Foreword from Deputy Leader Denise Jeffery

The Pontefract Vision provides an overview of shared aspirations for the future of Pontefract, and will provide a strategic steer for future projects. This follows on from the 2007 Masterplan for Pontefract town centre, which was written in a very different economic climate. It has been produced by Wakefield Council, in collaboration with WDH, and the Pontefract Civic Society.

As the Vision shows, Pontefract has a wealth of potential. There are a lot of great things that are already happening, such as the Key to the North project at the castle which is helping to put the town on the visitor destination map, and Pontefract also benefits from a number of volunteer groups who are making a difference to the town through initiatives such as Pontefract in Bloom & the friends groups that champion their local parks.

Response to the public consultation has really shown how much strength of feeling there is for Pontefract. The top three favourite things identified by the consultation are the heritage and history of the town, the castle and Pontefract Park. Other favourites include the compact town centre and Pontefract’s location.

The consultation highlighted a number of areas that need to be improved. Top of the list is traffic congestion, anti-social behaviour in the town centre and litter. Local students have also brought to our attention the lack of facilities for young people. We value this feedback which has shaped the content of the document and will influence future work areas.

We all know that the Council faces significant budget pressures but that shouldn’t stop us from aspiring to achieve great things by working alongside our partners. The challenge now is for all of us to work creatively together to deliver the aspirations identified in the Vision.
Foreword from Pontefract Members

The last 10 years have seen significant challenges for town centres across the country. People of all generations now have different shopping habits, with internet sales now at a reported 20% and continuing to grow. Such changes in people’s shopping habits and leisure pursuits mean that we have to look for new ways to reignite and invigorate interest in our town centre.

As the town has expanded, new people and families have chosen to move to Pontefract because it offers so much in terms of history, location and opportunities. There is much to celebrate in Pontefract’s rich heritage, its friends groups, sports clubs and its strong sense of community.

The Vision for Pontefract 2028 reflects the views of the community across all generations, ensuring that its aspirations can meet the challenges of the next 10 years. These are the foundations for the Vision for 2028.

The Vision is divided into five sections and each one has a map to show the main assets and issues discussed. Please refer to these as you read the relevant sections.

Section 3 map key
1 Tanshelf Intervention Area
2 Tanshelf Gateway
3 Swimming Pool Development Opportunity
4 King Charles II House Gateway
5 Library
6 Indoor Market
7 Southgate Environmental Improvements
8 Horsefair Intervention Area

Section 4 map key
- Development sites over 80 units
1 Introduction
Pontefract is a compact and attractive historic market town with a fascinating and nationally important heritage which can offer visitors a rewarding and enriching cultural experience. However, Pontefract remains a well-kept secret both within the Yorkshire region and beyond. Our challenge now is to spread the word to establish Pontefract’s place as a vital part of district’s wider ambitions to become one of Yorkshire’s leading cultural destinations.
2 Pontefract’s Outstanding Historical Assets

Pontefract has an incredible array of historical buildings and important archaeological sites which together tell a powerful story about the development of the town and the important role it has played in the nation’s history.

Pontefract Castle
At the heart of Pontefract’s identity is Pontefract Castle. Considered in medieval times as the ‘Key to the North’, the castle has recently seen a major transformation with significant investment to repair the fabric of the ancient monument including opening up parts of the castle not seen since the Civil War. Investment has also allowed for the creation of a new Visitor Centre, café, museum and learning space, and establishing a popular programme of outdoor events.

Pontefract Museum
Pontefract’s rich history is explored further at Pontefract Museum, situated in the town centre in a beautiful art nouveau building that was originally built in 1904 as a Carnegie Library to house the town’s library. The museum is currently undergoing a major overhaul of its displays, the final stage of significant investment into an improvement programme. These works will allow the museum displays to better tell the story of Pontefract from its pre-history to the development of the liquorice industry and Pontefract’s historic role in holding the first ever secret ballot held in 1872.

Pontefract Library
Pontefract Library was designed by architect John Poulson, and opened in 1975. It is the second busiest library in the district with 15,495 members borrowing over 80,000 books and using 14,363 PC hours. In addition to its detailed local history collection and range of fictional literature the Library Service has a friends group and is currently developing its cultural offer, with regular author talks, readers groups and artist events, and activities for all age groups. Internally, the library is currently being refurbished to give a flexible, modern and vibrant ambiance.

