

# Longhirst Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Longhirst Village Hall, on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Present	Cllr Glen Fahy (Chair)	Cllr Andrew Robson (Vice Chair)	Cllr Bill Climson
	Cllr David Jordon	Cllr Julie Murray	Cllr Janet Quinn
	Cllr Richard Tordoff		Barry Flux (Clerk)
In Attendance	Five members of the public		

## Public questions / speaking

The Chair opened the public section by clarifying that the purpose was to share updates, seek advice, or request parish support or funding—not to assign blame for issues since the previous meeting. The discussion began with concerns over the maintenance of the area around the bus shelter and the adjacent unadopted land. It was noted that while the Village Hall’s responsibility ends at the wall, the Parish Council may be able to fund improvements once multiple quotes are obtained. A quote was mentioned, and the need to confirm ownership and maintenance responsibility for the Grade II listed telephone box was raised. The Parish Council agreed to investigate its ownership and condition.

There was also discussion about ongoing maintenance and potential use of local gardeners once the area is cleared. The Village Hall trustees explained that their funds are ring-fenced and cannot legally be spent outside the Hall’s curtilage. The Parish Council agreed to explore funding options and to consult residents via the Longhirst Leader before proceeding with works.

Further issues were raised about overgrown shrubs encroaching on village footpaths, making access difficult. The Council agreed to contact Northumberland County Council to address this and, if necessary, issue reminders to residents. Concerns about widespread dog fouling were also raised, with suggestions for new signage to deter offenders. The Council confirmed it would request support from the County Council for signage and consider placing additional signs in Millennium Wood if appropriate.

Finally, traffic and parking issues were discussed, particularly poor visibility caused by cars parking close to the archway and junctions.

Councillor Dungait, who was absent, provided a written update confirming no major county-level issues but agreed to follow up on the ownership of the Longhirst Colliery driveway.

## Agenda Item

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Ed Dungait (County Councillor)

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

Signed .....

Date: .....

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes from the meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 were approved as a true record.

**4. DOMINOES FIELD / WAR HORSE FIELD**

Mr. Peter Coates, Chair of the Longhirst Wildlife and Community Trust, was welcomed to the meeting as an invited guest to provide an update on the Trust’s activities and to discuss the future of Dominoes Field (also known as Warhorse Field).

Mr. Coates reported that following his previous attendance in November 2024, a public meeting had been held to discuss the future of the field. A large number of residents attended, and there was a *clear majority view* that the village did not wish to see the land developed. Residents instead supported preserving the area as open land and wildlife habitat.

Mr. Coates explained that the field has significant historical importance, having been used for the raising of warhorses over a period of approximately 90 years, and that this heritage should be celebrated and protected. He also noted potential for expanding Paddock Wood and using the adjacent burn as a wetland wildlife area, creating a continuous biodiversity corridor.

The Council discussed recent planning history, noting that two previous planning applications on the site had been refused by Northumberland County Council and that appeals to the Planning Inspectorate had also been dismissed. Councillors recognised, however, that the new Government’s policies may increase pressure for rural and greenfield development in future.

Members expressed broad support for the Trust’s aims of protecting the site and promoting its environmental and historical value.

**5. NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL CALL FOR SITES**

Mr. Coates further advised that Northumberland County Council had issued a Call for Sites consultation as part of the review of the Local Plan. While primarily aimed at identifying potential housing and employment land, the process also allows submissions for environmental enhancement and biodiversity improvement sites.

Mr. Coates requested the Parish Council’s approval to submit an application to register Warhorse Field under the “environmental and biodiversity improvement” category, on behalf of the Longhirst Wildlife and Community Trust, in conjunction with the Parish Council.

Councillors discussed the proposal in detail it was noted:

- The land is privately owned, but it was confirmed that any party may submit land for consideration under the Call for Sites process, even without ownership.

- Members acknowledged that the landowner may not support the submission but agreed the Council's priority is to protect local interests and environmental assets.
- It was noted that inclusion in the Call for Sites does not grant any formal designation but may strengthen future resistance to development and promote biodiversity protection.
- After full discussion, it was agreed that Longhirst Parish Council supports the proposal by the Longhirst Wildlife and Community Trust to submit Warhorse Field under the Northumberland County Council Call for Sites as a potential area for biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- The Council concluded that the immediate priority is to support the environmental submission and to continue working collaboratively with the Wildlife and Community Trust.

## 6. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP)

### 7. CLERK'S REPORT

#### **Additional signatory**

It was confirmed the Cllr Robson could do this online and the clerk would send him details.

#### **Pay award (all clerks)**

It was agreed to implement the national pay agreement in respect of the clerks pay.

#### **Clerks Training**

The clerk confirmed he has passed his ILCA qualification. The next logical training is the CILCA qualification. SLCC had paused applications for this until January 2026 owing to them updating the course. It was agreed to

#### **Payments – Full Financial Report**

Financial reports with references AC003 and AC004, were presented to the meeting. It was also noted that the Community Account held £4,617.20 in funds and the Instant Access Account held £14,921.28

## 8. PLANNING

- Discharge of conditions 3 (BNG) and 6 (surface water) on approved application 25/00844/CCM

Butterwell Disposal Point Longhirst Morpeth Northumberland NE61 3NF

Ref. No: 25/02891/DISCON | Received: Fri 15 Aug 2025 | Validated: Fri 15 Aug 2025 | Status: Registered

Members noted the application to discharge conditions relating to Biodiversity Net Gain and surface water management. It was agreed that the Council did not have sufficient technical information to comment.

