



# Monthly Digest

March 15th, 2025

## News, Events, Funding



### Contents

1. Hub & Steering Group News – 1
2. An Interview With - 2
3. Biodiversity & Wildlife - 3
4. Community Food - 5
5. Active Travel – 5
6. Rivers, Seas & Coasts – 5
7. Arts and Culture – 6
8. Updates from Groups – 6
9. Net Zero Summit - 6
10. Events – 7
11. Repair Cafes – 8
12. Funding & Support – 9
13. News from NCC – 9
14. Training Opportunities – 10
15. April Copy Deadline – 10
16. Events Summary – 11

### 1. Hub & Steering Group News

#### NGH Steering Group Update

##### Welcome!

First of all, we'd like to welcome Heather, Richard, Elaine, Liam, Barbara-Jean and Rebecca to NGH and hope you enjoy being part of the network.

##### BOOK NOW!

We're getting excited about the **Community Event on March 22<sup>nd</sup>**. We've got a great lineup of talks from NGH members, including promoting farm biodiversity, playing for the planet, developing a community orchard and how coincidence played a part in creating a successful citizen science project. They will be plenty of time too to catch with familiar faces and make new contacts.

Don't miss out - **BOOK NOW** at [Booking Form for Events – Northumberland Green Hub](#).

### Website Improvements

The eagle-eyed amongst you may have noticed that we've made some further changes to the website. You can now access all the resource information via the menu which we hope will make it easier to find what you're looking for. There's also now a search tool on the home page as well as some 'quick links' and news updates. If you've got other ideas for the website, do get in touch and let us know.

## Training

Thanks to everyone who sent in their feedback about the online Geographic Information Systems training in January. We're pulling your comments together and will be in touch with course participants in the next week.

We've previously invited members to indicate their interest in **free digital skills training**. We've now firmed up the arrangements with an organisation called Digital Voice for Communities and we're pleased to announce that the training will take place on **Tuesday April 29<sup>th</sup>, 12.30 – 4.30pm at St James Church Centre, Alnwick**. You can find more details in Section 14 of this Digest and on the NGH website at [Training – Northumberland Green Hub](#).

## Green Spaces Consultation

Many NGH members have raised concerns about some of the maintenance of verges and public spaces carried out by the County Council. We'd therefore like to highlight the opportunity for parish councils, local residents and NGH members to get involved in a review by NCC of grounds maintenance arrangements to identify how they can better support nature recovery and improved biodiversity in public green spaces. See Section 13 of this Digest for more details and a link to the report.

## Steering Group News

The Steering Group is currently down to a group of four, and in the last Digest we invited members to get involved to help us run NGH. Unfortunately we haven't had any offers, but if you think you might be interested in helping to run the network, why not get in touch with one of the Steering Group (Liz, Colin, Julia and Mike) for a chat.

## And finally...

In order to avoid a clash, we've changed the date of the **September NGH Community Event which will now be held on Saturday September 13<sup>th</sup>**.

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## 2.An Interview with...

In our occasional series with NGH members, here is our interview with Carolyn Letts, a member of Swarland and Newton Action on Climate. Carolyn has recently started to help with pulling the Digest together (we're very grateful!)



### Quick-fire questions -

Night owl or early bird? *Early bird*

Glass of wine or cup of tea? *Glass of wine*

Walk on the beach or trip to a museum? *Walk on the beach*

Film or a good book? *Good book*

### **What was your first job?**

*Delivering Christmas post as a student. First 'proper' job: Speech & Language Therapist, Gwynedd Area Health Authority.*

### **What's your favourite book and why?**

*Hard to choose but as I have a soft spot for science fiction, I've gone for 'Great North Road' by Peter Hamilton. It is set in 22<sup>nd</sup> century Newcastle, with all the familiar places except with the added twist that a 'gateway' connects the city to a distant planet that is being heavily exploited to grow biofuel. Mostly though it's just a great story.*

### **What's your favourite place in Northumberland?**

*Craggside – I seem to have visited it on numerous occasions over the years, often with visitors and including on holidays a long time before moving north. There always seems to be something new to see there.*

