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## For your diary:

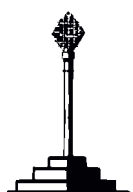
**19<sup>th</sup> May:** Alnwick Community Enterprise: Current activities and plans for the future. With Helen Dean. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.

**17<sup>th</sup> June:** Alnwick Playhouse: Adapting to a changing role in a landmark year. With Damian Cruden, Artistic Director. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.

**11<sup>th</sup> July:** Summer outing: A guided tour of Wooler. With Glendale Local History Society

**11<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Heritage Open Days: Watch for further details

**30<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings. With Jules Brown and Maria Carballeira from Historic England. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.



# Planning and Infrastructure Act: how will it affect us?

*The Planning and Infrastructure Act received Royal Assent on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2025, and is now law. It introduced wide-ranging changes to the planning system: Introduction of Spatial Development Strategies • Measures to improve the effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities and to streamline decisions on Strategic Infrastructure • A new approach to restoring Natural Habitats.*

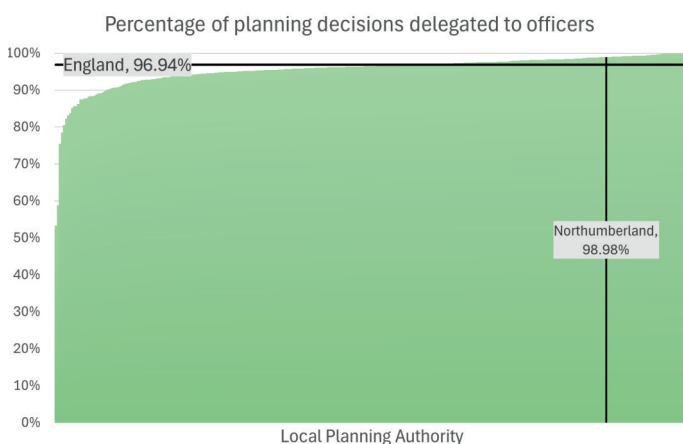
The act has been welcomed by the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Civil Engineering Contractors Association and the Royal Institute of British Architects. On the other hand, during its progress through parliament, there was strong opposition from organisations such as Friends of the Earth, The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, CPRE and the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Their concerns have not all been addressed. Civic Voice supported many aspects of the Bill, but also raised concerns about the risk that local democratic process would be undermined.

Time will tell whether these reforms really are going to streamline the planning system, accelerate housing delivery, unlock investment in strategic infrastructure and help promote economic growth. Or whether a price will be paid in terms of the natural environment and heritage conservation. Meanwhile, this is the law. We need to consider how the changes will affect Alnwick, our members and the work of the Society.

## Resources for local planning authorities

Planning Fees are meant to cover the cost of determining a planning application. In the past these fees have been set nationally, despite local variations in cost. Fees have been set at a level that does not cover the cost of development control. This has led to a lack of capacity and delays in decision-making. Now Local Planning Authorities will be able to set their own fees, as long as these do not exceed the costs incurred in determining planning applications.

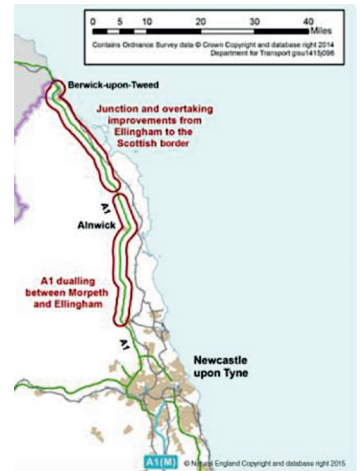
Planning decisions are the responsibility of a Local Authority's Planning Committee, although in practice Planning Committees only deal with large or contentious schemes. More than 96% of decisions are delegated to officers. Planning is a complex regulatory function, but the way that decisions are delegated has been inconsistent. There has been no statutory requirement for members of a planning committee to undergo training. To bring greater consistency to decision-making and make effective use of resources and skills the Act includes measures to introduce a national scheme of delegation, to require basic training for planning committee members and to control the size of planning committees.



## Strategic Infrastructure and housing

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects are large scale projects like offshore wind farms, power stations, motorways and other major roads, railways and gas pipelines. Examples locally would include dualling of the A1 between Morpeth and Ellingham, and improvements to the Newcastle / Gateshead Western Bypass. Their large scale and wider impact mean that planning decisions for such schemes are not handled by the normal local authority process. The Planning Inspectorate appoints independent inspectors. They examine the application and make recommendations to the relevant Secretary of State, who makes the final decision.

In an attempt to make it quicker and easier to deliver critical infrastructure projects the Act includes measures that aim to streamline consultation and reduce opportunities for judicial review. There are also a number of measures to reform and rationalise the Compulsory Purchase process and to give authorities more confidence to use their powers.



## Spatial Development Strategy

Sometimes there's a need to consider a development that is of regional importance. However, outside London the planning system has relied on cooperation between individual local authorities to address any cross-boundary issues. So the Act introduced a new planning tool. A Spatial Development Strategy is modelled on an approach that has already been used in London to consider development and use of land which is of regional strategic importance. There's a new duty on Combined Authorities and Local Authorities to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy for their area. A Spatial Development Strategy is expected to cover matters such as • Housing • Economy and Employment • Town Centres • Infrastructure • The Natural and Historic Environment.

## Natural Habitats

The Act introduces a new approach to protecting and restoring natural habitats and species. This will provide an alternative to bespoke schemes linked to individual developments. Instead, Environmental Delivery Plans developed by Natural England will set out packages of conservation measures to address environmental priorities. Levies from different developments will be pooled in a Nature Restoration Fund. The aim is to allow coordinated action to drive nature recovery, while enabling development to go ahead. Each Environmental Delivery Plan will define specific environmental impacts, set out relevant measures, and specify an appropriate levy. Once a scheme is approved by the Secretary of State, Natural England will be responsible for implementation.

## What outcomes should we expect?

It is widely expected that allowing Local Planning Authorities to set planning fees will help authorities to deploy more appropriate levels of resource. Nationally, more than 90% of plan-

## Planning and Infrastructure Act (continued)

ning applications are decided within the expected period. The figures for Northumberland have been lower, but improving in the last couple of years. Northumberland already delegates more planning decisions to officers than the national average and, as best we can tell, their costs are not substantially higher than fee income. So it will be interesting to see whether these changes have any effect on the quality and speed of local decision making.

