

AGENDA 7, Enc ii) Ashington Town Council, Draft Minutes of the Climate Change & Environment Committee Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 18th February 2025, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Paul Wright (Chair), Louis Brown, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davis, Marjorie Chambers, Lynne Grimshaw, Jim Lang, Pauline Thompson, and Caroline Ball.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant (Taking Minutes), Elaine Peverley (Ashington Community Litter Project), Craig Spence (Mortal Fools), Margaret Adams (Climate Action Wansbeck), Lynn Norris (Climate Action Wansbeck), Cathy Sharp (Northumberland Wildlife Trust), Doug Mitchley (Friends of Ashington Community Wood), Eloise Barber (Mortal Fools) and Victoria Morgan (Repurposeful CIC).

CCE25/025 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Cllr. Paul Wright welcomed everyone to the meeting.

CCE25/026 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Gemma Hemsley, Cllr Bob Walkinshaw and Cllr Victor Bridges.

CCE25/027 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

CCE25/028 DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensations.

CCE25/029 WELCOME AND COMMITTEE INTRODUCTIONS

The following groups were in attendance, welcomed and protocols were established.

- Ashington Community Litter Project
- Northumberland Wildlife Trust
- Climate Action Wansbeck
- Friends of Ashington Community Woods
- Repurposeful CIC
- Mortal Fools Theatre Company

The Secretary of Friends of Ashington Community Woods explained that their main condition of work is to help the environment and make access available for local communities, particularly through planting trees. They have planted around a thousand trees and are working to replace trees ruined by Storm Arwen. Pine trees are being replaced with broadleaf replacement trees, with around one hundred being planted. They have ordered another two hundred and forty trees from the Wildlife Trust. The group is trying to keep up with environmental needs by replacing trees lost to both storms and vandalism. The Secretary, who is personally a carbon trust consultant, offered to provide information and advice to other groups.

Cllr Louis Brown asked about wildlife conservation. Friends of Ashington Community Woods mentioned that wildlife is looked after and the replacement trees help wildlife, encouraging birds and other animals in the woods. Red squirrels are unfortunately leaving the woods, but they are working with the Red Squirrel Society to replace grey squirrels with reds.

Cathy from Northumberland Wildlife Trust mentioned they are one of many trusts throughout the UK, with over sixty reserves around the country that are all managed for nature and wildlife. They

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run various projects, including red squirrel groups. As a Community Engagement Officer, she is pushing to help people understand the benefits of wildlife for their wellbeing and supporting people in urban areas instead of just rural areas.

Margaret and Lynn from Climate Action Wansbeck explained the group was set up three years ago and operates mainly in the Morpeth and Wansbeck area. They have 150 members now spread across the area, with Lynne and Margaret covering the Ashington area. They engage with people through stalls and activities with support of the Town Council and have provided support through the orchard project for Wansbeck Road allotment. Lynne has been fundraising for further work to be done. They are working with the Oswin Project, which works with ex-offenders to help them get back into society. They want to work with communities such as schools and sixth forms, and to continue working with other projects to support Ashington.

Vicky, Director of Repurposeful CIC, explained they work to repurpose and recycle materials and create a permanent scrap store around Northumberland. They take unwanted materials from businesses and organisations to create crafts and anything that could be used by others, schools use the service. The idea being that often small businesses are paying to get rid of materials that the community can use for another purpose. A temporary scrap store on Laburnum Terrace in September was very successful. They also support adult volunteering for people with additional needs, and have worked with those with dementia.

Craig and Eloise from Mortal Fools work with young people through activities including Stage Two, Three, and Ensemble groups using drama activities. They have been based in Ashington for three years after being based in Prudhoe. They run drama groups with Dukes Secondary School and are making connections throughout the community.

Elaine from the Community Litter Pickers described herself as an avid supporter of many groups around Ashington. As part of the litter pickers, they like to signpost people to various groups around the town such as Full Circle Food, Cycling \$ Everyone, and Hirst Welfare. The litter pickers like to find other ways of recycling what they collect, using a trolley provided by Ashington Town Council to take aluminium cans, vapes, and other items to recycling points and dispose of them correctly.

The Executive Officer, Sarah Eden referenced the committee terms of reference, meeting protocols and how items could be placed on an agenda. Cllr Paul Wright went through the items ensuring everyone was happy with how the meetings would proceed.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers mentioned to Elaine about recycling, Amanda from Asda handles recycling of aluminium, plastic, and other materials, and suggested having a word with Amanda about potential collaboration.

CCE25/030 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no additional members of the public present.

CCE25/031 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was AGREED to RECEIVE and sign as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on 28TH October 2024.

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CCE25/032 OFFICERS UPDATE

The following update was shared by the Executive Officer having been sent out with the meeting papers.

Ashington Town Council Pledges Support for Community-Led Enhancement of Ashington Community Woods

Demonstrating our commitment to support local stakeholders and woodland users, we have pledged just under £4,000 from dedicated project funds towards the Project Development Phase of Ashington Community Woods.

