Sergeant Humble is excited to get involved in all aspects of rural Policing and targeting those whose actions impact the communities.

He is committed to targeting local criminals or those who travel to the area to commit crime. Sgt Humble asks the community to be vigilant as the darker nights draw in and report any suspicious activities in their area. Noting vehicle registrations as well as the vehicle models, is a great help in building intelligence and patterns in reported crime.

Sgt Humble is looking forward to building working relationships within the community, and even with the current restrictions due to Covid 19 there are still many ways to get in touch via our website:

www.northumbria.police.uk

The website also gives advice regarding Neighbourhood Disputes, Cyber Crime and Your Personal Safety.

Sgt Humble said, "With over 11 years policing experience I have worked across all disciplines within the organisation. As a qualified detective I have worked on numerous investigations including those involving murder and serious sexual assault. Before this current Neighbourhood role I led teams to deliver excellence when investigating Serious Category Crime in the Secondary Investigation Unit. I am really keen to progress community intelligence and wish to reiterate the need for residents to contact police should they have any concerns. My team continually work with partner agencies to tackle crime in order to keep you all safe."

You can report an incident online via our website – non emergency number is 101 or in an emergency or if a crime is occurring now it's 999.





REMEMBERING *with a difference*



It was early in the summer when we realised that the usual Remembrance Service was unlikely to take place this year. After the full road closure of 2019 and the inspiring sight of soldiers from L (Néry) Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery marching along the traffic free A695, we thought that 2020 would be even better.

Despite the absence of any immediate increase in restrictions, the Council decided that it would not be possible to hold the Service at the war memorial due to the need to maintain social distancing. Even with the road closed the space available was deemed insufficient to be 'Covid secure'. The first plan was to have a small service in St John's Church on Meadowfield Road, led by Rev Pat Moran, where a restricted number of community representatives would gather to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The Prime Minister's announcement on 31 October of new restrictions caused the Council to reconsider everything at its meeting on 2 November, and, with the help of Rev Pat Moran, Plan B was developed: to record a Service and stream the video on Sunday morning. We managed to organise wreath layers to be filmed at the war memorial, recorded playing of the Last Post and the Rouse at the church before Pat put it all together with

recordings of readings in one video, adding the words of the service.

At 10.54am on Sunday 8 November Stocksfield joined the whole of the country in remembering our fallen. Some of the images of the Service can be seen on this page. In recognising that the Poppy Appeal this year may be less successful due to Covid-19 and the absence of the usual post-service refreshments which would generate further contributions, the Council

has donated £200 to the Royal British Legion on behalf of residents.

The Council would like to thank those who were involved in the Service:

Rev Pat Moran (Service leader and producer with Julio her husband), Jean Algar (reader); the wreath layers - Cllr Paul Vickers (Stocksfield Parish Council), Cllr Anne Dale (Northumberland County Council), W02 Battery Sergeant Major James Hunter and Sgt James Berry (both of 3rd Royal Horse Artillery), Mr Tony Trapp (representing the Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland) and PC Sharon Walton (Northumbria Police); and our bugler Lloyd Spencer.

There is no doubt that we were all disappointed in not being able to hold the service at the war memorial where the numbers of residents attending seems to be increasing year on year, but we all hope for normal Service to be resumed in 2021.





Lockdown & Environment in Northumberland

A rash of articles this year on our national experience of lockdown, prompted me to ponder about our experience here in the North East. How has it differed from the often urban and London-centric accounts in the wider media? The resulting chats I've enjoyed with Northumberland locals form the basis of this article.

The first thing to say is that none of these contributors are overworked frontline keyworkers, or have lost loved ones to Covid, or are living in situations of extreme deprivation. The privations of those families are on another scale entirely, and we acknowledge their great sacrifices this year. Our contributors in contrast, count themselves as relatively fortunate in lockdown, untouched by tragedy, and aware of the green shoots of an accelerating environmental movement as a result.

So what have you noticed in your locale, and what has made most difference to you? Quieter skies? More butterflies? Time to grow and cook vegetables? More vivid dreams? Yes, unbelievably, this does seem to be a lockdown phenomenon! Did you feel this was the beginning of a shift in environmental awareness, or do you feel things will soon slip back to business-as-usual?

Laura, a working mum from Ashington, told me about how her friends' city-commuting times had dramatically reduced since lockdown, sometimes by as much as 60%. Cyclists in the SE of Northumberland and North Tyneside have been noticing cleaner air, without the acrid taste in the mouth, the coughing, and the previous blackening of pollution filtration masks. One cyclist put this reduction down to not just fewer journeys, but cars not needing to wait idling at busy junctions, pumping out exhaust fumes.

