

**Ashington Town Council**

**Draft Minutes of the Climate Change & Environment Committee Meeting held at 5:00pm on Tuesday 27th February 2024, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllr Sophie Robinson (Chair), Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Marjorie Chambers, Cllr Victor Bridges, Cllr Jim Lang, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert, and Cllr John Tully.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

A two-minute silence was held for the late Cllr Vicki Brown.

Assets and Facilities and Manager - Stephen Humphrey entered the meeting at 17:04.

**CCE23/026 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Cllr Sophie Robinson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**CCE23/027 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Louis Brown and Cllr Graeme Wright.

**CCE23/028 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interests from Councillors.

**CCE23/029 DISPENSATIONS**

There were no requests for dispensations from Councillors.

**CCE23/030 EMERGENCY MOTION – ACTION FOR INSECTS**

It was **AGREED** include an emergency motion on 'Action for Insects'.

**CCE23/031 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

**CCE23/032 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and sign as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

**CCE23/033 CLERK AND OFFICER UPDATES**

It was **AGREED** to receive an update.

***River Wansbeck Estuary & Barrage Project***

Since 2020 Groundwork have been working on a feasibility assessment of the barrage, funded by Environment Agency Water Environment Improvement Fund which aims to address waterbody failures and water quality improvements. The project has been looking at various options for improvement including the feasibility of replacing the lock gates and have costed options for this. The aim is to find a balance between improving the ecology and allowing river use to continue. There have been trialled opening the gates in 22/22 and 22/23 to learn if silt was removed from the area upstream of the barrage - hydraulic models have been developed to show various scenarios and how they would affect/improve the ecology.

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Groundwork is continuing to work with Northumberland County Council to find a way to still allow for river use alongside a more natural tidal regime. The next steps are to find the preferred option and how to fund it.

***Defra funded tree planting projects across Ashington***

Tree planting schemes in the Haydon ward will take place in coming weeks. As agreed, a joint letter was sent from Ashington TC and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea TC with reference to NCC Highways objection to the suggested planting scheme on the roundabout. The Highways Improvement Team Senior Officer has supported the objection as it is considered an accident hot spot, and they would not want to introduce anything that would affect visibility.

The response has been shared with Newbiggin-by-the-Sea TC along with the suggestion that there are alternative locations where tree planting might be more appropriate in Newbiggin, i.e. Central Parkway which could also prevent vehicles from driving over the grass. Presently, there is a live petition to install traffic lights on the roundabout. Additionally, the tree planting scheme in Seaton ward, funded by ATC, will also take place w/c26 February, carried out by our contractors; Brambledown Landscapes Ltd.

***Wildflower planting and bulb planting***

Work to plant bulbs at nine locations across the town, as agreed at the CC&E committee in September, was carried out in November by WL Straughan. The sites chosen were: A197 - Pegswood entrance, grassed area close to Holy Sepulchre Church, grassed area on Station Road, Featherwood Drive, Woodhorn Road / close to Wansbeck General Hospital, North Season Industrial Estate, Black Close Bank and Briardene. The planting should be coming through in coming days.

Additionally, wildflower planting schemes will take place in the spring at River Wansbeck, Paddock Wood, and Peoples Park in the spring with work again carried out by WL Straughan.

***The Great British Spring Clean***

The Spring Clean poster is out with dates for upcoming litter picks;

1. Hirst Area - Tuesday 26th March, from 10am - to meet at the Heart of the Hirst Building, 82 Beatrice Street, Ashington, NE63 9BP.
2. Peoples Park - Wednesday 27th March, from 10am - to meet at the main car park, Institute Road, Ashington, NE63 8HP.
3. Wansbeck Riverside - Thursday 28 March, from 10am - to meet at North Seaton Colliery Community Centre, Links View, NE63 0XQ.
4. Paddock Wood - Saturday 30th March, from 10.30am to 12.00noon & 12.30pm to 2.00pm to meet at North Seaton Community Centre, Manley View, Ashington, NE63 9TF.

The details are available on the website, as linked below:

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/ashinton-event/2024-03-26-ashingtons-great-british-spring-clean-hirst-area>

As well as the launch article that went out a couple of weeks ago.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-01-24-join-ashingtons-great-british-spring-clean-2024>

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***Climate Change Initiative – School Poster Competition***

As part of ATC's commitment to reducing the effect of climate change. In advance of Earth Day (21st April), we will hold a poster competition for local primary schools, launching on April 19th. The designs will be asked to focus on educating and encouraging emission reduction activities like turning off lights, shorter showers, and walking more.

