

Culcheth Life

Magazine

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Gearing up for BMX World Championships

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Editor's Comment



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THERE was a huge collective sigh of relief in the local area following the government's decision to scrap the controversial Golborne Link from the HS2 proposals.

The local area was going to feel all of the pain with none of the gain if the proposed High-Speed rail went through the area, destroying homes and businesses.

I was surprised (well may be not) to see rail enthusiasts bombarding those objecting to the proposals as being NIMBY - well if being NIMBY means opposing something that is going to destroy my home, my business or in some cases both - long live being a NIMBY.

Congratulations to all those in the local community who fought a long hard campaign opposing the Golborne Link, which I believe would have had a devastating impact on our community.

For those who want to call me a NIMBY - feel free - I will wear it as a badge of honour.

It was also good to see the town's two MPs, Charlotte Nichols, who represents the Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft areas, and Andy Carter in the South, representing those who would have been impacted at Lymm, showing a united front on this issue.

Indeed, it was also good to see them representing their constituencies at Civic Sunday recently showing support for the town's new Mayor, Cllr. Jean Flaherty.

I think it is really important that

local politicians, whether on the parish, borough or in Parliament should put political differences aside when tackling local issues - and long may it continue.

It is an impossible task to please all of the people all of the time on any issue, so it is important to put on a united front on the big issues that affect our local communities.

Meanwhile elsewhere in the country there will still be many thousands of people and businesses severely impacted by the HS2 project.

While I am all for improving public transport and the need to get traffic off our roads and improve the environment, I still question

whether HS2 is the right investment.

Many of our existing rail networks and stations need investment to encourage greater use - and let's face it until a Government is brave enough to put a super tax on car ownership our highways will remain congested.

The cost of fuel at £100 to fill up the average saloon, doesn't appear to making much difference to traffic levels while travelling around Warrington!

Finally, a quick mention to the Friends of the Raven Inn campaign group - it was fantastic to see the premises in use during the Jubilee celebrations - and I can't wait to sample my first pint in the premises, hopefully later this year!

Keep up the great work!



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Young BMX champion gearing up for World Championships in France

A NINE-YEAR-OLD BMX champion from Culcheth is gearing up for his most exciting achievement – after being selected to compete in the BMX World Championships in Nantes, France.

James started his hobby when he was just 5-years-old and started racing in December 2020. Since he started he's come a long way, ranking regional number 3 at the

end of his first season and ranking number 1 currently this season -although he's only halfway through so far!

Proud mum Helen said: "James won his first National race in Scotland last month and has been racing nationally for his first season this year and is currently ranked 2nd, with 4 more races to go this summer.

His most exciting achievement is being selected to race at the BMX World Championships in Nantes, France this July which he is

"training very hard for."

Bents Garden and Home are one of James' kind sponsors and have supplied him with a new race helmet for the 2022 race season.

He is a year 4 pupil at Twiss Green Primary school in Culcheth.

Helen added: "His dad is a keen mountain biker and took James to Mid Lancs BMX club in Chorley, now his home track and club, when he was 5 to see what he thought of it and the love grew from there really."



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Circus Starr entertain children with special needs

CIRCUS Starr was back in town providing accessible and inclusive shows for local children with disabilities and additional learning needs with a big top performance at Culcheth.

Circus Starr, or "the circus with a purpose", put on a special show at Culcheth Athletic Junior Football Club free of charge for youngsters with special needs.

The community interest company's events are funded by local businesses, meaning that families can enjoy live arts in a relaxed environment at no cost.

Fundraising director Michelle

Crossley is thrilled to return with the traditional set-up after an absence of over two years caused by the pandemic.

Each year Circus Starr visits 74 communities and perform two magical shows!

They bring all the fun of the circus to children and families that may have found this difficult in the past. They know that a circus is a family

event that brings everyone closer, encourages creativity and allows people to become stronger and more able to face life's challenges head on. They tour the UK bringing the very best in circus talent from around the world and stage 148 incredible, animal-free shows every year.

They perform for Children with disabilities, families on low incomes, those facing challenges such as domestic violence, bereavement or who may be living with a life-limiting condition. Every child, whoever they are, is free to be themselves at a Circus Starr Show.