Pontefract Racecourse
Pontefract Racecourse is located close to the northern entrance of the town - just off the M62. The award-winning racecourse attracts over 80,000 visitors to race days from April to October which also includes 3 family Sundays, 3 evening meetings and an annual Ladies Day in August. With a long history - horse racing was first recorded in 1644 - it boasts the longest continuous flat racing course in Europe.

Rosse Observatory
Officially opened by the late Sir Patrick Moore in the 1970s, the team at the Rosse Observatory aim to educate and encourage anyone who has a love for astronomy. The West Yorkshire Astronomical Society provides regular stargazing opportunities.

A further jewel for Pontefract has been regular visits by NASA Astronauts to the town since 2005 which has drawn audiences from all over the UK, Europe and the United States. This is an amazing example of a hidden delight in Pontefract.

St Giles Parish Church and All Saints Church
The unique hexagonal tower of St Giles Parish Church is a recognisable feature in the distinctive Pontefract skyline. The Grade II* listed building located next to the historic Buttercross, is a place of worship and a central hub for local events. In recent years St Giles Parish Church has gone through a significant refurbishment that both retains its historical identity, but now also provides a 21st century space for worship, meeting places, advice centres and community support groups. All Saints Church located close to the Castle dates from around the 1300s and is well known for its remarkable double helix staircase.
3 Pontefract's Annual Outdoor Festivals and Events Programme

Pontefract has great potential for the hosting of major outdoor events. The town centre has an excellent pedestrianised area which is already used by the annual Pontefract Liquorice Festival, specialty markets and the Christmas Lights switch-on event. Pontefract Castle also has an excellent green space for holding events, including ticketed events like the Proms at the Castle.

Pontefract Liquorice Festival

Pontefract Liquorice Festival celebrates the town’s confectionery heritage which was rooted in the growing of liquorice and thought to have been introduced to the area during medieval times. By the 1930s liquorice production was at its peak and the famous Pontefract Cake was shipped across the world. The main producers of liquorice in Pontefract are Tangerine Confectionery, who sponsor the Festival, and Haribo. The festival attracts on average over 40,000 visitors bringing in over £900K to the local economy.

Yorkshire Day

Pontefract is proud of its identity and we have now established Yorkshire Day, on 1 August each year, as our chance to celebrate all things Yorkshire. Celebrations across the town centre include: food and craft stalls, guided walking tours, live entertainment, family activities and Yorkshire-themed games at a range of venues around the town centre and Friarwood Valley Gardens as well as heritage themed activities at the Castle.

Pontefract Castle

The Key to the North project includes developing a programme of events with a regular year-round offer. The improvements in visitor facilities also provide the opportunity to create better links between events at the Castle and those in the town centre. In 2018, there will be an increased focus on linking the two sites more effectively during a weekend of celebrations for the Pontefract Liquorice Festival (July), Heritage Open Days (September) and to look at further developing a Christmas event at the Castle (December).

Farmer Copleys

A few minutes’ drive from Pontefract town centre, Farmer Copleys is becoming an increasingly popular farm attraction. After beginning life as a dairy farm the venue now has a successful farm shop, café and restaurant, and hosts a range of seasonal events including a Corn Maze, Pumpkin Festival and Christmas Lights. The events attract thousands of visitors to the town from many parts of the country.

Pontefract Park

In 2016 and 2017 Pontefract Park hosted the district’s Armed Forces Day celebrations, which included attractions such as parachute displays, police helicopter demonstrations, military vehicles, food stalls and children’s rides and activities.

Lioness Lantern Parade

The annual Lioness Lantern Parade takes place in October each year and involves a procession of handmade lanterns, created at special workshops. The parade travels from Pontefract Castle through the town centre and finishes in Friarwood Valley Gardens.
4  Supporting Tourism

**Visitor Information and Town Centre Maps**

A new Pontefract Visitor Map and Mini Guide were produced in 2017 to promote the main attractions in Pontefract. The leaflet includes an illustrative map produced by a local artist and information highlighting places of interest. The map has proved popular with visitors and local businesses. Based on the map we will be introducing two new visitor map boards in the town centre with a further board at Pontefract Castle, plus three heritage interpretation boards in the town centre.