### **What do you do to relax?**

*Binge knitting – but currently relaxing from having two jumpers on the go at the same time!*

### **What first made you interested in environmental issues?**

*Although I've always enjoyed being outdoors, I'm a bit of latecomer to this. I was (briefly) a parish councillor when we were asked about declaring a 'climate emergency'. Rather than just go along with the words, SNAC was born, and I have been hooked ever since.*

### **Tell us about a project you've been involved with**

*Working with SNAC and NCC to get a bus service into Swarland and Newton on the Moor (Saturday service now in place, still working on the rest of the week).*

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## **3. Biodiversity & Wildlife**

### **National Hedgehog Scheme comes to Rothbury**

Source: Rothbury CAN



Rothbury has been chosen as the newest site to be part of the National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme<sup>i</sup> (NHMP).

#### **Hedgehogs are in Decline**

Sadly, our much-loved hedgehogs have undergone considerable population decline in recent decades. To reverse this trend, we need to remove the threats they face and put in place practical conservation measures. But before this, we need to understand where and why hedgehogs are struggling. That's where the National Hedgehog Monitoring

Programme comes in, and it's coming to Rothbury!

#### **Are Geordie Hedgehogs Different?**

The scheme also aims to identify how regional and habitat differences may impact hedgehog populations. This knowledge can then be used to make effective conservation plans which can hopefully begin to reverse the decline of this iconic species.

On behalf of the NHMP, Rothbury CAN (Climate and Nature) has been liaising with the National Trust rangers at Cragside who have kindly agreed to host our part of the project. A site, one-kilometre square, has been identified on the estate and it's here that we will be setting up motion-activated cameras to record any passing *Erinaceus Europaeus* (hedgehogs to you and me) as well as other mammals.

#### **We Need Volunteers**

Setting up and calibrating thirty cameras is no small task. On the day we anticipate needing both a morning and an afternoon shift, each of about 3 hours. You don't need to know anything about setting camera traps, training will be provided.

A date hasn't yet been set but it's likely to be in late June/early July. In the meantime, if you think you might like to join us for one or both shifts, please email David at [tubbyewe@gmail.com](mailto:tubbyewe@gmail.com) and we will keep you in the loop.

Check the Events section for details of Hauxley Wildlife Group's talk about Hedgehogs on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> NHMP is a conservation scheme launched by the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society in partnership with Nottingham, Trent University, the Zoological Society of London and Durham University.

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## **Space for Nature – a Developer's Perspective**

An audience of more than fifty heard two fascinating talks from David Abercrombie (Technical Director of Taylor Wimpey Northeast) and Vicki Mordue (Managing Director of Biodiverse Consulting).

David's talk about Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems explained what SUDs are and the techniques that they use to manage rainfall in a sustainable way. David provided some excellent local examples of projects including those at Newcastle Great Park, where a range of habitats have been created, plus other sites in Blyth, Morpeth and Alnwick. He also talked about the planning and management issues involved.



Vicki's talk explained how the policy of Biodiversity Net Gain works in practical terms, and how it is seen as an important part of reaching the target to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. All developments (with some exemptions for small sites) are now required by law to create 10% more biodiversity than was originally present – whether that's onsite or offsite at a 'habitat bank' – of which there are a number being developed in Northumberland.

One audience member said *'Great night..... Really interesting evening and plenty of community interest. It was great the way the talks complemented each other.'*

David and Vicki have kindly made their slides [available](#).

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### **Clearing Invasive Plants from Warkworth Dunes**

Source: BBC News

Date: Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 2025

Work has begun on removing two areas of buckthorn from Warkworth dunes. This will protect plants like orchids and the bloody cranesbill (Northumberland's county flower) that can only grow in the dunes. The work will be carried out as quickly as

possible with minimal intrusions for people using the area, although it will look destructive initially. Similar work is taking place at Bamburgh Dunes, Embleton Links and Buston.

