

AGENDA 8, Enc iii) ASHINGTON COMMUNITY WOODLAND – MEMORIAL MEADOW

Ashington Community Woodland

Ashington Community Woodland is a large woodland planting scheme which has been used to reclaim the former Ashington Colliery site and associated post-industrial land.

This large site, covering approximately 135 hectares is jointly managed by Friends of Ashington Community Wood, Groundwork North East and Northumberland County Council (NCC).

Miners' Memorial Meadows

The Miners' Memorial Meadow Project was taken forward by Groundwork NorthEast, with Heritage Lottery Funding. The project focused on two aspects - historical investigation into Northumbrian miners and their families in WW1, and the creation of beautiful wildflower places to reflect and remember miners in WW1.

The Miners' Memorial Meadows was designed to make a beautiful space by increasing pollinators within three grassland areas, adjacent to the old mine sites. The areas were a woodland glade, a reclaimed coal site and woodland clearing. Volunteers and schools were involved in the project which was planted out in autumn 2017.

Cllr Caroline Ball has raised that the area is not a good representation of how many people feel a memorial should be, and that it would be wise to initiate improvements sooner rather than later.

As well as local community group Friends of Ashington Community Woods, the town now boasts Ashington Parkrun through the woods, straight past the Miners' Memorial Meadows, and other run events throughout the year, organised by Ashington Hirst Running Club.

Proposed Actions:

1. Form a project steering group with key stakeholders including but not limited to; Groundwork North East, Northumberland County Council (NCC), Friends of Ashington Community Woods, Ashington Parkrun, and Ashington Hirst Running Club to guide the revitalisation efforts.
2. Conduct a site assessment with Groundwork North East and NCC to evaluate the current condition of the meadows and determine the specific improvements and maintenance required to restore them to a fitting memorial state.
3. Develop a comprehensive revitalisation plan and budget based on the site assessment, incorporating elements such as:
 - Wildflower seeding/planting
 - Restored signage and interpretive elements
 - Ongoing maintenance plan
4. Allocate £3,000 from the Climate Change budget as seed funding, with potential to consider increase based on finalised project plan and budget.
5. Implement an engagement strategy throughout the project, involving volunteers, schools, community groups, and running clubs in activities like meadow preparation, planting, maintenance, etc.
6. Host an official re-dedication event upon completion to celebrate the revitalised Miners' Memorial Meadows as a community space for remembrance and reflection.

By taking a collaborative approach with committed stakeholders and the community, this project can successfully restore the Miners' Memorial Meadows to a beautiful, meaningful tribute honouring Ashington's mining heritage and sacrifices during WWI.