



Vision



A 4-star council Awarded top marks by the Audit Commission

February 2007

Providing • education • highways • trading standards • social services

EXPLORE

Our 'tardis' time boxes make pupils think and learn

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GUARDIAN ANGELS

Heat detectors, fall sensors and bed monitors are bringing peace of mind to older people

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IN TOUCH

Elected members are heading for the shopfloor

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My Lancashire

My Planet

Prediction 1:

Increase of 1C in North West average annual temperature by 2020

Prediction 2:

Increase of 2C in North West summer temperature by 2020

Prediction 3:

Up to 20 per cent North West drop in summer rain by 2020. It has already dropped by 20 per cent in the last century

Prediction 4:

10 to 30 per cent North West drop in annual snow by 2020

Source: Sustainability NW 2005

We have a local plan to tackle global climate change

A MAJOR £1.1m plan has been adopted to tackle climate change by reducing Lancashire's "carbon footprint".

The county council blueprint will seek to reduce the council's carbon emissions. More boldly still, it aims to encourage citizen and business use of turbines, solar panels and even biofuels, to cut emissions across the county as a whole.

Carbon offsetting, such as, for example, planting trees to recycle the carbon created by energy use, will be considered.

A high-level summit of public and private organisations, citizens and environmental agencies will be held to bring the best thinkers to Lancashire.

An extra £400,000 will also be spent in each of the next two years.

Giving a slice of the cash in grants to neighbourhood organisations raises the possibility of "match-funding" – meaning a final cash total of about £5m to make Lancashire one of Britain's cleanest and greenest counties.

County Councillor Tony Martin said: "Climate change could be a major threat to the entire world. This is something we are serious about. We can't afford to wait and see."

"We are a major local authority and we must take the lead in finding successful ways to combat climate change."

"It must go further than just good housekeeping by Lancashire County Council, important as that is."

"It will involve awarding grants to

neighbourhood organisations for things such as solar panels and to encourage things such as biofuel – only when there is demand for biofuel will power companies supply it. We need to set the ball rolling."

No one can be totally sure about climate change.

Yet recent changes have seen the North West sea level rise by more than two inches in the last 50 years and there has been increased high-density rainfall since the 1960s.

The average North West temperature has increased by 0.4C in the last 15 years. Granite dust was spread on Lancashire's roads last summer to prevent meltdown.

County councillors also expect to start "emissions trading" by the end of the decade.

The idea is that each large organisation will be given credits for a

permitted degree of carbon use. Over-use of energy will mean credits have to be bought while energy efficiency will allow the council to sell credits in the market.

County Councillor Hazel Harding, Lancashire County Council leader, said: "This is a top priority for us."

"It will affect everything we do, from the design and running of our buildings and how we operate our services - to stimulating communities to take their own measures against global warming."

"The county council has already achieved energy efficiency savings of 43 per cent since 1979 and 10 per cent of all streetlights are powered by renewable energy."

A number of Lancashire schools already have turbines and the wave of new schools currently being built are being built in an

environmentally friendly way.

Councillor Martin, cabinet member for sustainable development, added: "We must now build on our achievements and put our house in order in areas such as our vehicle fleet and waste management."

The policy has backing from sustainable development group, Forum for the Future.

Peter Madden, Forum for the Future's Chief Executive, said: "We are pleased that Lancashire County Council is planning such innovative approaches to tackling the biggest sustainability challenge we face."

What should Lancashire be doing about climate change?

Write to: The editor, Vision, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ or email neil.graham@css.lancscc.gov.uk

A cassette version of Vision is now available for visually impaired people from Galloway's Society for the Blind by calling 01772 744148

The presence of promotional leaflets delivered inside Vision does not imply Lancashire County Council endorsement.

YOUR LANCASHIRE: A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE MATTERS



Ask Shirley

Don't know who to contact when you need help? Are you baffled by bureaucracy? Ring Shirley on **0845 0530000** or email Shirley on **enquiries@css.lancscc.gov.uk**

If you are having problems getting hold of someone to help, Lancashire County Council has many staff trained and willing to assist.

Sometimes you just can't think who to ask - and this is where Vision's Shirley comes in.

Shirley answers all the letters she receives and some will feature on this page. Others may take a while as Shirley will seek responses from other council teams.

Shirley is not able to offer legal advice.

Leader of the pack?

Mr B from Morecambe writes:

Years ago I enjoyed getting out at the weekends on my motorbike.

When my family came along I sold my bike and spent my time with them.

However the children are now grown up and are busy with their own lives.

I mentioned to my wife that I quite fancied getting myself another bike. She thinks it is a good idea but she has her concerns about my safety considering how long it is since I last had one.

Does the council run any refresher courses that I could go on to put her mind at rest?

Lancashire County Council offers a free Rider Assessment in order to establish your current riding abilities. This involves spending an hour and a half with a qualified, motor-cycle-riding instructor after which you will be given a feedback report detailing any areas of concern.

Following that you may wish to look at further training on our 'levels' courses.

The Rider Assessments are run in daylight hours, 7 days a week and in a mutually convenient location throughout Lancashire.

For further information telephone: Rob Winn on 01772 533086 or the Road Safety Group on free phone 0800 328 1635.

Sit down at the back

Mr R from Fulwood writes:

Can you please solve an ongoing argument between my brother and I?

Is it against the law for my 15-month-old daughter to travel in the front seat of the car in her car seat?

I say she can and my brother says she can't.

You win! The law says she can as long as she is appropriately restrained and you use a suitable baby seat or child restraint for her



● BORN-again bikers can stay safe with free Rider Assessments (see "Leader of the pack").

weight and age.

However rear-facing baby seats must not be used in a seat protected by a frontal air-bag unless the air-bag has been deactivated manually or automatically. Use it in the back instead.

For further information please contact the Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety on 01772 534531.

I saw the sign

Miss L from Lancaster writes:

Some shops on the street close to where I live have put A-boards on the pavement. Can you tell them to move them?

Some shops may have private forecourts and A-boards may be permitted there.

However if the board is on the pavement, it is an offence to cause an obstruction.

You should contact Lancashire Highways on 0845 053 0011 and a highways inspector will investigate.

School out for summer?

Mrs K from Longridge writes: My brother is getting married in Cyprus next June. All the family would like to attend but the holiday would be in term time. Am I allowed to take my child out of school in term time?

Each school sets out its own policy on holidays during term time and the decision is usually made at the discretion of the head teacher.

The request should be submitted on a standard application form which is available from the school. Only then will the request be considered.

You should not book the holiday until permission has been granted.

Failure to obtain permission may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

The Local Education Authority reserves the right to prosecute any parent for a child's unauthorised non-attendance.

Snap, crackle, buzz

Mrs J from Ribblesdale writes:

The other day I bought some cereal from a supermarket and found a dead insect in the packet, how do I take this further and make a complaint?

You could contact Consumer Direct on 0845 4 04 05 06 or alternatively email: feedback@ts.lancscc.gov.uk

Consumer Direct are the specialist first line advice service for consumer matters on behalf of Lancashire County Council Trading Standards.