See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy4m4x297ryo>

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### **Peatlands Survey Progress**

Source: Hexham Courant

Date: February 18<sup>th</sup> 2025

The Northumberland Peat Partnership is surveying peatlands from north of the A69 up to the Scottish border. So far, an area equivalent to nearly twice the size of Kielder Water has been surveyed. The partnership works with landowners and government departments to carry out its work and engages with schools and communities. Restoration work is being carried out on two sites as a result, Whitelee Moor and The Wou in Thirlwall.

Projects are funded by a number of agencies and charities.

See: <https://www.hexham-courant.co.uk/news/24941752.northumberland-peat-partnership-announces-survey-progress/>

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### **Fund Raising to Purchase Rothbury Estate**

Source: BBC News

Date: March 6<sup>th</sup> 2025

Part of the Rothbury Estate including the Simonside Hills has already been bought by the Wildlife Trusts. The charity is seeking donations to buy the rest of the 9,500-acre estate and has so far raised £6 million (20% of total £30 million needed). Community

groups are among those raising money.

The Wildlife Trusts charity is currently developing a management plan for the land and will soon be beginning to monitor habitats. See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c981wpg1n56o>

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## Toad Patrol Seeks Volunteers

Source: BBC News

Dates: February 21<sup>st</sup> 2025

The Seahouses Toads on Roads group is looking for more people to help amphibians get to springtime breeding grounds in a pond next to the B1340 north of Seahouses. The group estimate that last year they prevented at least 800 toads from being killed by vehicles. Joining the patrols further provides volunteers with fresh air (all weathers), great night skies and the opportunity to meet some great people!



See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clylrmgzno>

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## 4. Community Food



### Women's Farming Project

Source: BBC News

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Thousands of women and girls have visited the Fallowlees Farm Project in Northumberland since it was set up in December 2021. The farm is leased from the National Trust by the West End Women and Girls Centre, in Elswick, Newcastle, and offers women the chance to grow crops, raise animals and experience nature. Food grown goes back to the West End and is given to women and their families. The group now has a long-term lease and has bought animals as well as planting crops.

See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czx8wk45j9go>

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## 5. Active Travel



### Borderline Greenway Reopens on March 29th

A disused Northumberland railway line will reopen to the public as a multi-accessible greenway on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its closure. The Greenway is wheelchair friendly, and suitable for walkers, runners, horse riders and cyclists. Further improvements are planned as further funding permits and in time it's hoped to extend the Greenway to create a Greater North Northumberland Greenway Trail, across almost 100 miles of former railway lines and cycle routes. Find out more [here](#).

Anyone interested in volunteering to help with track maintenance, litter picking and vegetation management should email [VolunteersBorderline@gmail.com](mailto:VolunteersBorderline@gmail.com).

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## 6. Rivers, Sea & Coast

### Great UK WaterBlitz

This biannual campaign is back – and calling on everyone to get out and test the quality of their local river, stream or lake. The data will help to build a national picture of water quality across the UK.

More than 4500 people took part in the last event in September 2024. The results showed that 61% of places monitored had poor water quality. Northumberland was one of the places with the best water quality – but there is still contamination and it's important to capture data on as wide a variety of water bodies as possible.



This year's blitz takes place between April 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. To find out how to get involved, visit [Great UK WaterBlitz - Earthwatch Europe](#)

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## 7. Arts and Culture

Each month, the NGH Arts and Culture Special Interest Group ask the group for a nature-themed prompt. So far, we've explored *Moving Water* (November), admired *Winter Trees* (December), celebrated *Lovely Lichen* in January and *Signs of Life* in February. The idea is simple: as you're out and about, pause for a moment, snap a photo of something that catches your eye, and share it with the group.



Whether or not you add a comment, sharing your photo gives us all a glimpse of the beauty you see and helps strengthen our connection to the nature we're working so hard to protect.

We'd love to see even more people get involved. If this sounds like something you'd enjoy, come and join us in the Special Interest Group and share your perspective. It's a wonderful way to slow down, appreciate nature, and connect with our community. Let's see what catches *your* eye next!

This month's theme is 'Clouds'.

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## 8. Updates from Groups



### Climate Action Wansbeck

Here at Climate Action Wansbeck, we are heading into Spring with some regular events planned and some projects in mind for the year ahead. We have a slowly growing pool of active volunteers and high hopes.