**Pontefract as a Destination Online**

Pontefract’s heritage offer has also successfully been promoted through the Pontefract Destination pages on the district’s tourism website ‘Experience Wakefield’.

The website enables visitors to easily access information about where to stay, shopping, places to eat and things to see and do. The site offers free business listings to independent retailers, cafés and restaurants and reaches approximately half a million users each year. The Pontefract Destination pages are one of the most popular places to visit on the site.

**Developing the Group Travel Market**

Pontefract Liquorice Festival is increasing in popularity as a destination for the group travel market with an estimated 10 coaches attending the festival last year. The developed offer at Pontefract Castle with improved visitor facilities and a range of pre-bookable talks, tours and workshops for groups provides the town with a hook and a year-round incentive to visit. The Castle and Liquorice Festival were promoted at a group travel industry trade show at the Birmingham NEC. A large number of organisers expressed an interest in finding out more about the area and would consider adding Pontefract as a new destination within their itineraries. However, at the moment, Pontefract has no official coach drop-off in the town centre or parking available to coaches with the exception of the temporary arrangements in place for the Liquorice Festival.

5  2028 Aspirations

Stakeholders will work towards achieving the following:

- To provide better parking and signage across Pontefract, so that a visitor will be guided into the town either by car or public transport, and have a clear idea of their location and proximity to their destination e.g. castle, museum, racecourse, town centre etc. Visitors will be able to easily navigate their way around the town through the provision of visitor information boards.
- A more diverse night time economy with a range of high-quality outlets including restaurants and bars to complement the existing offer. The town centre will be a safe and welcoming place for families.
- A continuous offer of available destinations (cafés & bars) as the day transitions into evening, avoiding the gap currently created by the closing of cafés in the afternoon.
- To have developed a co-ordinated and strategic marketing approach for Pontefract, as part of wider visitor development initiatives to establish the district as one of Yorkshire’s leading cultural destinations, by promoting our exceptional heritage offer to day-trippers and short-stay visitors.
- To attract visitors to Pontefract we need to ensure that we provide a quality welcome. We need to encourage local people to act as ambassadors to provide a positive welcome to all visitors to the town. We will work with wider visitor development initiatives to develop a district wide volunteering programme to meet and greet visitors to Pontefract and to the wider district.
- Build our programme of outdoor festivals and events to attract and inspire more visitors to experience our Pontefract. We will ensure that our events programme makes best use of the whole of Pontefract by ensuring a co-ordinated approach to better connect the town centre, the castle, Pontefract Park and Frierwood Valley Gardens.
- Develop official coach drop off points and coach parking in the town centre to support major events and other opportunities to attract the Group Travel Market.
- Further development of the visitor offer at the castle e.g. opening up access to the Outer Bailey and providing improved car parking facilities.
- Improved footpath access to the Racecourse & improved connections to the town centre.
- A new hotel in Pontefract to accommodate the increased visitor demand. This will be of particular benefit to race-goers who currently come to the town in droves on race days and potentially through the growth of cultural tourism.
- Ideas to be explored for ways to make better use of historic features, such as the Grade II Buttercross.
- The Grade I listed Hermitage will be protected for future generations. This rare historic site lies below Southgate. It is inaccessible and highly sensitive.
- Ongoing support for the Dispensary & Crescent projects and the ambition of securing viable new uses for these historic buildings.
1 Introduction
Pontefract benefits from close proximity to the M62 and A1. It also has three train stations and a bus station. While there have been some improvements in recent years, there are a number of areas that would benefit from changes to ensure that Pontefract is well-connected and therefore easy to get to and to navigate around.
2. Transport Investment

The Northern Link Road
The Northern Link Road - opened in March 2015 following £5.8m funding from the Department for Transport (£4.17m) and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (£1.6m). The road has opened up access to the Prince of Wales development site and connected Monkhill with the M62.

Town End Improvements
The 2016 Town End junction improvement was a £1m scheme funded by the West Yorkshire Local Transport Fund to replace traffic lights with mini roundabouts.

Monkhill Station Improvements
The Monkhill Station upgrade in 2015 comprised £300k for improvements to access, car parking, security, platforms and infrastructure. This was funded by the West Yorkshire Local Transport Fund with £100k from Wakefield Council.

