



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Questions from allotment holders for Environment Committee 17 September 2026

The question-asker has received the answer directly via email. Questions and answers will be shared anonymously on the Blyth Town Council website as part of the meeting agenda for the benefit of the wider community and on the online allotment noticeboard.

Any questions which raise a budgetary or policy consideration will be read out in the Committee meeting and may be timetabled for later discussion.

We encourage allotment holders and the general public to submit questions via email, phone or letter at any time; you do not have to wait for Allotment Question Time, though we use this time to highlight how to contact us.

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1. About 9 years ago one large plot was converted by Council contractors into 4 separate gardens at the Wensleydale site. The brand new internal fencing installed is all timber. Most of the timber posts now are rotting at the concreted base and some have snapped with some fences becoming unstable. It is clear that the timber utilised was untreated.

According to the rules tenants are responsible for the upkeep of fences, but my question is: why are the fences rotting relatively soon after construction and did the Council not specify that timber posts should be treated? This would have represented a small extra cost but with huge benefits by prolonging the life of the fencing. We find this an especially strange decision considering that all of the plots adjacent to the links road slope down and flood every winter due to the low level of the soil there and significant areas are under water for long periods.

Personally, I don't have the skills, health or finances necessary to rectify the issue myself. (I already reported this 4 years ago when I first noticed it)



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The 2014 invoice lists the timber as treated timber. The original contractor is no longer in business. After a conversation with our current fencing contractor, treated wood has a life span of approximately 10 years. This fence was built in approximately 2014 which makes it about 12 years old.

Officers are meeting with the plot-holder from week commencing 14 September to look at the fencing and review the condition of the plot. The plot is not currently listed as one prone to flooding.

2. Last year the relaxation of rules regarding burning of garden material was very welcome, so it was disappointing to see it revoked this year. My plot floods every winter and by the time October comes around the weather has changed and unprotected material is too wet to burn. Also, surely it is better for tenants to be able to burn small amounts throughout the year than the annual rush to burn in October. I know there were complaints from residents last year but I think burning small amounts throughout the year would be better for them too.

Fires were permitted as a trial from April to September 2025, which allowed for a full year of fires from October 2024 to October 2025 ahead of a Committee review and decision on 16 October 2025. Many factors were considered, including complaints from residents and a consultation of allotment holders, and ultimately the unanimous decision by the Committee was to revert to the original policy of only allowing fires between October and April each year.

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3. Can the council arrange bulk manure deliveries at discounted price that allotment holder can pay for

Unfortunately this is not something the Council has the capacity to organise.

We are happy for tenants to organise this between themselves and just ask everyone to be mindful of not blocking access (either with the delivery van or the delivery itself) and



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for the amount delivered to be the appropriate size to be collected by tenants in a matter of days.

4. I believe that we were going to have regular site inspections when are these going to take place ? there are two allotments on our site that are so unkempt . that they appear derelict.

If these site visits are to take place could the allotment holders be informed of the time and date and who is carrying out the inspection in case they want to be present

All sites are inspected on rotation throughout the year, meaning each site receives 3 or 4 inspections each year.

The team work to an approximate schedule, as other council work and inspection commitments, meetings, weather etc might change the priorities.

For this reason, while we do aim to give general advance notice across the sites when inspections take place, we cannot give precise days or times to individual allotment holders. There are also over 400 allotment plots across Blyth so coordinating with plot-holders is not possible.

However, we might request to meet with a plot holder should their garden be noted during inspections as falling below the required standards.

We are also happy to hear from plot holders about issues and can be contacted via phone or email, especially if they wish to proactively inform us of any personal issues that might be affecting the upkeep of their plot e.g. hospital stays etc.

We are aware of unkempt plots through our inspection process and are working with the holders to address this.



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5. I have a question for the Environment committee meeting. Why are some allotments allowed to continue to be overgrown and unkempt, after inspections. There are 3 plots on Tenth Avenue that are untended and the weeds are affecting other plot holders who work hard to keep their gardens in order. I understand there is a process to follow, but the times do seem rather lengthy and are often varied. Is the process based on any particular legal requirement or has this been agreed by councilors or allotment holders. I am a member of several allotments groups on the Internet and all seem to take more assertive action against plot holders who break the rules.

There is no legally stipulated process for inspections. The National Allotment Society provides guidance around the stages of issuing notices and timeframes. Blyth Town Council operates a regular schedule of inspections so issues can be identified early, breaches of tenancy can be addressed, and everyone can enjoy the allotments.

When the regular inspections identify an issue on a plot, for example poor levels of cultivation, poor condition of structures, or other emerging breach of tenancy conditions, the tenant receives a condition notice via email (or post if the tenant has not supplied an email) which notes the specific issue, referencing the tenancy agreement, and asks the tenant to make improvements within a period of weeks (usually 2 weeks, the National Allotment Association does not recommend less).

Often this first step identifies an issue, such as recovery from injury, which does influence the timelines given. Options for support are always highlighted in the condition notice, such as taking on a partner or splitting your plot, or moving to a smaller plot.

A reinspection is timetabled. Should no improvement be seen, the tenant receives a second condition notice by post. This notice asks for improvement within 28 days or tenancy is at risk.

