

ADEPT President's Awards 2026

Entry form

Award category

Shaping Places for People

Project Title

Energising Blyth

Local authority

Northumberland County Council

Partner/s if applicable

Partners are part of the Blyth Forum and Board, covering voluntary sector, public and private sector membership

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

Blyth a proud town through its culture, creativity and heritage. Through industrial growth, we innovatively lead the way for community regeneration.

Video - please paste links to any video evidence here. (Leave blank if not relevant.)

https://www.instagram.com/candleandbellfilms/reel/DNnETHzo_9r/?hl=en

Shaping Places for People: How was this project an innovative response to a significant local challenge? (150 words max.)

The significant challenge we are tackling is that the declining town centre has for many years made it unappealing for residents, businesses and visitors alike, which means local people go elsewhere to spend their money, while young people are less likely to stay in the town to make a life for themselves. Major investment over the last five years in the town centre has created new cultural and entertainment facilities kick starting change. Our innovative approach is beginning to reap dividends, however there is still much to do to do to reverse many years of decline.

A broad range of partners have worked on a multi faceted innovative programme to build the foundations for stronger communities, individual opportunities, a safer and more pleasant environment with better public transport and active travel options and a cultural programme that has inspired many people to showcase their skills and celebrate Blyth.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

Through partnership, people of Blyth are working together to improve where they live. Some £95m has been invested (via a Town Board, including local people) to make significant, beneficial economic and social improvements to the town. The way people move around, socialise and access jobs and training are all improved, through energy efficient housing, public realm, connectivity, (inc walking & cycling), skills provision, e.g. the Energy Central Learning Hub @ 1000 students are gaining qualifications in green technologies. 210 empty homes have been brought back into use; investment for 72 more energy efficient homes. Further investment in Blyth will be community led, building on the major investment in the towns infrastructure, with community involvement at decision making level. Going forward, existing activity will continue to be monitored and as the themes within the Pride in Place Programme develop, there will be further opportunities to make services more efficient working with residents.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

max.)

There has been huge collaboration from a wide range of partners. The council services engaged now and going forward through the new Programme of funding (Pride in Place) include, Neighbourhood Services, Public Health, Regeneration, skills, employability and Northumberland Small Business Service. All working with a whole place approach. People are at the heart of the Energising Blyth. Partnerships have developed around the Off shore wind, catapult centre and businesses located at the Port of Blyth. The new AI Data Centre, led by QTS, already has traction on community support through its social value work and is making a difference in Blyth and the County; by engaging local community organisations, businesses and are working Bede Academy running T level digital skills. A Forum and Board bring together partners from all sectors, including a strong VCS voice; police, business, education establishments, North East Combined Authority and national government, all connected to Blyth.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care, and external organisations. (150 words max.)

To date a huge level of engagement has taken place and through the Heart of Blyth community fund. Public Health led, this methodology was held up as national best practice. Residents have been involved in the decision making for community grants and the Blyth Celebrates cultural programme. These interventions have contributed to reducing health inequalities and improved well being delivered by community members, such as sports, social groups and multi cultural events. The Council's Locality Co-ordinator provides strong links to and within the voluntary sector, and Board members work in Blyth organisations to tackle worklessness, deprivation and community development. All of these voices contribute to the regeneration of the town and from the rich industrial heritage, Blyth is benefitting from this local buy in and collaboration, which will be built upon from April 2026 with the community led Pride in Place Programme, a £20m investment over the next decade.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

The Energising Blyth activities are bringing new investment to the town, retail is showing signs of being more buoyant in and around the regenerated Market Place and Market Pavilion, a social space and 3 screen cinema. The Northumberland Rail Line connects people to the places they want to be for work, skills and leisure, bringing wider economic benefits. The Pride in Place Programme can only build on this great success and as it is rooted in the community, the £20m, 10 year programme will attract further investment and community engagement through a cultural programme, business support offer, Community Investment Fund and town centre property fund and connectivity and Public Realm projects. New sources of investment may come from a range of sources, exploring options for match funding to invest in community spaces that provide services for people from diverse backgrounds around health, family support, reducing isolation and cultural events.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

There is a growing sense of pride to live and work in Blyth. To demonstrate this, and to show a town on the up, through five years of major investment, a magnificent weekend (5-8 March) "Festival of Energy" (one of the attached images shows the signature event). The Gaia and Moon (world first of Luke Jerram's installation) was the backdrop for Helen Sharman (first British Astronaut in space) who inspired 300 school students (and many adults) to think big, work hard and be curious. The weekend of events will attract 7,500 people across different locations in Blyth, all of which have in some way been enabled

through this significant investment. Energising Blyth has its foundations within the community, and has all the ingredients to develop as a destination for visitors and for investors. The future is bright and people of Blyth are embracing the places in their town.