

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) OFFICERS UPDATE - 13th February 2024

Potland Burn Surface Mine, Ashington

Update 03/01/24 Planning Enforcement has confirmed that the matter has been registered as a planning enforcement case – ref: **24/00002/BRCOND** with an assigned case officer.

An enforcement investigation will commence, and the enforcement officer will determine whether planning permission is required and whether there has been a breach of planning control. Due to the high volume of cases under investigation there is a backlog of site visits waiting to be carried out therefore cases are being dealt with in priority order with the cases causing irreversible harm being dealt with first. For this reason, NCC are unable to offer updates during the investigation and will be in touch with the outcome when the investigation is complete.

If we wish to contact NCC during the course of the investigation with additional information, we can but they will not be in touch until the investigation is complete.

Update 18/01/2024 Countryside and Green Spaces Manager updates:

I write in response your letter, on behalf of Longhirst Parish Council and Ashington Town Council, raising concerns over the delayed reinstatement of public access across the Potland Burn site.

My team have recently recruited a new Area Countryside Officer (Adam Musk) for this area who has now surveyed the site and made contact with the agent in order to progress reinstatement of existing public rights of way and the establishment of the new routes set out in the site's reinstatement plan.

In the near future we expect to be able to resolve some issues along the routes of existing rights of way so that available access routes are in evidence and straightforward to follow. I understand that reinstatement works have been taking place on site but that there remains a significant body of work outstanding to fully establish new routes on the ground and to carry out the legal work necessary to create and record these new public rights of way.

I'm sorry that more has not been achieved before now, and it is likely to be some time before we're able to have all planned routes in place; however, following contact with the agent I expect us to be able to move through the work required in order to have access across the site in place in line with the reinstatement plan.

I've asked my colleague Adam to provide you with an update on progress by the end of March, by which time I hope there will have been improvements to the existing public rights of way on the site.

Allotments

Our new Allotments Officer, Alan Bunker started on Monday 29th January. Alan has been working closely with the current allotment association volunteers, assessing the recent damages from both storm Isha and Jocelyn, working with contractors and rectifying issues.

Alan is looking forward to speaking and working with allotment holders in the coming days and weeks. Plans and updates will be shared going forward.

In the move towards more direct management of allotment sites, we have been collecting the required data to inform tenancy agreements. Gary has successfully uploaded the information into excel. Following more detailed discussion this has now been moved to a much more effective access database. This is a work in progress, but the system will be invaluable moving forward.

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We are now managing North Seaton Colliery Allotment site and have issued tenancy agreements and rents. The direct management of Hirst East End will commence on 1st April, and Woodhorn on 1st July.

Allotments (Capital Works)

The new Water system at Woodhorn Road Allotment site will be complete in the coming days.

Following the budget announcement this week, we will now look to proceed with the new water systems at Seaton Hirst Allotment site at a cost of £16,889.40. The work will begin early in the new financial year.

ATC Neighbourhood Services

Play Areas

A clean and tidy of the town's play areas is underway including edging works and removal of graffiti etc. Repairs to equipment have been carried out at People's Park, which this year celebrates its 5th anniversary. Preparation works have taken place at Paddock Wood Play Area for the replenishment of the bark safety surface this month.

Station Road Planting

Works to tidy the planting on Station Road were carried out w/c 5th February. Additional planting is planned to take place in the spring.

Paddock Wood

ATC Neighbourhood Services have supported the Ashington Community Litter Group to carry out a litter pick of Paddock Wood. Northumberland County Council have also supported the works through cutting back shrubbery as well as assisting with the removal of fly tipping and litter. A further tidy of Paddock Wood will take place, in March, as part of the Town Council's Great British Spring Clean effort.

Tree Planting Seaton Ward

Tree planting, as agreed with Seaton Ward Cllrs Environmental Improvements funding will take place in coming weeks, with 8 trees to be planted in the Hillcrest and South Side area.

Tree Planting Haydon Ward

ATC staff will support Northumberland County Council's tree planting in the Haydon ward, in the coming weeks.

Events and Engagement

Funding plaques

Funding plaques have been made and given to annual grant recipients for display on their premises or at locations they operate. We have asked that each group send a photo once the plaques are installed.



