

Coalfield Area Committee Delivery Plan 2023 - 2026

Updated March 2026

The Area Plan commits the Area Committee to a number of priorities, which will be delivered within the Coalfield Sunderland area. This Delivery Plan provides an update on progress on the Area Committee’s Area Plan and will be monitored by the Area Committee and actions will be addressed throughout the three years covered by the plan, via the Coalfield Neighbourhood and Community Board

Priority	Progress Update
<p>Dynamic Smart City We will have</p>	
<p>A Can Do Project to develop skills of young people</p>	<p>The ‘CAN DO’ Fund provides financial support of up to £750 for groups of young people who wish to design and deliver a small-scale project that benefits themselves and their community. The young people present their project proposals to Councillors at the Neighbourhood and Community Board. The following youth groups have successfully secured funding through this initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keping School • Houghton Boxing Club • Philadelphia Cricket Club, • Old Rectory Youth Club • Flatts Youthie • Houghton Rugby Club • Shiney Row Youth Club • Studio V • Durham Wildlife Trust • 1st Herrington Scouts • Acumen Community Buildings Youthy
<p>Coalfield Communities Connected Project to develop digital skills of residents</p>	<p>The Coalfield Communities Connected IT Project, delivered by Springboard, provides weekly digital support sessions in local Community Hubs. The initiative aims to improve digital confidence and skills among residents by offering access to laptops, PCs, and support with personal mobile phones</p>

	<p>and tablets, using the venues' Wi-Fi. Sessions are held weekly across multiple Community Hubs and residents receive hands-on guidance to improve their digital literacy</p> <p>The digital hubs are based in the following venues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hetton and Eppleton Hall (Hetton New Dawn) • ShARP • The Old Rectory • Hetton Lyons Country Park • Houghton Racecourse Community Association • Easington Lane Community Access Point (ELCAP) • A new hub has recently been established in Hetton, at the Hetton Centre, expanding the project's reach <p>Digital support sessions have engaged 174 individuals, with a total attendance of 571. 88 participants have successfully progressed into employment, education, or training, demonstrating the significant impact of this initiative in improving skills and creating opportunities.</p>
<p>Support to residents to improve financial resilience via R U Ready</p>	<p>The R U Ready project delivered by Springboard provides tailored support to individuals navigating Universal Credit (UC) and related benefits. Delivered through structured sessions, the project offers Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), often leading to financial advice and wider support. Due to the complexity and time required for each case, appointments are offered both during scheduled sessions and on alternative afternoons to ensure every resident receives the help they need.</p> <p>The R U Ready sessions have engaged 324 individuals, with a total attendance of 496. 91 participants have successfully progressed into employment, education, or training, highlighting the tangible impact of this initiative in building skills and creating pathways to opportunity.</p>
<p>A VAS and Road Safety programme</p>	<p>The Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS) programme is designed to improve road safety and driver awareness across the Coalfield area. The current phase includes 32 locations supported by 14 mobile signs, which are rotated on a quarterly basis to maximise coverage and impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme has been extended until March 2026, ensuring continued support for local traffic management

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers are actively exploring smart technology options to enhance future phases of the programme • Member consultation will take place at upcoming meetings to inform future developments
<p>A tree planting programme across the area</p>	<p>The Link Together project aimed to enhance green spaces and promote community engagement through tree planting across the Coalfield area. In addition to the original proposals covering 13 designated sites, members were invited to nominate locations within their wards for inclusion in a Community Orchard programme.</p> <p>Tree planting was successfully completed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hetton Park • Herrington Colliery Welfare • Elemore Park <p>The project has now concluded, having delivered environmental improvements and strengthened local involvement in green initiatives</p>
<p>Developed and delivered low carbon initiatives in the community</p>	<p>The Litter Free for Wildlife project is a two-year environmental initiative delivered by Durham Wildlife Trust in partnership with local schools; the programme aims to promote cleaner communities and protect local wildlife through education and hands-on litter-picking activities.</p> <p>The project launched in September 2024 and is making excellent progress</p> <p>Schools actively engaged include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hetton Lyons Primary School • Shiney Row Primary School • Barnwell Academy • East Rainton Primary School • Burnside Academy • Newbottle Primary School • Kepier Secondary School • Houghton Community Nursery School • New Penshaw Academy • Gillas Lane Primary School

Strong partnerships have been built with schools, encouraging environmental awareness and stewardship among pupils through regular litter-picking sessions.

