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CITIZENSASSEMBLYST



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Issue 12  
Apr.2021

# YOUR CAST NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with our work, what we're planning and how you can get involved, direct to your inbox every month!

Now is the time for community-driven, people-powered change in South Tyneside.

# THE 'CLEAN UP' ISSUE

Welcome to your packed April edition!

If you missed our AGM last month, don't panic, we've got you covered! You can watch Alison Benjamin's 'The buzz about bees' presentation [here](#) to get some great ways to help our pollinating pals out - tune in to her bee blog [here](#)

This month, we're announcing CAST's involvement in a national pilot with [Clean Up Britain](#), looking for members for our new group coming soon - diveST (divest South Tyneside) but if all that's not enough for you, we've invited Susan Tron from [Community Homes on the Map](#) to talk to us about community-led housing schemes!

If you have hearing difficulties and feel excluded from online meetings, why not give us a try? We're always looking to improve our inclusivity so we're currently trialling live closed captions (subtitles) for all of our meetings.

Got a better idea? Let us know [here](#)!

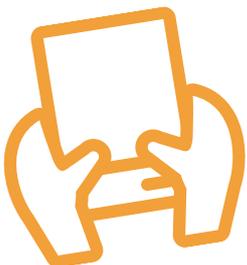
## WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

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# NEWS

## Clean Up South Tyneside

CAST has been invited to join **Clean Up Britain's** national initiative aiming to build a country-wide picture of how all of our local authorities are using their designated funding to deal with the issues of litter and fly-tipping. Of course, we all need to take personal responsibility for our own actions however ensuring that the council is directing it's allocated budget in the right places is an essential part of tackling the blight of waste. The real-time website will be a tool to share Best Practice across the country but also to compare how councils are faring against each other - something all authorities take very seriously!

Want more information or to get involved? Just get in touch [here](#)

### Litter bins and picks - update

Our interactive **map** is up and running so you can see where bin nominations have been submitted. Meetings with Morrisons and the council are ongoing but we do have some good news for you - Wilko Jarrow have made a contribution towards litter picking supplies and we've had a positive response from ASDA South Shields - more info to follow! In addition to this, we're preparing bids for funding from Barbour and Tesco and we're contacting more businesses every week!

### CAST hall of shame

We've really hit a nerve in the borough with our litter project, so each month we'll keep you updated on the businesses we've contacted but haven't engaged. So, to start us off:

- ASDA Boldon: three emails - no reply
- Souter Lighthouse: two emails - no reply
- Farmfoods: 'This is not something we are able to assist with however, thank you for taking time to contact us.'

Good to know!



## HAVE YOUR SAY ON... LITTER

Your response to our online consultation regarding litter hotspots has been fantastic but picking up other people's rubbish isn't going to solve the problem - we need to stop it happening in the first place! But how do we get that message across? How do we help residents to understand the damaging effect littering has on our environment? Fines don't work neither do dull, negative signs so we're asking for your ideas for a positive, fun anti-litter campaign.

**It's time to get involved - South Tyneside needs you!**

### Untreated sewage discharge at Whitburn

Following our February article, **A potted history of sewage in the North East**, we contacted Northumbrian Water and both South Tyneside and Sunderland councils for comment - no response so far.

With 760,000 tonnes of untreated sewage discharged into the sea at Whitburn in 2019 alone, the issue has now escalated. An **online petition** with over 900 signatures has received the backing of the local MP and Marine Conservation for the UK as well as featuring in The Shields Gazette and Sunderland Echo.

The sewage pollution problem is not confined to Whitburn. Almost every time it rains, raw sewage is discharged into our rivers and coastlines. Latest figures show that sewage was discharged into the River Wear 6541 times in 2020 from over 180 sewer overflows. The total hours that these discharges into the Wear took place amounted to 36,722 hours - that's 1,530 days worth of continuous discharging of untreated sewage!

