

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Environment Committee
Thursday 17 September 2026

**Inclusive Play, budget virement, and Newsham & New Delaval
Community Garden**

This report will not form part of the meeting. The contents are intended for information only. Should any member have questions or want further information about the items, please contact the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk in the first instance.

Information

1. Inclusive Play

The Feedback Report from the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum is available for Members to review. This is being shared as a Part II item as it contains information we may use for the tender process and should remain confidential until we are in a position to apply for funding and accept tenders. The consultation provided an opportunity for approximately 170 children, young people, parents and carers to contribute their views on the development of inclusive play provision.

The key priorities identified through the consultation were:

safe, enclosed and predictable layouts;
opportunities for movement-rich play, including swings, climbing, spinning and running;
accessible equipment and smooth, level routes;
a range of sensory play opportunities;
dedicated opportunities for older children and young people;
quiet and nature-based areas;
appropriate facilities, including toilets, shade and seating; and
reliable maintenance and clean, well-maintained environments.

The Feedback Report also includes recommendations for inclusive play design. The findings will help inform the tender documentation for the project, and officers are keen to continue involving the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum as the project develops.

Site meetings have been held with several play companies to explore potential approaches to the project. Indicative capital costs are currently estimated to be in the region of £500k to £750k. The potential revenue costs associated with a trial of play rangers are also being explored.

A number of potential external funding sources have been identified and are being investigated. However, funding cannot be formally secured until the Council is in a position to submit official quotations.

To enable delivery of the play area in spring 2027, tenders would need to be accepted and the necessary funding secured by December 2026.

Next steps will include progressing the tender documentation, continuing engagement with the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum, and identifying and securing the necessary capital and revenue funding.

2. Virement of funds

Within the Environment committee there are budgets for allotment capital works and play area repairs and these are £8k and £20k respectively.

Officers, and some of the members, have noted areas within allotment sites that are in need of improvement e.g. pockets of land which has encouraged fly tipping along with overgrown vegetation within the lanes. Regarding play areas the officers have drawn up a list of essential works, that are in the process of being actioned, and also desirable, aesthetic repairs within play areas.

The current budget provision allows for improvement to allotment standpipes and the level of play area repairs normally expected. The projected value of this additional work to improve allotments and play areas should exceed the budgets available.

A budget saving within the staffing area of Governance Committee has been identified. The Responsible Financial Officer will be requesting the virement of £13k to help assist the above from the Governance Committee to the Environment Committee and he has discussed this with both the Chairs of Environment Committee and Governance Committee. The decision to vire budget headings in excess of £2k is a function reserved for Full Council.

The virement will allow improvements to the identified allotment sites and a programme of repairs to improve the play areas.

3. Newsham & New Delaval Community Garden

Newsham and New Delaval Allotment Association have agreed through their formal processes at a Committee meeting held 4 January 2026 to develop a community garden on their Beatrice site.

Statement from Newsham and New Delaval Allotment Association:
Beatrice Community Garden will transform a neglected 70 ft x 70 ft site into a safe, accessible and welcoming space for older and less-mobile allotment holders, wheelchair and mobility-scooter users, people with

disabilities or long-term conditions, SEND children and adults, veterans, families, schools and community groups. It is needed because conventional plots can become difficult or impossible to manage, increasing isolation and removing the wellbeing, confidence and companionship that gardening provides. The project is being funded through donations and donations in kind, supported by volunteers and partner organisations. Safeguarding, equality, inclusivity, reasonable adjustments, appropriate supervision and responsible management will be built into every stage, ensuring fair and safe opportunities for everyone to participate.

Update:

- Meetings with BTC as landowners has identified no concerns and the Association have followed their internal processes for approval.
- The Association will keep the Council updated on progress.
- The Association had committed to clearing that land.
- Due consideration is being given to safety, safeguarding and liability throughout the initial clearance work and in the planning and delivery of a safe accessible space.
- The Association welcomes any avenue of support, from making them aware of funds they might apply to, to connections with professionals able to give advice.
- The Association have gathered a significant amount and range of support so far, evidence that this initiative is welcomed.