Pictures: John Hopkins



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Bents raise a toast to colleagues with 10 plus years service

BENTS Garden & Home at Glazebury, has this year celebrated its 10+ Club – a club which welcomes colleagues with 10 or more years’ service at the garden centre.

Since it was launched in 2003, the club has had a combined length of service totaling 1196 years with initial numbers totaling 14, the 10+ Club has continued to grow with 97 members, 69 still working within the Centre and a further 28 retired colleagues.

Sixty-three current members recently joined the Bents’ family and senior management for a special three-course thank you meal and fizz reception, held in the Centre’s Fresh Approach Restaurant. This year’s event also recognised two of Bents’ longest serving members; Ray Smith from Maintenance who has been part of the Bents family of colleagues for 45 years and Michael Seddon our Senior Retail Sales Associate for 40 years.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home said: “We have an excellent team throughout the Centre, many of whom have been with us for a number of years, as demonstrated by the incredible combined length of service total. We were blown away when we worked it out to be 1196 years!

“And we continue to welcome new members with six colleagues joining this year, all of whom joined us in the Fresh Approach Restaurant for our annual celebration. It is a

great way to recognise long-term commitment and we look forward to welcoming even more new members in the years to come.”

Other highlights from this year’s event recognised Bents’ oldest member of the 10+ Club still working at the Centre at 77 and its youngest member at 29 years old.

Kristen, member of the 10+club, added: “So much has happened at Bents in the time I have been here. The business has grown and developed so much but the care and attention they give to colleagues has always remained the same. The dinner is a great opportunity to get together and talk about things that have taken place and generally have a catch up with good friends.”

In addition to Bents’ usual colleague benefits such as birthday vouchers, birthday day off, pension scheme and Benidorm leave, members of the 10+ Club also receive additional holidays and an annual gift such as hotel vouchers every year.

The club also includes retired colleagues who were original members, many of whom continue to attend the annual dinner. The lavish three-course meal was all handcrafted and homemade by Bents’ in-house brigade of chefs.



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Controversial HS2 Golborne Link set to be scrapped

THE controversial HS2 Golborne Link, which was set to have a major impact on parts of Warrington including, Culcheth, Glazebury, Croft and Lymm, is set to be scrapped.

Transport Minister Andrew Stephenson has announced the proposal it a letter which has been welcomed by Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols, Warrington South MP Andy Carter and local borough councillors at Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft.

In his letter, the Transport Minister said Sir Peter Hendry's independent union connectivity review stated the Golborne Link did not resolve all the current constraints between Crewe and Preston and recommended the Government consider alternative options.

As a result, the Government intends to remove the Golborne Link and take time to consider the most effective way to find the right balance between delivering the benefits, improving journey times, controlling costs and understanding the deliverability of alternatives.

Commenting on the letter Warrington South MP Andy Carter MP said: "This is movement in the right direction. Since before being elected I've campaigned to have the Golborne Spur removed from the HS2 plan so the announcement that Government will table their own amendment is really good news, it demonstrates Government is listening.

"I know it has been difficult for people living along the route of the Spur and the sooner we can lift all safeguarding the better so that families can get on with their lives. Better links through Warrington Town Centre, with a new high-speed route east to west are needed along with improved bus services, that's my priority in line with the wishes of local people."

Meanwhile, local councillors at Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft, the areas, most impacted are delighted with the news.

Cllr Carol Benson said: "The negative impacts the Golborne link would have had on our affected Wards were well understood by everyone. Loss of many beautiful open spaces such as the Covey fishing lake at Partridge Lakes, Culcheth (pictured). Our residents would not have seen any benefit at all of the Golborne link as the trains would not have been accessible locally. After several years of Lobbying from our Warrington South MP, Andy Carter, local activists, and our own action groups, CADRAG with Frank Allen and more recently CLAG, who have all worked hard to raise the profile of this pointless Link, we can at last start to believe our voices

have been heard.

