

Minutes of Coquetdale Cluster meeting held on Tuesday 5th December 2023 commencing 730pm in the Dovecote Room, Jubilee Institute

41.1 Introduction and welcome

J Scarpa (Vice Chairman), A Tait, F Tait, J Sutton, C France, R Aplin, I Hedley (County Council)
C Miller (Clerk),

S Pringle (Inorthumberland) P Millward (Senior Delivery Manager) M Lee, (Community Engagement Advisor) North Northumberland and Teasdale, (Go Fibre)

R Stalker, P Johnson, Northumbria Police

41.2 Apologies for absence

J Famelton, N Fisher (Parish Cllr's), G Sanderson (Leader of the County Council)

41.3 Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st August 2023

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st August 2023 be accepted as a true record.

41.4 Broadband/Copper telephone lines Meeting with Go Fibre and inorthumberland

Meeting with Syliva Pringle, Peter Millward and Michael Lee. Various suppliers work within Rothbury such as Openreach, Alncom and Factco. Project gigabit is being run by BDUK, part of the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology. The Government had provided funding of £5billion, with the country split up into hard to reach places. 4000 premises had been identified in North Northumberland for provision of fibre connection to the door. Three year project to be completed October 2025, 1200 premises being connected to date. Building ongoing in Coquetdale, with no premises connected as yet. In and around Harbottle to be completed between May and October 2024, and some of the more rural areas between November 2024 and April 2025. S Pringle advised Go Fibre had been awarded the Type A contract, however the Type B contract is still with BDUK. The Castron premises in Hepple parish were included in the Type B contract. Go Fibre have no jurisdiction with the copper switchover. Copper will not be switched off without an alternative service in place, with information circulated which had been provided by John Cooper of the County Council, who is leading on the copper switch off. County Council were working closely with providers and currently in talks with EE, (Sky and Talk Talk services won't be affected) and Virgin, who were keen to work with local communities. The project cannot be stopped, some copper lines are not in good condition. The vulnerable will be covered and not switched over to a digital telephone, but the onus would be on people to let their suppliers know they are vulnerable. EE to provide battery back-up, free hybrid phones, and stage roadshows in libraries and community areas. Meeting had been held with County Council Adult Social Care Department, EE, and virgin regarding details of tele-care systems in place. There is a lot of background work going on, a toolkit is available for Parish Council's to circulate to residents. There are issues in Northumberland with mobile connectivity, work had been commissioned with equipment placed on bin wagons to monitor mobile coverage. Alncom were dealing with full fibre in Thropton, as previous to BDUK procurement, some smaller suppliers were using government vouchers. This scheme had been put on hold when procurement commenced, and Alncom had been the provider in Thropton beforehand. Vouchers were still able to be claimed in some areas. Go Fibre are a network and service provider, other communication providers can sell a service over their network.

S Pringle, P Millward and M Lee left the meeting.

41.5 Climate Change Action Plan within Coquetdale

Climate and Nature had created a separate group, Coquetdale Green Network, with several Parish Cllr's being members. Over the Bridges would be a useful vehicle for publicising issues within Coquetdale. A resident of Whitton and Tosson parish had voiced concerns relating to the increase in rain/flooding. There had been a situation during Storm Babet where Ryehill Cottages had been almost flooded due to a blocked culvert, which County Council had cleared within two hours. Whitton & Tosson PC clear drains when problems occur as the County Council do not have the resources. Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst have similar problems. Local knowledge is being lost. W&T Clerk had produced a draft letter to hand deliver in the parish in order to set up an emergency group of volunteers that can actions blocked drains. I Hedley advised Parish Council's have the legal power to carry out drainage works, this could be an area where Northumberland Association of Local Council's could be involved, and he would speak to G Popay, Northumberland ALC Officer.

