

# SEDGEFIELD NEWS

Produced by volunteers for the people of Sedgefield, Bradbury, Mordon and Fishburn

January 2021    **HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!**    **Deadline for February: Friday 15th January**

## Sedgefield Citizen of the Year 2019/2020

This year's Citizen of the Year Award had to be managed in a different way. Presented jointly by Sedgefield Town Council, Sedgefield Development Trust and the Rotary Club of Sedgefield, it is traditionally announced during the Annual Town Meeting in May. In the unusual context of 2020, rather than reveal the 2019 Citizen of the Year then, the decision was made to instead announce a 2019/2020 Citizen of the Year in December. Nominations were re-opened and a panel of judges held an online meeting to assess the candidates, including those who had already been suggested earlier in the year.

In common with all community groups, youth organisations have been badly hit by the pandemic. The Young Citizen of the Year Award, only established last year, relied on input from those groups, so sadly, no nominations were received this year for young people who qualify for the award. It will return refreshed in 2021!

However, there was a very strong line up of candidates for Citizen of the Year. We are very fortunate in Sedgefield to have so many people who contribute an awful lot to community life and choosing a winner in any given year is always extremely tough. The judges agree a set of criteria and then assess the nominees in detail. As ever, there were some very deserving individuals and the final result was very close, but there can only be one winner, and we are pleased to announce that the Sedgefield Citizen of the Year 2019/2020 is Howard Smith.



**Sedgefield Citizen of the Year, Howard Smith,** pictured on the right of our photograph from two years ago, with Alison Manning and Doug Etherington.

## A Hive of Activity

**Those busy bees at Growing Together in Sedgefield have a new home.**

"The Hive of Sedgefield" is to be in the former Turner's showroom building in Rectory Row, which Carole Lawford and her volunteers have now rented, Sedgefield Windows having relocated to Portrack Lane in Stockton, leaving not only the building but, importantly for Carole, land at the rear for growing and harvesting.

Plans for the land include more space to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers, as well as providing an opportunity for horticulture training. They will sell plants for home growing, like a small garden centre but also offer small, raised beds where people can grow what they like with help from the team of volunteers.

The building will become a base to provide support and fun for local people. The first stage is to create some retail space to help people with their shopping. As a Community Interest Company all the profit will go back into community projects and this will help fund the development of the rest of the building.

The next priority is to develop the kitchen for workshops and cookery lessons. The Hive will provide the food and support as now but on a bigger scale rather than in volunteers' homes. Carole is already working with businesses in Sedgefield but looks forward to developing other links to support local people and to attract more visitors.

If you have a few hours' spare would you like to help? Or can you provide some advice on building maintenance, especially roofing and plumbing? Jobs that need doing include scraping walls, painting, repairs, clearing weeds ready for planting - so please get in touch if you can help.

Growing Together in Sedgefield has received funding and support from Sedgefield Town Council, Durham County Councillor David Brown and Livin.

'We are grateful for the faith they have shown in us and we will continue to work with them', says Carole. 'The building and outside area will be fully accessible. For me, for everyone. That's the foundation of everything. Thank you all for the support we've had. Let's all make 2021 a new and safe start.'

You can contact Carole at [carole@thehiveofsedgefield.com](mailto:carole@thehiveofsedgefield.com) or on Facebook/ Growing Together in Sedgefield.

Sue Dobson

As chair of Sedgefield in Bloom, Howard is a familiar figure in our community. Although he deals with much the group's work behind the scenes, he is most often seen out and about (usually with his wife Barbara) tending to the various displays in Sedgefield which are brilliantly maintained by Bloom volunteers.

Despite the usual competitions being cancelled this year, Howard, the Bloomers and town council gardeners, Stephen and Ben, have made sure that our town looks as beautiful as ever. Howard's Sedgefield Citizen of the Year Award 2019/2020 recognises that recent work, but also reflects his many years of hard work as a dedicated volunteer. Congratulations!

## Citizen of the Year, 2000

We are very sad to report that the very first Sedgefield Citizen of the Year, Billy Cooper, has died.

For many years Billy could be found behind the bar at the Golden Lion, but he was so much more than the almost legendary landlord of one of our best loved pubs.

On page 2 we include a brief tribute to Billy from Les Butler, the 99 year old Burma veteran, who came to Sedgefield Army Camp in 1941 and has lived here ever since.

