AGENDA 13, Enc xvii) PADDOCK WOODS, NORTH SEATON – SITE MEETING REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Date: Tuesday 27th October 2026

Venue: Paddock Woods, North Seaton, Ashington (site walk)

Arranged by: Constable Callum Wallace, Ashington Neighbourhood Policing Team, Northumbria Police

Present: Constable Callum Wallace, Sergeant Kath Smith, Jimmy Reith & Thomas Crate (NCC Green Spaces), County Cllr Steven Roberts, County Cllr Karl Green, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Glyn Davies, Sarah Eden, Representatives of North Seaton Community Centre.

Note and Report by: Sarah Eden, Executive Officer, Ashington Town Council

1. Purpose of the meeting

The meeting was arranged by Constable Callum Wallace, Ashington Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) to agree practical partnership action at Paddock Woods, a recognised hotspot for anti-social behaviour (ASB).

It followed the NPT's own meeting with Northumbria Police's Design Out Crime Officer, whose survey of the site on 27th August 2026 produced a set of recommendations. Partners met on site to see the issues first-hand and agree who would take each forward.

Paddock Woods comprises a wooded area, a large field, a playground and a skate park. Housing surrounds it on three sides, with a new-build site on the fourth. Police data in the Design Out Crime report shows 27 calls about ASB and public safety in the last 12 months, 11 of them about youths on motorcycles. Residents believe the true level is higher, as daily incidents are not routinely reported.

2. National context: off-road bikes, Sur-Rons and e-scooters

The issues at Paddock Woods reflect a problem seen across the UK. Police forces from Cumbria to Somerset, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and London report rising ASB linked to off-road motorbikes, Sur-Ron style electric bikes and privately owned e-scooters.

- **Sur-Ron and similar e-motorbikes.** These are light, quiet and fast, with standard models reaching around 45mph and modified versions far more. Most are built for off-road use only and are not road legal.
- **Off-road petrol motorbikes and quads.** Long-standing across the North East, causing noise, damage to green spaces and risk to walkers, children and dogs.
- **Private e-scooters.** Legal to buy but illegal to ride anywhere in public, including roads, pavements, cycle lanes and parks. They can only be used on private land with the landowner's permission. Only government-approved rental scheme scooters may be used in public.

The common thread is that these machines are widely sold, often bought as gifts for young people, and frequently seen as toys rather than motor vehicles. Forces nationally have run pre-Christmas campaigns urging parents not to buy them, this includes Northumbria Police.

3. Northumbria Police messaging and the legal position

Northumbria Police's message is consistent and regularly repeated: these vehicles can be bought legally but riding them in public will see them seized and crushed. Parents are asked to understand the law before buying one for a child.

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The legal position:

- Off-road motorbikes and most Sur-Ron style e-motorbikes are motor vehicles. They need to be road legal, registered, taxed and insured, with a licensed rider, to be used on a road. Off-road bikes may only be ridden on private land with the owner's permission, never in parks, on footpaths or on public open space.
- Private e-scooters are treated as motor vehicles and cannot be ridden in any public place.
- Offences can be prosecuted under the Road Traffic Act 1988. Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 allows a warning to be issued and the vehicle then seized and destroyed if the behaviour continues. The Design Out Crime report also notes Council powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (noise), and parental liability for permitting use.

Recent Northumbria Police publicity includes:

- **Festive season warning (December 2025).** They urged the public to learn the rules on e-bikes and e-scooters before Christmas, noting these items are increasingly on children's wish lists. It reported seizing 286 electric motorbikes, 132 e-scooters and 204 illegally adapted pedal cycles since 2024. This is being repeated now.
- **South East Northumberland crackdown (May 2026).** NPTs in Ashington, Cramlington and Seaton Delaval, working with Northumberland County Council, seized 16 e-scooters, three e-bikes (two of them Sur-Rons), a motorcycle and two mopeds in one month. Inspectors made clear that vehicles ridden illegally in public spaces will be seized and crushed.

The Design Out Crime Officer observed that, despite this messaging, children at the skate park still see these bikes as desirable toys.

4. Enforcement challenges

The powers to deal with these vehicles are adequate; the difficulty is getting close enough to use them.

- **No safe pursuit.** Officers cannot chase riders through parks, footpaths and housing estates without putting the rider and the public at serious risk.
- **Speed and agility.** E-motorbikes are fast and quiet and can use narrow paths, cut-throughs and gaps in fencing that vehicles cannot follow.
- **Masked riders.** Riders routinely wear face coverings, balaclavas or helmets to hide their identity. Unregistered bikes have no plates, so neither rider nor machine can easily be identified from CCTV or witness accounts.
- **Escape routes.** At Paddock Woods, the many open entry and exit points give riders easy ways in and out, which the Design Out Crime Officer identified as the key weakness.
- **Under-reporting.** Riders know they are in the wrong and leave when they see authorities. Residents do not always report incidents, so police data understates the problem.