Train Service Improvements
Baghill Station - there will be an increase from two to three daily trains from May 2018
Tanshelf Station - as of December 2017 there is now a train to Leeds every other hour. From May 2018 there will be hourly trains to Leeds on weekdays.
Monkhill - from May 2018 the Leeds - Knottingley train will go alternately via Wakefield Kirkgate & Westgate, and Glasshoughton & Castleford.

3. Forthcoming Projects

Pontefract-Knottingley Connect
Pontefract - Knottingley Connect is a route for cyclists & pedestrians, linking the western part of Pontefract with the eastern part of Knottingley. The route will create a range of important linkages. These include links from the new housing developments on the former Prince of Wales Colliery site to Pontefract town centre and improved cycle and pedestrian access to Tanshelf and Monkhill Railway Stations. There will also be a canal side section at Knottingley. The route will be developed in stages over the next few years.

Colonel’s Walk
The Colonel’s Walk is one section of the Pontefract-Knottingley Connect scheme. It includes the upgrading of an existing path that is in very poor condition and runs between the town centre and the Prince of Wales development site. This will provide a better route for new residents, allowing easy access to shops and services.

4. 2028 Aspirations

Stakeholders will work towards achieving the following:

- The tram-train proposal that would connect Pontefract & the Five Towns with Leeds, Wakefield and the wider rail network is a long-term goal for the town that goes beyond 2028. However, this scheme would radically transform connectivity across the region.
- For all train stations there are shared aims:
  - More frequent rail services to Pontefract Stations.
  - Improved journey times and better connections to regional towns and cities e.g. Doncaster, Huddersfield, Leeds and Lincoln.
  - Better quality stock
  - Improved public realm, lighting and signage.

- Monkhill Station priority improvements:
  - Extended parking provision
  - Disabled access to the second platform
  - A third platform to increase capacity.
  - A local bus service integrated to rail services that suits local needs.
  - Congestion tackled across the road network.
  - A review of narrow roads passing through rail bridges.
  - A review of problem road junctions.
  - A review of cycleway & pedestrian footway provision across Pontefract.
  - The creation of a high quality cycle link between Castleford and Pontefract has been identified as a key corridor for improvement.
  - Progress strategic highway links identified in the Local Plan e.g. the South Featherstone Link Road.
1 Introduction
Pontefract has a vibrant town centre which has been steadily improving in recent years. Initiatives including business support and grant investment have made a significant impact. So while the national High Street retail vacancy rate is c. 12% on average, Pontefract is bucking this trend with just 26 vacant units out of a total of 289 registered business properties at the beginning of 2018 (i.e. less than 10%). Some long-term empty properties have been filled in recent months and there is a healthy interest in the empty units.

The town centre, with a wealth of historic buildings, is most striking. However, the area immediately around the town centre is less appealing. The busy dual carriageways, ugly car parks and areas of poor public realm have a negative impact. There is also a poor sense of arrival into Pontefract and the gateways into the town need to be addressed.
2. The Town Centre Offer

Retail
The town offers a range of retail choice including chain stores, independent shops and established markets. However, in recent years there has been an increase in investment from independent retailers and Pontefract is becoming established as a destination for independent shopping.

The historic town centre is very attractive and offers quirky, individual spaces that lend themselves to independent businesses. This means that the town offers a distinctive retail experience compared with the many high streets that are dominated by chain stores, and out of town retail parks.

Business Support
This investment has been supported by the Council’s Economic Development Team, which has introduced new businesses into Pontefract and helped market traders take the step up to shop tenancies such as Pickering’s Butchers at 2-4 Gillygate.

Pontefract Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)
The Pontefract THI has provided c.£1.5m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund & Wakefield Council in the town centre. Over the past seven years, the THI has supported the repair of over 25 historic buildings, which has transformed the town centre. Neglected buildings are now loved and back in use and the THI has supported the repair of over 25 historic buildings, which has transformed the town centre. Neglected buildings are now loved and back in use and the THI has supported the repair of over 25 historic buildings, which has transformed the town centre. Neglected buildings are now loved and back in use and the THI has supported the repair of over 25 historic buildings, which has transformed the town centre. Neglected buildings are now loved and back in use and the THI has supported the repair of over 25 historic buildings, which has transformed the town centre.