We have a regular Climate Change Reading Group which meets monthly (details in the Events section), and our next general meeting is on Thursday March 20<sup>th</sup> from 7.00-9.00pm in the upstairs bar at the White Swan, in Newgate Street, Morpeth. We are planning a future meeting to be hosted by our Newbiggin group, date and venue still to be decided.

Margaret Adams, our Treasurer and long-standing committee member, is now working with Ashington Town Council Climate Change Committee, and would be keen to arrange a meeting for interested Ashington folk to hear about what is happening there.

For more information about any of our activities, or to get involved, sign up for our Newsletter at [www.climateactionwansbeck.org](http://www.climateactionwansbeck.org) or drop us an email at [climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com](mailto:climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com).

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## 9. Net Zero Summit



### Feedback from Day 2

The second NZNE Summit in Gateshead was an excellently organised, very well attended gathering with an impressive array of sponsors, contributors and stalls from a wide variety of Northeast organisations which created an optimistic buzz in the Hilton Hotel.

Day 2 started with a session on a Just Transition which included informative presentations on community energy (with particular relevance to community groups), sustainable funding, upskilling and Fairer For All (transport) with an update on developments and plans of T & W Metro.

The workshop on Greener Skills consisted of the Net Zero education initiative by the RHS in schools, skills for sustainability, sustainable carbon management, simpler certification for green installation people-led training for the green sector and Nexus's Transport for All which includes a survey to find out what the barriers are for different people to using sustainable transport. NECA (Northeast Combined

Authority) are wanting to engage the VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector) in this process, while Newcastle City Council have a Movement Strategy which is all about integration, networks and connection featuring holistic messaging about transport options with the aim of promoting part-journeys by public transport.

The Summit provided plenty of opportunities to network, gather information about the latest information in the region and find out more about the opportunities and support for organisations to achieve Net Zero in the Northeast.

For more details about the event go to [www.netzeronortheastengland.co.uk](http://www.netzeronortheastengland.co.uk).

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## 10. Events



### Isabella Heap Volunteer Group

 **Date:** March 19<sup>th</sup> 2025

 **Time:** 1pm

 **Venue:** The Isabella Football Pavilion, Blyth

How can coastal communities in Blyth get the most out of the low-carbon energy transition and make sure it's fair and doesn't hurt anyone? How can we make sure that the voices of people who live on the outskirts of town are heard and taken into account? What do people want for their immediate neighbourhood and the wider town?

Come along to an arts workshop and talk together while we create with artist Allie Walton-Robson from headway Arts. The workshops will take as a creative standpoint 'reusing textiles'. Bring along an old t-shirt or hoodie to recycle as a starting point. There will be a variety of materials to use as well.

Brett Cherry and Clifton Evans from Newcastle University will also be there and will later feed people's contributions into an arts-based document for people who work on net zero and regeneration.



### Climate Action Wansbeck

The next planning meeting is on Thursday March 20<sup>th</sup>, 7.00 – 9.00pm, upstairs at the White Swan, Newgate St, Morpeth. Grab a drink and join in contributing to planning our activities.

The Climate Change Reading Group meets on the first Tuesday of the month, upstairs in Morpeth Library, 7.00 – 8.30pm. April's book is Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which is available from the library. But don't worry if you haven't read it, the group is keen to hear about what's been inspiring you, whether it's reading, listening or watching.

For more information, contact [climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com](mailto:climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com).



### SNAC – 'Wild about Gardens' – talk by Natasha Hemsley from NWT

 **Date:** April 15<sup>th</sup> 2025

 **Time:** 7pm




 **Venue:** Swarland Club, Coast View, NE65 9JG

The land covered by our gardens is huge and there's great potential for making them fantastic places for nature. Learn how to apply the principles of 'wilding' to your garden, even the very small, and create a range of wildlife friendly features. ALL WELCOME.

We will also be running a practical workshop in May where you can get involved in making some of the features that Natasha will cover in the talk.



