

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Environment and Communities Working Group

Time and date

Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 13:00

Place

Town Council office

TO: **All Members Of The Environment and Communities Working Group**

Working Group members

Cllr Graham Brown
Cllr Mike Greener
Cllr Paul Hillier
Cllr Ayrin Khan
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart
Cllr Jane Turton

Dear Councillor

The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

Iain McCready
Proper Officer
05 June 2026

Members' Apologies

Members are requested to submit their apologies and any Declarations of Interest on the relevant form attached to this agenda to Chief.Officer@Berwick-tc.gov.uk by 5pm on the day before the meeting.

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AGENDA

1. Election of Chair for the Administrative Year

Councillors are asked to elect a Chair for the meetings of the Working Group for the 2026/27 administrative year.

2. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Disclosures of Interest.

Please see attached form.

4. Notes of the Previous Meeting

To agree the notes of the previous meeting.

5. Future Operation of the Working Group

To consider how the Working Group will operate during the municipal year, including agenda-setting, information-only updates, external reports, questions and follow-up actions, and the management of officer workload and agenda deadlines.

6. Decisions from Full Council

To receive update on decisions log.

7. Town Forum Updates

No update

8. Northumbria Water

Councillors to update the Working Group.

9. Horticultural Works

To receive an update on the town's floral displays and to consider additional tree planting on Marygate, including location, maintenance, permissions and public realm implications. This item is intended to support forward planning for town centre improvements and the effective use of available resources.

10. Woodland Walk

To receive a verbal update from the Operations Manager.

11. Salmon Queen 2026

Update from the Task Group.

12. Play Areas and Splash Park: Current Position

To receive an update on the current position regarding the Council's play areas and Splash Park, including issues identified through routine inspections, repairs undertaken or scheduled, and the recent failure of the Splash Park computer system. The Working Group is asked to note the current position and consider any wider matters arising from the update, including future planning, budget pressures, and reporting arrangements for play areas and the Splash Park.

13. Public Bins: Operational Management and Member Involvement

To consider how decisions relating to the siting, replacement and removal of public bins should be managed, including which matters can be dealt with operationally by officers and managers, and which matters should be referred to the Working Group for discussion.

The item is intended to clarify responsibilities, support effective time management, and ensure that future Working Group agendas focus on matters requiring member consideration.

14. Reports from Outside Bodies

To receive reports from the following:

1. Green Table
2. Town and Parish Councils Liaison Group
3. NCC Environment and Transport Group

15. Items for Future Meetings and Workload Planning

To consider any additional items members may wish to bring forward for future Working Group meetings, including the purpose of the item, any supporting information required, and the likely impact on officer workload.

This item is intended to support forward planning, agenda management and the proportionate use of officer and member time, taking account of current work pressures and capacity.



Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council

Disclosure of Interests Form

(Localism Act 2011)

Notification by a Member of a Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Interest in a Matter under Consideration at a Meeting

Please complete the form below to indicate any agenda items in which you have an interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary or other interest in an item, please also indicate whether you wish to speak (refer to the Council's Code of Conduct for details).

As required by the Localism Act 2011, I declare that I have a disclosable pecuniary or personal interest in the following matter(s):

MEETING: _____

DATE: _____

NAME OF COUNCILLOR: _____

Agenda Item No.	Type of Interest (Disclosable Pecuniary / Other)	Reason for Interest	Wish to Speak (Yes/No)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to the Chief Officer before the meeting begins.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Environment and Communities Working Group

Time and date

Monday 07 April 2026 at 18:00

Place

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council, Unit 1, 82-88 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland
TD15 1BN

Group Members

Cllr Jane Turton – Chair
Cllr Janice Bowden
Cllr Robert Bruce
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart

In Attendance

Cllr Jane Turton – Chair
Cllr Janice Bowden
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart
Cllr Mike Greener
Stephen Robinson – Operations Manager

Notes

1. Apologies for Absence

The meeting began with Apologies for Absence. Apologies were received from Cllr Mackenzie. Cllr Bruce had sent apologies to the Chief Officer, but he was on annual leave so they were received after the meeting.

2. Disclosures of Interest

The Chair asked if there were any disclosures of interest. None were received.

3. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes from the previous meeting were discussed. Cllrs highlighted the need to discuss Christmas Lights and followed up on some outstanding tasks such as the reduction of the three tier planters to two tiers at Spittal.

4. Decisions from Full Council

Environment and Communities Working Group [In-person] - 2026-04-07

The Chair provided an update on the decisions log from the Full Council. There was a detailed discussion about various sites and projects. The group noted the progress of the decisions and were happy that there was progress. The frustration with the length of time for the legal transfer for the Woodland Walk was discussed. Cllrs asked for a slight re format of the spread sheet.

5. Salmon Queen

The Chair discussed the notes of the previous Working Group meeting. There was discussion about drone flight law changes, the need for a local photographer, social media influencers. The group discussed the progress on the planning for the 2026 event and thanked the group for the progress being made. The RNLI and Coastguard escort was also discussed.

6. Town Forum Update

There had been no meeting of the Town Forum.