They protect the interests of Lancashire consumers and businesses. They also enforce consumer protection legislation and provide free advice to consumers and honest businesses.

Ice, ice baby

Mr P from Poulton le Fylde writes:

With the bad weather now upon us I was thinking how difficult it must be to decide when the roads should be gritted.

How is this decision made?

Delivery of the service depends on the weather forecast and accuracy is paramount.

On average forecasts are 87 per cent accurate, but most winters see 10 days when frost is not forecast but actually occurs.

There are also significant local weather variations which are difficult to forecast. Weather forecasts are only a guide and we rely on our own local expertise.

Lancashire County Council's highways department identifies priority routes and reacts to conditions as quickly as possible.

Email: enquiries@css.lancscc.gov.uk or write to: Ask Shirley, Customer Service Centre, The Red Rose Hub, Bluebell Way, Preston PR2 5PZ. Telephone 0845 0530000.

Big push on child labour

Figures show half of teenaged workers are unlicensed

PARENTS and employers are being reminded that children need licences to work.

About half of all working teenagers in the county do not have licences to work - meaning no checks on hours or conditions.

Thousands of 13 to 16-year-olds work in jobs such as newspaper delivery and in shops. Only 1,500 are licensed in Lancashire.

Gillian Cookson, business manager of Lancashire County Council's education welfare service, said: "Local authorities have to licence these workers because we have to ensure they are not doing too much."

"They should not get to school too tired to learn and can't be working in dangerous conditions - some have been seriously injured."

"Excessive working can lead to school absence. A licence regulates the hours worked - yet many parents and employers are not aware of the need for one."

Children can start "light work" at age 13 while a wider range of work is open to them at 14. No pupils are allowed to do heavy, physical work, work involving dangerous or complex machinery or work that will put them in moral peril.

Working hours are strictly limited to two hours every school day and up to eight hours on Saturdays. Children must have a one-hour break after four hours.

Education welfare officers are teaming up with a local radio station in February to remind children, parents and employers of the need for licences.

Ring 01772 531431 for details on how to register.

Blue Badge fees

ALL application and renewal fees for Blue Badge parking permits are being abolished from February.

Fees for online applications were abolished some time ago. Improvements to Lancashire County Council's customer access strategy now mean that written and telephone applications are also to be free from 1 February.

The badges allow people who are registered blind or have mobility problems to park near shops, stations and other facilities.

Approximately 24,500 Blue Badge applications and renewals are made each year.

People can apply by contacting the customer service centre on 0845 0530049, by visiting www.lancashire.gov.uk or by picking up an information pack at a local social services office.

Drivers needed

EXTRA helpers are needed to work as volunteer drivers on the county's Community Car Schemes.

Volunteers use their own cars to take people to places such as shopping centres and even to visit friends and relatives.

As well as helping others, there will be contributions towards the costs of running a car.

For further details contact Elaine Winrow on 01772 534246 or write to: Community Transport Team, Environment Directorate, Lancashire County Council, Guild House, Cross Street, Preston PR1 8RD.

Don't forget - your county councillor can help. Contact details are available on 0845 0530000 or at: www.lancashire.gov.uk
You can also try your area's County Information Centre where staff are trained to help the public



A full job description of all vacancies is available on our website

www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies



NEWS IN BRIEF

Good news on road disruption

ROADWORKS have been delaying less traffic on Lancashire roads.

Lancashire County Council workers do not do repairs at "traffic-sensitive" times unless they are essential.

New statistics for March to June 2006 show that each kilometre of road suffered only 0.04 of a day of being affected by temporary traffic controls or road closure.

Put another way, it means that the typical kilometre of road was only affected by closure or temporary traffic lights once every five and a half years.

Such closure or delay is less than a fifth what it was two years ago. Some delays and closures, however, are unavoidable because of the nature of the work, for example, repairs to bridges.

Woodland legacy

ONE day's work which will leave a legacy for hundreds of years has been held in Oswaldtwistle.

Dozens of oak saplings, grown from acorns collected in the area, were planted by members of the public in the town to create a new two-acre wooded area for local residents to enjoy for years to come.

Two local organisations were supported in the planting by Lancashire County Developments Ltd, Lancashire County Council's economic development company.

The new woodland is at Bury Meadows, off New Lane, Oswaldtwistle, which was the site of a farm and fields alongside the former Clariant chemical works.

Beat the slavers

AN exhibition of the anti-slavery struggle will be staged in Nelson and then in Earby this month (February).

Lancashire played a pivotal role in the abolition of plantation slavery. But it still continues in a variety of modern guises such as child labour and indebted labour - that is, working to pay off a "debt" owed to an employer - in the sex trade.

The exhibition will be staged first this month in Nelson Library and, from 9 February onwards, at Earby Youth Centre.

Poet in town

POETRY lovers in Skelmersdale enjoyed a visit from one of the nation's leading poets and authors.

David Orme visited the town's library for a workshop on 25 January and also visited St Mary's Primary School, Scarisbrick, on the same day.

Schools need governors like you

VACANCIES exist across Lancashire for volunteers to sign up as school governors.

Parents, grandparents, employers, trade unionists, members of community

groups ... all can be school governors in Lancashire's 650 schools.

Volunteers typically need to attend two or three meetings per term and much support is available from Lancashire County Council's

governor services team.

Headteachers, other staff and governors also offer support and governing bodies have the support of a clerk to prepare and organise meetings and advise governors. Governors are closely

involved in running schools. No specialist knowledge is required as it is ordinary

day-to-day experience of life that is needed. Training, however, is provided.

More details from Amanda O'Connor on 0800 181832 or email her at: Amanda.O'Connor@ed.lancsc.gov.uk
Details are also available at www.lancashire.gov.uk

Peace of mind

High-tech gadgets mean older people are never entirely alone

HIGH-tech gadgets including bed-wetting sensors, medicine reminders, heat detectors and fall monitors are bringing peace of mind to older people in Lancashire.

The electronic devices are linked to one of four call centres. Any cause for alarm will trigger a visit 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Fall monitors ... sensors will detect if someone is no longer upright. If not, someone will visit.

There can even be bed monitors that will know if someone gets up in the middle of the night to visit the loo. If they do not return to bed within a set period then the alarm will be raised to check that things are okay.

"People like the peace of mind that this support brings," said Mark Luraschi, Lancashire County Council's Telecare team's joint manager.

"Highly dependent people will always have a place in one of our homes. Telecare is for people whose needs are lower, but who still want to know they will not be left alone if something goes wrong for them."

"Everyone dreads the consequences of a bad fall or something like a heart attack when no one is around. Knowing someone is watching over them gives them and their relatives a great sense of reassurance."

Warden-call systems such as panic buttons have been around for years.

Advances in technology mean the Telecare devices amount to a more personalised, modern and flexible "warden-call".

Other gadgets include motion sensors, flood detectors, radio-linked smoke detectors and chair-occupancy monitors. Devices can be picked and mixed in a variety of flexible packages:

- a falls package,
- a dementia package,
- a wander package,
- a home-security package.

