SUNDERLAND MAGAZINE

DIGITAL EDITION
September 2026

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

On the cover: Three Sunderland Hotel Staff Recognised in North East Hospitality Awards, page 8. Photo supplied by Hilton Garden Inn Sunderland.

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

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SUNDERLAND

Sunderland Restaurant Week Attracts Almost 15,000 Diners

Sunderland's recent Restaurant Week brought thousands of diners into the city and highlighted the growing popularity of the Healthy Plates initiative.

The latest Sunderland Restaurant Week began on 5 September, with almost 15,000 diners enjoying special deals at more than 60 eateries.

For the first time, Healthy Plates, a scheme where restaurants are encouraged to have healthier options without compromising taste, was incorporated into the week and has proven to be a huge success.

A huge 92 per cent of people surveyed said that healthier options matter when eating out, and that reflects in the most popular venues visited during Sunderland Restaurant Week.

Rio Brazilian Steakhouse, which has been signed up to Healthy Plates since day one, welcomed more than 1300 guests over the course of the event.

More and more venues across the city are joining Healthy Plates, which has been so successful it will be part of the first Restaurant Week of 2027 which will be held in March.

Once again we have had a really successful Restaurant Week with visitors turning out in force to experience Sunderland's fast growing and vibrant restaurant scene, said Roberta Redecke, Head of Business Services at Sunderland's BIDs which organise the week.

Each time there are a range of different places for people to try which reflects the ever-increasing food offer we have.

Adding in Healthy Plates has brought another dimension, giving people the option for a healthy choice and it's fantastic to see how businesses have also embraced the opportunity to be part of this initiative.

The positive response to Restaurant Week was echoed by those taking part.

Lewis Kenney, General Manager at Rio Steakhouse which proved to be the most popular choice by diners, is thrilled with the response.

It's always a pleasure taking part in Restaurant Week, he said.

Every time, we see so many new faces and welcome new guests, as well as those who have visited us before. This year was our busiest one yet, and it was also the first time we ran the offer for the full week.

The top ten venues across the week included Rio, Ember, newcomer No 32, Love Lily at Herrington Country Park, Signatures Italian, Vito's Osteria, Asiana, The Botanist, Babaji and Balér.

Restaurant Week is always such a brilliant opportunity for us to welcome both familiar faces and new guests through our doors. This year was particularly special, and the response across both Ember and No.32 was fantastic, said Tamer Hassan, owner of Ember and co-owner of No 32 with Vittorio Farigu.

To finish second and third for total diners is a huge achievement for our teams, who put so much work into making sure every guest had a great experience.

Restaurant Week creates a real buzz around the local dining scene and has a genuinely positive impact on our businesses.

Sunderland Restaurant Week was also supported by Nexus and marketing manager, David Turton, added that it was another successful event.

We were delighted to support Sunderland Restaurant Week, helping connect diners with Sunderland's excellent restaurants while showcasing how Tyne and Wear Metro makes it easy for people to travel into the city and enjoy everything it has to offer, he said.

Anyone wanting to find out more about events and initiatives in Sunderland should visit sunderlandbid.co.uk

By Zoe Walker Online 26 September 2026
Read more: **sunderlandmagazine.com**

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Meet the NHS Workers Ready for the AJ Bell Great North Run 2026



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Celebrating 45 years of the iconic half marathon from Newcastle to South Shields, this year's event expects a record-breaking 63,000 runners.

Among them, over 80 participants are running for STS Charity over the weekend, raising funds to improve care and experiences for patients, families, and staff across the South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust.

That total includes 60 adults in the main event, 18 of them being STSFT colleagues, plus 26 Mini and Junior runners, many from staff families.

Among them is Jason Lewins, Application Development Officer at STSFT. He is running for STS Charity to support the Phoenix Unit at Sunderland Royal Hospital. He said:

I've decided to raise money for the Phoenix Unit which is the Trust's Chemotherapy, Haematology and Infusion Day Unit.

Sunderland is recognised as a Cancer Unit and is part of the North of England Cancer Network.

"Over the years I have sadly had a number of family members pass away due to cancer, which is why I wanted to play my part in helping raise as much money as I can to help the unit continue their important work. I have never completed the GNR and thought what better way to challenge myself for a great cause!