## College donates over 2000 items to local Foodbank

Staff and students from Sedgefield Community College handed over 2250 individual items to the Billingham and Stockton Foodbank appeal as their festive spirit spread. It is the fourth year running in which the award-winning school has donated to local Foodbank charities, and this year has seen record-breaking results.

Charity Coordinator Paul McGeary said, "Year-on-year our Foodbank contributions have grown. We have created a momentum that shows no signs of slowing down. Our first ever collection in 2017 yielded 1000 items and last year we gathered an impressive 1500 items for Durham Foodbank appeal.

"This year we are handing over 2250 individual items which is of particular pertinence in times of Covid-19, which has badly affected Foodbank collections. We have educated our students as to the importance of Foodbanks, and dispelled many myths surrounding the beneficiaries of our donations. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our staff, students and parents and carers for embracing the project and already we are looking ahead to breaking records again with next year's collection."



## I'm a Sedgefield Hardwick Staff Member Get Me Out Of Here!

All pupils love seeing their teachers humiliated and this year, at Sedgefield Hardwick, their dreams came true. With a bit of Christmas magic, the help of Little Ant and Little Dec, a few reindeer and some extremely mischievous snowmen, the "I'm a Sedgefield Hardwick Teacher Get Me Out Of Here" trials were born. Little did the teachers know what was in store for them but they would soon find out.

It's Snow Joke was the first trial and it was a messy one. Staff were placed in a vote off on the school's social media channels with the 'lucky' winners being Mr Clark and Miss Bourner. Their mission was to decorate a gingerbread man. However, as it is the time for giving, we had a few surprises planned for them. They got in to a few sticky situations, being covered in strawberry sauce, sugar and maple syrup amongst others! They were both so covered in icing that you couldn't tell if the gingerbread men were on the plate or standing up next to the table. When they were finished, they looked better than the gingerbread men they were supposed to be decorating. However, Mr Clark got a bit hungry on set and ate more than he decorated!

We have a few more trials and surprises in store for the rest of the teachers and they will soon have their turn. Just wait!

That's it from Little Ant (Alice), Little Dec (Ollie) and their assistant (Ava)

PS: if you want to watch the trials then they are all available to watch on the school's Facebook page! [www.facebook.com/SedgefieldHardw](http://www.facebook.com/SedgefieldHardw)

Editor's note: you may think that web address looks wrong, but it's not! I tried it.



## School of the Decade

Sedgefield Community College has been named 'North East State Secondary School of the Decade' in the 28th edition of Parent Power, the Sunday Times Schools Guide.

The award is based on examination results, with top A-level grades given additional weighting in the rankings. The college is the only secondary school without a sixth form to win a School of the Decade award, a fantastic achievement.

The college was also shortlisted as Secondary School of the Year in the Times Educational Supplement Awards and the former headteacher, David Davies, was nominated Headteacher of the Year.

The school has once again been listed in the Sunday Times Top 50 11-16 schools in the UK.

## Your Flu jab is important!

People with breathing conditions are being urged to take up their free flu vaccine offer to protect themselves and to help reduce pressure on the NHS this winter. Many in County Durham have not yet taken up the offer, putting themselves and their family at greater risk from this potentially life-threatening illness.

People of all ages with a chronic breathing conditions like asthma, emphysema, cystic fibrosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), are all eligible for a free flu vaccine. They have a greater risk of being seriously affected by flu, and seven times more likely to die of it than someone without an underlying health condition.

Keeping the number of flu patient in hospital as low as possible, the NHS will be better placed to cope with the pressures of coronavirus during the winter. Also, getting the flu vaccination now helps to ease the burden on those who must administer the Covid vaccine.

## A tribute to Billy Cooper

I'm sorry to hear of the death of Billy Cooper. He did a lot for the village with his work, not only for the Golden Lion, but for Sedgefield Racecourse and organising other things. Best thing was when he gave all men over 65 a slap-up dinner after Christmas, a good five course meal and a sing-song to finish. Women of the village did the voluntaries for this cause.

He gave me a job on the number board at Sedgefield Racecourse. And his delivery of beers to your house on a weekend was superb.

Coopers of the Golden Lion, in peace and war, will always be remembered.

L J Butler

## PURPLE4POLIO

As the New Year begins and spring approaches, we all hope for brighter days, typified for many of us by spring blooms pushing through the cold earth.

Back in September, volunteer Bloomers planted 4,000 purple crocus corms donated by Sedgefield Rotary Club. These tiny bright flowers should soon be seen popping up along the church bank and around the Rotary Wheel at Winterton.

