Council Business

Changes to Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme provides a reduction in the Council Tax bill for people on a low income.

Council approved the following changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme with effect from 1 April 2027:

(a) disregard 100% of the Housing Cost Element of Universal Credit in all cases

(b) reduce discount band 2 from 90% to 85%

(c) reduce discount band 3 from 70% to 65%

(d) reduce discount band 4 from 40% to 35%

FREE gas safety checks

Funding provided by Foundations Independent Living Trust through the Gas Safe Charity is being administered by NCC and offers a grant of up to £500 to replace, repair, or service dangerous, faulty, or inefficient gas boilers, fires or cookers which can pose safety risks to vulnerable people in their homes. Funding is limited and is being offered on a first come first served basis to residents that live in privately owned accommodation and who have a household income no greater than £36,000 per year or have a disability.

To find out more and to apply contact the Council's Warmer Homes team via email at warmerhomes@northumberland.gov.uk or call customer services on 0345 600 6400 Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 5pm, Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm and ask to speak to the Warmer Homes Team.

Consultation on the possibility of withdrawing faith-based school transport.

NCC is currently consulting on a proposal to end its discretionary free home-to-school transport provision for pupils attending a faith school on religious grounds. The consultation closes on **30 November 2026.**

At present, NCC provides free transport for some children attending their nearest faith school (typically Catholic or Church of England schools) where

families can demonstrate that religion is the reason for the school choice. This is an additional service provided by the council and is not a legal requirement.

The proposal is to remove this discretionary entitlement for new applicants from September 2028.

Under the proposal:
Existing pupils receiving faith-based transport would continue to receive it while they remain at their current school. However, new pupils starting in Reception, Year 5, Year 7 or Year 9 from September 2028 would no longer qualify solely on faith grounds. Siblings would not automatically qualify if they started after the new policy came into effect.

Around 425 pupils currently receive free transport on faith grounds.
The scheme costs approximately £977,000 per year.
The council's overall home-to-school transport budget is about £26.4 million annually and is under significant pressure, particularly from rising SEND transport costs.

Home to School Transport Consultation - Have Your Say Northumberland - Citizen Space

Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services
As part of this year's **White Ribbon Day and 16 Days of Action**, Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services (NDAS) is hosting a free online awareness session on 25 November from 12pm-1pm.

Understanding Domestic Abuse and How to Help - is designed for anyone who wants to better understand domestic abuse, recognise when someone may need support, and feel more confident responding safely.

The session is suitable for local businesses, community groups, volunteers, customer-facing professionals and generally anyone interested in learning more.

Location: Online Microsoft Teams Webinar
Cost: Free

Register your place via NDAS website: https://www.nda.services/webinar

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Programme
On 10 November, Cabinet approved the expenditure of up to £1.038 million (£0.260 million in 2026-27, £0.519 million in 2027-28 and £0.259 million in 2028-29) on the provision and installation of 36 Electric Vehicle Charging points across Northumberland, with an agreement to sign a Grant Funding Agreement with the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority for the funding.

NCC is proposing to install two 7kw EV Charger units in Cresswell Beach Car Park but open to discussing the location with the Parish.

The list of sites will be subject to a final review once connection and installation costs are confirmed to ensure the proposed locations offer value for money.

Winter Services
Winter has arrived and the NCC website offers valuable advice on how to stay safe on the roads in winter.

Winter services | Northumberland County Council

Routine gritting takes place on a network of 28 main routes.

From this winter the County Council will also be gritting and providing winter maintenance on number of routes in Newcastle for the first time, after winning the contract to provide services on behalf of Newcastle City Council.

Due to the County Council no longer being responsible for winter maintenance on the A69, it can use this spare resource to provide a service for Newcastle, with no loss of service or capacity within the county.

If you require gritting support or need to report an issue, you can do this via the Winter Services Section of FixMyStreet.

Grit bins and heaps
These are available, where routine gritting doesn't happen, such as selected steep hills, sharp bends or near steps.

You can use this grit to clear snow and ice from roads and pavements around your home. It should not be used on private property.

Requests for any additional grit bins can be made via FixMyStreet but are subject to a strict scoring criteria. Parish and town councils can buy, place, and

fill their own grit bins to supplement the services provided by the county council.

There is also a Snow Warden Scheme in Northumberland which allows an individual or a group of community volunteers to sign up to help clear snow and ice from public footpaths in their local areas.

Snow wardens | Northumberland County Council

Local Issues

Community Speedwatch
The Force Lead for Community Speed Watch (CSW) responded to my emails, acknowledging Cllr Haworth's frustration at being unable to apply at present and offered an explanation as to why recruitment has been temporarily paused.

Community Speed Watch recruitment is on hold while Northumbria Police improves the way volunteers are recruited, trained and supported. A new coordinator role is being introduced to help manage the scheme and improve communication. Recruitment is expected to reopen around the start of next year, although no firm date has been set.

Jonathan Caisley 7537
Chief Inspector Communities
Northumberland

There is information on the Northumbria Police website about Community Speed Watch at the following links:

Community Speed Watch guidance | Northumbria Police

Community Speed Watch | Northumbria Police

There is the option to 'Tell us about a Location' where a road of concern can be named, a simple form completed and the complainant can say whether they want to join the CSW Scheme or would like more information.

E Bikes, E Scooters and ASB
Northumbria Police are reinforcing that residents should be encouraged to report anti-social behaviour involving off-road motorcycles, e-bikes and e-scooters through the following channels:

- Northumbria Police (101) for information about illegal or nuisance use of off-road motorcycles, including details of who owns the vehicle, where it is stored, when and where it is being ridden, and descriptions of riders or bikes
- Crimestoppers (0800 555 111) for anonymous reporting where residents do not wish to provide their details.

The attached information leaflets may assist parish councillors when responding to residents' concerns regarding:

- Anti-social use of off-road motorbikes.
- E-bikes and e-scooters.
- A parent/carer guide to e-bikes and e-scooters.