# NEWCASTLE MAGAZINE

DIGITAL EDITION
November 2026



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NEWCASTLE MAGAZINE

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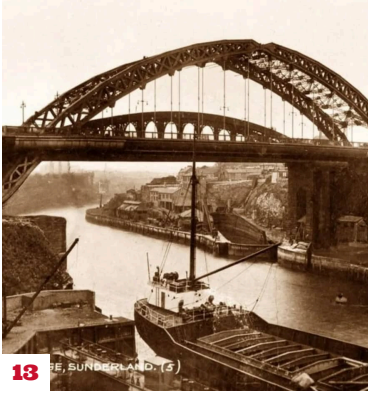
Every photo is numbered with its page. Spot a face, turn to the number.

On the cover: Jamie Ferry, farmer and sheepdog trainer, page 13. Photo: George Ledger, Communities in Focus.

**newcastlemagazine.com**




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NEWCASTLE

# Northern 500 Programme Launched to Help Businesses Grow and Create Jobs Across the North

*Ambitious businesses from across the North of England are being backed to grow by mayors and the private sector through a new Northern 500 programme, whose Partners Council met for the first time in Newcastle.*

Businesses across the North of England are set to benefit from new opportunities for growth, investment and innovation through the Government's Northern 500 programme.

This week, North East Mayor Kim McGuinness and NatWest Group chief executive Paul Thwaite co-chaired the first Northern 500 Partners Council meeting.

## What the Programme Will Do

The Northern 500 will bring together the North's most ambitious mid-sized businesses into a single growth community, led by The Great North partnership of Mayors. Funding to deliver the programme was confirmed by the Chancellor in the Budget, which also highlighted private sector involvement, including NatWest Group and Sage.

Following Natwest Group co-chairing the Partners Council the role will pass to Lloyds Banking Group next year.

The programme will open up new opportunities for Northern firms looking to scale, invest, innovate and reach new markets, helping to create jobs and drive economic growth across the North.

### Why Mid-Sized Firms Matter

According to research conducted by NatWest Group, mid-sized businesses are among the UK's most powerful engines of economic growth. Although they account for just 0.5% of UK companies, more than 13,000 mid-market firms employ 7.3 million people and generate around £420 billion in economic value each year.

The research, in NatWest's The Critical Middle report, suggests that unlocking just 1% additional growth among these businesses could generate an extra £24 billion for the economy outside London and the South East by 2030.

Yet many ambitious firms face barriers to reaching their full potential, from accessing investment and skilled workers to adopting new technologies and breaking into international markets. The Northern 500 aims to close that gap, harnessing the collective strength of Northern mayors, business leaders and national institutions to help more firms turn their ambition into growth.

Further research from Lloyds Business Barometer released in September shows that four in five UK businesses are confident in their regional economic growth in the next three years, with planning and investment in community and transport reported as the key drivers of future regional economic growth.

Confidence was highest in the North East, where 90% of businesses expect regional economic growth, and the North West at 88%.

### Partners Council and Next Steps

Kim McGuinness, North East Mayor and Chair of The Great North, will co-chair the Northern 500 Partners Council alongside a rotating business co-chair. Paul Thwaite, Chief Executive of NatWest Group, will serve for the first six months, with Amanda Murphy, CEO of Business and Commercial Banking at Lloyds taking the co-chair role for the second six months in 2027.

The Council met in Newcastle on Wednesday 4th November, bringing together senior business leaders and national partners to agree the programme's priorities and next steps.

An initial cohort of around 80 to 100 businesses will be identified through Northern mayoral strategic authorities, ahead of the programme's planned formal launch in January 2027.

NatWest Group and Lloyds Banking Group will bring their experience of supporting mid-market businesses, access to finance and expertise in helping ambitious firms grow and expand into new markets.

Sage, the FTSE 100 technology company headquartered in the North East, will support the programme, bringing expertise in digital transformation, technology adoption and innovation to help Northern businesses improve productivity and realise their growth potential.

