

CommunityTalk

IN RENNINGTON, ROCK & STAMFORD SPRING 2026

Classroom Meets Countryside

Broxfield Farm, currently run by David Thompson and his son Robert, is a good example of how agriculture can inspire, educate, and empower young people. Through its partnership with The Country Trust, a registered charity, the farm welcomes groups of inner-city schoolchildren, offering them a hands-on experience of rural life that many may never have imagined.

A visit to Broxfield is more than a day out; it's an immersion into the rhythms of food, nature, and sustainable farming. David guides children through fields, hedgerows,

and livestock areas, encouraging them to ask questions, observe closely, and discover the origins of the food they eat every day. For many pupils, this marks the first time they've touched soil, heard the quiet of open countryside, or seen wildlife in its natural habitat.

The Country Trust's mission - to connect children with the land - comes alive at Broxfield with activities such as investigating soil health and learning how crops grow. This really helps students develop curiosity, confidence, and a deeper awareness of the

environment. Teachers often report that pupils return to the classroom more engaged, motivated, and reflective.

What makes Broxfield Farm particularly special is the warmth and openness with which David welcomes every group. His passion for farming and for sharing it with young people transforms the visit into a memorable learning adventure.

Visits to Broxfield Farm are always very well received by schools, some of which have visited the farm for the last 25 years.

Future of the Library Service

Northumberland County Council has launched a public consultation to shape the future of its library service.

Residents are being invited to share their thoughts on proposals to redesign services to meet the evolving needs of the community. Both members and non-members are encouraged to participate. The proposals include changes to opening hours, the mobile library service, new access methods for rural communities, the use of technology for 'open access' self-service hours, and some libraries operated by community volunteers. Councillor Wendy Pattison, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, has emphasised the importance of hearing from as many people as possible, as libraries are for all residents. Participation is open to everyone and can be done in various ways.

The proposals will mainly affect our community in two ways:

- The Mobile Library service will change from a three-week to a six-week schedule. If you use this service, your views are therefore really important.
- Alnwick Library's opening hours will be reduced from 54 to 45 hours.

Council officers will be available at drop-in sessions at each library throughout the consultation period to provide further information and answer questions about the new library service.

You are invited to share your views by Monday, 13 April. You can participate online or collect a printed copy of the consultation at Alnwick Library.

It's certainly a little ironic that during the National Year of Reading, the County Council is considering library service cuts that potentially harm rural communities.



Tom Brown, 95 using the mobile library

Why do Birds Fly in V Formations?

Many long-distance migrants fly in V-formations. We most commonly see geese, but ducks, swans, cranes, pelicans, and gulls all do the same. They form an echelon, with one bird at the front and others about a metre behind and to either side. Adjacent birds flap their wings synchronously, enabling following birds to obtain lift from the vortex in the air created by the bird in front. This reduces the energy consumption of the following bird by up to 50%, meaning that the whole formation can fly further before resting than solitary birds. Studies on pelicans have shown that following birds in V-formations have significantly lower heart rates than leading ones, indicating lower energy consumption. The bird at the front of the formation works the hardest. Birds rotate into that position when the lead bird gets tired, just like cyclists in the Peloton in the Tour de France. The lead position is not shared by all birds; more experienced fliers lead. Younger birds learn their navigational routes by following their parents. While the instinct to migrate is partly innate, flying in a V formation appears to be a learned behaviour. V formations are often asymmetrical. This is usually due to the wind direction creating more lift on one side of the V than the other, with the longer arm of the V being on the side generating the most lift. The birds call to each other while flying to indicate position and coordinate when they move in the formation.

Tim Walls



Pink Footed Geese flying in V formation

Our Neighbourhood Plan

If you're not directly involved, it's hard to grasp how long it takes to agree a Neighbourhood Plan. However, experience elsewhere shows perseverance pays off. For example, a neighbouring parish's Plan took eight years to develop.

The sheer bureaucracy is both mind-numbing and ongoing. During our recent Regulation 14 Consultation, we received numerous pages of comments from the County Council. Some of their views didn't align with the community's earlier consultations.

To support our community's views and wishes, we realised we needed the planners on board. We actively engaged with them, speaking directly rather than relying solely on email. A lengthy meeting in Morpeth was particularly helpful.

Our discussions with the planners were productive and constructive.

They offered many suggestions to improve the Plan and increase its chances of success with the Independent Examiner. However, we remained firm on key issues, particularly principal occupancy, developments in Rock and Stamford, rejecting further development at North Farm Rennington, and including the Rennington settlement boundary in our Plan.

We're currently working with the planners on what needs to be done before the County Council formally submits the Plan for the final public consultation. Then it's down to the independent planning inspector, followed hopefully by a positive referendum!

It's certainly important that our Plan is adopted, although it's still anyone's guess how much longer this will all take.

Peter Purdom



Parish Spring Clean

Saturday 21 March 10am until 12 noon

Volunteers - please meet at 10am at the Parish Council Notice Boards in Rennington, Rock or Stamford!

Just bring yourself - we provide the kit - we again need your help for litter-picking, cleaning benches and road signs.

Afterwards, soup and a roll available for volunteers at the HORSESHOES INN

Parish Council Sets Lower Charge for 2026/27

Rennington Parish Council has agreed its budget and parish precept for the 2026/27 financial year, bringing good news for residents with a slight reduction in the parish element of Council Tax.

For a Band D property, the parish charge will be £43.09 in 2026/27.

This reduction has been achieved through improved cost control and budgeting, despite ongoing cost pressures. General Reserve levels will be maintained, ensuring the Council remains well placed to manage future uncertainties and challenges.

The Parish Council remains committed to investing in projects that improve local facilities and benefit residents and the wider community.

