

# NGH Monthly Digest

January 15<sup>th</sup> 2026

## News, Events, Updates and More!



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### 1. Hub & Steering Group News

#### Happy New Year!

We'd like to wish all members of NGH a very Happy New Year. We hope that you're feeling refreshed, reinvigorated and ready to get involved with exciting environmental and climate change projects in your local community.

In 2025, NGH grew to more than 150 members from across north Northumberland. Our four Community Events included showcasing projects being delivered by NGH members, Rewilding in Northumberland and The Future of Food, as well as our social get together in December.

We had our first AGM in September and held elections to the Steering Group. We also obtained our first funding from Thriving Together Northumberland which has helped us to deliver events and training.

With events, occasional talks, training, the monthly Digest and the WhatsApp community, we hope that you feel that you benefit from being part of NGH.

*To help us to continue developing, we would love to get your feedback on what works and what you think we could do better – together with your ideas for events, talks, visits and training in 2026. You can email us at [Northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com](mailto:Northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com).*

#### 2026 Event Dates for your Diary

**We've now booked dates for NGH Community Events in 2026. They are –  
March 21<sup>st</sup>, June 20<sup>th</sup>, September 12<sup>th</sup> and December 5<sup>th</sup>.**

We'll be sharing details of the March event shortly, but in the meantime please make a note of the dates in your diary!

Liz, Lesley, Julia and Mike  
The NGH Steering Group

## 2. Biodiversity & Wildlife

### New community woodland for Northumberland village

Planting has begun at a new community woodland in Hadston and Red Row. During two community planting events, over 300 trees have been put in the ground with another 10,000 more being planted over the coming weeks by a local tree planting company.

The Old School Field site in Hadston has seen a total of 80 volunteers from Hadston House Youth Club and members of the public plant tree species including Rowan, Downy Birch, Silver Birch, and Hornbeam. The design has carefully considered the needs of the community and part of the design has incorporated shelterbelts for the grazing horses on the site.

£62,000 of grant funding came from the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) provided through the Forestry Commission, along with 435m hedgerows and 18 Trees outside of Woodland, funded through the Council's Great Northumberland Forest team. Both grants are from the Nature for Climate Fund, from the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

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## 3. Rivers, Sea & Coast

### New hope for seagrass scheme

Source: BBC News

Date: January 4<sup>th</sup> 2026



As part of the Stronger Shores project, Durham Wildlife Trust carried out the plantings at the river Don at Jarrow and the river Aln at Alnmouth at the end of November.

Seagrass meadows once thrived along the coastline, including in north-east England.

Although some pockets remain, over time a combination of human activity and environmental change has led to widespread habitat loss.

The plants are attached to custom-made frames before being planted. It is hoped the trials, which will last until the end of September, will inform if the plant could grow again in areas where it previously existed.

The young plants spent a year at the Hartlepool nursery before being transported to the trial sites, where they are planted into custom-made frames sunk in the mud. The frames help protect the plants as they become established.

Seagrass is considered a bit of a miracle plant. It's the only flowering plant that's truly marine. It captures carbon at a really impressive rate. It provides habitat for a huge number of species and it also cleans the water, so it helps improve water quality.

A third planting at Wansbeck Estuary is expected to take place shortly.

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### Positive Results for Bathing Water Quality

Source: Northumberland Gazette

Date: November 25<sup>th</sup> 2025



An impressive 12 bathing waters along the county's coastline have once again been awarded the 'excellent' standard - the highest possible rating in European bathing water quality.

The beaches that have been rated as 'excellent' are Bamburgh Castle, Seahouses North, Beadnell, Low Newton, Warkworth, Amble Links, Druridge Bay North and South, Newbiggin North and South, Blyth South beach, and Seaton Sluice. Spittal beach was

rated as good. This means that all 13 pass the European standards.

The beaches were evaluated on water samples collected by the Environment Agency over the last three years.

Across the North East, 24 beaches were rated excellent and nine were deemed good. Two failed to meet the minimum required and have been classified as poor. They are at Cullercoats and Littlehaven.

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### Work to restore river to its natural state completed

Source: BBC News

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



The River Breamish on the Harehope Estate, south of Wooler, was originally straightened for agricultural purposes.

A 1km (0.6 mile) section of the river has now been returned to its former shape through the Life Wader project, which used a mixture of ancient maps and modern technology to trace its original route.

Jim Heslop, environment programme manager for the Environment Agency (EA), said the scheme had created new habitats, improved water quality and protected the area from floods.

The restoration, which is part of a wider River Till Restoration Strategy, named after the river the Breamish flows into, saw contractors installing silt traps, shallow ponds, wetlands and embankment breaches to divert the river.

