

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held in the Long Room, Gallery 45 on Thursday 24 September 2026.

Present: Cllrs Day, Green, F Hoyle and S Hoyle. CC T Thorne
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
13 members of the public

35 Apologies for Absence – Cllr Fenwick, Royal and CC Sanderson

36 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda –

37 Sam Thistlethwaite and James Stone re Proposals for Anaerobic Digester Plant

Sam Thistlethwaite (ST), Planning Consultant based in Northumberland and James Stone of Greenacre Energy based in Corby attended the meeting to present the latest proposals for an anaerobic digester (AD) in West Thirston. Greenacre has a team of experts in AD systems however they do not have any sites currently operations in the UK. It is privately funded through the development stage however when it gets to construction stage there will be debt raised finance of £30-35m investment required.

These proposals had changed since the meeting last year following feedback and consultation with relevant organisations. Specifically moving the main building structures away from the Woodland Burial Ground but still being housed in the field directly adjacent to the Burial Ground. The initial environmental screening submitted to NCC resulted in no need for an environmental impact assessment however there is going to be an additional environmental screening survey submitted in light of the changes to the site.

The site was chosen due to accessibility to the national gas mains grid, access to the A1 road network and close to the feed stock suppliers.

The AD will be agriculturally fed with no food waste involved, this will comprise silage, straw and manure which will be held in tanks. The AD would require 100,000 tonnes per year to feed it and it would be operational 24/7, 365 days of the year. The materials release gas when degrading. Gas goes through upgrading which takes carbon dioxide out of the gas to be used for industrial processes and the upgraded gas will be fed into the national grid, the remaining digestate will be returned to the sites it came from as fertiliser. Local farmers have been approached pre-planning to assess that there is sufficient interest to feed to the plant and a local contractor has been appointed to move the materials. The crops will be part of the break crops (part of the farming rotation) and farmers will receive a contracted price for 5-10 years. It would be a possible change in break crops to crops that can feed the AD.

The AD is a justifiable renewable energy source providing gas, fertiliser and CO₂ – the situation in Iran has had an impact on industries for these commodities so governments are supporting such initiatives.

The floor was then opened up to questions which raised the following:

- Average concrete v grass in the location – 50/50
- Vehicles per day – 37x2 per day but during peak periods June/July and Sept/Oct 160x2 per day (coinciding with the peak harvest season) comprising HGVs and tractors and trailers. These movements would be weather dependent but would be 13-14 hours per day, could be 24 hrs per day if there were weather issues. These would usually be coming from a 10-15 mile radius of the site. They will be using the local road networks and the A1. By the nature of the materials they will be coming through villages but would be looking to use the best access routes possible. Residents stated that the A1 is already proving problematic for traffic and accessing the A1 from the West Thirston junction is difficult, especially when turning north and this would cause considerable tailbacks and this could potentially block the entrance to the facility. They do realise that the A1 is a major issue but looking at this with NCC and National Highways in detail.
- There will be removal of hedgerows to ensure visibility for vehicles but there will be 110% replacement of hedgerows to compensate.
- How long would it take to offload a vehicle – 2 minutes offloading. In busy periods you would have vehicles coming in every 2 minutes. The comments made were there would be a backlog of vehicles in the peak periods and again ST stated that the holding locations could be used. There is lots of data on traffic movement from dualling of A1 available.