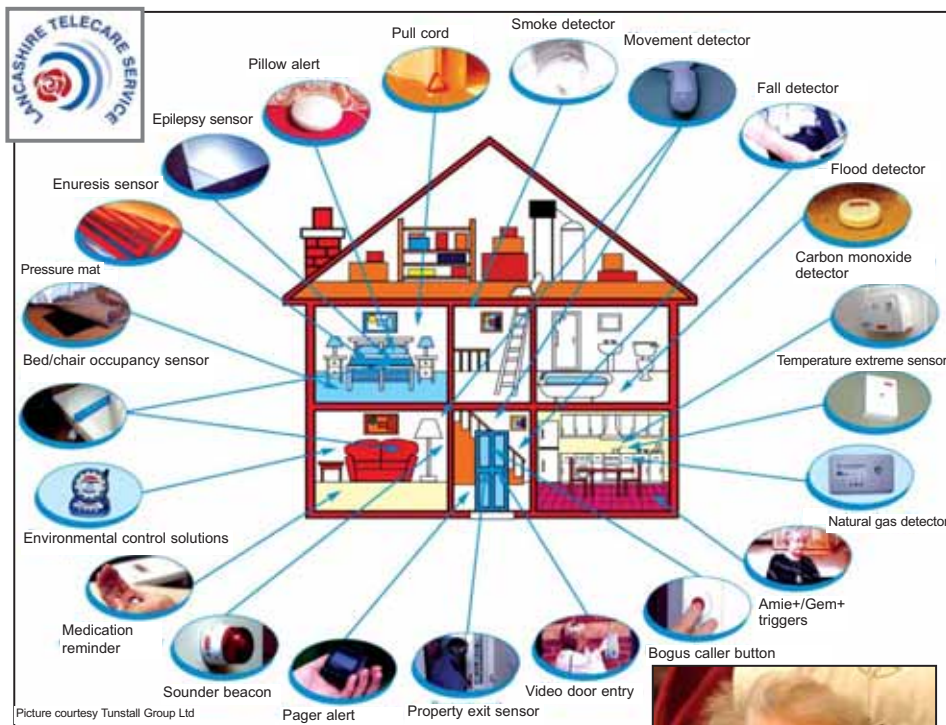
"We can tailor a package to be suitable for almost all needs," fellow manager Steve Sylvester said.

"It is all about support for people. Most people want to stay in their own home for as long as possible - but they need to feel secure."

"Not everyone, of course, has their family nearby these days."

"Telecare can also be a relief for relatives and friends who care for someone. They can now have some time for themselves as they know support is available while they are out."

"If there is an alarm while they are out, staff will ensure it is checked and also let the family member know via



their mobile phone."

Lancashire County Council will spend a total of £1.7m on Telecare equipment in total. It is already being installed in people's homes.

Social services chiefs have been aware for some time that many members of ethnic minorities prefer to use their family networks to care for the elderly. That can happily continue - only now with added support from Telecare.

Monitoring staff can tell which of the range of devices has gone off. Staff will knock on the door within an hour.

"This is an exciting development," Mark added. "People don't want a carer in their home for 24 hours a day, but they do want to know their safety is assured 24 hours a day."

Social workers will assess what help is needed and arrange a tailored package of support.

Lancashire County Council's Telecare service has been developed in partnership with district councils, housing asso-

Case study: Rose Fennessey

'I like to feel safe'

PENSIONER Rose Fennessey has suffered a number of falls over the years. At least she now has the peace of mind brought by Telecare.

A variety of devices are helping. She now has a button on her wrist that alerts carers if she falls over and may soon be getting a bed-occupancy monitor.

Rose, from Colne, said: "I am on my own most of the time so help like this just makes me feel safe."

"It is nice to know that someone



is there and will come quickly."

Rose has already tried a falls monitor around her waist. It works by detecting when she is no longer upright.

Rose added: "I haven't found it very comfortable so far, but I know there is a wide range of other things to try."

ciations and the NHS. People can approach their local social services offices - telephone 0845 0530000 for details - or via other professionals and agencies including: ● NHS occupational therapists and

district nurses ● Age Concern ● Housing Pendle 01282 873767 ● West Lancashire Council 0800 566666 ● Lancaster City Council 01524 586883 ● New Progress Housing 01772 436756.

£200,000 boost for countryside lovers

COUNTRYSIDE lovers are winners in a £200,000 scheme to make it easier to get into Lancashire's wide open spaces.

At least 20 new projects will be paid for by Lancashire County Council - and advanced planning means a number will be open

by spring.

Planned with walkers, cyclists, landowners, horse-riders and neighbouring councils in the Local Access Forum, projects include:

- Improvements to North Lancashire Bridleway at Claughton and Salter Fell Road.
- Major maintenance to Cribden Bridleway and

Irongate Lane Bridleway, both in Rossendale.

- Footpath improvements around Stocks reservoir near Gisburn.
- Towpath improvements in Rufford - part of a new circular walk.

- Improved access for disabled people in Alkincoates Park, Colne.
- New Tramper vehicles

to ease access at Wycollar Country Park.

Clive Weake, Countryside Service planner, said: "We're especially keen to improve access to existing rights of way from urban areas."

"That will encourage more people to enjoy the benefits of walking - that includes better health."

"We hope to implement

similar programmes in each of the next four years to promote active travel and to link towns and villages in an environmentally friendly way."

The recently approved programme has been drawn up in Lancashire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, itself part of a wider scheme to improve transport in the county.



a super hotel break

THE Norbreck Castle - with its spectacular views over the Irish Sea is a complete holiday experience under one roof.

Situated in vibrant Blackpool, the Norbreck is the perfect short-break venue or holiday venue for the whole family.

Facilities include 480 ensuite bedrooms, tea- and coffee-making facilities and colour television, standard and premier rooms, and a 36-seater cinema.

There is Copper-Faced Jack's, health and fitness options, including a fully-equipped gymnasium, health and beauty treatments, a swimming pool, sauna, whirlpool spa and steam room.

You couldn't ask for more –

and Vision and Briannia and Grand Hotels have a week-end break for two to give to this month's competition winner.

There is also nightly fun-packed entertainment programme, cash bingo and much more.

The Norbreck as a fantastic convention, exhibition, banqueting and entertainment complex.

What's more, even if you don't win Vision readers can claim a 10 per cent discount at the Norbreck Castle.

To be in with a chance of winning a weekend break for

two at one of Blackpool's premier entertainment hotels, simply answer the following and send us your entry before the closing date:

The Norbreck Castle faces which sea?

Our prize for two people includes en-suite accommodation and breakfast. Prize subject to availability, excluding certain breaks and bank holidays.

Return entries, by 16 February, to: Norbreck competition, Vision, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ.



www.britanniahotels.com

ENTRY FORM

Q: The Norbreck Castle faces which sea?

