

# North East Pensioners Association

Regional impact report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in August 2020 including the following:

**1. Care Homes & Housing, 2. Economy, 3. Health & Welfare, 4. NHS, 5. Politics, 6. Poverty 7. Security and 8. Transport.**

**NEPA**  
Security with Dignity

## 1. CARE HOMES & HOUSING

**DNR - Urgent Enquiry.** The National Pensioners' Convention is calling for this after a new report revealed some care home staff were told to put blanket Do Not Resuscitate orders on residents at the height of the pandemic. The NPC, the UK's largest campaigning group for older people is shocked by the findings of a survey published today (24 August 2020) by the Queen's Nursing Institute on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the UK's nursing and residential homes (NPC Letter for urgent enquiry).



**Planning laws radical change.** The biggest change will see land dividing up into three categories – "growth", "renewal" and "protected".

- On land earmarked for growth, new homes, schools and hospitals will be allowed to be built automatically, with councils unable to veto.
- Councils will be also be told to push through plans on land marked for renewal.
- Protected land will include green belts and areas of natural beauty, where new building plans will not be allowed.

The plans have been criticised over fears they could lead to rushed, poor quality housing, and because they diminish the influence of local authorities (inews).

## 2. ECONOMY.

**Public sector debt hits £2 trillion.** Higher than our gross domestic output (ONS).

**Worse than the 1930's.** The Institute for Public Policy Research thinktank, warns that withdrawing the furlough scheme with nothing in its place will cause unemployment at levels "not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Guardian).

**A Brexit vigil.** This was held outside the gates of Nissan's huge factory in Sunderland as supporters pleaded for the Government not to leave the EU transition period without a deal (D/Express).

**Government Refund Policy.** Businesses in Sunderland received tens of millions of pounds in grants to help during the Covid 19 Lock down. £8.3 million is currently leftover in Sunderland and the Local Government Association suggests the Council should retain this (Sunderland Echo).

### Work coming to the region includes:

**New Morrisons Supermarket** - Murton County Durham. This will bring 150 permanent jobs and could be opened by the end of the year (N/Echo).

**Green Energy Advice Bureau** - Aims to create 200 jobs Newcastle Business Park.

**Trucktyre ATS** - Aims to bring 80 new jobs to Gateshead.

**Government Infrastructure fund.** This is backing 18 schemes with £47m across the region. This could create 4,000 jobs and safeguard others (Chronicle).

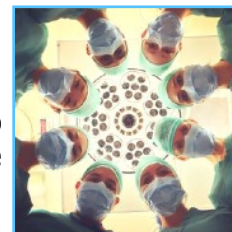
**United Kingdom's greenest Tyre recycling plant** This planned for Port of Sunderland 100 construction jobs and 30 permanent to run the plant (S/Echo).

**Notable work loss.** This included Hays Travel that was hit hard by the Spanish restrictions and may now shed over 800 staff.

**The funeral business.** The competition watchdog has been forced to put off plans to impose a price cap on standard funeral services due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Competition and Markets Authority had been considering imposing price controls on funerals after a probe into wild west practices in the sector, which leave consumers overpaying by an average of £400 per funeral and £215 per cremation (inews).

### 3. HEALTH & WELFARE.

**Cancer - 5 year survival rates expected to fall.** This is due to delays in getting urgent referrals or treatment at the height of the pandemic. The fall in the number of people seeing their GP with symptoms, and in referrals for scans, is resulting in cancers being spotted too late, according to the research by the Institute for Public Policy Research and Carnall Farrar, a healthcare management consultancy (Times).



**South Tyneside palliative service.** Plans for the future of palliative services in South Tyneside, which has been without a dedicated facility since the closure of Jarrow's St Clares Hospice in 2019, are expected to be confirmed in September. Campaigners fear it is unlikely to be a like-for-like replacement (S/Gazette).

**South Tyneside Pensioners are you missing out?** A record low number of pensioners are using a Government scheme to help pay their council tax bill during the corona virus crisis. Low income households and pensioners can apply for a discount or exemption on their council tax under the Council Tax Reduction scheme and Ministry of Housing (S/Gazette).

**Former Newcastle General Hospital site - Covid19 test and trace open.** As part of a national network, the centre will be linked to the national test booking system and will feed results into the NHS Test and Trace system to help control the spread of the virus. This is in addition to the Newcastle Great Park and Byker facilities (Citylife).

### 4. THE NHS

**Public Health England - National Institute for Health Protection.** It brings together the health protection parts of Public Health England with NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Centre. Ministers have been accused of using PHE as a scapegoat for failings (BBC). Preempting any Covid-19 investigations no doubt.

**UK new Covid-19.** Daily cases reported at 1940 as of 04/09/20.

**North East England lockdown warning.** Our area is at risk of lockdown as cases rise by 344 percent (D/Express 04/09/20).



Remember not everyone can wear a mask. Not all disabilities are visible.

**Coronavirus tests are running out in parts of north-east England.** Despite cases rising to the highest level in months, political leaders have said amid growing concern over the government's rationing of tests. Health officials in Gateshead said tests were running out within two hours of becoming available, despite a recent surge in cases meaning the area has one of the highest infection rates in England (Guardian 04/09/20)

**North East Ambulance Service new technology location finder.** They are using the "what3words" platform for mobile users. This has divided coordinates of the world into a grid of 3m x 3m squares (NewsPost).

**How to use what3words in an emergency - Mobile users.** Find the 3 word address for your current location on the free what3words app for iOS and Android. It

works offline – ideal for areas with unreliable data connection. Share your 3 word address over the phone to the call handler. The emergency service can then coordinate a response directly to the exact location where help is needed.