Hayley Walton, Facilities Administration, System & Compliance Manager for Choice, is also running for STS Charity. Choice is a subsidiary company of STSFT. She said:

By Beth Smith Online 8 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/meet-the-nhs-workers-ready-for-the-aj-bell-great-north-run-2026**

University of Sunderland Athlete Crowned Commonwealth Powerlifting Champion

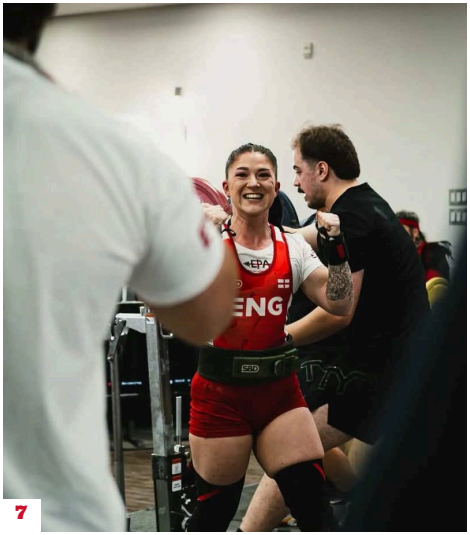

Photo: Clean Strength Media

An elite athlete from the University of Sunderland has been crowned 2026 Commonwealth Powerlifting Champion following an outstanding performance in Canada.

Representing England in the Open 57kg category, Team Sunderland's Caitlin Baxter finished first overall at the 2026 Commonwealth Powerlifting Championships, taking gold in both the squat and bench press before securing third place in the deadlift.

Alongside winning the overall Commonwealth title, Caitlin, who studies Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Pharmacy at the University, also produced a number of standout performances.

Her 113.5kg bench press not only won her the individual bench press competition but also set a new Open Commonwealth record in the 57kg category.

She also produced a 177.5kg deadlift, which earned her a bronze medal in the discipline and represented a new personal best and also set a new record, establishing a new benchmark for her category across the Yorkshire and north-east region.

Her three best lifts, a 170kg squat, 113.5kg bench press and 177.5kg deadlift, combined to give her a huge 461kg total at a bodyweight of just 56.08kg.

About her win, Caitlin, 25, Newcastle upon Tyne, said:

I can't quite begin to describe how ecstatic I am. This was my tenth international competition, but my first ever Commonwealths and win for the Open English Women's Team, so it all feels incredibly special.

There was a huge amount of hard work involved in my preparation for this event with balancing work, training, and studies for my diploma. It was therefore very rewarding to see it all come together and successfully reach my goals of winning my category and contributing team points. This resulted in the Women's Open English Team placing second, which made the achievement even more special.

By Catherine Wilson Online 30 September 2026

Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/university-of-sunderland-athlete-crowned-commonwealth-powerlifting-champion**

SUNDERLAND

Three Sunderland Hotel Staff Recognised in North East Hospitality Awards



Photo supplied by Hilton Garden Inn Sunderland

Three team members from Hilton Garden Inn Sunderland have been shortlisted for prestigious North East hospitality awards, recognising their outstanding contributions across maintenance, housekeeping and reception.

The nominees have reached the final stages of the North East Hotels Association Excellence Awards, which celebrate the achievements of people working in hospitality across the region.

A member of the maintenance team, Ella-Louise Bodin, has been shortlisted in the Best Newcomer section, joining the hotel as an apprentice on placement through East Durham College.

By Zoe Walker Online 2 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/three-sunderland-hotel-staff-recognised-in-north-east-hospitality-awards**

SUNDERLAND

Active Sunderland BIG Walk Returns to Herrington Country Park



Active Sunderland BIG Walk is returning for 2026, with people of all ages invited to sign up and take part.

This year's event will take place at Herrington Country Park on Sunday 27 September, offering a fun, family-friendly day outdoors as well as the chance to take on a walking challenge.

There are four routes available, and walkers can select a walk that suits them, from a gentle, accessible three mile stroll to a challenging hike. Choose between three, six, nine or 13.5 mile routes.

All routes start at 10am from near the amphitheatre and skate park. The longer routes take walkers outside of the park onto footpaths through open countryside and ancient woodland, and along the banks of the River Wear.

