



Northumberland Association of Local Councils



Opportunity to join the body championing access to Northumberland's
wonderous countryside

People with a passion for the great outdoors are being invited to apply for membership of a group set up to improve access to Northumberland's countryside.

The Northumberland Local Access Forum is currently recruiting new members.

JLAF is an independent body with an interest in public rights of way and access to the countryside in Northumberland which includes inland and coastal areas. Northumberland National Park Authority works in partnership with Northumberland County Council in the running of the forum.

The county-wide body is looking for new members to join them; seeking people who are passionate about making Northumberland more accessible and who can share knowledge with others from all walks of life. They are particularly interested to receive applications from a wide range of applicants, regardless of age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, or belief.

and so Alex MacLennan, NJLAF Chair, believes it is an exciting time to join.

He says: “our key focus is for everyone to be given the opportunity to gain enjoyment from accessing our natural landscape. The group passionately believes in promoting sustainable and responsible outdoor education and has responded strategically to county-wide visitor behaviours in recent years.”

He adds: “NJLAF have done some fantastic work collaborating with stakeholder organisations such as Northumberland National Park Authority, Northumberland County Council, Forestry England, Northumberland Coast National Landscape and, equally importantly, privately managed land. NJLAF seeks to continually improve opportunities for people to access the countryside and link local communities together. We have contributed to the A1 dual carriage way process, supported access route challenges and opportunities, as well as having reacted to national access consultations such as the Environment Bill and England Coastal Path”.

Alex continues, “This is where we want members of the public to get involved; as well as the main NJLAF group, we have set up some task and finish subgroups to focus on areas such as improving communications, horse box parking, and rights of way. We are keen to monitor key trends and growth areas, ensuring that (where we can) local access areas deliver what the public requires.”

NJLAF are looking for members from a wide range of backgrounds with various skills, experience, abilities, and qualifications, to build on the group’s core values. This friendly group meet four times a year at locations across Northumberland.

Volunteers will also be supported to champion local access improvements strengthening local communities and individuals/ businesses collaborate with relevant authorities to unlock the full potential of the Northumberland countryside for all.

If you would like to get involved and help make a difference, then NJLAF would love to hear from you. Please contact Jayne Longlands for further information, Jayne.Longlands@nnpa.org.uk, 01434 611550.



Kings Garden Party Wednesday 6th May 2026

I am pleased to advise that Northumberland Association of Local Councils has received an allocation of tickets to attend the Royal Garden Party on Wednesday 6th May 2026

The theme this year is diversity and this is the guidance we have received.

When making nominations, you should consider diversity in all its forms, including geographical spread across England, where appropriate, and protected characteristics. You should recognise front-line contributions,

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grassroots individuals within an organisation rather than those in senior positions. We would define frontline workers as individuals whose roles involve direct or essential service to the public, often in challenging or high-pressure environments. By shining a light on selfless efforts, we hope the Garden Parties will inspire future generations to uphold the principles of duty and care that strengthen the fabric of our society.

Nominated guests should be drawn from a diverse range of individuals and organisations. They should recognise excellent contributions in their field, and in public service, voluntary or community work. We recommend you consult with your Parish/Town Colleagues to identify outstanding individuals or organisations they have come into contact with over the past year, who are deserving of recognition.

As usual this is a very tight turnaround and I will need your nomination by noon on Monday 9th February 2026, your nomination should include the following information about the person you are nominating:

- **Full name**
- **Email address**
- **Telephone number**
- **Address**
- **In no more than 100 words why the person you are nominating deserves to go.**

Please send your nomination to Graeme no later than noon on 9th February - info@northumberlandalc.uk



Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has launched its formal public consultation on the new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which will run until Friday 30 January 2026. Residents, businesses and partners across the county are invited to take part and help shape the future of fire and rescue services in Northumberland.

The CRMP outlines how NFRS identifies, understands and prepares for the risks facing communities, both now and in the years ahead. Every fire and rescue service in England is required to produce a CRMP to ensure services remain modern, effective and accountable.