A reinspection is timetabled for this point. If no improvement has been made, the notice to quit is provided, which gives 28 days to vacate the plot. Officers make every attempt to contact the tenant to advise of this situation.

We remind tenants to be mindful that their neighbours may have personal circumstances affecting their ability to work on their plot. The Council will always try to work alongside a tenant to ensure the improvements happen and the tenant can keep



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the plot. There may be some leniency in the timelines as a result of this, and we always welcome conversation with tenants as soon as difficulties arise.

6 Why are the Bollam Avenue allotment lanes allowed to be in such a poor condition?

I'm well aware that plot holders are responsible for the ground immediately outside their site.

I'm also certain that in the Blyth Small Holdings and Allotments 'Constitution' the committee is responsible for the maintenance of the rest of the site.

I'm specifically concerned about the following areas:

- 1. The area around the pedestrian gate at the Eagle entrance. This is constantly covered in junk. Anyone who looks inside will be significantly unimpressed.**
- 2. The track from the Newsham Road gate around to the car park by allotment 42. This is a primary access route into the site and is appallingly unkempt.**

It would pose a significant issue to any emergency vehicle that might need to reach someone ill onsite. The bushes have been allowed to overgrow the lane, the undergrowth along the wall next to the old basket ball court is (Especially this summer) a potentially significant fire hazard. Especially with the druggies that gather in the outside corner by the allotment 42 car park. The whole lane is plastered with years of old litter of all types. The corner by the metal fence that faces the sports centre has half a skips worth of junk in it including a door that has been there for at least a year. There are OSB sheets by the Newsham Rd gate that have been there for over two years.

- 3. The allotment 42 car park has always been a dumping site and still is.**
- 4. There are mountains of litter everywhere around the site. They are undoubtedly dropped by the users but other than the one or two folk that do pick it up it is left to fester.**

None of the above is new. It has been ongoing for the ten or more years that I have been using my garden. Nothing is ever done. No, please don't tell me that you had a HIAB in to remove the junk dumped by the Newsham Rd gate after the fire. That is



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not the point. The point is that there is an ongoing maintenance requirement for the site that is supposed to be provided by the committee and nothing is ever done.

Regular litter picking, strimming and brush cutting (At the right times of the year!) would make a significant difference.

Thanks you for your attention in these matters.

Blyth Smallholdings and Allotment Association (BSHAA) is responsible for:

- managing the waiting list
- the letting of plots
- collection of rents
- inspections
- issuing notices or terminations
- arranging for skips
- generally enforcing the rules of the site
- passing on official communications from Blyth Town Council

If BSHAA identify an issue falling under the responsibility of Blyth Town Council, they must report it accordingly.

Blyth Town Council (BTC) is responsible for:

- maintenance of perimeters, gates, the lanes, water standpipes and noticeboards
- arranging the removal of hazardous waste
- car park surfaces

BTC remain the overall landowner.

A correction: tenants are not responsible for the land immediately outside of their plot. This is the responsibility of BTC. That land is therefore not 'available' for parking, storage or dumping by the tenant. Sometimes tenants do move their fence boundary to allow for e.g. parking, but this is within the original boundary of their plot.

Both issues you have raised require some joint working between the Council and the Association.



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Dumped waste and litter

- BSHAA to remind tenants of their responsibility to remove waste in the first instance and actively discourage dumping and littering
- BSHAA to take action, including warnings and terminations, against tenants who are found to be dumping/littering, and raise concerns to BTC and the County Council's Environmental Enforcement Team when necessary
- BSHAA to liaise with tenants about the provision of skips to the site if needed to prevent accumulation of waste or dumping
- BTC to arrange for the clearing of waste/litter in the areas they are responsible for

It should be noted that BTC does not operate waste or cleansing services directly; we commission these services from Northumberland County Council (NCC) for streets and public areas, but allotment sites are considered an extra and arranged on an ad hoc basis with consideration to the capacity of the NCC team. This does mean that there is not a set schedule for addressing the issue or a guarantee that the NCC

Overgrown lanes

It is the responsibility of BTC to maintain the lanes. Again, it should be noted that BTC does not operate an environmental service directly and we do not have equipment or staff to clear undergrowth. Again, we commission these services from Northumberland County Council for streets and public areas, but allotment sites are considered an extra and arranged on an ad hoc basis with consideration to the capacity of the NCC team. We also recognise that in some areas, the growth acts as a layer of security.

We appreciate that the standard around this site is regarded as particularly low, and we will commit to exploring with the Environment Committee about the allocation of a budget to this work and discussion with NCC colleagues about their capacity, or find another solution. As this will incur a charge, this will need to go to a Council committee for consideration.

We will also work with BSHAA to improve the issue, ensure responsibilities are clear, and plan wider communication alongside BSHAA to ensure tenants understand their responsibilities under their tenancy agreement to help manage the build up of waste in the first instance:



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- not to bring waste or materials they do not immediately use onto sites
- disposal of waste is the tenant's responsibility
- tenants may liaise with the Association regarding the supply of skips
- tenants must respect the site and not litter
- the Association will enforce these rules and breaches may result in warning notices or termination of tenancy