7. Northumbria in Bloom

The progress on Northumbria in Bloom was discussed, including work with the Community Trust and Greener Berwick to help improve the bed on Castlegate. The news of the arrival of the summer plants into the poly tunnels was welcomed. The positive comments on the winter/spring planting were noted and the staff thanked for their hard work.

8. Woodland Walk

The deed of transfer is with the legal team at NCC. BTC solicitors have sent over the necessary amendments and were awaiting comments from NCC. The slow progress was discussed but it was recognised that it was out of the control of BTC.

9. War Memorials

It was noted that the transfer was still with NCC and BTC were awaiting them sending over the necessary paperwork. Again, the length of time the process is taking was commented on.

10. 5 Arches Park

Officers updated the group that BTC is awaiting a meeting with NCC to discuss the ongoing projects. Officers were to chase NCC.

11. Allotments

The group noted that the work to reinstate the water to 5 Arches was underway. Officers updated the group on the situation with allotments being vacated and re-let. The waiting list is still sat at 14. Officers are chasing a meeting with NCC to discuss new/extending sites. The need for signage on all the allotment sites was discussed, and officers were tasked with bringing costings back to a future meeting.

After all the discussions on projects that are being held up with delays at NCC, the group discussed compiling a letter to Glen Sanderson and the three ward councillors to ask if they were able to aid BTC in the progression of outstanding projects.

12. Pocket Park Palace Green

Officers updated the group that permission from the Scouts had been received and a design would be drawn up for approval with the work to take place later in the year.

Several items were added.

13. Play Parks

The conditions report was discussed. The key maintenance issues were prioritised which included, the surface at Osbourne and Newfields and the out-of-date park signage. Officers were tasked with bringing costings back to a future meeting.

14. Grove Gardens South

The group were informed that the flyers were ready to distribute. Cllrs Stewart, Smith and Kahn were going to post them in the area surrounding the park.

15. Bus Fairs

The group discussed the discrepancies in fares on certain services. The reason for the difference is bus passes and reduced fares work on busses that are heading to the BGH even if you are only travelling to a destination on that route but do not cover cross border travel.

The group raised concerns that for those living in North Northumberland or the Borders this was not good and should be addressed at a national level by lobbying MPs and LGAs

16. Campervan Park

During the discussion the group commented on the issues caused by unauthorised campervans being parked and the lack of enforcement being undertaken by NCC. Issues included taking up needed parking space in residential areas, waste disposal and litter.

Several potential sites were discussed with pros and cons considered for all. The site members thought would be best placed was the land adjacent to Sandstell Road in Spittal. This land is owned by a local property developer but is a large site that will take many years to develop.

17. Public Toilet Issue

Members discussed the issue of the lack of public toilets within Berwick, exacerbated by the extended closure of the Woolmarket toilet and changing spaces.

The group highlighted the growing tourist economy and higher visitor numbers and the problems that increased footfall combined with a lack of public facilities will bring, especially on local hospitality businesses.

18. Items for Future Agendas

The existing list of Items for Future Agendas was

1. Town Centre Garden/Additional Trees
2. Assets for community value
3. Public Access Defibrillators
4. Spa Well Issues
5. Far Eat Campaign Memorial
6. Public Water Fountains (New)
7. Community Energy Project

Resolved

To recommend to Full Council that:

Items 8-10 – Full Council to approve officers to write a letter to Glen Sanderson and the three Berwick Ward Councillors requesting they help to expedite the outstanding projects.

Item 16 – Full Council to approve Officers to contact the landowner and arrange a meeting to discuss the potential benefits to both of them as a business but also the wider community and tourist economy by creating a semi-temporary campervan park on part of the site.

Support any following planning application for a campervan park through the council's role as a consultee for planning.

Item 17 – Write to NCC at Director level and to Nicole Brooke, to request an update on the time frame of the re-opening of the Woolmarket toilets and enquire into the feasibility of a set of temporary public Environment and Communities Working Group [In-person] - 2026-04-07

conveniences to be installed in the town either at Wool Market or on the site of the old toilet in the Eastern Lane Car Park, both of which have drainage and mains water.

Dear all,

I am writing to raise a concern regarding the play park in Newfields.

The current playpark is very small and does not appear to reflect the level of use it receives. There are a large number of children in the area, and the site is regularly busy. With St Mary's School located nearby, there is a consistent and growing demand for safe and accessible play facilities.

At present, the equipment feels limited and the space itself does not seem sufficient for the number of families using it. I believe there is available surrounding space that could be used to expand the play area and improve the facilities.

I am requesting that the council review the site with a view to:

Expanding the playpark where possible

Installing additional and updated equipment suitable for a wider range of ages

Improving the overall capacity and usability of the area

With summer approaching, the need for adequate outdoor play space will only increase.

