



The Echo

The Magazine of the Elders Council

Issue 97

May - July 2022

Elders Council of Newcastle Annual General Meeting 2022

It gives me great pleasure to invite members to the 2022 AGM, when we will celebrate the Coming of Age (21st birthday) of the Elders Council.

This will be held on:

Wednesday 20 July, from 2pm to 4pm

(Registration will be from 1.30pm)

The Pandon Room, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne.

We are looking forward to seeing old friends, and meeting new ones, in person. The AGM will give us an opportunity to reflect on our work over the last twelve months, to think about what really matters to us, and to set out our plan for the coming year.

We will also conduct the formal business of the AGM, including the presentation of the Annual Report and Accounts, and the election of Trustees (Directors) of the Board of the Elders Council of Newcastle. And, of course, there will be tea and cake to celebrate! We do hope that you will be able to join us on the day, and that you will send us stories or poems about your EC memories over the years.

Please reply as soon as possible, but no later than Friday 20th May, to our email address or by completing the reply slip and returning it to the office address shown at the end of the Magazine.

If you are unable to attend, please complete the proxy vote slip and return it as soon as possible.

I look forward very much to seeing you on 20 July 2022.

Anne Raffle

Chair of the Elders Council

What's the Elders Council Doing?

Age Friendly Neighbourhoods

This spring we've been focusing on talking to older people in 3 areas of the city – Byker, Walker and West Fenham (that's the area that includes the west part of Fenham and Slatyford).

We've visited lots of community groups in these areas to:

- encourage people to apply for our small sparks grants to get Age Friendly activities up and running
- hear about what older people have to say about things that affect their lives such as the pandemic, health, access to advice and information, crime and antisocial behaviour
- listen to people's stories to help us make connections
- tell people about the work of the Elders Council and how they can be involved and get information.



We've been working with local organisations to run community events in each area.

Our first event was held at the St Martins Centre on 28 March, we ran some fun activities and had food.

We worked with local organisations to promote the events, provide activities and engage with older people in the area and we talked to people

about the grant ideas.

We asked people "What would make Byker more Age Friendly?" Here's a sample from many suggestions from the event.

"Advocacy is available face to face and telephone – not everyone has the internet"

"Assessment for aids and adaptations should be sooner rather than later, weeks not months"

"More visible police presence on the streets"

Come to the Tea Club at St Martin's on a Tuesday – it's been going since 1970"

We ran a similar event on 4 April at Denton Burn Community Association on Slatyford Lane and are looking forward to receiving applications for new ideas for activities that get people together in the area.

We asked people what would make West Fenham more Age Friendly, they too had good ideas, here's one or two of them



"Advice on home maintenance"

"More seating on north Denton Dene as it's good for walking"

"Community Centre being used for a wider range of the community, e.g., crafting classes/family research – there seems to be things for young mums but not for older people"

"More sharing of premises for activities/meetings so small groups don't incur large costs"

Our next event is at Treetops Village, Walker Road on 25 April, we look forward to seeing lots of people there!

To find out more about small sparks grants of up to £200 for Byker, Walker and West Fenham, please get in touch.

Thanks to all the volunteers and organisations who've worked in partnership with us and supported this work



St Martins Centre, Search, Keyring, YHN, Byker Community Trust, Anchor Housing, Slatyford Friendship Club, Community Catering Initiative, Community Champions, Healthworks, Unfolding Theatre, Denton Burn Community Association and to Newcastle City Council for providing a community health grant for the events.

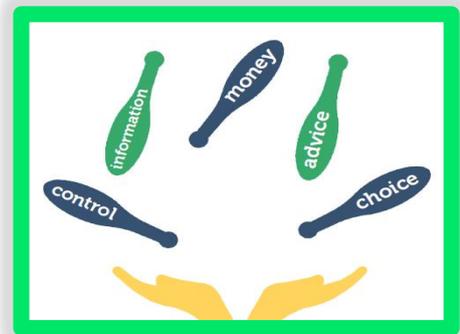
Clare Levi

The home care circus continues to perform some new acts!