41.6 Policing Matters

Police Officer Russell Stalker, and PCSO Peter Johnson present, who work out of Alnwick police station with a large geographical area to cover. Farm watch updates available via Northumbria Connected. Quad bike thefts rising in North Northumberland, any suspicious vehicles should be reported. During the past two months, 100 incidents had occurred in Rothbury and the surrounding area, which were related to safety reports, domestic incidents and road traffic collisions. There had been community concerns relating to graffiti in Rothbury centre with enquiries being made, and County Council removing the graffiti. NP looking into tactics regarding quad bike thefts. Quads can be difficult to secure, some models are easier to steal, however regulations were to be implemented to ensure immobiliser's were fitted on all new machinery. Thefts occur from 7am onwards, some later in the afternoon, and historically on nights with inclement weather. Police helicopter had been in the area recently, which had been related to concerns for a vulnerable person, the ongoing situation to be discussed between authorities. Police sharing information and working closely with local publicans and licensing department to ensure all is in order.

Police representatives left the meeting.

41.7 Update on Borderlands Place Programme

Four of the five officers working on Borderlands Place Programme had left the County Council. Two new officers had been recruited, with progress envisaged in the New Year,

41.8 Roads/Traffic/Local Transport Plan Problems
with potholes continue.

41.9 Footpaths

T Derbyshire, County Council Footpaths Officer had been seconded elsewhere – Clerk to provide details of alternative contact.

41.10 Crises Management/Emergency Resilience Grant Funding

There was no update regarding the County Cllr proposals relating to Northern Powergrid funding for crises management. F Tait to contact County Cllr and request an update.

41.11 Items from individual Parish Council's

Hepple parish had identified problems due to drains collapsing. Issues should be reported to G Bucknall, County Council. Drainage records per parish should be available via the County Council. Individual parishes could produce maps of parish drains. Digital maps were available to view via County Council website home page.

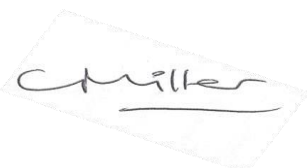
41.12 Items from Northumberland County Council

G Sanderson had forwarded an update as follows. "A combination of flooding and frosts had caused a lot of road damage, the bill to sort them out will be high. Landslips and other issues caused by Storm Babet had caused damage to the tune of over £2.5 million. Extra money is being allocated to try to deal with new damage the weather is causing, as well as trying to find extra for more pavement work and U class roads. Todstead had worked out well, the metre of layers of tarmac that had been used for patching over the past 50 years or so is justification for doing the job properly. It has been very expensive but hopefully will last for many years to come. Although we are waiting for the Government's final settlement which normally comes in late December I am pretty sure we can get to a Budget for next year that will meet my main drivers - no cuts in frontline services, continued investment across the County and no compulsory redundancies for staff if it can be avoided. The proposals will be going out to consultation soon before the final date of the Budget meeting in February. We will continue our schools building programme for Seaton Valley (the final green light to start will be this month) Amble, and Berwick. These projects are costing a lot of money but we feel it is right to bring all our schools up to the highest standard because over the past seven years our schools Ofsted results have hugely improved. Then, we were in the lower quartile - today we are ranked the best performing of any of the NE area with 94% ranked as either Good or Outstanding. That is a great effort from everyone involved so thanks to them. The new Northumberland Line will be running this time next year with almost all stations in use. One or two will be a little later in opening as partners are involved in very substantial engineering challenges. The line has been out of action for passenger services since the 1960s. We are finding £1 million to help us with our new Environment Policy - as well as committing to doing our bit around Climate Change we will be spending more on our Parks which are already very much used and enjoyed (and we will continue with our policy of not charging for the first hour parking) as well as spending more on rubbish clearing along some of our major roads thanks to the good folks who think its ok to chuck their rubbish out of their vehicles...! And finally, because we feel it really does help our market town businesses as well as residents and visitors, we will forgo again the £3.5 million that car parking charges would bring in and continue with free town centre car parking. Until I can make another meeting I hope this written note is useful but please just get in touch anytime if I can help with anything no matter how small."

I Hedley reported a further Annual Town and Parish Town Conference to be held March 2024, logistics and content to be confirmed in due course.

41.13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Coquetdale Cluster will be held on Tuesday 2nd April 2024 commencing 730pm in the Dovecote Room, Jubilee Institute. It was agreed to invite John Cooper, County Council Strategic Programmes Manager, Digital and information Technology, to the meeting.



C Miller, Clerk
Coquettale Cluster

The meeting closed at 9pm.

DRAFT