**By Sara Janiszewska**

Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/northern-500-programme-launched-to-help-businesses-grow-and-create-jobs-across-the-north**

CONSETT

# Wonderful gifts from a stranger - the magic of books travelling throughout the country

*Scrolling through social media one rainy, freezing, winter's day in early 2024, Karen Dickie stumbled upon a page called 'Book club swap shop' - she shares her experiences*




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Photo: Karen Dickie

Originally, I thought this page could simply be another fantastic resource for recommendations however a post from the voluntary organiser of the group caught my attention about a secret book swap between members.

I have to say, I was a little dubious about joining in: the swap did seem a little too good to be true. Initially, I was very wary about giving away personal details to people or organisations that were not known to me.

However, deciding to take a leap of faith and entering into the spirit of the swap I gave it a try. If it hadn't worked out that first time, I wouldn't have done it again and would have requested that my details were immediately removed. There is a more detailed description of the actual process of how the swaps are administered included at the end of this article.

I'm really pleased to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed all the secret book swaps that I have been involved in, becoming an active member of the group and nearly three years later still look forward to receiving my parcel every time the swap is available.

How you can get involved - https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1CjixMBoDU/

**By Karen Dickie**

Continued at **consettmagazine.com/wonderful-gifts-from-a-stranger-the-magic-of-books-travelling-throughout-the-country**

SUNDERLAND

# Sunderland Launches UK's Largest School Esports Programme Across 14 Local Schools

*Sunderland is set to become the first place in the UK to introduce esports across 14 primary and secondary schools, creating the country's largest school-based esports programme.*



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Sunderland is set to become the first place in the UK to introduce esports across 14 primary and secondary schools, creating the country's largest school-based esports programme.

The city is uniquely positioned to be a national leader in educational esports, with Sunderland headquartered British Esports Federation supporting schools to create safe, supervised gaming environments that help develop digital skills, teamwork, confidence and pathways into future careers.

The co-ordinated roll out is part of a council funded pioneering £2m enrichment programme designed to boost engagement in education and raise aspirations, particularly in communities where additional support and opportunities can have the greatest impact.

## Ryhope Junior School Leads the Way

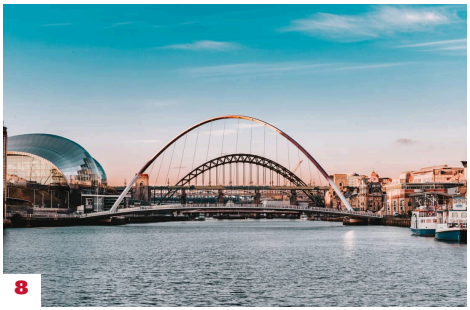
Ryhope Junior School is one of the first schools in the city to complete its dedicated esports suite and will serve as the flagship school for the programme's launch. The wider esports investment is expected to total between £900,000 and £1 million across 14 Sunderland schools and will benefit around 3,600 pupils citywide.

**By Zoe Walker**

Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/sunderland-launches-uks-largest-school-esports-programme-across-14-local-schools**

NEWCASTLE

# Newcastle and Gateshead Regeneration Plan Opens for Public Views Until 6 January



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Residents across the North East are being invited to help shape the future of Newcastle and Gateshead, with plans to create vibrant, welcoming places to live, work and enjoy.

The North East Mayor and leaders of Newcastle and Gateshead councils have launched a public consultation on a draft Strategic Regeneration Framework, giving residents, businesses and community groups the opportunity to share their views on the area's future development.

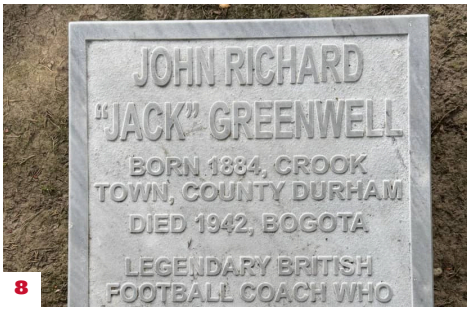
The consultation opened on 6 November 2026 and will run until 6 January 2027.

