

Nene Valley news

YOUR LOCAL INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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NEWS IN BRIEF

SEND Workshops provide feedback

North Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voices (NPCV) and North Northamptonshire Council hosted a series of workshops recently, focusing on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The workshops brought together parents, carers, professionals from education, health and social care, and representatives from schools and early years settings.

More than 100 people took part across four sessions held in Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby and via Zoom. Attendees shared what is working well, the challenges they are facing, and the changes they feel are needed to better support children, young people, and families. The workshops offered space for honest conversations, reflection and collaborative problem-solving.

Topics included co-production and how to improve working together, key findings from the NPCV 2025 SEND Survey, and progress from local service providers in response to the 2024 Ofsted/CQC inspection and the issues raised through ongoing feedback.

The organisers have expressed their thanks to everyone who attended and contributed their experiences to help inform future services.

Cotterstock marks Remembrance Day

Villagers in Cotterstock held a series of events around Remembrance this year, beginning in September with a talk on the war dead and culminating in the presentation of an artwork by Angela Wright, accompanied by memorabilia from the two world wars.

Back in September, Kathryn Baird shared the findings of her research into the war dead from Cotterstock. Kathryn created a file for the church and posted the information on the Warmington Benefice website.

A printed raffle prize draw was organised, sponsored by King West estate agents, with prizes kindly donated by local businesses. The raffle was drawn by The Venerable Fiona Windsor on 8th November.

The organisers were delighted when Anne Cotton agreed to give a presentation, 'Marching On', about the

effect the Great War had on Northamptonshire's shoe factories, her family's business and the role played by women at this tumultuous time. Her talk on 6th November was sold out. Anne painted a graphic picture of how important good boots were to every man in wartime.

Angela Wright, a London based artist, designed a wonderful art installation entitled 'Broken Lives', reflections on the aftermath of war. It took Angela four days to create, using broken pieces of mirror glass to produce an immersive and memorable piece. Angela started with a

broken panel of mirror in the centre of the altar, cascading into two smaller pools and finally one large circular pool, conveying the lost hopes and dreams of lives impacted by war.

Alongside the installation, villagers, their friends and families loaned memorabilia from WW1 and WW2 which was displayed in the nave. Each item was carefully labelled with its own unique story to tell.

Lee Barron, MP for Corby and East Northants visited on 7th November and met Angela too. There was a video commemorating the Great



War playing in the nave and the benefice bell-ringers rang the church bells muffled to herald the opening of the event.

A total of 363 people visited St Andrew's and the comments in the visitors' book show just



how poignant and memorable they found both exhibitions. The events raised £3,645 for the upkeep of St Andrew's Church.

A traditional service of Remembrance was held on Sunday 9th November at 6pm.

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Toothbrushing packs to help vulnerable people and families

North Northamptonshire Council has secured £20,000 of ring-fenced funding from the county's Integrated Care Board (ICB) to continue to buy and distribute toothbrushing packs to foodbanks and other organisations in the community who provide support for vulnerable people and families.

Toothbrushing packs include age-appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste and will be distributed across a number of organisations who participated in a similar project last year.

The participating organisations help vulnerable and deprived communities who can be most at risk of experiencing poor oral health.

The packs are being distributed to help enable people who are currently unable to purchase these supplies to brush their teeth by the recommended guideline which is at least two times a day.

Jane Bethea, Director of Public Health, Communities and Leisure at North Northamptonshire Council, said: "Poor oral health is a major public health concern and can have a negative impact on our overall health and wellbeing and affect what we eat, how we communicate and our self-confidence. The build-up of plaque in the mouth, through poor dental hygiene, can result in tooth decay or gum infections, which in turn can lead to tooth

loss or gum disease.

"Organisations who support people in financial stress like foodbanks don't always have a continuous supply of oral health products to give out to people who need them. This funding will help us to maintain a supply, ensuring people have access to the products and information they need to support good oral health."

Cllr Brian Benneyworth, Executive Member for Health and Leisure at North Northamptonshire Council, said:

"Good oral health is important for everyone, and we want to make sure that everyone across North Northamptonshire has the means to maintain it. These toothbrushing packs are a

simple but powerful way to help those who are most vulnerable. Providing not just the tools, but the dignity of self-care.

"We're working with some great organisations to get these packs to the people who need them the most, and we'll keep doing whatever we can to help people stay healthy. It's the right thing to do, and it's what being part of a community is all about.

"Under current financial pressures, due to the cost of living crisis, some households

are having to make very difficult choices about what they can and cannot buy. In these situations, items such as new toothbrushes and toothpaste could be seen as less important than essentials such food and heating. We shouldn't be in this position but I very much welcome this funding at this time for the many people who will benefit."

Corby Foodbank's Manager, Martin Langford, said:

"We're delighted that North Northamptonshire Council

has committed to continue its support by providing oral health packs for our users. Access to basic hygiene items, such as toothbrush packs, is often underestimated but they make a real difference to how people look and feel.

"That's why we are incredibly grateful for this ongoing support. It strengthens our ability to reach those most in need and ensures we can continue making a positive impact within the community."

GENEALOGY JOTTINGS

WORDS BY
JAN PEARSON

On websites such as Ancestry, I have so often seen 'name collectors' – people who just assume that if the name is the same, then it must be right. WRONG!

Take the name Pearson, for example. Not a common name, but not uncommon either. Although nowadays it is spread about the country, the predominance is still in northern England, namely Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumbria.

I think that I have mentioned my brother-in-law before. He was a great follower of the Pearson family line and would take his wife and children all over the north of England, searching for graves of ancestors. He had traced the Pearson family back to the hills of Cumbria and found the graveyard in which many were buried. A family holiday was then planned so that they could have a look at the gravestones. When they arrived, there wasn't one for this particular ancestor – a gravestone, that is; just a green swathe of grass surrounded by other gravestones. He arranged for a stone to be carved with the name and dates of his ancestor. However,

a couple of years later, he discovered that it was not his ancestor after all but a family of the same name. His were on another Cumbrian hillside. A costly mistake and one that made him revisit his findings and make sure that he was following the correct lines.

