Katie Scott
Co-ordinator
Rothbury CAN

Jennifer Wallace

8th April 2025

Dear Jennifer

Election of County Councillor for the Rothbury Ward

I am writing to you on behalf of members of Rothbury CAN. We are a group of residents who aim to do what we can to help mitigate climate change and help nature. You can find out more about us here: www.rothburycan.org

We are surprised, and delighted, that so many candidates have put themselves forward to represent our community. However, we are disappointed that it has been impossible for a Hustings to be organised. We feel we need to know more about what you stand for, in terms of environmental matters.

Because there are so many candidates, we decided to write to you all with the same set of questions, which are of major importance to us. We look forward to reading all the replies, so we can make a balanced judgement about who is likely to represent our views, most sympathetically.

Questions

1. What can you/ do you intend to do to help remove sewage from our waterways? Do you feel developers should share the cost of upgrading sewage treatment plants that are beyond capacity to get planning permission?
   What will you do to ensure new development does not increase flood risk?

SEWAGE

- Developers should be required to contribute to the cost of additional capacity within the system, though this would require Westminster legislation. Note that the fundamental responsibility for providing sufficient capacity remains with Northumbrian Water (income of almost £1bn last year…)

FLOOD RISK

- All new developments require SUDs installations to reduce flow and mitigate risk.

- Northumbrian Water to be pressured to reduce ***existing*** surface water entering the treatment works – diversion of road gullies etc to holding ponds
- No permissions should be granted on flood plains.
- Beavers! (at least support for any feasibility studies into their effectiveness and any unintended consequences). Although born in Glasgow, having spent half my life in Canada I can vouch for them as being generally wonderful

2. How would you ensure that all residents, particularly those in social or rented housing, have access to solar energy and battery storage to reduce their household bills and reduce global warming?
   EV Charging: residents who cannot park near enough to their homes to have a home charger. What will you do to ensure these residents can cheaply and efficiently charge their cars?

- I would encourage direct discussions between NCC and regional social housing providers to upgrade their existing stock to include PV panels AND solar thermal
- I would support for any investigation into community-owned power generation.
- I would lobby for legislation to upgrade Building Regulations in England to match Scotland, so that there is an obligation for on-site generation.
- EV chargers: I would lobby for reduction of VAT on electricity provided by on-street charging points (20%) to match domestic charge Vat rate (currently 5%)
- As a means of reducing the overall number of cars on the side of the road, I support any study into the feasibility of EV car-share or car-club schemes in rural areas.

3. Compared to many other counties, the provision for doorstep recycling in Northumberland is extremely limited. What will you do to improve this and increase the proportion of waste that is recycled?

- The limited provision of recycling has been a deliberate policy decision by the current Tory administration: that decision must be overturned at the earliest opportunity
- There is no county-level strategy for reduction of the amount of waste (whether recyclable or not): this must be introduced
- Additional doorstep recycling brings issues, eg of space for additional bins: consider hyper-local shared recycling points (car parks, school gates, libraries) as part of the wider solution
- Not within the council's power, but I'd lobby Government for the introduction of national can and bottle deposit schemes (as in many other countries)

4. Hedge-cutting and chemical spraying. What are your views on when hedges should be cut, and how? Will you join with us to request an end to the spraying of pollinator killing weedkiller, by NCC on our paths and building edges, etc?

- NCC own very few roadside hedges, so have limited ability to directly control cutting. However I would seek to form good relations with farmers and landowners, and use those channels to open discussions on the timing & nature of hedge-cutting
- I' aware that NCC have been promising for at least five years, that they are trialling alternatives to glyphosate: I'm aware of no results that have been published
- If elected I would take this issue directly into the Council chamber at the first opportunity

5. What would you do to increase biodiversity at the Parish level?

- As above I would liaise directly with landowners & farmers to open discussions around reductions in grass-cutting & hedge-trimming
- I would ensure that NCC take a more proactive approach to biodiversity on land that they own or manage, including the possibility of using council-owned land to provide space for Biodiversity Net Gain required of developers from outside the county.
- Encourage and support community orchards, which have potential to be some of the richest biodiversity habitats.

6. How do you feel about the purchase, by the Wildlife Trusts, of the Rothbury Estate?

- I welcome the purchase as a generational opportunity to alter the approach to the upland areas for the benefit of the community and of the environment, for an increase in sustainable tourism, for an opportunity for large-scale rewilding, and for the reintroduction of native species.

Please could you respond to this email by Tuesday 15th April. This will give our members time to digest and compare the views of you all.

We plan also, to publish the responses, so that the wider community may also know how you view environmental issues.

Do please take this opportunity also, to tell us what you feel are the most important aspects in representing the Rothbury Ward? What do you feel the main role of a County Councillor is?

We really look forward to hearing from you, and we thank you in advance for your response.

With all good wishes

Katie Scott
Co-ordinator, Rothbury CAN

Dear Katie

Many thanks for your letter dated 8th April – I'm pleased to provide answers to your questions, as red text within your letter above.

Best wishes