**By Barbara Parker**

Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/newcastle-and-gateshead-regeneration-plan-opens-for-public-views-until-6-january**

DURHAM

# Crook football legend receives tombstone 84 years later




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Photo: Richard McColl

Jack Greenwell, of Crook Town, County Durham, is arguably the most successful English football coach to have ever plied his trade overseas.

He won 13 awards in Spain with Barcelona, Espanyol and Valencia, was Peruvian champion with Universitario of Lima and triumphed in the Copa America with Peru before arriving in Colombia and coaching Independiente de Santa Fe in Bogotá.

## A forgotten footnote

This begs the question, why does he remain an almost forgotten footnote in the archives of international football, despite being inducted into the Football Hall of Fame in 2025. There is so little recorded about Jack Greenwell's time in Bogotá, a mere two months, which perhaps makes the story even more enticing.

**By Richard McColl**

Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/crook-legend-receives-tombstone-84-years-later**

NEWCASTLE

## North East Rugby Players Swap Boots for Swimsuits in Hilarious Charity Calendar




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Photo: Joe Costigan Photography

A group of former North East rugby players have traded their muddy boots for miniskirts, swimsuits and Spice Girls outfits in a lighthearted fundraising campaign supporting motor neurone disease charities.

The former Ryton Rugby Club players have teamed up with Newcastle photographer Joe Costigan to create a humorous 2027 charity calendar, recreating 12 iconic images of women with plenty of personality, laughter and community spirit, all for a good cause.

And while the finished photographs might raise a few eyebrows, there's a serious reason behind the laughter.

**By Albert Nelson**

Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/north-east-rugby-players-swap-boots-for-swimsuits-in-hilarious-charity-calendar**

DURHAM

## County Durham and Northumberland celebrate 25 years of Harry Potter magic



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Photo: Visit County Durham

County Durham and Northumberland are celebrating 25 years of Harry Potter magic, shining a spotlight on the region's special connection to one of the world's most beloved film franchises.

To mark the anniversary of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, which first reached cinemas in November 2001, the two counties have joined forces on a special campaign celebrating their iconic filming locations. The initiative highlights the region's role in bringing the wizarding world to life and invites fans to discover the real-life places behind the magic.

**By Barbara Parker**

Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/county-durham-and-northumberland-celebrate-25-years-of-harry-potter-magic**

# In brief



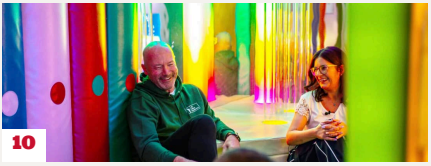
Photo: Erin Malik

NEWCASTLE

## Fenwick Christmas Window Brings the Gruffalo's Child to Newcastle

The Fenwick Christmas Window is one of the North East's most beloved family traditions, globally renowned for its stunning designs and captivating stories each year.

**By Erin Malik**
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/fenwick-christmas-window-brings-the-gruffalos-child-to-newcastle**



NEWCASTLE

## Alan Shearer and Northern Lights Newcastle Team up to Move a Mile This Christmas

Northern Lights Newcastle partners with the Alan Shearer Foundation and its Move a Mile challenge this Christmas.

Alan Shearer will visit the trail to complete his own mile alongside members of the Alan Shearer Centre.

**By Holly Smith-Turner**
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/alan-shearer-and-northern-lights-newcastle-team-up-to-move-a-mile-this-christmas**



NEWCASTLE

## Newcastle fashion designer wins prestigious award at Milan Fashion Week

A talented North East fashion designer has taken her creativity to the international stage, impressing audiences at Milan Fashion Week with a striking collection made predominantly from recycled and upcycled materials.