- Listed building consent for erection of 8.5m x 2.5m timber garden shed with a sloping pent style roof covered with felt and some clear roofing panels.

Longhirst Farm House Longhirst Morpeth Northumberland NE61 3LX

Signed .....

Date: .....

Ref. No: 25/02719/LBC | Received: Mon 04 Aug 2025 | Validated: Tue 19 Aug 2025 | Status: Registered

Members discussed the proposal and were satisfied that the proposed design and scale were appropriate for the site.

- Erection of 8.5m x 2.5m timber garden shed with a sloping pent style roof covered with felt and some clear roofing panels

Longhirst Farm House Longhirst Morpeth Northumberland NE61 3LX

Ref. No: 25/02718/FUL | Received: Thu 31 Jul 2025 | Validated: Tue 19 Aug 2025 | Status: Registered

The full planning application for the same structure was considered alongside the listed building consent. Members raised no objections.

- Listed Building Consent to replace two aged doors

Old Moor Farm Longhirst Morpeth Northumberland NE61 6PR

Ref. No: 25/02674/LBC | Received: Wed 30 Jul 2025 | Validated: Mon 04 Aug 2025 | Status: Registered

Members reviewed the proposal and noted that the replacement doors were in keeping with the character of the property and sympathetic to its listed status.

## 9. GENERAL ITEMS

### **Churchyard Maintenance and Graveyard**

The Council confirmed that the annual churchyard maintenance contribution of £700 has been paid (or will be ensured if not already completed). Payment timing was clarified—previously paid early due to banking arrangements, so the next payment will align with the usual annual schedule.

### **Litter Bin – Longhirst Colliery Bus Stop**

A replacement litter bin identical in design to the previous one has been installed at the Colliery bus stop. Although the new bin is a different colour (black instead of green), it is functional. New drill holes were required for fitting, and further minor adjustments will be made shortly.

### **Speeding**

A detailed update was given on ongoing speeding concerns through the village.

The County Council's latest speed survey (May 2024) shows average speeds between 25–28 mph, with the 85th percentile at or slightly above 30 mph.

Despite around 15% of vehicles exceeding 30 mph, the County Council's threshold for intervention is higher (35 mph+).

Two recorded injury incidents over the last five years were noted.

Signed .....

Date: .....

Residents' petition and survey data have been submitted; the matter is expected to progress to a Community Partnership Meeting for further discussion.

The Parish Council reaffirmed support for residents' efforts and agreed to continue pressing for action and safety improvements.

### **Maintenance of Public Rights of Way**

No recent developments. The Council noted ongoing frustration with the County Council's inaction but agreed to continue raising the issue.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

The Council agreed to order two wreaths—one for the parish and one for Longhirst Colliery. A councillor will represent the Parish Council at the event. The Legion's role and availability of a bugler were briefly discussed.

### **Noticeboard Next to War Memorial**

Residents had requested a new noticeboard, but the Council recalled that this was reviewed previously and deemed unnecessary due to the existing boards (bus shelter, Colliery, and Ulgham Lane). The current boards are considered adequate, and there may be an argument that these need to be rationalised due to how many there are.

### **Update on Wall Renovations**

Discussion took place regarding the damaged wall.

### **Entertainment Levy**

Discussion introduced by reference to a model used in Seahouses, where residents contribute a small levy towards community activities (cinema, hall events, etc.). Councillors agreed Longhirst lacks comparable infrastructure or tourism base to implement this but would review the materials circulated and revisit at a later meeting.

### **Nuisance Behaviour**

Concerns were raised about individuals accessing the village hall without authorisation and misrepresenting themselves as trustees. The issue has been addressed by changing door codes. Council noted the matter as resolved but recorded it for awareness.

### **Article for Longhirst Leader**

The Council will prepare an article highlighting recent Parish Council achievements.

A list of completed works (e.g. road and path improvements, village maintenance) will be compiled by email from councillors.

The article will appear in the next issue; the clerk to coordinate submissions before the end of the month

### **Any Other Business (AOB)**

New Pathway: A new path has been installed through Longhirst Colliery Woods following tree clearance.

Road Safety Mirror: Discussion about repositioning or upgrading the mirror near the church. Further placement to be confirmed.

Signed .....

Date: .....

Poaching and Trespass: Serious ongoing issues with poaching and unauthorised vehicles around the Portland Burn site. Reports made to Advance Northumberland, County Council, and police with little response. Council to continue pressing for action.

Miscellaneous Village Maintenance: Possible replacement of broken seating and tidying of unused concrete features to be explored.

Church Yard maintenance

Discussion took place concerning correspondence received about the maintenance of the church yards. It was made clear that this is not within the remit of the Parish Council and was for the church themselves to resolve.

Discussion took place in respect of donations made to groups such as the church in Longhirst. It was agreed to maintain existing arrangements

#### **Litter bin Longhirst Colliery bus stop**

It was agreed to purchase a bin of similar / the same dimensions as the existing bin at the bus stop rather than order a bigger or different bin. The bin would be ordered by the clerk and delivered to the chairman's address.

#### **Speeding**

As the matter was extensively discussed during the public question section, no further discussion took place

#### **Maintenance of public rights of way**

Estimates had been received in respect of cutting back of blocked rights of way behind Longhirst Colliery. Permission was being sought from Northumberland County Council to cut back, but this had yet to be received.

#### **AOB**

No other business raised

### **10. ITEMS FOR THE NOVEMBER MEETING**

It was agreed to message the clerk with any items for the next meeting.

### **11. NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Signed .....

Date: .....