

Draft Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 17th July 2023

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Jim Blythe (JB) Alison Murphy (AM), John Grahamslaw (JJG) and Dougie Watkin (DW). Also in attendance were Cllr Colin Hardy (CH), and two members of the public. Guests at the meeting were James Boulton and Gus Russell, Chair and Secretary respectively of the Tweed Railway Campaign.

7.23.1 To accept apologies for absence.

Apologies accepted from Sheelagh Hume.

7.23.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

Dougie Watkin declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation Item 3.234.i (Tweed Valley Railway Campaign) and agreed he would not take part in any discussion.

7.23.3 To confirm Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 10th May were confirmed as an accurate record and signed.

7.23.4 Matters arising from Minutes.

i Tweed Valley Railway Campaign

Messrs Boulton and Russell were welcomed to the meeting and gave their very interesting presentation. Any proposed route has not yet been decided as a feasibility study would be required. The current campaign is aimed at raising awareness and building up support for the concept. As regards the Tweedbank to Edinburgh railway it took 15 years to finalise the feasibility study and persuade the Scottish Government that it was a good plan. The existence of that new railway already appears to be having a positive effect on that part of the Borders. More information is available at <https://www.tweedvalleyrailway.co.uk>

ii Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan

Awaiting progress.

iii Public Conveniences

In a reasonable state though could probably benefit from a refresh

iv Play Areas

Report received from RoSPA inspection. No serious concerns. GS and JJG will meet to discuss how to address the minor matters raised. VLC to check Playdale guarantee on new play equipment.

v Community Police Report

None received as PC Ritchie has been off sick for several months.

vi Norham School – Education in Berwick Partnership Consultation

The Head has asked for a meeting with the parish council after return to school in September to discuss how to build links between the school and the community. The format for this meeting has not yet been discussed. It was noted that a car is frequently parked in the designated bus space by the

school, making it difficult to navigate the bend in the road. Details of the car were passed to DW.

vii Undergrounding of cables

Nothing to report.

viii Norham Development Trust

NDT is in discussion with the Church regarding the future of 1 Tower Cottages, in the hope that it could become an affordable let rather than be sold and become a holiday let. NDT are hoping this might be the seed for an affordable housing trust.

JG reported on renewables. Public meeting had been held on 7th June with some encouraging responses. The scoping report had been lodged with NCC and again responses had been positive – some work still to do. As regards grid connection, a grant application for £35000 had been made to enable payment of £50000 to be made to SPEN. If the grant is not obtained that will be an end to the project.

A request was made that NDT's business model governance and management documents be made public. After some heated debate JG explained that those documents as such did not exist. The only figures which had been considered were produced in conjunction with the original feasibility report prepared by Green Cat in September 2021 which were now largely out of date as a result of the massive changes in energy prices and interest rates and this request was refused on the grounds of commercial sensitivity. It was argued that notwithstanding this as it is a community project the community should have access to information regarding the finances and management of the project. JG confirmed that the process so far had concentrated on the practicalities of working towards planning permission and keeping the landowner on side. If NDT gain planning permission and a grid connection, then NDT will concentrate on how best to bring the project into being whether by way of an outside developer or by way of keeping it solely as a community project run by a third party on behalf of the community. There was further discussion regarding whether it would be wise to publicise historic projections when the project is unlikely to proceed for at least five years. To which the request was made for the second time for a breakdown of proposed fund allocation i.e., capital cost repayment, land rental, percentage allocated to community funds, grant awards etc. It was however clear at the public meeting that what members of the public were most interested in was the precise benefit to each household even although NDT were not in a position to provide an accurate figure. It was questioned how NDT had arrived at the figures discussed at the NDT presentation to NPC held on 5th June, prior to the community meeting, if there were no business models or projections available. After further discussion a vote on the project at this stage was held

– JB, DW, GS and JG voted in favour, AM against and JJG indicated he was still had the matter under consideration. A query was raised as to whether JG and GS should declare an interest as directors of NDT.

ix Jubilee Field

The builder who had previously quoted to repair the wall had still not started work. After discussion it was agreed that GS/JB/JJG would carry out the work if materials were paid for.

x Parking in Castle Street

Noted that a design for chevron parking had still not been received from NCC. CH will chase. JG queried the type of EVC installed as he had been unable to connect his car. He was also aware that a number of people had tried and failed to connect to the chargers because of difficulties with the mobile phone signal. CH will investigate further.