Thank you

GREEN TABLE EVENT

Organised & hosted by [Community Action Northumberland](#)

14th May 2026 – held at the Voluntary Forum, Tweed Street, Berwick

Local groups represented

- Greener Berwick
- Holy Trinity Parish Church
- Berwick Town Council
- Rothbury Sustainable Energy Group

Organisations represented

- [Groundwork](#)
- NEY (North East & Yorkshire) Net Zero Hub
- [VONNE](#) (Voluntary Organisations Network North East)
- [What a Wonderful World Festival](#) (25-28th June)
- [Reheat](#)
- [Nicro](#) (National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise)
- [Karbon Homes](#)
- [Rural Design Centre](#)
- [Community First Yorkshire](#)
- [EARN](#) (Energy Advice in Rural Northumberland)

Presentations given

Reheat Neil Harrison spoke about the decarbonisation of heating (which has been a LOT slower than the decarbonisation of electricity): most urgently important for those properties which are currently reliant on either bottled gas or oil for their heating – this is likely to include several dozen properties within the Berwick TC area (farms and farm cottages north of the Tweed). Options will include woodchip boilers, or heat pumps: small scale district heating was also discussed.

Community First Yorkshire Charles Forman spoke about the example of [Village Green](#), which is a county-wide community climate project in North Yorkshire, helping people take practical steps towards a more sustainable future.

All organisations represented would be happy to assist BTC where appropriate.

Networking

It was interesting to hear about the success of the photovoltaic panels which were installed on the roof of Berwick Parish Church and which now contribute (?) 50% of the electricity required. BTC may want to ensure that any new premises we acquire has something similar.

TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON WORKING GROUP

Chaired by Cllr Isobel Hunter

21st May 2026 – held online via Teams

Presentations given

Environment & Transport update (attached) – given by Paul Jones

It's worth noting that under Section 7, £450K has been obtained from the "Transport for City Regions" Fund, to carry out feasibility & business development work for a small number of "major infrastructure" schemes, *including work at Berwick Railway Station*.

Planning update – given by Rob Murfin

- Consultation on the review of the Northumberland Local Plan has started, and the CRUCIAL importance of engagement with this process was stressed.
- Approx 37,000 will be OBLIGED to be approved within Northumberland during the life of the Local Plan – that's equivalent of a new Berwick, Alnwick, and Morpeth put together.
- If we don't make representations about where the housing goes, or what jobs, infrastructure and facilities are needed to support them, then someone else will decide without our input.
- The number of applications that are heard by NCC Planning Committee will be drastically reduced, with decisions taken by officers based on the content of the Local Plan.
- The existence of a robust NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN to supplement the Local Plan is even more essential
- In the absence of NCC Planning Committee meetings, the ongoing existence of the BTC Planning Committee will become almost the only public forum locally in which the merits of individual planning applications can be debated – we will remain a small but vital democratic tool within the wider planning system.

Rob Murfin mentioned his personal commitment to visit every town and parish council in the county (about 150?) but, apart from regularly attending Berwick Town Forum, has he actually come to address the Town Council? An invitation may be worthwhile at some point.

Cllr Thomas Stewart



Northumberland County Council

Town and Parish Council Liaison Working Group

Date: 21st May 2026

Environment and Transport Update

Report of: Paul Jones, Director of Environment and Transport

Cabinet Members: Cllr John Riddle, Environment, Rural and Farming; Cllr Mark Mather, Roads and Highways; Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader

UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT KEY PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES & SERVICE ACTIVITIES

1. The Northumberland Line

Since the last meeting in January 2026 all 6 of the Northumberland Line stations have now entered service, with Northumberland Park opening on 22 February (where passengers can connect to the Tyne & Wear Metro) and Bedlington Station opening on 29 March 2026. This completes the first phase of the Northumberland Line scheme to reintroduce passenger rail services across SE Northumberland. The scheme which has cost £336m to deliver has been hugely successful – with over 1.5m passenger journeys being made on the line since it opened in December 2024.

Due to the success of the service, the rail operator, Northern Trains, is working with Northumberland County Council and NECA to increase capacity on the line by bringing in additional carriages from other locations. This will enable more 4 carriage trains to operate at peak times so that passengers continue to benefit from a high standard of service and comfort.

The Council is already looking to build on the success of the rail line opening – with ‘Northumberland Line - Phase 2’ with a feasibility study being commissioned using funding from NECA to investigate possible rail extensions including station(s) at Woodhorn and Newbiggin.

Funding is also being sought through NECA to increase capacity at the Newsham Station car park and we are also continuing work to improve the ‘active travel’ infrastructure connections to the rail stations, with the Bedlington to Cambois active travel scheme now having reached Bedlington Station and proposals for an active travel route connecting Bebside Station to Blyth Town Centre also being out for public consultation.

1.1 Other Rail

We are in discussion with NECA regarding fares and ticketing arrangements relating to rail services along the Tyne Valley with the aim of making rail travel more attractive and accessible along this route. Building on the Northumberland Line's success the North East Mayor is keen to see POP introduced across the local rail network as soon as possible, and work is already underway to look at how this could be achieved in the context of the Railways Bill and rail industry reform.

We are also continuing to push for a stopping service on the east coast main line, a station at Belford and will keep the pressure on Train Operating Companies to add services back into the county in future timetable revisions

2. Blyth Relief Road

The planning application for the dualling of the A1061 Laverock Hall Road and creating a new link road between Chase Farm Drive and Ogle Drive was approved in April 2026. This £59.903m scheme aims to reduce congestion, improve journey times, support walking, cycling, and the economic growth and regeneration of Blyth. Securing planning approval marks a key milestone in the scheme enabling it to progress into funding confirmation and construction delivery.

