

**Minutes of Allendale Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 4th July 2024 at 7pm
at Allendale Village Hall**

Present: Cllr Coulson (Vice Chair), Bron, Gray, Johnson, Kirk, Philipson, Simmonds, White and H Newsome (Clerk).

1) Apologies for absence and councillor news

Apologies were received from Cllrs Beck and Swaile and Co Cllr Colin Horncastle.

Cllr Coulson acknowledged the resignations of Councillors Andrew Graham, Nick Howard and Oran Villiers-Stuart.

2) Declarations of interest

See APC's website for a full list: <https://bit.ly/4cWwHHv>

3) Planning Committee – planning applications

24/01143/FUL Lonkley Head Farm Lonkley Head Allendale

Cllr Gray declared an interest and left the room. Cllr White proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr Kirk seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

24/02004/FUL The Barn Sparty Lea Allenheads

Cllr Johnson proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr Kirk seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

24/01928/LBC Ellershope Cottage Sparty Lea

Cllr White proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr Johnson seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

24/02233/FUL Ellershope Cottage Sparty Lea

Cllr White proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr Johnson seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

24/02072/FUL 2 Low Shield Close Sparty Lea

Cllr Kirk proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr Philipson seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

4) Public participation

There were **three** members of the public in attendance.

Village Tidying

Carol Davison and Valeria Dunn were unhappy about the general upkeep of the Village, and in particular the lack of maintenance which meant that there were unsightly weeds everywhere. Cllr Gray said that the Towns & Villages Committee had a plan for tidying up the Village. He said that because Northumberland County Council's weed spraying programme had been hampered due to the wet and windy conditions it had asked for local help and Hilton Graham had agreed to maintain all aspects of the Bullring including weed killing/removal, edging, removing the gap between grass and pavement kerb, and cleaning the granite setts between road tarmac and kerb. Cllr Gray would send Carol and Valeria the planned schedule of works that included the areas around Isaac's Well, Arnison Terrace, the BT phone kiosk, the former Lloyds Bank and the old Rectory Green.

Reduction of speed limit along Station Road

Although a resident of Station Road welcomed the Parish Council's Facebook message informing people of the imminent work to install the 30 mph traffic scheme, he said that it would have been helpful if more warning and notice could have been given. He said that there is a sign that alerts drivers that a previous higher limit had been replaced by a 30 mph limit by the removal of speed limit signs that was shown on the GOV.UK website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/know-your-traffic-signs/speed-limit-signs>

The Clerk said that she had only learned of the work on the day it was happening and had created the social media message as quickly as she could, and that she would ask if the signs the resident described could be installed on Station Road. The Council also said that Co Cllr Horncastle had sent a message prior to the meeting saying that the highways officer would be visiting in the next few weeks to look at traffic safety in Catton and when he hoped there could be improvement to what he called an ineffectual scheme design on Station Road. The Council confirmed the costs of installing two vehicle activated solar signs in Catton in 2017 at a **total** cost of £7k plus VAT paid for from Co Cllr Horncastle's county project allowance, and maintained by Allendale Parish Council by way of an annual contract with SWARCO: <https://www.swarco.com/#> at a total annual cost of less than £600 plus VAT. The Council agreed to the resident's suggestion to include these costs in the minutes as some Station Road residents thought that installing a similar scheme along Station Road would help reduce the speed of traffic.

5) Minutes of the previous meetings held on 6th June 2024

Cllr Kirk agreed, and Cllr Philipson seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th June 2024 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6) Matters Arising

Allendale estates felling works update

The Council acknowledged the responses it had received from Natural England, North Pennines National Landscape and Northumberland County Council's Principal Planning Officer - see Appendix A

https://northumberlandparishes.uk/sites/default/files/parish-councils/documents/2024/July/106/correspondence%20july%202024_1.pdf

Cllr Philipson said that whilst nobody was against the commercial felling of trees the main concern was the manner it was being done at the height of the breeding season without consideration for the red squirrel population and the hundreds of bats that were known to inhabit the woods. He said that it was clear from the responses received from Natural England and North Pennines National Landscape that neither of these organisations had a record of receiving the Management Plan approved by the Forestry Commission leading to the issuing the felling licence, and that they were only made aware of the felling licence in 2023.