The internet can be so helpful in finding the names of our ancestors but don't forget the basic steps in confirming who those folk are with birth, marriage and death certificates as well as census results. Don't forget, though – civil registration did not start in England and Wales until 1st July 1837 and so you will need to look for parish records before then. By the way, civil registration did not start in Scotland until 1st January 1855 and in Ireland, civil registration of all births, marriages, and deaths began in 1864 (except for non-Catholic marriages, for which registration started in 1845).

Genealogy Specialists, Tracing Our Past, Discovering Our Genes (TOP DOG)
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Consultation on term dates for schools for the 2027-28 academic year

North Northamptonshire Council is now consulting on the proposed term dates for its Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for the 2027-2028 academic year.

The consultation, which began on 17th November, will run until 31st December 2025.

Please note that Academies, Free, Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools can set their own term dates, although they may choose to adopt those used by the local authority.

When choosing term dates, the council has, wherever possible, tried to do this in conjunction

with neighbouring local authorities.

However, whilst proposed dates broadly align, it cannot be guaranteed that term dates will be identical to those of neighbouring authorities as there is no formal mechanism for the regional or national setting of school term and holiday dates.

To view the proposed term dates and find out more about the consultation, including how to comment, please visit:
<https://northnorthants.citizenspace.com/schools/term-dates-2027-28>



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Holiday Food and Back to School essentials vouchers to be distributed to schools and families

North Northamptonshire Council is distributing Holiday Food vouchers and Back to School essentials vouchers via funds from the UK Government as part of the Household Support Fund (HSF).

The Free School Meal (FSM) Holiday voucher will be distributed to schools as one voucher throughout the month of December to include payments covering Christmas, February half term and Easter. The overall amount each student will receive via the school will be £90 to cover all three coming holidays.

In addition to this, the council will also be offering the 'Back to School essentials' payment at a value of £15 per student. This, in total, will equate to an overall payment of £105 per student. Eligible families will receive the voucher via email. They have until the end of January 2026 to redeem the voucher.

Once the voucher is redeemed at the chosen

supermarket they will have 12-24 months to spend it in its entirety, depending on the supermarket's T&C's.

Vouchers do not have to be spent in one go once redeemed and spreading the use of vouchers to cover the remaining holidays is recommended.

The council understands that this change may cause families concern when they do not receive another voucher in February half term and Easter Holidays in 2026. There is further support available for families through:

- Family Hubs <https://familyhubs.northnorthants.gov.uk/home>
- Healthy Schools <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-schools-service>

- The 0-19 service providers outside of financial aid to offer support to them through any difficult times. <https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/0-19/>
- Cllr Gregory Wilcox, North Northamptonshire Council's Executive Member for Communities, said: "We are committed to helping North Northamptonshire's residents impacted by the continued cost of living crisis and by allocating this welcome money from the Household Support Fund to families who need it the most, we hope to ease a little of the financial strain that continues."

Any queries on the scheme can be sent to HSFNorth@northnorthants.gov.uk

Council celebrates recently launched Parent Portal milestone

More than 10,000 parents and carers have now registered for improved way to access education services.

North Northamptonshire Council is celebrating a major milestone for its Parent Portal, launched in May 2025, to make accessing education services simpler, faster, and more efficient.

More than 10,000 parents and carers have now registered, helping to transform the way families interact with key services.

Through the portal, parents and carers can:

- Request a school place
 - Submit an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment request
 - Share documents for annual reviews of EHCPs
- From early December,

families applying for Free School Meals will also complete their request via the Parent Portal. This change is expected to improve the speed and efficiency of the service.

Looking ahead, the portal's functionality will expand even further. From March 2026, the portal will become the primary way to request Early Years Childcare funding, making it an essential tool for families across North Northamptonshire.

If parents haven't already registered, they can sign up to the Parent Portal to explore the range of services available and stay ahead of upcoming

changes.

Cllr Elizabeth Wright, Executive Member for Children, Families and Education, at North Northamptonshire Council, said: "Reaching 10,000 sign-ups is a fantastic achievement and shows how much families value having a simple, secure way to access education services online. The Parent Portal is helping us deliver faster, more efficient services, and we're excited to continue expanding its features to make life easier for parents and carers across North Northamptonshire."

Find out more about the Parent Portal on the council's website.

PURPLE MONDAY

20% off Wills in February.*

Make this the year you make (or update) your Will.

"Purple Monday" is our annual drive to encourage people to have a professionally-drafted Will, to ensure that your wishes are carried out. This could include your assets, guardianship of your children and any specific gifts you wish to make.

It can also help to reduce your dependants' liability for Inheritance Tax. If you need to update your Will ask about our free Will health check.

*Appointments must be booked on Monday 2 February 2026 for an appointment within 28 days. Other terms apply – see wilsonbrowne.co.uk/terms or call for details.

wilsonbrowne.co.uk
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SOLICITORS



DECEMBER

Thu 11 Windsor OR Windsor Castle
Sat 13 Hyde Park Winter Wonderland or free time

JANUARY

Sat 3 Boundary Mills, Grantham
Wed 21 Seasonal Mystery

FEBRUARY

Wed 4 St Albans Market Day
Sat 7 York Ice Trail - free event in the town
Wed 11 Boston Market & Baytree Garden Centre
Sat 14 Warwick & Leamington Spa
Sun 15 Birmingham International Tattoo
Tue 17 Melton Mowbray
Wed 18 Seasonal Mystery
Thu 19 Ely Market Day
Fri 20 London Museums OR Free Time
Fri 20 Tower Bridge
Sat 21 Tewksbury Market Day & The Valley
Sun 22 Orchids at Kew Gardens
Tue 24 Barnsdale Gardens Snow Drops