"Many meetings have been held, information events and even a Teams meeting facilitated by Andy Carter between Cllr Kath Buckley, Cllr Carol Benson and The House of Commons which was very helpful. We are promised that safeguarding of land and property along the existing route will be maintained, whilst alternative options are considered. We truly welcome this good news and its massive victory for common sense."

Cllr Valerie Allen added: "I am absolutely delighted at this announcement and for the residents of Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft who along with Cllr Benson, Cllr Maisey and I have argued against

this from day one. It would have had done untold damage to wildlife and the greenbelt and effectively cut two villages in half"

Cllr Wendy Maisey added: "This is the long awaited news we've been looking forward to and proof that the Government is listening to the residents of Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft. As the former Parliamentary Candidate for Warrington North I fought the GE19 election on a pledge to oppose the Golborne Link, and have kept that promise. When I met and spoke with the HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson in May, again he was made very aware of the environmental disaster that is the Golborne Link."



Cllr Carol Benson, Cllr Valerie Allen and Cllr Wendy Maisey.

Campaign Chair welcomes "momentous decision" to scrap HS2 Golborne Link

THE Chair of the Culcheth & District Rail Group (CADRAG) has welcomed the "momentous decision" to scrap the controversial HS2 Golborne Link and thanked those who have supported the campaign that started in 2013.

Frank Allen, Chair of CADRAG, who helped set up the campaign group opposing the HS2 Golborne Link, said: "The news that the Golborne Link is to be removed from the HS2 Hybrid Bill currently before Parliament is very welcome indeed.

"The local community has been campaigning for this since 2013 and many people's lives have been affected by the proposal and its

impact. To see the announcement that it will be removed from the plans will be a huge relief to a large number of local people.

"As Chair of CADRAG, I have been involved in the campaign from the outset and I would like to thank the wonderful local people who have supported CADRAG in all sorts of ways, in helping with the campaign, delivering leaflets, raising money, collecting signatures, writing to MPs, and responding to consultations, over the nine years this has taken.

"The campaign has been well supported by our local MPs and Councillors and they deserve special thanks for their efforts, in

many cases over a number of years. Thank you also to the dedicated CADRAG committee members who have also provided a huge amount of effort and encouragement over that time. And of course many thanks for the ongoing support we have had from "Culcheth Life" and "Warrington-Worldwide".

"We do need to remain alert as the Golborne Link may be removed from the current plans but we do not yet know what alternative will be proposed.

"However, I hope we can all at least breathe a sigh of relief and relax following this momentous decision."



Charlotte Nichols MP

Warrington North

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Sisters celebrate scrapping of HS2 Golborne link

TWO sisters from Culcheth, who feared for the futures of their neighbouring businesses are celebrating following the latest update from HS2.

Holly Pirrie & Barbara Ikin both run businesses that were set to be heavily affected by the proposed HS2 trainline however, they have breathed a sigh of relief with the news that the Government intends to remove the Golborne Link from the High Speed Rail Bill.

The sisters were just two of many that stood to be affected by the works. Based on Glaziers Lane, the sisters may work next door to each other but they have very different careers!

Barbara leads Partridge Lakes Fishery and Lakeside Café. Often described as a hidden gem, the business is a local beauty spot and central to the Culcheth and Croft Communities. The café offers lakeside views and is a regular host of community events & fundraisers; whilst the fishery offers the ideal location to enjoy the sport and wildlife.

Barbara said: "Reflecting on the last five years, we're very grateful that the business has grown from strength to strength. We now have nearly 40 employees from the local community at the lake and this news means that we can continue to focus on the future."

"As a business owner, it goes against the grain to be told to effectively pause and not re-invest, this is now wonderful news for our plans and growth. I am so excited for the short and long term future."

Next door at The Warehouse Studios, Holly runs The Dress Studio

& Pageant Girl. Holly organises nationwide pageants including Miss Teen Great Britain, and The Dress Studio is a prom dress superstore, which attracts customers from across the UK to the area.

Holly added: "We are still finding it hard to believe that we finally have some good news. Like many, this has been a weight on our shoulders. We have spent hours reviewing the plans, challenging them and it has felt like years of ongoing meetings and reports. It was clear from the plans that the construction and development would have had a devastating impact to Culcheth and Croft, the news is brilliant for everyone in the area."