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- Concerns were raised about the number of vehicles especially through the villages and accessing the A1 which cannot cope with existing traffic. ST stated there was the ability to control when vehicles come onto site with holding locations for materials which could be brought onto site at quieter times. They will ensure contractors following designated routes and should they deviate from this, a complaints procedure would be in place. NCC could put a condition on re routes however there was little confidence from the members of the public that NCC has the manpower to enforce any breaches of this condition. There is a reliance for contractors to comply to routes.
 - There are no planned upgrades of the A1 junction however lighting could possibly be installed. Lighting on site would be 24/7 however during dark periods, the majority would be motion sensor lights with some low level lighting on during night time.
 - What benefits would there be for the community? There are wider benefits to the economy with renewable energy and not relying on importing fertiliser but in terms of direct benefits very little. There would be 6-7 full time employees, no likelihood of local employment but would be using local contractors and farmers. The comments were made that these employees would not be using local facilities so no benefit to the community.
 - It would take 18 months to construct the site with delivery of materials coming directly from the A1.
 - What are the vehicles speeds – HGVs 55mph, tractors 20mph including on A1.
 - If there is an environmental disaster from the site who is responsible – the directors of Greenacre would ultimately be responsible.
 - If the AD was no longer viable would the land be returned to its original state? Usually the investors would want to take over the site as they have invested a lot of money into it. ST stated there would be no bond in place for this however there may be a planning condition for this.
 - Why choose a greenfield residential site and not a brown site when there are so many around? Due to the gas network and access to agricultural community.
 - Would there be any noise? There would be the noise of the vehicles, a 24/7 hum from the gas upgrade equipment and onsite pumps but there are existing sites in the UK that can provide evidence of noise levels and a noise assessment would be submitted through prediction monitoring.
 - Would there be a smell? Not as much as there would be with food waste. There would be an air exchange 3 times an hour in the sheds which would reduce the impact of odour however it is designed to manage odour but it does not eliminate it.
 - How would residual materials be removed from site – silage would be in enclosed tanks and fertiliser in sheeted or enclosed transport.
 - How high are the structures? The tanks and gas dome would be 9m high, these being the tallest structures. A farmer stated the agricultural sheds they would have to be taller than 9m to allow tipping of materials. It was then confirmed that these sheds would be the tallest structures, but no definitive answer was given on the shed height.
 - How will the heights of these buildings affect the airfield? There are height restrictions at the ends of the runway which fan-out and we would avoid these areas with the buildings so should affect flights. Is there an increased fire risk from having tanks producing and storing methane next to an airfield – ST stated the site is not on the main flight path into the airfield, there are restrictions at the end of the runway over what can be built and even grown.
 - How was the land acquired – JS could not recall how the site was acquired.
 - Water storage was raised and whether there would be enough – the lagoons would house the rainwater from buildings and this goes back into the system to mix with the dry matter contents. There will be more than enough water and any surplus clean water would go into green field run off into existing drains.
 - Have the satellite stores locations been identified – cannot give definitive answers as do not have contracts in place with farmers so do not know where the materials will be coming from to identify stores locations.
 - Have you got farmers signed up for this yet? No, planning has to be approved first, then we will agree supply contracts and then start the building phase.
 - Planning application should be with NCC in 4-6 weeks.
- Happy to respond to ongoing questions and meet again when planning application is submitted.

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38 **Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) – None**

39 **The minutes of the meetings held on 18 June 2026 and 20 July 2026.** The minutes were approved as a true record.

40 **Matters Arising therefrom:**

1. **1) Matters arising there from (excluding outstanding actions in relation to NCC)**

- a) NCC Local Plan and TPC Neighbourhood Plan – NCC has responded that in light of the withdrawal of government support for neighbourhood planning, TPC may wish to consider whether its objectives would be most effectively achieved through active engagement in the preparation of the emerging Local Plan, either alongside or as an alternative to undertaking a review of the neighbourhood plan. This approach would ensure that local priorities and aspirations are considered as part of the wider strategic planning framework. It was raised that St Oswalds Way should have been in the NP. Clerk stated that as this is through a number of parishes it should be in LP and this would hold more weight.
- b) Meeting with the Zoo – Covered under report back from meetings (42)

