DURHAM MAGAZINE

DIGITAL EDITION
July 2026

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Inside this month

Durham Community Event Receives Banks Group Funding 8

Into The Light Launches Creative Call To Support County Durham's Cultural Future 4

Residents Invited to Witness Bishop Auckland Freedom Procession 6

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IN THIS ISSUE

Your people, your pages

4 Into The Light Launches Creative Call To Support County Durham's Cultural Future

6 Residents Invited to Witness Bishop Auckland Freedom Procession

7 Seaham Food Festival Set to Welcome Thousands This Weekend

8 Durham Brass Festival Celebrates 20 Years with Countywide Performances

8 Durham Community Event Receives Banks Group Funding Boost

9 Durham Music Service Celebrates Young Talent At Gala Durham

9 Connecting County Durham Online Directory Launches To Help Residents Find Support

10 In brief: Durham

11 In brief: Durham

12 In brief: Newcastle, Consett

13 In brief: Consett, Sunderland

14 In brief: Stanley

16 Your story could be next


6



4


8


12

Every photo is numbered with its page. Spot a face, turn to the number.

On the cover: Durham Community Event Receives Banks Group Funding Boost, page 8. Photo supplied by The Banks Group.

This is a look-back edition, put together in November 2026 from stories that appeared online in July 2026. Durham Magazine's first digital edition was published in November 2026.

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4

Photo supplied by Into the Light, via McBryde & Co

DURHAM

Into The Light Launches Creative Call To Support County Durham's Cultural Future

A shared commitment to strengthen County Durham's cultural and creative industry was launched yesterday (Wednesday,8th July) by Into the Light, a place-based initiative designed to drive cultural growth and aid regeneration.

Hosted by North-East singer-songwriter Joe McElderry, Into the Light's Creative Call event set out clear ways for people and organisations to help local creativity thrive.

In front of artists, cultural organisations, businesses, and public-sector partners, the event showcased the creative community's integral role in developing the new Creative Call from County Durham, and the five key areas which Into the Light's extensive listening process highlighted as most pressing, access, value, connection, community and innovation.

The launch was an opportunity to share for the first time how the programme has transformed two years of research and community engagement into a practical framework, designed to grow the county's creative sector.

Speaking on the motivation behind the Creative Call from County Durham, Julia Handelman-Smith, Director of Into the Light,

said:

“People across Durham have told us they’d like to see creative opportunities more visible and sustainable. They also asked for fair recognition for the value creative practitioners bring, more networking across the county and opportunities for peer support and engagement.

“They shared the realities of living and working in a rural county, where geography, transport and isolation create career barriers which are often overlooked. Our Creative Call, therefore, explores practical ways we can address these challenges head-on.”

Born from County Durham’s UK City of Culture 2025 bid, Into the Light has become a driving force in demonstrating how culture can attract regional investment and build regeneration.

Since its inception, the programme has engaged more than 19,000 participants, welcomed audiences of 126,000, supported over 1,100 creative practitioners and freelancers, and delivered more than 1,300 events throughout County Durham.

Growing up in the North East himself, and a passionate advocate for opportunities within the creative industry after winning the X Factor in 2009, Joe McElderry hosted the day. Over the past 17 years, Joe has established himself as one of the UK’s most versatile and beloved vocalists, with an impressive career spanning music, television, theatre, and live entertainment.

Joe McElderry said:

“Growing up in the North East and building a career in music and theatre, I know how much talent exists across our region; but talent also needs opportunity, encouragement and people willing to open doors. I was proud to host the launch of the Creative Call from County Durham. It is practical, positive and shaped by the people who know the county’s creative scene best. I hope it supports more artists, communities and organisations to connect, take chances, build their careers here, and explore what’s possible.”

Julia continued:

“Creativity is flourishing in the county. Yet, Into the Light’s research shows that too much of it happens in isolation, without the right visibility, investment or recognition. For many creative professionals, this lack of support can make it difficult to build a career locally, leading talented people to leave in search of opportunities elsewhere.”

Prior to the inception of Into the Light, local artist Lewis Hobson experienced these challenges firsthand. He said:

“What drives my work is getting people involved in telling the stories of their own communities.

“Through Into the Light, I’ve been able to work with more people, expand my network, and create projects that instil pride in people’s hometowns. I want everyone to celebrate where they are from and not feel like they have to leave due to a lack of creative opportunities.”