The next key milestone for the scheme is to secure DfT funding for its delivery as part of the Government's Major Roads Network programme. NCC has submitted a refreshed Outline Business Case to the Department for Transport (DfT) which is currently under review with an outcome expected to be announced later this summer. NCC has already committed 15% match funding to the scheme and is continuing to progress land acquisition and detailed design so that it is able to quickly proceed into delivery once funding is secured.

3. Cycling & Walking

We continue to identify further funding sources to support the delivery of Active Travel infrastructure across the County which will provide safe, direct and well-maintained infrastructure for our residents to walk, wheel and cycle.

Work is progressing well on the delivery of the routes from Bedlington to Cambois and from Hexham to Corbridge. Much of the infrastructure through Bedlington is now complete and already being well used with remaining works out to Cambois still on track from completion by end of March 2027. Similarly, the Hexham / Corbridge scheme is progressing well, and we expect the infrastructure in Hexham to be complete and operational this summer, with teams then constructing phase 2 of the scheme to connect to Corbridge, again with completion of the entire route planned for March 2027. Plans are also being progressed for the completion of the route to connect Woodhorn Road to Ashington rail station, Blyth town centre to Bebside station and a route connecting Blyth Beach to St Mary's in Whitley Bay.

Design work is also progressing for new active travel infrastructure along the route of Hadrian's Wall between Greenhead to the Sill, including a spur to the east that will link to the Reivers Trails, an exciting new network of recreational and way-marked

routes developed to connect Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site with Kielder Water and Forest Park in the North of Northumberland, and NCN 68, the Pennine Cycleway.

Due to the sensitive and archaeologically significant setting both alongside Hadrian's Wall WHS and the Military Road which is a scheduled ancient monument, Historic England has been consulted about the proposals and have provided input to the design of the route to ensure the integrity of the site is maintained, while providing a secure, segregated and comfortable route for cyclists. The delivery of this new infrastructure is subject to funding approvals through the Borderlands programme and aims to support the tourism and visitor economy along the Hadrian's Wall corridor. We are continuing to look for opportunities to fund improvements on other leisure routes outside of towns which will help to support rural connections, supporting the visitor economy.

4. Bus Franchising - Update

Bus franchising gives the region full control over timetables, routes and fares, with operators contracted to deliver all services. NECA's Cabinet has now given its approval for the franchising scheme to move to the next stage which will involve an independent audit of the Franchising Scheme Assessment (FSA) to test its affordability, value for value for money and the robustness of the analysis. Subject to a positive outcome from the audit the FSA would then be published and subject to a 12 week public consultation exercise. After consultation responses are analysed, NECA will take a final decision in early 2027 on whether or not to proceed with Franchising. If it's decided to proceed then detailed network design would be undertaken and an operating model confirmed, procurement of operators would be progressed with the aim of commencing the new arrangements by Autumn 2029.

5. Strategic Road Network

5.1 A1 Safety Improvements

Following funding for the dualling scheme being withdrawn by Government, the Department for Transport has tasked National Highways to undertake a review of the A1 from Morpeth through to the Scottish Border to identify alternative safety and congestion improvements for the route. This study has now been completed and a range of safety improvements are going to be implemented within the existing highway boundaries of the A1 at various junctions and cross-over points along the route at an estimated cost totalling ~£20m. These works are now progressing into detailed design, and it is anticipated will delivered within the current National Highways Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) programme period (RIS3) which runs until 31st March 2031.

NCC continues to work with National Highways to try and mitigate the 'rat running' impacts that increasing traffic volumes and congestion at peak periods on the A1 is having on the local road network, particularly along the A697 and settlements like Felton. Work to tackle rat-running through Felton has included use of digital signage

on the A1, introduction of 20mph speed limits in Felton and changes to data accessed by satnav systems to try and dissuade drivers from using this route. We have also now agreed diversion routes with National Highways for key sections of the A1 when accidents/incidents occur and have also put in place arrangements for traffic to be alerted to congestion on the A1 at Felton when heading south at Alnwick, with the option of local traffic being able to divert onto the A1068.

Work to progress the provision of new fixed point and average speed cameras at appropriate locations along the A697 corridor (as well as at other key locations countywide) to improve road safety within settlements along those A road routes most affected by speeding traffic is on-going.

5.2 A19 Improvements

Following concerted pressure by the County Council as well as other key stakeholders, the Department for Transport and National Highways have now confirmed that an improvement scheme will progress through the Development Stage as part of RIS3 (2026–2031). This will entail:-

- Business case development
- Options design
- Public consultation (expected to start in summer 2026)

Subject to a successful business case being developed, the scheme would then proceed to construction during RIS4 (expected to be 2031 to 2036). This scheme is expected to include:-

- Increased junction capacity
- Potential grade separation or major reconfiguration
- Improved safety and reliability
- Better connectivity for housing and employment growth

However, DfT have given no commitment to addressing the congestion issues at Seaton Burn roundabout which remains a significant concern for NCC and we are continuing to work with other LAs, NECA and key stakeholders to press the case for major investment to improve Seaton Burn roundabout.