We currently have no Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in our immediate area, but we still have an interest in what happens across the wider region. The premise that planning is a significant cause of delays to critical infrastructure is contested. On the contrary, many argue that effective scrutiny ought to result in better decisions and reduce the risk of problems emerging later. Streamlining the process might lead to less effective scrutiny, and hence poorer decisions.

The North East Combined Authority wants to have one of the first Spatial Development Strategies in place because they believe this will help attract investment. They are aiming to produce a draft strategy by late 2027 for adoption the following year. This should not affect the responsibility of Northumber-

land County Council for planning at a local level. There should be some public consultation on a Spatial Development Strategy - but if it does attract appropriate investment to the region, will that benefit Alnwick?

Preparation of the first Environment Development Plans has already begun. The intent is that these will concentrate resources to deliver greater environmental gains, while also providing clarity and certainty for developers. Natural England has decided to prepare sixteen for nutrient pollution affecting protected sites (including the Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast SPA/Ramsar) and seven for great crested newts including one for the North East & Yorkshire. Conservation bodies have concerns that these plans will bypass existing regulations, weaken protection and undermine responses to local issues.

Finally, this legislation forms part of a wider programme of planning reform which includes changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation has pointed out the risk that centralised decision making can result in failure to account for local circumstances. The Planning and Infrastructure Act and the National Planning Policy Framework both have to address the needs of the whole country. And priorities can differ. Does the National Planning Policy give too much weight to assumptions that apply in high growth areas such as England's south-east. And too little weight to the pressures in areas where the economy is less than vibrant. Like the need to attract skilled jobs, or the challenges in funding viable heritage conservation projects.

Alnwick Civic Society might have limited ability to influence national policy. But we can try to ensure that changes to the planning system don't undermine an important principle - that the community must have a voice in decisions that affect us.



Catchment Area of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area (SPA).

## England's first Land-Use Framework

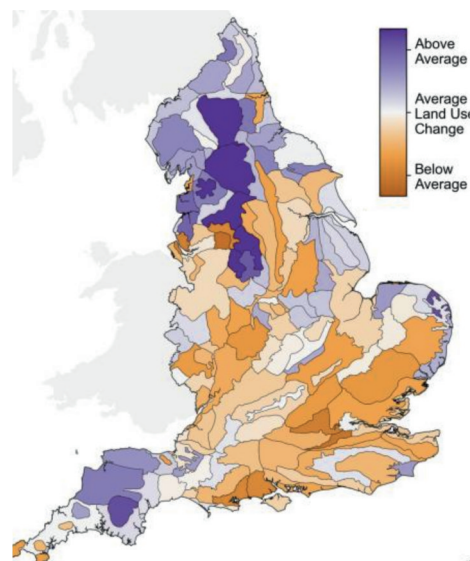
*In March the Government published England's first Land-Use Framework. There is a finite amount of land available, yet growing pressure to build more homes, generate clean energy, maintain food production, and restore nature. The framework falls short of directing how land will be used. Instead it set out how much land is needed to meet different targets, and includes a number of supporting measures and tools to steer effective use of land and ensure that there is sufficient to meet different needs.*

The framework has taken years to develop: work began in 2022. Now that it has been published, with some reservations, it has been welcomed by stakeholders with very different priorities: the National Farmers' Union (“a step in the right direction, but challenges remain...”), CPRE (“welcoming its ambition while urging stronger safeguards...”), Royal

Town Planning Institute (“To realise its full potential, the Framework needs to place communities at its heart...”) the Countryside Alliance (“Significant concerns remain: most notably its remarks about shooting”), RSPB (“a promising commitment to spatially target funding for nature-friendly farming”), Rewilding Britain (“a significant step forward in creating the long-term vision for land use and nature recovery”).

Achieving efficient land use will mean focusing change in areas where it is going to be most effective. On that basis, the DEFRA model anticipates an impact on Northumberland that is somewhat above average, but not as great as the change expected in some other National Character Areas.

There's more here : <https://tinyurl.com/bddafzz9>



# Future for Civic Voice

*Civic Voice has set out a renewed, volunteer-led future to strengthen the civic movement across England*

The Board of Civic Voice has announced a significant and positive evolution in the organisation's future operations, following a period of careful reflection and engagement with its membership.

At the heart of this renewed direction is a commitment to become a truly volunteer-led organisation, focused on empowering civic action at local, county, regional and national levels. This approach reflects both the strength of the civic network itself and the Board's determination to ensure Civic Voice remains resilient, inclusive and impactful in a rapidly changing civic and policy environment.

Civic Voice will continue to champion the values on which it was founded: supporting community placemaking, protecting heritage, and acting as the voice of the citizen planner. By placing volunteers and networks at the centre of its model, the organisation will strengthen its role as the natural partner for communities seeking to shape the places they care about, while amplifying local voices in national conversations about planning, place and civic pride.

Having considered a range of options and listened closely to member views at the Annual General Meeting in Birmingham on 8 November 2025, an online meeting later that month and a subsequent hybrid update meeting held on 24 January 2026 the Board has agreed a clear way forward that will enable Civic Voice to continue serving its vital purpose as the national champion for local pride and place.

As part of this renewed approach, membership of Civic Voice will be opened more broadly to individuals as well as to a diverse range of organisations operating within the civic space. This reflects the Board's belief that civic engagement thrives when barriers to participation are lowered and when a wide range of perspectives are welcomed and supported.

The Board has also committed to consulting fully with members on a significant review of Civic Voice's membership fee structure. The aim of this review will be to ensure that no individual or organisation is excluded from participation based on cost, and that membership arrangements are fair, proportionate and supportive of the organisation's volunteer-led ethos.

Alongside structural changes, Civic Voice will place a strong emphasis on connection and collaboration across the civic movement. The development and use of accessible online tools to facilitate the sharing of best practice will be actively encouraged. By enabling member organisations and groups to learn from one another, Civic Voice aims to foster greater cohesion and confidence across the network, ensuring that local experience informs regional and national debate, and that innovation and success can be shared widely.