To date 10044m2 of highways, cycle paths, foot paths and greenspaces have been improved.

**Healthy Smart City
We will have**

Provision of positive activities for young people during school holidays

A comprehensive programme of school holiday activities was launched in July 2024, with 14 projects funded to deliver free sessions for children and young people across the Coalfield area. Activities included cycling, trips out, cookery, crafts, outdoor games, and swimming, running during all school holidays until May 2025.

The programme has seen strong engagement across the area, with a wide variety of inclusive and accessible activities.

All sessions have been promoted via the Coalfield Sunderland Community Facebook page, ensuring wide community reach.

Following successful delivery, a Call for Projects was carried out for 2025/26 with 12 projects funded, running during all school holidays until May 2026.

Activities are being delivered by a range of local organisations, including:

- Broadside Creatives
- Everyone Active
- Groundwork NE & Cumbria
- Space4
- Community Opportunities
- Houghton Racecourse Community Association
- Minerva Arts and Wellbeing
- Nuvo Wellbeing
- Active Families NE (Penshaw & Fencehouses)
- Hetton Buddies
- Youth Almighty

	<p>These partners are offering sessions in crafts, cooking, sensory activities, outdoor sports, and trips, continuing the programme's commitment to enriching school holidays for local children.</p>
<p>Youth clubs in each of the four wards</p>	<p>Youth Choices is a two-year project delivered by Community Opportunities, offering two youth activity sessions per ward, per week across four wards. The project provides young people with safe, supportive spaces to meet, engage in discussions, and explore issues relevant to their lives.</p> <p>Sessions are held at both indoor and outdoor venues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flatts Youth Centre • Shiney Row Community Association & Claremont Drive field • Houghton Racecourse CA & Kirklea field • Houghton Sports Centre & MUGA <p>Sessions have seen a total attendance of 4328 young people with 232 new children and young people benefitting from the project.</p> <p>More information can be found here Community Opportunities Youth & Play</p> <p>Councillors supported a complementary project titled Barney & Echo delivered by Amber Bee CIC focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness – promoting emotional wellbeing and self-awareness • Caught in the Web – educating pupils on safe and responsible internet use • The Bad Apples – raising awareness of the risks and consequences of anti-social behaviour <p>Resources have been delivered to 12 local primary schools with the programme expected to reach 1,038 pupils.</p> <p>More information can be found here Barney & Echo</p>
<p>A Coalfield Healthy and Active Teen (CHAT) programme</p>	<p>Delivered by Everyone Active, this completed project provided young people aged 11–15 in the Coalfield area with access to junior gym and wellness sessions at Hetton and Houghton Sports Centres. The initiative aimed to promote physical wellbeing and introduce participants to career opportunities within the leisure industry.</p>

	<p>The programme successfully engaged 48 participants over its 12-month duration. Strong partnerships were developed with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation of Light • HALO Project • Local Police • Community Opportunities Youth Workers <p>Participants were informed about leisure industry roles such as lifeguards, leisure attendants, tennis coaches, and swim teachers.</p> <p>They received details on small group training sessions and were supported as a group.</p> <p>Exit strategies were shared, including opportunities to join social football, teen circuits, Couch to 5K, and other ongoing wellness activities.</p>
<p>Activities to reduce Social Isolation</p>	<p>Originally launched as the Social Isolation Programme, Connected Communities for Wellbeing was established to enhance social and wellbeing activities across the Coalfield area, with a particular emphasis on reducing social isolation. Funded by the Area Committee, the initiative began in October 2024, with 12 organisations delivering a diverse range of activities and events. The programme was initially scheduled to conclude in September 2025.</p> <p>Delivery across the Coalfield area has been successful, with notable impact observed during the festive season a period when social isolation tends to be more pronounced.</p> <p>At the September 2025 Area Committee meeting, members acknowledged the programme’s positive outcomes and approved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extension of the current programme until 31 December 2025 • The launch of a Call for Projects to develop a new programme commencing January 2026 <p>A Call for Projects was published in September 2025. Applications were reviewed at the November 2025 Neighbourhood and Community Board meeting and at December’s Area Committee meeting, approval was granted</p>