5.3 A69

From April 2026 the Council is no longer responsible for the maintenance and provision of winter services along the A69 following the end of the 30 year Design Build Finance Operate contract between National Highways and Roadlink, Newcastle City Council and Northumberland. The Council is continuing to press DfT for improvements to the A69.

6. Highway Maintenance Activity

6.1 Local Transport Plan 2026-2029

We are now in the process of delivering the year 1 schemes detailed in the new 3 year LTP programme which runs from 2026/27 to 2028/29. The overall value of the 3-year LTP capital programme being over £102m, which includes £4m of NCC's own

capital funds to targeted specifically at additional maintenance of U&C roads and footways.

The first big block of maintenance activity is the delivery of our surface dressing programme. We have been undertaking preparatory works across the road network to address defects and regularise road surfaces within the areas that will be subject to surface dressing works. Surface dressing is a preventative maintenance method that involves spraying a bitumen emulsion on the surface of the road and then rolling in stone chippings – this process seals the road surface from water penetration, improves skid resistance and ride quality, and extends the lifespan of the asset. The Council is investing in a major surface dressing programme in 2026 which is due to start in mid-May and involves a total of 19 sites being repaired and improved covering an area of 443,290 square metres, the equivalent of 62 football pitches, at an overall cost of £4.730m.

6.2 Trial Preventative Maintenance Scheme

NCC is undertaking the trial use of an innovative ‘rejuvenating’ product this summer which will be applied to sections of roads which are rated ‘amber’ in terms of their condition and which would not normally be prioritised for capital maintenance works until they deteriorated further. The maintenance technique involves the application of a product that acts to ‘rejuvenates’ the bitumen to help prevent water ingress/seal cracking and is expected to enhance asset life by ~5 yrs.

6.3 Update on Major Schemes

Mitford Road Landslip - Work is progressing well on the £4.5m scheme to stabilise the landslip on the B6343 Mitford Road near Morpeth. Piling works and construction of the cantilevered concrete slab are complete and works are progressing on the construction of the new road surface and riverside embankment. The road remains closed with diversionary routes in place which are considered to be working well. It is still anticipated that the scheme will be completed in the summer 2026.

Corbridge Car Park expansion – The implementation of this scheme has been delayed as it is taking longer than anticipated to conclude the legal documentation to complete the acquisition of the land required to enable the scheme to progress into construction. We remain confident that this scheme to provide an additional 43 parking bays in Corbridge long stay car park off the B6321 will progress during 2026/27.

Alnwick Cobbles – We are currently finalising soft landscaping details and tree infrastructure and once final details are agreed and the works target cost confirmed we will then proceed into delivery of the scheme aiming to commence works on site in late summer. It is expected that works will need to span across 2026/27 and into 2027/28 to mitigate loss of parking spaces and disruption to the town centre economy during the construction period. We are also conscious of the need to co-ordinate the works with the other construction activity occurring in Alnwick Town Centre involving Northumberland Hall/Bailiffgate Museum and improvements to Alnwick Bus Station.

Swinhoe Cross Roads – Detailed design work and costings for options to improve the layout of the current crossroads, which has a poor accident record, are now complete and an options evaluation has been undertaken. The Council is seeking feedback on the options and the evaluation results from key stakeholders and the general public, with meetings scheduled later this month including displays of the options work and staff being on hand to answer any queries and take feedback at the North Community Forum meeting in Bamburgh on 28th May.

The feedback received from the engagement activity will then be considered alongside the options evaluation work and costings to determine which of the designs should proceed into delivery. It is anticipated that construction of the scheme will start during 2026/27 and span into 2027/28, with the start date being subject to timings around land acquisition and utility works.

Berwick Castlegate Car Park – following various studies and close dialogue with Historic England and other stakeholders design work is now on-going to develop plans to improve the Castlegate car park in Berwick as part of the scheme to secure permanent planning approval for the use of the grassed seasonal overflow area, which is essential to help manage the influx of visitors to the town over the busy summer period. A planning application will be submitted for the scheme later this year.

7. Transport for City Regions Funding

The Council has secured £450k in Transport for City Regions funds from NECA to progress feasibility and business case development work for 3 proposed major infrastructure schemes. These include:

- Northumberland Line – Phase 2 – to investigate the feasibility of expanding the line and developing new stations at Woodhorn and Newbiggin and for provision of additional car parking capacity at Newsham Station.
- Berwick Rail Station Accessibility – to improve accessibility, transport interchange arrangements and active travel connections for Berwick Rail station working with the rail operators and Network Rail. This will include the potential to develop a new car park next to the northbound platform, lift access provision at the station, improvements for bus interchange arrangements and new active travel infrastructure to improve the walking, wheeling and cycling route from Highfields to Marygate past the station.
- Holy Island Gateway – to provide improved active travel infrastructure between the A1 and Holy Island, including a separate active travel route over the Causeway connecting to the settlement, parking improvements, changes to traffic priority and public realm and wayfinding improvements within the settlement. A new bridge over the River Low connecting the mainland to the Causeway is also proposed as part of a separate funding bid through NECA's Highways Structures Fund.