The Board recognises the dedication, experience and goodwill within the civic movement and believes that this renewed focus will allow Civic Voice to build on its legacy

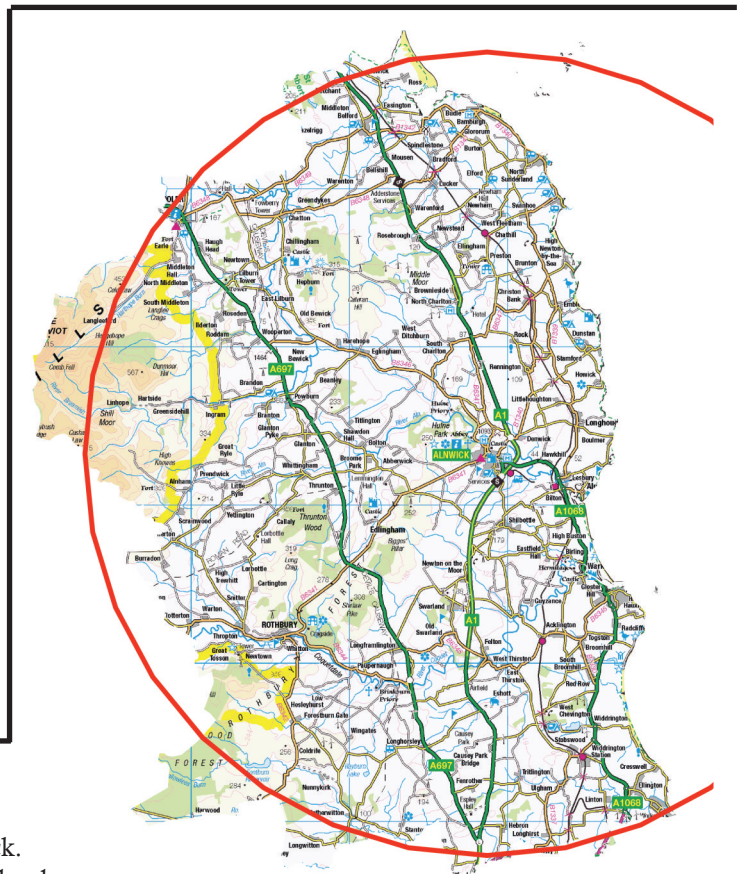
while adapting to future challenges and opportunities. Further details on membership, consultation arrangements and the next steps in implementing this volunteer-led model will be shared with members in due course. A working party to undertake a full Strategic Review has been commissioned by the Board. This will lead to a new constitution and the formation of a CIO to better serve the organisation in the future.

Where there are no regional groups they are seeking volunteers on a county-by-county basis to create, maintain and link societies to facilitate quick dissemination of relevant information and share good practice and ideas. If you can help as a county coordinator, or if you want to help establish a county network where none exists, you can register your interest with Civic Voice by email to [info@civicvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@civicvoice.org.uk) so they can match volunteers, connect societies, and build coverage county by county.

In summary:

- A volunteer led national, regional and/or county network to connect civic societies.
- Membership open to individuals as well as organisations.
- A member consultation on fair, proportionate fees, with cost not a barrier.
- A Strategic Review leading to a new constitution and a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

There will be regular online meetings for members, following the pattern of those held in November and February, to maintain continuity, accountability, and check that they have the support for members as the organisation evolves.



## Did you know?

About 56,500 people live within 16 miles of Alnwick. That's roughly the same as the population of Greenland.

# Borderline Greenway: creating a regional strategic asset

*The Newsletter of February last year carried an article about the history of the Alnwick and Cornhill rail line that operated from 1887 to finally closing in 1965. An introduction to the article signalled the reuse of the trackbed as a path for walkers, cyclists and riders. A month after the article appeared the first stretch of the Borderline Greenway was officially opened.*

Borderline Greenway is a project being undertaken by a Community Interest Company that aims to complete an ambitious plan to restore the disused railway tracks between Alnwick and Cornhill as a traffic-free path. A start has been made with the completion of an initial 3km section running out of Alnwick to Rugley Wood. This has been achieved with help from a variety of sponsors and has involved the building of a bridge and installing new fences and gates.

## Creating A Regional Strategic Asset

Opening up the Alnwick to Cornhill path is one part of a vision to connect to the River Tweed Trail (Cornhill to Berwick – complete in 2028), NCN 1 down the coast, and the route alongside the Aln Valley Railway to create a 156km circular ‘Northumberland Way’. The route will also link to NCN 68, the Sandstone Way and create ready access to the National Park at Powburn and Wooler.

The development of what will become an asset of regional importance speaks to the potential to enhance active and more sustainable tourism in the area, as well providing a local recreational asset.

In addition to these benefits, it is intended to maximise the greening potential of the project. Here, the focus on

appropriate plantings and shrubbery and establishing a wildlife corridor will enhance both the ecological environment and the look of the trail. Learning from others who have taken forward greenway projects and linking with the developing green corridor plans elsewhere will be an early priority – specifically connecting with the proposed Druridge Bay to Keilderhead green corridor to the south. Again, the ambition here is regional and strategic in scope.

## The Next Steps

An initial focus to realise the strategic aim will be to work closely with local landowners and farmers to extend the route by 18km by renovating the former rail track to create a traffic-free path between Rugley Wood and Powburn.

Borderline Greenway is gearing up for this next challenge by surveying the route and engaging with owners and stakeholders along the path, raising finance for planned work and helping volunteers to maintain the existing path and develop future sections.

As part of the practical challenge of extending the path a key aspect of project will be to engage with local communities, to promote the use of the existing path and as far as possible meet the needs of users as the route is extended. Early indications are that the path out of Alnwick is getting high

### The ambition - creating The Northumberland Way

Ambitious plan to join two disused railway tracks to National Cycle Routes 1 and 68

Creating a 156km / 97 mile circular route

New link to National Park at Powburn and Wooler

Link to Druridge Bay to Keilderhead Wildlife Corridor

usage by both locals and visitors. As part of the task of gathering supportive data to accompany future grant applications, surveys and counters will be used to measure usage and gauge support for the project.

In progressing this element of the Borderline Greenway project, the active participation of civic and special interest groups will be critically important.

