



Excellence and Beyond...

Being awarded the status of an 'excellent' council was great news for us and the communities we serve. However, we have no intention of resting on our laurels!

The next 12 months promise to be busy as we work to achieve our vision of making North East Derbyshire a great place to live, work and play. We will focus on a number of key areas to achieve our ambitions, including:

- Carry out more research to further understand the make-up of our communities, which will help us tailor our services to their needs



- Continue to work closely with our partners, providing more efficient services and saving money where possible
- Use our Community Partnership meetings to make sure all sections of the community have the chance to put forward their views
- Work closely with Rykneld Homes in the run-up to their Audit Commission inspection - with the ultimate goal of securing £60m worth of funding to bring all council houses up to the Decent Homes standard
- Replace older Council vehicles with a new 'green fleet' to meet current European Emission Standards
- Achieve accreditation from the Eco-Management Audit Scheme (EMAS)
- Work to reduce the Council's 'carbon footprint' to help tackle climate change
- Build our influence at regional and national level as an ambitious and progressive Council - to put North East Derbyshire on the map
- Create more 'one-stop-shops' in libraries across the district - and in mobile libraries in isolated areas - to make it easier for residents to access Council services and information
- Push forward progress on the major redevelopment of Clay Cross town centre

You can view a full copy of the Council's Annual Report 2008-09 on the website at www.ne-derbyshire.gov.uk

Community Corner

Here we put the spotlight on you – if you've got a success you want to shout about, an event you need to promote or a project you want to highlight in the NEWS, then get in touch!

Step out for health and heritage

History, heritage and exercise come together in the third Peak District Historic Border County Walking Festival this summer.

For the third year running the countryside and market towns of North East Derbyshire will host the annual festival, which boasts over 40 guided walks.

The festival runs from 20 - 28 June and for the first time this year will also include cycle rides and illustrated lectures about the area's natural beauty and heritage.

Programmes are now on sale at Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre. For more information call (01246) 345777 or e-mail: tourism@chesterfield.gov.uk.



Well done Emily!

Talented schoolgirl Emily Brown (10) put pen to paper to scoop a top award in a national short story competition.

Emily, a pupil at Hunloke Park Primary School in Wingerworth, was picked as one of 10 winners out of 3,000 young hopefuls in the Evans Schools Short Story Competition.



Emily Brown

Her story, 'Rules Out,' has now been published alongside the other winning entries in a compilation book, 'The Monster in the Moat,' which was launched on national World Book Day 2009.

Brenda Thomas, Emily's teacher, said: "It was a fantastic story, imaginative, full of fun - Emily made a really grand job of it. I was not really surprised she won because she is a very talented pupil!"

Become an NEDDC correspondent! If you would like to see your story on this page, please contact Mandy Atkinson on (01246) 217692 or email mandy.atkinson@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk.

The deadline for the next edition, which will be received by residents in September 2009, is Friday 10 July.

Advice Line



I've heard you can get help if you have a mortgage and you lose your job?

New measures to help people who lose their jobs hang on to their homes were introduced in January 2009.

The rules about help with housing costs for owner-occupiers on benefits have changed. You can get help towards paying the interest on your mortgage – known as Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) - if you are on Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or income-related Employment and Support Allowance. In addition, some mortgage lenders have agreed they will not start court action for at least three months (and at least two lenders have extended this to six months).

The government also has a new Homeowner Mortgage Support Scheme. It will allow borrowers who experience a loss of income to delay some interest payments. Visit www.direct.gov.uk for details.

There is also a new mortgage rescue scheme to help homeowners to stay in their home. To find out more contact NEDDC's Housing Options Team on (01246) 231111. A new leaflet providing information about mortgage arrears can be viewed at www.nhas.org.uk.

I am being pressurised to repay a credit card debt that I can't afford. What should I do?

If you've got problems paying, and you seek advice from an independent debt advice agency such as a Citizens Advice Bureau, the company won't collect the debt for 30 days. They'll accept a further 30-day period if a repayment plan has not been agreed, but you're still taking advice from the agency and a repayment plan is expected to be agreed. They will also give at least 30 days' notice of any increase in interest rates and allow customers who then cancel their cards a reasonable period to repay. Finally, they will not raise their main interest rate for 12 months after you have signed up for a card. This is an industry code of conduct. If they don't stick to it you should complain to the company and if they won't address the problem, seek advice.