You may remember that we told you about how well our animation video has been received in the last edition of The Echo. Here at the EC, we hope you have had a chance to watch it on YouTube and tell us what you think. It didn't win an Oscar (!) but the video and our report, *Managing the Home Care Circus*, is certainly having an impact.

Last week we showed it to social workers and managers in local authorities around the region as part of an online teaching session about home care. This was in response to an invitation to take part in a programme for professional development for social workers who work with older people. Several members of the EC took part in discussions about what we thought was good practice and listening to what older people might want.

We've also had several discussions with managers in the Adult Social Care services in Newcastle about providing better information and advice regarding what is available to help people stay at home. Finally, we have been asked to help with the way the Council is deciding which care agencies might be suitable to get new contracts when they negotiate these. We think the older person needing help is the most important person in all this so we will be doing our best to ensure their voice is listened to.



Julie Irvine

Bus Pass (Concessionary Travel Pass CT)

This matter (renewing your bus pass) was raised by a member and luckily another of our members has contacts at Nexus and was able to get a reply to the problems. This is the reply from a member of staff at Nexus.



'We are trying to sort this out as soon as possible. I'm sorry for any inconvenience or stress it has caused. The time it was taking us to

process a renewal application rose to 28 days before Christmas, though we have now reduced this to 17 days. - - - We are steadily reducing the backlog but I have asked we make it possible for people to apply for renewal more than 28 days in advance. This needs a small change in the online software.

The big change I want to see is the introduction of automatic renewal for those people who have used their card (bus pass) in the previous year. - - - I hope to have it in place later this spring.' (Thanks to Bill H)

Bus routes can change as well as timetables, including Metro timetables, so it's always wise to keep an eye out for any changes.

Seeking new Board members



The Elders Council always welcomes new trustees to join the Board. Membership of the Board is a responsible task, but very fulfilling. If you would like to know more about becoming a Trustee, please contact us on 0191 208 2701 or email info@elderscouncil.org.uk.

One helpful way of finding out a little of the work of the Board is to attend a Board meeting as a guest. You will need to request permission from the Chair.

You can also contact our current Chair, Anne Raffle, **on 07973 915299** to have a chat about what the post entails. If you know somebody who you think would make a good trustee, could you please (with their permission, of course) nominate them?

Nomination papers must be returned by Friday 8 July 2022 to enable a postal ballot to be conducted if there are more nominations than vacancies.



Song writing Workshop: 1952 – 2022: Seventy Years in Song

As part of the Jesmond Festival the Elders Council and Jesmond Wellbeing for Life group are presenting a workshop with experienced musician and cultural historian Jude Murphy to collaboratively create and sing songs. No prior experience of creative writing or song writing is necessary. The event is at **10.30 am on Wednesday 18 May** at Jesmond Library



Older Voices Radio Show



The next broadcast is on Friday **6 May from 2-4pm** the theme is 'Heritage: Newcastle Buildings'. The Older Voices Team will be welcoming friends from the City Guides who bring a wealth of information to the programme, it will be well worth listening in at Nova Radio North East on 102.5 FM or <https://www.novaradio.co.uk/nowalive> The **3 June** broadcast hasn't yet been discussed (at the time of this magazine going to print.)

You can also listen at any time by tuning in into [MixCloud here](#)

Elders Council 'Warm Welcome'

This is the monthly meeting that used to take place at the Milecastle pub. Of course, this all ceased over the last two years but they have now found a new home **in the Community room of Newcastle Building Society**, Northumberland St, Newcastle.

They have already had two meetings and plan on others. They are looking forward to hearing from speakers who have interesting and/or useful things to say. Tea or coffee is available and although you can't sit down for lunch in that building, it is right in the city centre with plenty of places to suit all tastes (and pockets!) Please contact the office for details of the meeting in May, you are very welcome to come along.