Rhiannon Hiles, CBE, Chief Executive at Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, said:

Online 9 July 2026

Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/into-the-light-launches-creative-call-to-support-county-durhams-cultural-future**

Residents Invited to Witness Bishop Auckland Freedom Procession



Photo supplied by Hawkey PR for Bishop Auckland Town Council

Residents are warmly invited to witness a landmark moment in Bishop Auckland's history on Tuesday 4 August at 5.30pm, as Bishop Auckland Town Council hosts its first-ever Freedom of the Town Ceremony.

This prestigious civic honour, the highest award the Town Council can bestow, will be formally conferred for the very first time, marking a significant milestone in the town's history.

While the ceremony itself is by invitation only, members of the public are encouraged to gather along the pathway from the Clock Tower at Auckland Palace to the Palace gates, to witness the ceremonial arrival of Dame Susan Snowdon DCVO and Dr Robert McManners, who will become the first recipients of the Freedom of the Town of Bishop Auckland.

The distinguished guests will arrive at the clock tower in a Rolls-Royce generously loaned by Kynren, before travelling along to Auckland Palace gates and St Peter's Chapel. They will be accompanied by the Town Clerk and a guest Town Crier, creating a ceremonial procession for residents and visitors to enjoy.

The Freedom of the Town is an ancient civic honour, awarded in recognition of exceptional service, dedication, and contribution to the community. Although the historic privileges once associated with the honour are no longer practiced, it remains one of the highest forms of civic recognition a council can bestow.

Mayor of Bishop Auckland, Councillor Michael Siddle, said:

"This is a truly historic moment for Bishop Auckland. Not only are we celebrating the exceptional contributions of our recipients, but we are also establishing a new civic tradition for our town. I encourage residents to come along, witness the ceremonial procession and help mark a day that will become part of Bishop Auckland's history."

Town Clerk Sarah Harris added:

"The Freedom of the Town represents the highest esteem in which our community can hold an individual or organisation. Although the ceremony itself is not open to the public, we are delighted to invite residents to witness the arrival of our recipients and share in this proud and historic moment for Bishop Auckland."

By Durham Magazine Online 30 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/residents-invited-to-witness-bishop-auckland-freedom-procession**

Seaham Food Festival Set to Welcome Thousands This Weekend



7

Traders are getting ready to serve up delicious food, celebrity chefs are preparing to showcase their skills, and Seaham is set to welcome thousands of visitors as one of the region's biggest seaside events approaches.

Seaham Food Festival is now less than a week away from its return on Saturday 1 August and Saturday 2 August, and final preparations are underway, led by organisers Durham County Council, to make sure it is another unforgettable year.

As always, there's no better way to get festival-goers' tummies rumbling, than with the mouth-watering demonstrations by brilliant celebrity chefs.

Headlining the free event is popular TV chef Matt Tebbutt. Meanwhile, across the weekend, visitors can see formidable judge from Channel 4s Bake Off: The Professionals, Cherish Finden; BBC MasterChef winner, Shelina Permalloo; chef and author, Cyrus Todiwala; Italian influencer, Francesco Mattana; and chocolatier, Oliver Dunn, known as Oli The Choc. Finally, bringing the weekend together, will be popular presenter Chris Bavin.

After all that cooking, there will be ample options for audiences to satisfy their hunger, with something for everyone thanks to nearly 140 traders coming to the seaside town.

From locally brewed beverages to savoury street food from a range of cuisines, visitors can fill their appetite on the day, or, if their eyes are bigger than their bellies, take home a range of goodies to enjoy later.

Online 29 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/seaham-food-festival-set-to-welcome-thousands-this-weekend**

DURHAM

Durham Brass Festival Celebrates 20 Years with Countywide Performances



8

Durham Brass Festival has come to a close after a packed programme of events across the county.

Run by Durham County Council, the festival filled communities and venues across County Durham with music this week as brass bands performed in locations throughout the area.

Celebrating 20 years of Durham Brass Festival, the packed programme played to the tune of all music tastes, with unique collaborations, lively street bands and traditional brass for audiences to enjoy.

Cllr Karen Allison, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for leisure, tourism, regeneration and high street, said:

"What a week we have had celebrating the 20th anniversary of Durham Brass Festival.