Selected poster designs will be printed and displayed around town - including bus shelters and litter bins - to inspire climate action in the broader community. The finished designs will be in place to support The Great Big Green Week in June.

**CCE23/034 ACTION FOR INSECTS**

**It was AGREED** to commit to a series of initiatives designed to create insect-friendly spaces throughout the town. **It was AGREED** to involve the community, by sharing tips with residents on how to turn their gardens into insect havens.

The meeting discussed that insects play a vital role in our environment, acting as pollinators, decomposers, and a food source for other wildlife. However, many species are in alarming decline due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and other human impacts. The Action for Insects plan aims to combat this by allowing wildflowers to bloom along grassy verges and in park areas, planting more insect-friendly plants and trees, minimising pesticide use on council grounds, and installing insect hotels and bee bricks to provide nesting sites.

The Council discussed the goal of making Ashington a more insect-friendly town through small, cumulative changes.

Regarding the use of pesticides and chemicals for grass cutting and weed removal in gardens and parks around town, it was discussed that Northumberland County Council had trialled many different methods without success. While recognising it would require overcoming some obstacles, there was general agreement the benefits of better protecting local wildlife would outweigh the challenges. Recommendations were made to take steps to raise public awareness about Ashington's wild areas and wildlife, including by engaging local community groups, schools, and associations in education and outreach efforts.

It was suggested looking into the possibility of supplying and installing bird feeders and bee habitats around the wildlife enclosures in Ashington to support local species. It was added that other nearby towns conduct bird counts to monitor wildlife populations, which could be something for Ashington to consider as well.

It was proposed that encouraging the planting of wildflowers around smaller allotment plots could also help provide habitat for insects and other small wildlife.

A motion was made to continue exploring options for reducing chemical pesticide use and taking steps to protect and promote awareness of Ashington's local wildlife.

**The motion passed by a vote of 6 in favour, 0 against, and 1 abstaining.**

**CCE23/035 SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION AND RETROFITTING PROPERTIES**

Following agreement to write to Advance Northumberland and Bernicia Housing, it was AGREED to receive the responses. In respect of the response from Bernicia that set out

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commitments but was not Ashington specific, **it was AGREED** to follow-up now that the busy budget period was over, and they may be in a better position to provide more details.

### **CCE23/036 GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK**

It was **AGREED** to receive an update on plans progressed for Great Big Green Week, and poster competition and Cllr support was sought for the Tuesday market on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June.

### **CCE23/037 ECO FAIR**

**It was AGREED** to receive the proposal and event brief for an Eco Fair to be held in February 2025.

The events aims were agreed as follows:

- Raise awareness in the local community about environmental issues and sustainable solutions.
- Inspire and empower individuals and organisations to take action to reduce their environmental impact.
- Provide a platform for local schools, and community groups to showcase their environmental initiatives.

The overall objectives of the event were agreed as follows:

- ❖ Distribute informational materials from community organisations on topics like energy conservation, sustainable living, green transportation etc.
- ❖ Conduct feedback surveys and encourage attendees to make a pledge to quantify the impact of the event on increasing local community awareness and interest in environmental action, and savings in carbon emissions.

**It was AGREED** the event would include:

1. Exhibitors and Vendors
2. Climate Project Showcase
3. Workshops and Presentations
4. Demonstrations and Activities
5. Environmental Organisations and Initiatives
6. Local Food and Refreshments
7. Kids' Activities
8. Live Entertainment

The proposed date and venue were agreed - Wednesday 20th February 2025, 10.30am to 3.30pm at Ashington Hirst Welfare.

### **CCE23/038 TREE PLANTING TARGET**

**It was AGREED** to receive an update that 300 trees have been planted, which was the target set.

**It was AGREED** to contact those who have planted trees, and informed us, on the progress of trees planted, with a view to sharing photographs and good news stories.

**It was AGREED** to review the tree planting target in the next Council term, and to consider a target over the Council term.

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<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-01-16-ashington-town-surpasses-tree-planting-goal>

**CCE23/038 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- ❖ Tuesday 30th April 2024, 5:00pm
- ❖ Tuesday 30th July 2024, 5:00pm
- ❖ Tuesday 28th October 2024 5:00pm
- ❖ Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 5:00pm

**Meeting ends 18:08pm**

DRAFT