Once more, we've contacted the authorities for comment but again, at time of publish, we've received no response. It would appear that the author was correct - '[t]he local authorities in Sunderland and South Tyneside have literally washed their hands of the issue'.

As always, we'll keep you updated but once again we'll have to leave you to draw your own conclusions...

Get in touch with us: [here](#) Join us: [here](#)

# UPCOMING CAST MEETINGS

We're trialling live subtitles in our meetings - why not try it and give us your feedback?

Sustainable Communities  
Thu.6th May @ 5pm

Community-led Housing event  
Sat.8th May @ 11am

COMING  
SOON

Interested in divestment?  
Join our new group [diveST](#)

Interested? Got an idea or just want to listen? Why not come along?  
If you're not a member, just [get in touch](#) and we'll send you the link!

## Community-led Housing

Communities can play an active role in solving local housing problems. Community-led housing (CLH) schemes (when residents organise to look at housing issues in their local area) explore the needs of their community, covering issues such as a lack of starter homes for people to buy, too many empty properties or not enough affordable homes to rent.

CLH schemes come in many different forms. There is no standard, off-the-shelf approach, but initiatives can include:

- **Community Land Trusts:** affordable homes for rent or shared ownership by acquiring land and holding it as a community asset in perpetuity;
- **Housing co-operatives:** groups of people who provide and collectively manage affordable homes for themselves as tenants or shared owners;
- **Cohousing schemes:** residents come together to provide self-contained, private homes for themselves but manage their scheme together and share activities;
- **Tenant management organisations:** provide social housing tenants with collective responsibility for managing and maintaining their homes in agreement with landlord;
- **Self-help housing projects:** small, community-based organisations bring empty properties back into use – usually without mainstream funding and an emphasis on construction skills training and support;
- **Community self-build schemes:** groups of local people building homes for themselves with external support and managing the process collectively.

While there are overlaps between these different approaches, CLH schemes share five main features:

- NOT for profit;
- small scale - most schemes are under 20-25 homes;
- set up and run by local people with support from housing associations, local authorities and/or regional/national support organisations;
- provide genuinely affordable homes for rent, shared ownership or sale on sites that are difficult for mainstream housing providers to develop;
- meet long-term local housing needs - the community retain legal and/or financial interest in the homes and ensure they are available to the local people who need them.

Do they work? Check out the successful project in [Sunderland](#)

Want to get involved? Got a question? Or just intrigued?

Susan Tron from the CLH organisation, [Community Homes on the Map](#), will be joining us live on Sat. 8th May (11am) to take your questions – just drop us an [email](#) for info/link

Get in touch with us: [here](#)    Join us: [here](#)

# WHAT IS...DIVESTMENT?

Each month, our section 'What is...?' will take an unbiased look at terms often used but never really explained. This month, divestment...

In July 2018, Ireland became the first country to announce that it would be divesting all money, €318 million of its investment portfolio, from fossil fuels. In the wake of this declaration, which received global attention, many organisations, companies and universities followed suit – the latest being New York City, which has recently divested its \$4 billion pension fund away from fossil fuels and towards economic sectors more conducive to a healthy planet.

But what actually is divestment - what does it mean?

**'Divestment means getting rid of any stocks, bonds or investment funds your company might have in a particular industry. It means cutting all ties, in this case with the fossil fuel sector, and taking money from their pockets and redistributing it somewhere else. It is the exact opposite of investing.'**

OK, so what's the case for divestment?

There are two basic lines of reasoning in favour of fossil fuel divestment: environmental and financial.

**Environmental:** research shows that if we want to meet the target of limiting global warming to a 2 degree rise and avoid irreversible and devastating levels of climate change, then between two-thirds and four-fifths of fossil fuels need to stay where they are – in the ground.

**Financial:** if these international targets on climate change are met and the fossil fuels stay in the ground, then investments in fossil fuel companies become worthless as these corporations no longer have a 'product' to sell. Producers of sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels – the green economy – will provide the next generation of 'ethical' investments for stakeholders.

Hmm, sounds logical so what's the case against divestment?