The EA said the river would develop its own "final design" and following recent rainfall it has already spilled onto its floodplains, forming wetlands.

Habitats in and around the new channel are developing and being used by wildlife including heron, kingfishers and damsel flies.

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## 4. Climate Crisis Response

### Environmental Project goes Trans-Atlantic

During the last few months Terry Smith from Alnwick Area FoE and Katie Tompkins have been working on an exciting environmental project which could help bring about positive changes in this country but also in the United States.

Katie Tompkins, a student from Cambridge, Minnesota USA, has been staying in Alnwick Castle with other students from Minnesota. During her stay Katie worked as a volunteer with Terry Smith from Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth, helping with its environmental and nature work with young people and their families.



A major part of this activity has been using the Environmental Tipping Point Challenge game that was created recently by Terry from Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth together with Rosie Bush and the Duchess's Community High School. This game has proved popular in schools across the North East and with many of those attending recent community fairs in Amble, Rothbury and Woodhorn.

Katie suggested that the United States should have its own game for work with young people. She thought

that this could be in Minnesota initially but with a scope for widening its use beyond the state. Working with Terry Smith, Katie has developed a U.S. version of the game which she has taken back to home. The U.S. version builds on the original concept of the Tipping Point game whilst tailoring content to reflect environmental contexts, policies and community priorities in the States.

Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth will be very interested to hear what young people in the U.S. make of the game. Meanwhile a further print run of the 90 cards has recently been undertaken and new games of the UK version have been produced. These are for sale for families, community groups and schools. They are available at cost to make price and all monies are used to make new games and for the work with children and young people.

Have you got your version yet? The £20 version comes in a canvas type box with instructions and other information and the 90 cards in a folder with the 96 wood blocks for the game. There is also a cotton bag version of the game with small wood blocks. That is £15. Finally, if you already have two sets of Jenga blocks you can purchase the game without the wood blocks for £10. Terry is currently working on two additional games linked to the Environmental Tipping Point Challenge. One is called Diving Deeper and the other is a group work game.

More information or for purchase of the game please contact Terry Smith on <mailto:tezzalasmezz@icloud.com>.

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## The Hidden Cost of Wood-Burning Stoves

Wood-burning stoves may look cosy, but they are now one of the largest sources of harmful air pollution in the UK. Most households that burn wood do so by choice, often without realising the impact on their health and that of neighbours and local wildlife. They deserve the full picture, including new information from recent research.



### Why It Matters - health

Wood smoke is a major cause of spikes in PM 2.5, tiny particles that penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream. They are linked to asthma, heart disease, dementia risk, premature births, and harm to wildlife and plants. Nearly 2,500 UK deaths are attributed to domestic woodburning.

Smoke doesn't stay inside one home, it drifts across streets, gardens and parks. Even modern "eco-design" stoves can emit more harmful particles per hour than many vehicles.

Heather Lambert, a retired paediatric doctor, explained: "Air pollution causes a lot of disease, affecting almost every organ in the body and at all ages, from before birth throughout life. There is no safe limit, and small particle pollution is particularly harmful."

### Why It Matters now – winter pollution spikes

National Clean Air Night is on 22 January – timed to draw attention to the increase in particulate pollution in mid-winter. The organisers make clear that "wood burning is the most polluting way to heat your home". Supporters include the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health, and Mums for Lungs.

### It's Not the Cheap Option

Despite common perceptions, wood-burning is often more expensive than other options:

- Heating just 20% of a home with a stove can raise annual heating costs by over 20%.
- Using a stove for most heating can push costs 50% higher than a modern gas boiler, once fuel, delivery, chimney cleaning and inefficiency are included.
- However, national campaigners acknowledge that some households do not have access to cheaper alternatives, particularly in rural areas – they urge that more support is needed, to take account of the health risks from wood burning.

## **“Natural” Doesn’t Mean Sustainable**

Burning wood releases a large surge of CO<sub>2</sub> immediately, while replacement trees take decades to absorb it. Only around 8% of UK stove users rely on wood because they have no other option. For most, it’s a lifestyle choice with climate and health consequences.

## **Help avoid “buyers’ regret” – cautionary case studies**

As more detailed research has emerged, people who paid to install woodstoves with the best of intentions are left with a dilemma. Do they continue to burn wood, knowing it may be more expensive and put health at risk? Stoves are now being left idle, taking up space and a constant cause of regret. Sharing the latest information may help avoid colleagues and neighbours ending up in the same situation.