	<p>for the following organisations to deliver activities between January 2026 and September 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Almighty • Minerva Arts • HALO • Penshaw Community Centre • Houghton Racecourse Community Association • Hetton New Dawn • Durham Wildlife Trust • Community Opportunities • Hetton Buddies • Everyone Active • Broadside Creatives
<p>Social Prescribing Services</p>	<p>The Advice on Prescription (AoP) project, delivered by ShARP and funded by the Area Committee, provided targeted support to patients across six GP surgeries in the Coalfield area. The initiative aimed to improve financial resilience and overall wellbeing by offering tailored advice and casework support through direct referrals from GPs, health practitioners, social prescribers, the Stroke Team, and Macmillan.</p> <p>The project has now successfully concluded, achieving significant impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,336 interventions were delivered to support residents in improving their financial resilience • 1,018 individuals became more financially resilient as a result of the support received <p>The project’s casework approach ensured continuity of care, with patients receiving personalised support from a dedicated Advice Worker who understood their individual circumstances and needs.</p>
<p>Vibrant Smart City We will have</p>	
<p>The Coalfield Clean It, Green It project</p>	<p>The Clean It, Green It initiative is a two-year environmental improvement project delivered by Springboard, targeting neglected sites across all four wards. These locations are not part of any existing maintenance schedule and require focused clean-up and restoration efforts.</p>

Activities have included litter picking, community clean-ups, and restoration /painting of steelwork. A Project Officer has been successfully recruited and is now in post. A pickup truck has been purchased using reallocated vehicle maintenance funds, significantly boosting operational capacity.

The project benefits from a strong partnership with Community Opportunities, with an additional staff member supporting Springboard two days a week.

One Councillor from each ward sits on the project's steering group, alongside representatives from Sunderland City Council (SCC) and Gentoo. The partnership model continues to strengthen, ensuring community involvement and strategic oversight.

To date, 11,000 m² of highways, footpaths, and green spaces have been improved, alongside 400 community clean-ups and litter picks. These efforts have resulted in the removal of 600 bags of waste from local neighbourhoods, significantly improving the environment and enhancing the quality of public spaces for residents.

More information can be found here [Clean It Green It - Coalfield](#)

Heritage Activities and Community Events

Local community events and heritage initiatives are being supported through the Area Committee and Community Chest, enhancing cultural engagement and local pride across the Coalfield area.

- Christmas 2024 saw a successful programme of events and activities across the area.
- The Elemore Music Festival and Coalfield Pride, held in August 2025, were highly successful events that attracted strong community engagement and positive feedback.
- The Hetton History Project, led by the Hetton Local and Natural History Society, will involve six local schools in a curriculum-aligned exploration of local history, supporting Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 learning objectives. Upon completion, each school will receive a professionally produced six-metre timeline banner, showcasing their research and celebrating the heritage of the area.
- The Coalfield Christmas 2025 programme featured festive tree lighting ceremonies in Houghton, Fencehouses, West Herrington, and

	<p>Shiney Row. Live switch-on events in Shiney Row, Easington Lane and Newbottle served as key highlights, bringing the community together to celebrate the season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Remembrance parades were held in Houghton, Easington Lane, and Fencehouses on 9 November 2025. The event was coordinated by ELCAP, ensuring respectful and well-managed commemorations across the Coalfield area.
<p>Delivered the Houghton Feast community programme</p>	<p>The Houghton Feast is a long-standing community celebration that brings together residents, schools, and local groups through a programme of entertainment and cultural activities. The event is overseen by a Steering Group, which includes Coalfield ward Councillors, Council Officers, local partners and the Partnership and Community Resilience Manager (PCRM) for Coalfield.</p> <p>The 2024 and 2025 Houghton Feast were successfully delivered, with the opening ceremony and parade attracting hundreds of participants from community groups, schools, and the wider public.</p>
<p>Improvements to Herrington Colliery Welfare Ground facilities</p>	<p>Following the allocation of funding through the Neighbourhood Fund and the Neighbourhood Capital Improvement Programme, a series of enhancements have been delivered at Herrington Colliery Welfare Ground to improve community facilities and support local recreation.</p> <p>To date the following improvements have taken place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavilion Improvements: Upgrades to the existing structure to enhance usability. • Football Pitch Enhancements: The Class A pitch has been improved for better playability. • Tree Management: Encroaching trees were removed and bollards installed to protect the area. • Spectator Rail Repairs: Completed to improve safety and viewing experience. • External Fencing: Installed to secure the site and prevent unauthorised access. • Picnic Benches: Added to encourage community use and leisure activities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowling Green Works: Essential maintenance carried out in March 2025. <p>Further improvements are planned following the approval of additional funding at the June Area Committee</p>
<p>Improvements to Houghton Rectory Park</p>	<p>As part of local investment in public spaces, improvements at Rectory Park have now been completed to enhance the park's accessibility, safety, and enjoyment for residents and visitors.</p> <p>New bins and benches have been installed to improve cleanliness and comfort; the red gravel path has been improved for safer and easier access and new gates have been installed to enhance security and visual appeal.</p>
<p>Delivered the Stephenson Trail heritage programme</p>	<p>This project aimed to enhance local walking trails and promote outdoor activity through improved signage, community engagement, and environmental investment.</p> <p>The project delivered the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage and Materials: Additional signage installed; maps, badges, and walking guides distributed across key locations including Elemore Park and Hetton Lyons Country Park. • Legacy Investment: Remaining funding has been allocated to three organisations across the East, Coalfield, and West areas to continue environmental improvements for the next two years. • Legacy Materials: Replacement way markers, maps, and badges have been purchased to support long-term use of the Trail. <p>Further information and a map of the Stephenson Trail can be found here. Stephenson Trail Information and Trail Map</p>
<p>Contributed to habitat and ecological improvements via the Links with Nature project</p>	<p>The Links with Nature project is a large-scale environmental initiative focused on enhancing biodiversity, improving access to green spaces, and engaging local communities across 13 sites in the Coalfield area. The project team, which began work on 1st July, includes an Engagement Officer, Greenspaces Officer, Hetton Park and Hetton Bogs Officer, and two Conservation Trainees.</p>