### People, Planet, Pint – Sustainability Meetup

 **Date:** Tuesday April 22nd  
 **Time:** 5.30pm  
 **Venue:** The Forth Pub, Pink Lane, Newcastle, NE1 5DW

Special Earth Day meeting. For free tickets, visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1273711698979>

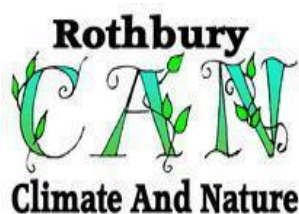
### Thriving Together Network Event

 **Date:** Tuesday April 29th  
 **Time:** 10.00am – 12pm  
 **Venue:** Longhoughton Community & Sports Centre, NE66 3JH



These networking events are a chance to grab a coffee and chat with like-minded people. The Thriving Together team will be on hand to introduce you to new contacts. There are no formal presentations, just good conversation with great people from across Northumberland's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

To book a place, please complete the [booking form](#).



### Rothbury CAN - FREE or LOW-COST Events

Rothbury Climate and Nature host a number of mostly free events throughout the year. Here is blog which tells about recent ones:

Find out more at <https://www.rothburycan.org>

## 11. Repair Cafes

- 1. Coquetdale Repair Café – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, Jubilee Hall Rothbury 10.00-2.00pm** Combine fun & learning with reducing waste. Have your broken items repaired or learn to repair them yourself with the help of friendly volunteers. Tea and cakes available! Book your repair on our website [www.coquetrepair.co.uk](http://www.coquetrepair.co.uk) or pick up a form in the Rothbury RSPCA shop. Booking really helps us get the right volunteers in place! Email [info@coquet-repair.co.uk](mailto:info@coquet-repair.co.uk).
- 2. Greener Berwick Zero Waste Group Repair Café – Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March, 10-1pm at The Salvation Army Hall, 53 Church Street, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, TD15.** Darning, sewing repairs, toys, phone software, computer software, blade sharpening, general repairs. The repair café runs on the last Saturday of every month, same venue, and same time. Repairs are free but donations very welcome. Tea, coffee and cake provided by Northern Soul Kitchen (Zero Waste).  
If you've got a skill and want to experience the thrill of community repairing, please get in touch. We're always looking for volunteers and you don't have to be a professional. All skills welcome.  
  
Brought to you by Greener Berwick and kindly supported by Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council and NCC Climate Fund. For information contact [info@greenerberwick.org.uk](mailto:info@greenerberwick.org.uk) and put FAO Repair Cafe Team in the Subject heading.
- 3. Felton Repair Café – Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup>, 11.00am – 3.00pm, Gallery Forty5, Main Street, Felton, NE65 9PP.** All small repairs considered. Clothes, ceramics, small items of furniture, help with IT. Contact [feltonrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:feltonrepaircafe@gmail.com).



Felton Repair Cafe is going strong since its inception in Sept 2023 and has repaired approximately 430 items! We would very much like to acknowledge and thank Rothbury Repair Cafe who gave us time and good advice about to proceed. Very valuable!

We seem to be evolving - bicycle repair had few takers so is no longer on offer. We now do small electrical repairs, knife and tool sharpening, sewing, toy and ceramic mending, IT advice and digital restoration of old photos. The latest additions are jewellery cleaning and advice on repairs, advice about old phones, tablets, laptops etc, making these safe and how to recycle them.

We are also trying out an offer of basic IT instruction - but it has to be booked in advance.

Good luck to all who are furthering the cause!

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## 12. Funding & Support



### Community Foundation

Up to £500,000 is being made available to community organisations across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland for environmental and climate-related projects. Re-wilding programmes, recycling and repurposing projects, raising awareness in communities, and improving the

energy efficiency of a building are examples of activities that would be considered. The maximum grant size is £10,000. **Deadline: 31 March 2025.**

There are a number of **new funds available for community groups**, such as the FB and PFB Lough Fund, the EDF Energy Green Rigg Wind Farm Community Fund and the Nadara Sisters and North Steads Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund. For more details visit the [NGH Funding page](#).

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## 13. News from Northumberland County Council



### New Food Strategy Launched

NCC has launched a new strategy to improve the county's food system over the next two years. It covers the whole food chain – from soil and nature to production, consumption, waste and recycling.