### **What You Can Do**

- Think before you install. Cleaner heating options already exist.
- Share the facts. Many people simply don’t know the impacts.
- Use and promote resources to schools. Free lesson packs are available via the national Clean Air Hub.
- Already have a stove? Use only dry certified fuel, avoid burning on still or foggy days, keep it well-maintained. Or you could repurpose it as a very expensive plant holder!

Reproduced with permission from Climate Action Newcastle. You can find out more about their campaign at [WOOD-BURNING STOVES: hidden costs and harms2025-12-18T15:01:42.284Z](#)

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## **5. Updates from Groups**



### **Greener Berwick Action Group – Growing a Sustainable Future**

Greener Berwick continues to thrive, with volunteers working across the town to make Berwick greener, cleaner, and more connected.

Our *Growing Communities* team has been busy caring for the raised beds in the town centre, now flourishing with herbs, flowers, and food plants. Friday mornings bring together a regular group of volunteers to keep the beds looking their best. Plans are also underway to install a rainwater collection system to help with summer watering.

Looking ahead, Greener Berwick hopes to bring all its activities under one roof and secure funding for next year’s projects.

To find out more or get involved, email [info@greenerberwick.org.uk](mailto:info@greenerberwick.org.uk)

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### **Climate Action Wansbeck**



Here are some of the Climate Action Wansbeck events from 2025.

#### **Is the Wansbeck Alive?**

Climate Action Wansbeck had decided to focus our attention on the health and well-being of the Wansbeck and to explore where we could be well placed to support other groups working on improvements and maintaining the well-being of the river.

Following this we had a fantastic river-focussed workshop on Wednesday 26th November at Morpeth Methodist Church, led by Nick Mason of CAW. Expert speakers from Groundworks, CRAG and Sarah Best from NICRE. Together with an enthusiastic group, debated how the local community could care for and protect our beautiful River Wansbeck. The verdict? It is alive.

(If you missed it but would like to be involved in developing a project about the river, drop us an email at [climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com](mailto:climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com) and we'll add you to the list).

### **Ashington Light switch on**

CAW were invited to have a stall at the Ashington Christmas light switch on 13th November. We made paper snowflakes and printed snowflake Christmas cards and talked to families about the way we have milder winters and less snow because of climate change. Of course, this was only a few days before we had a cold snap and heavy snow in November. Nevertheless, it's always a lively and joyful afternoon.

### **The Morpeth Flood Project**

A number of members of CAW took part in this Environmental Art project in the first few months of 2025. A series of workshops were run by artist Laura Harrington and Cultural Geographer Danny McNally where we were invited to share stories and experiences based on the 2008 Wansbeck flood at Morpeth.

The workshops included expressive drawing, performance, clay work and poster making. We visited the beaver enclosure where we were given a guided walk by Heather Davis from Wild Intrigue. There is a planned display of the project in Morpeth library in 2026.

Climate Action Wansbeck meetings are on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Contact details:  
[Climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com](mailto:Climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com)

CAW Climate Change Reading Group will continue in Morpeth Poetry library on the first Tuesday of each month 7.00 - 9.00. Join us for a coffee/tea (bring a reusable cup if you have one) and a lively discussion. Look out for the topic and date in our newsletter or on Facebook or Contact [climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com](mailto:climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com).

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### **Newbiggin Blue and Green Network**



In December we held three events: a screening of David Attenborough's film Ocean alongside a discussion with representatives from the Saw we Sea/Stronger Shores. This was funded through a grant from Cinema 4 all, Sea Changers and supported by the Maritime Centre. We encouraged participants to sign the petition to ban trawling in all Marine Protected Areas.

We held two packed eco Xmas decorations workshops at the Coble pub and Artisan cafe. We also held a meeting with the local Council about joint activities and promotions including around coastal erosion at Church Point.

We were successful in getting a grant from Newbiggin Town Council for planting beds on Front Street and for screening the film Power Station at the Elizabethan Hall (February date to be announced). The film is about community organising and residents coming together to get power in their community including neighbourhood solar power.

The Blue and Green Network are affiliated to CAW Anyone interested in joining NBGN can do so by contacting Caroline Mitchell at [cam.algo@gmail.com](mailto:cam.algo@gmail.com)

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### **Greener Amble Network**

We are a community volunteer led group that shares concerns for our Environment, Biodiversity, Nature, Sustainability and Climate Change. The Network provides a place to find out what's going on in the Amble area by sharing knowledge, information, opportunities and speaking up together on issues.

We meet monthly on a Wednesday 6.45 pm from 7.00pm until 8.45 pm. This year our venue will initially be Amble Youth Project, Dilston Terrace NE65 0DT on January 14<sup>th</sup>, February 11<sup>th</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup>.

