

Vicar cleared of child rape

A JURY took just an hour to clear a vicar last week of raping and abusing a schoolgirl.

The Rev Malcolm Jackson, 52, vicar of Kirkleatham, Teesside, smiled and looked up as the foreman gave "not guilty" verdicts on the four serious charges he faced.

The married father-of-four was cleared of rape, attempted rape, sexual activity with a child and causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity following a week-long trial at Teesside Crown Court.

Mr Jackson was close to tears leaving the dock before hugging a female well-wisher in the public gallery.

He declined to comment about the ordeal, which saw him suspended from his role as vicar.

That suspension has now been lifted, though the Archbishop of York has recommended he take time off to recover.

Outside court Eleanor Course, communications officer for the Diocese of York, said: "We are praying for everyone who was involved in the case."

SUNDAY

OFFICIALS in Austria spent £10m on a motorway which has now been closed after residents' protests.

SNIP

Soldiers complete harsh run

A GROUP of former members of the armed service will complete a gruelling run in Army gear to raise awareness for their new foundation in the North.

Members of ForceSelect, an organisation to help service leavers find jobs, will take part in the Para 10 event in Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire, today.

Founder of ForceSelect and former member of the armed forces, Hugh Andree will be joined by former SAS soldier turned author Andy McNab and eight other members of the ForceSelect team on the 10 mile run today, which will see them run in military boots and carry 16kg throughout the 10 mile run. The ForceSelect Foundation has been established to raise money for smaller military charities.



CLAIMS: MP Stuart Bell, below, says the region and its industries, pictured above, can beat the recession

WE CAN BEAT THE RECESSION, SAYS MP



A DEFIANT North MP says Middlesbrough remains resilient to any large scale public service cuts.

Sir Stuart Bell – the town's MP for the last 28 years – has also called for more investment in job creation, saying regeneration cash has not been wasted or squandered.

Sir Stuart's comments come in response to the BBC-commissioned survey which placed Middlesbrough as the area of England least resilient to changes in the economy, especially cuts in public spending.

Sir Stuart said: "There must be greater emphasis on job creation in the small and medium-size business sector, which in the past has received help from Business Link, One North East and other Government-led organisations.

"To scrap these and prevent new start-ups would be to squander our own entrepreneurial talent and deprive

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our labour force of work prospects.

"Our major heavy industries collapsed in the early 1980s, 20,000 jobs were lost in two years.

"This massive loss coincided with the rise of the microchip.

"Production is now governed by computer with a limited workforce so that even when the new enterprises take off they will not provide the thousands of jobs to make up for those lost.

"That is why skills are needed, new apprenticeship and training schemes for those who need to change direction in their forties and fifties.

"And by looking ahead there can be industrial growth in petrochemicals, in new forms of power generation, in the development of land along our riverside, the growth of the port, bio-technology, carbon capture storage, in-

novative heat-to-power systems and digital innovation. These are the technologies of the future."

The MP said Middlesbrough might be vulnerable to cuts but it was also resilient.

He said: "Our business community can pull together with our civic community to see us through the present downturn, but we are in competition with Tyneside and Humberside for limited Government resources.

"Investment in our area has neither been wasted nor squandered, but has been used to develop an appropriate mix between the public and private sector and to reduce the consequences of de-industrialisation.

"This has left us with the finest university in the country and the finest hospital. We have seen new development in Teesside Park, the university, Middlesbrough College, the Riverside Stadium and Middlehaven – and the Tees and Hartlepool Port, among other developments."

Wedding pair are arrested

A SUSPECTED fake bride and groom were marched through a busy city centre after they were arrested on suspicion of taking part in a sham marriage ceremony, officials confirmed.

The dramatic scenes were played out in the centre of Sheffield on Friday after UK Border Agency (UKBA) officers swooped on the couple at the city's Town Hall.

The 29-year-old Pakistani groom, who was wearing a shirt and tie, was brought out across the pavement in handcuffs to a waiting van along with his 35-year-old Slovak bride, who was wearing a striped top and a cardigan.

The scene was watched by dozens of shoppers and city centre workers. Five wedding guests were also detained.

Councillor's P45 blunder

A LABOUR leader was sent his P45 by mistake in a council staff blunder.

Stunned Newcastle Labour leader Coun Nick Forbes arrived home to find a letter in the post stating that his employment had been terminated.

The document was on HM Revenue & Customs headed paper and had been produced on the basis Coun Forbes had

been working for social housing provider Your Homes Newcastle.

It described him as an "employee leaving work" and included personal data, including his date of birth, National Insurance number and home address.

Coun Forbes contacted YHN which has been forced to admit the blunder and bosses have written to him to apologise.