8. Climate Change

8.1 Warmer Homes

Our Warmer Homes team has successfully delivered year 1 of two major 3 year Government funding programmes, namely:

- £2.67m for Warm Homes: Local Grant, to improve more than 150 privately owned and privately rented homes in Northumberland, with 42 having had retrofit measures installed by the end of year 1.
- £3.5m for Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, co-funded with an additional £3.5 million from the Council. This is enabling up to 400 Council-owned homes to be upgraded with more energy efficient measures, with 87 having had retrofit measures installed by the end of year 1.

Through the Gas Safe scheme which targets the most vulnerable residents and provides funding for gas repairs, gas boiler and fire servicing and £500 towards gas appliance replacements (eg broken boilers/ broken gas fires) - the team assisted 37 homes to access this support during 2025/26 and were able to match fund the Gas Safe grants with Household Support Funding to fund the total cost of boiler replacements for vulnerable residents who would otherwise have not been able to heat their homes.

Between 1 June 2025 – 18 March 2026 the team delivered 225 Household Support Fund interventions supported by 202 home visits. These interventions improve the safety, energy efficiency, and overall living conditions of disadvantaged and vulnerable residents by addressing key issues within their homes that impact health and well-being including taking a preventative approach. Same-day payments can be made for emergency requests to the Household Support Fund for fuel and help for residents with fuel bills. Boiler replacements, energy efficiency solutions and immediate heating help was also provided for example electric blankets, carbon monoxide alarms, ventilation improvements and temporary oil filled radiators.

The Warmer Homes team also established a project to generate private sector funding through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) to upgrade the energy efficiency of 409 council homes. This generated over £2.9m of private sector funding, co-funded by £165,170 council funding to install improved cavity wall insulation and 71 MCS-compliant solar PV systems.

In total, across all these schemes in 2025/6 the Warmer Homes Team have helped over 1210 residents; installing measures in over 530 properties and giving detailed in-person energy advice to over 680 residents. The excellent work of the Warmer Homes team has been recognised regionally and nationally, most recently by the award for “Best Council” and “Best Vulnerable Customer Support” at the 2026 Regional (North East) Energy Efficiency Awards – the 2nd and 3rd time respectively in a row we have won these awards.

8.2 Renewable Energy Schemes

In October 2025 the Council accepted £350,000 in grant funding through the Mayoral Renewables Fund, co-funded by the Council, to install solar PV on 10 schools across the county by March 2026. Installations were completed at Belford Primary School, Choppington Primary, Hillcrest, Horton Grange Primary, Kielder Primary and Nursery, Linton Primary, New Deleval Primary, Seahouses Primary, Stead Lane First School and an installation at Wooler First School will be completed in 2026 due to ongoing construction work at site. Schools were selected that had high proportions of Free School Meals, challenges associated with rurality, in addition to the condition and suitable orientation of their roofs. Initial modelling indicates potential cost savings of £50,000 per year across all sites could be achieved.

On 15th December 2025 the council was invited to submit a business case to secure up to £3.096m Borderlands Energy Investment Programme funding, subject to business case approval, for the Woodhorn “Powering the Past and the Future” project. This project will install a range of low carbon technologies, including ground source heat pump (GSHP), solar panels, a lighting upgrade across the site to use LED lights, solar carports and battery storage. This project will enable the Woodhorn Mining museum to use the region’s rich industrial heritage to showcase the economic and environmental benefits of low carbon technologies and energy generation. Visitors and local school children will be able to see innovative technology in action. This will create an additional draw for tourists and enable the museum and local educational institutions to incorporate information from the system into their STEM programmes.

Renewable energy will significantly reduce the museum's carbon footprint and lower energy costs, enhance visitor experience and ensure energy reliability. The visible commitment to renewable energy will educate and inspire visitors about sustainable practices.

8.3 Northumberland Environment and Climate Fund

A total of 17 grassroots community projects across Northumberland are benefitting from the County Council’s Environment and Climate Fund this year. With the groups and organisations getting funding of up to £5,000 from a pot of £50,000 to help them make sustainable changes; tackling climate change and improving their local environment. This year’s successful projects span a wide range of activities, from forest school enhancement, nature corridors, cycling and active travel schemes to water quality monitoring, energy and insulation improvements as well as educational programmes and waste reduction – all with the aim of reducing emissions and enhancing the natural environment to support the council’s ambition of making Northumberland a net zero county by 2040.

9. Public Toilets Investment Programme

The Council has agreed an additional £1.56m capital funding in its Medium Term Financial Plan over the next 3 years to enable the completion of its Public Toilets Improvement Programme. The additional funding will mean that all 54 public toilets in the County will benefit from improvements, with the remaining 26 public toilets

being improved over the next 3 years. Details of the timing of refurbishment activity and scope of works needed at each facility are currently being developed.

Issues with repeated blockages at Alnmouth public toilets have not been fully resolved following changes made to cisterns, so some further works to improve the flow/falls within the drainage pipework serving the site are due to start in June. Access to toilets will be maintained during the works.