2) Long-term Outstanding issues being addressed by NCC for information

- a) Installation of 20mph speed limit – signage now installed. Speed sign an issue as stating 30mph at entrance to W Thirston from E Thirston as 20mph does not start until past a number of houses. NCC has stated there has to be an area of 30mph as cannot reduce from 50mph to 20mph but as correct signage is in place this should be clearer to drivers.
- b) Road surface down The Peth – NCC has undertaken a second lot of repairs but still not satisfactory. Clerk to request NCC undertaken works on the whole of the rutted area.
- c) Pot holes in the New Bridge – this work is now finished by NCC, not a great job.
- d) Acro barrier supports – The bridge team has this in hand – no timescale as yet.
- e) Leak in Narrow Bank – still outstanding. LTP states that looking at anti-slip surface on this pathway

Clerk

41 **Report by County Councillor Sanderson –**

There was an accident on the Tyne resulting in 13 tons of very small plastic pellets (nurdles) used for the manufacture of plastic goods went overboard. Although there is a clear case of Polluter pays the actual overseeing of this accident is confused - some say it is Department of Transport, Defra, Environment Agency, Coastguard and Maritime Agency etc etc.

I have managed to speak to the EA and asked them three questions -

1. Do they know many tons have been collected Council teams, contractors and volunteers - NO
2. What is the likelihood of a surge of these farther afield given tide & weather - DONT KNOW
3. When will the clean up actually be called to an end - will it be down to no trace of any, or, so many per square metre - DONT KNOW

Additionally have no idea of a timescale for our staff that may be needed on the job.

Meanwhile we are pretty much on top of grass and road repairs and new road surfacing thanks to the dry weather. I have asked that we look at a different way of doing weeds because given the size of the County and the work that needs to be done pretty quickly before weeds get too big we do struggle to keep up. This will be more expensive but I want to see if we can find a different model.

Meeting with Felton PC and National Highways. National Highways are going to look at signage again to try to deter the rat runs but I very much doubt that this will make a huge difference. As you may know the recent tragedies led me to work with the Mayor on a letter to government. The argument about safety and the dangerous mix of single and dual carriageway continue to be part of my argument for action but actually it is the capacity of the road now that demonstrates the other real problem. I laid a Motion to our Full Council last month about the A1 and it was carried unanimously.

I have just received the first draft findings of the traffic survey carried out over the August weekend. They show the increase that we predicted through Felton and Thirston - figures in excess of 300% increase in traffic travelling south. I hope to get further detail later today or tomorrow and may pop them onto Facebook but with officer warning that we need to continue to take traffic surveys to

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counter any negative challenge on this set of figures. However these will feed into the study that we are doing which pulls together new data and evidence about the A1 to strengthen our argument for dualling.

42 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

Pumpkin Pie – Cllr Day met with Lucy Grieve. He stated parking must have priority for residents and no one must park on the south side of the main road. He asked why staff do not park on the Peth. LG stated most of the staff are now not from the village – only 1 local employee. LG asked why PP was always in the minutes – all references are legitimate complaints or actions in relation to PP. LG stated a couple of residents are approaching parents however this is due to incidents such as reversing into owner whilst they are on their own driveway and blocking residents entrances. It was agreed parking has improved however Tuesdays and Thursdays are still bad. The orange pumpkin sign has been removed however some complaints have been received about some to the orange sign remaining. LG stated that the work on removal has not been finished yet.

Wilds Of Wanny – Cllr Day attended the meeting at Longframlington. Brinkburn and Hazelhaugh PCs have an active biodiversity committee – they receive lots of funding from the windfarm development. About half the parish covers the Rothbury Estate so quite a lot of discussion about the sale of the land here. Interesting meeting as a wide range of organisations giving talks – farmers, wildlife trust, CRAG, rivers as a cultural inspiration. Probably not relevant to our PC as we do not have the same availability of funding.

CRAG meeting – re-election of officers took place. The Felton environmental improvement scheme is not going to affect TPC. Longdyke and Thirston Burns are not of great quality due to agricultural and sewerage treatment works running into the burns. There is going to be a working party to remove Himalayan balsam from around the burns.