If you would like to be kept informed of developments

via the Borderline Greenway Newsletter, please register your interest on the main page of the website:

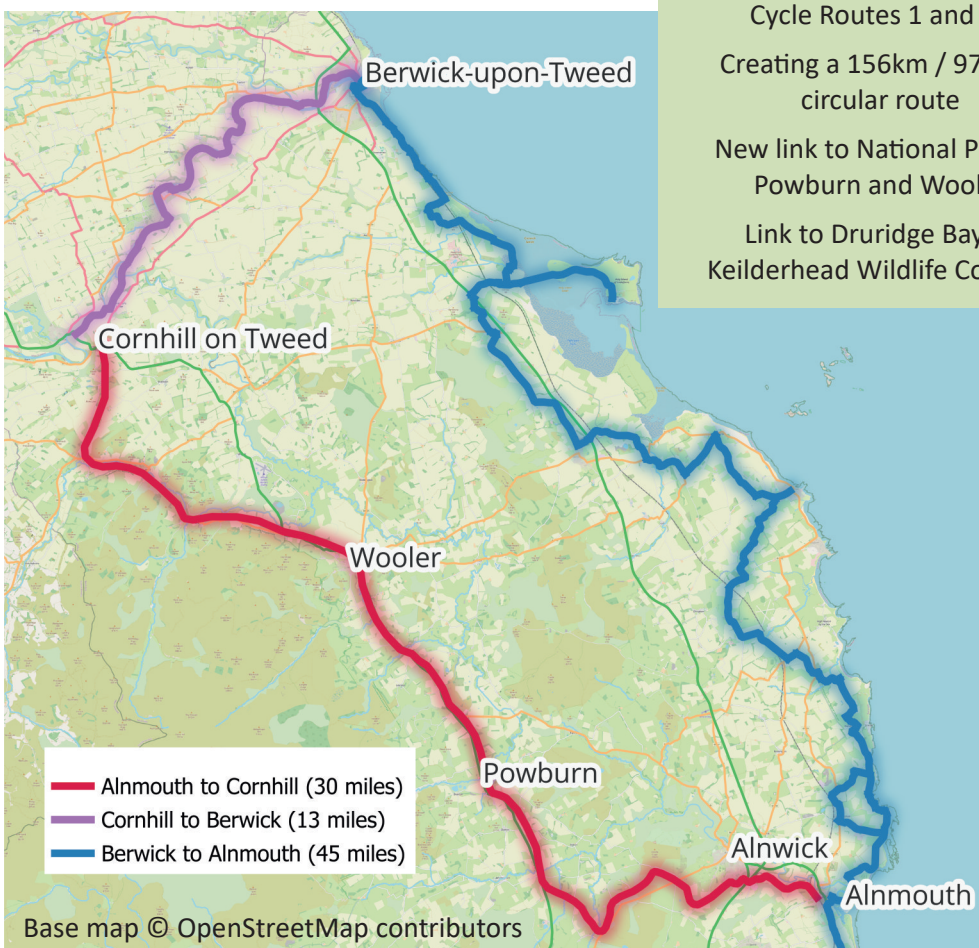
<http://www.borderlinegreenway.com/>

If you would like to give financial backing to the project you can do that via the links on the website “Donations” page:

<https://www.borderlinegreenway.com/donate>

Your donation would be very welcome and much appreciated.

In the coming months the Borderline Greenway will be posting news of developments, and show where and when you could add practical weight to the project.



# Protecting Alnwick's trees

Trees are protected in the planning system because of their amenity value, the contribution they make to local character, in order to mitigate climate change and to enhance biodiversity.

Certain countryside hedgerows are protected, but this does not include boundaries of private gardens. Consent is not needed to: remove dead branches, to make a dangerous tree safe (though in this case the council should be notified), to prune fruit trees to keep them healthy, or to prune hedgerows to keep them healthy and in shape. So in practice, within Alnwick we come across two forms of tree protection:

- Certain trees, groups of trees or woodlands are protected by Tree Preservation Orders made by Northumberland County Council as the Planning Authority under Part VIII of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town & Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012.
- Trees within Alnwick Conservation Area that have a trunk diameter of 75mm or more are protected under section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Protected or not, it is important that any tree



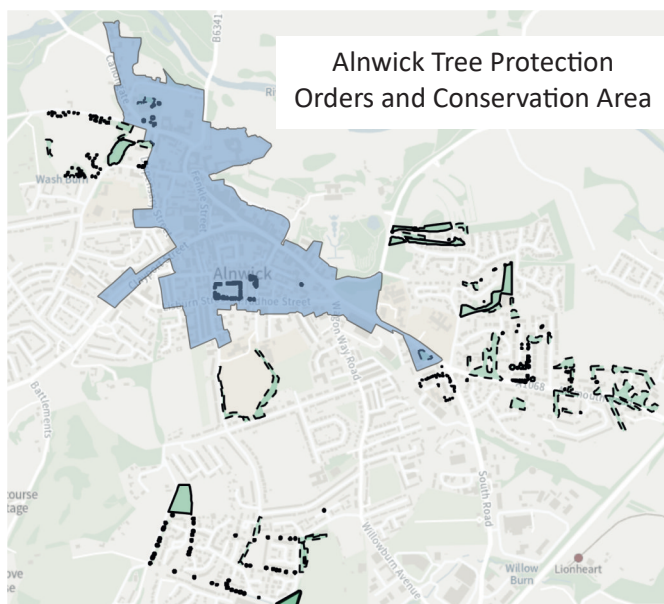
is inspected regularly and that maintenance is carried out to make sure they remain safe and healthy. The tree's owner is responsible for this. There are no regulations setting out how often or to what standard work must be carried out. The local authority can encourage good practice, but it cannot require work to be carried out - even when a tree is protected.

## Tree Preservation Orders

A Tree Preservation Order is an order made by a local planning authority to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity. 'Amenity' is not defined in law, so this is an area where the authorities need to exercise judgement. The guidance they are given is that these orders should be used when removal would have a significant negative impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public. They should be able to show that protection would bring a reasonable degree of public benefit. A structured way of assessing the amenity value of trees will take account of:

- **Visibility:** the extent to which the trees or woodlands can be seen by the public.
- **Impact:** size and form; potential as an amenity; rarity, cultural or historic value; relationship with landscape; contribution to character or appearance of a conservation area.
- **Other factors:** such as contribution to nature conservation or climate change can be considered, but on their own, these would not warrant making an Order.

An Order can be used to protect individual trees, trees within an area, groups of trees or whole woodlands. Protected trees can be of any size or species.



Authorities may only use an Order to protect something that would normally be considered to be a tree. This would exclude shrubs, but could include trees in a hedge or an old hedge which has grown into trees of a reasonable height.

## Trees in the conservation area

Some trees in the conservation area are already protected by a Tree Preservation Order. These are subject to all the same procedures and controls as any tree outside the Conservation area that is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Trees in a conservation area that are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These require the local planning authority to be notified 6 weeks before certain work is carried out. This gives the authority an opportunity to consider whether or not to make an Order. A section 211 notice is not an application for consent. So the authority cannot refuse consent. Nor can it grant consent subject to conditions. What it can do is make a Tree Preservation Order (if it believes this is justified) or inform the applicant that the work can go ahead. If it just allows the notice period to lapse then the proposed work may go ahead.