A:

Name

Address

Postcode Tel

The Norbreck may be handy for Lancashires, but our winner can take the break for two at one of the following Britannia and Grand Entertainment Hotels in England and Wales, subject to availability: The Grand Metropole, Blackpool, 0845 838 1002; the Grand, Scarborough, 0845 838 1004; the Grand, Llandudno, 0845 838 1006; the Grand Bursin, Folkestone, 0845 838 1005; Britannia Seaside Resort Hotel - Savoy Hotel, Blackpool, 0845 838 6079;

the Prince of Wales, Southport, 0845 838 1003; the Roundhouse, Bournemouth, 0845 838 1007; Britannia Hotel, Bournemouth, 0845 838 6070; the Royal Albion, Brighton, 0845 838 1008. All Vision readers can claim a 10 per cent discount by mentioning Vision newspaper. All breaks including the prize-winner must be taken within three months, excluding bank holidays and specialist breaks and are subject to availability.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Open for bookings



● LORD Shuttleworth and Chole pupil Harry-Jake Ollis (10).

COMFORTABLE new accommodation has been opened at one of the North West's foremost outdoor education centres.

The new North Backside wing of Borwick Hall features 10 en-suite bedrooms and makes it easier than ever for more people to enjoy the centre's facilities.

The accommodation block was designed by Lancashire County Council's Property Group and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

It was officially opened by Lord Shuttleworth, the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire. Guests included previous centre users and schoolchildren from across Lancashire.

Quiz time

MEMBERS of the public have the chance to hold senior councillors to account at two forthcoming Cabinet in the Community events.

People are invited at 7.15pm on Tuesday 27 February to the Little Theatre on Fleetwood Road South in Thornton where leading county councillors will be on stage for a grilling by members of the public.

County councillors will be Hazel Harding, Anne Brown, Chris Cheetham, Clive Grunshaw and Tony Martin.

There will be another Cabinet in the Community at 7.15pm on Thursday 8 March at St Mary's Parish Centre, West Street, Chorley.



January's Vision asked people to tell us what subjects they thought the council's Overview and Scrutiny teams

should investigate - and also if poorly maintained bus shelters put people off bus travel.

Send your letters to:

The Editor, Vision, Corporate Communications Group, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ. neil.graham@css.lancsc.gov.uk

Letters containing a name and address will be given priority in publication. Letters may be edited.

Plane talk

I READ that a plaque was presented to the people of Lancashire in 1942 for their role in helping buy Spitfires (Vision, January).

I wonder if people will be able to see the plaque now it is located on the wall of the county council chairman's office. Few members of the public will enter that office.

It may have been better to locate it in a library or other publicly-used building. Perhaps its display should be rotated around the 65 towns concerned.

It is, after all, an historic and emotional item of history that truly belongs to the people of Lancashire.

J C NESTOR
Euxton

■ The chairman's office is purely a temporary location and there may, indeed, be better locations elsewhere in the county. It is hoped to find somewhere more prominent in the future – editor.

Cab probe plea

JANUARY'S Vision asked for ideas of policy areas that Overview and Scrutiny teams could investigate.

I suggest they should look at the taxi trade.

Haslingden is not exactly the centre of the universe and it has long been safe to use local shops. By day, however, the streets are littered with taxis.

A number of taxi companies have sprung up in recent years and their cabs clog up car parking space behind a bank on Manchester Road.

It is almost impossible to park on the left of Lower Deardengate during the day; the problem multiplies at night.

Some taxi drivers can be a bit reckless, especially late at night.

We know that anti-drink laws are aimed at cutting accidents, which is good.

I suspect, however, that the various problems associated with all these taxis are a newer matter and should be looked at separately.

The number of taxis is growing by the

week in many towns.

P MURRAY
Helmshore

Bus passengers want comfort

I READ the Vision article (January) asking for people's views on vandalised bus shelters and the effects of that vandalism on bus use. It is something I have seen for myself at two shelters in Coppull.

One shelter had to be pulled down after it was wrecked. The seats were written upon and damaged and the timetable was covered with black spray.

Another shelter, at the top of Bentham Street, has no protection from the wind. Some shelters in Chorley have four walls and have doors at each end and on both sides. We can't have those in Coppull?

I have no car, so I have to travel quite often on the buses. I am deaf and physically disabled, so it is very uncomfortable to be exposed to such poor conditions.

I know money is always short, but it doesn't seem fair to us in Coppull when Chorley has better shelters. I pay my rates like everyone else.

R MAXWELL
Coppull

I AM a regular user of the main bus service between Colne and Burnley and was interested in the article about a possible link between bus use and the state of bus stops (Vision, January).

With frequent vandalism attacks in mind I cannot see why there needs to be glass from the floor to the ceiling in any bus shelter.

The floor-to-waist height is a challenge to vandals to give it a good kicking. I suspect the floor-to-waist glass is attacked more often than the waist-to-ceiling glass.

My answer is that as each floor-to-waist glass panel is broken, it should be replaced with galvanised sheeting. This happened with the bus shelter at Philips Lane, Colne

which has often been vandalised over the years.

Then someone decided to install blue-painted galvanised sheeting. I can't think of there having been a problem since.

MR J S CRABTREE
Colne

IT is most unpleasant to have to wait for a bus in a poorly maintained shelter (Vision, January).

My mother and her neighbours nearly always find the shelter near their houses smashed, full of rubbish and generally not very nice to stand in while waiting for the bus.

Some people walk to the next bus stop which is much better. It features a small seat – great for elderly people.

The damaged shelter would be alright if it contained a seat and faced the pavement which it doesn't at the moment.

A NUTTALL
Burnley

JANUARY'S Vision asks people for their views on the state of bus shelters.

One I use in Burnley is a disgrace. The windows are broken, it smells disgusting and there are a lot of bottles and cans dumped round the back.

Many here are elderly or infirm and have to stand there or walk further down to a shelter which contains a seat. The latter shelter is cleaned every week although it too gets vandalised sometimes.

M NUTTER
Burnley

I REGULARLY use two very old bus shelters that are a disgrace in this day and age (Vision, January).

Both are within five minutes of my home in Clayton-le-Woods.

I can't understand why they can't be replaced by modern shelters.

The old ones are a haven for litter louts. It is very offputting. These shelters need more litter bins – and someone responsible for cleaning them.

MRS M WILKINSON
Clayton-le-Woods

New cash aids jobs fight

AN EXTRA £382,000 is now available to get people back into the labour market after Lancashire County Council teamed up with the European Social Fund (ESF).

Lancashire County Development Enterprises Ltd, the county council's economic development company, has made £275,000 available to "match-fund" ESF support for grass-roots enterprises that help economically inactive people back into the labour market.

Lancashire's Grants for Growth scheme started in 2004 and, so far, almost 130 groups – and individuals – countywide have landed financial aid. The new cash will allow extension of the programme.

Typical projects helped so far include informal "job clubs" to help people prepare applications and get ready for interviews. One such club led to 15 people gaining jobs – one woman got her first work at age 54.

County Councillor Niki Penney, LCDL chairman, said: "LCDL is charged with promoting the economic well-being of Lancashire so we welcome this news on a number of levels."