The purple crocus is the symbol of Rotary's worldwide campaign to eradicate polio. The tiny flowers represent the purple dye used to mark a finger of a child who has been immunised.

Since the campaign began in 1985, 2.5 billion children have been vaccinated, cases have been reduced by 99.9% and polio is now classed as endemic only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Three years after the last recorded case the world can be considered free of polio.

Alice Hobson planting crocus





## ARTS UPDATE with Geoff Millichap

email: [sedgefieldartsandevents@outlook.com](mailto:sedgefieldartsandevents@outlook.com)

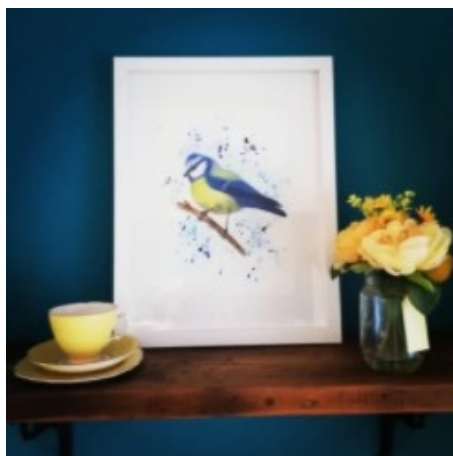
### From Loft To Loved: now on The Square

In Sedgefield for four years now, From Loft to Loved is firmly established as a prime local asset for crafting and craft shopping. Fans travel from as far as Darlington & York for its offering of unusual, original stock lines, its workshops and the enthusiasm & warmth of management team, Kim & Sarah. So successful has it become that FLTL has moved from North End to The Square in order to obtain larger premises & expand their portfolio of products from nearby artists & craftspeople, for whom the shopfront is a talent showcase. Bedding in at the new store was not as straightforward as Kim and Sarah might have expected, coinciding as it did with the government's imposition of restrictions on our movement, which hit the retail sector hard. Not only that, but crafting workshops, which are central to the identity of FLTL, making it a community hub as well as a lovely shop, had to be curtailed & they currently remain on hiatus awaiting further government instructions. Nonetheless, the shop is now firmly back in business & thanks to its popularity here in Sedgefield, there was no shortage of volunteers to help to move stock get set up. As you would expect, the new shop already looks amazing, though it is, in Sarah's words still a work in progress.

When I paid a visit to discover what we might expect from FLTL in the new year, I learned that the extended family of suppliers, shoppers & craft workshop attendees all contribute to its special feel of a far larger family than a typical shop. During the first lockdown, when many regular attendees were at risk of becoming quite socially isolated, Kim was making rounds & paying visits to make sure they were OK.

Of course, the craft workshops are the shop's unique feature, and both Sarah & Kim miss running them very much. A successful workshop, where people get a real sense of pride and satisfaction in something that they have made, was identified by Sarah as one of the most rewarding parts of the job. No return date is confirmed yet, but plans are in place to expand on established favourites, like candle making, furniture painting, & decoupage with courses in embroidery, water-colour painting, jewellery making, and creative writing when classes can resume. Classes are sometimes run by the shop's suppliers, and sometimes by Kim & Sarah, both of whom have experience running psychology courses for inmates on behalf of the prison service, so are prepared for almost anything! No mishap or catastrophe has derailed a course yet, and mistakes are welcomed as an opportunity to learn how to correct them, literally to 'style them out'. Fun as well as informative & rewarding work.

There is now a real boom in crafting & making-at-home in the UK and FLTL is central to this ethos here in Sedgefield. Beyond an enjoyable shopping experience, a real spirit of community is engendered by bringing people together to work on something challenging & new - a real asset to the village. As part of a much bigger ecosystem of local



artists & craftspeople working full or part-time, who don't want to open a shop to sell their products, Sarah and Kim's format is a perfect fit. So if you haven't seen the new shop, be sure to have a look next time you pass, or take a look at the website for lovely & unusual gifts or conversation pieces. When the workshops resume, do book early to avoid disappointment. You can pick up a new skill while having fun, meeting new people & supporting a unique and key local business.



Please send Diary & Event details to [diary.sedgefieldnews@gmail.com](mailto:diary.sedgefieldnews@gmail.com)

### SEDFIELD LIBRARY

Tel: 0300 026 9521

Sedgefield Library remains closed, but the 'Pick and collect' service enables people to borrow books during the restrictions.

Collection points near us include Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Shildon, Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Clayport Library in Durham. Readers can order up to six books either online or over the phone. They are then contacted by library staff, using their registered phone number, to arrange collection.

