

Ashington Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Climate Change & Environment Committee Meeting held at 18:15pm on Tuesday 19th September 2023, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllr Sophie Robinson (Chair), Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Vicky Brown, Cllr Glyn Davies, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert, and Cllr John Tully.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO, Sharon Parmley – Community and Engagement Officer, Stephen Humphrey – Assets and Facilities Manager and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant

Three members of the public in attendance.

CCE23/013 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Cllr Sophie Robinson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

CCE23/014 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Lynne Grimshaw, Caroline Ball, Marjorie Chambers and Victor Bridges.

CCE23/015 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests from Councillors.

CCE23/016 DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations from Councillors.

CCE23/017 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were three members of the public present, but no items brought forward for question.

CCE23/018 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and sign as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 20th June 2023.

CCE23/019 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES

It was noted that all matters for update were on the agenda.

CCE23/020 REVITALISING OUR ESTUARIES (*Becky Vickers, Community Project Manager, Groundwork, in attendance*)

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a presentation and update on this 18-month project and further planned improvements.

The key points from the presentation were:

- Revitalising Our Estuaries (RoE) was an 18-month nature restoration and community engagement project across six estuaries in northeast England, supported by Defra and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- The Wansbeck estuary and Ashington/Choppington area was one of the six estuary sites covered by the Revitalising Our Estuaries project.
- The project aimed to connect people to nature, restore estuary habitat, create jobs and training opportunities, and pilot innovative nature-based solutions.

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Key outcomes included:

- √ Restoring 464 hectares of estuary and riparian habitat through various nature-based solutions including the Wansbeck estuary and riparian corridors.
- √ Creating 41 jobs and 560 training opportunities, including 37 Kickstart placements.
- √ Engaging over 6,000 people through events, volunteering, and educational activities, some in Ashington and Choppington.
- √ Installing several innovative habitats features like floating ecosystems, fish refugia, and vertipools.

Challenges faced included compressed timescales, recruiting suitable trainees, and managing a large geographic area.

The project has secured further funding to continue habitat restoration and community engagement work across several estuaries, which is likely to include the Wansbeck estuary.. It provides a model for attracting investment into nature-based solutions.

Members voiced their own memories of the river Wansbeck and how it had changed over the years. There was disappointment expressed in the maintenance of schemes put in place.

Questions were posed on the difficulties between maintaining the ecosystems of the river, and leisure pursuits and whether these could work in harmony. It was discussed that working together was the key.

With the permission of the Chair, a member of the public raised concerns about the footpaths along the riverside, which is very well used and could be much wider and more accessible.

The Council thanked Becky for attending and for the detailed and informative presentation, and it was agreed that the Council would continue to keep in updated via the working groups.

Becky suggested the Council could support their work by directing any groups and volunteers who wanted to get involved towards them.

CCE23/021 DEFRA FUNDED TREE PLANTING PROJECTS ACROSS ASHINGTON

It was AGREED to RECEIVE

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the update from by Kirsten Johnson, Woodlands Officer, Great Northumberland Forest, on the tree planting schemes put forward for consideration by Ashington Town Council.

Members were pleased that of the schemes put forward, most had been followed up and would be supported. Assets and Facilities Manager, Stephen Humphrey summarised the schemes being taken forward:

Off North Seaton Road (NZ 276 868)

0.28 ha site

Plant 60 trees total, arranged in clumps.

Tree species: rowan, holly, downy birch, crab apple

60 deer guards, stakes, and ties

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Adjoining Green Lane (NZ 272 869)

NCC owned 0.24 ha site.

Plant 50 trees in 10 groups of 5

Tree species: aspen, Scots pine, rowan, downy birch, bird cherry

50 deer guards, stakes & ties

Adjoining Green Lane (NZ 272 870)

NCC owned 0.18 + 0.09 ha.

Plant 50 trees in 10 clumps of 5

Tree species: aspen, Scots pine, rowan, downy birch, bird cherry

50 deer guards, stakes & ties

In respect of the scheme on ***North Seaton roundabout (NZ 229 684)*** 0.85 ha site, to plant 850 trees of the species: aspen, oak, rowan, bird cherry, wild cherry, downy birch, Scots pine, hawthorn, and holly, which was rejected by NCC Highways, **it was AGREED** to write to seek the reasons why and express the Council's disappointment. **It was AGREED** to contact Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council to ask if they would support a joint letter.

CCE23/022 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

It was AGREED in accordance with Financial Regulation 11(g) to approve that a single quote is sourced for this work (agenda item 11) as it is of a 'specialist nature' with the provider chosen by Northumberland County Council, in view that works are expected on their land, and suspending Financial Regulation 11(f) which requires three quotations.

CCE23/023 WILDFLOWER PLANTING AND BULB PLANTING

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the report and costs associated with potential schemes, and to place orders for work to be carried by Straughans at a cost of £17,380 for bulb planting across 9 locations, and £5,287.50 for wildflower planting across 3 locations.

Assets and Facilities Manager, Stephen Humphrey summarised the schemes being taken forward:

The schemes put forward have been suggested in full consultation with NCC and ward Cllrs. Bulb planting is best done in autumn and wildflower planting is best in spring. The schemes will provide some colour and interest in several areas of the town and the schemes are well spread. Some suggested locations were not suitable at this time, and it is worth noting that further wildflower planting may be done by the Friends of Ashington Community Woods group.

CCE23/024 SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION AND RETROFITTING PROPERTIES

It was AGREED to invite Social Housing providers with housing stock in Ashington to a future meeting of the Climate Change Committee, to update on plans to improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock, and to update on delivery of domestic retrofit in compliance with the UK Government's PAS 2035 standard.

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CCE23/025 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

A meeting date was not confirmed. The Executive Officer reminded those members who have completed Carbon Literacy Training that they need to plan to come together to discuss pledges, and how these would be brought forward.

Meeting ends 19:12pm

DRAFT