

Press release 2024

The region's foremost traditional festival, the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering, is back from Friday 5th to Sunday 7th April - the usual weekend after Easter – in the historic county town that nestles in the loop of the River Wansbeck. The 56th annual celebration of the NE's folk music, song, craft, dance, dialect, drama, stories, heritage and have-a-go workshops takes place across the town's indoor and outdoor spaces including the medieval castle, the Chantry bridge chapel, the park, the central Market Place and the hub of the event, Morpeth Town Hall.

There's a huge range of events from have-a-go music, craft and dance workshops, through street shows, storytelling and dialect sessions, to an evening Barn Dance with the Blue Hat Ceilidh Band and a teatime Family Ceilidh with the Storytellers Street Band. From the very first Gathering in 1968 the voluntary organisers have run competitions for singing, musical instruments, reciting and crafts as well as concerts to showcase the winning performers and guest artists. This year's Friday evening features young ensemble Folkestra from The Glasshouse (formerly Sage Gateshead) with their leader, ace Northumbrian piper Andy May, along with gifted folk singers Anne Lamb and Graham Bell, while Saturday's evening concert of 2023's winners is headlined by highly respected NE singer Benny Graham. Other events take this year's "Fairies, Faas and Folktales" theme – faas were the Border Gypsies renowned for their musical skills, and one of them being remembered by performers Chris Ormston and Matt Seattle is the legendary piper Jamie Allan, whose pipes can still be seen in the Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum.

It's still not been plain sailing for preparing live events after the impact of the pandemic with funding, venue and staffing challenges, but the organisers and the town are looking forward to seeing old and new friends in April. Full details are on www.northumbriana.org.uk with updates on Facebook. People can call in for advance tickets at Morpeth Chantry TIC, 01670 623455, or visit the Town Hall during the festival itself for tickets and programmes. Queries to 01670 513308 or kim@northumbriana.org.uk