Local projects delivered this year include:

- A new village green bench in Rock
- New litter bins installed
- A local Spring Clean
- Bulb planting across the parish

Projects in progress or proposed from 2026/27 include:

- A land survey for a potential Rock to Rennington footpath
- New village signage
- Hocket Junction bus shelter repairs
- A new Stamford defibrillator, including an off-grid power supply
- Replacement of the Rennington defibrillator, approaching 10 yrs old
- Completion of the Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Other potential projects - 'Book by the Sea' libraries, tree planting & bins

Why are Defibrillators Important?

As you're probably aware Rennington and Rock have defibrillators and Stamford will soon have one. You've likely also seen the media coverage of high-profile individuals like Christian Eriksen and Fabrice Muamba who collapsed suddenly due to cardiac arrest. Both were successfully resuscitated on the football pitch thanks to the immediate availability of trained personnel and defibrillators.

It's estimated that up to 30,000 people in the UK experience sudden cardiac arrest outside hospital each year. Survival chances are significantly improved by having defibrillators and a substantial portion of the community trained in basic cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

A cardiac arrest occurs when the heart stops pumping blood effectively, causing rapid loss of consciousness as the brain deprives itself of oxygen. This leads to collapse and cessation of breathing.

Resuscitation in the community is crucial due to the critical timeframe. Within about three minutes of cardiac arrest, brain injury begins, and without restoring circulation, severe and permanent brain damage occurs by nine minutes post-arrest. After ten minutes without circulation, survival chances are extremely low.



Basic CPR by manual chest compression restores sufficient circulation to the brain, extending the timeline for brain damage development. Using a defibrillator can restore heart rhythm in a significant number of patients, potentially buying enough time for paramedics to arrive and transfer the individual to hospital.

Training a substantial number of people in basic CPR would enhance community safety. Would you consider joining the training? Generally fit adults can perform CPR, but effective training is essential. Regular skill refreshers are also necessary once trained.

A training session is planned for Monday, 30 March, in the Village Hall at 6.30pm. Instruction will be given by Elliot Smith, ex Merchant Navy and ex NEAS Fast Responder, and Tim Walls, a retired doctor who lives in the village.

If you're interested in attending, please contact Elliot at RenningtonCPR@outlook.com.

Let him know if you've had CPR training before; if so, he'll enrol you in a refresher session. If not, you'll be assigned to a longer introductory session.

Tim Walls & Elliot Smith

Garden Talk

Hanging Baskets

As spring approaches, thoughts turn to the garden and perhaps to hanging baskets. While I don't claim to be an expert, I've enjoyed making them for many years, and some people have appreciated my efforts. Here are a few tips I've gathered along the way.

First, choose plants you like but equally importantly those that suit the location. When I had west-facing baskets, I loved using trailing begonias or petunias. Now, with a north-east facing aspect, I opt for impatiens as they tolerate the conditions well.



There are various types of baskets to choose from. I prefer open-sided ones for a ball effect, and I use a very elderly 45 cm basket - spiral sided for easy planting. Some form of liner will be needed: you can buy these but I prefer moss - much easier to plant through and any left will keep for next year. This size accommodates around 24 plants, plus some trailing ones at the bottom if you want them. Any decent compost will do, and I recommend adding granular fertiliser and water-retaining gel. Plunging an inverted cut-off bottle in the centre with the top off and a small piece of plastic or matting below helps direct water to the bottom of the basket.

After planting, I rest the basket on a plant pot for a couple of weeks to let the plants root firmly (and also protect them from the weather if necessary). Allow the basket to dry a bit before hanging: they can be heavy. Water regularly, even in wet conditions, and feed them often with any liquid feed. Then, simply enjoy your beautiful baskets throughout the summer.

Hilary Walls

Murder Most Foul in Rennington

Was it Professor Peacock in the Library with a heavy tome or General Custard in the Hallway with a lead pipe? No, it was mild-mannered Dr Fumble with the candlestick by the swimming pool. So the mystery resolved itself in a most entertaining way under the direction of Jane Hedges, the Master of Ceremonies.

The gathered participants had prepared a marvellous array of costumes and entered into the spirit of the event with great humour and enthusiasm. They, together with a group of non-acting observers, were entertained to a delicious three-course meal courtesy of Chris Hedges and Hilary Walls, during which the mystery unfolded.

Many thanks must also go to the rest of the catering team who washed up a seemingly never-ending train of crockery and glasses! In short, a most successful and enjoyable evening. If you missed out this time, watch for future events and buy your tickets early!



Stop Press...

Rennington Village Hall will be closed from 13 June to 28 June for redecoration

Whats On

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| 21 March | 10am Spring Clean - meeting up in Rock, Rennington or Stamford |
| 27 March | 6.30pm Quiz Night, RVH |
| 30 March | 6.30pm Defibrillator & CPR Training - Elliot Smith & Tim Walls, RVH |
| 3 April | 4 - 8pm Organic & Local Market, free entry, RVH |
| 23 April | 6.30pm Rock History - Lalage Bosanquet & Brian Eke, Rock Church |
| 24 April | 6.30pm Quiz Night, RVH |
| 1 May | 4 - 8pm Organic & Local Market, free entry, RVH |
| 21 May | 6.30pm Planes, Helicopters, Ships, Subs & Motorsports - Matt Cowlshaw, Rock Church |
| 27 May | 7.30pm Annual Parish Meeting, RVH |
| 29 May | 6.30pm Quiz Night, RVH |
| 5 June | 4 - 8pm Organic & Local Market, free entry, RVH |

Check for future events at www.rennington-pc.gov.uk

Next issue:

Summer 26; please submit content no later than 22 May 2026

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