xi Proposed 20mph Speed limit

Noted that NCC had still not been in touch re ideas to help slow traffic in the village. This was becoming more important as there are more agricultural vehicles coming through due to harvest being on the point of starting. CH will chase. JG reported that the lights at the school were now on the correct timer.

xii Approach to Diocese re Land at Glebefield

GS reported that The Diocese of Newcastle property committee had made a fact finding visit to look at the field, owned by the Diocese, and which had been allocated for housing by NCC, and the surrounding area, including the Glebefield, so they had a full picture of the area in question.

xiii Tourism

A query was made re the current level of tourism in the village, and the number of visitors, and whether a new strategy should be put in place. The original plan to encourage tourism had perhaps achieved its targets in particular in the wake of Covid when Northumberland had become far more popular, and it was perceived that NCC pursued tourism as its main strategy for economic improvement to the county. A suggestion was made that perhaps the village should consider the creation of a car park. There was a duty to protect housing for locals rather than have more holiday lets. It was however pointed out that control of the level of holiday lets could only be effectively addressed by central government. Agreed after discussion that this matter would be placed on the agenda for next meeting.

xiv Sustrans – Declassification of National Cycle routes

GS reported on the meeting with Sustrans to discuss their declassification of cycle routes. This had been based on data they had obtained on speed and volume of traffic on local roads. It was not clear where some of their data had

been obtained whether from NCC or Google Maps. After discussion and after the point had been made that their strategy was UK wide, it was agreed that that Sustrans would be asked to check their data round this locality. In addition, any of other queries/points that councillors would like passed on to Sustrans would be sent to VLC in the first instance.

xv Paton & Co Donations

A further £250 had been received from Paton & Co – the parish council is extremely grateful for these generous donations. A quote is awaited for refurbishment of the bus shelter.

xvi Dogs

A complaint on Norham Craic regarding dog poo in the graveyard had been raised at the most recent PCC meeting. That in turn had been raised with the parish council. The graveyard is however under the care of NCC, so it was not for the parish council to put up signs there. After some discussion it was agreed that the complaint would be passed on to NCC and they be asked for their views on action to be taken. It was noted that dog poo is an issue throughout the village.

7.23.5 Local Transport Plan programme 2024-25 proposals

After discussion it was agreed the proposals would be

1. Reduction of the speed limit to 20mph
2. Resurfacing of Boathouse Lane
3. Resurfacing of lane from West Street to St Cuthbert's Square

In the meantime, VLC will report disintegrating surface of road by the school via <https://www.fixmystreet.com>

FINANCE

7.23.6 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Payments from Current Account

11th May to NCC £288 (gritbin); to BHIB Ltd £478.44 (insurance premium); to N&DPCC £150 (churchyard maintenance); to N&DPCC £150 (newsround); to Norham Village Hall £300 (donation); to GNAA £50 (donation); to CAN £50 (donation); to HospiceCare £50 (donation); to NDT £75 (website)

12th June to S Broadbent £230.63 (WCs)

20th June to PlaySafety Ltd £180 (RoSPA Inspection)

4th July to S Broadbent £150 (WCs)

Receipts into Current Account

22nd June from Paton &Co £250 (donation)

Receipt into Business account

5th June £1.55 (interest)

7.23.7 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Accounts

As at 17th July

Current Account £9634.82

Business Account £746.44

7.23.8 To look at Planning Application decisions.

Masons Arms 16 West Street: Granted

14 Castle Street: Refused

37 Castle Street: Granted

39 Castle Street: Granted

7.23.9 To look at state of Roads and Pavements

Noted that hedges opposite school and down Stackyard Lane had just been cut.

Also noted that Fishers Walk had been strimmed by Jim Yeomans who has requested that from now on weedkiller be used. The historic problem there is dog poo which makes strimming a very unpleasant task. After some discussion Rob Kelsey offered to take it in turns to trim Fishers Walk if that meant avoiding the use of weedkiller.

7.23.10 General Correspondence

VLC confirmed the most recent letter to Ann-Marie Trevelyan re dualling of the A1 had been sent (where the council is one of 18 parish councils who are signatories).

Discussion re NCC proposal that North Local Area Committee change its pattern of meetings, to hold some solely as planning meetings, and others relating to local service and highways matters. This was an attempt to improve communication between NCC and parish councils.

Any Other Business (For information only)

None

Date of next meeting: 18th September 7pm