Great Northumberland puts on a Great North Knees-Up

Tuesday 26 June, 2018

- Folk bands, local singers and musicians will provide the soundtrack to a celebratory day
- A huge public ceilidh led by The Village Band on the Sele

Great Northumberland launches in Hexham on Saturday 7 July in what promises to be a fun-filled-festival demonstrating exactly what makes Northumberland great.

To kick-off eight weeks of summer in the county, Great Northumberland (delivered by Northumberland County Council) are inviting everyone to Hexham Abbey Grounds and the Sele for a vibrant family-friendly day of performance, street theatre and a line-up of musicians designed to get everyone up and dancing, culminating in an energetic public ceilidh.

From 1pm onwards, there will be plenty for visitors to enjoy in a jam-packed schedule featuring local choirs and musicians alongside some well-known talent from the region; North East-based folk-rock band Dansi will take to the main stage at 2pm and The Village Band will lead a mass public ceilidh at 4pm.

“The opening day of Great Northumberland promises to be a fun day out in the sun (hopefully) with something for everyone,” says Cllr Peter Jackson, Leader of Northumberland County Council,

“Visitors can see some very special street theatre from some of the best, most lively performers in the county, bring a picnic and enjoy the line-up of bands and musicians we have secured to perform, who are all rooted in Northumberland, and even join in themselves with some dancing!”

Inspired by the Great Exhibition of the North, Great Northumberland is designed to encourage those visiting the North for the once in a generation exhibition to venture further afield into England’s most northerly county.

“The North is a diverse, exciting and beautiful place to be,” said Cllr Cath Homer, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts, Tourism & Leisure, “we hope that those heading to the North this summer will spend time exploring and enjoying Northumberland – from the coastline to the hills, the contemporary galleries to landmarks steeped in heritage; Northumberland truly is a great place to be this summer!”

Staying true to its raison d'être, the entertainment in store for Saturday 7 July is anchored around regional talent and sprinkled with some big-names from the international performing arts scene.

Such as Spark! Drummers, a North Shields-based international street theatre show presented by several striking characters; combining high-impact drumming with dynamic choreography for a captivating and memorable performance. Spark! Drummers will play three sets throughout the day, at 1pm, 2:30pm and 4pm.

Other performers set to delight visitors on the day include:

Swank - Girl Guides: the terribly jolly Girl Guide duo ‘Val Keen’ and ‘Babs Eager’, engage the public in achieving their SWANK GUIDES badges. Whether 'Ging Gang Goolying', ‘’Fit for Anything’ or simply 'Doing My Best', everyone is a badge winner.

Dan Fox, Boom Bikes and Band: the astounding BoomBike takes music wherever it goes, a one-man band for the digital generation, delivering programmes of live music across the Sele.

Bruce Airhead: one man, one balloon, one amazing show. Television’s Bruce Airhead will perform his astounding 30-minute performance, involving a man climbing inside a huge balloon!

Sid Bowfin: world-class violinist and clown, prepare for a one-man musical comedy show, entirely improvised, no two shows are the same, so don’t miss a single one!

Bedlam Oz: world-renowned theatre company Bedlam Oz use giant, life size slinkies to animate spaces and create compelling street theatre for the whole family to enjoy.

Visitors are encouraged to bring a picnic and stay the day to be sure not to miss a single act, or for ideas of places to eat in Hexham go to www.visithexham.net.

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The day will also act as an opportunity for visitors to explore what the rest of Great Northumberland has in store, Cllr Jackson explains “all of our host venues and Great Northumberland partner organisations will be there on the day, revealing for the first time, some of the exciting events and activities they have planned for the 56 day long fun-filled family-friendly programme!”

The day is being produced by Walk the Plank - one of the leading arts companies in the world, alongside Culture Creative an Alnwick-based firm who deliver global art, sport and tourism events.

Cllr Jackson added, “It’s part of our core proposition that business in the North, and Northumberland specific, benefit from this season of cultural events. We are working with a number of regional organisations to deliver the programme and are looking to partner with as many Northumberland businesses and venues as possible to make sure this county-wide initiative benefits everyone.”

Great Northumberland 2018 will culminate with a celebration of the unique musical traditions and talent of Northumberland. On Saturday 1 September in Berwick-upon-Tweed a children’s choir and fanfare of trumpets outside the Guildhall will herald the start of a concert that showcases the newly-commissioned song suite the ‘Great Song of the North’, alongside a performance from locally-based mezzo soprano Tamsin Davidson, contemporary settings of familiar Northumbrian songs and an introduction to the Northumbrian pipes.

Anyone wishing to attend the event on Saturday 7 July, should simply turn up! It’s completely free and the fun begins at midday. There will be a FREE Park and Ride at Hexham & Northern Marts, Tyne Green, Hexham from 12.30pm-5.45pm which will take you directly to the Abbey Grounds.

Sign up to the newsletter on the website to be kept informed. Find out more at greatnorthumberland.co.uk

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