

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Committee** held at Alnwick Adult Learning Centre, Lindisfarne Rd, Alnwick NE66 1AU on Thursday, 28 March 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT

G Castle (Chair)
(in the Chair)

MEMBERS

T Clark
G Hill
M Mather
M Swinbank

C Hardy
I Hunter
C Seymour
J Watson

OFFICERS

J Cooper
N Dawson
I Hewitt
R Little
N Snowdon

Strategic Programmes Manager
Countryside and Green Spaces Manager
RAMP Programme Manager
Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Principal Programme Officer

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

C Davidson
Sgt. D Stapleton

Borderline Greenway Community Interest Company
Northumbria Police

There were eight members of the public and one member of the press present.

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32 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bridgett, Pattison, Renner-Thompson, and Thorne.

33 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee meeting held on Thursday, 22 February 2024, as circulated, be a true record and signed by the Chair.

34 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Hunter noted that she had personal but non-prejudicial interests in item 6 of the agenda; petitions “Safety at Swinhoe” and “Petition seeking the Creation or Community Woodland between Shielfield Terrace & Prior Road, Berwick Upon Tweed”.

35 **NORTHUMBRIA POLICE**

Sergeant D Stapleton – Northumbria Police was in attendance to provide information to members regarding policing in the North Northumberland area.

Members noted that there were some boundary changes due to come into effect in June 2024 with Amble no longer being included in the Morpeth statistics and would be included within the Alnwick area.

Sergeant Stapleton addressed members regarding an article that had been written in a local newspaper suggesting that burglaries in Alnwick were on the rise with a 73% increase compared to last year, stating that the statistics used in the article were factually inaccurate and disproportional to the correct numbers. There had also been an update from the Home Office in 2023 with related changes to the classification of certain offences, including burglaries.

Members heard that in the past few years in Alnwick there had been ongoing drug related issues, with Northumbria Police executing several operations to tackle drug supply issues. Throughout 2022 and 2023 there had been a number of arrests made, paraphernalia found and mobile devices also seized from residential accommodation. There had also been several arson attacks including police cars set alight, since then a number of people had been remanded in custody until their court date in May 2024.

Northumbria Policing Neighbourhood units had also been working with several services to inform and prevent further crime and protect vulnerable people and had also attended Duchess High School to speak to students.

Members thanked Sergeant Stapleton for attending.

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36 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The committee received no questions.

37 **PETITIONS**

(a) There were no new petitions to be received by members.

(b)

i. Safety at Swinhoe

The North Northumberland Local Area Committee were requested to acknowledge the petition received from J Swind regarding road safety concerns at Swinhoe Crossroads.

J Rhind – Lead Petitioner addressed the Committee and made the following comments:

- A year ago, there was a near fatal accident involving a young mother of two at the Swinhoe Crossroads, her car was written off and although narrowly escaping serious injury, she required hospital treatment.
- The accident figures in the report excluded those unreported to police.
- The report stated that the biggest causes of accidents were “failing to look properly” and excessive speed; “looking properly” was not possible when facing a stone wall.
- The report stated that a number of interventions had been made at the junction over many years and none of those have reduced the accident rate, which was a clear acknowledgement that the problem highlighted in the petition could not be addressed through low cost measures.
- The Lead Petitioner welcomed the officer’s recommendation for some serious design work to develop meaningful options that would realign the carriageway to address the root cause of the safety record of the junction.
- The report did not mention monitoring the junction and did not contain any data on traffic volumes, flows, speeds, or driver behaviour or the last design study completed in July 2022 which had not been fully implemented.
- The Lead Petitioner urged members to agree the proposed work must be only the first step to an unrelenting and pacity commitment to resolve the issues at the junction.
- The Lead Petitioner also urged members to have the report resubmitted at the next North Northumberland Local Area Committee meeting in May, and for it to include a plan setting out timescales and ownership.
- The fundamental problem was the lack of visibility for vehicles from the South making a right turn, alongside the general speed of traffic.

Members agreed with the recommendation in the report, and noted that a major redesign of the Swinhoe Crossroads was needed and for plans to involve the Local Ward Member as well as Beadnel Parish Council.

RESOLVED that members noted the contents of the report and supported the actions proposed.

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ii. Petition seeking the Creation of Community Woodland between Shielffield Terrace & Prior Road, Berwick Upon Tweed

The North Northumberland Local Area Committee were requested to acknowledge the petition received from Berwick Town Council regarding a Petition seeking the Creation of Community Woodland between Shielffield Terrace & Prior Road, Berwick Upon Tweed

Berwick Town Council had submitted a speech which was accepted by the Chair and was read out by the Democratic Services Officer. The following comments were made:

- Berwick Town Council welcomed the positive response from Northumberland County Council.
- The stipulations in the report were reasonable and congruent with the steps they expected to take.
- Berwick Town Council would undertake consultation with the neighbouring properties as soon as possible.
- Berwick Town Council wished to acknowledge the support from NCC officers for the proposal and the efficient way in which the process had taken place.