The investment, combined with additional funding from Ward Councillors' Environment Enhancements budget, will support comprehensive consultation, steering group management and the preparation of funding applications.

Beginning in April 2025, this will bring together regular woodland users, community groups and residents to shape the plans for enhancing valuable green space.

Backed by County Cllr Caroline Ball and County Cllr Brian Gallacher as part of the steering committee, we expect more stakeholders will want to be directly involved alongside Northumberland County Council, Friends of Ashington Commit Woods, Ashington Hirst Running Club and local historian Barry Mead.

Key elements of the collaborative approach include:

- In-depth consultation with current woodland users and stakeholders
- Development of user-led proposals for signage and orientation features
- Community input on heritage interpretation elements
- Collaborative planning of enhanced visitor facilities
- Exploration of public art and sculpture opportunities

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2025-02-06-ashington-town-council-pledges-support-for-community-led-enhancement-of-ashington-community-woods>

Successful Day of Action in the Hirst Area

With the help of Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Gemma Hemsley, Cllr Marjorie Chambers and Ashington Town Council officers Stephen Humphrey, Alan Bunker, Ryan Appleby and Mark Air supported our partners: Ashington Community Litter Pickers, Northumberland County Council, Asda and Bernicia. 38 bags of litter were collected and disposed of after a fantastic community effort to keep the Hirst Area clean.

Northumberland County Council's Neil Quinn and Gary McGuire led a consultation of the Hirst Masterplan, supported by Cllr Pauline Thompson, allowing residents the opportunity to discuss future plans for the area.

Northumberland Police were the catalyst for the whole day, bringing everyone together, with Operation Impact making several arrests and vehicle seizures as part of their ongoing commitment to community safety.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-12-20-successful-day-of-action-in-the-hirst-area>

Winter Maintenance Update: Embracing Sustainable Planting in Our Town

With the dedication of Neighbourhood Services Officers – Mark Air and Ryan Appleby, the sustainable planting scheme has made significant progress over the winter months, but we know to all eyes it may not look as beautiful as formal annual planting. Embracing the sustainable, climate-friendly planting we have managed to maintain sustainable beds along Station Road, the Town gateways and alongside our memorials.

Maintenance is ongoing year-round to ensure they are kept looking tidy while also encouraging the natural cycles of the plants.

The structural elements of our chosen plants – seed heads, architectural structural stems and evergreen foliage - create winter interest while providing valuable habitats for local wildlife. This approach aligns with our broader climate action goals and creates resilient landscapes that support local biodiversity.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-12-19-winter-maintenance-update-embracing-sustainable-planting-in-our-town>

Ashington Town Council Maintains Iconic Mining Wheel Entrance Feature

We have reaffirmed our commitment to maintaining Town assets with a recent tidy-up and planting project at the iconic Mining Wheel on Rotary Parkway.

Neighbourhood Services Officer – Ryan Appleby, has used his horticultural expertise to lead the recent improvements.

Using a selection of locally sourced plants from Wansbeck Garden Centre, he has managed to enhance the features of the site with fresh foliage that complements the historic display. Ryan has further ideas for improvements to the surrounding landscape, which he hopes to introduce as the planting calendar allows.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-11-01-ashington-town-council-maintains-iconic-mining-wheel-entrance-feature>

Support for Climate Action Wansbeck Allotment Project

It was approved to further fund the Climate Action Wansbeck orchard project at the Wansbeck Road Allotment Site.

The area has been transformed from derelict plots to the start of an orchard, led by Mrs Margaret Adams and Mrs Lynn Norris. Funds were secured by the two from various sources as well as our contribution to the project to support landscaping and fencing costs. When preparatory work is fully complete, fruit trees will be provided by the Great Northumberland Forest Project.

Neighbourhood Services Officers – Mark Air and Ryan Appleby, both worked alongside the volunteers on the project, assisting in preparing the paths, with materials supplied by JT Dove Ltd. further reinforcing our commitment to using local resources and labour.

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Working alongside volunteer groups such as Climate Action Wansbeck helps solidify our commitment to foster a greener, more sustainable future for Ashington.

You can view the images of the work done by following the link below.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2024-10-31-town-council-supports-climate-action-wansbeck-project>

The 2025 Big Garden Birdwatch

The annual Big Garden Birdwatch was held again by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds over the weekend of 24th January/25th January 2025.

At the time of writing, there have been 7,899,799 birds counted and registered during their survey result collection.

Following our commitment to a greener Ashington, we have encouraged residents to take part in the survey and to count the local birds to support the efforts of sustaining our local bird life.

Northumberland currently sits at number 34 on their siting leaderboard, with 3,292 birds spotted and accounted for.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2025-01-14-the-2025-big-garden-birdwatch>

Help Shape the Response to Fly-Tipping: Community Survey

Northumberland County Council's Safe and Resilient Communities Team have reached out to the community to understand and address issues of fly-tipping around our local areas.