Eunice Davidson



Eunice in the studio at the mike

It is with deep sadness that we report the death of Eunice Davidson, a stalwart of the Elders Council radio show, *Older Voices*. Listeners will remember with fondness her regular slot of *Thought for the fortnight* – always to the point, always fascinating.

Eunice was born in South Shields in 1930 but moved to Newcastle when she was a young child. When

her mother took her to Newbegin's Dancing School, it soon became apparent that Eunice had a talent for dancing. When she was 18, Eunice joined the West End Operatic Society, which is where she met the love of her life – her husband, Richard.

Eunice could not only dance brilliantly; she also had a wonderful singing voice. She and Richard performed in many memorable shows with the West End Operatic Society.

When both she and Richard retired, they took up bowling. This was on Richard's insistence that they should do something together. It turned out that Eunice was also a very good bowler and was selected many times to compete with the Northumberland County Bowling Team. During these years Eunice was also Treasurer to the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship (she worked at the DSS in Long Benton from being 17 years old to her retirement) and for many years was Treasurer at St James' and St Basil's church.

Eunice is survived by her daughters, Julie and Gillian, three grandsons and four great-grandchildren. What a kind, talented and special lady she was; we shall miss her.

Steve Whitley

Health and Social Care Information

Do you think you might need care and support?

Community Health and Social Care Direct (CHSCD) is a service run by Newcastle City Council that gives information about social care and support available for adults. It aims to be the first point of contact for anyone who thinks they might need help and are struggling to manage at home independently. This could mean difficulties with your mobility such as moving around easily around your home, getting dressed or washing yourself or all the tasks involved in caring for someone else. CHSCD will offer advice and provide support (if you meet certain criteria) to those who need help with everyday activities.



For example, here's one way in which someone was given help: *Mrs Smith (not her real name) telephoned CHSCD to ask about help with her husband who has Parkinson's and was recently involved in a road traffic accident. This accident further limited his ability to move around. Mrs Smith wanted to ask about some help in the home as she is his main carer and supports him on a daily basis with washing, dressing, meals and going to church and any other activities.*

CHSCD discussed the options available to her and how she might get help. This could mean a formal assessment of their circumstances to work out what their needs were and if the Smiths would be eligible for help. They then put her in touch with Newcastle Carers, who can help support her in her caring role. They also [sent a link to a list of local Home Care agencies on InformationNOW](#) for extra support, should they need it.

If you think you need information or support, please call Community Health and Social Care Direct (CHSCD) on 0191 278 8377. You can also find out more information on their website: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/adults/contact-care-and-support-adults>

Here's a letter from one satisfied resident:

Dear Care & Support Adult Team,

Just a quick word of thanks for the exemplary service we've received from your team in the last month or two.

We recently returned to the UK to look after our elderly parents and were apprehensive about accessing support services for them. However, we have found the online guidance easy to navigate and our subsequent contacts with members of the adult services team have been without exception helpful, positive and professional throughout.

At a time when I'm sure your services are extremely busy and praise is probably in short supply, I wanted to thank you for your diligence, kindness and guidance, which we have found both valuable and reassuring. P L

Adaptations



We mentioned assessments for home adaptations in the previous article. These adaptations might be adding grab rails at your door to help get up and down steps safely or putting a second banister rail on your staircase as this can help getting up and down stairs more easily and safely. A member of the Occupational Health team will make the assessment.

We know from the experiences of our members that, whilst getting small items of equipment such as grab rails is relatively quick, if you require a larger adaptation (e.g. a bathroom adaptation) there is a long wait for an assessment. Newcastle City Council is working towards appointing more Occupational Therapists to improve the situation. The Council is also reviewing its policy for home adaptations and we have asked for the opportunity to comment on what is being proposed.

If you have experiences of getting small or large adaptations in your home, we'd love to hear from you.

Our advice to you is to think ahead. Don't wait for the situation to get really difficult or end up in a crisis. If you know your needs are changing and you are likely to require some adjustments in your home, get in touch with Health and Social Care Direct on 0191 278 8377 now!