By Zoe Walker Online 10 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/active-sunderland-big-walk-returns-to-herrington-country-park**

SUNDERLAND

Milo the Therapy Dog Brings Joy to Stroke Patient



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A heartwarming moment at South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust has highlighted the powerful impact therapy dogs can have on patients recovering in hospital.

Ronald Shaw, 94, from Sunderland, has been receiving care at Sunderland Royal Hospital after suffering a stroke. After spending several weeks on the ward, Ron had been missing his family dogs and the comfort they bring.

That changed when Milo, a Bedlington Terrier and much-loved Pets As Therapy dog at STSFT, paid him a visit.

Volunteer Jill Bambrough, and her gentle companion Milo, were asked by staff on a neighbouring ward to meet Ron and the impact was immediate.

Jill, who has been volunteering with the Trust since November, said:

By Beth Smith Online 10 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/milo-the-therapy-dog-brings-joy-to-stroke-patient**

SUNDERLAND

Falls Prevention Week Highlights Progress for Older Residents in Sunderland



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Sunderland is marking Falls Prevention Week, from Monday 21 to Friday 25 September, by celebrating a major improvement in the falls rate among the city's older residents.

The city has improved from being ranked 150th out of 151 areas in England for falls, the second highest falls rate in the country, to 75th out of 151 in 2024-25.

This improvement means that Sunderland's falls rate is now below the national average for the first time.

Falls are one of the most common causes of injury in later life, affecting around one in three adults aged over 65 and half of those aged over 80 each year. In Sunderland, it is estimated that between 35,000 and 40,000 falls occur annually.

By Barbara Parker Online 18 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/falls-prevention-week-highlights-progress-for-older-residents-in-sunderland**

In brief



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SUNDERLAND

Free Events to Showcase Sunderland's Historic Sites

Free events celebrating Sunderland's history will begin this week as part of this year's Heritage Open Days, England's largest festival of history and culture.

By Catherine Wilson Online 11 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/free-events-to-showcase-sunderlands-historic-sites**



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SUNDERLAND

New Sunderland Hub Opens to Support Young People

A new hub for young people has opened in Sunderland, bringing a range of services together under one roof to offer a welcoming and safe space for advice and support.

By Catherine Wilson Online 24 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/new-sunderland-hub-opens-to-support-young-people**



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Photo supplied by Sunderland City Council

SUNDERLAND

Communities Asked to Share Views on Sunderland's Future Growth

Communities across Sunderland are being invited to share their first thoughts on a new Local Plan and how the city should develop over the next 20 years.

By Albert Nelson Online 4 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/communities-asked-to-share-views-on-sunderlands-future-growth**



10

SUNDERLAND

Bernicia Development to Bring New Social Rent Homes to Sunderland

A North East housing association's £11.4m scheme in Silksworth will deliver a mix of two, three and four-bedroom homes, alongside two-bedroom bungalows for social rent, with rents set well below the UK market average.

By Rhianna Hay Online 7 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/bernicia-development-to-bring-new-social-rent-homes-to-sunderland**

In brief



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SUNDERLAND

Social Care Charity Supporting People in Jarrow and Sunderland Becomes The Do Good Charity

SJOG (Saint John of God Hospitaller Services) has become The Do Good Charity, but says there will be no change to the values or personalised approach underpinning its local care.

By Clair Challenor-Chadwick Online 15 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/social-care-charity-supporting-people-in-jarrow-and-sunderland-becomes-the-do-good-charity**



11

SUNDERLAND

Sunderland Business School Re-Accredited with Small Business Charter

The University of Sunderland's Business School has been re-accredited with the Small Business Charter, recognising its work to support small businesses, student entrepreneurship and the local economy.

By Albert Nelson Online 28 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/sunderland-business-school-re-accredited-with-small-business-charter**



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SUNDERLAND

Community Session Explores Future of Cancer Care Across South Tyneside and Sunderland

People affected by cancer are helping to shape the future of cancer care across South Tyneside and Sunderland.

By Barbara Parker Online 22 September 2026
Continued at **sunderlandmagazine.com/community-session-explores-future-of-cancer-care-across-south-tyneside-and-sunderland**



11

NEWCASTLE

Tyne Rivers Trust Secures £249,579 National Lottery Funding

A £249,579 award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund will help North East environmental charity Tyne Rivers Trust invest in new staff, stronger systems and long-term resilience as it prepares for the next phase of its work.

