

COUNTY COUNCILLOR WENDY PATTISON

EGLINGHAM PARISH

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT



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ALNWICK BANKING UPDATE!

MP Anne Marie Trevelyan brought LINK to Parliament to get further explanation from them on the new Banking Hub in Alnwick.

LINK review bank closures and recommend Banking Hubs where criteria are met – as they have been in Alnwick.

While final details are being worked out – there will be a meeting with Cash Access UK who will run the



Hub to help shape them – key Hub principles are:

- ✓ It will offer cross-bank counter-service transactions run by the Post Office
- ✓ In addition to the current Post Office
- ✓ A private consultation room will be staffed by the 5 most commonly used banks in our area – each on a different weekday
- ✓ 97% of people will be covered by this – with only folk who have specifically chosen online-exclusive banks not covered

Representations to the Treasury Committee's banking inquiry, help to shape the way the Government through the Financial Services & Markets Act 2023, have asked the FCA to ensure cash deposit and withdrawal services for personal and business accounts.



WET START TO THIS YEAR'S GRASS CUTTING SEASON

Preparations are well underway ahead of the Council's annual grass cutting programme.

Equipment has been serviced and the council has recruited to its 50 seasonal staff positions which support the core workforce during the growing season.

The season is set to start a little later than usual due to the sustained period of wet weather that has saturated the ground in many locations around the county.

This saturation makes the ground very soft, and significantly increases the risk of surface damage caused by the Council's ride on grass cutting machines, which are much heavier than domestic lawnmowers.

Because the teams are having to start cutting later, the grass may be longer than normal when it is first cut which will result in clippings sitting in place until subsequent cutting cycles but teams will ensure that any clippings are blown off footpaths back onto the grassed area.

Teams will inspect all areas and make an assessment on suitability for cutting and as soon as ground conditions allow the Council will deploy its ride on mowers straight away.

We know how important it is to keep our green spaces looking neat and tidy, and we'll be starting our grass cutting season soon. However some things are at the mercy of the weather and the ground is still saturated in some areas.

We don't want to damage the grass or our machines, so it might take a bit longer to get started.

We thank residents for their patience while we get round to cutting the grass in their areas.

NEW MEASURES TO BETTER PROTECT VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS AGREED WITH TELECOMS

UK phone providers have agreed a number of new measures to protect vulnerable customers as phone lines are upgraded to a new digital network.

- UK phone providers agree new measures to protect vulnerable customers when upgrading phone lines to a new digital network
- Technology Secretary asks all providers not to force people to switch over until enhanced protections are in place
- The agreement also means that vulnerable households have better access to emergency services during power outages

The most vulnerable people across England will be better protected following agreement with the telecoms industry to introduce new measures when upgrading phone lines to a digital network, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, announced today (Monday 18 December).

After becoming aware of serious incidents, the Technology Secretary convened a meeting with the UK's leading telecoms providers, including Sky, BT, VMO2 and TalkTalk, to discuss urgent mitigations to reduce the likelihood of further incidents, protecting those including the elderly.

Telecoms providers have now signed a Charter committing to concrete measures to protect vulnerable households, particularly those using personal alarms, known as telecare, which offer remote support to elderly, disabled, and vulnerable people – with many located in rural and isolated areas. The move represents a positive step by industry to make sure safety continues to be at the heart of the nationwide switchover and provides reassurance to vulnerable households.

Phone providers have been upgrading household landlines to digital technology which uses an internet connection, to deliver a modern network which is secure, efficient, and fit for the future. However, the Secretary of State was recently made aware of serious incidents involving telecare users having their devices fail when trying to use them after the upgrade process.

Though these incidents are confined to a small number of providers, the Technology Secretary has worked with telecoms bosses to ensure robust protections are in place. Under the Charter, all providers have agreed to not forcibly move customers onto the new network unless they are fully confident they will be protected.

NORTHUMBERLAND PUBLIC HEALTH LEADS WELCOME NEW TOBACCO BILL

Public Health leads at Northumberland County Council have welcomed the first step in Parliament to raise the age of sale for tobacco in England, making smoking history for the next generation.



The Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which on Wednesday March 20 was laid before the House of Commons, raises the age of sale for all tobacco products one year every year from 2027 onwards. This means that tobacco can never be legally sold to anyone aged 15 or younger this year.

Gill O'Neill, Northumberland Executive Director of Public Health, said: "I am delighted to see that the new legislation means anyone born after 1st January 2009 will never legally be allowed to be sold cigarettes in England.

"The new Bill would also see new fixed penalty fines of £100 for selling cigarettes or vapes to children. Preventing children from ever taking up smoking will give them the best possible start in life and help us work towards a smokefree generation."

Cllr Wendy Pattison, chair of the Northumberland Tobacco Control Partnership, said: "Smoking is the biggest cause of ill health, disability and death in the country, so we need to do all we can to prevent our children from ever starting the habit and I am delighted that this new Bill is a fantastic opportunity to do just that.

"I would also like to remind smokers in Northumberland that there is lots of free support available and I would encourage anyone who wants to quit smoking, to ask for help"

The new Bill also sees plans to ban disposable vapes, restrict vape flavours, introduce plain packaging for vapes and change how vapes are displayed in shops so that they don't appeal to children.

Nicotine vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking. It's also one of the most effective tools for quitting smoking. However, vaping is not recommended for non-smokers and children.

A variety of free support is available in Northumberland to stop smoking. Find out more at stopsmokingnorthumberland.co.uk or call 01670 813135.