"Firstly, it is money that is new to the county and will all be spent within the county. Secondly, it is targeted at those who need help to get into work. That is good for them and good for the community."

"It is a broad approach. Some of our work, for example, involves people getting involved in volunteering as volunteering can help people back into paid employment."

"One grant went to a man who was caring for a relative 24 hours per day and was cut off from the world of work. We gave him £1,000 for a computer so he could start working from home."

NEEC 2007

Lancashire
Investing for achievement

Normal life is usually resumed slowly after Christmas and New Year, but not so in Lancashire in early January: Preston was the base the North of England Education Conference, hosted by Lancashire County Council.

Top-flight educational theorists and thinkers from around the world, delegates and school-children from all over the country converged on the town to take part in the annual event, which this year centred around the theme of Investing for Achievement.

Lancashire lesson for the world

International educationalists head home with 'invest to achieve' message

Top backing for county's £250m schools' plan

A LANCASHIRE education inspired one young boy to become a leading figure in education.

Andy Hargreaves, now one of the most respected names in education, attended Spring Hill Primary in Accrington and, after encountering inspirational teacher Mary Hindle, embarked on a career that took him across the world.

He has written extensively on leadership in education, publishing numerous books on the subject.

Andy is currently based at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College in America and, in his address to the North of England Education Conference, he told delegates that investment in the future was vital for the success of young people.

Lancashire's £250m Building Schools for the Future project also came in for praise.

Mr Hargreaves said: "Building Schools for the Future is a bold venture to re-energise communities. Who wouldn't want their kids in these schools?"

Dr Jonathan Jansen, the first black dean at the University of Pretoria, also endorsed the major overhaul of education in Burnley.

He said: "This is a good idea. New buildings and new ways of bringing communities together are vital.

"Unless we do something bold and radical like this in education we end up running on the spot."

County Councillor Alan Whittaker, Cabinet member for Schools, said: "I want to see Building Schools for the Future projects throughout Lancashire as I believe it is the way forward for children and communities.

"To have the endorsement of people like Andy Hargreaves and Jonathan Jansen is fantastic as they are amongst the most respected people in education."



●FORMER Lancashire pupil Andy Hargreaves, now a leading educationalist, returned from the USA – and praised the county's £250m school-building scheme.



LIGHT relief: children perform the Indian dandia raas stick dance to entertain delegates.

SOME of Lancashire's youngest educational movers and shakers delighted the audience of conference delegates with a display of song and dance that was in turns moving, colourful, inspirational and hilarious.

Weeks of rehearsal by pupils from all over the county paid off when they took to the stage at the

Charter Theatre in a special one-off show entitled, "Different Voices – Shared Lives".

Delegates watched entranced as the children performed a programme designed to reflect Lancashire's cultural diversity, including a school choir, traditional clog dancing to live fiddle music, a troupe of cheerleaders, and dandia raas – an Indian stick dance.

Children from Pear Tree Special School and the Willows RC Primary School in Kirkham drew cheers for their performance of "Always Take the Weather With You," complete with sunshine faces, golden "veils" of mist and a unique hail shower effect produced by passing a wheelchair over giant bubblewrap.

Equally well received was the tongue-in-cheek aerobics routine performed by the strapping 16-year-old lads of Ormskirk High School rugby team, who threw themselves into "Three-minute Abs with Northern Lads", based on Victoria Wood's "Fattitude" sketch.

Irish dancers and George Formby window cleaners led to a finale that included all the performers and had the delegates clapping along.

Conference keynote speaker Jonathan Jansen, dean at the University of Pretoria, later told delegates that the children's performance alone had made his long journey worthwhile and that he had already telephoned friends back in South Africa to tell them about it.

Dean's 'fair play' plea

ONE of South Africa's most distinguished academics, Dr Jonathan Jansen, held the conference delegates spellbound with a speech about the challenges of providing education in a divided world.

The first black dean of education at the formerly all-white University of Pretoria, Dr Jansen, spoke of how he had been inspired at an early age by a teacher who told him he had potential despite being "a lad who had no shoes and played soccer all the time".

The apartheid system and its legacy of effects – particularly on the education system – had shaped his formative years and academic career.

It had made him learn to be wary of symbols which stereotyped whole groups of people as good or bad, Dr Jansen said.

Integrating students at university partly solved the problem, he said, but there remained divisions outside and at home which needed to be addressed.

He added: "You cannot begin to lead in the direction of social justice unless you acknowledge complexity and your own frailties."



Practice unless you acknowledge complexity and your own frailties."

Team up to avoid Farepak-type farce

FORWARD-looking savers can avoid Farepak hamper-style disasters by planning ahead with a credit union.

Farepak's collapse late last year caused misery to tens of thousands of people who had given money to the company all year in the expectation of receiving a festive hamper.

But, says County Councillor Tim Ormrod, canny customers should join a credit union, earn money on their savings – and then buy their own hamper!

He said: "The Farepak collapse ruined Christmas for many people.

"People should take steps now to ensure

they are not left in that position again by joining a credit union.

"They can pay in money as they can afford it and save up with the advantage of earning a dividend paid from credit union profits.

"People who have shown they can be regular savers are also entitled to take out loans at a low-cost."

Many parts of Lancashire have credit unions, as do a number of workplaces.

People can join the credit union, many of which are backed by Lancashire County Council, for the area in which they live.

The unions exist to maximise the benefits

– in terms of savings and loans – for their members. Accounts are easy to open – you need not prove you already have a bank account.

All credit union members have a say in the running of the union and all loans are at a reasonable rate of interest. Loan protection and life insurance is offered at no extra cost.

People's savings are also protected by banking legislation.

Councillor Ormrod added: "Using your own or credit union cash, also allows you to shop around and get the best prices all year round."

LOCAL OFFICES

Bacup Credit Union
01706 601809
Mid-Rosendale Credit Union
07811 403301
Fleetwood Credit Union
01253 777535
Preston Credit Union
01772 556738
Haslingden, Hyndburn and Helmshore Credit Union
01706 215082
Burnley Area Community Credit Union
01282 685151

Pendle Community Credit Union
01282 616777
Enterprise, the business credit union
01524 415666
Morecambe Bay Credit Union
01524 411240
Skelmersdale Credit Union
01695 733443
Blues and Twos Credit Union (for police and other uniformed services)
01772 614444
Lancashire County Council Credit Union (for county council employees)
01772 532296

LOOK LIVELY

Voice of



Mike Darbyshire -
scientific officer

Vision

WE all eat food and drink from supermarkets without ever questioning the accu-

racy of labels which tell us how much sugar, fat, alcohol or artificial colouring they contain.

And we take it for granted that someone, somewhere, has checked that chlorine levels in our local swimming pool are safe or that our drinking water does not contain dangerous chemicals.

It is a little-known fact that these and many other tasks essential to public safety are carried out in Lancashire by a dedicated team of scientists at the County Analysts' Laboratory, based at Preston docks.

Why did you become an analyst?