Holly is now hopeful her sister will host a party at the lakes for the community to celebrate.... Watch this space!





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- You can still sow crops such as carrots, turnips and fast maturing salad crops
- Remember to sit down and enjoy what you have created - an ideal time to relax with friends, a glass of wine and a barbecue!

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Jubilee beacon and parties celebrate Queen's 70 years on the throne

A Jubilee Beacon at Southworth Farm Croft was one of many lit up across Warrington and the country to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The picture (right) by Adam Neale of ADM942 Photography at Southworth Hall Farm was part of the Jubilee celebrations organised by Croft Parish Council.

Parish Council Chairman Cllr Paul Campbell said: "Proud to take part as Parish Council Chairman at the Jubilee Beacon Lighting in Croft. Many thanks to everyone who came and who helped to celebrate this little piece of history."

Meanwhile jubilee celebrations took place across the local area.

One of those celebrating with his

family and dressed for the occasion was little Vincent Caple.

Vincent aged three is pictured in his Silvercross pram which is now over sixty years old.

The pram was decorated for the occasion while Vincent was dressed for the Trooping of the Colour by his grandmother Debby Hughes of Wellfield Road, Culcheth.

Meanwhile Culcheth residents didn't let the rain dampen their spirits as they moved their "picnic in the Park" event across the road to Newchurch Parish Hall.



Jubilee celebrations see historic Raven Inn the busiest it has been for years

FRIENDS of the Raven Inn opened the doors for an "ungrand opening" over the Jubilee weekend to say thank you to all the people who have been giving up time to help renovate the historic building which has been saved from demolition.

The pub which the community campaigned to save was made safe and welcoming for those people who have devoted a lot of time and worked very hard.

The youngest reveller was one-year-old, the oldest 95-years young- not a bad community representation.

A good number of people remarked that it was the busiest they have seen the Raven in years. It was also time for the workers to take in the Raven as a future hostelry as opposed to a building site. Lots of good ideas

surfaced, amongst the merriment.

Anyone passing cannot have failed to be struck by the recently painted, jubilee 'Union Jack' front door.

One of the Raven's many supporters Sarah Jane Reed Peasant commented, "After seeing all of the jubilee fun across the country I spoke to my friend Clint who is a brilliant decorator in Culcheth (Spectrum Painting) and asked him if he'd be up for doing something a little fun for the Raven to celebrate the occasion by painting the Union Jack on the door. Of course he said yes and volunteered his time to the cause."

"The Raven being saved has brought happiness to so many locals and hopefully the bright patriotic front door will bring a smile to everyone who passes it"



Volunteers wanted for Ukrainian family support hub

VOLUNTEERS are wanted to help run a Ukrainian family support hub at Culcheth Sports Club for families arriving in Warrington from the war-torn country.

There are currently around 10 Ukrainian families in the Culcheth area, with more on the way and at least 50 families now in Warrington.

Volunteers are required to assist with a number of projects, on a

Sunday to help set up and organise refreshments, organisation, and to entertain children.

The support hub has a play and toy area, teenage playstation area, outside play area, information area, school uniform and book

resource area and an events and hobbies area – informing people of local activities, etc.

For older children and teenagers there are sports activities a welcome and starter packs/children gift table, fundraising and discounts.

Monthly events are also being planned while also getting local businesses involved and organising drop-ins including beautician, job

centre support etc.

One of the organisers Kate McCarthy-Booth said: "It is a great opportunity to support the local new families. The first night was very successful for the education lessons and we hope other events will be just as popular.

Anyone interested in volunteering can email kate@mcCarthyrecruitment.com



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Power firms slammed over “unacceptable service” in response to Storm Arwen

POWER companies have been slammed by energy watchdog Ofgem over an “unacceptable service” in response to Storm Arwen last November, which saw nearly one million homes cut off, including villagers at Croft.

Three network operators – Northern Powergrid, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks and Electricity North West – have paid nearly £30 million in compensation to affected customers and agreed to pay another £10.3 million in “redress payments”.