10. Grounds Maintenance

10.1 Supporting Nature in Our Green Spaces Review - Update

The Council gave an update on the '*Supporting Nature in our Green Spaces*' project to the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 29th April 2026. This project entails reviewing our grounds maintenance arrangements to identify how we can better support nature recovery and improve biodiversity, whilst maintaining a high level of visual amenity and improving the value for money of the Grounds Maintenance service. As part of the project we have undertaken some Pollinator Trails and have also conducted a 'Community Conversation' engagement exercise with the public and other key stakeholders to get an insight into people's attitudes about improving biodiversity through changes to grounds maintenance regimes, particularly those relating to how we manage areas of amenity grassland.

The engagement exercise and pollinator trials have provided a valuable insight into what changes to grounds maintenance activity are likely to be supported by the public, as well highlighting those types of areas where current maintenance regimes should be retained and has demonstrated that any reduction in grass-cutting frequency significantly and quickly improves biodiversity.

The scrutiny committee were supportive of the recommendations within the report and the proposed next steps which entailed:-

- The results of the survey and an update on the pollinator trials being sent to County Councillors, Local Councils and published on the Councils web pages, a press release will also be issued.
- Incorporating the Grounds Maintenance Review into the Council's programme of 'Value for Money Service Reviews' being undertaken as part of the BEST transformation programme – so that the findings of this process and those from the Community Conversation and Pollinator Trials and baseline data for the existing service can be used to design and develop the principals for a new Grounds Maintenance Operating Model and adoption of a range of new maintenance regimes.

It was noted that at this stage we only expected that around 10% of the areas currently maintained by NCC would have changes made, with the remaining 90% still being subject to the existing grounds maintenance regimes for grass cutting.

It was also noted that a comprehensive communication and engagement activity is essential as part of any implementation plan to ensure that the public are aware of

and understand the changes being made to support nature recovery and improved biodiversity in their local green spaces.

It is intended that over the summer and autumn Local councillors and town and parish councils will be consulted on the details of any proposed changes to grounds maintenance in their areas using detailed digital mapping information which shows which parcels of land are proposed to have changes made and what those changes would entail. This feedback will then be used to finalise the proposals and the proposed new operating arrangements for grounds maintenance will be reported to Cabinet in the Autumn of 2026 for implementation in the spring 2027/28.

10.2 Verge Works

We are fully prepared to undertake our verge maintenance activity for this years growing season utilising both our in-house teams with support from agricultural contractors, with cutting activity due to start in June and running through to end of July. We also continue to work with a range of stakeholders who manage specific sections of highway verge that have a high biodiversity / ecological value and which are maintained differently so that we strike an appropriate balance between supporting nature recovery whilst still ensuring the safety of road users.

11. Tree and Woodland Strategy – Update

The Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on progress with the development of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy (TAWs) on 29th April 2026 so that they could comment on the draft document prior to it being considered by Cabinet later this summer. The key issues detailed in the report and the TAWs are summarised below:

- The vision for the TAWs is to enrich Northumberland's landscapes by strengthening the quality, quantity, resilience and diversity of our trees and woodlands, creating a greener, safer county for current and future generations.
- The strategy recognises that trees and woodlands are incredibly important and valuable, providing a wide range of environmental and societal benefits. However, they can also present challenges and risks, including concerns raised by residents and issues associated with pests, diseases and tree safety.
- It is proposed that we adopt a strengthened, much more robust risk assessment-based approach to effectively manage the risks presented by the +4million trees in the Council's ownership or under its management.
- NCC has invested in piloting a new inspection approach in 2026/27, during which we will collect data to inform a more proportionate and sustainable inspection programme that reflects the scale of our responsibilities and how best to manage the risks that trees can pose to public safety. It is considered that the direction of travel after this pilot must be to permanently increase the

scope and effectiveness of our tree inspection schedule and as a result, enhance the volume of proactive, safety critical tree maintenance work undertaken by the Council.

- We will introduce new timeframes for how quickly we undertake an inspection following customer reports and enquiries, and a new methodology will be adopted for formal tree inspections that uses a comprehensive Tree Hazard, Risk Evaluation and Treatment System (THREATS).
- An amended approach will be adopted to tree enquiries that are not related to safety or risk, to better manage residents' expectations and to help support increasing the number of proactive inspections undertaken. This will be underpinned by a commitment to prioritise safety and not undertake non-essential work on trees which are otherwise in a healthy and safe condition.
- We will improve the clarity of our initial response to customers who request non-essential work to trees that the Council will not undertake, such as work requested to help improve satellite signal, reduce bird droppings, open impeded views etc.
- We will permit residents concerned about these issues to commission work at their own expense as long as that work has been agreed to by the council and a suitably qualified and insured tree surgeon is appointed to undertake that work.
- A new back-office system will be adopted to improve the recording of inspections, scheduling of work and responses to customer enquiries and service requests.
- We will create Woodland Management Plans for each woodland in our care, which will provide the foundation for funding bids to support improvements in the active management of NCC woodlands, including those in or on the edge of urban settings. We will seek to generate income from the sale of timber from woodland management activities, where viable to do so to help make our tree and woodland management more financially self-sustaining.
- A pilot project to test and evaluate active management principles in a small urban woodland in Northburn, Cramlington will be undertaken during 2026/27 which will provide evidence that supports applications for grant funding bids.
- Urban trees are a vital asset that contribute positively to the environment and the amenity of urban landscapes. Some trees planted many decades ago have reached maturity as the world around them has changed and there can be conflicting views expressed in respect of their current suitability for their setting but they provide immediate and long-term benefits to their local environment.
- The Council will act on concerns raised regarding urban trees as it would with other trees, if a tree presents an evidenced risk to people or infrastructure, we

will undertake work to mitigate that risk, but we won't undertake work based on people's preferences.