Pontefract Market
The town centre features an excellent indoor market, which was named as the joint winner of the Best Small Indoor Market by the National Association of British Markets in 2015. This prestigious award recognised the high quality service that is provided to thousands of customers each week. This is complemented by a large outdoor market taking place twice a week, and a small specialty market on Fridays. Pontefract has been trading since 1257 and is well known as a quality destination for those seeking a historic market town, and the market helps attract visitors from across the region.

The market also provides a valuable stepping stone, which supports business development.

Pontefract in Bloom
The Pontefract in Bloom team work hard each year to enhance the town centre through floral displays and hanging baskets, which is supported by sponsorship from local businesses and community groups. Fittingly, a memorial created in memory of Brian Chappell, the founder of Pontefract in Bloom stands on Bridge Street.

Town Centre Living
Following recent changes to national planning policy, there has been an increase in town centre living and a number of buildings have undergone refurbishment, such as Micklegate House and King Charles II House which have been converted into apartments, while on lower Gillygate, former long term empty properties have been converted into 15 apartments. The housing market in the town centre will continue to develop, helping to bring more footfall for local businesses both in the daytime and evening.

3. 2028 Aspirations

Stakeholders will work towards achieving the following:

- **Ongoing support & promotion for Pontefract as a town for independent retail**, to enable it to continue to compete with other shopping destinations and internet shopping. This does not mean rejecting the presence of chain stores, but championing Pontefract as a shopping & visitor destination with a strong sense of identity.
- **Explore pedestrianisation of the town centre** e.g. Ropergate.
- The issues raised under Cultural Destination about parking and signage are important issues that need to be tackled for the success of the town centre too.
- **Improvement of gateways into Pontefract town centre**. There is no sense of arrival from the motorway/ dual carriageway network, there are no obvious signs or features to indicate the location of the town centre and the areas immediately around the town centre are typically low-grade and of poor environmental quality.
  - **The Tanshelf Gateway** - this might include a feature building to create an attractive sense of arrival.
  - **King Charles II House Gateway** - the large open area of parking and the walkway into the town centre are in urgent need of improvement.

- **Consolidation of Pontefract town centre area** - tackling the fragmentation that historic planning decisions have created:
  - **Tanshelf intervention area** - as well as providing an attractive gateway into the town centre this area could benefit from investment to deliver town centre living.
  - **Horsefair intervention area** - the reconnection of the town centre and the castle is a priority for the future success of the town. Town centre living continues to be a priority for the area.

- **The Pontefract swimming baths site will become a development opportunity** after the Leisure & Well-Being Hub opens in 2020.
- **Support for town centre living** - for all ages, and in particular for older people who benefit from the close proximity to services.

- **Investment in the markets** to ensure that Pontefract fulfils its potential to become a unique market in the north of England.

- **Environmental improvements along Southgate**, which could become a tree-lined boulevard with shops and business along its frontage.
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1 Introduction
Pontefract has experienced a lot of housing growth in recent years. It is an attractive area with good links to the motorway network, and with prices generally lower than neighbouring areas such as Leeds, it is proving to be very appealing to house-buyers. In addition to the larger development areas (above 80 homes) there are a number of small windfall sites that have been built out across the town.
2. Issues
To avoid Pontefract becoming a dormitory town, where people with good jobs come to live but work elsewhere, a number of factors need to be addressed to ensure that future growth is sustainable:

Housing
There is a need to make sure that housing is provided to suit all needs and not just the private sector market. In the last five years 119 affordable homes have been built in Pontefract.

WDH’s Vision for Housing in Pontefract
WDH’s vision to create confident communities includes investing in more new homes to meet the growing demand in the area. WDH aims to provide affordable, energy efficient, quality homes that people are proud to live in.

This vision also extends to the wider environment where communities live. Working closely with key partners, WDH hopes to further invest in Pontefract to ensure that it becomes not only the vibrant town centre location of choice, but also a place where people want to live for future generations.

Employment & Investment
There is an acknowledged shortage of high-skilled jobs across much of Wakefield district and Pontefract is no exception. However, the Council works closely with businesses to encourage inward investment and there are good examples of businesses relocating to Pontefract such as Milestone Flooring on Southgate.