## We can make a difference

The illustration (above) is extracted from a map of tree protection in Northumberland. Anyone can use this to check where regulations apply. See digital mapping of Planning Constraints: <https://tinyurl.com/33h8yt52>

Northumberland County Council invite members of the public to suggest trees that should be considered for a Tree Preservation Order, or report breaches of the regulations such as:

- a protected tree being cut down without permission
- unauthorised work on protected trees
- work on a tree in a conservation area without permission
- a breach of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO)
- removal of a protected hedgerow

See: <https://tinyurl.com/3pvzthye>

The categories for reporting issues on FixMyStreet include:

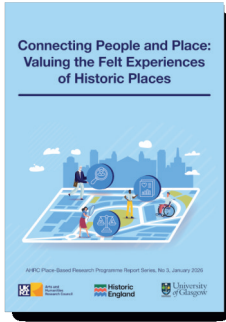
- Nuisance or dangerous trees
- Trees affecting highways or pavements
- Trees affecting streetlights
- Trees damaging private property
- Trees under a Preservation Order or in a Conservation Area

See: <https://fix.northumberland.gov.uk>

If you have a particular interest in this topic please get in touch. We can share details of any planning applications that affect Alnwick's trees and we would welcome your views.

# News in Brief

Why do people form emotional connections to historic places? According to a report by Historic England and the University of Glasgow historic places provide the permanence people need to feel secure in their surroundings and the stability to function and thrive in everyday life. This connection to places is something that each of us instinctively knows and it permeates every part of our lives. So it is often taken for granted. Historic places matter because we have a human connection to them but this connection is often downplayed. The report goes on to consider the relationship between experience of historic places and socio-economic outcomes, and how this can drive innovative policies. The full report “*Connecting People and Place: Valuing the Felt Experiences of Historic Places*” can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/5etwzdcx>



The Local Government Ombudsman is warning that councils are losing control of planning enforcement. Enforcement investigations are a rising proportion of the Ombudsman's planning work and they are drawing attention to the impact of significant delays. In some cases, statutory time limits have passed before councils could act, leaving communities with no legal remedy and developments that breach planning rules standing indefinitely. The report echoes findings from an earlier survey by the Royal Town Planning Institute. In that 80% of planning enforcement officers say there are not enough staff to carry out the workload, 89% report case backlogs, and 73% say their authority struggles to recruit. A recent Northumberland County Council Performance Report showed that the backlog of cases here has reduced significantly, but performance is still below target, workflows are high and the issue remains under review.

See <https://tinyurl.com/5evv4yxa>

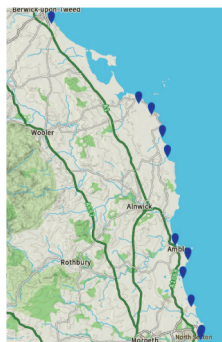
The government has been seeking views on updated design guidance for new build with a focus on design quality, creating places of lasting value, that are climate change resilient. New builds will be expected to address and adapt to climate

change, creating adequate shade and minimising potential flood risk. The guidance encourages all parties to support local jobs and amenities - ensuring local shops and services are within walking distance. It lists seven features of well-designed places :

- **Liveability:** Homes close to amenities, designed for all stages of life, with communal and private space.
- **Climate:** Buildings that cope with climate change, green spaces to reduce overheating, solar panels, green and brown roofs, and EV charging stations.
- **Nature:** Hedgehog highways, swift bricks, green spaces and parks, and protection for existing natural features.
- **Movement:** Safe streets, accessible public transport, and good parking without car dominated design.
- **Built Form:** Rooms sized to promote health and wellbeing, with good storage, minimising outside noise, privacy and security, sunlight, and good ventilation.
- **Public Space:** well-located spaces that encourage social interaction, with natural surveillance from windows and balconies.
- **Identity:** Character shaped by local history, culture, and landscape, reflected in building types, and architectural details.

The Draft for Consultation can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/2x9buxbe>

Northumberland's outstanding coastline is a draw for visitors and an asset for residents. Amble's Little Shore was recently shortlisted as a designated bathing spot and (if accepted) will join 13 others in Northumberland. Designated Bathing Waters are regularly tested for water quality and twelve of those in Northumberland are currently rated as 'excellent' (Bamburgh Castle, Sea-houses North, Beadnell, Low Newton, Warkworth, Amble Links, Druridge Bay North and



South, Newbiggin North and South, Blyth South beach, and Seaton Sluice). Spittal beach is rated as 'good'.



In related news, the management plan for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape (formerly the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) was adopted by Northumberland County Council in December 2025. Among other things, the plan aims to ensure that the landscape and settlements are conserved and enhanced. One outcome being that historical landscape features and heritage assets are protected and enhanced. The plan area includes 21 scheduled monuments, 280 listed buildings, 9 conservation areas and 2 Registered Parks and Gardens. Three are regarded by Historic England as being at risk (a Round barrow near Bamburgh, Benthall round cairn near Beadnell and St Ebba's chapel and monastic site at Beadnell). The plan aims to reduce this number. It can be downloaded here:

<https://tinyurl.com/4dydxd2>

The recent fire in Glasgow's Union Street attracted national attention after widespread disruption and the destruction of an historic building. This is not the first example of significant fire damage to Glasgow's Heritage. The Glasgow School of Art (Mackintosh building) was severely damaged by fire in 2014 and again in 2020. A nightclub on Sauchiehall Street was lost to fire in 2019. Tenement blocks in the city's Pollokshields area were destroyed by separate fires in 2019 and 2020. A derelict Georgian terrace in Carlton Place was damaged by fire in 2024.

Glasgow has an exceptionally large number of under-used 19th century buildings. These structures pre-date modern building standards and can incorporate significant quantities of combustible material. Some commentators are already calling for specific policy changes regarding licensing and planning to limit the ways that such buildings can be used. Others are drawing attention to an increase in vacancy rates, rising construction costs, and growing numbers of stalled projects. This pattern of risk to vulnerable heritage cannot be ignored: either in Glasgow, or in Alnwick.

# Football in Alnwick

Previous research has shown that Association Football was established in the town in 1879 under the name of Alnwick United Services Club, but the game of football itself has been played in the town long before this. The old Shrovetide Football has been played in the town since at least 1762. Although the rules are different, the idea is the same, get the ball into the opposition's goal! Having played Shrove Tuesday for a number of years, it's safe to say you couldn't play it every week without serious injuries occurring!