MARCH

Tue 3 Springfield
Tue 3 Spalding
Thu 5 Cotswold Tour
Sat 7 York OR Jorvik Viking Centre
Sat 7 National Railway Museum
Tue 10 Derbyshire & Peak District
Sat 14 Saffron Walden Market Day
Wed 18 Seasonal Mystery
Sat 21 Greenwich
Sat 21 Cutty Sark
Sat 21 National Maritime Museum
Sun 22 Thriplow Daffodil & Country Fair
Tue 26 Canterbury OR Canterbury Cathedral
Fri 27 Stratford Upon Avon
Sat 28 Hever Castle & Gardens - Anne Boleyn

APRIL

Sun 12 Ideal Home Show at the weekend

MAY

Sun 31 Abba Voyage (New date added)

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FEBRUARY

23-27 FEBRUARY BOURNEMOUTH & NEW FOREST ALL INCLUSIVE – £499PP

Suncliff Hotel, Bournemouth. Half Board including excursions. Renowned for its seven miles of golden beaches, beautiful parks and gardens. Bournemouth is the perfect location for visiting the surrounding area such as the New Forest and Jurassic Coastline. Choose from fantastic attractions, live entertainment, history, heritage and culture, churches, castles and cathedrals, museums, stately homes and miles of unspoilt countryside! Bournemouth Oceanarium, the Bournemouth Eye, Poole, Christchurch and Kingston Lacey are on your doorstep.

MARCH

8-14 MARCH WINTER WINE & BEER AND THE ROMANTIC ROAD – £989PP

Hotel Gasthof Zum Storch, Schlusselfeld. Half Board including excursions. In the southern part of the Bamberg district of Germany, surrounded by picturesque hills, the town has a rich history with numerous historical buildings, such as the town parish church of St. Johannes Baptist or Thurnau Castle from the 18th century. The Franconian Open-Air Museum Fladungen with its faithfully reproduced half-timbered houses, and the Banz Monastery from the 11th century. Walking tours, brewery tour and wine tasting included.

20-23 MARCH VINTAGE VARIETY SHOW WEEKEND – £529PP

Cedar Court Hotel, Eiland, Huddersfield. Half Board including excursions. Yorkshire is England's largest historical county. It comprises of four broad belts each stretching from north to south: the high Pennine moorlands in the west, dissected by the Yorkshire Dales; the central lowlands - including the Vale of York - draining into the Humber estuary in the southeast; the North Yorkshire Moors and Yorkshire Wolds in the east; and, in the far southeast, the Holderness plain along the North Sea. Includes Haworth Express, Harrogate and all entertainment.

24-28 MARCH A TOUCH OF CLASS – £719PP

The Belmont Hotel, Sidmouth. Half Board including excursions. Sidmouth is a gateway to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. A large part of the town has been designated a conservation area. Sidmouth lies on the Jurassic Coast, and the coastline is dominated by the vivid red sandstone cliffs, which date back to the Triassic period. Along the front is the Millennium Walkway, which stretches the length of the beach and is made of pebbles, providing the perfect backdrop for an afternoon stroll. Excursions include Cream tea and Boat cruise.

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Spotlight on > CHRISTMAS

> NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ELF SERVICE - RAFFLE OF JOY

With around 2,000 people expected to spend Christmas Day in hospitals

across Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Health Charity is once again spreading festive cheer through its Northamptonshire Elf Service.

Their amazing team of Elves will be delivering gift boxes to people spending Christmas in hospital



Win £2,500 in our Raffle of Joy!

Take part to help spread cheer to people in hospital over Christmas. And you could win one of these fantastic prizes:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1st | £2,500 | 3rd | 7 night self-catered holiday +£250 |
| 2nd | £1,000 | 5^x | 5x runner-up prizes of £50 gift vouchers. |



Scan here to buy your tickets



Get your tickets today, visit: NHCharity.co.uk/joy



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NHS University Hospitals of Northamptonshire NHS Group

Sponsored by:



Registered Charity no: 1165702

and sharing festive treats with NHS staff who'll be working over the holidays.

To help make this possible, the charity has launched its annual Raffle of Joy, giving you the chance to win some fantastic prizes while helping them bring kindness and joy to hospitals across the county.

This year's raffle is proudly sponsored by EquiTech in Northampton and RCI Europe in Kettering, and it's the biggest one yet!

Prizes include:

- £2,500 cash first prize
- £1,000 cash second prize
- Seven-night self-catering holiday plus £250 cash for third prize
- Plus five runner-up £50 gift vouchers

EquiTech has

generously supported the top two prizes, and RCI Europe has donated the holiday prize, helping to create the biggest prize



pool so far.

Last year's first prize winner, Beverly, shared: "I was excited, speechless and in disbelief. Winning the first prize just before Christmas was extra special and a wonderful start to the New Year. Taking part also felt meaningful because it supports a great cause. I would encourage everyone to take part this year."

Get your tickets today, visit NHCharity.co.uk/joy

> A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS AT BOSWORTH'S GARDEN CENTRE

Christmas at Bosworth's Garden Centre is a truly magical experience for the whole family.

Every year, the centre is transformed into a festive wonderland, with dazzling displays that capture the spirit of the season.

From twinkling lights and beautifully decorated trees to unique gift ideas, the atmosphere is filled with warmth and joy. The festive displays are always a highlight — changing each year to bring something fresh, exciting, and full of holiday cheer.

New for 2025,

"To the wonderful teams who have supported and cared for me. I'll never forget your kindness."

Denise, treated for breast cancer at Northampton General Hospital, is leaving a gift in her will to Northamptonshire Health Charity.

Say thank you by leaving a legacy to help fund cutting-edge equipment, research, and improved patient care for generations to come.
For more information visit: NHCharity.co.uk/legacy or Call: 01604 626927

Scan here to find out more



*This image is illustrative, but Denise's words are real.