- Where non-essential work to a Council tree has been requested by a third party (e.g. residents) and has been agreed to in principle by the council the third party may then commission the work at their own expense subject to the specification for the work being agreed with the council in advance, and a suitably qualified and insured tree surgeon being appointed to undertake the work.
- NCC will actively seek to increase and enhance tree cover in Northumberland on NCC owned land and adopted public open spaces, and this includes within urban areas. This will require both new and replacement tree planting and our urban tree policy will always follow the principle of 'the right tree in the right place'.

12. Waste Management

From April 2026, the Government is introducing new Simpler Recycling rules across England. These rules mean all councils must collect the same set of recycling materials from all households.

Northumberland County Council is working to introduce these changes as soon as possible and has recently published the following update to outline what the new rules mean, how we are preparing, and what residents can expect.

What's Changing Nationally?

Under the new rules, councils must collect a wider range of materials for recycling. This expanded range of materials includes the following that we don't currently collect:

- Plastic pots, tubs and trays
- Glass bottles and jars
- Clean aluminium foils, trays, bottles and tubes
- Food and drink cartons (e.g. Tetra Pak)
- By March 2027: flexible plastics such as plastic bags and wrapping

Councils must also provide a **separate weekly food waste collection**.

Why Some Councils Won't Start on 1st April 2026

Many councils, including Northumberland, will not have the new services in place from day one because of:

- Insufficient Government funding to fully deliver the changes
- National delays in the supply of new refuse vehicles

- The need for major upgrades to waste processing facilities
- Complex planning, procurement and construction timescales

How Northumberland Is Preparing

We have been planning for Simpler Recycling for several years to create a cost efficient, environmentally responsible system.

In November 2025, Cabinet approved an investment of over £21 million to:

- Provide new recycling bins
- Upgrade reception and processing facilities
- Make major improvements to our Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)
- Prepare for the wider range of recycling materials

These improvements must be completed before new services can start.

When Will the New Dry Recycling Service Start?

Infrastructure upgrades are now progressing through procurement, planning and construction.

We expect to begin **phased introduction of the new dry recycling service in early 2027.**

Once final dates are confirmed, we will publish full details for residents.

What the New System Will Look Like

General Waste

No change to the current general waste collection service. This will continue to be collected **every two weeks.**

Recycling

To accommodate the expanded range of materials, collections will be made from **two separate recycling bins:**

Bin 1: Fibre Recycling Bin (New bin)

An additional 240litre wheeled bin with a black body and burgundy lid will be supplied to kerbside households for the separate collection of the following materials:

- Paper
- Card
- Cardboard

Bin 2: Mixed Recycling Bin (Existing bin repurposed)

Your existing recycling bin will remain and be repurposed for the collection of the following materials:

- Metal tins and cans
- Plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays
- Clean aluminium foils, trays, bottles and tubes
- Empty aerosol cans
- Glass bottles and jars
- Food and drink cartons
- Flexible plastics (March 2027)

Collection Pattern

Households will continue to receive a general waste collection once per fortnight and have the fibre recycling bin emptied the following week and then the mixed recycling bin emptied on the following fortnight's recycling collection day so that each recycling bin gets emptied once per month on an alternating four-week cycle.

An example of the collection pattern is shown below to help illustrate this.

Stream	Wee k 1	Wee k 2	Wee k 3	Wee k 4	Wee k 5	Wee k 6	Wee k 7	Wee k 8	Wee k 9	Wee k 10
General waste	Y		Y		Y		Y		Y	
Fibre Recycling		Y				Y				Y
Mixed Recycling				Y				Y		

Food Waste Collections

Phased Rollout

Weekly kerbside food waste collections will begin from autumn 2026, starting with around 90,000 households in:

- Southeast Northumberland (former Blyth Valley and Wansbeck District Council areas)
- Morpeth
- Pegswood
- Ponteland

Further rollout across the county will depend on securing additional funding in 2027/28.

What Residents Will Receive

- A 23litre outdoor food waste bin with an orange lid (Kerbside households only)
- A 5-litre kitchen caddy
- A roll of 52 caddy liners
- Information and instructions before the service begins

For those households with communal waste bins, we will work to identify suitable collection options. This will most likely to be a communal food waste bin.

Collected food waste will be transferred to an anaerobic digestion facility where it will be turned into renewable energy and fertiliser via the council's long term Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract.

Keeping Residents Informed

These are significant, once in a generation changes to waste and recycling in Northumberland. We are developing a dedicated communications campaign to keep residents updated on:

- When changes will happen
- What the new services include
- Which materials go in each bin
- When new bins will be delivered
- Where to find further information

More details will be shared with residents once final implementation dates are confirmed – the NCC web page detailing waste service changes can be found here [Simpler Recycling in Northumberland | Northumberland County Council](#)