Significant progress has already been made across multiple sites, with regular conservation tasks and community involvement. Highlights include:

- Access to sites including, Copt Hill, Success Railway, and Hazard Railway has been improved by volunteer activity cutting back overgrown blackthorn and hawthorn along footpaths and desire lines.
- Restoration of the pond at Hetton Bogs been completed by volunteers providing improved habitat for newt and aquatic invertebrates.
- A delivery of 20 boulders were installed along the boundary of Flint Mill. They were positioned to block access to quadbikes and other motor vehicles from adjacent fields. Pedestrian access has not been impacted but regular damage from motorbike and 4x4 cars will hopefully now be reduced and locals will feel safer when accessing the site.
- Information and conduct signs were created for the new grazing compartments at Elemore Park. 7 signs and posts have been acquired and are being installed by volunteers at entrance points to the compartments.
- As part of National Tree Week, these sessions were open to the community and delivered with North East Community Forests. Hedge laying training was provided to volunteers over two days at Elemore Park.

To date, 227,591 m² of highways, footpaths, and green spaces have been improved, complemented by 13 community clean-ups and litter picks. These efforts have been supported by 3,703 volunteer hours, and a diverse range of activities have been delivered with a total attendance of 1469 adults, promoting healthier lifestyles and strengthening community wellbeing.

Continued the Proactive Coalfield Anti-social behaviour project and worked in partnership to tackle Motorcycle ASB

This project supports proactive community safety patrols across the Coalfield area, with a focus on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), particularly motorcycle-related issues. The initiative is delivered in partnership with the Houghton Neighbourhood Policing Team and the HALO partnership project and includes multi-agency Days and Nights of Action to address local concerns.

In December 2024, the Area Committee approved £10,000 from the Preventative Measures Budget to extend the Motorcycle ASB Officer post for a further 12 months. Since then, the team has:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out 33 proactive patrols during the most recent quarter ensuring a visible presence in key locations to deter motorcycle-related anti-social behaviour and reassure residents. • The first drone deployment to support intelligence gathering during a night of action in Herrington Country Park. <p>These activities have helped strengthen local partnerships, increase visibility, and respond directly to resident concerns.</p>
<p>Held a Coalfield Pride Event at Houghton</p>	<p>Coalfield Pride is an inclusive community celebration that promotes equality, diversity, and unity across the Coalfield area. The event brings together residents, organisations, and partners to celebrate LGBTQ+ pride through music, entertainment, and community engagement.</p> <p>The 2025 event took place on Saturday 16th August at Houghton Rectory Park, following the success of the previous year's celebration. The event was well attended, attracting a wide and diverse audience from across the area.</p>
<p>Developed environmental improvements at Copt Hill and Seven Sisters</p>	<p>This project focuses on the ongoing improvement and maintenance of local green spaces, supported by community volunteers and coordinated environmental tasks. The aim is to enhance the appearance, accessibility, and usability of public areas.</p> <p>The project is progressing well, with a wide range of areas already covered. Recent activity has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased volunteer days, with local residents supporting tasks such as strimming, cutting back vegetation, and general site maintenance • Installation of new signage, which is now fully completed and in place, helping to improve navigation and awareness of the site <p>These efforts are contributing to a cleaner, safer, and more welcoming environment for the community.</p>
<p>Supported VCSE organisations and Community Hubs</p>	<p>The Coalfield VCSE Network provides a regular platform for voluntary and community organisations to connect, collaborate, and share information. The network supports stronger partnership working, helps identify emerging community needs, and encourages joint working with Council officers and local partners.</p>