Assisted Living

Assisted Living housing provides a modern accessible apartment and opportunities to get involved in social activities within the apartment complex . A care team is on-site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide planned care and support during the day. Here a Supported Housing Advisor talks about assisted living.



“Every day is different as a Supported Housing Advisor but it’s one of the main things I love about my job!” says Francesca Howden, a supported housing advisor at Your Homes Newcastle (YHN)

Assisted Living at YHN is designed to make living easier by offering support to help older or disabled people live independently at home. As a Supported Housing Advisor, Francesca helps customers with the process of Assisted Living. She is there to help from the start of an application, where she can help you or your family members to set up the online application on Tyne and Wear Homes and then keep you updated as your application progresses. She works closely with Newcastle City Council and other professionals across the city; these partnerships aim to make the process smooth and efficient.

YHN wants to ensure that customers receive the main benefits and support that Assisted Living has to offer for a more independent, social and fulfilling life. This is why each applicant is supported by a Supported Housing Advisor, who becomes their direct contact.

The best part of her day, she says, will always be going to visit customers, whether current or new, and being able to offer some support, advice, guidance, reassurance and confidence in applying for Assisted Living.



To get in touch, please ring 0191 278 8600 or email yhn@yhn.org.uk .

Home from Hospital

This is a volunteer led programme. The organisations look for volunteers to support people when they come home from hospital. The volunteers aren't paid staff and do not have medical training.

The Home from Hospital project was developed to enable patients to thrive back home safely and comfortably and to support our local NHS services.

Patients referred to the programme are provided with a flexible, short-term support package designed to meet their most important needs. Support may include collecting food items or prescriptions on the person's behalf, friendly conversations and emotional support, or practical tasks such as helping to fill in forms and making sure the person's home is safe. The programme's aim is to give the person the confidence to continue their recovery successfully at home.



Home from Hospital also seeks to provide their volunteers with a memorable and meaningful experience through befriending an older person in their local community.

The project is operated by Volunteering Matters and Chain Reaction, working together across Newcastle supporting patients discharged from the RVI and Freeman Hospital. Please get in touch to find out more: Matthew Brindley (Engagement Manager, Volunteering Matters): 0753 404 3578; matthew.brindley@volunteeringmatters.org.uk



Did you get a 'coronation mug' to commemorate the coronation of our Queen? Millions of children did and there were various versions. We have some coronation day memories on pages 17 and 18, they might jog your memories of that day.

Things we think may be helpful to know

Could you claim some extra cash?

Pension Credit tops up weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level of £182.60 a week for single pensioners or £278.70 for couples (after April 11 this year).

It could be more than that depending on your circumstances. It is a tax-free payment for those who have reached State Pension age, and live in Great Britain

Some quick facts:

- you can have some savings and other incomes
- your own home doesn't stop you claiming
- couples both have to be of State Pension age

This is the government website with all the information you need.

<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim> They also have a free phone number 0800 99 1234

There are other places where you can get help completing the forms: Citizens Advice 0191 229 2750; Your Homes Newcastle (tenants only) 0191 278 8600; Welfare Rights 0191 277 2600

With prices rising before you can blink, please make sure you are claiming for everything to which you are entitled to help pay those heating bills.

Carers Wellbeing Fund

Do you know someone who cannot manage without help because of illness, disability, frailty, mental health problems or alcohol or drug-related problems? Or are you working with an adult who cares for someone with those issues? Could they benefit from a small grant to help them in their caring role?



The Carers Wellbeing Fund may be able to provide a small grant to help them as a carer. The fund is open to all adult carers and is intended to help maintain and improve a carer's health and wellbeing. Grants can be used in many ways, for example:

- garden maintenance
- a holiday or weekend break in the UK
- gym membership, exercise classes
- driving lessons
- buying items for an activity or hobby such as a bicycle or craft supplies
- household items such as a washing machine, cooker, a fridge or a bed/mattress
- electrical goods such as tablets, laptops or mobile phones

It's easy for a carer to apply for a grant: all that's needed is some basic information about them, the person they are caring for, what it is they would use the grant for and why this will maintain or improve their health and wellbeing.