N Dawson - Countryside and Green Spaces Manager introduced the report and gave members a brief outline of the request from Berwick Town Council to enter into a partnership arrangement or community asset transfer in respect of a wooded area of land between the rear of Prior Road and Shielffield Terrace in Berwick Upon Tweed to enable to creation of a community woodland, providing recreational space and allowing the issues of litter, antisocial behaviour and associated rodent infestations to be addressed.

Members were supportive of the actions proposed in the report for the Town Council to submit a formal community asset transfer for the use of the land in perpetuity.

RESOLVED that members noted the contents of the report and supported the actions proposed.

(c) There were no updates on previous petitions.

38 TRANSITION FROM ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL LANDLINES

J Cooper - Strategic Programmes Manager was in attendance to provide a presentation on the transition from analogue to digital landlines. A copy of the presentation would be attached to the signed minutes of the meeting and uploaded to the Council's website.

Members were informed that the switchover would only impact users with a landline telephone and for the majority of those, the transition would be straightforward. Work was underway in the telecoms industry to try and mitigate the risks with power cuts by adding resilience within the network structure by adding backup generators at relay sites or mobile phone masts.

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It was noted that Northumberland County Council was not directly involved in the industry led programme but had taken the decision to raise awareness with Northumberland's residents, businesses and community groups and signpost those with concerns to the relevant organisation for support. The Council did not have access to switchover plans and timescales so did not know when individuals would be switched across, however were raising awareness with activities such as adding flyers summarising the switchover to March/April council tax bills, attending Local Area Committee meetings and Parish Council meetings when requested, engaging with stakeholders with a role in community resilience and working with BT to support regional roadshow campaign.

Members thanked J Cooper for the presentation and for attending.

A short comfort break was announced.

39 **RURAL BUSINESS FUNDING PROGRAMMES**

I Hewitt, RAMP Programme Manager was in attendance to provide a presentation on a new programme to support businesses within rural areas. A copy of the presentation would be attached to the signed minutes of the meeting and uploaded to the Council's website.

The Northumberland Small Business Service was a £4.8m, 3 year programme which would deliver business growth, diagnostic and brokerage services to all small and micro businesses across Northumberland to unlock the barriers to growth specifically for rural businesses. The objectives of the programme were:

1. To increase business resilience and support rural businesses with growth potential and ambition to develop and implement business growth and resilience plans.
2. Develop a more diverse business base by creating new businesses and supporting rural businesses to grow, safeguarding, and creating new employment opportunities, becomes more resilient and increasing productivity.
3. Stimulate investment in the growth of existing private sector rural businesses.

The service would deliver support to businesses via the following methods:

- Growth and Resilience Support, which included; dedicated 1-2-1 support from a Rural Business Adviser, developing workshop programme, specialist mentoring and coaching from industry experts and large scale conferences and events.
- Start up and Enterprise support, which included; 1-2-1 support with an experienced business coach, access to networking with other start up companies, expert led themed workshops, further signposting to other services as necessary and appropriate.
- Farming Enterprise Support, which included; on the ground dedicated Farming and Rural Enterprise Officers provided hands on 1-2-1 advice, access to engagement and awareness events, business support workshops, bespoke knowledge transfer and networking events guided by

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famer interests and support accessing the NBSB Grant Investment Fund and other financial assistance.

- The NSBS Grant Investment Fund.

Members thanked I Hewitt for the presentation and for attending.

40 **BORDERLINE GREENWAY**

C Davidson - Borderline Greenway Community Interest Company was in attendance to provide an update on the project to create a greenway out of Alnwick on the disused Alnwick to Cornhill line.

The objective of the project was to create a trail from Alnwick to Cornhill via Wooler, following the disused train line which could be used for pedestrian, equine, cycling and motorised wheelchair use. The Community Interest Company were working on phase one of the project, following securing a 25 year lease of land 1.78 miles long.

Councillor Castle congratulated the Borderline Greenway Community Interest Group on their progress so far explaining that he had allocated £5k from his own Local Member Improvement Scheme funds and encouraged other members to support the project via their respective funds.

Members thanked C Davidson for the presentation and for attending.

41 **LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED that this was noted.

42 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the North Northumberland Local Area Committee was noted as Thursday, 30 May 2024 at The Cheviot Centre, Wooler.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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