**By Sara Janiszewska**
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/newcastle-fashion-designer-wins-prestigious-award-at-milan-fashion-week**



NEWCASTLE

## Newcastle Hospitals and Gateshead Health celebrate 10 years of life-saving stroke partnership

Patients, clinicians, and healthcare partners are marking ten years since the launch of a hyper-acute stroke service that has transformed emergency stroke care across Newcastle and Gateshead.

**By Alex Nelson**
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/newcastle-hospitals-and-gateshead-health-celebrate-10-years-of-life-saving-stroke-partnership**

# In brief



NEWCASTLE

## Gosforth hospice introduces year-long activity programme to tackle isolation and build friendships

St Oswald's Hospice in Gosforth is introducing a new programme of free weekly activities, offering patients a welcoming space to connect with others, develop practical skills and enjoy meaningful experiences that support their wellbeing.

**By Barbara Parker**
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/gosforth-hospice-introduces-year-long-activity-programme-to-tackle-isolation-and-build-friendships**



Photo: Arne Müseler / arne-mueseler.com, CC BY-SA 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0), cropped

NEWCASTLE

## Newcastle's St James' Park revealed as potential host venue for the 2035 Women's World Cup

St James' Park in Newcastle has been revealed as a potential host venue for the 2035 Women's World Cup.

**By Erin Malik**
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/newcastles-st-james-park-revealed-as-potential-host-venue-for-the-2035-womens-world-cup**



Photo: Durham County Council

DURHAM

## Tanfield Railway Volunteers Receive County Durham's Highest Civic Honour

Dedicated volunteers who have helped preserve and transform Tanfield Railway, the world's oldest railway, have been recognised with County Durham's highest civic honour.

**By Albert Nelson**
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/tanfield-railway-volunteers-receive-county-durhams-highest-civic-honour**



DURHAM

## Durham Christmas Festival 2026 returns with over 200 stalls and festive family fun

Durham is preparing to welcome the festive season in style as Durham Christmas Festival 2026 returns on Friday 4 December, opening at 9 am for three days of Christmas shopping, seasonal celebrations and community spirit.

**By Albert Nelson**
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/durham-christmas-festival-2026-returns-with-over-200-stalls-and-festive-family-fun**

# In brief




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Photo: Y Hawkey

DURHAM

## Jörd brings fine dining to Bishop Auckland market place

Inspired by a passion for Scandinavian cuisine and a belief in letting exceptional ingredients speak for themselves, Jörd offers a fresh approach to fine dining, with a menu centred around locally sourced produce, seasonality and simplicity.

By Yvonne Hawkey
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/jord-brings-fine-dining-to-bishop-auckland-market-place**



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Photo: My Delhi

DURHAM

## My Delhi donates 500 meals to six North East charities ahead of Christmas

A North East restaurant group recently crowned Champion of Champions has prepared and donated 500 freshly cooked meals to six local charities.

By Nicky Hayer
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/my-delhi-donates-500-meals-to-six-north-east-charities-ahead-of-christmas**



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SUNDERLAND

## Sunderland Families Come Together to Create Colourful Mural Celebrating Their City

Families, schools and community groups across Sunderland have come together to share what makes their city special, inspiring a colourful new mural celebrating local stories, memories and community pride.

By Barbara Parker
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/sunderland-families-come-together-to-create-colourful-mural-celebrating-their-city**



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SUNDERLAND

## Sunderland cycling charity marks 30th anniversary with 321-mile challenge

Gateway Wheelers is celebrating 30 years of bringing the joy of cycling to people of all abilities, marking the milestone with a special fundraising event at Houghton Rectory Park.

By Cattherine Wilson
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/sunderland-cycling-charity-marks-30th-anniversary-with-321-mile-challenge**

# In brief



Photo: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, via Wikimedia Commons (Wearmouth Bridge, Sunderland, 1930s), no known copyright restrictions

SUNDERLAND

## Timepiece: The new installation at Culture House Sunderland bringing the region's past to each hour

From Monday 16th November, the newly-opened Culture House Sunderland is set to signal in each hour with an audio-visual collage of the city's history.

