Northumberland in the spotlight with a summer of culture

Monday 30 April, 2018

- Great Northumberland 2018 is 56 days of arts, culture and heritage events celebrating the county of Northumberland
- Opening on Saturday 7 July and closing on Saturday 1 September 2018

This summer, the great county of Northumberland will demonstrate why it's one of a kind when it serves up a summer of arts, culture and heritage to tempt visitors to enjoy and discover this unique and stunning corner of Northern England.

Great Northumberland 2018 is an eight-week extravaganza of events, exhibitions and activities starting from Saturday 7 July. Great Northumberland offers something for everyone, regardless of age, whether they're families, art lovers, history buffs or they're simply looking to explore and find adventure.

Spurred on by the Great Exhibition of the North 2018, Northumberland County Council is bringing together, for the first time, a diverse range of summer activities under 'Great Northumberland', with a variety of the county's best-loved visitor attractions playing host to events, including Lindisfarne Castle, Cragside, Vindolanda, Cherryburn and many more.

Cllr Peter Jackson, Leader of Northumberland County Council said: "With the spotlight firmly on our region this summer, we wanted to showcase what Northumberland has to offer, encouraging visitors and residents to explore our stunning county.

"Great Northumberland will celebrate our art, culture, heritage and innovation. Today we are unveiling our packed programme of free, family-friendly events for the first time and we want everyone to be part of it.

"It's a really exciting time to be in Northumberland both as a resident and a visitor, with things such as the North of Tyne Devolution Deal and the Borderlands Growth Initiative bringing about great change.

"Great Northumberland gives us another reason to shout about what makes our county so special."

Great Northumberland 2018 will be launched in Hexham on Saturday 7 July with a truly exciting opening show produced by Billie Klinger of Walk the Plank - one of the leading arts companies in the world, renowned for their spectacular showcase events. In and around the Abbey gardens the first event of Great Northumberland will feature street theatre (including the world-renowned SPARK! LED drummers) music, comedy and a main stage, from where representatives of all the participating venues will introduce their own contributions to the summer's activities.

The aim of Great Northumberland 2018 is to showcase the county's rich heritage, unique traditions and fabulous landscape, while also demonstrating its forward-thinking approach to environmental innovation and digital technology.

Enjoy a new immersive experience by Anya Gallaccio at Lindisfarne Castle, join in with Carnival Capers at Seaton Delaval Hall, reach for the stars at the North Pennines Observatory and take an enchanting journey through the world of toys at the Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick.

Watch out for a new exhibition at the National Trust's Cragside property near Rothbury, exploring the role of women in the industrial workplace focusing particularly on STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) industries, and a celebration of 50 years of the National Trust at Wallington.

Expect new art exhibitions at Woodhorn Museum to celebrate the much-loved Ashington Group, famously nicknamed the Pitmen Painters, plus a new display of landscapes by Mark Fairnington at the National Trust's Cherryburn property near Stocksfield, the birthplace of printmaker Thomas Bewick.

Look out, too, for a solo exhibition showcasing the work of Chinese artist and master craftsman Qi Yafeng at Cheeseburn Sculpture near Stamfordham. Meanwhile, an exhibition of the work of South Korean sculptor Joo-Hee Yang will be staged to mark the end of her residency with Visual Arts in Rural Communities, based in High Green, Tarset in the Northumberland National Park.

At the coast, the port town of Blyth will mark 200 years since one of the town's most extraordinary sons, Captain William Smith, became the first person to discover land in Antarctica. Visitors will be able to view

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an installation of over 600 blue sailcloth flags made by local people to illustrate his journey of discovery. Using exciting cyanotype photo-reactive printmaking techniques, the installation will create a flurry of colour and movement.

Cllr Cath Homer, Cabinet member for Culture, Arts, Tourism and Leisure said: “Great Northumberland is an exciting mix of heritage events, new exhibitions and commissions and live performances covering all corners of the county.

“Northumberland is a place where everyone is welcome and where there truly is something for all. We want everyone to get involved and support Great Northumberland, so if you’re an event organiser, tourist attraction or venue we want to hear about your events this summer!

“Working together we can provide an unforgettable experience which not only instills a sense of pride in residents, but also encourages visitors to discover what makes Northumberland great.”

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.

Northumberland County Council hopes Great Northumberland 2018 will put the county on the national stage, encouraging visitors to take longer stays in the region, and has come up with six slogans to convey its message:

*** EXPLORE NORTHUMBERLAND**

*** EXPERIENCE NORTHUMBERLAND**

*** ENJOY NORTHUMBERLAND**

*** DISCOVER NORTHUMBERLAND**

*** REIMAGINE NORTHUMBERLAND**

*** LOVE NORTHUMBERLAND**

Organisers are encouraging venues and organisations across Northumberland to submit their events and plans for the summer to be featured on the Great Northumberland website - visit www.greatnorthumberland.co.uk for more information.

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