We ask for a supporting statement from a professional who has involvement with the carer or the person they care for (for example, a support worker, social worker, or employer who knows the carer in their caring role).

Carers and/or the people they care for do not have to have engage with social care services or have had a statutory carer's assessment to apply to this fund.

Carers can apply to the fund every 12 months. For more information, please ring 0191 275 5060; or email info@newcastlecarers.org.uk ; or go to [Adult Carers | Carers Wellbeing Fund - Newcastle Carers](#).

Post Office and pensions



From this November, it will no longer be possible for older people to have their pension or other benefits paid into a post office account.

The Department for Work and Pensions has started sending letters to customers who are receiving benefits or pensions payments via their post office card account (POca). People are being told that the POca service is closing and are being asked for their bank account details so that their benefits and pensions can be paid into this alternative account.

If you don't have a bank account, you will automatically be moved over to a new system called the Payment Exception Service (PES), which will

allow you to collect your benefit or pension payments. The PES will be available in only very limited circumstances. It will deliver benefits using a digital voucher. You can choose whether you receive the voucher via a text message, an email or a re-useable plastic card.

If you want more detail, please ring 0800 085 7133 or go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/post-office-card-accounts-closure-extended-until-november-2022>

Pension Credit

We have mentioned Pension Credit more than once both in the Magazine and the Bulletin but we are all feeling the effects of price increases, especially with our energy. Pension Credit can help those of you who have small incomes.

Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis says: 'if you claim and are successful, you can access a whole raft of other benefits including council tax discounts and free TV licences for over-75s'

This is money that you are entitled to claim, it's not charity so please don't struggle along find out if you are eligible.

You can do this online via the government website (this is the Department of Work and Pensions.) www.gov.uk/pensions-credit

There is also a telephone helpline (it's free) 0800 991 234

It is a means tested benefit so you will be asked quite personal questions about your finances and your circumstances.

Another pension expert and campaigner, Henry Tapper, says, "**An estimated 850k eligible households are missing out on pension credit.**"

You can check by using the phone number above.

Henry Tapper is creating a working group on how to bring that number down. He intends to create a feasibility study on how to simplify eligibility criteria for claiming Pension Credit. Most importantly, he wants pension credit to be automatic where there is a clear entitlement. We couldn't agree more Henry.

You can read more about Pension Credit and Henry Tapper's proposals by clicking the link here.

<https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/pensions/article-10664609/Pension-credit-automated-needy-older-people.html>

Useful Phone Numbers



AgeUK Gateshead

Support for benefit claims and other useful information. Ask to speak to a benefit advisor we will book in an appointment. This is for those living in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Phone 0191 477 3559

Search

West End Warmers, is a new Energy Advice Service for people aged over 50 living in the west end of Newcastle. They also offer Information and Advice on other problems.

Phone 0191 273 7443.

National Energy Action

If you or someone you know can't afford to heat their home, then we're here to help. We offer a range of advice and support both directly to people in need, and via frontline workers and other intermediaries.

<https://www.nea.org.uk/advice-support/>

Phone 0800 304 7159

First Stop Care Advice

First Stop Advice is an independent, impartial and free service offering advice and information to older people, their families and carers about housing and care options for later life.

<http://www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk/>

Phone 0800 377 7070

Ostara Newcastle

A 24-hour response and support service

<https://www.ostara.org.uk/>

phone 0191 277 7470



Citizen's advice

Advice on a wide range of issues. This is the energy advice contacts.

<http://www.citizensadvice-newcastle.org.uk/>

Energy Affordability Line: 0800 448 0721

Newcastle Welfare Rights

Newcastle Welfare Rights Service give telephone benefits advice for people who live in West Newcastle in Arthurs Hill, Blakelaw, Elswick, Kenton, West Fenham, and Wingrove.

Phone 0191 277 262

<http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights>

Money Matters



Money Matters is Newcastle City Council's specialist debt team that offers debt and money advice to vulnerable people who live in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Phone: 0800 170 7008

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/debthelp>

Carers Centre

To talk to someone about your caring role, or for information or advice call their Carers Information line.