BorrowBox is still available with membership. For more information visit [www.durham.gov.uk/pickandcollect](http://www.durham.gov.uk/pickandcollect)

### Ferryhill, Sedgefield & District Flower Club

The committee have taken the decision to cancel the AGM, which was due to take place on 19 January 2021. The COVID-19 restrictions prevent the meeting from taking place. We do intend to resume the Flower Club programme in 2021, but only when it is safe to do so in line with government guidelines.

Once we know that restrictions are lifted and it is safe to resume, we will be advertising the fact and contacting our very loyal members with the necessary information. The committee wish to thank our members for their patience and continued support. Have a safe Christmas and we hope to get back together in 2021.

### Sedgefield in the snow

Amongst the horrors of 2020 there has always been beauty, so we've included the image below to celebrate the place we are so lucky to live in - and to put in a quick word for a short spell of crisp winter!

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## SEDGEFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

### DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE THIS CHRISTMAS!

According to the Department of Transport an estimated 8680 people were killed or injured by drink-drivers nationally last year.

Local Police Officers are once again taking part in a national campaign to target drivers under the influence of drugs and alcohol over the Christmas Season.

During December they are carrying out random vehicle stops and intelligence led enforcement in a bid to remove drivers who are under the influence, from the roads. Police will be out morning and night to catch those who may be flouting The Law.

Inspector Jamie Bell from the Durham and Cleveland Specialist Operations Unit said, "Whilst pubs and restaurants remain closed at the moment, there will be people who fancy a tipple at home over the festive season, which is absolutely fine as long as they don't get behind the wheel of a vehicle whilst over the limit."

"People will also need to be mindful of driving the following day; they will need to leave enough time for the alcohol to leave their bodies to ensure they can safely use the roads."

**Drivers risk up to six months imprisonment, an unlimited fine and a substantial driving ban if they are caught driving above the legal limit.**

**Anyone who causes death while drink or drug driving faces up to 14 years imprisonment.**



### CHRISTMAS SURPRISES

We all want a surprise this Christmas, but make sure it's a nice surprise left by Santa and not a nasty one from a burglar. Take some simple precautions:

- Put your lights on a timer for these early dark nights.
- Use sensor operated outside lights.
- Secure your car and park off the road, nose in. (Thieves don't like looking for reverse gear).
- When you've opened your presents, flatten boxes and tear off labels and wrappers that advertise the contents. (Burglars are observant).
- Keep your doors and windows locked.
- Don't answer the door to strangers arriving uninvited. (Just because someone knocks, doesn't mean you are obliged to answer.)

### HAVE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND STAY SAFE

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## Sign up for the 2021 Garden Waste Collection scheme

The first collection from Durham County Council's service will take place in late March or early April this year, followed by fortnightly collections until November, when the season ends.

Those who sign up before Sunday 14 February will receive all 17 collections during the year, dependent on Government advice on coronavirus.

The fee is £35, except for those who subscribed to the scheme in 2020, who will be charged £30.90 per existing bin subscription for 2021. This is due to Covid19 causing a late start in 2020.

Go to [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk) and search for garden waste collections.



## GREENER SEDGEFIELD

New Year usually means resolutions started with good intentions but often wear thin after a time. Here are some simple eco ideas to get you started with green resolutions:

**Shop locally** and look for items with as little packaging as possible. If the items are local, all the better.

Lockdowns have impacted smaller businesses and we've been encouraged to help them, so we can enjoy them in the future. When you shop, take your bags with you.

- A small bin or bag for **recycling** next to your main indoor one may encourage you to recycle more.

Some people are less likely to recycle if they feel it's a hassle going to the bin outside with every item.

If in doubt as what to put in the recycling, either leave it out or look it up at the council's A to Z. Most importantly, don't put nappies or food waste in them, it contaminates the whole load in the truck.

**Donate before you throw away.** The local Facebook larder page or Freecycle will often put even an old fence panel to use. Charities welcome good clothing and household items. After Christmas the annual clean out occurs in so many houses. Pass it on. On the reverse, do you really need a brand new item? Put a wanted message out, you may be surprised what offers of help you may receive. Saving money and resources often go hand in hand. This also applies to fast fashion etc. Even children's dressing up items can be in great condition second hand.

**Plan your meals.** This may sound a bit of extra work but you'll throw away less and in buying what you need save money too. Any uncooked leftovers or veg peelings can be composted.

**Batteries.** Sales are generally higher around Christmas, rechargeable ones are more initially but being able to use them over and over saves money and resources.