Apprenticeships
Critical to the success of business is the availability of people with the right skills to match the available job opportunities. One way of tackling this issue is for established businesses to run apprenticeships. Businesses in Pontefract are committed to developing and training their employees. For example Haribo recruit engineering apprentices each summer from local school leavers. These apprentices are supported by qualified engineers and also have the opportunity to work towards a brand new Level 3 qualification in Food Engineering, which is part of the new Trailblazer apprenticeships developed in part by the Haribo team. There are also a wide range of apprenticeships available in a variety of different sectors including ICT, Creative and Media and Construction. This means school and college leavers have a wide of options available to them and Pontefract as an area is making a significant contribution towards the 1.2% increase in apprenticeships the Wakefield district has seen as a whole.

Skills & Qualifications
NEW College is a national leader in further education provision. The Park Lane Campus has been upgraded in recent years and includes a Performance Academy and Learning Resource Centre as well as a new Visual Arts Academy. The sixth form college offers a wide range of courses and attracts students from across the area.

Community Support
There are a range of communities in Pontefract with different needs and support requirements. St. Mary’s Centre in Chequerfield is a Community Anchor and a not-for-profit organisation. The Centre offers a range of activities including adult education courses, community activities and has a wide range of other functions and services. Situated on The Circle, in Chequerfield, it is just a short distance away from Pontefract town centre. Since its ‘rising from the rubble’ on the site of the demolished St. Mary’s Church in 2004, St. Mary’s Community Centre has become a focal point in the regeneration of Chequerfield and neighbouring areas. The Centre and its Manager have been presented with two highly prestigious awards for work in the community. The St. Mary’s Chequerfield Community Project, based at the Centre, have twice received the Duke of York Community Initiative Award for ‘developing a new community spirit in the area’ and for the Centre Manager, a special leadership award for being such an ‘inspirational leadership at the helm’. The awards were presented by Prince Andrew, the Duke of York.

3. 2028 Aspirations
Stakeholders will work towards achieving the following:

- Promotion of Pontefract and its assets to new residents. This will encourage them to see the town centre as the place they come to shop and where they use local services. In some cases better connections to the town centre for residents may be required.
- Provision of relevant services to meet the needs of the growing population e.g. primary schools, doctors etc. as required through the planning process.
- Continued work to attract inward investment to Pontefract, attracting high-skilled jobs to the area. This may encourage young people to return to the town following university.
- Increase in apprenticeships and skills development to further support the skilled jobs sector.
- Ongoing support for the St Mary’s Centre as a community anchor and encourage sustainable growth of the skills and training that it offers.
- Explore options for creating activities for young people.
1 Introduction
There are significant health inequalities between the most and least affluent parts of Pontefract. Men in the least affluent parts of Pontefract live on average 4.3 years less than those in the more affluent areas, while women in the least affluent areas live on average 5.9 years less than those in the most affluent parts of the town. People living in Pontefract are also significantly more likely to die of cancer and respiratory diseases than people in England as a whole.

In order to tackle these health issues a need has been identified to improve the health of the population as a whole; while improving the health of the poorest fastest. One way to contribute to this goal would be to help both adults and children to become more active and take up healthy lifestyles. The proposed Leisure & Wellbeing Hub is expected to play an important role in achieving this, as are the many parks and green spaces that Pontefract benefits from.

The mental health benefits of being active out in the fresh air and spending time in green spaces is well documented, as is the benefit of volunteering in your local community. There are a number of active friends groups in Pontefract that are working hard to transform local parks which could always make use of an extra pair of hands.
2. Pontefract’s Leisure Assets

Leisure & Wellbeing Hub
The Leisure Hub is to be built at the southern end of Pontefract Park and is expected to be completed in 2020. It will include the following facilities: two swimming pools, 120-station state-of-the-art Gym, two fitness studios, a 36 pitch, Clip and Climb, as well as a public cafe for park and facility users and associated toilet facilities, and a variety of small interview / meeting rooms which will be available for hire.

As the name suggests the Leisure & Wellbeing Hub will act as a focal point for health and wellbeing for the east of the district, but it will also sign-post to other organisations and activities in the area. It will provide much needed facilities for visitors to Pontefract Park.

Pontefract Squash & Leisure Club
With an international reputation, it was voted Squash Club of the year 2015–16 and recently hosted a European Championships and an international open event. The club has undergone extensive refurbishment and facilities include courts for badminton, squash and racketball, as well as a fitness gym and studio space for dance classes.

