Foreword

Councillor Darren Byford
Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth & Regeneration

The second year of the Pontefract Action Plan came to an end in March 2020 and we are pleased to now be able to bring you our latest update report. It has been another busy 12 months.

Work on the new Leisure and Wellbeing Hub continues at pace. This fantastic facility should open in early 2021 and I look forward to seeing the newest addition to the Council’s leisure portfolio open for business - it will be an excellent addition to Pontefract, the five towns and the wider Community.

Many of you will also have seen that preparation of the Pontefract Masterplan is well underway too. Nash Partnership have been commissioned to create a framework for identifying ways to reconnect the town centre to the communities, transport hubs and key destinations around it, creating a coherent area that sits between them. The initial public consultation on Nash’s background work concluded in February 2020 and the draft of the document will be available in the summer.

Our new webpage: www.wakefield.gov.uk/ponteplan will be updated with new materials as things progress so please have a look and make sure to have your say!

It is important, though, that we think about the Climate Emergency and how the Pontefract Masterplan can help to reduce our impact on the environment. The Streets for People project aims to transform the road which links Pontefract’s historic town centre with the castle, Horsefair, into a pleasant route for walking and cycling which we hope will be the blueprint for future travel around town. The planning, also led by Nash, is going well and physical changes are on course to start in early 2021.

The Council continues to work closely with our strategic partners, businesses and community groups on everything we are doing in Pontefract. Challenges remain but we will continue to be bold and work tirelessly to achieve the Vision for 2028, making sure that the future for the unique town of Pontefract is bright and sustainable.
**A Local View**

**Pontefract Ward Members - Councillors Patricia Garbutt, Lorna Malkin, Clive Tennant, George Ayre, David Jones & Celia Loughran**

We firmly believe that Pontefract has a unique place both in the wider Wakefield district and in the surrounding area. It is pleasing to see the hard work that is going in to help our town develop and thrive as it meets the challenges of the 21st century. There have been successes already and we are looking forward to seeing the ongoing projects start to deliver positive change for our town.

We would like to thank everyone who got involved in the recent consultation and would encourage all of you to keep taking the time to make your feelings known as things progress. Your opinion really does matter and is a key part of the process of transforming Pontefract.

We will continue to work with all of the services involved to make sure that the recent successful funding bids to improve the platform accessibility at Monkhill station and cycle infrastructure throughout the town, as well as Council investment in the Markets and in wider regenerative projects like the Masterplan are just the tip of the iceberg.

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**Pontefract Civic Society - Paul Cartwright (Chair)**

The Civic Society continues to have a positive working relationship with Council officers and remains heavily involved with the ambitious plans to transform Pontefract.

We work across various task groups to blend a focus on addressing current issues like Anti-Social Behaviour and the Night-time Economy with support for the long term blueprint for change that will be provided by the Masterplan.

As a catalyst for collective volunteering, our Decoration Squad continues to go from strength to strength, even though the ‘Lockdown’ is providing challenges for us all, and some parts of VE Day will be moved online, allowing for the proper celebrations to take place later in the year.

We are always looking for creative ways to support local businesses, such as our annual design awards, our business member scheme, and extensive online promotion of businesses and what Pontefract has to offer as a whole.

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**Pontefract Heritage Partnership - Colin White (Chair)**

Our town’s heritage is one of its greatest assets. We have been pleased to see significant recent investment in the Castle, with plans in place for further improvements in the future.

We also continue to work closely with the Council to secure the regeneration of our locally listed Dispensary building on Southgate as well as safeguarding the Grade 1 listed Hermitage located underneath it.

Our history is quite literally beneath our feet and we are pleased to see the Council taking steps to protect it.
**Introduction**

As we enter the third full year of the Pontefract Action Plan, we felt this was a good time to look at where we are and how far we’ve come.

The next few pages provide you with a reminder of what we had achieved this time last year, some detail on what has been achieved in the last 12 months and a look at the other work we’ve been doing and which will continue to be our focus over the coming months.

