

LOCAL NEWS

HUMSHAUGH WARD



Nick Morphet
Your County Councillor

WORKING HARD FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Welcome to my latest newsletter! It's been a while since you last received one because I've been so **busy representing the Humshaugh ward** – and I'll always put council work before trying to make myself look good. It's also impossible to fit even a fraction of what I've been up to into a newsletter. You can follow my work more closely via my Facebook page (QR code overleaf) or by attending parish council meetings.

What's keeping me so busy? As well as being the leader of the Green Party group, **I represent the Humshaugh ward on nine different bodies**. These include Tynedale Local Area Council, the Communities & Place Scrutiny Committee, the Climate Change Working Group and the Northumberland Cycling & Walking Board. I also attend all meetings of all eight parish councils in the ward (unless meetings clash).

I'd also like to take this opportunity to say **thank you for electing me!** It's a privilege and an honour to represent the people of the Humshaugh ward and **I promise to do it to the best of my ability** at all times – whether you voted for me or not. Please feel free to get in touch at any time - I'm never far away!



IMPROVING ROAD VERGES FOR WILDLIFE

We've lost 97% of our wildflower meadows since the 1930s, but we can compensate for the loss by changing the way we manage our road verges. I'm leading **"species-rich grassland"** trials on road verges across the ward - the aim being to mimic a traditional hay meadow by cutting the grass in early autumn (after the flowers have set seed) and raking up the clippings to deprive the soil of nutrients. This will promote rare plants such as orchids and suppress common plants such as cow parsley. The long-term aim is to create **an attractive road verge** that's **great for wildlife and safe for motorists**. The local school children are helping with wildlife surveys.

TASKED WITH FIXING A "DYSFUNCTIONAL" COUNCIL

The County Council has recently been labelled **"dysfunctional"** by an independent review team. As the leader of the Green Party group, I've been asked to help to implement the recommendations in their report - and I'll be more than happy to work with councillors of all parties for the benefit of the people of Northumberland. You can read the report here:



STORM ARWEN: THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

I was a member of the Storm Arwen Review Committee which interviewed the utility companies and council departments involved in the response to the storm. **Northern Powergrid accepted that many of their poles were in poor condition** before the storm, and that it could be why 775 of them snapped. When I pointed out that their profit margins are over 30% and asked why they hadn't spent the money on **maintaining their poles**, they told me that they have to spend public money carefully and that profit margins aren't the right way to measure an energy network's profitability.

My efforts weren't wasted though! Northern Powergrid have since announced a **60% increase in overhead line investment** and that they will donate £7.5m to charities working to improve community resilience.

The County Council is working on a **Community Resilience Programme** which will involve the creation of a network of **Community Response Hubs**, mostly in village halls. They'll be recruiting **Community Response Volunteers** and encouraging parish councils to invite people to self-identify as vulnerable. If you consider yourself vulnerable you should check you're on the **Priority Services Register** of all your utility companies.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE FOSSIL FUEL BOILER BAN?

The government is planning to ban the installation of **fossil fuel** boilers in homes that are off the gas grid from 2026 - nine years earlier than for homes on the grid. There are good reasons for this, but also many objections. Fortunately, the new **Boiler Upgrade Scheme** will provide grants of up to £6,000 towards heat pump costs, and the County Council's **Warmer Homes scheme** will help those on low incomes or benefits living in inefficient homes.



PUSHING FOR ETHICAL FINANCE AT NCC

My group are pushing the County Council to **adopt more ethical financial behaviour**. We successfully passed a motion calling on the council to make **the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration** (the photo opposite shows me doing so) and we're now in dialogue with finance officers over the need to **move away from Barclays** (scored 2 out of 15 by Ethical Consumer). Our next goal is to persuade the council's pension fund to **divest from fossil fuels**.



MY MONEY IS YOUR MONEY

I have a **Members Local Improvement Scheme** allowance of £15k per year, to be spent on the purchase of community assets. Last year I used it to buy an interactive speed sign for Wall. If you have a project that could benefit from this, please get in touch! The minimum spend is £2k.

GET IN TOUCH

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NICK MORPHET: STANDING UP FOR HUMSHAUGH