The strategy will guide decision-making and investment, taking into account challenges such as climate change and the need for greater resilience in the food system. The strategy is part of the Council's goal of making Northumberland net zero by 2040.

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### Supporting Nature in Green Spaces

The County Council Cabinet has recently received a report on its Environmental Policy Action Plan including details of a project titled 'Supporting Nature in our Green Spaces'. This will include a detailed review of its Grounds Maintenance Service. The aim is to develop a new operating model that is efficient, provides value for money and defines a set of standards to improve biodiversity.

The work is being supported by Newcastle University to ensure there is a strong evidence base. Part of the project will include a 'Community Conversation' to find out if people think that it is important to improve the biodiversity of our green spaces. This will begin with a questionnaire being sent to local Council clerks (March 17<sup>th</sup>), following which it will be open to the public from March 19<sup>th</sup> with a closing date of April 21<sup>st</sup>. Participants in the survey will also be asked if they wish to participate in future research about the new operating model.

If you've been concerned about cutting regimes in your area, this is your chance to have your say!

The report, and others considered by the Cabinet can be found at [here](#).

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## 14. Training Opportunities

### Digital Voice – Digital Learning Session for NGH Members

Digital Voice is a not-for-profit social enterprise which has been delivering digital inclusion projects since 2007. They are teaming up with NGH to deliver a **FREE Digital Learning event** funded by Tyne and Wear Community Foundation.

The training will take place **on Tuesday April 29<sup>th</sup> from 12.30 – 4.30pm at St James Church Centre, Alnwick**. There will be two sessions, each approximately 90 minutes covering **digital graphic design using Canva and web and social media management**. Everyone will be able to attend both sessions. Equipment and refreshments provided.

Full details of the event can be found on the Training page of the NGH website at [Training – Northumberland Green Hub](#).

**BOOKING IS NOW OPEN!**

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## 15. April Digest – Copy Deadline

You can send items for the Digest at any time to [northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com](mailto:northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com). The deadline for the next edition is **April 10<sup>th</sup> 2025!**



*To ALL contributors to this month's Digest and those working behind the scenes - you know who you are, and your efforts made pulling this edition together so much easier.*

## 16. Summary of Events

(See Digest content for full details of events)

### March

- 19<sup>th</sup> Isabella Heap Volunteer Group workshop, 1pm, Isabella Football Pavillion, Blyth
- 19<sup>th</sup> Hauxley Wildlife Group Talk 'Let's give hedgehogs a helping hand', 7.00pm, Hauxley Wildlife Discovery Centre
- 20<sup>th</sup> Climate Action Wansbeck meeting, 7 – 9pm, White Swan, Newgate St, Morpeth
- 22<sup>nd</sup> NGH Community Event, 10 – 1.00pm, St James Church Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Coquetdale Repair Café, 10 – 2pm, Jubilee Hall, Rothbury
- 29<sup>th</sup> Greener Berwick Repair Café, 10 – 1pm, Salvation Army Church Hall, Church St, Berwick

### April

- 1<sup>st</sup> Climate Action Wansbeck Reading Group, 7 – 8.30pm, Morpeth Library
- 15<sup>th</sup> SNAC, Talk on 'Wild about Gardens', 7pm, Swarland Club, Coast View, Swarland
- 19<sup>th</sup> Felton Repair Café, 11 – 3pm, Gallery Forty5, Main St, Felton
- 22<sup>nd</sup> People, Planet, Pint, 5.30, The Forth Pub, Pink Lane, Newcastle
- 29<sup>th</sup> Digital Skills Training, 12.30 – 4.30pm, St James Church Centre Pottergate, Alnwick
- 29<sup>th</sup> Thriving Together Networking Event, 10 – 12pm, Longhoughton Community and Sport Centre

### Regular Events

Women's Workshop, Amble - every Monday

Climate Action Wansbeck Climate Reading Group. Morpeth Library - first Tuesday of the month

Greener Amble Meet Up at Drywater Arts Centre, Amble - every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday

Swarland and Newton Action on Climate, third Tuesday of the month.