Northamptonshire Health Charity

Fundraising for:



Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust



Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust



Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board



Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust



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Bosworth's Garden Centre

Bosworth's is taking the magic to the next level with the Magical Sleigh Ride VR experience. This all-new, family-friendly adventure lets you climb aboard Santa's sleigh and take flight through snowy skies and enchanted

worlds using immersive 4D virtual reality. With motion, sound and special effects, it's a ride full of wonder that kids and grown-ups alike will love.

The family favourite of Santa's Grotto is back again this year.

Whether you're shopping for decorations, enjoying a festive treat in the café, or making memories with the new sleigh ride experience, Christmas at Bosworth's is a must-visit destination this season.



New for 2025 - Our Magical Sleigh Ride VR - Santa's Grotto
Booking open online now!
Real Christmas Trees from the end of November.
Festive Workshops & Coach Trips
Festive Displays open from mid October

Festive menu throughout December!



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Garden Centre

bosworthsgc.co.uk

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Carols & Festive Music
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Musical Director: Adele Hudson
Saint Mary's Church
Little Addington NN14 4BD
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Tanya 01933 650402

RAUNDS CHRISTMAS CRACKER TRAIL



Find the Christmas Cracker in local participating shops & collect 9 stamps to win a prize
Pick up a Trail Card from participating shops or the Town Council offices and start collecting from Sunday 30th November
Visit www.raunds-tc.gov.uk for more details

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Volunteer Action honoured with The King's Award for Voluntary Service

A lifetime honour recognising the incredible dedication of volunteers.

Volunteer Action is delighted and immensely proud to announce that it has been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service

Service — the highest national honour given to volunteer groups across the UK.

Often described as the "MBE

for voluntary organisations," this prestigious award recognises exceptional work by groups of volunteers who make a real difference in their communities. It celebrates the dedication, compassion and commitment that lie at the very heart of Volunteer Action — Community Volunteers.

This award is more than a moment of recognition; it is a lifetime honour that shines a light on everything VA's volunteers do — supporting local people, tackling isolation, offering friendship and transport and giving their time, energy and kindness to improve lives across our community.

Rachel Dixon, Volunteer Action's Chief Executive & Charity Manager, said: "We would like to express our deepest gratitude to every one of our volunteers, past and present. This award truly belongs to our volunteers. Their generosity,

compassion and unwavering belief in community spirit have made Volunteer Action what it is today. Without all our volunteers, none of this would be possible.

"We would also like to extend our thanks to our supporters, partners and staff who work alongside us every day to make our mission a reality. Together, we have built something very special — a network of kindness that reaches into every corner of our community. This recognition reminds us why we do what we do — to connect people, reduce loneliness and make a lasting difference in the lives of others. As we celebrate this incredible achievement, we are inspired to continue growing, supporting and empowering our community through volunteering.



The King's Award for Voluntary Service

Volunteer Action is deeply honoured to receive The King's Award for Voluntary Service — and we are so proud to share this lifetime achievement with every member of our Volunteer Action family."

If you wish to find out more about Volunteer Action and the work they do, including joining their award-winning volunteer base, please contact them on: www.volunteer-action.org.uk / 01832 275433 / admin@volunteer-action.org.uk



Peter & Lisa Fretwell: The Penguin Book of Penguins

Author Talk: Thursday 18th December, 7.30pm. Great Hall, New Street, Oundle PE8 4GH

There's something about penguins. Maybe it is their comical waddle, or the fact that their upright gait makes them look like humans. Whatever the reason, their cult following around the world is indisputable.

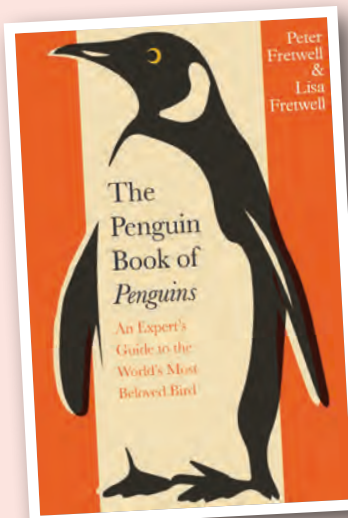
The Penguin Book of Penguins is a joyful, informative book. Dr Peter Fretwell has discovered almost half of the world's emperor penguin colonies. Through his published research, he knows that penguins can convey an urgent message about the importance of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean to the world's climate, with a strong ecological message running throughout the book.

Dr Fretwell introduces us to 18 charismatic species of penguin and the fascinating lives they lead: their evolution, behaviours and habitats, and their history with humans. From the fact that emperor penguins dive twice as deep as any other bird, to the story of a king penguin called Sir Nils Olav III who was made a Major General by the Norwegian Army, we discover through first-hand encounters (and even penguin jokes and emojis!) why penguins matter so greatly to all of us.

'Electrifyingly charismatic' Dan Snow, author of *On This Day in History*.

'The world's best-loved bird from the world's best-known publisher – what's not to like?' Stephen Moss, author of *The Bird Biography* series.

'Simply wonderful. If you like feeling joy, you'll love this book,' Tristan Gooley, author of *How to Read a Tree*.



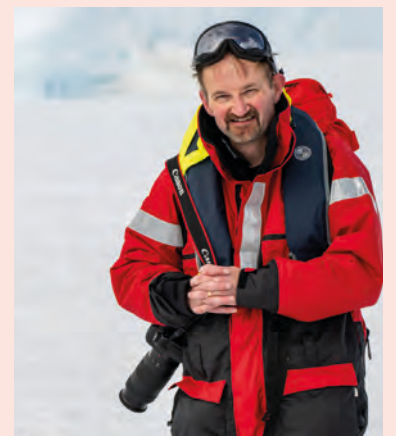
'Beautifully written and illustrated' Matt Merritt, Editor of *Bird Watching*.

Dr Peter Fretwell is an award-winning cartographer and lead scientist at the British Antarctic Survey, renowned for being a world expert in emperor penguins. He pioneered the use of satellite imagery to find and monitor polar wildlife. He is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and has completed six field seasons in Antarctica. In 2020, he published the award-winning book *Antarctic Atlas*, which was a *Financial Times* Book of the Year.