Zoo re BOAT - The Clerk met with Maxine Bradley (Zoo) and Kris Westerby (NCC Highways) in relation to the BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic). This BOAT has proven problematic over many years being used by poachers and concerns raised in 1994 by Borough Councillors who objected to the change have proven accurate. The zoo has acquired land to the other side of the BOAT and have concerns about this running through the middle of the zoo in relation to safety of endangered species of animals and the public visiting the zoo. Discussions took place as to whether this can be changed to a restricted byway – which would mean not open to vehicles. NCC has stated there will be opposition to this from potential users as has been the situation with stopping up orders, however the circumstances have changed since was made into a BOAT with the building and expansion of a zoo and as a major tourist attraction to the area this should hold some weight in implementing the changes. NCC will look at the proposals of the zoo and liaise with the police on the incidents reported to them regularly by the Zoo and see if proposals can be submitted to change the use. This would ultimately be a decision taken by the Secretary of State.

Zoo Meeting re future plans – started with a brief tour of the zoo which was very informative followed by a presentation as to how the zoo has expanded over the years and the future plans. Issues arising from this meeting that the PC may be able to help with are – BOAT (as above), brown sign on A1, airfield overflying, support from NCC and making them aware of how important the zoo is as a major tourist attraction.

43 Potential Projects

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – A resident from Eshott village has reported issues with accessing the woods around Eshott following the development at Eshott Hall. Therefore residents have been wanting to use public rights of way and have found signs stating no entry which have been put in place to deter poachers. Also farms have diverted PROW directing walkers away from the designated PROW. At Bernie Farm this is due to the property there no longer being part of the farm, it is rented out privately. As use of farm buildings is changing routing PROW through farm yard might not be practical anymore. Cllr Green to speak to residents and Clerk to speak to NCC Footpath Officer to see what can be done.

b) Landscaping – None

c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects –

- Bus Shelter – Noticeboards – These have now been installed by Cllr Royal – thanks go to him for this work.

Clerk/
Cllr
Green

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- 44 **To report on any planning decisions:**
26/00130/ADE – Pumpkin Pie Childcare Signage – APPEAL DISMISSED. Orange Pumpkin has now been removed.
26/01214/FUL - Thorndyke Park Felton, Change in entrance to holiday park entrance site – GRANTED
26/01424/FUL - Northumberland Zoo - Erection of two agricultural buildings – GRANTED
26/01611/FUL - Land to the north of 1 Bockenfield Cottages – new build property – WITHDRAWN
26/01898/COU - Ivy Cottage West Thirston – COU from granny annex to holiday let - GRANTED
26/02259/FUL - 9 Cromwell Grove - Single storey extension – GRANTED

Planning applications pending:

- 26/01643/FUL** - Land East Of The Brocks Brocks Cottage - Erection of a new general purpose agricultural building – no objection from TPC, 2 objections in relation to biodiversity and flood assessment.
26/02975/FUL – Longdyke - Erection of 4 small glamping pods and 1 shepherds hut lodge for holiday use (year-round operation) – Already approved, this minor amendment enables the proposal to be considered under the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain exemption

Planning Issues:

Eshott Airfield Issues:

- 24/04166/FUL** – application for new build where another building has been sited on what is supposed to be enhanced rich grassland. 25/01258/BRCOND is the breach in conditions reference logged in December 2025 and no action has been taken. Clerk has contacted Enforcement Officer for an update.
24/02451/FUL – Approved 13 August 2024 with a condition to install a treatment plant within 3 months – this has not been undertaken and TPC has stated that they have no concerns as the septic tank is working fine and less effect on environment however complaints received from other parties. 25/00844/BRCOND this has been logged with no progress after two years. This needs to be either closed or installed and the Clerk has relayed this to NCC. NCC has responded to state they remain in ongoing discussions with the applicant regarding an acceptable means of meeting the requirements of the condition. As discussions remain on-going, NCC are unable to give a definitive date as to when this will be fully resolved.
New structures at far side of airfield – these have been installed without permission. NCC state that they are being installed by the owner not the airfield. The Clerk has relayed that it does not matter who is installing them permission is required unless they comply with condition 5 of 19/03659/VARYCO which states *“There shall be no outside storage within the application site without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority except for the outside storage of plant/equipment associated with airfield operations and the development approved on the 21 March 2018 under planning permission reference 17/04453/FUL.”* However if it is the owner who is installing he is not involved in airfield operations and therefore this condition is not applicable to the structures. The Clerk has requested an update on this situation.
Thirston Garage rent/sale sign – this was reported in April. NCC are stating it is taking 6 months minimum to look into issues and they are prioritised based on the severity of potential harm, with those involving irreversible harm being addressed first. This situation does not meet this criteria.
24/01178/VARYCO – Installation of footpaths 24 June 2024 giving an extension of 2 years – the Clerk has gone back to NCC with a diagram of where a footpath should be installed as per the original application. NCC state the minor works drawing in the email was not an approved planning document, it was submitted with the S73 application as an indication as to where a potential footpath can be located. NCC understand an alternative scheme has been implemented on site with a footpath being sited opposite plot 5, providing a link to the existing footpath network. NCC also understand a pedestrian refuge area was also required which has not yet been installed on site so have asked for an update on this. A S73 planning application will be needed to reword the highway works condition.

45 **Requested Agenda Items:**

- Review of Policies and Procedures – the following were reviewed and only minor changes to Disposal Policy in relation to planning applications were made. These policies were reviewed and approved – Public Participation, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment, Clerk

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Publication Scheme, Disposal Policy, Bullying Policy, Complaints Policy, IT Policy and Data Protection Policy.

46 Correspondence:

- NCC – LTP notification – NCC has confirmed the outcomes of TPCs requests. It has agreed to an additional street light on The Peth and Clerk to liaise with NCC once the nights draw in for best location. Anti-slip surface on narrow bank footpath – to be investigated and a suitable anti-slip surface provided if feasible. Footpath resurfacing from garage to farm – footpath will be monitored with minor repairs as required and will be taken into consideration for future plans.
- NCC – Email in relation to Community Governance Review request submitted – A suggestion (by non-residents of Thirston Parish) has been submitted to NCC to merge Felton and Thirston Parish Councils. FPC has minuted that they will “state that we did not suggest this and are not proactively seeking merger but accept that there is a lot of commonality between the two parishes and can see some benefits of efficiencies of scale”. TPC does not see that there are lots of commonalities – the parishes are very different in relation to TPC having a number of communities as opposed to being one village and a number of large scale businesses which Felton PC does not have. The Clerk put a notice on facebook and the local newsletter to get residents views – to date there has been two responses stating strongly they believe the parishes should remain separate as they have very different priorities.
- NCC – Notes from digital handover meeting - circulated
- NCC - Changes to Green Dog Walker Scheme - dog waste bags will no longer be supplied to PCs. Instead, all bag supplies will be available from designated local libraries.
- NCC – 2 emails re proposed boundaries between Felton and Thirston and Felton and Newton on the Moor/Swarland – confusing emails as both have the same map of the proposal for FPC and NotM&S PC but nothing for FPC & TPC. Clerk has asked NCC for clarification but not received a response.
- NCC – Update on Northumberland Local Plan consultation process - circulated
- NCC – Libraries newsletter – circulated. It was agreed we do not need to receive this newsletter but put a link on the fb page.
- NCC - Consultation on a proposal to introduce a new countywide Public Spaces Protection Order - Circulated
- NCC – Consultation on its draft Gambling Licensing Policy - Circulated
- NALC AGM – now be held during T&PC Conference – 8 October
- Coquet River Action Group email re constitution and appointed delegates – it was agreed that Cllr Day continue with Cllr S Hoyle as reserve.
- Age UK – email re setting up social group in the community - looking at starting a social group in the Felton area providing an opportunity to socialise as well as take part in games/activities or any talks that we manage to organise. Clerk has forwarded to Felton PC. It was felt there were enough groups in the village and demand would probably be low.
- Email re: PROW issues around Eshott Village – covered under footpaths above (43a).
- Email from CAN re People's Emergency Briefing at 7pm on Saturday 3rd October
- Email from Northern Powergrid re: Applications for Energy Resilience Grant – forwarded to Felton CAN
- Email from Felton & Thirston Magazine re donation promise – donation sent as previous agreed.
- Email re parking issues at Pumpkin Pie followed by Email from Owner of PP requesting meeting – Cllr Day met with PP Owner as reported above (42).
- Email 20mph limits and narrow bank footpath surface – speed limits covered above (40/2a), narrow bank surface being looked at by NCC under LTP.
- Emails of complaint re low overflying in Bockenfield and over the zoo – Clerk has reported these issues to the airfield and received a response stating this is for safety reasons so the pilot can establish the runway in use and safely integrate with other aircraft. There was no response re the zoo complaint. The Clerk responded to state this was not a safety issue it was a blatant overfly to give café customers the best view of this aircraft. No other aircraft does this and it has only occurred recently with the bi-planes. No response was received.
- Emails re late arrivals and early departures from Airfield – forwarded to NCC Enforcement.
- Email re plane crashing into boundary fencing – For information. Clerk informed sender that this is a civic dispute and not a planning/TPC issue.