Christmas Trail

The Christmas Trail engaged twenty local shops and businesses in the Town Centre (thirteen took part in the previous year), along Station Road, Woodhorn Road, Lintonville Terrace and Laburnum Terrace.

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Shops included: The Sewing Machine Guy, Scope, L A Clothing, CEX, The Card Factory, Timewarp Sounds Record Shop, Salvation Army Shop, Sense Shop, The Little Tea Room, Sweet Memories Sweet Shop, Hog Roast Deli, Tony Joshua Couture, Bettini's, British Heart Foundation Shop, Mind, Body & Spirit, Herons, M & H Bakes, Select, Glentons, Iceland and Asda.

Feedback sought concluded that many shops reported increased foot traffic and enjoyed seeing children come in to collect trail stickers and being part of festivities. There were more shops and more children involved in 2024, than in 2023.

Points for the future are to include checking store opening hours to avoid disappointment and launching sooner to give families more time. Consideration could be given to reducing the number of selection boxes purchased, in line with expected numbers involved.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2023-12-18-a-heartfelt-thanks-to-our-christmas-trail-participants>

Christmas Window Competition

Fourteen local business took part. These were on Station Road, Lintonville Terrace, Woodhorn Road, and Laburnum Terrace. There were some very festive windows, and the spirit of friendly competition was evident, with many congratulating each other on the results. The winner of the Christmas window competition was Mind, Body and Spirit, Cllr Bridges went along to hand over the hamper.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2023-12-18-mind-body-spirit-takes-the-prize-in-ashingtons-christmas-window-display-competition>

Northumberland CVA AGM – 27th January 2024

Sharon attended Northumberland CVA's AGM. Northumberland CVA champions and supports the local voluntary sector. Empowering community groups and connecting people to volunteering opportunities to develop new skills and retain independence. By assisting charities and organisations with funding, partnerships, and capacity building, they promote community activity that enables positive change across Northumberland.

Central Northumberland Network Meeting – 28th January 2024

Sharon attended a network meeting at Ashington's Family Hub. As well as finding out about what is going on at the Family Hub, Sharon met members of staff from Ashington Library and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, spoke with NHS staff promoting a host of self-help guidance and information on issues such as Health Anxiety, Stress, Bereavement and Depression.

Cambois Rowing Club – Name the Boat

On 16th January we launched a name the boat call-out via Facebook. Three names were selected from a very long list, and there was some good engagement from members of the public. The vote was closed on 2nd February, and the winning name has been sent to Alan at the rowing club. By the time of the meeting this should have been announced, and we can arrange a phot call.

Ashington Youth Offer Meeting – 25th January 2024

Sharon attended a meeting at Ashington Hirst Welfare, organised by Northumberland Communities Together, Carla Thompson.

The purpose of the meeting was to create a more coordinated approach to youth work in Ashington.

Others in attendance were Ed Browne, NCC Youth Support Worker, Eric Fletcher, YMCA Northumberland, Wayne Daniels, Northumbria Police, Marie Oliver, Teen Bar, Ashington Life Centre,

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Elinor Bryant, Mortal Fools, Jake Preece and Bailey Milligan, Get on Side and Paul Killpatrick, Off the Grid CIC.

Some of the youth work discussed included a new graffiti project at the Family Hub, HAF at Dukes Primary School, Ability to Play, a youth group at the YMCA, the new play zone coming to Hirst Park and Shannon the new Youth Project Coordinator at Full Circle Food.

Household Information Event – 26th January 2024

Sharon attended the Household Information Event held at Ashington Hirst Welfare. Some of the information on offer was from Citizens Advice, Thriving Together, Army Recruitment, Northumberland CVA, Ashington Community Litter Pickers, Every Turn, Newcastle United, Northumberland Skills, Network Rail, Wansbeck Community Links and Peoples Plus.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-01-29-people-and-services-come-together-at-ashington-information-day>

Living Wage Employer

You may have noticed that our Living Wage Employer Accreditation is complete. This has been shared across our media and we have the logo displayed on our website.



<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-01-22-ashington-town-council-accredited-as-a-living-wage-employer>

Budget and Precept

The required information was sent to Northumberland County Council following the Full Council meeting. Information was put into the public domain the following day.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-01-31-ashington-town-council-sets-responsible-precept-demand-for-20242025-ensuring-financial-stability-and-minimal-resident-impact>