Plans such as Northumberland County Council's new 'Our Way' document, set out how the council aims to 'encourage people of all ages to walk and cycle more often, to improve health and wellbeing, help the economy, create jobs and improve the environment.' Bike sales have spiked, with adults riding bikes for the first time in 30 years, or joining the e-bike revolution, and hopefully these converts will continue in their new habit. The rapidly-approaching winter will be the first test!

Joe, a doctor living in Jesmond, described bluer skies, the increase in birdsong, the excited anticipation of being in nature, and greater perception of the safety of the outdoors. And although he'd noticed far more bikes about, he also described an increase in high-speed vehicles, particularly on rural roads and on quiet residential roads.

Justine, a working mum and a member of CANN (Climate Action Network Northumberland), told me she'd noticed a far better work/life balance, with more meals eaten together at the family table, fast food being replaced by locally-sourced fresh produce, and the time to properly prepare it. She described to me the calmer mood at home, without the daily stress peaks of morning and evening rush-hours.

Many people have been concerned to find single-use plastics creeping back into their lives since lockdown, despite their best efforts. But crucially, there's now a moral gap; households seem much more aware of their own plastic use, and more aware of plastic debris, litter and fly-tipping around them. Living near Bellingham, Nisha had noticed that friends with more disposable income were caught in a loop of buying more ephemera, then disposing of it, as if charity shops somehow lent a legitimacy to this pattern. It was often these people who, in lockdown, were finally driven to look for less consumer-driven pursuits, such as making or growing things.

Frequent travellers seem to have been amongst the hardest hit psychologically. Like Derek from the North Tyne Valley, who 'just likes to have something on the calendar to look forward to' – a weekend away, a change of scenery, a trip out to see friends. Some of these people have found new ways around this discomfort. Nisha, a young professional woman in her 20s, had always met up with her mum to do shopping halfway between their homes. But as lockdown eased, they found themselves meeting outdoors, close to their favourite shopping haunts, but now looking at actual flowers, rather than flowery home furnishings.

It seems that people who have moved towards their natural environment have experienced bounty overall, and those detached from it have experienced lack. And this crucial degree of connection has been essentially independent of circumstances. Surprisingly, it's not been about whether you have a garden, or a park nearby. Some rural folk have bemoaned their isolation. Yet some Newcastle city dwellers without so much as a window box have celebrated a reinvigorated connection with nature, whether it be a view or nearby walk.

Many reflections have suggested that Covid-19 has been Earth's attempt to rein in man's harmful activity. Certainly, there are people who've realised that they work for a level of income that they don't actually need. So might we in Northumberland, possibly look back on this period as 'The Great Reset'?

CPRE Northumberland is the local branch of CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England). We believe in countryside and green spaces that are accessible to all, rich in nature and playing a crucial role in responding to the climate emergency. We're passionate about the kind of countryside we all want: one with sustainable, healthy communities and available to more people than ever, including those who haven't benefited before. We care what gets built where, and believe that there's already enough brownfield land to meet housing targets. We've worked for almost a century to protect the countryside, and we'll be doing this for generations to come. That's why we call ourselves 'the countryside charity'. We urgently seek new members and volunteers to help support our important work.

Please contact annie.CPRE@gmail.com for more detail, or to go on our mailing list for our 2021 Online Events programme. And do watch out for our Spring 2021 Digital Photography competition!

Annie Lloyd is the Branch Co-ordinator for CPRE Northumberland



Stocksfield Cricket Club 2020 Season

While the celebrations and events for our Centenary season were severely curtailed due to the pandemic, we still managed to field ten sides in various reorganised League structures and friendly fixtures, once play was allowed in July.

The 1st XI in particular played some great cricket, finishing second in their League and reaching the last 16 of the Village Cup for the first time since 1992.

Perhaps the highlight was a match against a strong MCC team. A good crowd was treated to some excellent cricket from both sides on a warm sunny afternoon. The MCC eventually proved too strong but our lads played their part in a high scoring, entertaining match.

Some performances of note during the shortened season came from Mark Jacobs and Ben Wraith both scoring centuries. The bowling honours went to Alistair Thirlwell (6 for 17) and Chris Scandle and Aaron Rourke, both with 5 wicket hauls.



Once again a large number of juniors played in the senior teams with six U13 players taking the step up during the summer. The U13 and U11 squads played quite a few games and the All Stars programme was fully booked with 50 youngsters from 5 to 8 years taking part, albeit after a late start.

Prior to games being allowed, junior coaching and nets began with limited numbers at each session. The demand stretched our coaches but once again they proved up to the task and provided an outlet for our youngsters to enjoy the game again, with a number of new starters joining in.

Off the field, volunteers painted the Clubhouse and carried out numerous jobs during and after lockdown to allow the club to be ready to start play when that was eventually allowed. In addition quite a few helped out as volunteers in and around the village during lockdown, making deliveries and collecting prescriptions for those in difficulty.