Lisa Fretwell has been a working artist and teacher for over 25 years. She has exhibited her work in the Smith's Gallery in London and in New York. She produced the line drawings and edited the book *Antarctic Atlas* alongside Peter.

You are invited to attend the talk dressed as a penguin, this could mean monochrome attire, with a dash of yellow/orange, a dress suit or a penguin onesie! The choice is yours.

Authors in Oundle will donate a percentage of the ticket cost of all penguins attending to support the work of the WWF UK.



Tickets £14 (£9) available from Oundle Bookshop (cash only) or online from www.authorsinoundle.co.uk. Enquiries contact info@authorsinoundle.co.uk



By popular demand: extra date added for magical Lantern Walk

With the first two evenings selling out quickly, Stanwick Lakes is excited to announce an additional date for its magical Lantern Walk and Lakeside Carols (Monday 22nd December) – for the first time ever!



Enjoy a magical, lantern-lit walk around Solstice Lake followed by carols in the outdoor theatre. A perfectly enchanting evening that will really get you in the Christmas mood.

All you need to do is wrap up warm and bring a torch, lantern or simply cover yourself in fairy lights! Festive food and refreshments will be available to purchase. And to top it all off, Father Christmas himself will be making a special appearance on the night.

Plus, why not book a visit to his grotto ahead of the event, as it's one of his last evenings with us, before he heads back to the North Pole for those final preparations!

Booking required. Free parking with your Lantern Walk ticket. <https://stanwicklakes.org.uk/events/lantern-walk-lakeside-carols-monday/>

There's lots more to uncover at Stanwick Lakes this festive season, from festive lunches and afternoon teas to wreath-making and a magical Christmas children's trail. <https://stanwicklakes.org.uk/christmas/>

Santa's Grotto 29th November to the 23rd December!

Booking required. <https://stanwicklakes.org.uk/grotto-book/>

Festive Afternoon Teas or Christmas Lunches

Book now for a delightful festive afternoon tea or delicious seasonal lunch. Enjoy all the trimmings and Christmas treats with your favourite people to kickstart your Christmas celebrations.

Booking required. <https://stanwicklakes.org.uk/christmas-bookings-festive-afternoon-tea-or-lunch/>

Midwinter 14th December, 11am- 3pm

A mystical day, spent outdoors. An event filled with festivities and enchanting entertainment, celebrating thousands of years of traditions and ancient beliefs. There will be plenty to enjoy with warming food and refreshments available throughout the day.

Free event, register early to avoid disappointment. <https://stanwicklakes.org.uk/the-festival-of-mid-winter-2025/#tickets>

Christmas Pottery or the enchanting Christmas Trail from 29th November

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Nene Valley News - EVENTS

> SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 10.15AM

Morning Worship

Whitefriars Church, Whitefriars Primary School, Boughton Drive, Rushden NN10 9HX.

> SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 9.50AM

Higham Ferrers Footpath Group

Saffron Road car park for car sharing. Contact Daphne on 07709 569415. 5-mile Christmas Hat walk around Chelveston with post-walk refreshments.

> SATURDAY 13TH DECEMBER, 7.30PM (DOORS OPEN 6.45PM)

St Mary's Church Annual Christmas Concert with The Rushden Town Band



St Mary The Virgin Church, High Street, Little Addington, Northants NN14 4BD (1.25 miles A6 Irthlingborough). Tickets £10 Adults, £3 Children (WC available). Contact Jean on 01933 650245 or Ken 01933 650788 / Mob 07857393935. Annual Church Christmas concert including carols with The Rushden Town Band Concert. Includes free mince pie and mulled wine.

> SATURDAY 13TH DECEMBER, 10-11AM

Community Carols in the Car Park

Rushden Full Gospel Church, High Street South, Rushden.

> SATURDAY 13TH DECEMBER, 7.30PM

Oundle & District Choral Society Christmas Concert

Christmas concert under the new leadership of Andrew Kennedy in St Peter's Church, Oundle. The programme includes various seasonal works

by Ola Gjeilo, John Rutter, Sally Beamish and Gerald Finzi. Tickets £15 or £5 for under 18s, on the door, from choir members or soon to be available on TicketSource.

> SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER, 10.30AM

Countryside Walk

A 4-mile walk in Upper and Lower Dean. Meet at Grange Lodge, High Street, Lower Dean PE28 0LL. Organised by Whitefriars Church, Rushden – all welcome. Details from Andrew Presland, 01933 316927.

> MONDAY 15TH DECEMBER

Nene Valley Valley Astronomical Society

A presentation by member Will North titled, 'Gravity – A Journey to the Fabric of Reality'. Chelveston Village Hall, Caldecott Road Chelveston NN9 6AT. Admission £6 including, tea/coffee and biscuits. For more information please see www.neneastro.org.uk, or call Kevin on 07731890594. Do things fall, or does the ground come up to meet them? Find out tonight.

> SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER, 9.45AM

Higham Ferrers Footpath Group

Saffron Road car park for car sharing. Contact Mark on 07462 422097. Last walk of 2025, a 4.5-mile walk around Wrath Park Country Park.

> SUNDAY 4TH JANUARY, 9.20AM

Higham Ferrers Footpath Group



Saffron Road car park for car sharing. Contact Karin & Andrew on 07952 350540. 1st Walk of 2026 is a 7.5-mile walk around Pitsford Reservoir.

To submit your event please contact us via our website www.nenevalleynews.co.uk or call 01522 692542. Please supply in the following format: Date, event, place, time, admission fee (if applicable), contact information, 15 word description.

Yarwell & Nassington Britannia Band - Christmas is on its way

Christmas is on its way and the nights are getting colder. So, what a good opportunity to get some dates in your diary to help you, your family and friends celebrate Advent and prepare for Christmas.

The preparations for Christmas for many of you start with the Yarwell and Nassington Britannia Band's Christmas concert. This year is no different. The band is in Nassington Church on Sunday 7th December at 3pm for its Christmas concert, which will feature lots of popular favourites, some carols for you to sing along to and guests, the very popular Elton School band.