**Try new things each month.** You could try refilling your bottles of shampoo or soap one month, pop to your local zero waste shop. Another month you could try something else like reusable wax wraps instead of cling film. Small steps spread cost and allow you to see what works for you.

**Washing your clothes** on a short low temperature cycle saves energy and water. Pop your clothes out to dry as much as possible. Try to avoid washing fleeces very often, because of the microplastics that are washed out of them.

**2020 is a year most of us would happily like to forget, let's make a good start to 2021 and beyond.**

## STEVE'S NATURE DIARY JANUARY 2021

At the time of writing, as well as opening Christmas cards, one of the highlights of 2020 (and with Covid there certainly haven't been many!) was opening a parcel containing the Cleveland Bird Report 2019. Published by Teesmouth Bird Club, it is compiled by volunteers who summarise records of both common and rare birds seen in the Cleveland area. Not only does it make an interesting read, it is a useful tool for analysing species records since the club was formed in 1960. It is intended to be a repository of interesting and historically worthwhile ornithological local observations within the unitary authorities of Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. It also includes a monthly summary with a commentary on birds seen, as well as the weather. It is useful to see what was happening in January 2019 and what we might see in January 2021 - obviously nothing is guaranteed. It was a cold January with an icy north wind bringing snow showers on the 17th and night time temperatures were regularly below freezing during the last week of the month. All areas of freshwater froze to some extent, the lowest temperature being -7°C on the last morning of the month.

Reed beds are well worth a visit at this time of the year. They are a very specialist habitat and animals that live here are often secretive and hard to see. One of the commoner species you might see is the Reed Bunting, a streaky brown bird about the size of a sparrow. The males have black heads and black throats, with a white collar and white 'moustache'. Female Reed Buntings are non-descript and can be difficult to tell apart from other buntings such as Yellowhammer. You can often see the birds calling from the top of the reeds. Other specialist reed dwellers to watch out for include Marsh Harrier, Bittern and Bearded Tit. These birds are adapted to breeding in reedbeds and in the previously mentioned report, 2019 was a bumper year one of these, the Bearded Tit with birds being seen throughout the year at Dorman's Pool, The Long Drag, Portrack Marsh and Coatham Marsh.

Bearded Tit is a nationally rare breeding bird and it has turned out that 2020 was even better than 2019 with reports of them breeding in Cleveland. A total of 11 juvenile birds being seen in June 2020 probably from 2 broods. So, if you do take a walk on a cold crisp January day keep your eye out for this small handsome bird which is cinnamon-brown with a long brown tail, a grey head with a black 'moustache' (rather than a beard) and a yellow bill and eyes.

## Plans for new County Durham athletics facility are on track

The prospects of a new athletics facility being built in County Durham have moved a step closer. Ahead of the submission of a planning application early next year, details of proposals for the East Durham Community Athletics Track (EDCAT) have been published on a new website and members of the public are being given the opportunity to comment and get involved. The track will be located on a site at NETPark, on the north edge of Sedgefield, and will serve communities throughout East Durham.

The EDCAT project is being led by athletics club Sedgefield Harriers, working closely with a range of partners, including the local authority, Durham County Council, which owns the site on which the facility will be built. Founded in 2005, Sedgefield Harriers has grown into one of the county's most successful clubs, with a large senior membership and an even bigger junior section. The club currently has no home and has had aspirations to build a track for a decade, launching its 'Back the Track' campaign in 2013.

Located beside the main road between Sedgefield and Fishburn, on the north-

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## SEDGEFIELD DEVELOPMENT TRUST PROJECT NEWS

### Energy Switch Let us help you reduce your energy costs.

**Registration for the next auction closes on 8th February.** Auction on the 9th and offers issued from 22nd February.

To register on line, go to [www.sedgefieldweb.co.uk/energy-switch](http://www.sedgefieldweb.co.uk/energy-switch) and click on 'REGISTER TODAY' then fill out your details. **Remember to have your latest energy bill or annual statement with you when you start your registration.**

If you can't apply via the internet, contact our helpline on **07980 134 594** and we will complete registration for you. You will be only talking to Sedgefield people and won't be committing to anything.

**Don't forget, if you are already part of the scheme and your existing energy contract comes to an end before the end of April 2021, you do need to register for this auction.**



**A reminder that volunteers will be at the Woodland & Wildlife site to recycle your real Christmas trees on both January 9<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> from 10am – 12.**



You are welcome to bring your tree to us during those times, or to use the Sedgefield in Bloom collection service for residents in Sedgefield.

