

It's a splashing idea

» JOANNE BUTCHER

SHOT stopper Steve Harper is keeping fit – by diving into a charity challenge.

The Toon goalie is joining hundreds of folk across the region to swim a mile for the Percy Hedley Foundation.

The challenge is the brainchild of a Tyneside triathlete who wanted to test the region in swimming, running and cycling.

Fitness instructor and Great British triathlete Joanna Reed, from Gosforth, Newcastle, wanted to see how many miles the people of the North East could collectively swim within one week, while raising money for charity.

Reason to Swim is the first of three Reason to... challenges she's organising in the three triathlon disciplines.

Joanna, 37, said: "The Percy Hedley Foundation is such a fantastic organisation helping so many children and adults across the North East.

"Reason to... is about giving people a reason to be active, healthy and at the same time raise some money for a fantastic local charity."

Reason to Swim will run from Monday, July 2, to Sunday, July 8, and will see hundreds of youngsters from schools across the region swimming one mile as part of their swimming lessons.

Adults can also take part by swimming a mile during the week, when and wherever they would normally swim, and donating to the charity.

Already signed up to swim a mile is Newcastle United goalkeeper Steve Harper. The footballer was at Northern



JUMPING IN Mark Garrick, Oliver Crick, Anth Mooney, Steve Harper, Joanna Reed, Megan Melvin and Ryan Kibbles. Right, the Toon keeper

Counties School in Jesmond, Newcastle, yesterday to get in a bit of poolside practice ahead of the big week.

He was joined by Anth Mooney, mortgage and savings director at bank Virgin Money, who are supporting the event. Anth said: "We are passionate about helping good causes in our community and are delighted to support Reason to Swim.

"It will be an exciting event that offers a great opportunity for swimmers across the North East to raise funds for the Percy Hedley Foundation." Reason to

Ride will see Joanna and a team of cyclists ride a total of 200 miles in 24 hours from Edinburgh to Newcastle.

And the Reason to Run event will see runners Matt Atkinson and Phil Smith running the length of Hadrian's Wall in a day.

For more information on Reason to Swim and a registration pack, schools can visit www.percyhedley.org.uk.

To make your own mile count towards the North East total, pledge a minimum of £5 to Percy Hedley at www.virginmoneygiving.com/reasontoswim



Low flying stops for breeding season

AIR force bosses have agreed to stop low flying over a Northumberland wildlife haven during bird breeding season amid claims that it caused chicks to die.

The Royal Air Force has said it will not carry out low flying at the Farne Islands while birds are breeding following an alleged incident in which young kittiwakes drowned after their parents were panicked by aircraft on exercise.

One of those who originally reported the matter called the creation of a no-fly zone "fantastic."

An RAF aircraft is said to have flown low over the Farnes, off the coast of Seahouses, last Tuesday.

The islands have a population of 80,000 pairs of seabirds, including Kittiwakes which are in the midst of breeding season and nest in cliffs there.

Andrew Douglas, who runs a company taking boats to the island said: "For me personally it is fantastic that they are not going to fly over.

"It is not just for me, it is for the birds and the people who enjoy the islands.

"The last thing we want to see is chicks dying."

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