Thanks to all for their best wishes, support, the work put in and for the enthusiasm shown to play.

We made the most of what limited playing time we had, and while Covid 19 dampened the celebrations, it didn't put out the light.

Hoping everyone stays safe, enjoys whatever Christmas brings and we'll see you in our 101st season, next year!

Water Quality in Stocksfield Burn-Testing Resumes!

From March until July the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown forced the suspension of monthly testing of water quality in Stocksfield burn. Testing resumed on 6 July with some added precautions to enable social distancing to be maintained. Water levels in the burn during the summer were lower than any recorded in the 11 years since monthly recording began. Despite these low water levels the populations of the key indicator species remained at a relatively high level and chemical tests (pH, phosphate, nitrate concentrations etc.) showed no significant change. The main problem for the team of volunteers was finding places where there was sufficient depth of water to carry out kick sampling.

In October the team of volunteers experienced the opposite problem as heavy rainfall produced such high water levels in the burn that no testing was possible. Water flow was still very fast when the November test was carried out but results were similar to those in previous years. With 11 years of data to examine, seasonal variations are easy to spot. For example the larval forms of various mayfly species found in autumn are very much smaller and more difficult to spot – large ones having emerged as adult mayflies during the summer months. Provided no more than six volunteers are involved (easy to achieve!) testing can continue even if this present lockdown is extended beyond 2 December.

Volunteering outdoors in groups of no more than six can continue, following government guidelines on social distancing, so anyone interested in learning more about this work with a view to joining the group or volunteering with the Tyne Rivers Trust should contact the trust on 01434 636902 or 07817 238455. Tyne Rivers Trust volunteers carry out a wide variety of tasks including tree planting, electro-fishing, controlling invasive plants and supporting the re-introduction of water voles into Kielder Forest.

Update from COUNTY COUNCILLOR Anne Dale

As I write this update for the NE43 News Christmas edition we are just into the first few days of the second COVID 19 lockdown of this year. Since March residents have had the support of over 230 volunteers from the village who have delivered letters and prescriptions, cooked and shopped, and our telephone buddies have kept in touch with those who are alone and want a chat and maybe a little bit of 'tlc'. The surgery, the churches, the school, shops, clubs and volunteers have all helped to ensure that residents stay safe and everyone is happy to continue to help those in need in the village. **Thank you.**

The County Council holds online weekly briefings for Councillors and I am in regular contact with officers with the concerns residents raise with me. I also post the Council's regular updates on COVID19 data on Stocksfield Matters Facebook page.

The County Council hold virtual meetings which anyone can access on the County Council's You Tube site. The County Council officers are all working from home and so all my meetings with them are held virtually on Zoom. However the Council remains

resilient throughout, and locally the officers continue to work on highways maintenance, refuse collection, public protection, planning applications and planning enforcement, and the Household Waste Recovery Centres have stayed open over this lockdown period. Blocked gullies still remain a problem in the village but until the leaves have all dropped this will be an ongoing issue. The officers are aware of this position and will attend if there is a potential flooding concern.

Delays have occurred with some of the highways projects in the village and the introduction of the 20mph advisory speed limit on the A695 at the beginning and end of the school day will be introduced early next year. Speeding in the village continues to be an issue and the County Council are introducing measures to make drivers aware of the speed limits in the area.

This year from my County Councillor's members small allowance scheme I have been able to help with funding for the Scout Hut, the village's defibrillator project, the cricket club and the school, together with road safety measures.

Broomley First School has been developing their green strategy over a period of time and I was delighted to be able to help with the establishment of the Stocksfield Garbage

Crew (aptly named by a resident of the village). 'The Crew' of children and local residents will ensure that the village is litter free. It is sad that this project together with others has been delayed due to COVID19 but everyone in the school is working hard to ensure that the children enjoy their days at school and stay safe.

I have attended various virtual meetings on the new Government White papers on the future of housing including Neighbourhood Plans. The proposals are wide ranging with changes in the methodology of the delivery of planning services, housing and local plans. It is quite complicated so if anyone would like any further information or a chat about it please do contact me. The latest draft Local Plan is under inspection at the present time and this is also raising some concerns.

I am working with the County Council, BT Openreach and two commercial enterprises to deliver full fibre to the village in the future. More information will be available soon.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone good health and happiness for the coming months and in particular over the Christmas period. If you would like any further information or help please contact me either by phone: 01434 673326 or by email at Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN STOCKSFIELD AND MICKLEY

It is so disappointing that Covid-19 prevents us from holding our enjoyable and popular Christmas events this year. The Charity Christmas Card Sale and Coffee morning, and The Big Sing always bring the village together joyfully pre- Christmas.