The network meets on the first Tuesday of each month and is chaired by the Vice Chair of the Area Committee. Meetings continue to be well attended, participative, and informative, with a growing number of local groups and organisations taking part. These sessions offer valuable opportunities for:

- Networking and collaboration
- Sharing updates and best practice
- Discussing local priorities and challenges

In addition, the Partnership and Community Resilience Manager is actively supporting VCSE organisations to identify and apply for funding, offering one-to-one guidance to strengthen applications and improve access to resources.

Improved Community Assets

This project supports the enhancement of community buildings and facilities across the Coalfield area, helping to ensure they remain safe, accessible, and fit for purpose. Funding is provided through the Area Committee, enabling local organisations to carry out essential upgrades that benefit residents and service users.

Projects to date:

- Shiney Row Community Centre – new kitchen and flooring
- Houghton Blind Centre – installation of a new heating system
- ShARP – refurbishment of the Digital Hub
- Houghton Racecourse Community Association – new toilet flooring and plans to redecorate
- ELCAP – installation of a comprehensive CCTV system
- Penshaw Community Centre – new kitchen installed
- New Herrington Bowling Club – improvements to the bowling green
- Age UK – replacement windows
- Youth Almighty – decorating, refurbished kitchen, tables/chairs and blinds
- Durham Wildlife Trust - repair and refurbishment of visitors centre and enhancement of the Attenborough room
- Hetton New Dawn – replacement fridge
- Hetton Methodist Church – re-wiring
- ELCAP – wall removal and installation of sockets
- East Rainton Cricket Club – accessible toilet facilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Opportunities Shiney Row – replacement boiler, ground floor decoration and improvements to kitchen • 1st Herrington Scouts – new oven, blinds and flooring for office • Hetton Town Trust – decoration, new flooring, new signage. Legionella control works and heritage artwork
Supported the celebration event at former Houghton Colliery site	Work on the new retail development at Houghton is now complete and the mining heritage artwork has been installed. A display board has been installed, and the project is now complete.
A Christmas Tree at Newbottle	<p>The Coalfield Christmas project aims to bring festive cheer to local communities through the installation of Christmas lights and support for community-led celebrations. The initiative helps create a welcoming seasonal atmosphere and encourages local involvement in events and switch-on activities.</p> <p>Following Area Committee approval in September 2023, funding was allocated to support the delivery of Christmas infrastructure in Newbottle, including the purchase of lights and installation of supporting infrastructure. As part of the project, Christmas trees were provided in both 2023 and 2024.</p> <p>Local groups, including St Matthew’s Church, helped organise switch-on events, providing entertainment and refreshments for the community.</p> <p>Christmas 2025 seen a live switch-on event led by Newbottle Community Hall. This took place on Friday 5th December</p>
A Music Event at Elemore Park	<p>This project supports the delivery of a family-friendly music and community event at Elemore Park, designed to bring people together through live entertainment and free activities. The event aims to celebrate local talent, promote community cohesion, and provide an inclusive day out for residents of all ages.</p> <p>The 2024 event took place on Saturday 24 August and was a great success, attracting a wide audience from across the area. The event was headlined by The Lake Poets, with performances from This Little Bird, Jessica Thoroughgood, and King Ink. Alongside the music, families enjoyed free activities including face painting, balloon modelling, juggling, and magic.</p>

	<p>The 2025 event, held on Saturday 23 August, was a resounding success, achieving increased footfall compared to 2024. The programme was headlined once again by The Lake Poets, supported by performances from Houghton Brass Band, Jess and James Thoroughgood, Moorsley Choir, This Little Bird, and Celtic Man. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many praising the event's organisation and noting that the children's activities offered an excellent balance.</p>
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