Phone 0191 275 5060

Newcastle City Council Welfare and Wellbeing Team

They can support residents to self-isolate and vaccination assistance, such as transport to get their job. The team can also give advice and signpost on many other areas such as food and essential items and benefits.

Phone 0800 170 7001 – this is a freephone number.

Independent Age

This organisation is for older people. They have a range of useful leaflets on money, benefits etc. there is also a telephone helpline

Phone 0800 319 6789

<https://www.independentage.org/get-advice>

Kinship

Kinship (previously known as Grandparents Plus) offer support to grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and family friends who step up to raise children when their parents can't.

Phone 0300 123 7015

<http://www.kinship.org.uk/>

Food Banks and Free hot food

If you are struggling to afford to eat, food banks or charities may be able to help. There are a number of places that give free food or food vouchers to those who need it most. We can't add all the phone numbers but these two web pages in InformationNOW are very helpful

<https://www.informationnow.org.uk/article/food-banks-in-newcastle/>

<https://www.informationnow.org.uk/article/free-meals-cheap-food/>



The Coronation of Elizabeth 2 was held on Tuesday, 2 June 1953.
Here are some Coronation Day memories from members

Susan: I remember just sitting in a crowded room ,with several unknown relatives, watching a tiny screen! And I had my coronation mug!

Steve (aged 18): I was a sea cadet and our school section was offered places on the fountain-cum-roundabout opposite Buckingham Palace's main gate. I declined the offer and instead went to Wales with my parents. That day, it wasn't raining in Wales.

Mary (aged 7): The street party was cancelled because it rained. We went to the Methodist Church Hall. We were entertained by a Punch and Judy show; there was a lot of shouting at Mr Punch!

Anne: As a 5-year-old infant school pupil at Christ Church C of E School, we all walked the short distance to wave our flags. I was most upset that mam had forced me to wear two pairs of knickers that day to keep out the cold! This is my abiding coronation memory.

Liz: I lived in the city centre and there were no street parties to see. However, there was a concert on Leazes Row. We listened to music that evening, a celebratory occasion

Rosalind (aged 24): My neighbour invited me in to see the coronation on TV. I had never seen a television before, the screen was tiny.

Noreen (aged 21): It was a wet day. A neighbour had earlier in the week invited me to watch on her brand-new TV. When I went round, she told me they were full up already so I didn't see anything!

Barbara B (aged 9): We were all so excited. On the previous day we had lots of bunting, streamers made from red, white and blue crepe paper, and many pictures of the Queen, which we stuck on to the walls in our back lane. We used paste made from flour and water! My Dad fixed up a sort of wireless system so we could listen to the Coronation at the party next day.

Well! Next day came and we discovered that all of our preparations had turned very soggy overnight! The rain was bucketing down. Where would we have our party? What a headache for Mrs Cruddas, who had collected our threepences each week for the Big Day and organised it all!

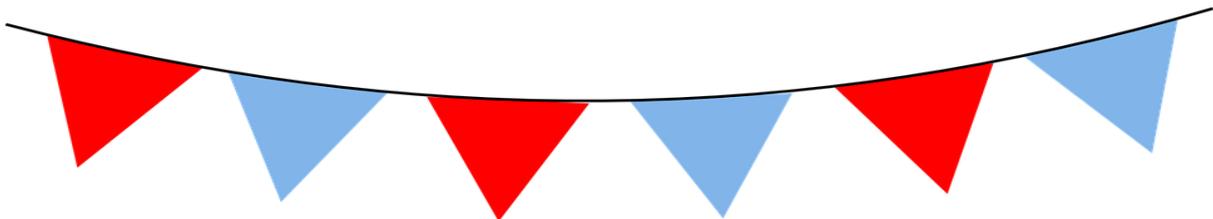
News gradually filtered down in the street that we had to go to the Heaton Electric Ballroom. What a super time we had, all dolled up in our dresses made by our Auntie, new white socks, best shoes, and crowned with beautiful paper hats.