Cllr Philipson said that it was unfortunate that the wood containing the greatest number of a variety of endangered species was the first to be felled and that time was of the essence in acting before more damage was done. The Council unanimously agreed to Cllr Philipson's proposal to a) make a formal complaint to the Forestry Commission as it appeared that the stakeholder consultation had not taken place, and at the same to inform the Member of Parliament for Hexham, and b) put in a Freedom of Information request to the Forestry Commission to ask why the statutory consultation process in October 2022 does not appear to have been followed as several of those bodies had no record of receiving the consultation documents, and to ask what plans had been put in place to minimise the possible impacts on red squirrels, water voles and bats with particular reference to the correspondence from North Pennines National Landscape dated 12th July 2023.

Former First School update

Cllr Coulson said that the buyer of the former First School had been carrying out some maintenance to the grounds around the school including removing some of the vegetation. Co Cllr Horncastle also said that he had requested his NCC colleagues to tidy up the place.

Nora Handcock Memorial bench

Cllr Philipson confirmed that the Nora Handcock memorial bench had been delivered and was in storage and that it would be installed at Isaacs's Well once the salt bin had been moved. Valeria Dunn said that she would know the outcome of Allen Valleys History Society's grant application to NCC's Community Chest shortly after 19th July. If it was successful, then it could begin work to refurbish the environment around Isaac's Well she said.

7) County Councillor and Northumberland County Council update

Co Cllr Horncastle sent his apologies for absence but provided the following update:

Whitfield road closure

Update on Whitfield Road closure. I'm surprised how quick they have started this. Some landslips have taken years to do. But they have made it a priority.

Former First School update

I've requested tidying up at old First School.

Reduction of speed limit along Station Road

Hopefully will have Highways officer out in next few weeks to look at Catton and improve on what I would say is a pretty ineffectual design on Station Road. 40 to 30 reduction. Just sorting a date out.

8) Affordable Housing Committee

There was no update or actions.

9) Allotments Committee

Fencing works update

Cllr Coulson said that Mark Armstrong would begin work to replace eleven metres of 4' high fencing including a new gate, replacing a further two new 9' posts and replacing the fence on the long side of the allotments.

Permission for tenant to put up a shed

The Council agreed for Amanda and Norman Galbraith to choose a suitable shed to put up in their allotment and to inform Cllr Coulson of the dimensions.

10) Cemetery Committee

Concrete strips for Allendale Cemetery

The Clerk said that she had talked to Gary Air, Memorial Safety Inspector at NCC who had recommended only two suppliers in the county to install the proposed concrete strip foundation and on that basis, she had asked JB Colman's for a revised quote for the shorter concrete strip and requested an additional quote from Art of Stone, but she had not yet received replies.

11) Environment & Climate Change Committee

There Committee would be meeting once Cllr Swaile returned from her holiday.

12) Rights of Way & Access Committee

There were no actions. See Correspondence below.

13) Towns & Villages Committee

Bus shelter update

Cllr Kirk said that even though planning permission had now been granted it would still be necessary for the Council to meet the requirements of section 38 of the Commons Act 2006 and seek consent from the Department of Environment to carry out works on the Village Green. He said that the application process could start after the election on 5th July but that it would be a lengthy one with the Dept of Environment taking up to three months to reach a decision. Cllr Kirk also said that it would be necessary to get landowner consent from Allendale Estates to install the bus shelter on its land. Cllr Gray said that he agreed that the process outlined by Cllr Kirk was needed and that the Council may also want to get help to complete its application to the Department of Environment as the procedure outlined was quite complex. Cllr Philipson questioned the need for making an application to the Department of Environment since the Village Green was subject to a Scheme of Management that permitted the Parish Council to manage and carry out works that improved the green for visitors' enjoyment. He said that installing a bus shelter on a small area of the Village Green would not cause material harm to the Village Green rather it would be providing shelter to residents and visitors in an exposed part of the Village where there was no other shelter thereby improving

