



# Bishop Auckland Town Council

## Allotment & Environment Sub-Strategy 2026–2031

### 1. Purpose of the Sub Strategy

This Community Sub-Strategy supports and sits beneath the **Town Council Strategy 2026–2031**, specifically delivering Strategic Priority 5.2 – Allotments and Environment.

It provides a framework through which the council will achieve the agreed Allotment and Environment objectives as set out in 5.2 of the Town Council Strategy and ensures that ambition is translated into measurable, deliverable activity.

Bishop Auckland Town Council is committed to delivering modern, sustainable allotment services and enhancing the natural environment across the town. This strategy provides a clear, forward-looking framework that places community, sustainability, and good governance at its heart.

Key drivers include:

- **a balanced allotment portfolio** and provision providing value for money for residents
- **Constant waiting lists** and growing demand across the North-East.
- **Ageing infrastructure** at several sites requiring long-term planning and development
- **Climate challenges**, including water scarcity, extreme weather, and biodiversity decline.
- **Community expectations** for more sustainable and accessible green spaces.
- **Finance** - Pressure on public finances and cost of living
- **Collaborative ambition** - Alignment with local regeneration ambitions, climate protection and national guidance from the National Allotment Society.

Appendix 2 sets out the councils current (2026) Allotment and Environment provision.

### 2. Allotment and Environment Vision

*“To nurture a greener, healthier, and more resilient town by promoting sustainable allotment gardening, enhancing biodiversity, and protecting our shared natural environment – empowering the community to grow, connect and care for the town together.”*

### 3. Minimum Standards Framework for Allotment Sites

Demand for allotments in Bishop Auckland continues as residents seek healthier lifestyles, local food production, and opportunities for wellbeing. Allotments also play a crucial role in biodiversity, community cohesion, and contributing to climate resilience.

Every council and self-managed site must meet the following minimum standards by 2031:

#### Infrastructure

- Secure boundary fencing and clear access points.
- Clearly marked plots.
- Safe, accessible paths.

- Sustainable water strategy.

### Facilities

- Designated waste and composting areas.
- Clear plot boundaries and signage.
- Appropriate meeting or association space where applicable.

### Environmental Standards

- Wildlife-friendly zones or features.
- Reduced pesticide usage.
- Commitment to peat-free and sustainable materials.

### Governance

- Clear tenancy agreements.
- Annual inspections and compliance.
- Site-specific maintenance plans.
- Robust Association Agreements or Self Management Agreements

## 4. Allotment and Environment Objectives as set out in the Town Council Strategy 7.2

This sub-strategy is explicitly structured around the Allotment and Environment Objectives agreed in section 7.1 of the Town Council Strategy:

- Provide Transparent and efficient Allotment Services
- Improve site standards and tenant relationships
- Support community planting and local environmental projects
- Enhance biodiversity and sustainable practices town wide

## 5. Strategic themes and priorities

### Theme 1: Allotment Provision & Management

#### *Linked Objectives:*

- Provide Transparent and efficient Allotment Services and
- Improve site standards and tenant relationships

#### *Priority:*

- *Provide fair, efficient and high-quality allotment sites that meet community needs.*

#### *Key Commitments:*

- Transparent waiting list management, prioritising residents.
- Modern tenancy, rules, and enforcement frameworks.
- Annual inspections and compliance processes.
- Fit-for-purpose infrastructure, including water access, security, and accessibility.
- Support and strengthen self-managed allotment associations.
- Evidence-based decisions on long-term site viability, including potential de-designation where appropriate.

*Key Areas of Focus:*

- Reduction in waiting list time.
- All sites meeting Minimum Standards Framework.
- Increased tenant satisfaction.

## **Theme 2: Enhancing the Town's Natural Environment**

*Linked Objectives: support community planting and local environment projects and enhance biodiversity and sustainable practices town wide.*

*Priority:*

- Improve and protect Bishop Auckland's natural environment through sustainable planting, biodiversity enhancement, and community action.