We got a mug from the City Council and a tin of toffees. Mrs Thompson rattled out some great tunes on the piano and we all sang our hearts out. There was a special song for the day, which I still remember: *There's a Golden Coach*. The Mams and Dads danced and we had such a marvellous time. Fabulous day which just seems like it happened yesterday.

Later on in June, my little sister and I were taken off to the pictures by our cousin to see the film of the Coronation. It was marvellous.

Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee was on 6 February 2022 as she acceded to the throne on that day in 1952, the day her father, King George VI died. The Coronation took place on 2 June the following year.

There are bank holidays to celebrate the Jubilee this year. The late Spring Bank holiday has been moved from May to Thursday June 2 and Friday June 3 is also a Bank holiday.



Heritage

The word 'heritage' triggers two very different responses from me. Part of me reacts

very positively. We should be grateful for all the good things bequeathed to us by past generations. We would be much poorer without the endowment of so much wonderful music, so many great paintings, such a rich variety of beautiful architecture and many other cultural bequests. Indeed, our lives would be directly endangered if it were not for benign developments in fields such as medicine in past times.

We are similarly richer because previous generations took care to protect a treasury of landscapes and habitats. Then there were all those who conserved genetic varieties in plants and animals, a truly priceless heritage. We should celebrate what we inherited and take care to pass on such treasures to future generations in as least a good condition as we found them.

Yet another part of me really dislikes the word 'heritage' especially the profit-driven 'heritage industry'. It markets a phoney version of the past, one totally sanitised and indeed romanticised. At its worst, it becomes just a means to sell merchandise. Real ploughmen never ate the 'ploughman's lunches' on sale at pubs full of replica farm implements and the like.



WOODHORN MUSEUM

The North East actually contains two examples of both sides of the heritage coin. At Beamish Museum, much good work has been done to collect artefacts from the region's past. It is a great achievement indeed.

Yet the squalor, oppression and suffering in the 'good old days' has been largely brushed out of the picture. By contrast, at Woodhorn Museum, the hardship of life in mining communities and the history of bitter struggles between miners and pit owners is presented, warts and all. So, let us cherish heritage but make sure we do not sink into false nostalgia. **Sandy Irvine**

The City Guides have a wealth of knowledge about our city and you can learn more by joining a City Guided walk. These start again in May; tickets are £4 for those 60+. Find out more on the website <https://newcastlegateshead.com/newcastle-city-guides/season-tickets>



Looking for Someone?

A month or two after my wife died, there was a French film showing at the Tyneside cinema that I really wanted to see. In the previous fifty years, I would have gone to the show with Wendy and just about the only question would have been about the choice of performance. Now I realised that none of the blokes I knew were aficionados of the cinema, so I went by myself.

There were about twenty people in the audience, and all were couples – except me. Suddenly, for the first time since the funeral, I felt like a lonely old man. When I got home, there was no-one to discuss the acting nor the direction nor any aspect of the show. I felt the need to find a companion to sit with me in the cinema or the theatre.



Next day, I resolved to find someone who would sit next to me and enjoy the film. I had grown used to shopping on line so finding an on-line dating site came naturally. A short search soon produced a dating site for those over 50. I submitted my payment, a recent photograph and a short statement displaying my interest in the cinema, theatre, classical music and bird-watching, and waited for something to happen.

There was no result, so I then started contacting ladies over sixty (I was 73) who lived within 50 miles of Newcastle. I had introductory meetings with ten ladies. Four of them wished to explore matters further, but two out of the four made it clear that I was seen as a route out of bankruptcy. The other two ladies were pleasant, and had interests in common with me, and, as it happened, with each other.

To cut a long story short, the relationship with one of the ladies I dated blossomed into a partnership. After seven years of life together, I think I could say that the dating experience progressed from sociability to love to partnership. On-line dating was an adventure with a happy ending.