Lots of the Council’s efforts to this point have been about preparation - working with partners to get a good understanding of what the issues affecting the town are and how they might be sorted out. This work will continue because things are always changing and we want to make sure that, as far as we can, we do the right things at the right time.

It’s important to remember that this work is about safeguarding the future of Pontefract. While some of our projects are relatively short-term, many of them will take several years to implement.

To help you to understand how long some of this work might take, we’ve prepared the following key:

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If you’d like to know more about the Pontefract Vision to 2028, it is available on our website (www.wakefield.gov.uk/ponteplan).
Theme 1 - A Cultural Destination

Establishing Pontefract as one of Yorkshire’s leading cultural destinations

Projects completed prior to the 2019 Action Plan update:
- Install Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) information panels
- Present Liquorice Day (over 2 days) & Yorkshire Day
- Complete a Pilot for Sunday opening on Liquorice Day
- Introduce a programme of events at Pontefract Castle

Projects completed in the last 12 months:
- Survey of the hospitality sector to identify key issues affecting the Night Time Economy (NTE)
- Revitalise Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) enforcement work
- Complete Heritage Lottery-funded works at the Castle to remove it from the Historic England Heritage At Risk Register
- Complete a high-level options appraisal for the Dispensary & Hermitage (findings to be incorporated into the Masterplan)
- Form an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and NTE Task Group to lead problem-solving of these issues in Pontefract

Projects we’ll be working on over the next 12 months:
- Improvements to signage and wayfinding in and around Pontefract
- Complete the Pontefract Masterplan
- Develop a visitor plan to enhance the profile of Pontefract as a heritage destination
- Secure a coach drop-off point to support efforts to promote tourism
- Address the problem of inadequate coach parking (including discussions with NEW College around their transport issues)
- Ongoing liaison with the Mid-Yorkshire NHS Trust to secure the future of the Dispensary building and underground Hermitage
- Working up of specific projects to address ASB and NTE issues
- Improving the events offer in Pontefract whether by the Council or its partners (including volunteer organisations)
Theme 2 - Well-connected
Making sure Pontefract is easy to get to and navigate around

Projects completed prior to the 2019 Action Plan update:
- Secure timetable improvements for Pontefract train stations
- Improve Broad Lane/Southgate road junction
- Complete extensive road network re-surfacing works
- Complete the initial phases of the Pontefract/Knottingley Connect Cycle Route - including Stuart Road Crossing

Projects completed in the last 12 months:
- Install a rapid electric vehicle charging point to improve Air Quality
- Secure funding to improve accessibility at Monkhill train station
- Secure funding to improve lighting, signage and cycle infrastructure on Horsefair in support of Streets for People

Projects we’ll be working on over the next 12 months:
- Further delivery of the Pontefract/Knottingley Connect Cycle Route
- Complete work on new lifts and a gantry at Monkhill station
- Use the recently won Yorkshire-wide Transforming Cities Fund monies to deliver improvements in Pontefract
- Improve road junctions onto and around North Baileygate
- Problem-solve with Network Rail to improve car parking at Monkhill train station
- Support the development of the Council’s Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan which will bring improvements district-wide
- Complete further work to bring forward the South Featherstone Link Road which will help ease congestion in Pontefract
- Create more highway improvement schemes to help residents get around more smoothly
- Continue lobbying Network Rail to improve train services for Pontefract (and the wider district)
- Explore options with Network Rail to secure improvements to Pontefract’s other train stations - Tanshelf & Baghill
Theme 3 - A Vibrant Town Centre

Making Pontefract an attractive and inviting environment

Projects completed prior to the 2019 Action Plan update:
- Complete the Pontefract Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)
- Complete a Christmas marketing campaign promoting independent retailers
- Form the Market Management Board
- Install additional planters in the town centre for Pontefract in Bloom