*Key commitments:*

- Strengthen partnership work through Greener Together with groups such as Green Matters, In Bloom, and other volunteer groups.
- Enhance verges, green spaces, and public planters using sustainable, drought-resistant planting schemes.
- Expand community planting days and environmental volunteering.
- Develop biodiversity corridors and wildlife-friendly practices town-wide.

*Key areas of Focus*

- Increased biodiversity indicators.
- Higher community volunteer participation.

## **Theme 3: Community Engagement & Education**

*Linked Objectives: support community planting and local environment projects and enhance biodiversity and sustainable practices town wide.*

*Priority:*

- Inspire, involve, and educate the community in growing, sustainability, and environmental stewardship.

*Key Commitments:*

- Workshops and events delivered through partnerships with schools, community groups, and environmental organisations.
- Establish intergeneration and inclusive participation.
- Annual celebration and recognition of allotment and environmental achievements.
- Improve communication through newsletters, social media, and onsite information.

*Key areas of Focus*

- Growth in number of community events.
- Increased participation in Allotments Week and planting initiatives.

## Theme 4: Climate & Sustainability

*Linked Objectives: enhance biodiversity and sustainable practices town wide.*

*Priority: Make allotments and environmental services climate-resilient and aligned to local climate action goals.*

*Key Commitments:*

- Promote composting, rainwater harvesting, and low-carbon gardening.
- Reduce pesticide use and promote peat-free and plastic-free practices.
- Explore solar-powered pumps for water-limited sites.
- Introduce wildlife zones, hedging, and sustainable materials.

*Key areas of Focus*

- Lower water usage at key sites.
- Increase in wildlife-friendly features across sites.

## Theme 5: Partnerships, Monitoring & Funding

*Linked objectives:*

Provide Transparent and efficient Allotment Services and

Improve site standards and tenant relationships

support community planting and local environment projects

enhance biodiversity and sustainable practices town wide.

*Priorities*

- : Strengthen partnerships, secure external funding, and monitor performance effectively.

*Key Commitments:*

- Regular review of site data, utilisation rates, and tenant satisfaction.
- Strong working relationships with associations, schools, environmental organisations, and volunteers.
- Pursuit of funding including Lottery, Heritage, environmental and local networks.
- Annual reporting to Council.

*Key areas of Focus*

- Successful grant applications.
- Improved performance metrics year-on-year.

## 6. Delivery Approach & Action Plan (2025–2030)

The Council will deliver this sub-strategy by:

- Embedding the objectives across all relevant Council activity
- Working in partnership rather than duplicating services
- Aligning resources to priorities
- Remaining flexible to respond to emerging community needs

An annual Allotment and Environment Action Plan (see Appendix 1) will:

- Set out actions against each Allotment and Environment objectives
- Identify lead members and officers
- Allocate resources
- Define success measures

## 7. Measuring Success

Progress will be measured against the objectives through:

- Allotment Site Data
- Community and partner feedback
- Grant outcomes and impact reporting
- Delivery against the Allotment and Environment Action Plan

Performance will be reported:

- Standing item on committee agendas
- Quarterly to Council (headline progress)
- Annually through a public-facing performance and annual report
- Public visibility through the website and community engagement

By 2031, Bishop Auckland aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Reduced waiting times**, with an ambition for residents to wait no longer than 36 months for a plot, where possible.
- **Improved site standards**, with 100% of allotment sites meeting the Council's Minimum Standards Framework.
- **Stronger community participation**, increasing volunteer engagement in environmental and growing activities.
- **Enhanced biodiversity**, with all sites implementing pollinator-friendly planting and sustainable water practices.
- **Resilient, sustainable sites**, with reduced reliance on mains water, greater composting rates, increased use of sustainable materials and ultimately sites becoming self sustaining with viable engagement, and effective associations.
- **Transparent, modern governance**, with clear agreements, fair processes, and strong partnership working.