I did science A-levels at school and thought that this was by far the most interesting career available to me.

I've worked in unrelated fields

such as Human Resources since but working for a public scientific laboratory is fascinating as the job is so varied.

What do you like about the job?

I like the fact that there's no typical day at the lab. Working for a private company may involve testing large samples of the same thing over and over again but here I'm much more likely to get a small sample and have to use my initiative to get the result.

For example, if a district environmental health officer receives a complaint about a foreign object found in someone's takeaway they may ask me to find out what it is. This really keeps me on my toes as there is such a wide variety of techniques I need to use to find the answer.

What skills do you need to be an analyst?

You have to have the right approach and the right mindset. It's essential to be focused and have meticulous attention to detail.

There's also a great deal of knowledge required to use all the different equipment and you need to use your own initiative to develop new methods of testing.

What is the satisfaction in the job?

For me, it's that you achieve something new every day by producing concrete results from a set of samples.

The majority of work we do has a direct benefit to the public as we analyse nutritional values of food sold in the shops or test milk from farms or fish from rivers to check for contaminants.

This is all done without the public ever knowing but it's good to know I'm providing an important service.

What's your favourite aspect of the job?

I enjoy testing alcoholic spirits as sometimes I have been asked to find out why, for example, a bottle of vodka has made someone very ill.

Often it's because the drink contains dangerously high levels of methanol, which is toxic, and the

vodka has been manufactured illegally without the required controls.

I like to see that my work has a direct benefit for public safety.

What other things does the County Laboratory do?

We do an enormous variety of work. We test school meals to ensure they meet nutritional standards, and we also work with our Trading Standards colleagues to test food from takeaways, factories and retailers to make sure labelling is accurate and they meet legal standards.

We also examine toys and cosmetics following complaints to Trading Standards to test their safety.

The scientists can be called on by the police or emergency planning officers 24/7 to identify suspect substances – such as in recent "white powder" incidents where people have been sent suspicious substances in the post.

We also work closely with district councils and with the county council's own Property Group.

Leaders head 'back to floor'

SUPERMARKETS do it, building firms have done it...and now county councillors are going "back to the floor" to ensure public services are on tip-top form.

Like industry chiefs on the TV programme, elected members of Lancashire County Council are serving the public in services ranging from street inspections to tracking down truants, from helping find old wills to serving in libraries.

Members of all political persuasions have always kept an eye on the way that services are actually provided.

The difference now is that there is a formal programme to get councillors meeting staff and



public face to face.

County Councillor Wendy Dwyer, who went "back to the floor" at the county's Record Office, said: "It was a real eye-opener."

"The Record Office stores things such as wills, old maps, pub licences and many church records. As such it is extremely popular these days with people tracing their family tree."

"Among other things it stores pub landlord records going back hundreds of years."

The visits have been organised as part of a training programme for county councillors.

● **RECORDS** galore: Wendy Dwyer checks Lancashire's history as part of a "back to the floor" exercise. Other councillors will perform other public services.

Tutors needed for motorbike class

LANCASHIRE County Council's Road Safety Group is looking to recruit the services of experienced, qualified motorcycle instructors to assess bikers in Lancashire.

Instructors interested in joining the team need to have been DAS Level instructors for at least two years and have an advanced riding qualification, which has been taken or refreshed within the last three years.

The role involves practical riding assessments with the opportunity to progress to other schemes.

Instructors will deal with a broad range of riders with different skill levels. Assessments, including comprehensive feedback, will last for 90 minutes for full licence holders and one hour for provisional licence holders.

Rob Winn, road safety adviser for motorcycling, said: "Motorcyclists are among the most vulnerable group of road users and this free scheme offers riders of all abilities a unique opportunity to have their riding professionally assessed."

Contact Rob for details on 01772 533086. If you would like to try the free riding opportunity, contact Gemma Craven on 01772 530316.

Have you got space in your life to care for a child? If so, have you considered fostering?

We urgently need permanent carers for the following children who are unable to live with their birth families.

● Katie, an imaginative 6 year old who likes drawing, reading and playing games. Katie enjoys school and the contact she has with her birth family. Katie may need help in coming to terms with her previous experiences.

● Peter, is an 11 year old, outgoing, active child who enjoys football and cycling. Peter is used to living with other children and responds well to consistent boundaries.

● Sarah, aged 12 years and Paul, aged 13 years are brother and sister. Both are active children who need a family where they can remain together.

All of these children, and others like them, need support, understanding, care and love in a secure environment which will enable them to fulfil their potential.

If you feel you can provide this please contact Louise McConochie on 01772 538700

North West Lancashire Family Placement Team.

fostering
Lancashire County Council
0800 195 1183
www.fosteringinlancashire.co.uk

Free Nursery Education places in Lancashire for 3 and 4 year olds



If you have a child born on or between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2003 your child is entitled to a free part-time pre-school nursery education place from the start of the Spring Term 2007 commencing in January.

A free place consists of a maximum of five sessions per week and no more than fifty five sessions for the Spring term. A free session is for a period of 2.5 hours in length. There are three terms in the year, covering a total of 38 weeks per year.

Places are available from any of Lancashire County Council's eligible providers of pre-school nursery education.

These can be Local Authority (LA) maintained nursery schools and nursery classes, providers in the independent, private and voluntary sectors or accredited childminders on an approved National Childminding Association (NCMA) Children Come First Network.

Further information including a parent guide and a list of eligible providers within your area may be obtained from the Childcare Information Service on Freephone 0800 195 0137.

children first
partnership
Caring for and Educating Lancashire's Children

SureStart

Lancashire
County Council

A 4-star council
Awarded top marks by the Audit Commission

Lancashire
County Council

Children and young people

Temporary part-time personal assistant

Ref: CYP/IS/274/MG

£16,740 to £20,235 a year (pro rata).

18 1/2 hours a week at Committee and Office Services, County Hall, Preston. Required from March 2007 until April 2008, job-share, Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday.

You will provide a comprehensive and confidential secretarial and administrative service to the Head of the Inclusion Strategy Team (Special Educational Needs and Behaviour) which is a major strategy in the Education Standards and Inclusion Group. You will produce correspondence, using your own initiative, take minutes at meetings, manage an electronic diary and time management tasks, manage mail and e-mails, deal with telephone enquiries and maintain filing systems. Team cover is essential in the absence of other personal/executive assistants

Essential: You must have the full range of secretarial and administrative skills, be highly organised, an excellent communicator, have demonstrable interpersonal skills, be competent in the use of a wide range of information technology, especially Microsoft Word, spreadsheets and e-mail. You must have experience of producing correspondence, servicing meetings, liaising with agencies and the public, and of working in a team.

Interview dates: 9 March 2007 and 12 March 2007.

Apply online at: www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies or email: cyp@central.ed.lancsc.gov.uk. Tel: 01772 531747, 24hr answerphone. Closing date: 16 February 2007.

Lancashire County Council is an equal opportunities employer welcoming applications from all sections of the community. Applications from ethnic minorities are welcome. You must be committed to equality and diversity in the workplace. Lancashire County Council are currently undergoing an equal pay review and the grades of some posts advertised may be subject to review in future months.