By Sara Janiszewska Online 25 September 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/tyne-rivers-trust-secures-249579-national-lottery-funding**

In brief



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NEWCASTLE

Tyne and Wear Firefighters Inspire Next Generation Through Silver Axe Success

When Natalie Mortimer stepped onto the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service podium to receive the prestigious Silver Axe Award more than two decades ago, she had no idea where her career would take her.

By Sara Janiszewska Online 4 September 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/tyne-and-wear-firefighters-inspire-next-generation-through-silver-axe-success**



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NEWCASTLE

Sir Bobby Robson Institute Fundraising Enters Final £1m Phase

Fundraising for the Sir Bobby Robson Institute, a world-leading cancer drug trials centre for the region, has entered a crucial final phase, with the public being asked to help raise the final £1 million needed.

By Albert Nelson Online 17 September 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/sir-bobby-robson-institute-fundraising-enters-final-1m-phase**



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NEWCASTLE

Newbiggin Woman and Loyal Dog Take on 100-Mile Cancer Challenge

A Newbiggin-by-the-Sea woman is taking on a 100-mile walking challenge with her loyal dog Teddy after seeing first-hand the devastating impact cancer can have on a family.

By Zoe Eastman Online 3 September 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/newbiggin-woman-and-loyal-dog-take-on-100-mile-cancer-challenge**



12

NEWCASTLE

Birtley Swimmer Takes on Four Lakes Challenge for Community Pool

A Birtley swimmer is preparing to take on an extraordinary 11.5-mile open water swim this month to raise vital funds for Birtley Community Pool.

By Sara Janiszewska Online 7 September 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/birtley-swimmer-takes-on-four-lakes-challenge-for-community-pool**

In brief



NEWCASTLE

Wor Peter Sculpture Set for Charity Auction at St James' Park

Football fans will have the chance to snap up the latest signing at Newcastle's St James' Park during a very special transfer window next month.

By Sara Janiszewska Online 11 September 2026
Continued at **newcastlemagazine.com/wor-peter-sculpture-set-for-charity-auction-at-st-james-park**



DURHAM

Bishop Auckland Wins Gold at Northumbria in Bloom Awards

Bishop Auckland has been recognised for its commitment to environmental improvement and civic pride after winning Gold in the Large Town category at the annual Northumbria in Bloom Awards.

By Barbara Parker Online 22 September 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/bishop-auckland-wins-gold-at-northumbria-in-bloom-awards**



DURHAM

Miss Durham Nicole Hanson Unites Car Culture and Pageantry to Raise £1,270 for Cancer Research UK

Since being crowned Miss Durham earlier this year, Nicole Hanson has used her platform to bridge two distinct passions: pageantry and motorsport.

By Barbara Parker Online 30 September 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/miss-durham-nicole-hanson-unites-car-culture-and-pageantry-to-raise-1270-for-cancer-research-uk**



DURHAM

Bishop Auckland Heritage Festival returns with free talks, classic cars and local history displays

Bishop Auckland Town Council will host the fourth annual Heritage Festival on Saturday 26 September, from 10am to 3pm, offering a full programme of free talks, heritage displays, exhibitions and interactive activities. The event celebrates the town's rich industrial and cultural heritage and is open to all.

By Durham Magazine Online 15 September 2026
Continued at **durhammagazine.co.uk/bishop-auckland-heritage-festival-returns-with-free-talks-classic-cars-and-local-history-displays**

In brief



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BLAYDON

Liz Twist MP Visits Blaydon Leisure Centre to See How the Centre Brings the Community Together

Last week (16 September), to coincide with National Fitness Day, GLL welcomed MP for Blaydon and Consett, Liz Twist, to Blaydon Leisure Centre.

By Jo Leatham Online 28 September 2026
Continued at **blaydonmagazine.co.uk/liz-twist-mp-visits-blaydon-leisure-centre-to-see-how-the-centre-brings-the-community-together**

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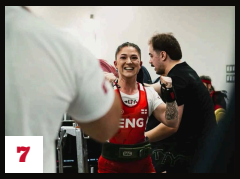

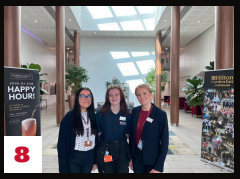



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