Storm Arwen saw nearly one million homes in Britain lose power in November 2021, with nearly 4,000 homes having to cope in appalling conditions without power for over a week. Villagers in Croft were left without power for several days.

Ofgem has today published its findings following a six-month review launched in December 2021 to establish what went wrong and what industry needs to change to provide a more effective response to severe weather events.

The review focussed on whether the power outages could have been prevented, whether correct and timely information was given to customers affected, whether power was restored quickly enough and how customers were supported after the storm including the processing of compensation payments.

Staff in all affected DNOs worked hard in challenging circumstances to get customers reconnected, but Ofgem concludes that thousands of customers were provided with an unacceptable service. This report builds on the initial findings in the interim report and sets out clear recommendations for improvement.

The main findings of the review are:

1. Some affected customers remained off power for an unacceptable amount of time, received poor communication from their network operator and compensation payments took too long.

2. Whilst companies initiated their emergency plans before the storm hit, the plans were not sufficient to deal with the scale of damage that resulted from Storm Arwen.

3. One DNO, Northern Powergrid (NPG), did not directly contact vulnerable customers enrolled on its Priority Services Register (PSR) prior to Storm Arwen. This should have been carried out as part of its planned winter preparedness campaign.

4. NPG accepted the performance of its call centre fell below the standards it should have been able to meet during a severe storm. This could be a potential breach to licence condition, SLC 8.3(b) & (c), which relates to the availability and operation of their call centre.

5. Limited remote monitoring on the lower voltage networks hindered DNOs from understanding the full scale and complexity of faults, impacting the number of resources they initially deployed to undertake repairs, restore power and support customers.

6. Most network faults during Storm Arwen were caused by strong winds or trees and branches falling onto power lines. Ofgem additionally found some correlation

between poles that were damaged and their age, although this needs further investigation.

7. Customer research and stakeholder feedback told Ofgem that many customers had to endure a very long wait to have their power restored, had to deal with poor and sometimes inaccurate communications with the network operator, and had to endure long delays in receiving compensation, which is not acceptable.

8. 28% of customers were given a restoration time that was not within 24 hours of their actual restoration time, and some affected customers did not think that the support available was made clear to them.

In recognition of this, three DNOs – NPG, SSEN and ENWL – paid nearly £30 million in direct compensation to affected customers after the storms. These network operators have agreed that they will pay a further £10.3 million in voluntary redress payments to the affected communities through contributions to community funds and in donations to vulnerability support charities. Progress against recommendations will be tracked and Ofgem will act as necessary to ensure compliance.

Jonathan Brearley, chief executive of Ofgem, said: “Distribution network companies faced challenging conditions in the aftermath of Storm Arwen, and I pay tribute to the many colleagues in those companies who supported customers and worked to get them back on power as quickly as possible. However, it was unacceptable that nearly 4,000 homes in parts of England and Scotland were off power for over a week, often without accurate information as to when power would be restored.

“Network companies need to do better, not just to prevent power disruptions, but to ensure that when power is off, they work smarter to get people back on power quicker, and keep customers informed with accurate and timely information. This is the very least customers should be able to expect.

“The frequency of extreme weather events is only set to increase so it is really important that industry, and those involved more widely, learn from Storm Arwen to better respond in future.”

The key recommendations are:

1. DNOs should submit their winter preparedness plans to Ofgem so the regulator can be assured that DNOs have taken the necessary steps to ensure that all customers, especially vulnerable customers, can be supported effectively during power disruptions.

2. DNOs should stress test their websites and call centres to ensure adequate capacity during severe weather events. Additional reporting metrics for communication channels will fit within the next RIIO-ED2 price control settlement that will be determined this year.

3. DNOs to develop more robust mechanisms to enable the delivery



of compensation payments at scale, enabling timely and accurate compensation to those eligible.

4. Ofgem will review the Guaranteed Standard of Performance (GSoP) for severe weather to identify amendments that should be made to better reflect the impact of extended power cuts. And in the meantime, we recommend DNOs should voluntarily lift the cap for future storms as they did during Storm Arwen.

5. Current network infrastructure and guidance including vegetation

management and overhead line designs should be reviewed to increase network resilience to severe weather events.