Trying to piece together the history of the Association Football in the town has been anything but straight forward. From trying to locate former pitches, to identifying which team carried on from another after folding and attempting to note every score and goalscorer for the official club records, it has been a project years in the making and is still ongoing. The plan is to eventually publish everything that has been discovered, and with 2029 set to be the 150<sup>th</sup> year of Association Football in the town, that is the target.

In the early days football was played at the Recreation Ground (behind Upper Barresdale) and Wagonways. Other pitches of note discovered to date are at Howling Lane, Fishers Lane, Bog Mill Field (on the way out of Alnwick towards Alnmouth), South Road Ground, (old) Percy Park (where the allotments are at St James'), Malcolm's Cross, The Pastures and Hulne Park. There are more without a doubt.

Local man John Whinham, along with Scotsmen Dan Pender and Adam Crammond are 3 names that crop up regarding the formation of a club in the town. John Whinham in newspaper articles openly states the formation date of 1879 at North Northumberland meetings.

The 1<sup>st</sup> game was played at the Pastures where the Tyne sent a side up to show the locals how to play on 27.11.1880. The visitors returned home 7-1 winners.

The 1884-85 season saw the formation of Alnwick AFC, a merge between Alnwick Association, Hotspur and St Michael's Guild. The strangest thing about this is that Hotspur played the Rugby code, which would disappear from the town for decades.

The complicated family tree that follows includes Alnwick Working Men's Club, Alnwick AFC, Alnwick North End, Alnwick Association, Percy Rovers, Duke's School Old Boys,

and many more. It is safe to say that football was a popular sport in its early years.

Alnwick St James's played the 1<sup>st</sup> game league at St James's Park (after a move from Victoria Park) on 21.09.1901 against New York United in the Northumberland League, winning 7-0. This side was setup by Rev Cairns of St James's Church. They would bring home the Minor Cup in 1904 defeating Scotswood 1-0 at the other St James' Park in front of 5000 spectators. J Waugh with the winning goal.



Alnwick United – 1936/37

1911 saw the last amalgamation of clubs in the town to date. Alnwick Wednesday and Duke's School Old Boys (formerly Percy Rovers) came together to form Alnwick Town and compete in the Coquetdale League. It's worth noting the colours adopted were blue with a white band. Alnwick Aydon Rovers declined to be part of the merger.

A further name change followed after the First World War to Alnwick United Ex-Servicemen. After promotion to the Northern Alliance in 1936, the name returned to Alnwick Town and has stayed that way since.

The Northern Alliance years have brought some remarkable success. The glory years of the 1960's and 70's brought 8 league titles and 5 league cup wins. Only the Senior Cup evaded the club, not for lack of trying.



Alnwick Town with the Northern Alliance title.



St James' Park - Clubhouse

## Football in Alnwick (continued)

A single season in the Durham Central League in 1964-65 brought a league cup victory. Promotion to the Northern League occurred in 1982, where the club travelled to the likes of Whitehaven and Northallerton in years gone by.

No league trophy has been won in the Northern League, but the club did gain promotion to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, their highest place in the football pyramid to date, in 1989.

Unfortunately, the stay only lasted 2 years, and the club remained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division until 2007 when they were relegated back to the Northern Alliance. The club have been promoted, relegated and promoted back in the years since, and are now pushing for a playoff place under manager Richie Latimer.

There are so many people to mention that have been legends of the game in the town, but the likes of Clive Burn, Eric Hately, Tom Pickard, Mac Belisle, Albert Straughan, James Swordy, Cyril Cox and Tom McKie are just a handful that deserve eternal recognition for their contributions to the club and the sport.

Away from the men's senior team, football is flourishing at the Junior Setup. Junior football has been played in Alnwick since the formation days. Some real grassroot heroes gave the youngsters of the town somewhere to play the game, and they now have their own state of the art 3G pitch and clubhouse. Long gone are the days of getting changed in a portacabin at the entrance to Greensfield, or the caravan at Longhoughton! The most famous product of the junior set up is England International, Lucy Bronze. The clubhouse is named after Lucy, a true role model for kids in the town.

The club also has a very successful Ladies team, who will be hoping to finally bring home the Senior Cup this year. Little old Alnwick have punched well above their weight in the Ladies game, taking on the likes of Newcastle United at St James' Park, and Leeds United at Elland Road. The Ladies currently compete in the North East Regional Women's Premier League. They have moved to the junior setup in recent years, have a new 50 seater stand and pitch with perimeter fencing in place.

*Thanks to Michael Cook for this brief summary of his research into the complex history of one of Alnwick's most popular sports.*



Alnwick Town Ladies 2017

## Alnwick Pubs, Past and Present

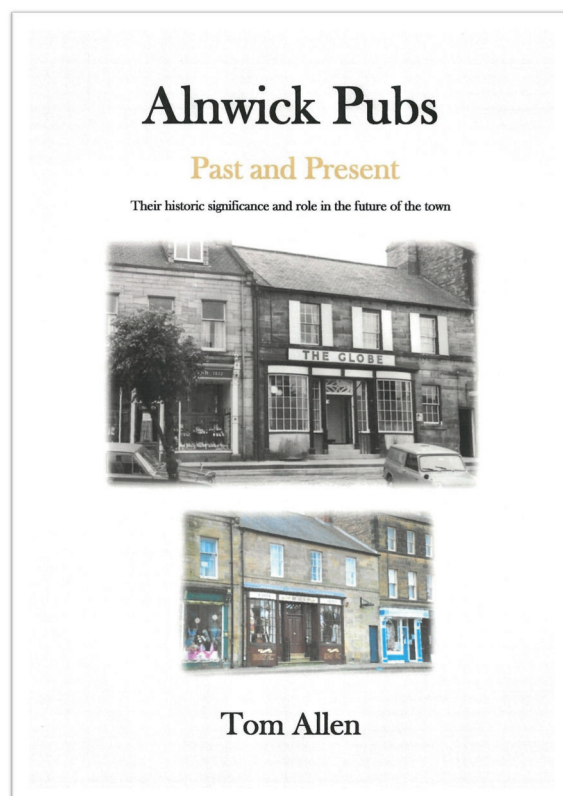
In 2023, Tom Allen produced a booklet '*Alnwick Pubs, Lanes and Alleyways*' which provided an overview of the town's pubs as well as information on the pathways connecting them. Subsequent discussions with Alnwick residents showed that there was a great deal of interest in the town's lost pubs. It then became inevitable that there was a more detailed book waiting to be written.

