



**SADBERGE AND WHESSOE WARD**

## **COUNCILLOR BRIAN JONES**

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# Newsletter

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### **Bus subsidies**

At a meeting of Darlington Borough Council's cabinet in the town hall on 19<sup>th</sup> February the proposed removal of subsidies to bus services 17 and 97 was partially withdrawn. The service 17 will cease while the 97 will be changed to provide the best possible service to Sadberge and the surrounding areas. This decision followed sustained pressure in recent weeks from residents, the parish council and myself. I have made it abundantly clear at several meetings that the removal of the services was totally unacceptable because of the devastating effect on those who rely on the services, either wholly or in part. I would like to thank everyone who took part in meetings, wrote letters or completed forms objecting to the proposal. **A word of caution.** There is little or no detail available at the moment as to what exactly will happen and we therefore must work to ensure the new service accords with the needs and wishes of residents.

### **Parish grants**

The second part of a 'double whammy' to the rural area of Darlington was also withdrawn. It had been suggested that annual grants to all 12 parish councils (£34,000) should also be removed despite the fact that the borough received £6.5m in council tax from the four rural wards this year. That would have meant that parishes would either have to curtail their activities or almost double their precept. Whilst the actual amounts to residents may not be huge, the principal at stake is massive. Rural residents would in effect be paying double taxation via council tax and the precept. The new proposal is to retain the grants and to review the distribution criteria. As Chair of the Darlington Association of Parish Councils I will seek to be involved in that review.

### **National Bus Pass**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April pensioners (aged 60 and over) and disabled people in Darlington borough will be able to travel free by bus anywhere in England as part of a national scheme. This will apply between 9-30am and 11pm Mondays to Fridays, all day on weekends and bank holidays and free travel within the borough after 11pm on weekdays. Anyone who is disabled and who needs help to travel will also be issued with a free companion pass. If you already have a pass you will automatically be sent a new one. If not, and you think you could be eligible to register telephone **388799** for further information.

## **Planning Committee**

In my November newsletter I was hopeful that changes would be made to the procedures of the planning committee following my complaint about the short amount of time given to objectors to present their case. I'm pleased to say that a Corporate Governance Group has looked at the issues and recommended changes that will allow members of the public and ward and parish councillors a greater and fairer opportunity, not only to present their case, but to also have a right of reply.

## **Wind farms**

Preliminary investigations are taking place to build two wind farms close to Sadberge. An Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Document outlines one project with nine turbines at West Newbiggin and a further site with two turbines at East Newbiggin. The name East Newbiggin is misleading because the site is actually nearer to Great Burdon and will be clearly visible from the village hall. The maximum turbine height including blades will be approximately 100 metres.

Your views would be appreciated.

## **NHS Out of Hours Services**

Darlington Primary Care Trust (PCT) has recently taken over responsibility for Out of Hours urgent care services for people in Darlington. Out of Hours services are the non-emergency health services provided when your GP surgery is closed at night, weekends and bank holidays. This service will be based at Dr Piper House, King Street, Darlington. The Out of Hours period runs from:

Monday – Friday	6 p.m. – 8 a.m.
Saturday – Monday	8 a.m. – 8 a.m.
Bank Holidays	From 6 p.m. the evening before a bank holiday until 8 a.m. the day after.

You may be given advice over the telephone or you may require a face-to-face consultation at Dr Piper House. A home visit will only be made if it is considered necessary by a health care professional and is usually only made to the terminally ill and the permanently bedbound.

## **Out of Hours services: 01325 746322**

Additional help available out of hours – **NHS Direct – 0845 4647 (24 hours) for health advice and information.**

## **Water Meters**

A meter can help you control the size of your water bill because you only pay for the water you have used. This could be beneficial if you live alone or are a couple and you use little water. All domestic customers have the right to ask for a meter to be fitted at no charge. If you change your mind after it has been installed you can revert to the unmetered tariff by telling Northumbrian Water in writing. The meter will not be removed but left for the next occupier of the property.

Meters are installed free of charge within 90 days of application. For a guide to how much water you may use and for further information call Northumbrian Water on **0845 733 5566** for a meter option pack.