For more information about the group and future dates, contact Sue Rzepczynski at [sue@greeneramble@gmail.com](mailto:sue@greeneramble@gmail.com).

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## Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth



The next committee meeting is at 7pm on Wed 4<sup>th</sup> February in Alnwick Youth Hostel.

Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth welcomes new members. Why not come along to this meeting to find out what we are planning for 2026?

If you would like to join Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth, just send a message expressing your interest to [contact@alnwickfoe.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickfoe.org.uk).

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## 6. Events

### Community Event – Warming Winter Gathering

**Date:** Sunday January 17th

**Time:** 11.00am

**Venue:** St Bartholomew's Church and Yard, Whittingham

Come along to a Warming Winter Gathering and find out about a new Churchyard Nature Conservation Project – with hot punch, coffee, cake and a bit of wassailing!

For more details contact [soniaritter@outlook.com](mailto:soniaritter@outlook.com).

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### Growing Together Northumberland - Fruit Tree Pruning: Theory and Demonstration

**Date:** Thursday January 29th

**Time:** 1.00 – 3.00pm

**Venue:** Lindisfarne Adult Learning Centre, Alnwick, NE66 1AU

Learn how, why and when to prune fruit trees to improve their health, retain shape and increase their yield. Volunteer Tom Pattinson will give a talk in the centre community room, followed by a practical demonstration outdoors.

The session is free but booking here is essential as places are limited.

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### Northumberland Organic and Local Market

**Date:** Friday February 6<sup>th</sup> & March 6th

**Time:** From 4 – 8pm

**Venue:** Rennington Village Hall, NE66 3RR

Support local producers at the Northumberland Organic and Local Market on the first Friday of the month.

Free Entry.

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## NEW – Warkworth Food Group

 **Date:** Wednesday February 11th

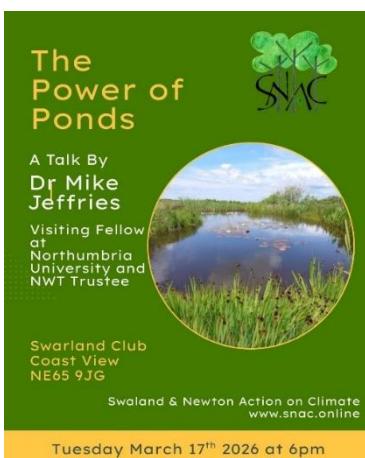
 **Time:** 7 - 9pm

 **Venue:** British Legion Room, Warkworth Memorial Hall

The group is for anyone interested in working to change our food system. The current system underpays farmers for growing food, makes healthy food more expensive and contributes to a range of environmental issues.

If this concerns you, join this meeting where we will talk about what we might do to change things locally and nationally.

## Seed Swaps



## SNAC – The Power of Ponds

 **Date:** Tuesday March 17<sup>th</sup>

 **Time:** 6pm

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

Dr Mike Jeffries has spent the last forty years working on ponds and wetlands in Northumbria. He's an expert on freshwater ecology, a Visiting Fellow at Northumbria University and a Trustee of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust.

In The Power of Ponds, he will talk about the importance of ponds for wildlife, and also cover topics about why they are so good for carbon capture.

## 7. Repair Cafes

**Coquetdale Repair Café – Saturday February 21st, 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. Book your repair on our website [www.coquettrepair.co.uk](http://www.coquettrepair.co.uk) or pick up a form in the Rothbury RSPCA shop. Booking really helps us get the right volunteers in place. Email [info@coquettrepair.co.uk](mailto:info@coquettrepair.co.uk). Tea and cakes available.

**Felton Repair Café – Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup>, 11.00 – 3.00pm, Forty5, Main Street, Felton, NE65 9PP.**

Contact [feltonrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:feltonrepaircafe@gmail.com).



Volunteers will be there to sharpen knives and garden tools, fix small electrical items, answer IT queries, fix toys and broken ceramics, mend or patch loved items of clothing, mend wooden items and clean and check gold or silver jewellery.

**Greener Berwick Zero Waste Group Repair Café – Saturday January 31st, 10-1pm at The Salvation Army Hall, 53 Church Street, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, TD15 1EE.** 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. Visit <https://www.greenerberwick.org.uk/repair-cafe>.

**Berwick Tool Library** is also now operating. Visit <https://berwicktoollibrary.myturn.com> or contact [info@greenerberwick.org.uk](mailto:info@greenerberwick.org.uk) for more details.

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.