Health Walks
The Council runs health walks from Chequerfield and soon from Pontefract Library too. Nordic Walking takes place weekly in Pontefract Park.

Allotments
There is evidence to show that allotments can promote healthy eating by improving people’s access to affordable healthy food options. Pontefract is in the fortunate position of having nine allotment sites spread across the area. There is evidence to show that allotments can promote healthy eating by improving people’s access to affordable healthy food options. Pontefract is in the fortunate position of having nine allotment sites spread across the area.

Parks in Pontefract
There is a wealth of parks in Pontefract, each one providing a valuable resource for local neighbourhoods. The larger parks are visitor attractions in their own right, and with improved facilities could also contribute to making Pontefract an attractive destination.

Unfortunately, an ongoing problem for parks is vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Cuts to the public purse are also causing problems as community groups strive to fill the gap that has been left by shrinking public services. Whilst valiant efforts are being made, there is still a shortage of willing and able volunteers to support an increasing number of friends groups.

Pontefract Park
Pontefract Park is a large green open space, and home to Pontefract Racecourse, a lake, a children’s playground and other facilities. The Park holds around 20 events each year including family fun days and fun fairs. The north section of the park called ‘Pontefract Park North’ is designated as a Local Nature Reserve, offering a range of habitats including grassland, woodland a lake and wetland.

The Friends of Pontefract Park meet regularly and are working to improve seating in the park and have secured funding for a number of benches and picnic tables. Fundraising efforts continue for additional seating. The priority of the Friends group is the refurbishment of the children’s playground for young children and an adventure area for older children and teenagers, plus a skate park. Additional aims are to upgrade the two mile track that runs around the inside of the racecourse to be buggy and wheelchair-friendly and improved access to the park from the Prince of Wales development.

The Council is spending £15k of capital funding on a family trail around Pontefract Park, based on its history as a deer park for the castle. It will have wooden sculptures like those at the Room on the Broom trails at Anglers Country Park and is expected to be completed in 2019.

Friarwood Valley Gardens
This is a Grade II listed park and garden. The Friends of Friarwood Valley Gardens formed in 2012 and have achieved a great deal since then including:

- Entrance signs to the gardens
- A community survey to find out users priorities
- Restoration of the sensory garden with a grant from Yorkshire Gardens Trust
- Restoration of the Rose Garden including the replanting of 31 rose beds and 2000 new rose bushes
- A new children’s playground with a grant from WREN & WMDC
- 15 new benches and 5 new picnic tables & information boards.
- Renovation of the former aviary and conversion to a pinhole camera with funding from WDH.
- Re-installation of an outdoor stage with a Tesco Bags of Help funding.

The friends facilitate events in the park as part of the Liquorice Festival, Yorkshire Day and the Lantern Festival. They also run an annual Easter Egg hunt. Future events will include the Friarwood Festival, which will give local music artists the chance to perform in the gardens. Funding has been secured for a sound system.

Future aims include renovation of paths, walls, gates and railings and enhancement of the entrances to the Valley Gardens. There are also exciting plans to develop the pinhole camera into a camera obscura which would be a great visitor attraction for the town.

Pease Park
Pease Park had a new equipped play space in 2012. The Friends group aim to further develop, promote, enhance and protect Pease Park as a place of recreation and enjoyment for all the local community. The group also holds open days and runs galas in the park.

3. 2028 Aspirations
Stakeholders will work towards achieving the following:

- A reduction in health inequalities for all sectors of the population of Pontefract, by creating a more active local population that is taking part in informal and formal activity.
- A new management plan for Pontefract Park,
- To complement the offer of the Leisure Hub.
- Opportunities for volunteers,
- Supporting mental health well-being. Active volunteers supporting the various friends group that are the life-blood for so many green spaces in Pontefract. Creation of a new Friends Group for the Cemetery.
- A review of provision of support for volunteer groups.
- The development of walking trails in selected green spaces or even connecting green spaces.
- Ensure adequate and appropriate recreational provision is planned for in all residential developments.
- Enhance biodiversity habitats by increasing the number of green connections/corridors across Pontefract.
- Delivery of the local biodiversity plan aim to plant 0.25ha native woodland in Pontefract Park.
- Increased provision of dedicated cycleways and pedestrian footpaths.
- Address the shortage of equipped play space in Pontefract South Ward.
Pontefract Champions

There are numerous pro-active people who are working in businesses, organisations and voluntary groups to make Pontefract a better place to live, work and visit. These Pontefract Champions all deserve our thanks for their hard work and their commitment to the town and its future.