6. A standard-based approach to organisational resilience should be considered by E3C to improve the speed of customer restoration during severe weather events. It is noted that current standards and guidance that support the DNOs in providing a reliable network are more focussed on preventing outages rather than how to respond during a power outage.

Croft WI enlightened by the interesting world of a Private Investigator

THE exciting and surprisingly humorous world of private investigation was the subject of the talk given to members of Croft WI by former private detective George Hughes.

After leaving the Guards Regiment of the army, he started work as a driver for a private detection agency in Liverpool and, after observing the detectives at work, decided that was the career for him.

After lengthy training, he eventually graduated to become a private detective.

George related the history of private investigation, which was started by a British man named Alan Pinkerton, a Cooper by trade, who in 1875 emigrated to the U.S.A. and founded the famous “Pinkerton Agency”.

The capture of many of the outlaws of the old west such as Jesse James and Butch Cassidy were instigated by the Pinkerton Agency and the company is still in operation to this day.

Surveillance is just one part of private investigation, involving many hours of sitting in a vehicle, and the golden rule is to take along plenty of snack food, but not drinks, as “nipping to the loo” is not an option.

The reality of surveillance bears no resemblance to its portrayal in films etc., where there is always a parking space available just opposite the suspect, rarely the case in true life.

On one occasion George and his partner had been watching a house for a long time and were very hungry, so bought some fish and chips. They were just enjoying their treat when the “suspect” came

out of the house, they immediately threw away their meal, only to find out later that they had been following the wrong person and had discarded their food for nothing!

Visiting night clubs was often part of George’s work and he told of his early naivety in the job when he had to sign in to a club in order to follow a suspect, but left his pen at the reception desk.

One of the “bouncers” duly returned it to him and to his dismay George realised it had the name of the agency he worked for advertised in bold lettering on the pen!

Another case involved a locksmith having to drill out the lock on a front door which took at least an hour, a neighbour came along and said “Oh the local kids could have picked that lock in 5 minutes!”

A further element of the work includes door to door enquiries, where apparently women are much more cautious than men when giving information, a fact to which WI ladies totally agreed.

Liaising with overseas operatives, the nuances of giving evidence in court all these subjects were part of the talk and George concluded by saying that every day was a challenge and having an understanding wife or partner was an absolute must, as popping out for a couple of hours could mean returning the next day!

Deputy President Gill Coon thanked the speaker for a very interesting, enlightening and enjoyable evening.

The competition was won by Sheila Glass 2nd Jill Hillam 3rd Anne Geraghty.

Friends of Raven Inn aiming high



THE friends of the Raven Inn at Glazebury have been heartened by the community's response to the saving of the historic pub and are now aiming high with their fund-raising campaign.

Many people have rallied around, working on the Raven and its grounds and also offering help, support and ideas.

Campaign spokesperson Peter Sturnam said: "It was always intended that the Raven would become a community pub. It has happened well before the doors are open!"

Now The Friends of the Raven have been contacted by Jonathan Fenney, of Conquer Hiking and Trekking, based in Glazebury. Conquer Hiking organise walks, treks and outdoor challenges around the UK and across the world. From steady walks around Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire to the Yorkshire 3 Peaks, from the National 3 Peaks to Everest Base Camp.

They state, "We have something for everybody with a very experienced and qualified team to support each event. Being based in the local community we were well aware of the plight of The Raven Inn and the magnificent efforts of those who managed to save the historic building so we wanted to try and help out in some way. We put forward our idea of arranging a challenge event to raise invaluable funds and the idea of a Snowdon challenge came to fruition.

Now, on Saturday 24th September 2022, a group of participants will be attempting to summit Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales, with the guidance and support of the Conquer Hiking and Trekking team.

Carol Watson, from the Friends of the Raven Inn group, commented, "It's amazing how people have responded to the Raven being saved. This is a wonderful initiative from Jonathan. As well as raising funds it will be a fun challenge that will be professionally organised and supervised. We hope a good number of people will want to become involved"

Anyone interested in taking part is asked to contact: jonathan.fenney@conquerhiking.com

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