**Officers Report
10 September 2026**

BEATRICE COMMUNITY GARDEN

An access-first garden for Blyth - built around dignity, wellbeing and equal opportunity.

Belonging should not depend on how much ground a person can dig.



THE SITE TODAY

About 70 ft x 70 ft - disused and heavily overgrown



THE OPPORTUNITY

An inclusive community garden - illustrative vision

PRIMARY PURPOSE

To create a lasting, lower-maintenance shared garden where older and less-mobile allotment users - and others excluded by conventional plots - can continue to grow, contribute, learn and connect.

WHY THIS IS NEEDED

The site can reduce practical, health and social inequalities that make ordinary allotment participation an all-or-nothing choice.

- Conventional plots can become impossible. Full-size beds, low-level work and uneven routes demand strength, balance and stamina.
- Barriers exclude people. Age, disability, long-term conditions, visual or sensory needs can turn everyday site features into obstacles.
- Disconnection has a cost. Losing access to gardening can also mean losing routine, confidence, gentle activity and social contact.
- Unused land can deliver public value. This neglected area can serve far more people without displacing a productive working plot.

WHO CAN USE IT

PRIMARY USERS

- Older or less-mobile allotment holders
- Wheelchair and mobility-scooter users
- People unable to manage a full conventional plot

WIDER COMMUNITY

- People living with dementia, Parkinson's, visual impairment or other long-term conditions
- Disabled and SEND children, young people and adults
- Veterans, families, schools, youth organisations and community groups
- Volunteers, mentors and residents who want to share skills or companionship

GROW

at your pace

CONNECT

with others

CONTRIBUTE

skills & time

MANAGED COMMUNITY USE

Access and group visits will be organised through the Association and partner organisations - the garden is not proposed as an unrestricted public space.

INCLUSION BY DESIGN. SAFE IN DELIVERY.

A practical framework for fair access, safeguarding and accountable community use.

EQUALITY, EQUITY & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Equality is the same right to participate. Equity is removing the barriers that make that right unequal in practice. This garden is being planned around both - from the first design, not as an afterthought.

1

Firm, wide routes and turning space

2

Accessible raised beds and potting tables

3

Frequent seating, quiet and sensory spaces

4

Clear information and reasonable adjustments

5

Welfare, toilet and first-aid planning

6

Different levels and paces of participation



ACCESS IS BUILT IN FROM THE START

Illustrative vision; final design is subject to approvals. No pond is proposed.

SAFEGUARDING & RESPONSIBLE OPERATION

POLICY BEFORE OPENING | CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY

- A published safeguarding policy, named lead and clear route to report and record concerns.
- Children and adults at risk appropriately supervised; partner duties, permissions and ratios agreed in advance.
- Role-based suitability checks, including DBS eligibility, assessed rather than assumed.
- Risk assessments, sign-in/out, briefings, PPE, first aid and accessible emergency arrangements.
- Machinery only by competent operators with separation zones; volunteers matched to safe tasks.
- Consent for photographs and responsible handling of personal information.

NEIGHBOUR COMMITMENTS: proposed 08:00-19:00 hours | low-noise use | no fires | no pond | secure boundaries and protected privacy

A DELIVERY COALITION IS ALREADY IN PLACE

LEAD & GOVERNANCE

Newsham & New Delaval Allotment & Garden Association - Bill McFadzean, Chair; David Darbyshire, Acting Secretary and Project Lead.

TECHNICAL, ACCESS & HORTICULTURAL NETWORK

Kier Construction | ODR | Sirius | Northumberland College | Newcastle United Foundation | Northern Powergrid | The Alnwick Garden | Disability North

VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY

RSM UK | VOE Marine | Citizens Advice | local volunteers and youth/community groups

Partner roles and dates differ and remain subject to final planning and availability.

BACKING SECURED

CASH & IN-KIND SUPPORT

- Port of Blyth
- Gleeson Homes
- 15 orchard trees
- Pollinator planting
- Tools, PPE, irrigation and specialist expertise

COMMUNITY-LED. SAFELY MANAGED. BUILT TO LAST.

Every stage will be carefully planned, risk-assessed and delivered with appropriate permissions, clear accountability and respect for neighbours.