**By Erin Malik**
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/timepiece-the-new-installation-at-culture-house-sunderland-bringing-the-regions-past-to-each-hour**




Photo: Robin Webb

CONSETT

## A proud return for the Steelworks Train and Ladle

On Saturday 19 September, a powerful symbol of Consett's industrial heritage took centre stage at The Heart: the newly renovated Steelworks Train and Ladle, lovingly restored by local craftsman and heritage champion Rob Moran.

**By History of Consett Steelworks Group**
Continued at **consettmagazine.com/a-proud-return-for-the-steelworks-train-and-ladle**



CONSETT

## Jamie Ferry, farmer and sheepdog trainer

From a young age, Jamie Ferry knew he wanted to be a farmer. Growing up in Stanley, his passion began when his parents bought him nine sheep and rented a small piece of land near Burnhope.

**Words and photographs by George Ledger, Communities in Focus**
Continued at **consettmagazine.com/jamie-ferry-farmer-and-sheepdog-trainer**



Photo: George Ledger, Communities in Focus

CONSETT

## Harvest time at Lanchester Community Orchard

Lanchester Community Orchard is more than just a place to grow fruit. It's a thriving community space created by local people, for local people.

**By Chris Bruce**
Continued at **consettmagazine.com/harvest-time-at-lanchester-community-orchard**

# In brief




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Photo: Office of Liz Twist MP

BLAYDON

## Blaydon, Ryton and Chopwell volunteers celebrated at the Red Kite Awards

The Winlaton Centre was full of local heroes on Saturday 21 November, as Liz Twist, MP for Blaydon and Consett, held her second annual Red Kite Awards.

By Barry Kirkham
Continued at **blaydonmagazine.co.uk/red-kite-awards-2026-blaydon-winlaton-volunteers-celebrated**



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Photo: Roger Clegg

HEXHAM

## £5.7m Plan to Bring Hadrian's Wall's Hidden Stories to Life

Visitors to Hadrian's Wall will find new information hubs, better signposting, a new cycle route and augmented reality heritage trails along its length, after £5.714 million of UK Government funding was approved by the Borderlands Partnership Board.

By Local Magazines newsdesk
Continued at **hexhammagazine.co.uk/57m-plan-to-bring-hadrians-walls-hidden-stories-to-life**



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MIDDLESBROUGH

## Middlesbrough to honour sporting heroes with permanent town centre tribute

Middlesbrough is preparing to celebrate its proud sporting heritage with a new town centre project that will honour local athletes who have represented their countries on the international stage.

By Zoe Walker
Continued at **middlesbroughmagazine.co.uk/middlesbrough-to-honour-sporting-heroes-with-permanent-town-centre-tribute**



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DARLINGTON

## Retired Officer Meets Air Ambulance Crew Who Saved His Life

A retired police officer from Darlington and his colleagues have thanked their local air ambulance service for coming to their aid following a road traffic collision earlier this year.

By Zoe Walker
Continued at **darlingtonmagazine.com/retired-officer-meets-air-ambulance-crew-who-saved-his-life**

# In brief

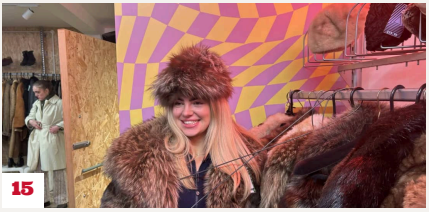


Photo: The Northern School of Art

HARTLEPOOL

## Hartlepool fashion student lands Victoria Beckham Internship

Ebony Murtha has swapped the studio in Hartlepool's Northern School of Art for an internship with Victoria Beckham's London Atelier.

**By ian monaghan**
Continued at **hartlepoolmagazine.co.uk/hartlepool-fashion-student-lands-victoria-beckham-internship**

*Your turn*

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