A full job description of all vacancies is available on our website www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies

Tardis trip to tomorrow's world

Classroom 'timeboxes' bring vital lessons to life for pupils

TARDIS-type time boxes are bringing history, science, art and technology alive in Lancashire schools.

About 500 boxes containing artefacts from many countries and almost every period of history are lent to schools by Lancashire Museum's Service – boxes that can spark a lifelong fascination with people and learning.

Boxes can be used in teaching National Curriculum subjects. Each contains cards designed to get children thinking – and about how 21st century people have become what we are.

"They're like an Aladdin's cave of historical treasure – but they also help children into a different world of imagination and information", said loans officer Gail Bonney.

"The pupils get excited as soon as they see the boxes being unloaded. They can't wait to take the things out. It is fun for them and a great way to get them thinking about serious subjects."

Charlotte Steels, the service's learning assistant, has been researching the ever-popular subject of World War Two. One of her boxes contains artefacts such as a "football-style" gas-attack rattle, a steel helmet, a Ministry of Food bowl, a parachute-silk skirt and an old cooking pan.

She said: "Each box is loaned out for two weeks so teachers can explore a variety of interesting angles."

"The World War Two box, for example, contains a parachute-silk skirt and that can start discussions and projects about rationing, about economics and even about the fabrics we use for clothing nowadays."

"Every part of Lancashire still has missing railings and gates from that period."

"The truth is that few of them actually resulted in Spitfires as it was, in reality, largely a morale building exercise."

One of Gail's favourite boxes examines the development of museums using a giraffe puppet called Jo Jo, which cries for its lost friends – a Victorian tray of butterflies and a set of antelope horns.

Many museums started, of course, as collections by Victorian hunters.

A number of Victorian collectors are brought to attention, from Richard Owen, Lancaster's "dinosaur man" to Mary Henrietta



● (Above) RACE for Africa: Charlotte and Jo Jo the giraffe which stimulates debate about empire.

● (Right) CHARLOTTE sits in an air-raid shelter with items from WW2.



Kingsley who wore mourning black to explore Gabon.

The development of homes is explored through a manual coffee grinder, a lemon-squeezer, sugar nips and a jelly mould.

Gail said: "Even kitchen objects teach about different forms of energy, different types of material and even changing social customs. Men, for instance, are frequently seen in kitchens these days – but, of course, kitchens have traditionally been seen as a woman's domain."

"The better-off homes also had domestic staff. That, in itself, can spark projects and debates about the way we all lived in those days."

Schools can find out more on the county council's School's Portal under museum. Gail can be contacted on 01772 534089 or at gail.bonney2@mus.lancscc.gov.uk

Some of the boxes

can be seen on

www.lancsmuseums.gov.uk

58m on the buses

MORE and more people are using the bus in Lancashire, according to latest statistics.

A total of 57.99m bus journeys were taken in 2005/6, compared with 56.8m the previous year.

Figures may increase further when the recently introduced concessionary fares scheme for older people is taken into account – early indications are that free travel for the elderly within their own district council area has increased by 43 per cent since April 2006.

Sam's history lesson

LIBRARIANS in Chorley have devised a novel way to get children interested in history, reading and research.

They studied the 19th century life of Samuel Gartside and included various scenes from his life in a history resource pack for schoolchildren.

Samuel was a real-life member of the Gartside family – which still runs a building firm in Chorley – and his life illustrates how people ate, worked, played and learned in the 1850s.

Working in Lancashire

Lancashire County Developments Ltd
The County Council's economic development department



Jobs to suit everyone

Whether you are looking to work part-time, full-time or with flexible working patterns, there are a number of events being held across the county soon with a range of opportunities to suit your personal circumstances, with around 1,500 vacancies to fill.

Whichever event you visit you will be able to meet local employers with local jobs, and work-related opportunities are also available.

So, choose the event that best suits you from the list below and we look forward to meeting you on the day.

This activity is part of the Economic Development and Enterprise section of the Lancashire Partnership's Local Area Agreement (LAA), in which partners from public, private and voluntary sectors in Lancashire work together to achieve a single set of targets and objectives. Jobcentre Plus is leading this particular activity with the support of partners, including the county council's economic development department.

At each event advice and support will be available on searching for a job, finding childcare, training, claiming tax credits, how to prepare your CV and interview and all aspects of the out of work and into work journey.



Dates and venues

Thursday 8 February – 10-4
Jobcentre Plus, Lee-Moran House,
Victoria Street, **Burnley**

Wednesday 14 February – 11-3
Empress Ballroom, Winter Gardens,
Blackpool

Wednesday 21 February – 10-4
Jobcentre Plus, Orchard House,
Penny Street, **Blackburn**

Wednesday 28th February – 10-3
The Stoneyholme and Daneshouse
Centre, **Burnley**

Wednesday 7 March – 10-2
Jobcentre Plus, Whelmar House,
Southway, **Skelmersdale**

Wednesday 7 March – 10-4
Jobcentre Plus, Gateway House,
200 Ringway, **Preston**

Wednesday 7 March – 10-2
Jobcentre Plus, Heron House,
67 Queen Street, **Morecambe**

Wednesday 14 March – 10-2
Jobcentre Plus, Mitre House,
Church Street, **Lancaster**

Wednesday 14 March – 10-3
The Municipal Hall, **Colne**

Tuesday, 27th March – 12-4
The Civic Centre, West Paddock,
Leyland

Wednesday 28 March – 10-2
Jobcentre Plus, Westmorland House,
29-31 Orchard Road, **St. Annes**

Wednesday 28 March – 10-2
Jobcentre Plus, Hamilton Road,
Chorley

Thursday 29 March – 10-4
Town Hall, Blackburn Road,
Accrington

Tuesday, 24th April – 10-3
The Pendle Pakistan Welfare
Association
25 Market Street, **Brierfield**

Tuesday, 22nd May – 10-3
The Old Fire Station,
Burnley Road, **Rawtenstall**

For further information please contact LCDL on 01772 551888.

**Lancashire County
Developments Ltd.**

Lancashire
County Council

NEWS IN BRIEF

Phone fine warning for drivers

FROM 27 February motorists caught using hand-held mobiles while driving could now face three penalty points and a £60 on-the-spot fixed penalty fine.

The new law applies when driving, stopping at traffic lights; queuing in traffic and texting.

Lancashire County Council's Road Safety Group is advising drivers to "switch off before you drive off" as using a mobile phone even with hands-free equipment can affect concentration and increases the risk of being involved in a crash.

Group manager Neil Cunliffe said: "Research shows that talking on a mobile phone while driving affects your concentration and ability to react to dangerous situations."

Employers can also be prosecuted if they allow their employees to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving.

For more information visit <http://www.thinkroad-safety.gov.uk>

Highways injuries drop

RECENT statistics show that Lancashire roads have been getting safer in recent years.