For more information on the project please join our Woodland & Wildlife - Sedgefield Facebook page or email us at [woodland@sedgefielddevelopmenttrust.co.uk](mailto:woodland@sedgefielddevelopmenttrust.co.uk)

### Ceddesfeld Hall Home of Sedgefield Community Association 50 Years of the SCA – Moving Forwards!



SCA will be relieved and pleased to see the end of 2020, a year of unprecedented crisis and upset for all families and communities. Certainly not the best year in which to celebrate a 'Golden Anniversary' but we will celebrate as soon as it can be safely arranged, hopefully during autumn, 2021.

With hope on the horizon, SCA is looking forward to re-opening Ceddesfeld Hall as soon as possible. Due to the extended closure this year, the annual membership fee will not be collected until January 2022. The fees are small: Adults £8, Over 60s £7, Under 18s £4, and anyone in and around Sedgefield may become a member. If you wish to create a new activity or interest group in the coming months, once we are re-opened, please get in touch.

The Regular Activities Section on the SCA website [sedgefieldsca.org.uk](http://sedgefieldsca.org.uk) provides information relating to all groups and sections, and there really is something for everyone. The bar staff (run wholly by volunteers of the Social Section) will be pleased to be get back to serving great real ale and a wide and varied selection of other drinks, at very reasonable prices. A new card payment system will also be available. New volunteers will be very much welcomed.

Sedgefield Squash Club is a very active section. They will be glad to get back to running a very busy youth training/league schedule, in their newly improved building. They also enjoy social events and activities at Ceddesfeld. It will be great to welcome everyone back!

All clubs have missed their usual activities and the important social interaction that regular meetings provide. Some groups have been able to arrange virtual meetings, practices, and quizzes and even an on-line drama festival, over the past months. SCA Craft Club despite not being together since March, provided the lovely display of knitted/crocheted poppies around the War Memorial. People have done their best in these difficult times.

SCA are grateful that Sedgefield in Bloom members have continued their valuable work around the village and particularly their care of the gardens surrounding the Hall and car park. A lit tree in the grounds is part of village Christmas lights.

The Trustees sincerely hope that events and activities will return as soon as possible in 2021 and SCA will work hard to that end. Realistically, we feel this may be towards the late summer into autumn. National health and safety procedures are going to take a while to roll out and because of this a decision has been made to cancel the 2021 Mediaeval Fayre which was due to be held on May 15th. There remains much uncertainty and apprehension regarding large social events and to be fair to all stakeholders, we need to inform all participants in good time, hence the decision to cancel now. However, the date for 2022 is saved!




We hope that students and volunteers alike have benefitted from the holidays.

We will be up and running with renewed oomph in the new term. If any new students or helpers would like to get in touch, please email [homework@sedgefielddevelopmenttrust.co.uk](mailto:homework@sedgefielddevelopmenttrust.co.uk) or find us on Facebook. Best wishes to everyone for a happy, healthy and confident New Year.

### Sedgefield Farmers Market

**Sunday 3rd January 8.30am - 12.15**

To our customers and traders, very best wishes for a Good New Year. We hope to see lots of you at our first Market of 2021, having acquired something of a reputation for being a hardy lot, battling through, whatever the weather! So here's good health to you all in 2021. 

### Athletics Track, cont'd from p 7

east edge of NETPark, a site which is already earmarked for development. The facility will support runners of all ages and abilities in East Durham, and be managed by a not-for-profit organisation.

The EDCAT steering group intends to submit a planning application to Durham County Council early next year and is preparing a business plan to demonstrate the long-term viability of the facility. The project currently has provisional access to around £500,000, thanks to fundraising that has already been undertaken. Subject to securing planning permission, this will allow building work to begin.

Ean Parsons, chair of the EDCAT steering group comments: "Never has the phrase 'it's a marathon, not a sprint' felt so appropriate, but there are really good reasons why this project has taken some time. It was important to find a site that was not only suitable for this type of development, but also easy to access for people across East Durham, particularly from Sedgefield northwards."

A website has been launched to showcase the project and give members of the public the chance to express their views about the plans. The website, at [www.edcatrack.com](http://www.edcatrack.com) includes a survey that will be open until 7 January 2021.

Anyone who is interested in getting involved in the project can contact the steering group on [edcatrack@gmail.com](mailto:edcatrack@gmail.com) or by calling Ean Parsons on 07771 828568. Updates on the project will also be shared at @EDCATrack on Twitter.