Online 20 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/durham-brass-festival-celebrates-20-years-with-countywide-performances**

DURHAM

Durham Community Event Receives Banks Group Funding Boost



8

Photo supplied by The Banks Group

Plans for a popular community celebration in a Durham City suburb are well underway after organisers secured new funding from a local employer.

Friends of Addison Park will host its annual Party in the Park from 12.30pm to 3pm on Saturday 1 August, with more than 1,000 people expected to enjoy a free family day out at the Browney Lane venue.

A £500 grant from the Banks Group's Banks Community Fund has covered most of the cost of organising the event, with this year's Party set to feature a craft tent, a bouncy castle, archery, giant garden games, face painting, mehndi henna body art and a kids' play area, along with a range of different food vans and concessions.

By Durham Magazine Online 21 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/durham-community-event-receives-banks-group-funding-boost**

DURHAM

Durham Music Service Celebrates Young Talent At Gala Durham



9

Some of County Durham's finest young musicians took to the stage at Gala Durham for a memorable evening of live music.

Durham County Council's Music Service hosted its Leavers' Gala Concert at the venue, celebrating the talent and achievements of young musicians supported by the service.

Featuring Durham Music Youth Orchestra, Youth Choir, Senior Wind Band and Youth Jazz, students showcased their talent with a range of dazzling performances across the evening.

Durham Music's newly crowned Young Musician of the Year, Eilidh Huddart, also took to the stage for a special solo performance.

Online 2 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/durham-music-service-celebrates-young-talent-at-gala-durham**

DURHAM

Connecting County Durham Online Directory Launches To Help Residents Find Support



9

Residents in County Durham can now find support more easily through a new online directory.

Connecting County Durham, launched by Durham County Council, brings local organisations, activities and support services together in one accessible place for residents and professionals.

The directory will include details, and access, to care and support organisations, activities and social groups, mental and physical well-being services, childcare and family support, and special educational needs and disabilities services.

By Zoe Online 10 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/connecting-county-durham-online-directory-launches-to-help-residents-find-support**

In brief



10

DURHAM

Durham County Council Wins National Award For Social Value Work

Durham County Council has received national recognition for its work to use procurement as a tool for growth.

The council is celebrating after winning the Excellence in Social Value Award at the prestigious National GO Awards.

Online 7 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/durham-county-council-wins-national-award-for-social-value-work**



10

DURHAM

County Durham Reservoir Upgrade to Improve Long-Term Water Resilience

Work is set to begin on a £6.9m project at Selset Reservoir in County Durham.

The investment by Northumbrian Water will strengthen the site's long-term ability to support water treatment for customers in Teesdale and beyond.

By Durham Magazine Online 17 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/county-durham-reservoir-upgrade-to-improve-long-term-water-resilience**



10

DURHAM

Miss Durham GB Finalist Volunteers with JPC Community Hub at Motorist Fest

Miss Durham GB finalist Nicole Hanson spent the day volunteering with Teesside-based JPC Community Hub at this year's Motorist Fest, helping children and adults enjoy memorable passenger rides in a range of performance cars.

Online 15 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/miss-durham-gb-finalist-volunteers-with-jpc-community-hub-at-motorist-fest**



10

DURHAM

Crook School Celebrates New Library Funded By Local Community

A NEW chapter has begun for North East schoolchildren after their local community helped raise more than £7,000 towards a new library.

By Durham Magazine Online 5 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/crook-school-celebrates-new-library-funded-by-local-community**

In brief



11

DURHAM

County Durham Pupils Celebrate Opening Of Dedicated Steel Band Space

Young musicians from a County Durham primary school have been showcasing their talents at the official opening of their new dedicated steel band room.

Online 12 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/county-durham-pupils-celebrate-opening-of-dedicated-steel-band-space**



11

DURHAM

County Durham Primary School Receives OPAL's Highest Honour

A County Durham primary school has been recognised among the country's leaders for outdoor play after becoming one of the first in the North East to receive OPAL's highest honour.

Online 28 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/county-durham-primary-school-receives-opals-highest-honour**



11

DURHAM

Bournmoor Primary Pupils Visit New Homes Development at Lambton Park

A group of Year 5 and 6 pupils were invited to the nearby Hedworths Green at Lambton Park development, where Bellway is building 145 new homes within the historic Lambton Park Estate.