Interim Chief Fire Officer Lynsey McVay said: “Our priority is always the safety and well-being of every community across Northumberland. This new CRMP allows us to plan for both existing and emerging risks, but we can only do that effectively with input from you – our communities and our partners. All feedback will be considered and used to help finalise this plan, influencing how we keep our county safe.”

From today, you can:

- Read the full draft CRMP
- Complete the online consultation survey
- Share your thoughts, concerns and ideas directly with the service

Take part

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to hear from as many people as possible, from all parts of Northumberland. Your views will help ensure our plans are robust, relevant and grounded in the real experiences of our communities.”

The consultation is now live. NFRS encourages everyone who lives, works or travels in the county to take a few minutes to read the draft plan and complete the survey.

Together, we can build a safer Northumberland. Your voice matters.

Find out more and complete the survey [HERE](#)



ONLINE TRAINING WITH THE PARKINSON PARTNERSHIP

THE ROLE OF INTERNAL AUDIT - £35

Wednesday 18th February 10am - 11:30am

Details:

For councillors and officers who want to understand the role of the internal auditor, what to expect from them and how to appoint one.

(Please note, this is NOT a training session for people who want to undertake internal audits)

This session explains the role of the internal auditor in providing assurance to the council that it has sound financial controls.

Topics include:

- legislation and guidance
- Roles and responsibilities
- Internal controls
- how the council appoints an internal auditor
- Scope of internal audit

Session benefits:

By the end of this session you will:

- Understand the purpose of internal audit
- Be aware of relevant legislation and sources of guidance
- Understand how a council should appoint an internal auditor
- Recognise the importance of internal controls
- Be aware of the need to review effectiveness

FINANCE FOR COUNCILLORS - £35

Tuesday 10th February 10am - 11:30am

Details

This session is for councillors only and is designed to give them a greater understanding of their duties with regard to the council's finances.

Topics include:

- Roles and responsibilities
- setting a budget and precept
- Financial control
- The Annual Governance & Accountability Return
- Internal and external audit
- How VAT applies to local councils

By the end of the session you will:

- Understand the council's duties regarding financial management
- Be aware of relevant legislation and sources of guidance
- Be aware of how the council's accounts are prepared and audited
- Recognise the importance of internal controls
- Understand how VAT law applies to your council

PROCUREMENT - £35

Tuesday 24th February 10am - 11:30am

Thursday 23rd April 10am - 11:30am

Details

For anyone involved in procuring goods and services, preparing tenders, or entering into contracts on behalf of local councils.

This session introduces the new rules of the Procurement Act 2023, which came into force on 24 February 2025 and replace the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The session

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Topics include:

- Overview and purpose of the Procurement Act 2023
- Procurement principles and objectives
- Procurement lifecycle
- Conflicts of Interest
- Roles and responsibilities
- Thresholds
- Below threshold contracts
- Excluded contracts
- Direct Awards
- Estimating the contract value
- Scope/Specification
- Frameworks
- Procurement procedures
- Timescales
- Publication of your procurement
- Assessment summaries
- Contract Award Notice & Standstill
- Contracting authorities' requirements (mandatory or voluntary).

INTERNAL CONTROLS - £35

Wednesday 28th January 10am - 11:30am

Details

This session gives councillors and officers an understanding of the need for internal controls and how they work, with practical examples and case studies.

Topics include:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Financial risks
- Purpose of internal controls
- Case studies
- Examples of controls
- Review of internal controls

By the end of this session you will:

- Understand the council's and RFO's duties regarding internal control
- Be aware of the purpose of internal controls
- Be able to identify examples of internal controls

VAT PARTIAL EXEMPTION - £35

Thursday 22nd January 10am - 11:30am

Tuesday 14th April 10am - 11:30am

Details:

For clerks, finance staff and councillors of councils that lease or hire out land and buildings (such as village halls, community centres, meeting rooms or markets), who need to understand when their council is at risk of not being able to reclaim VAT. Essential for any council contemplating major building projects, or incurring significant expenditure on running these facilities.

This session is for those who already understand the rules of VAT (possibly from having attended one of our VAT sessions) and need to work out whether their council can reclaim VAT in relation to its use of land.

This session is unlikely to be of benefit for councils spending less than £50,000 a year, or for anyone that doesn't already understand the difference between business and non-business activities or between taxable and exempt supplies.