For those that have been before, you will know that it is a very special afternoon which includes tea and mince pies as well as expert compering by Tony Cooper. The concert is free on entry but there will be a plate for donations. This year all donations will be going to the NET cancer charity in memory of Alan (Jock) Rodgers, the band's greatly missed drummer and churchwarden.

The band has a very busy build-up to Christmas with plenty of opportunities to join in. Carols in the local pub has become a very popular event. What could be better than joining your friends to sing carols with a pint of beer in your hand beside an open log fire? The band will be visiting the Angel, The Queens Head and the Cross Keys. Come and support your local hostelry.

Christmas Programme:-

- Saturday 6th December 12.30pm to 2.30pm – Oundle Christmas Market



- Sunday 7th December 3pm – Nassington Church
- Wednesday 10th December 8.30pm – The Angel, Yarwell
- Thursday 11th December 8pm – The Queens Head, Nassington
- Wednesday 17th December 8pm – The Cross Keys, Wansford
- Friday 19th December 7pm – Kings Cliffe Club
- Wednesday 24th December – Carol Singing around Yarwell (meet at the bus stop at 6pm)

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NHFT QUALITY AWARDS

Now in its eleventh year, the Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT) Quality Awards continue to shine a spotlight on the dedication, compassion and innovation that defines NHFT.

This year's NHFT Quality Awards ceremony took place on Friday 7th November, during which the 'shining stars' who have gone above and beyond, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other NHS workers, were honoured and celebrated.

It was a night to recognise the inspiring NHS professionals who have demonstrated outstanding care to support patients and colleagues across Northamptonshire, as well as an opportunity to share learning and grow as an NHS team.

The evening was opened by NHFT's Chief Executive, Angela Hillery, and closed by the Trust's new Interim Group Chair, Faisal Hussain, who both paid tribute to the incredible efforts of colleagues across the organisation.



Angela Hillery said: "Every single day across Northamptonshire and beyond, colleagues from team NHFT are working in our communities and making a difference for those in need. Our Quality Awards are an opportunity to say thank you and recognise the outstanding, compassionate care they are providing."

"As Chief Executive of the organisation, I am proud and humbled by the stories we have seen in the nominations for this year's awards. Our incredible hard-working colleagues are striving to bring compassionate care to life, to innovate and ensure continuous improvement and make a difference, together, every single day."

The Trust extends its sincere thanks to headline sponsor Northamptonshire Health Charity as well as Hempsons, Fleet Architects, Riverside Printing, and the Mercure Hotel who also supported the event. The Trust are looking for passionate local businesses who would like to support next year's recognition programme. If you are interested, please email: commsteam@nhft.nhs.uk

The NHFT Quality Awards 2025 were a powerful reminder of the extraordinary people who make up the Trust. To all nominees, winners, and every member of teamNHFT, thank you for your continued dedication, compassion, and excellence. You are the heart of NHFT.

Winter Energy Support – applications now open

A one-off Winter Energy Support payment of £250, funded by the UK Government's Household Support Fund and distributed by North Northamptonshire Council, is available for residents of homes that are receiving means-tested benefits, and on a pre-payment meter or use non-standard fuel such as heating oil, have a Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) or biomass boiler.

Residents are urged to apply online and will receive the payment to their bank account if successful. For those without a computer or Internet at home, North Northamptonshire Council libraries provide a range of services, including free public computers with internet and Wi-Fi.

To receive the support payment you must:

- be over the age of 16 years (not in full-time education)
 - have the right to work in the United Kingdom
 - be a resident of North Northamptonshire
 - be in receipt of means-tested benefits
 - use a pre-payment meter or non-standard fuel (such as oil) for heating the home
- Residents must also provide evidence of:
- your National Insurance number
 - 1 month's full bank statement dated within the last 3 months showing receipt of means tested benefits
 - proof of up-front payment for energy

(receipt, bill or statement of account showing name, address and account details) dated within the last 3 months

Due to the high numbers the council expects to receive, applications will be processed within two months from the date of application. The deadline for applications is 12 noon on 20th February 2026 and to help the council process applications efficiently and avoid delays, the form will occasionally be closed for short periods of time.

Cllr Gregory Wilcox, Executive Member for Communities at North Northamptonshire Council, said: "This is a welcome fund and will make a real difference to eligible residents in North Northamptonshire this winter. We know that being able to pay the heating bills during winter is a very real worry for many people and this will hopefully help to ease that."

"The Household Support Fund continues to be a lifeline for many households in North Northamptonshire, particularly those experiencing significant financial challenges."

"I strongly encourage anyone who is struggling with the cost of living to take a look at what is on offer and to take full advantage of the resources and support that is available."

The Winter Fuel Payment is a different payment and service to the Winter Energy Support. Most people get the Winter Fuel Payment automatically if they're eligible.

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Your Health – Running in December

WORDS BY
CLAIRE SHORT

To me, winter running means chilblains on your thighs, cold feet, and air that freezes your lungs. Jay Sheridan, our sports and rehab therapist, disagrees and tells me that winter running has a charm. The quieter paths, crisp air and sunrises/sunsets tick the boxes for him.

If you're with Jay on this, then here are his top tips for staying fit, healthy and upright through the festive season.

Warm up properly

You know this already, but we're saying it again - cold muscles take longer to switch on so give them a chance to warm up.

- Walk for 5 minutes before you start running

- Do movements to loosen up your hips, ankles and upper back
- Start slowly for the first mile to let your body get used to the temperature.

Think about your lungs

Cold air can feel sharp, especially if you have asthma. Studies show that breathing through your nose warms incoming air, which might help. You can also:

- Cover your mouth with a light scarf
- Keep your shoulders relaxed to help you breathe more easily

Watch your footing

Whether it's from ice, mud or rain, we definitely see an increase in sprained ankles in the winter. Aiden, our sports

massage therapist says you should:

- Shorten your stride on slippery ground
- Avoid sudden direction changes
- Choose routes with good light or take a torch – sounds obvious, I know!