Tom's new book, '*Alnwick Pubs, Past and Present*', documents the town's pubs from medieval times to the present-day providing dates, locations, maps and photographs for many lost pubs. It also describes the history surrounding today's surviving pubs.

Unlike many towns and cities around the country, Alnwick old town avoided the national rush to modernise in the 1960s. The story of this narrow escape is described in detail by someone who was present at a decisive public meeting over 60 years ago.

With national pub numbers in seemingly terminal decline, the author compares Alnwick's pub numbers with the rest of the country and considers what modern pubs have to offer and, indeed, if pubs have a role in 21st century Britain.

'*Alnwick Pubs, Past and Present*' is a book intended for anyone interested in the town's architectural and social history and the importance of pubs in the cultural and economic success of the town today. The book will be on sale from May 2026 at several locations in Alnwick including Bailiffgate Museum, Taste of Northumbria and The Post Office (which was once The King's Arms in the 19th century).



# Planning Matters

Proposed improvements to the public area around Alnwick Bus Station are designed to improve layout, safety, accessibility and the quality of the public area. The works include the repair and replacement of hardstanding, reconfiguration of bus parking, improved pedestrian routes, new paving and hardstanding, seating and landscaping, and the introduction of a rain garden, ornamental planting and tree planting. The application promises to improve use of the bus station for all users but will also enhance the public realm and by extension the character and appearance of the Alnwick Conservation Area.

In our view improvements to the bus station are long overdue and welcome. These will improve arrival in Alnwick and enhance the townscape in a part of the Alnwick Conservation Area where the condition of the public realm falls below the standard expected. However, details should not be overlooked in enthusiasm for the project. So our our response highlighted three areas where we believe further consideration is required:

- The need for clarity on how the current proposals relate to the improvements that are necessary to the bus station building interior.
- Maintenance arrangements to ensure that these improvements will continue to provide a welcoming environment and enhance the townscape over the long-term.
- The need to establish management arrangements capable of realising the full potential of this investment.

## Building interior

The application description refers to the “bus station area” but pre-application feedback shows that the public finds the interior of the present building unwelcoming, dark, messy, windy and cold.

The interior of the building is clearly in need of an upgrade. This proposal includes some elements that fall within the building, but a more general upgrading of the building does not form part of this application. Without further improvements to the interior we believe the public will be disappointed that their principal concerns have not been addressed. And as a result the po-

tential benefits of this investment will not be realised. In the absence of a published plan for the interior that is funded, approved and scheduled the community deserves greater clarity on how their concerns regarding the interior of the building are going to be addressed.

## Maintenance

The proposed planting, materials, and street furniture appear to be of a high standard. Appropriate weight should be given to the positive impact of this design on visual amenity and green infrastructure. Properly maintained the planting should continue to provide a welcoming environment and enhance the townscape. However, maintenance of public green space throughout Alnwick town centre (including the Bus Station site) already relies on a considerable amount of community effort to supplement the work of contractors. The expectation will be that the quality of this design will be maintained over time and we do not see any evidence that this design will require no maintenance. We therefore suggest that urgent consideration is given to ensuring that a fully resourced and funded maintenance plan is in place before work begins.

## Management

The Legislative and Policy Context for this application outlines a variety of factors against which this application needs to be considered. The potential benefits include aspects of economic development, health and well-being, public safety, social inclusion, sustainable travel, and environmental impact. The application acknowledges that land ownership in the vicinity of the bus station is complex, and operational responsibilities are shared across a variety of different

stakeholders. We therefore suggest that consideration is given to bringing stakeholders together and establishing an appropriate management structure, with responsibility for realising the potential benefits, putting the required resources in place, and tracking progress.



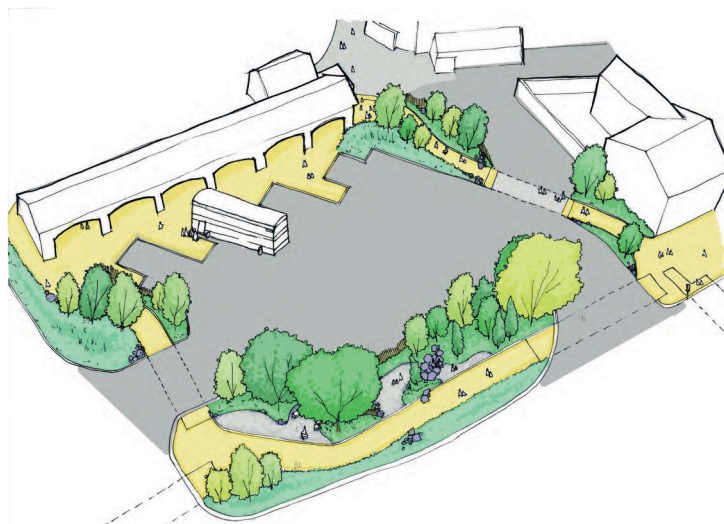
The former Library on Green Batt was built in 1810 as a school to commemorate the golden jubilee of George III. It was extended between 1887 and 1898, then larger windows inserted, and the original leaded windows replaced with horned sashes. After the Duke's School was built in 1904 it became an elementary school, which closed in 1921. It then became a Branch Library in 1931. When that closed in 2019 the building was converted to residential use.

The building is not listed, and has lost much of its internal layout, fixtures, and fittings. However, it makes an important contribution to the character of this part of the town and has local significance. There is a proposal to replace existing windows and doors. We have objected. The design and materials are inappropriate and will harm the significance of the building, and the character of this part of the Conservation Area. A number of National and local planning policies could be referenced but we drew particular attention to HD3 in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan which relates to protecting Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

It says that development affecting non-designated heritage assets, whether

locally listed, identified in the Historic Environment Record, through characterisation studies or research, or identified as part of the application process, should have particular regard to the conservation of the heritage asset, its features and its setting.

The Town Council and Conservation Officers from NCC Built Heritage and Design made similar objections.



## Quiz: Local walks

Anybody searching for the best walk in Northumberland will have 3,100 miles of public rights of way to compare. But every journey starts with a single step. So here are seven examples of familiar local walks. How many do you recognise?

Footpaths are open to walkers only. Bridleways are open to walkers, horse riders and cyclists. A Byway Open to All Traffic is open to walkers, cyclists, horse riders, horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles. A landowner may allow use of paths and tracks which are not public rights of way. These are 'Permissive Paths'. All can be sampled around Alnwick.