David Stewart-David

Enjoy a great day out and help a charity



Since its establishment in 1927, the National Garden Scheme (NGS) has raised over £63m for nursing, caring and other charities. How? By owners opening their gardens to the public. Visitors pay an entry fee to wander around the garden and usually buy delicious homemade teas and homegrown plants.

Because the scheme is run mainly by volunteers, over 80% of money raised goes to the NGS beneficiaries (e.g., Macmillan, Marie Curie, Parkinson's UK and Hospice UK). The NGS is the biggest annual contributor to these charities and also supports other health charities and community gardening. The Gardens and Health programme – to raise awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of gardens – is a major focus.

In 2022, 44 North East gardens will open their gates, with some opening by arrangement for small group visits. They range from country estates to small urban plots, and include traditional, cottage, natural wildflower and tropical designs.



Never have outside spaces been more important; never has health been higher on the agenda; and never have health charities been more in need of help. Visiting an NGS garden is an opportunity to be outdoors, take a little exercise and enjoy afternoon tea. For details, please ring 0148 321 1535 or go to <https://ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/>



Continuing to drive

Your driving licence expires automatically when you reach 70. To continue driving, you need to renew it and every three years after that. Make sure you have regular sight tests; if you have health conditions, ask your GP or specialist if your driving could be affected; speak to your GP if you're concerned about your hearing; check with a GP or pharmacist that any medication you are prescribed is safe to take while driving.

Generally, vision is poorer at night so consider whether you need to drive at night. It's probably a good idea to avoid driving in peak hours. The Highway Code recommends taking a break of at least 15 minutes after every two hours of driving.

Reporting health conditions

There are some health conditions that you must report to the DVLA, [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) has a list of all the conditions you're required to report. If you fail to report, you could be fined up to £1,000.

You should also report any medical conditions that could affect your driving to your insurer. If you don't inform them accidents may not be covered. More detailed information at this website.

<https://www.independentage.org/get-advice/personal-life/getting-out-and-about/driving-later-life>



Lockdown & Me is a thought-provoking digital exhibition curated by Newcastle creative practitioner Sharon Race, following workshops with local young and older people who produced art relating to their experiences, good and bad, of the Covid-19 Lockdown

The art will be used to develop a virtual interactive exhibition at www.lockdownandme.co.uk

This can be seen in a Pop-Up Exhibition in the City Library, New Bridge Street, Newcastle upon Tyne from 5 to 19 May.

Ways to Donate

Every penny counts! No matter how small, the Elders Council really values your donation.

Your donation helps us provide information to you, our members, for instance each magazine costs about **£2.00** to print and post – and we post a lot! We have to pay for office space, telephones etc. and most importantly our hard-working staff. So, please if you can, make a donation, Thank you.

You can make a donation in different ways, use the one that suits you.

Direct payment

Bank: Co-operative Bank

Account name: Elders Council of Newcastle

Sort Code: 08-92-99

Account Number: 65079623

Cheque Post a cheque payable to the “The Elders Council of Newcastle” to the address on the back of this magazine.

Cash We also accept cash donations. Please ring the office to arrange collection. The phone number is on the back page.

www.giveasyoulive.com Log on to every time you shop online and nominate the Elders Council as your chosen charity. It costs you nothing and we receive a small percentage of the sale.

Legacy Some members have chosen to leave the Elders Council a legacy. By deciding to remember us in your will, you can really help the Elders Council to continue its work.

Gift Aid

We can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you donate if you are a UK tax payer. You just need to fill in a Gift Aid form ask us for one and return it to us and we'll do the rest. (All our contact details are on the back page) The extra cash comes from the government and there is there is no charge to you.

Magazine Information

Magazine articles

Do you have a great article or an idea for one or an axe you want to grind for the next magazine? Then please send it to us by **Friday 10 June 2022**, to us at info@elderscouncil.org.uk You may also post articles to us at the address below. Articles that are typed or word-processed are really appreciated but hand-written articles are fine.

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Reminder

If you move, change your email address or telephone number, please let us know so that we can keep our records up to date.