Do a quick post-run check

Your body is good at telling you when it needs care.

- Niggles that last more than a day need attention
- Stiffness that gets worse with each run is a sign to slow down
- If a muscle aches, simply rubbing it to get the blood flowing should help.

Most of all, if you're out, wrap up, stay sensible and enjoy the stunning scenery we have locally.

Claire Short is a Registered Osteopath, and runs The Ashgrove Clinic in Higham Ferrers. Send your questions to claire@ashgrovehealth.co.uk or Tweet to @AshgroveClinic

New school guidance on exclusions aims to 'change the narrative'

New guidance for schools to help reduce pupil suspensions and exclusions has been introduced encouraging a focus on 'inclusivity and early intervention'.

In response to concerns, nationally and locally, around high rates of exclusions and suspensions, North Northamptonshire Council has launched a comprehensive new guidance document seeking to "change the narrative" in the way schools and educational settings tackle the issue, and ensure exclusions are only ever a 'last resort'.

While the number of permanent exclusions has decreased slightly in the past year, the overall trend over five years remains upward – emphasising the urgent need for change. In 2021/22 there were 66 permanent exclusions, in 2022/23 there were 83, in 2023/24 there were 154, and in 2024/25 there were 141.

The key features of the guidance are:

- Relational practice at the core: Emphasising the importance of relationships, connection, and emotional safety in preventing exclusion
- Universal and targeted support: Providing clear strategies for whole-school approaches as well as targeted interventions for pupils at risk
- Graduated response framework: Offering step-by-step guidance to help settings make informed decisions, with a focus on prevention, support, and accountability
- Decision-making support: Equipping leaders with tools to assess situations fairly and consistently, ensuring exclusions are lawful, proportionate, and necessary

Exclusion can have long-term impacts on a child's education, wellbeing, and future opportunities. By shifting the focus to building and maintaining strong, respectful relationships, the council aims to create environments where all children feel safe, valued, and supported – reducing the need for exclusion and improving outcomes for vulnerable learners.

Cllr Elizabeth Wright, Executive Member for Children's Families and Education, at North Northamptonshire Council said: "This is a significant issue at schools across the country, which unfortunately is reflected locally. It is imperative that we turn this tide to ensure that we are focusing our efforts on early help and earlier identification of risk, especially when offering support to our most vulnerable young people.

"This new guidance is about changing the narrative – from exclusion as a disciplinary tool to inclusion as a shared responsibility. We want every child in North Northamptonshire to feel they belong, and every setting to feel equipped to make that happen."

Some of the approaches suggested to help reduce suspensions and exclusions include one-to-one counselling or mentoring with pupils at risk of exclusion, therapeutic interventions such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, as well as restorative practices where a safe, inclusive space for all parties to share their perspectives, feelings and experiences is encouraged to help resolve conflicts.

There is also an emphasis on a 'trauma-informed' approach whereby the impact of trauma on a person's development and behaviour is considered, to create environments of safety, trust and connection.

Schools and educational settings are being encouraged to engage with the guidance, reflect on current practice, and use the tools provided to strengthen their approach to inclusion and behaviour. Training and support will be available to help embed the principles across schools and services.

This new guidance aims to build on the council's ongoing work with schools to boost pupil attendance and reduce exclusions. Find out more about support around exclusions and suspensions on the council's website.

MAP OF 'WARM SPACES' AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS

North Northamptonshire Council has once again worked with community groups, voluntary organisations and not-for profit organisations to grant fund, via the UK Government's Household Support Fund, a network of 'Warm Spaces' this winter.

A total of 43 organisations are opening their doors to give their time and share their resources with local residents, providing a safe, warm and welcome space. The spaces include churches, village halls, community centres, libraries and even the Northamptonshire Branch of the RSPCA. Wellingborough's African Caribbean Association is also opening its doors alongside Snap Dragon and Bop in Kettering.

Warm Spaces are open for residents of all ages and offer somewhere a person who needs to get warm can go to, for free, to enjoy warmth, have a hot drink and socialise if they choose to. Residents struggling with heating their homes due to the rising cost of living can go for warmth, to look after physical and mental health, and to access support information.

The council has also developed a map of Warm Spaces available across North Northamptonshire

on its website: www.northnorthants.gov.uk/support-offer/warm-spaces. Click the 'Find a Warm Space' button. There is a list of all warm spaces and a map.

The council is also calling all residents for their help in spreading the message. If you know someone who you think might benefit, but doesn't have access to the internet, please let them know about their nearby Warm Spaces by looking at the website page, which also offers opening times and dates.

All residents can attend for activities at these locations without any need to discuss their personal circumstances.

Cllr Gregory Wilcox, Executive Member for Communities at North Northamptonshire Council, said: "North Northamptonshire Council recognises that once again it will be unaffordable for many residents to heat their homes for as long as they would do normally this winter.

"The Warm Spaces initiative has been running for a few years now and as well as offering a place of warmth, they are also places offering residents dignity and hopefully also some very important connection through the winter months."

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 – SECTION 14
(PUBLIC FOOTPATH PG2 (PART) – YARWELL)
(TEMPORARY CLOSURE) ORDER 2025

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that North Northamptonshire Council have made an Order the effect of which is to prohibit pedestrians from proceeding along that length of Public Footpath PG2 (Part) in Yarwell as specified below. Private access to land or premises adjacent to the said length of footpath are unaffected.

RIGHT OF WAY TO WHICH RESTRICTION APPLIES: The route to be closed starts on Public Footpath PG2 in the parish of Yarwell at point A on the map at National Grid Reference (NGR) SP 507456/297211. The route travels South for approximately 11 metres to point B on the map at (NGR) SP 507459/297201.

The route to be closed is shown by a solid black line on the map between points A-B.

