

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Community Development Committee
Date of Meeting – 25 November 2025

Blue Plaque Scheme

North Farm Miners Memorial Garden – Blue Plaque Nomination

Recommendation

The committee agree to recognise Blyth's mining heritage, at the North Farm Miners' Memorial Garden with the award of a Blue Plaque and listing in the Blyth Heritage Trail.

Committee further agree to erect an information board at the site for all to understand the heritage of the site

If agreed, delegate the responsibility for determining the text for the Blue Plaque, Info Board, and Heritage Trail to Cllr Nicholson with Council Officers.

Ward

Cowpen

Risk Management

A blue plaque and installation costs approx. £600, there is budget provision for this.

The cost of the production and installation of an information board has been quoted at approx. £500.

Permission has been received from Northumberland County Council (NCC) to erect the blue plaque and install the information board.

Crime Prevention

None.

Objective

To recognise and appreciate the town's mining heritage.

Report

A nomination for a Blue Plaque and inclusion for North Farm Miners' Memorial Garden has been submitted by Cllr Nicholson, seconded by Cllr Peart. The motion is attached as Appendix 1.

It has also been proposed that an information board is erected at the site providing further information about the history of the Memorial Garden.

Situated in the North Farm Estate on the corner of Temple Avenue and Walton Avenue is an old pathway that miners once walked daily to and from Bates Colliery. The garden and statue serve as a lasting reminder of the generations of miners who lived and worked in the area—many of whom lost their lives or suffered illnesses due to their work underground.

The North Farm Residents and Community Association, established in 2001, initiated the Miners Commemorative Garden Project after local young people joined a gardening club led by resident, Isobel Foster.

The Association successfully fundraised for the design, commissioning and installation of the statue.

The land is adopted by Northumberland County Council, while ownership of the statue has remained with the Residents Association. The Garden was declared a memorial garden by former NCC Leader Jeff Reid.

The project engaged three local schools.

While the formal Residents Association has since dissolved, several original members still reside on the estate and support the proposal for Blue Plaque recognition.

The memorial garden remains a focal point for the community. Residents and former association members have expressed strong support for obtaining a Blue Plaque, as well as an information board installed at the site ensuring the site's history and significance and preserved for future generations.

Blue Plaque Suggested Wording

Miners Remembered

Miners traversed this path to the Bates Colliery (1794-1986) many lost their lives or suffered illnesses due to their work at 'Bates Pit'.

Elisa Mullen
Democratic Services Officer

& Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk

18 November 2025

MOTION - Request for Blue Plaque Recognition and Inclusion in the Blyth Heritage Trail – North Farm Miners’ Memorial Garden and Statue in addition an information board to be erected there for all to understand its significance.

Dear Members of Blyth Town Council,

I am writing to request that the **North Farm Miners’ Memorial Garden and Statue** be considered for **Blue Plaque status** and inclusion in the **Blyth Heritage Trail**.

This site holds deep historical, cultural, and emotional significance for the Blyth community. Situated on the old pathway that miners once walked daily to and from **Bates Colliery**, the memorial garden stands as a lasting tribute to the generations of local men and families whose lives were shaped by the mining industry.

The **North Farm Estate**, built just after the Second World War to house mining families, remains home to many with direct links to Blyth’s coal-mining past. In 2001, residents came together to form the **North Farm Residents and Community Association**, led by **Isobel Foster**, to tackle decline on the estate and rekindle local pride. From this effort grew the **Miners’ Commemorative Garden Project**—a true community achievement.

Through fundraising events, donations, and grants—including £20,000 from **The Banks Group** and support from the **National Lottery**—residents raised **£53,000** to design and install a statue of a **pit boy and pony**. The sculpture, created by **Richard Broderick** of North Shields, captures both the hardship and humanity of mining life. The pony was modelled on “Flash” from Beamish Museum. Three young boy chosen by the sculptor to model for the statues hands, torso and face, sadly the young boy who modelled for the face passed away soon after. The statue therefore serves not only as a memorial to the miners but also to the community members who made it possible, including Isobel Foster and the young boy.

The land for the garden was originally owned by the **National Coal Board** and gifted to the Association for the memorial. It was later adopted by **Northumberland County Council** and granted **memorial status** by Council Leader **Jeff Reid**, who formally presented the documents to Isobel Foster.

The garden also features a miners’ cart donated by the British Coal Board, it was transported from the south of England courtesy of **Ferguson Transport**, and an inscription in Geordie dialect honouring the miners who once passed along that very route. Local schools, including **Malvins First School, St Andrew’s (now St Wilfrid’s)**, and the former **Morpeth Road School**, worked with the Association to include the statue and its story within their curriculum, ensuring that Blyth’s mining heritage is remembered and understood by younger generations.

Today, the memorial garden sits beside a busy footpath used daily by residents and schoolchildren, serving as a constant reminder of Blyth’s proud industrial past. Not only has it been visited by locals but also had national and international visitors, New Zealand and Spain are a few to mention. Many who pass it still have personal or family connections to the mines. Recognising the site with **Blue Plaque status** would ensure that the sacrifices, resilience, and community spirit of Blyth’s miners are permanently commemorated, and that this important chapter in the town’s history is included within the **official heritage trail**.

This recognition would not only honour the people who built and maintained the memorial but would also reaffirm Blyth’s commitment to preserving its working-class and industrial heritage for future generations.

Cllr Denise Nicholson