## 5. POLITICS

**Women aged 80 without children will triple in next 25 years.** Helen Walker, chief executive of Carers UK, said: 'Given there is already huge unmet need for formal care in this country, it is staggering to think about the sky-high level of demand that will be placed on our care system and unpaid carers in the next 25 years if urgent action isn't taken by the Government ([MetroUK](#)). [Click here](#) for the World Childless webinar on 16/09/20 and [click here](#) for further information on, "Not all older people are grandparents".

**Northumberland County Council - Leader ousted in no-confidence vote.** This came about after the chief executive was put on a 'period of extended leave'. This after she emailed all 66 county councillors to flag up what she claimed were 'significant whistle-blowing concerns', including in relation to the leader. A second report has been made to the police ([Nland/Gazette](#)).

## 6. POVERTY

**Covid - Capped.** Across the country, the number of households affected by the benefit cap across the country almost doubled from 79,000 in February 2020, to 154,000 in May 2020 (a 93% increase). The number of households affected in the North East has increased from 3,018 in February 2020, to 4,802 in May 2020 - a 59% increase in just three months ([NE Child Poverty Commission 7/08/20](#)).

**The Benefit Cap.** The CPAG's Chief Executive Alison Garnham comments: 'The benefit cap has always been nonsensical because it's an arbitrary limit that's applied irrespective of needs. In a pandemic it is egregious. The cap is causing intense hardship yet in the pandemic most routes for escaping it are closed off so families are left without a life raft. CPAG's case loads are growing ([Child Poverty Action Group](#)).

### Introducing Our New NEPA Chair Eileen Thompson



I was born in Sheffield but moved to the North East 40 years ago. I now live in Sunderland, in the shadow of Penshaw Monument.

I have been retired from Northumbria University for 8 years, having worked there for 33

years originally as a librarian and for the last 10 years as a fulltime trade union branch secretary. During that time, I represented UNISON Northern Region on the Higher Education Service Group Regional Committee

UNISON is addictive and I am still heavily involved. I am Chair of UNISON

and member of Regional Committee and Council. I still attend conferences such as Higher Education Conference,

National Delegate Conference and Retired Members' Conference and love the debates and discussions.

In fact, I have always loved debate and discussion. I was brought up in a home where my father, unusually for a man in the late 1950s and early 60s encouraged his 2 daughters to debate, discuss and argue on politics, religion and the merits of the Beatles and Elvis versus Mario Lanza and Kathleen Ferrier.



I am looking forward to exercising my charring skills on virtual and actual committees in the not too distant future.

## 7. SECURITY

**Attacks on North East Ambulance Service crews.** A 21 year old has been jailed for 12 months which is a landmark sentence after [ChronicleLive](#) launched a campaign calling for a Government review over a lack of prison sentences handed out to those who attack our 999 workers. One of those assaulted said:

"I don't take any pleasure in a young lad being sent to jail, but I hope that this sentence acts as a lesson and deterrent for anyone else. Attacking us is wrong on every level, there is no justification for it."

**Attacks on OAP reported in the Chronicle in August 2020 included:**

**South Shields victim.** The 25 year serial offender old burgled the home of a 76 year old with cancer. The burglar was given 3 years 3 months.

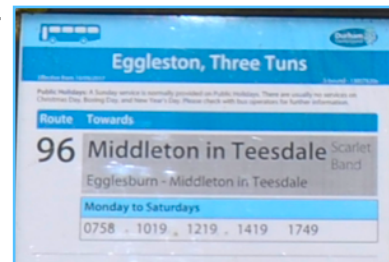
**Newcastle victim.** The 39 year old offender was given 45 months for burgling an 80 year old widow.

**Newcastle Victims.** A 41 year old offender admitted burglary and theft was given 10 months for preying on old people a 73 year and 76 year old man.

## 8. TRANSPORT

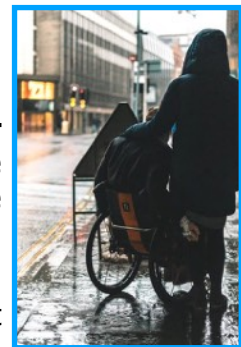
**Sunderland Council owned car parks.** Drivers can now park for free after 3.00pm.

**Public Transport in Teesdale - Members letter.** "For 28 years my mother owned a house in Eggleston. When Mum bought the house, there was only one bus a week, and that was on a Saturday for market day. This bus ceased for many years until 10 years ago. Scarlett Band mini buses put on a service between Middleton in Teesdale and Barnard castle". Now there are 5 buses a day. George our member now lives in Gateshead and still visits the dales but not by bus.



**New Durham Bus Station.** Plans have been outlined to tear down Durham's ageing bus station and build an attractive modern transport hub ([Chronicle](#)).

**Newcastle Council owned car parks - Axing free parking for disabled badge holders.** Charity Disability North called the decision "very disappointing" as it "creates a barrier" for people with mobility issues. ([BBC](#)). NEPA asks you to change your policy. We know you have to balance the books but this policy harsh.



**Consett Low-emission buses.** Go North East, the regions largest bus operator has invested £4.5m into new buses for Consett Co Durham ([Chronicle](#)).

**The Tyne and Wear Metro has secured £8.5m.** This from the Government to keep services running while passenger numbers continue to gradually recover ([NEXUS](#)).

**Newcastle City Council to refund drivers £2.5m.** The independent adjudicator accused the council of being "fundamentally negligent" over how the new bus lane was signposted. The council is furious at the decision, accusing the Traffic Penalty Tribunal of making legal errors in its decision despite the length of time it has taken to release a ruling. The council are, however, not seeking a judicial review ([Chronicle](#)).

Sean Fahey  
NEPA Secretary

**The NEPA Website** can be accessed by [clicking here](#) or google "**NEPA Pensioners**"  
(Please note that underlined script in this document serve as links to web pages).