REASONS FOR RESTRICTION: The restriction is required in the interest of health and safety – refurbishment works on lock for environment agency including scaffolding and painting the gate which is adjacent to the existing bridge. This will require scaffolding to be placed on the bridge in some cases.

PERIOD OF CLOSURE: The Order will come into effect on 5th January 2026 and will continue in force for a period of six months. An application may be made for the approval of the Secretary of State for Transport for this Order to be extended if this proves necessary. However, the restriction specified will have effect only at such times and to such extent as is indicated by the display of notices.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: The alternative route starts at point A on the map at NGR SP 507456/297211. The route travels west for approximately 10 metres to point C at NGR SP 507447/297210. The route travels south 8 metres across the temporary bridge to Point D NGR SP 507447/297202. The route then proceeds east for 12 metres to point B 507459/297201.

The route is shown by a broken black line between points A-C – D-B

If you require any further information please contact Tim Honeyball on 07718 366365.

Dated this 6th day of December 2025

KAMILA COULSON-PATEL

Director of Law & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

ROW/196-N

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 – SECTION 14
(PILTON ROAD, WADENHOE)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC) ORDER 2025

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that North Northamptonshire Council have made an Order the effect of which is to prohibit traffic from proceeding along that length of Pilton Road, Wadenhoe as set out below.

LENGTH OF ROAD TO WHICH RESTRICTION APPLIES: That length of Pilton Road, Wadenhoe from outside Longfield House to Footpath NN1.

REASON FOR RESTRICTION: The restriction is required for safety during pole maintenance works.

PERIOD OF CLOSURE: The proposed Order will come into effect on 8th December 2025 and will continue in force for a period of eighteen months. An application may be made for the approval of the Secretary of State for Transport for the Order to be extended if this proves necessary. However, the restriction specified will have effect only at such times and to such an extent as is indicated by the display of signs prescribed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.

EXPECTED DURATION: It is expected that the road will be restricted for up to 3 days.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES: use Main Street, Wadenhoe Lane, Pilton Road and Oundle Road.

If you require any further information please contact Steve Fowler ref:- 25/26 – N561 Steve.Fowler@northnorthants.gov.uk PKG/T25/833

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 – SECTION 14
(MAIN STREET, COTTERSTOCK)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC) ORDER 2025

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that North Northamptonshire Council have made an Order the effect of which is to prohibit traffic from proceeding along that length of Main Street, Cotterstock as set out below.

LENGTH OF ROAD TO WHICH RESTRICTION APPLIES: That length of Main Street, Cotterstock from outside Dove Court to outside Chippings.

REASON FOR RESTRICTION: The restriction is required for safety during manhole maintenance works.

PERIOD OF CLOSURE: The proposed Order will come into effect on 8th December 2025 and will continue in force for a period of eighteen months. An application may be made for the approval of the Secretary of State for Transport for the Order to be extended if this proves necessary. However, the restriction specified will have effect only at such times and to such an extent as is indicated by the display of signs prescribed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.

EXPECTED DURATION: It is expected that the road will be restricted for up to 3 days.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES: use Cotterstock Road, Glapthorn Road, New Road, A427 and A605.

If you require any further information please contact Steve Fowler ref:- 25/26 – N559 Steve.Fowler@northnorthants.gov.uk PKG/T25/834

Dated this 6th day of December 2025

KAMILA COULSON-PATEL

Director of Law & Governance (Monitoring Officer)



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Much-loved Peterborough Arch sculpture restored and returned to Thorpe Meadows

Peterborough's favourite sculpture, 'Peterborough Arch', has returned to its home after a two-year absence and a long process of restoration.

The sculpture, by renowned artist Lee Grandjean, was removed from beside the Longthorpe Parkway in 2023 for safety reasons after extensive weather damage. It has been at specialist conservators, Hall Conservation, ever since, undergoing a lengthy process of drying out, conservation treatment and painstaking repair work.

With restoration costs exceeding £50,000, the work has been largely funded through grant funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Henry Moore Foundation and Arts Council England. Additional significant donations have been received from The Peterborough Civic Society and Compare the Market. Members of the public have contributed through the Nene Park Trust online fundraising appeal and

at drop-in art workshops, a drawing competition and other events across the city.

Nene Park Trust is now excited to be welcoming back Peterborough Arch, affectionately known as 'Bob', to its home at Thorpe Meadows, where it previously stood for over 35 years, with wide welcoming arms.

Peterborough Arch was originally commissioned by the Peterborough Development Corporation in the 1980s as part of the city's expansion. It is an important part of Peterborough's modern history, the linchpin of the wider Sculpture Collection, and was voted as Peterborough's favourite sculpture in 2023 in an online poll.

Matthew Bradbury, CEO of Nene Park Trust says, "We are so pleased to see this much-loved sculpture restored to its former glory and

returned to its familiar home at Thorpe Meadows. We are grateful for the generous support of all our funders and donations from members of the public – we couldn't have completed this restoration project without you. We're looking forward to hosting Peterborough Arch at Thorpe Meadows for many years to come and seeing the Peterborough Sculpture Collection go from strength to strength."

The artist Lee Grandjean is delighted that his sculpture has been restored successfully and is thankful to the many funders and deeply touched by the affection shown for it by the people of Peterborough. Here he reflects on the original intentions behind his sculpture design as a welcome to the city. "I am glad that it is enjoyed and seen as an 'entrance



landmark' into the city. That was my intention from the beginning, a positive step across a threshold place and moment, going on to the centre, which I marked as the great cathedral.

"The structure of the sculpture reflects the gothic architecture of the cathedral and in the same spirit embodies a fundamental relationship at this threshold moment between human being and nature."



Arch before restoration

So when you're next driving along Longthorpe Parkway into Peterborough, please give 'Bob' a welcome home wave or visit Thorpe Meadows and see it up close and back in its rightful home. While you're there, pick up a leaflet from the Thorpe Meadows café and explore the rest of the Sculpture Trail which sits around the rowing lake – such an important part of the city's cultural history and heritage.


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