Even where a rider is not identified, a bike shown to have been used as a nuisance can be seized and destroyed. The report cites forensic tagging spray, used successfully in South Shields and Sunderland, as one way to link a bike or rider to an incident later.

5. Local partnership working

The Ashington NPT works closely with partners to get round these enforcement barriers.

- **Asset Watch and CCTV.** The NPT works closely with Asset Watch, which monitors the Town Council's CCTV network, to spot riders, share footage and build evidence.
- **Drones.** Drones are used to follow riders from the air, without a dangerous ground chase, and track them back to their home addresses. Officers can then seize the bike and deal with the rider. Ashington was identified as the worst-affected town in the county for off-road motorcycle ASB in 2023, when more than 1,300 cases were reported across Northumberland, and drones were deployed across south east Northumberland in response. Northumberland County Council's drone specialists also support the NPT.
- **Landlords.** Where a rider is traced to a rented home, the landlord or housing provider can be involved. ASB by a household member may breach tenancy conditions, and Northumbria Police has previously warned that tenants could face eviction.

6. Site walk and Design Out Crime findings

All present walked the site, and PC Wallace talked through the pointers from the Design Out Crime report. The main issues seen, and the report's suggested responses, were:

Issue observed	**Design Out Crime recommendation**
Broken gates and fencing. Only two points have any access restriction, and one is no longer effective. A gap in the south east corner allows vehicles in, with tyre tracks from motorbikes visible. Many of the birds mouth fencing installed to keep vehicles off the grass, are broken.	Repair or replace gates, fencing and barriers so they do their job. Reinstate a barrier at the vehicle access; neighbour services access should be maintained via key.
Free passage along many paths and onto the field. Most entrances are open footpaths, giving riders easy entry and escape.	Consider calming measures at entry and exit points to slow riders. These must be balanced with public rights of way and access for wheelchairs, prams and cycles.
Inadequate lighting. Little natural or artificial light where offending takes place.	Light paths, entrances and exits. Raise tree canopies and lower shrubs to let in natural light.
Limited CCTV. One camera, sited outside the perimeter, partly obscured by foliage. Offenders know where it is and avoid it.	Check whether foliage limits coverage and whether the camera can identify people and bikes. Consider coverage of other parts of the site.

Overgrown planting. Low canopies and tall shrubs block sightlines and create hidden areas, used for drinking and fires.	Create gaps and clear sightlines so users can see ahead before entering an area (subject to nesting seasons and wildlife).
Litter and dumped items. A large amount of litter and dumped items, smashed toy cars, and fires set around the youth shelter.	Clear litter, damage and graffiti quickly to stop disorder becoming normal (the "broken windows" effect).
No rules on display. Few signs set expectations at entrances.	Install signs at entrances setting out the law on motorbikes and scooters and the enforcement action that will follow.
No staff presence out of hours.	Encourage a sense of community ownership, for example through park users, parents, volunteers or wardens.

The report also suggests education inputs to schools and youth groups through Northumbria Police's Prevention Through Education team, and fire-setting education from Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

7. Impact on the community

Partners agreed that the human cost of this behaviour is significant and is changing how local people use the park.

- **Families.** Parents no longer feel comfortable letting their children go to the park unsupervised, even though the playground and skate park are well used.
- **Adults and dog walkers.** People feel intimidated and are choosing not to walk their dogs on their usual routes, especially after dark.
- **Normalisation.** There is a growing sense that misuse of this valuable outdoor space is becoming the norm. The Design Out Crime Officer warned that, if left unchecked, the park will become a hostile place for the families and young people who use it properly, rather than for those causing the problems. Is this already the case?

Paddock Woods is a well-maintained green space surrounded by homes. The aim of the actions below is to give it back to the community who use it legitimately.

8. Actions agreed

No.	Action	Lead	Timescale
1	Repair broken fencing and gates.	NCC Green Spaces	To be confirmed
2	Install signs at entrances setting out the law on off-road bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters.	NCC Green Spaces	To be confirmed

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3	Identify entry and exit points onto Summerhouse Lane where very large boulders would form an effective barrier.	NCC Green Spaces	To be confirmed
4	Check with Asset Watch that the CCTV camera is not restricted by trees in any way, and whether it could be better positioned.	Ashington Town Council	28/10/2026
5	Raise the volume of litter and dumped items with NCC Neighbourhood Services, to arrange clearance and regular removal so that disorder does not become normalised.	ATC and NCC Green Spaces (jointly)	28/10/2026
6	Look at funding for pavement solutions.	NCC Green Spaces and County Councillors	To be confirmed
7	Include lighting in the funding package for the new play area, being developed jointly by NCC and ATC.	NCC and ATC	Project start date April 2027