So, let's break it down into two camps again: environmental and financial.

**Environmental:** opponents argue that it would be more effective to engage with fossil fuel companies and to reduce carbon emissions by specifically targeting those emitting high quantities of carbon. Companies can be influenced by active shareholder engagement - this dialogue is lost with divestment. In addition, each of us needs to take responsibility and change our own consumption habits – we are all dependent on coal, oil and gas for our everyday lives.

**Financial:** some are of the view that divesting shares will have a limited financial impact on the fossil fuel industry as other investors will simply step in and capitalise on the increased stock availability. Others state that divestment is economically unethical – developing countries rely on fossil fuels to build their emergent economies and we cannot disregard the 'plight of the poor today' in favour of what may or may not happen to our great-great grandchildren in the future.

It's becoming clear that fossil fuel companies are based on a business model which is rapidly becoming more unsustainable with every international agreement aimed at fighting climate change. If authorities and organisations continue to invest in them, such investments will inevitably become worthless, so which way makes more sense – stay in or pull out?

What do you think? Take a look at the links below and let us **know**



## May: Carbon Capture

Do you have any terms you're unsure of?

Let us know **here** and we'll take an impartial, honest look into them for you.

# COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Look out for bogus text messages informing you that your vehicle tax is overdue, you have a charge to pay on a parcel, you are entitled to a tax refund etc - scammers are using texts to access your bank details. DO NOT use the link in the text - check your details safely by going through official websites. OFFICIAL BODIES WILL NEVER ASK FOR YOUR BANK DETAILS VIA TEXT MESSAGE

Family and friends of care home residents in South Tyneside are being invited to describe their experiences of visiting while social distancing restrictions have been in place. Healthwatch South Tyneside has commissioned a research project looking at the impact of the curbs on the mental health and well-being of all of those concerned. Click [here](#) to access the survey.

In March, Apna Ghar Minority Ethnic Women's Centre announced the publication of their book compiled by staff in collaboration with BAME families in South Tyneside. The team gathered Covid stories from families during and between the three lockdown periods. Hard copies of the book are available but they've also shared a [digital copy](#).

Healthnet have developed a series of short videos to support and encourage people with Severe Mental Illness to get their COVID-19 vaccines. Personal experience guide for people with severe mental illness: [Part 1](#) / [Part 2](#)  
A [guide to support](#) people with severe mental illness.

Watch: South Tyneside Council meetings online - details [here](#)

What's going on with the downgrading of our hospital?

CAST are proud to support Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign - why not join their meetings and find out?

First Contact have spaces available on the following upcoming sessions: Emotional Health and Well-being, Healthy Weight and Sexual Health - just click the link for more details

Great news!

Moving On Tyne and Wear South Tyneside have had their funding extended until March 2023!

Check out their latest newsletter



## DID YOU KNOW...

...Bilton Hall has a 24hr laundry service?

Another great service from Bilton Hall Community Trust is now open - a 24hr laundry service available to use onsite!

The installation of this washing station offers the opportunity to do a variety of different size washes and includes a dryer.

Covered by 24hr surveillance, the machines take cash and/or card for convenience.

Functional and innovative, the kiosk offers an 8kg wash for £4 and 18kg for £8 along with an 18kg dry for £2 meaning you can wash and dry all of your clothes, duvets, curtains, cushions...

More information on their [Facebook page](#)

## IN THE CAST PIPELINE...



Here's what we're working on at the minute...

If you're interested in working towards divestment, our new group, diveST, is launching soon and we're looking for members. Aiming to produce a comprehensive and evidenced proposal to put to South Tyneside Council, this is an exciting and ambitious project with possible wider-reaching significance.

More interested in joining in with our collaboration with Clean Up Britain to clean up South Tyneside? If you want to know more about the scheme, just let us know and we'll send you all the info!

As with all of our groups and projects, you can be involved as much or as little as you like - the choice, as always, is yours! Just get in [touch](#)

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