By Zoe Online 14 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/bournmoor-primary-pupils-visit-new-homes-development-at-lambton-park**



11

DURHAM

County Durham School Playground Set For Upgrade Thanks To Persimmon Donation

Children at a County Durham school will soon benefit from a transformed playground thanks to a donation from a national property developer.

Online 3 July 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/county-durham-school-playground-set-for-upgrade-thanks-to-persimmon-donation**

In brief



12

NEWCASTLE

Killingworth Zumbathon® To Raise Funds For Maggie's Newcastle

The 16-year-old will host Party In Orange: A Zumbathon® Charity Event for Maggie's Newcastle on Saturday 4 July at the White Swan Centre in Killingworth, bringing together 10 fellow Zumba® instructors for two hours of energetic dance, fitness and fundraising.

By Zoe Eastman Online 1 July 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/killingworth-zumbathon-to-raise-funds-for-maggies-newcastle**



12

NEWCASTLE

Newcastle Teacher To Mark Retirement With Final A To Z Marathon

A long-serving language teacher is preparing to mark his retirement by completing a unique running challenge that has taken him across the UK and Europe, an 'A to Z' of marathons.

By Sara Janiszewska Online 14 July 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/newcastle-teacher-to-mark-retirement-with-final-a-to-z-marathon**



12

NEWCASTLE

Charity Cyclists Honour Sir Bobby Robson and Kevin Keegan

An annual charity cycle ride in support of The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, part of Newcastle Hospitals Charity, has taken on added poignancy following the sad news about Kevin Keegan.

By Sara Janiszewska Online 23 July 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/charity-cyclists-honour-sir-bobby-robson-and-kevin-keegan**



12

CONSETT

A Lifetime on the Land: Keith Harrison's Life in Farming

A lifetime on the land.

For Keith Harrison, farming is not simply a job. It is a way of life shaped by early mornings, changing seasons, family responsibility and a deep connection to the land.

Words and photographs by Juan Fitzgerald, Communities in Focus Online 8 July 2026
Continued at **consettmagazine.com/a-lifetime-on-the-land-keith-harrisons-life-in-farming**

In brief



13

CONSETT

New Accessible Sailing Dinghy Makes Maiden Voyage at Derwent Reservoir

Derwent Reservoir Sailing Club celebrated an important step forward for inclusive sailing with the official launch of its new adapted dinghy, New Venture.

By Consett Magazine Online 11 July 2026
Continued at **consettmagazine.com/new-accessible-sailing-dinghy-makes-maiden-voyage-at-derwent-reservoir**



13

Photo: Mark Wilkinson, Communities in Focus

CONSETT

The King's Head Finds New Life at the Heart of Lanchester

The village pub has always been at the heart of community life, but many have struggled in recent years. The Kings Head was one of them, until Rachel Simpson and Kelly Wardman stepped in and gave it a new lease of life.

By Consett Magazine Online 7 July 2026
Continued at **consettmagazine.com/the-kings-head-finds-new-life-at-the-heart-of-lanchester**



13

SUNDERLAND

Five Sunderland Parks Celebrate Green Flag Award Success

Five parks across Sunderland are proudly raising prestigious Green Flags after receiving international quality marks.

Sunderland City Council will raise the flags at Barnes Park, Herrington Country Park, Hetton Lyons Country Park, Mowbray Park and Roker Park.

By Zoe Online 17 July 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/five-sunderland-parks-celebrate-green-flag-award-success**



13

SUNDERLAND

Sunderland To Host Free England World Cup Semi-Final Fan Zone

Football fans of all ages are invited to gather in Keel Square on Wednesday 15 July as Sunderland hosts a free fan zone for England's World Cup semi-final against Argentina.

By Sunderland Magazine Online 13 July 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/sunderland-to-host-free-england-world-cup-semi-final-fan-zone**

In brief



14

STANLEY

Stanley Housing Scheme Received Life-Saving Defibrillator In £62,000 Rollout

A publicly accessible defibrillator was installed at Oakwood Court in Annfield Plain as part of a £62,000 project designed to save lives across the North East.

By Stanley Magazine Online 18 July 2026
Continued at **stanleymagazine.com/stanley-housing-scheme-received-life-saving-defibrillator-in-62000-rollout**

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