The survey has been developed to help Northumberland County Council:

- Identify key issues and concerns from a resident's perspective.
- Gather information about community awareness and understanding.
- Help shape the approach to tackling fly-tipping.

Responses given to the survey before 25th January 2025 will ensure resident's views are included in future planning.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2025-01-15-help-shape-the-response-to-fly-tipping-community-survey>

ScottishPower Renewables' Celebrates Sustainable Community Development in Ashington

ScottishPower Renewables is committed to supporting local communities with its benefit fund having distributed over £67 million to date.

A while ago a grant of £25,000 from the Lynemouth Windfarm fund allowed us to redevelop two residential play areas within the Orchid Meadows Estate. Featuring Kompan's cutting-edge Greenline range of play equipment, this was the perfect blend of environmental responsibility and community development. The play areas showcase play equipment manufactured from recycled

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materials and promoted an inclusive design to allow children of all abilities to play within the play area.

We were delighted that the project featured in ScottishPower Renewables' Community Benefit Report.

<https://www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/news/news.php?s=2025-01-13-scottishpower-renewables-celebrates-sustainable-community-development-in-ashington>

CCE25/033 ECO FAIR - FRIDAY, 25TH APRIL AT THE ASHINGTON HIRST WELFARE CENTRE

The draft event brief was **RECEIVED**.

The Committee was asked to:

- Review the draft event brief
- Confirm event objectives
- Provide input on event planning
- Discuss and agree initial approach to delivering this community sustainability showcase
- Allocate initial responsibilities for event development
- Agree engagement strategy
- Discuss potential showcases and expert involvement
- Raise any logistical planning considerations

Dennis from Friends of Ashington Community Woods discussed how China inflates the country with plastics and other products, noting that anything made in China cannot be repaired while locally made products can be fixed. He mentioned a repair shop at the eco fair that repairs broken goods, so they don't need to be replaced, which saves on manufacturing and reduces carbon emissions.

Cllr Paul Wright emphasised the importance of showcasing and encouraging local products. Cllr Caroline Ball acknowledged that everyone likes convenience and stressed the need to be realistic about people enjoying having items delivered to their doors from online shopping. She pointed out that everything we buy, even from local shops, is often flown in, and promoted reading packet labels to see where the items we are purchasing come from.

Vicky mentioned that there is a repair café operating in Berwick. Councillor Lynne Grimshaw discussed hedgehog hotels for wildlife and insects and wondered if Friends of Ashington Community Woods could make them. Dennis confirmed they have been making them for a while and would be happy to provide more.

Climate Action Wansbeck spoke about getting people to think about what constitutes food waste and how to achieve food security. They discussed baking initiatives and having labelled produce showing costs and other information.

Vicky and Mortal Fools discussed potential collaboration for props, drama activities, and other projects, with Mortal Fools looking to make more connections in the community.

Councillor Lynne Grimshaw asked if it would be possible to look at providing slow cookers, air fryers, and similar appliances. Councillor Caroline Ball suggested choosing a specific focus for the

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fair, such as what behaviour to concentrate on or encouraging changes to specific things. She mentioned the change of Ashington from coal to solar power alongside the development of the new college.

The Executive Officer explained that having a specific theme would be difficult this year as an application has been made to NCC Climate Change which required ticks in most sustainability boxes to have any chance of success, and that this has been submitted. However, it was acknowledged it would be a good idea for future years. Cllr Lynne Grimshaw suggested that in future it would be beneficial to have someone from the new college speak at events, as the new college is being constructed using sustainable materials.

CCE25/034 GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN

Involvement in the campaign was **AGREED**.

Cllr Caroline Ball suggested sorting through rubbish piles to identify which companies the waste comes from, then writing to those companies to ask them to make their packaging more recyclable and to help educate the brands who are part of the problem.

The Executive Officer responded that while it would not be appropriate to ask volunteers to sort through discarded waste, if the County Council agrees they could ask for help as it's an excellent idea. Councillor Lynne Grimshaw suggested contacting KFC and McDonald's to see if they have identification on their drive-through packaging to identify people throwing rubbish out of their vehicles.

Several locations for potential action including Riverside, Hirst Park, People's Park, and Paddock Woods were discussed. Ashington Community Woods was suggested by Friends of Ashington Community Woods. Wansbeck Climate Action identified the stretch towards Guidepost as another area of concern.

Cllr Caroline Ball suggested using before and after photos on Instagram to document improvements. Friends of Ashington Community Woods recommended using different bags other than plastic, such as reusable or paper alternatives. The Executive Officer advised that they are looking to use a different colour bag for litter pickers, to better identify the rubbish collected, but could explore other options alongside NCC.

CCE25/034 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

❖ Tuesday 24th June, 5:30pm

Meeting ends 7.14pm.