For further advice and information contact your local bureau:

Clay Cross 126, High Street, Tel: 0844 8489800	Mon to Fri 10am - 2pm
Dronfield, Peel Centre Tel: 0844 8489800	Mon & Thur 10am - 2pm
Eckington Library Tel: 0844 8489800	Tue & Fri 10am - 2pm
Renishaw Community Centre Tel: 0844 8489800	Tue 10am - 2pm

Further information about all the advice offered by the Bureau can be found on their website www.ned-cab.org.uk or by telephoning 0844 8489800.

I got into very bad debt a few years ago and set up a debt management plan, but my financial situation is increasingly difficult. What should I do?

It's time to re-assess your disposable income and see if there are any alternative options available. A CAB adviser can do this, some of the options could be:

Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) – a legally binding agreement with your creditors to pay a proportion of your debts over a set period.

Bankruptcy – a court order which declares you are unable to pay your debts and protects you from enforcement action by your creditors.

Administration Order – another form of court order only available to people with total debts of £5,000, plus a court judgment. You pay a set amount each month and the court distributes the money to creditors.

Debt Relief Order – these orders are aimed at giving people who have debts of less than £15,000, assets of less than £300 and surplus income of less than £50 per month relief from paying their debts. Once the order is made your creditors cannot take any action against you and, if your situation does not change, your debts will be written off after one year.

Working to deliver Decent Homes for our tenants

A round-up of news from Rykneld Homes, the organisation which manages Council houses in North East Derbyshire.

Tenants are in line for a programme of improvements to their homes, including new kitchens, bathrooms and windows, as part of Rykneld's commitment to meeting the Decent Homes Standard.

We are now rolling out our 'Estates Delivery Plan,' which sets out a timetable for work to be carried out on properties across the district over the next seven years.

Work already underway includes the installation of kitchens, bathrooms, and new windows and doors at homes in Killamarsh.

Meanwhile, new windows and doors are being installed in properties in Eckington as part of the work, over the next few months.

The full timetable, which started in 2008 and will run until 2014, breaks down work as it is planned for each estate. This can be viewed on the website at www.rykneldhomes.org.uk, and was also published the September / October 2008 edition of the tenants' newsletter, Homing In.

At the start of each financial year we will publish our plans for delivering the major element of work, street-by-street, providing greater detail on when tenants can expect work to start – so look out for these updates!

Please note that this timetable is subject to the funding we receive from the Council for 2009/10. Any decrease in funding - from any source - will mean we have to revise this programme.



Making plans for the year ahead

Like any business we need to develop a set of plans that will direct our operations over the coming year and show how we will achieve our aims and ambitions.

Before drawing up our Business Plan for 2009 / 10 we consulted widely with tenants and our partners to make sure our plans will deliver the services that meet the needs and expectations of our customers.

As well as setting out our priorities for the year ahead, the plan contains details of how we are performing and what our targets are for this year. It also sets out how much we have budgeted for services, such as repairs and improvements to homes. Key aims are set out opposite.

Key aims for the coming year include:

- Maintaining your homes by continuing with the Decent Homes programme, day-to-day repairs and planned maintenance.
- Supporting older people in sheltered housing
- Supporting tenants to pay their rent
- Taking pride in your neighbourhoods by providing clean estates, improved grounds maintenance and work with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour
- Working with the Council to prevent homelessness and minimise the time that homes are vacant
- Use the Choice Based Lettings system to let you have a degree of choice in where you wish to live
- Involve you in the way your landlord service is delivered, based on your needs and in ways which suit you. We will do this through improved customer access, encouraging tenant involvement and tailoring services to meet your needs
- Putting things right when they go wrong and letting you know what we have done
- Your views on the 2009 / 10 Business Plan are welcomed – copies can be found on our website at www.rykneldhomes.org.uk.

New Board Member for Rykneld

A new member has taken up his seat on the Rykneld Homes Board, which oversees the running of the organisation.

David Hunt was appointed by the Council to take up the vacant seat, after Cllr Betty Hill stepped down from the role.

David was formerly the Director of Housing with North East Derbyshire District Council, retiring in 1997 having worked for the authority for over 20 years.