This session explains when VAT cannot be reclaimed in relation to exempt activities and what options may be available if you are in that situation.

Topics include:

- law and guidance
- non-business, taxable and exempt uses of land
- Apportionment of costs
- Partial exemption calculations
- Occasional breaches
- Option to tax
- Capital Goods Scheme adjustments

**To book onto a course please email Graeme -
info@northumberlandalc.uk**

NEWS FROM NATIONAL NALC.

Changes to Section 137

the 2026/27 financial year. The new limit is £11.60 per elector, up from £11.10 in 2025/26. The increase reflects the percentage rise in the retail price index between September 2024 and September 2025, in accordance with Schedule 12B of the Local Government Act 1972. Section 137 of the Act allows parish and town councils to incur expenditures for purposes that benefit their communities when no specific statutory power is available.

Message from the New National Chair

NALC National chair, Cllr Iain Hamilton, has set out a clear focus on stronger voices, stronger governance and stronger partnerships. The open letter reaffirms our commitment to ensuring parish and town councils are more influential and better heard at national and local levels, championing their vital role in communities. It also highlights the importance of high standards of governance, transparency and support for councillors and clerks, alongside a renewed emphasis on collaboration, strengthening relationships across the sector and with key partners to ensure parish and town councils are well-represented, well-run and well-connected for the future. You can [read the full letter](#) on our website.

Devolution and the need to empower Town & Parish Councils

I just wanted to send you the link to the finally published Local Policy Innovation Partnership (LPIP) report The Future of Local Democracy – Devolution and the Need to Empower Town and Parish Councils (<https://lpiphub.bham.ac.uk/the-future-of-local-democracy-devolution-and-the-need-to-empower-town-and-parish-councils/>).

Policy Committee fed back their comments last Autumn and Smaller Councils Committee hosted the authors at its 4/11/25 session – this is the final output from that process and is useful for all size of parish and town council as we progress through the LGR process.

Please have a read of and promote the report to parish and town councils in your patch (see below message and links).

NALC warns Planning reforms could weaken community protections

We have set out our position in response to the government's consultation on reforms to the statutory consultee system, warning that some of the proposed changes risk weakening protections for communities if not handled carefully.

The consultation explores proposals to remove statutory consultee status from certain bodies, narrow the scope of advice they provide and introduce stronger performance management across the planning system. While we recognise the need for a more efficient and timely consultation process, we stress that reforms must not undermine local scrutiny or community confidence in planning decisions.

A key concern raised is the proposal to remove statutory consultee status from Sport England, the Gardens Trust and the Theatres Trust. We accept that these organisations' roles are most effectively delivered through the plan-making process. However, we caution that where there is no up-to-date local plan in place, the cultural, sporting and heritage

NALC Partners with LGA on a new National campaign to boost Parish & Town Council recruitment.

We have partnered with the Local Government Association (LGA) to launch a landmark government-funded national recruitment campaign to attract fresh talent into parish and town councils.

The [Make a Difference, Work for Your Local Council campaign](#) will run throughout 2026 with a high-profile advertising push across billboards, radio, podcasts, social media channels, and popular websites, giving parish and town councils unprecedented national visibility at no cost to individual councils.

To help every parish and town council capitalise on this unique opportunity, as part of the campaign, we have helped produce a comprehensive recruitment toolkit tailored specifically for the sector.

The toolkit gives parish and town councils everything needed to promote vacancies quickly, professionally and in line with the national campaign branding. It includes ready-to-use social media posts and eye-catching graphics, customisable posters, leaflets, and pull-up banners, job advert templates with suggested wording that reflects the campaign messaging, step-by-step guidance on how to get the most from the campaign, and all materials supplied in fully editable formats so councils can simply add their logo, contact details, and vacancy information.

Whether you are recruiting a clerk, project officer, grounds staff or any other role, these resources will save time and money while presenting your council as a modern, attractive employer. More [HERE](#)

Northumberland County Office is only an email away.

Best regards

Graeme Popay
CO Northumberland ALC
info@northumberlandalc.uk

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info@northumberlandalc.uk

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