Clerk

Clerk

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- Email re flytipping – reported to NCC and removed – resident requested CCTV be installed but at present not enough flytipping to justify NCC putting the cameras in temporarily.
- Email re verges between East and West Thirston – request that verges be cut and a request was submitted to NCC.
- Email HospiceCare Big Give Christmas Challenge 2026 – minimum £100 donation – matched funding would be given if the pledge was made. It was agreed this donation request was too high and outside the budget.
- Email HospiceCare Bereavement donation request – no donation made.
- Email from Brity First Aid – requesting link on webpage re defibrillators in area – it was agreed the Clerk would put information on the website of locations of defibs in parish but not to use this organisations link.
- Whatsapp message re overgrowth on Narrow Bank – Clerk reported to NCC and some works were completed but not all. It was stated at the meeting that this might have been the works carried out by Thirston House and not NCC to Clerk to look at what work is required.
- Newsletters – NALC and CAN - circulated

Clerk

Clerk

47 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £16,118.49 TPC funds and £2,985.82 FCJC totaling £19,104.31. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and Cllr S Hoyle signed the statement to confirm this
- (b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members for approval

Payments this meeting:		
SC	3 x Lloyds Bank Service Charge	£12.75
SO	3 x L Hamlin Salary 2 July & 30 July & 27 August 2026	£1,395.00
IB242	Donation to Felton and Thirston Newsletter	£200.00
IB243	Swarco speed camera repairs	£107.58
IB244	Felton Parish Council War Memorial Insurance (£34.90) 50% contribution to Cemetery (£759.13) Recreation Field Contribution (£500.00)	£1,294.03
IB245	L Hamlin Expenses Home working allowance of 13 weeks (£13.00) 3 x DD for email address 13 Jul, 12 Aug, 14 Sept (£8.97) 1 x DD for website 14 Sept (£11.99) HMRC – Payment for Employees NI – Jun £12.02, July £11.98, Aug £12 (£36.00) Felton Village Hall Room Hire 20 July (£5.00)	£74.96

- (c) **Income** – NCC Precept 2nd installment £5,375

48 Urgent Items – None

49 Items for next agenda – Draft budget and list of meeting dates for 2027

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.45 pm

Date of Next meeting: 5 November 2026