As you will see elsewhere in this issue, although the church buildings may have closed doors, we are still here for you. Clergy and church leaders are accessible, and there are many services and prayers still going on via Zoom meetings, online, and through social media and telephone links. We hope you can still access Advent, Carol and Christmas services on your TVs, and in all the ways mentioned above.

As for Christmas cards - as we all know, every charity is struggling in these difficult times. May I encourage you to still help them all out by buying your cards in their charity shops, if you can do so safely after this second lockdown. Otherwise most charities have online shops too.

Churches' contact information

Please use the following phone numbers or websites to find out nearer the time what's happening about local Christmas services, or if you would like to contact one of the churches or clergy about anything else.

Stocksfield Baptist Church:
Tel. 07809 829594

www.stocksfieldbaptistchurch.net and
www.facebook.com/stocksfieldbc

Stocksfield Quakers:
Tel. 01434 604747

Church of England

St. Peter's Bywell, St George's Mickley
and St John's, Painshawfield:

Tel. 01661 842272

www.stocksfieldchurchofengland.org and
Facebook. (St Peter's): Bywell

www.facebook.com/newcastlediocese
(St George's): St. Georges Church, Mickley
www.facebook.com/stgeorges Mickley/

Stocksfield Methodist Church:

Tel. 01661 833869

www.stocksfieldmethodists.org.uk and
on Facebook.

Also, new for 2020: Countdown to Christmas with the local Churches Together joint Facebook Advent Calendar, daily from 1st December: search 'Stocksfield Advent Calendar' on Facebook

With all good wishes to you and your loved ones, from Churches Together.

WINTER QUIZ 2020

Copies of this year's quiz can be obtained from the Community Centre Office, Management Board members, Boots Chemist Branch End, Branch End Service Station, Stocksfield Village Store, Stocksfield Central Post Office or Jean Robinson (842115). The closing date for entries is 12 January 2021. Price: £1.00 - all proceeds to Stocksfield Community Association (SCA).

Stocksfield Golf Club prepares for reopening

During the first lockdown the Clubhouse was totally revamped to provide a modern friendly environment and since then the previous Catering Manager Russell Watson has returned from Hexham golf club and has been providing some excellent service and getting some rave reviews. Russell says, "Work is underway to extend the facilities in readiness for opening as soon as we are allowed and he is looking forward to seeing everyone again". Also the course greens staff are using the opportunity afforded by the closure to push ahead with some maintenance and greens dressing work so the course will be even better when it opens again.

PRECEPT unchanged

The Council set its budget and precept for 2021/22 at its November meeting and decided to leave the precept unchanged from this year. There is likely to be a slight increase in the annual payment for each household caused by the way Northumberland County Council calculates the tax base so that a Band D household will pay £74.79 for the year, an increase of 55 pence.

The Council's internal auditor for over 15 years, Peter Basnett, has now retired and a new auditor, Margaret Weatherley, has been appointed. In his last report to the Council, Peter concluded with the remarks that the Council is 'to be complimented on a well-run, well managed and proactive council which provides, in my opinion, excellent value to the residents of the parish'. The Council thanked Peter for his work over the years and for his advice to the clerks, both present and past, and wished him a full and happy retirement.

The end of year report of the external auditor has been received and there are no matters to bring to the attention of the Council.

Stocksfield Parish Council

The Parish Council normally meets in the Community Centre at 7.30pm. The agenda and minutes are posted on the notice boards and on the website (www.stocksfieldpc.org.uk). As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, meetings are currently being held online and are streamed live on the Council's Facebook page www.facebook.com/stocksfield

Next Parish Council Meetings:

Monday 7 December 2020

Monday 4 January 2021

Monday 1 February 2021

Monday 1 March 2021

Monday 12 April 2021

Members of the public are normally welcome to attend any meeting of the Parish Council but at the moment need to view the meetings online. Residents who want to raise issues of concern need to email full details to the Clerk at least three hours prior to the scheduled commencement of the meeting.

SCOUT POST

I am sure it will be no surprise to hear that we won't be running Scout Post this year - a very successful activity, which we have run for almost 20 years. There would be no way we could anticipate the Government rules from one week to the next and this is backed up by the Scout Association who have advised that it shouldn't go ahead. Hopefully we will be able to restart with renewed enthusiasm in 2021. In the meantime, thank you to all the Stocksfield residents, the Scouting families and post offices/chemists who displayed our post boxes. They have all supported us so loyally and made the initiative so successful in the past and, with your help, an important source of funds.

Philippa Harpin

Contact the Parish Council at:

**Stocksfield Parish Council, at
Stocksfield Community Centre,
Mount View Terrace, Stocksfield
NE43 7HL.**

Mobile: 07908 601619

Office: 01661 844667

email: clerk@stocksfieldpc.org.uk

Website: www.stocksfieldpc.org.uk

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