The following four Pontefract Champions have shared their views on Pontefract and its future.

Sue Willoughby
Business Owner - Suzie’s Boutique

1. What is your connection with Pontefract?
   Pontefract born and bred.

2. What do you like best about Pontefract?
   Historic market town status.

3. If you had a magic wand - what would you change about Pontefract?
   I would go back to the 70s & early 80s when Pontefract was a thriving market town with a vibrant nightlife.

4. What is your vision of Pontefract in 2028?
   Hopefully we will have created a historic, cultural town that is bright and welcoming for tourists, plus a busy accessible town centre.

Karen Morley
Business Owner - Southgate Kitchen & Bathroom Studio, The Shoe Room, Hark Interiors and 1902 Ladies Wear

1. What is your connection with Pontefract?
   I have lived here for 24 Years, I’m originally from Leeds.

2. What do you like best about Pontefract?
   Market town, friendly people plus the vast amount of history connected with the town.

3. If you had a magic wand - what would you change about Pontefract?
   I’d like to take it back to quirky little independent shops with a bustling market (yes that’s two wishes!).

4. What is your vision of Pontefract in 2028?
   As above: Ropergate pedestrianised, people coming from far and wide to visit our shops and the castle and other heritage buildings being tourist attractions.

Steve Dibb
Director & Solicitor Advocate, Care Department Switalskis Solicitors

1. What is your connection with Pontefract?
   I have historical family connections to Tanshelf and Chequerfield through my late grandparents - both sides being in the mines. I have many childhood memories of the town. It was fantastic for me when we had the opportunity to extend our business into Pontefract. I am proud to be the Director responsible for our branch here bringing our truly Yorkshire firm to a truly Yorkshire town.

2. What do you like best about Pontefract?
   I like the town’s history, warmth, honesty and also its massive potential.

3. If you had a magic wand - what would you change about Pontefract?
   I would take inspiration from the historical hill-top towns of France and Italy. I truly believe, Pontefract can offer that and so much more and has so much potential to be a tourist destination. I would maximise the transport links, pedestrianise much more of the town centre to create a better flow between the town centre and the castle and within the historical areas of the town centre itself. In turn there would be ample parking/park and ride. There would be no empty retail units, instead they would be filled with varied independent retailers, pavement cafes, pop-up galleries etc.

4. What is your vision of Pontefract in 2028?
   See 3 above! At least a clearer direction and step towards obtaining approval, funding and an agreed plan. Facilitated with more aggressive action in relation to absent landlords and empty units, and then replacing unsympathetic architecture (i.e. KC2 House, Horsefair Flats, the Library etc.) and creating sympathetic spaces in the town centre.

Chris Pennock
Business Owner - Pomfret Gallery

1. What is your connection with Pontefract?
   My real connection with Pontefract started when my parents had the Elephant Hotel public house in the 70s. This is where I developed a keen sense of community and where I developed my love of Pontefract through my paintings. Later in 1987 against my accountant’s advice, I opened my dream shop, Pomfret Gallery over 30 years ago at the age of 27. I really believed I could run a successful gallery and framing business and it looks like I proved them wrong. I really believe in following your dreams.

2. What do you like best about Pontefract?
   What I like best about Pontefract is its diversity of quirky buildings and shops. The castle is very important as is our liquorice heritage. Pontefract is also in an amazing position for the motorway networks and visitors.

3. If you had a magic wand - what would you change about Pontefract?
   As a business man, I would try to involve and encourage those people starting out with a dream and give them a fighting chance to start their businesses. They are our future.

   This might include subsidies on shop rates, talking with landlords to help encourage future growth i.e. shorter leases. As all out of town retail outlets have their own free parking, I would like to see some free parking in the direct town centre, maybe on a disc zone basis as in many North Yorkshire towns. This will encourage people to visit our shops.

4. What is your vision of Pontefract in 2028?
   My vision is a Pontefract with more individual shops with a bustling market (yes that’s two wishes!).

   As above: Ropergate pedestrianised, people coming from far and wide to visit our shops and the castle and other heritage buildings being tourist attractions.

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