## 8. Governance and Role Clarity

### Council Responsibilities

- Strategic oversight and policy approval.
- Budget setting and long-term planning.

### Officers

- Town Clerk: strategic leadership and policy enforcement.
- Deputy Clerk: governance, compliance, and partnership management.
- Allotments Officer: day-to-day site management, inspections, tenant liaison.

- Administrative Support: administration of waiting list and documentation.

### Associations

- Management of self-managed sites.
- Collaboration with Council on shared goals.
- Maintenance of facilities as per agreements.

## 9. Risk Management

Key identified risks include:

- Anti-social behaviour.
- Water shortages and climate impacts.
- Declining volunteer capacity.
- Ageing infrastructure.
- Rising operational costs.

Mitigation plans will be reviewed annually.

## 10. Five-Year Investment Plan (High-Level)

Year	Priority Area	Investment Type
2026	Water reviews, urgent repairs	Capital / Maintenance
2027	Biodiversity upgrades	External Funding / Grants
2028	Accessibility improvement	Capital
2029	Strengthening self-management	Training / Governance
2030	Comprehensive site review	Strategic Planning

# Appendix 1 Bishop Auckland Town Council Allotment & Environment Action Plan 2026–2028

## Supporting the Allotment and Environment Sub-Strategy 2026-31 and Town Council Plan Strategic Priority 5.2

### Allotment and Environment

#### 1. Purpose of the Action Plan

This Action Plan sets out practical, deliverable actions to implement the Allotment and Environment Sub-Strategy 2026–2031. It focuses on the first two years (2026–2028) and will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

The Action Plan is structured directly around the four Community objectives agreed in section 5.1 of the Town Council Strategy to ensure clarity, accountability and measurable progress.

#### 2. Allotment and Environment Action Plan – Table

Objective	Action	Specific Outcome	Lead Officer	Timeframe	Measure of Success	Resources Needed	Status
<b>Allotment Provision &amp; Management</b>	1.1 Implement transparent waiting list system prioritising residents	Clear, published allocation process	Admin Assistant / Allotments Officer	By March 2026	Annual report shows reduced waiting time	Staff time	
	1.2 Annual review of tenancy agreements, rules and enforcement	Updated, modern documents approved by Council	Deputy Clerk	Annually each January	Approved documents in place	Staff time / Legal advice	
	1.3 Deliver twice-yearly site inspections using Minimum Standards Framework	Consistent compliance monitoring	Allotments Officer	Twice yearly (Spring & Autumn)	100% sites inspected, scores recorded	Officer time	
	1.4 Develop site-specific maintenance plans	Clear plans and costings for each site	Allotments Officer	By December 2026	Plans completed for all sites	Staff time / Budget allocation	
	1.5 Review viability of undesignated or problematic sites	Transparent decisions for future land use	Town Clerk	2026–2027	Council-approved decision matrix applied	Officer time / Legal advice	
<b>Enhancing the Town's Natural Environment</b>	2.1 Expand biodiversity planting in public spaces	Wildlife-friendly planting schemes in priority areas	Deputy Clerk / Environment Working Group	2026–2028	Number of new wildlife zones created	Planting budget / Volunteers	
	2.2 Coordinate quarterly community planting /weeding	Increased community involvement in greening	Community Support Officer	Quarterly	Participation numbers rise annually	Materials / Volunteer coordination	