For bonus points, can you say who is ultimately responsible for

- Signposting rights of way
- Maintaining the Definitive Map (the record of rights of way)
- Providing and maintaining stiles and gates?



## For your diary

**19<sup>th</sup> May:** Alnwick Community Enterprise. Current activities and plans for the future with Helen Dean. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 for 7:30 start.



**17<sup>th</sup> June:** Alnwick Playhouse: Adapting to a changing role in a landmark year. With Damian Cruden, Artistic Director. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 for 7:30 start.

**11<sup>th</sup> July:** Our summer outing: A guided tour of Wooler with Glendale Local History Society.

**11<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Heritage Open Days. Watch for further details.

**30<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings. With Jules Brown and Maria Carballeira from Historic England. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 for 7:30 start.

## ...and more

**19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> June:** Mighty Dub Fest, Alnwick Castle Pastures.

**25<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> June:** What A Wonderful World Festival.

### Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery

**To 30<sup>th</sup> May:** May the toys be with you. Exhibition of Star Wars toys, images and memorabilia.

**2<sup>nd</sup> June -30<sup>th</sup> Aug:** Ration Books to Moon Landings. An in-house exhibition of life in the Alnwick area from 1950 to 1970.

### HospiceCare North Northumberland

**Sun 31<sup>st</sup> May:** Hedgeley Hall Open Garden.

**Sun 24<sup>th</sup> May:** Kirky Cottage Open Garden.

**Sat 13<sup>th</sup> Jun:** Lorbottle Hall Open Garden & Companion Dog Show.

**Sat 20<sup>th</sup> Jun:** Strawberries, Fizz and Live Music at Denwick House.

**Sat 25<sup>th</sup> Jul:** Homemade Teas and Live Music at The Friary.

**Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Sep:** Adderstone House Open Garden.

### British Red Cross

**Sun 28<sup>th</sup> June:** Falldon Hall Open Gardens.

**Sat 11<sup>th</sup> July:** Chillingham Castle Open Gardens.

## About Alnwick Civic Society

Alnwick Civic Society was formed in 1974, following the defeat of proposals to re-develop the town centre with a modern shopping area and amid growing concerns about the future of our town. Since then we have sought to influence developments, especially in the town centre and conservation area, to ensure that proposals protect and enhance our heritage.

The Society pursues its objectives through a variety of activities. We provide a voice for members through dialogue with planning and conservation professionals and like-minded organisations. We offer advice, scrutinise and comment on development proposals; recognise excellence; and organise public meetings.

Members were heavily involved in development of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and we work with local partners to influence policy at a county level. We seek to influence national policy by co-operating with other bodies in the civic movement, and the Society was a founding member of Civic Voice.

All who share our aims can support the work of the society: by joining as an individual, family, student, or business member; by participating in activities, sharing ideas, raising areas of concern and pointing out examples of good practice. Or simply by demonstrating pride in our town and spreading the word about the value of our work.



## Who's Who?

**President:** Brian Lamb

**Trustees:** Chair: Peter Reed; Membership: Gill Parker; Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith; Treasurer: Tim Smith.

**Web:** [www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

**Email:** [contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

**Bluesky:** [@alnwickcivicsoc.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/alnwickcivicsoc.bsky.social)

**Facebook:** [AlnwickCivicSociety](https://www.facebook.com/AlnwickCivicSociety)

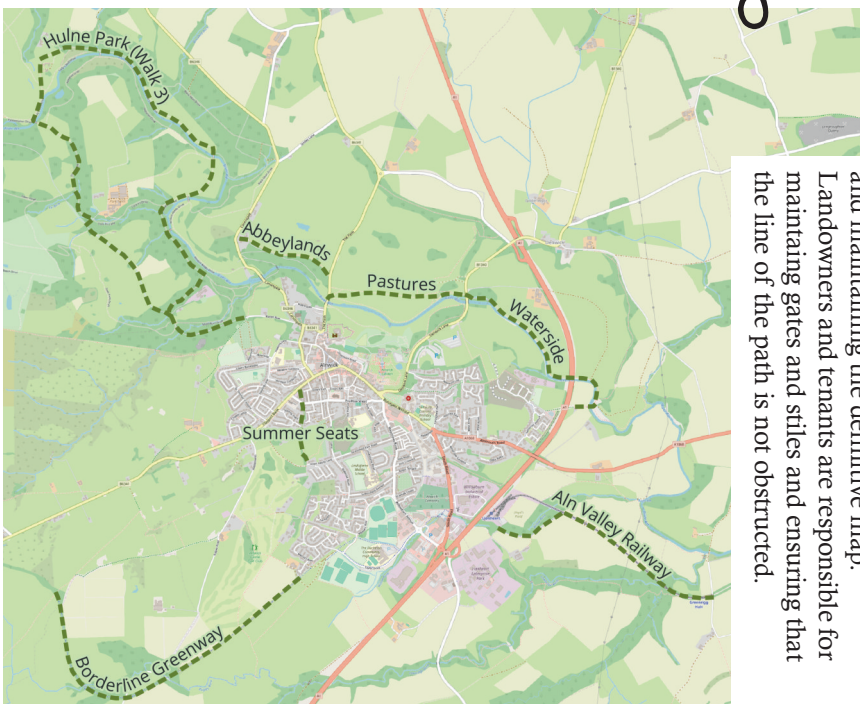
**Instagram:** [alnwickcivicsociety](https://www.instagram.com/alnwickcivicsociety)

**Substack:** [alnwickcivicsociety.substack.com](https://www.substack.com/p/alnwickcivicsociety)

**Charity registration number:** 1197235

**Heritage at risk:** report your concerns here:

<https://alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk/heritage-at-risk/>



- Landowners and tenants are responsible for maintaining gates and stiles and ensuring that the line of the path is not obstructed.
- Voluntary groups play an important role in helping to maintain footpaths, but responsibilities for rights of way are shared between the Highway Authority (Northumberland County Council) and the Landowner or Tenant. The Highway Authority is responsible for signage and maintaining the definitive map.
- ## Quiz Answers
- A) Summer Seats.
  - B) Underpass on Waterside between Peter's Mill and Denwick Bridge.
  - C) Hulne Park (Walk 3).
  - D) Near Abbeylands House on path a.k.a. Barbary Bank or Barbara's Bank.
  - E) Pastures. a.k.a. North Desmesne.
  - F) Aln Valley Railway.
  - G) Borderline Greenway.