One of Lancashire County Council's objectives is to ensure that people can "travel easily and safely". The most recent figures available – for January to March 2006 – show that 881 people were killed or seriously injured on the roads in that period.

A total of 921 people were killed or seriously injured in the same period of 2005.

Students' beeline

STUDENTS from across Europe will be in Lancaster in May as part of a language "taster" project.

The Language Festival project involves students from the Adult College, Lancaster, and students from Austria, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Spain, and the Czech Republic.

Each has the chance to visit festivals in each other's country. The Adult College will be host in May and will offer students and members of the public a variety of language tasters.

Our winners

WINNER of the Borwick Hall weekend break (Vision, December) is H Perry from Skelmersdale. Winner of a three-day Lakes break (Vision, January) is M Courtney of Clitheroe. Winners of 24-hour Freedom of the Lake family tickets for Windermere are: G Christiansen of Morecambe and E Naylor of Burnley.

Clarets boss opens sports hall

A MAJOR new sports facility, bringing opportunities for fitness and fun to schoolchildren and community users has opened in Ribbles Valley.

Lancashire County Council has used a £1.4m grant from the Big Lottery Fund to build a much-needed sports hall at Grindleton's Bowland

High, a school with Specialist Status in Performing Arts.

Funding for the new facility came from the Big Lottery Fund's £750m New Opportunities for Physical Education and Sport Programme which supports community use of such services across England.

The facility was opened by Burnley FC manager Steve Cotterill.



●STEVE Cotterill, right, and schools chief Alan Whittaker check the new sports facilities.

School at the heart of its community

Ever heard of socially inclusive cricket?

NO? NEITHER have the children at Pear Tree School's holiday club.

They just know that if your mate's in a wheelchair, you have to help him whack the ball, and then grab the handles of his chair and run like billy-o to get a run before someone scrabbles the ball from the ground.

Others quickly realise that if your new best friend needs help with eating lunch, you just have to wait, patiently, for her to finish so you can both get back outside into the playground to carry on your secret game.

The children who attend the range of activities at Pear Tree Special School in Kirkham have no knowledge of policies to combat marginalisation.

Instead, they mix together freely from such an early age that they scarcely notice or care that their friends have a variety of profound disabilities.

Pear Tree School has taken the concept of social cohesion and applied its own approach.

As a school educating about 60 children with severe multiple disabilities, the expectation might be that the community would take the school under its wing.

But at Pear Tree, the opposite is true as well: the school has taken the community to its heart, and because of that it has become the first special school in the county to be awarded children's centre status.

The new children's centres are attached to schools with the aim of providing combined education, care, family support and health services, to help not just children but families too.

"We were aware of the Children's Centre initiative and were already developing that way, with all the community activities we run," said headteacher Lesley Koller.

"We feel sure that this way of working is the future of all children with disabilities being accepted into the community."

Acceptance starts early at Pear Tree. From the age of two, toddlers attend the Seedlings pre-school group where they quickly become used to mixing with chil-



●FUN at children's centre: from left, Amy Beatham (10), Jack Gorman (10), Rebecca Sowden (9).

dren whose needs differ from their own.

Childminders and parents are equally welcome.

As a young non-disabled playgroup member put it: "I have been to other playschemes and I have been to a childminder but this is the best because they are more free about what you do."

"I prefer a playcheme with disabled children because it's nicer; a normal person learns to be nicer if they see disabled people."

There is also the Water Babies' group, in which children can enjoy the school's hydrotherapy pool, and of course the holiday club where dozens of disabled and non-disabled youngsters make the most of their precious time off school.

Now the children's centre status will

allow the school to spread its wings wider.

New rooms at the school are being completed to provide health and social care outreach services and there will be a link with the JobCentre and a place where parents can hunt for jobs on-line.

Additional services will be provided according to what's needed by local people.

There will also be evening classes leading to vocational qualifications in literacy and numeracy – something Pear Tree has already been providing for their entry-level care staff for some time.

Janet Lawrenson, teacher responsible for community development, said: "Schools aren't isolated places. We've had huge support from our community – now we're giving something back."

New centres opening all the time

FAMILY life in Skelmersdale received a big boost recently with the official opening of a new scheme to help children and parents.

The First Steps Children's Centres in Tanhouse and Diggmoor are one-stop-shops for families, offering everything from education and childcare to job and health advice.

The centres give people access to childcare and advice on employment training

and stopping smoking - and give mums, dads and carers the chance to socialise while giving their children the best possible start in life.

The First Steps Children's Centres operate from two locations – Birleywood in Diggmoor and Eavesdale in Tanhouse.

Services include early education and childcare for under-fives, family support and advice, a range of healthcare facilities, and skills training.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Apply here for £1m birthday

LANCASHIRE Environmental Fund is making available an additional £1m in the form of a challenge competition to celebrate its 10th birthday.

The contest is for not-for-profit environmental and community groups in the county.

The money is highlighted for two specific project areas:

- Community Buildings
- Community Amenity and Natural Environment.

Applicants are encouraged to consider what would improve the local community and the environment they live in and can apply for support for projects ranging from community buildings and village halls to nature reserves and public parks.

For more details, visit www.lancsensfund.org.uk or email general@lancsensfund.org.uk or phone 01772 317247.

Urban art for boarders

TALENTED youngsters did their bit for the urban environment when they designed their own skatepark – complete with "urban art".

The Cleveleys youngsters were invited to help design boarding facilities at Jubilee Gardens to give them a sense of ownership.

Designated areas can be used for spraycan art and the park's opening was celebrated with a DJ workshop and barbecue. Brian Wood, Cleveleys youth work manager, said: "Many young people were involved in designing the area and decorating the walls and fences surrounding the skatepark."

Sea-going storytime

FEBRUARY is a busy month at Lancaster Maritime Museum. "Maritime Madness", a workshop exploring themed crafts and ideas, is to be held at 10.30am and at 1.30pm on Tuesday 13 February. People are invited to write their stories of the sea at 1.30pm on Tuesday 16 February while "Get Knotted", a class teaching how to tie knots will be held on Monday 26 February. Tel 01524 382264 for details.

Help may be just a click away

LANCASHIRE residents can now check their eligibility for receiving social care services and request a social care assessment at a click of a button.

The new easy-to-use online system enables users to find information and work out if they, their friend or rel-

ative, are eligible to receive social care support from the county council's adult social services.

The pilot scheme, initially being rolled out across Chorley, Leyland and South Ribble, is part of Lancashire County Council's Customer Access Strategy in developing ways to make it easier for

people to access services quickly and efficiently.

The self-referral system is available for all adults over the age of 18 and older people who may be finding it increasingly difficult to look after themselves at home due to either a disability or illness.

The online self-referral

system is at www.lancashire.gov.uk/social-services/self-referral

After completing an online questionnaire, users will receive an instant response notifying them whether they are eligible to receive social care services. They will then be referred to an adult social services customer care team

which will process a formal care assessment to advise what support is required to meet their needs.

For those who are not considered eligible for social care, users will have access to information about a range of support provided by other statutory agencies, voluntary groups and carers projects.