	2.3 Develop biodiversity corridors linking key areas	Improved habitat connectivity	Deputy Clerk / Environment Working Group	By 2029	Corridor map and installations complete	External funding / Partnerships	
<b>Community Engagement &amp; Education</b>	3.1 Establish annual Allotments Week events	Higher awareness and engagement	Deputy Clerk / Community Support Officer/ Partners	Annually in August	Increase year-on-year attendance	Event budget	
	3.2 Create Growing Hubs and intergenerational activities	Improved community learning	Deputy Clerk / Community Support Officer/ Partners	2026–2029	2 hubs established	External funding / Partnerships	
	3.3 Produce quarterly community updates/newsletters	Improve communication and awareness	Deputy Clerk / Community Support Officer/ Partners	Quarterly	Distribution and engagement metrics	Staff time	
<b>Climate &amp; Sustainability</b>	4.1 Promote composting and reduce pesticide use	More sustainable gardening practices	Allotments Officer	Ongoing 2025–2030	Annual tenant survey shows uptake	Training materials	
	4.2 Install rainwater harvesting at priority sites	Reduced mains water reliance	Town Clerk / Allotments Officer	2026–2028	Reduction in annual water charges	Capital funding	
	4.3 Explore feasibility of solar-powered pumps	Sustainable water access on limited sites	Deputy Clerk	Feasibility by 2027	Report produced, trial agreed	External funding	
<b>Partnerships, Monitoring &amp; Funding</b>	5.1 Establish annual partnership review meeting	Stronger collaborative working	Town Clerk / Deputy Clerk	Annually	Attendance and agreed shared priorities	Meeting time	
	5.2 Submit at least three external funding bids per year	Increase investment in sites	Deputy Clerk	2025–2030	Number of successful grants secured	Staff time	
	5.3 Publish annual monitoring report	Public transparency and accountability	Town Clerk	Annually	Report received by Council	Staff time	

## Appendix 2 – Allotments and Environment provision overview

### Allotment Site Overview

Site Name	Plots	Management Type	Key Features
Broken Banks	7	Council Managed Direct let	Water access, 2 tenants use as extension to domestic gardens. This site is currently de-designated and plots 1-5 are being sold to tenants, with plots 6/7 going on the open market.
Edge Hill	34	Council-managed, with association on site. Leased site from landlord. Association Agreement in Place setting out clear responsibilities.	Water access, no car access, no footpaths or plot boundary fencing. Association Shed. Lease expires in 2029.
Pollards	55	Council-managed, with association on site. Association Agreement in Place setting out clear responsibilities.	Water access. Limited car access. Bees on Site. Composting loo managed by association. Association ran plot, with greenhouse and meeting shed. 2 storage containers.
Mill Race	44	Council managed, direct let	No Water, horses enabled for previous tenants. Waiting list closed – due to site sustainability.
South Church		Self Managed	Water Access, Toilets, and site shop, association plot facilities. Self Management Agreement is due for re-renewal.
Tindale	47	Council-managed, direct let.	Water access. Car park and car access to plots.
Toronto	3	Council-managed.	Domestic Gardens. Waiting list closed. Application submitted to Secretary of State for DE designation.
Woodhouse Close	57	Council-managed, direct let.	Water access. Car park and car access to plots.
West mills	0	Council managed – no lets	No services on site, vacant site due to ASB. Waiting List close. Site is surrounded by DCC Land.

## Environment provision overview

Item	Key features
Flower bed provision & town centre Planters	Council Commissions DCC (as they own the infrastructure) to supply and maintain planters in Market Place, Newgate Street and Theatre Corner and beds on Bob Hardisty Drive. 2026-27 will see a mix of seasonal and sustainable options. Watering funded by Town Council but provided by third party.
Community Planting	Council supports and helps to facilitate community planting for environmental improvements, and for 2026-27 4 fixed flower beds in the Town Centre have been done. Watering funded by Town Council but provided by third party
Member of In Bloom	Attends the meetings and helps to facilitate partnership working. Council member is now secretary of the Group
Member of Bishop Auckland Green Matters	Councillor attends the meetings and helps to facilitate partnership working.
Greener Together	Council have established the Together Greener Environment Working Group in 2026, it brings together organisations, the Town Council and environmental groups within the town, as well as individual volunteers. Project work has included collaboration with the College on the Railway garden.