Projects completed in the last 12 months:
- Complete a review of the district’s markets
- Scoping of opportunities for improvements across Pontefract (in preparation for a Masterplan and related future projects)
- Form an ASB & NTE Task Group to problem-solve challenges in the town

Projects we’ll be working on over the next 12 months:
- Produce marketing material to promote Pontefract as an excellent choice for retail businesses large and small
- Explore options to provide tailored support to businesses in Pontefract
- Complete detailed design work for the Streets for People project to improve Horsetfair
- Explore options for additional improvements to the town centre
- Explore solutions for the long term empty retail properties in the town centre
- Progress the district-wide market improvement plan to deliver improvements to Pontefract’s offer
- Continue work to address ASB and NTE issues
- Explore options to improve Pontefract’s ginnels
- Complete the Pontefract Masterplan
- Explore options for seasonal lighting for the Butter Cross
Theme 4 - **Sustainable Communities**

**Helping to ensure that Pontefract has the right housing, services & employment opportunities**

**Projects completed prior to the 2019 Action Plan update:**
- Create a re-employment & pre-apprenticeship ‘Employment Hub’
- Hold an Annual Careers event in Pontefract
- Commence the ‘Pomfretian’ publication, promoting the town and its assets to new and existing residents
- Open a Makers Space for craft activities at Pontefract Library (started June 2019)

**Projects completed in the last 12 months:**
- Engage secondary schools in the Leeds City Region (LCR) Enterprise Adviser programme, providing young people with work experience & preparing them for work
- Initiate the Go Higher West Yorkshire programme, working with disadvantaged young people in Pontefract to support them into higher education

**Projects we’ll be working on over the next 12 months:**
- Identify opportunities to engage with the Wakefield Youth Council (including using www.wfyouth.co.uk to promote activities)
- Support the delivery of an outreach programme for the young people of Pontefract, delivered through the ward members’ project fund
- Explore options to improve the offer for young people in Pontefract
- Work pro-actively to attract investment in Pontefract
- Secure the continued provision of adult & community education through local centres
- Support Pontefract residents to access help from the ‘Step-Up’ employment and skills programme
- Work with Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) & Jobcentre Plus to deliver innovative solutions that make a lasting difference to life opportunities & maintain a presence in Pontefract Library & St Mary’s Community Centre
Theme 5 - Happy & Healthy Residents

Encouraging healthier and active lifestyles in Pontefract

Projects completed prior to the 2019 Action Plan update:
- Planning permission secured for the new Leisure and Wellbeing Hub
- Volunteer fair held in Pontefract Library to raise awareness of local opportunities along with the launch of the new volunteer website - VolunteerWakefield.org.uk

Projects completed in the last 12 months:
- Delivery of the local biodiversity plan aim to plant ¼ hectare of native woodland in the Park
- Volunteer Wakefield website now up and running

Projects we’ll be working on over the next 12 months:
- Completion and opening to the public of the Health & Wellbeing Hub - ‘Aspire@ThePark’
- Delivery of a walking trail in Pontefract Park, complete with sculptures
- Further delivery of the Pontefract/Knottingley Connect Cycle Route
- Complete the Pontefract Masterplan
- Further development of walking activities as part of the Walking for Health Programme
- Further workplace health promotion throughout workplaces in Pontefract
- Review of Green Space Needs Assessment for Pontefract and refresh of the Management Plan for Pontefract Park
- Working up of specific projects to address ASB and NTE issues
Get in touch

Is there something you’d like to know more about?

Are you a business or community group interested in getting involved?

We are always pleased to hear from members of the public and welcome any input that will help us to make Pontefract a better place to live, work and visit.

If you’d like to get in touch, please use the following contact details:

By Post: Pontefract Action Plan
   Regeneration Team
   Wakefield Council
   Wakefield One
   PO Box 700
   Burton Street
   Wakefield
   WF1 2EB

By Email: majorprojects@wakefield.gov.uk

By Phone: 01924 306630