**Amble Repair Café – Saturday January 31st, 2.30 – 4.30pm, Dry Water Arts in Amble.**

Join the repair revolution, don't throw it away, give it a second life. Bring your broken items along and we will see if we can mend them. Our volunteer repairers cover: sewing, darning, toys, small electrical appliances, sharpening, ceramics and small items of furniture. Enjoy tea and cake while you wait for your repair. For further information please contact: [amblerrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:amblerrepaircafe@gmail.com)

## 8. Funding

### Funding Available for Urban Nature Projects (UK)

Grants of up to £2,000 are available to charities, community groups, and other not-for-profit organisations in the UK that aim to bring local people together to transform urban spaces by sowing and growing UK native wildflowers and/or fungi.

The Grow Wild Community Programme will support twenty-three community-led projects that benefit both wildlife and people, with a particular focus on engaging young people, disabled people, those experiencing disadvantage, and others who face barriers to connecting with nature.

Funding can cover costs such as seeds, plants, soil, tools, materials, events, workshops, specialist expertise, and staff time. Successful groups can also apply for a £500 follow-on grant for spring 2027 to support ongoing activities. Applications close at 3pm on the 4th February 2026.

<https://growwild.kew.org/community-programme>

## Marine Conservation Funding

Grant applications are invited from charities, community groups and organisations who are working to connect communities to nature through –

- Marine habitat restoration
- Seagrass, saltmarsh and kelp projects
- Species protection and recovery
- Marine litter and plastic pollution prevention
- Sustainable coastal and marine management
- Marine conservation volunteering
- Education and ocean literacy
- Influencing local and national marine policy
- Citizen science and monitoring
- Community-led coastal and marine surveys

The deadline for applications is 12 noon on Thursday February 26<sup>th</sup> 2026. For more information visit <https://naturesave.co.uk>.

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## Stobart Group – The Stobart Sustainability Fund

The Stobart Group has launched a new fund to support community-led environmental and sustainability projects across the UK.

The Fund will support projects that tackle climate change, reduce carbon emissions and protect and enhance the environment.

The Fund aims to help educate communities on how they can make a difference by supporting diverse projects and initiatives.

For more details visit [The Stobart Sustainability Fund - Stobart](#)

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## 9. Training

NGH is running a peer support Canva workshop on January 21<sup>st</sup> at St James Church Centre in Alnwick from 2 – 4pm.

These aren't formal training sessions, but rather an opportunity to share skills and knowledge, perhaps look at some online tutorials together – and work on one of your projects.

Attendees must bring their own laptop or tablet – no equipment provided.

Please email [Northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com](mailto:Northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com) to book your place.

NB – there are still a few FREE Canva Pro licences available. Get in touch if you would like one of these.



## 10. February 2026 Digest – Copy Deadline

The deadline for the next edition is **February 10<sup>th</sup> 2026** but you can send items for the Digest at any time to [northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com](mailto:northumberlandgreenhub@gmail.com)

*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.*

## 11. Summary of Events



(See Events section for full details)

### Jan

- 17<sup>th</sup> Warming Winter Gathering, 11am, St Bartholomew's Church, Whittingham
- 29<sup>th</sup> Growing Together – Fruit Tree Pruning, 1 – 3pm, Lindisfarne Adult Learning Centre
- 31<sup>st</sup> Greener Berwick Repair Café, 10 – 1pm, The Salvation Army Hall, Berwick
- 31<sup>st</sup> Amble Repair Café, 2.30 – 4.30, Dry Water Arts, Amble
- 31<sup>st</sup> Bowsden Seed Swap, 10 – 11.30am, Bowsden Village Hall

### Feb

- 6<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Organic and Local Market, 4 – 8pm, Rennington Village Hall
- 6<sup>th</sup> Seedy Saturday, 10 – 1pm, Alnwick Garden
- 11<sup>th</sup> Warkworth Food Group, 7 – 9pm, British Legion Room, Warkworth Memorial Hall
- 21<sup>st</sup> Coquetdale Repair Café, 10 – 2pm, Jubilee Hall, Rothbury

### March

- 6<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Organic and Local Market, 4 – 8pm, Rennington Village Hall
- 7<sup>th</sup> Felton Repair Café, 11 – 3pm, Gallery Forty5, Felton
- 17<sup>th</sup> The Power of Ponds, 6pm, Swarland Club
- 21<sup>st</sup> NGH Community Event, 10 – 1pm, St James Church Centre, Alnwick

### Regular Meetings

Climate Action Wansbeck meet on the third Tuesday of the month. Contact  
[Climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com](mailto:Climateactionwansbeck@gmail.com)

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

Greener Amble Network meets on January 14<sup>th</sup>, February 11<sup>th</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup> at be Amble Youth Project, Dilston Terrace NE65 0DT from 6.30 for 7.00 – 8.45pm