the facilities for all. Cllr Kirk updated everyone on all the other aspects of the project including the need to get sign off from NCC that had requested the details of the finishes to be used, managing public safety during the installation, and appointing a supplier to install the concrete base. After discussion, the Council agreed for a) the Towns & Villages Committee to set out researching and costing three options, installing the bespoke timber shelter and set about getting all the permissions in place, installing an off the peg cantilever type bus shelter that would not encroach on the Village Green, or not having a bus shelter at all and b) the Clerk to ask the National Association of Local Councils Legal Team what was needed to put up a bespoke timber bus shelter on a Village Green.

Catton road safety mirror

Cllr Gray to recommend a suitable replacement mirror for Batey Terrace and the Clerk to order it.

Local Transport Plan priorities for 2025/2026

The Council agreed to discuss its priorities for 2025/2026 at its September meeting.

RoSPA annual inspections

Cllr Gray said that when the Towns & Villages Committee met on 27th June it agreed to the following actions as recommended by RoSPA after its recent inspections:

Denefields – to provide more infill on steps.

Allenfields – to fix the gap in the gate hinges (that can be screw adjusted). The Council agreed to ask Mark Armstrong to do the work when he was free to which was likely to be not before October 2024.

Surfacing works in Allendale update

Cllr Kirk said that Coulson Contracting had postponed the re-surfacing work to the parking area next to Allen House until August because of staff absence.

Village tidying update

See 4) Public Participation above.

Payphone kiosk

The Clerk said that BT had agreed to repair the Listed payphone kiosk and that the engineer had visited the site but needed to return with more materials to repair/replace the multiple glass panels.

14) Correspondence

Jenny Fairless – see 13) Towns & Villages Committee Catton road safety mirror (above).

Cllr Gray to recommend a suitable replacement mirror for Batey Terrace and the Clerk to order it.

David Clayton – The Clerk had put David in touch with Allen Valleys Local History Group for more information about the history of Thornley Leazes and the Council also recommended that he make enquiries at Northumberland County Councils archives at Woodhorn Colliery.

Irene Ness – The Clerk to let Irene know that:

a) Allendale Parish Council had put forward its recommendations to reduce the speed limit around Thornley Gate, but these had been turned down by Northumberland County Council, and to let her know that anyone could put forward their concerns about traffic safety by logging these on the Fix My Street portal <https://fix.northumberland.gov.uk/>

b) Northumberland County Council had been in touch to say that its weed spraying programme had suffered quite a bit due to the wet and windy conditions that had hampered progress, however, it was still hoping to get the weeding done in both Catton and Allendale in the near future. Cllr Gray said that the Towns & Villages Committee was considering using private contractors to carry out weed killing in the parish.

c) Allendale Parish Council had reported the subsidence on the opposite side of the road to Thornley Leazes where the pavement had dropped and where the wall was bulging, and it would again raise this as a concern using the Fix My Street portal <https://fix.northumberland.gov.uk/>

Christina John – The Clerk to check out the damaged tree close to Arnison Retirement Home.

Lorna Hutchinson – The Council discussed Lorna's suggestion to move the position of the bus stop further south and closer to the entrance to Wentworth Park for residents returning from Hexham to make it easier and safer for elderly residents living on the estate. After discussion the Council agreed for Cllr Johnson to meet with Lorna and discuss her proposal.

Jenny Fairless – The Clerk to let Jenny know that the footpath sign lying against a wall buried in undergrowth was a temporary sign put up to let people know that the footpath was closed, and the Council would remove it now that the footpath was open (post meeting note: on investigation there was a footpath sign pointing down to the river walk on the right and it was hidden behind the temporary closed sign that has now been reinstated).

15) Finance Committee

Accounts for payment/bank reconciliation

Cllr Kirk proposed that the accounts for payment, seconded by Cllr White.

Treasurer's Account bank balance as of 30 th June 2024.	£13,514.93
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Business 30-Day Notice Account bank balance as of 30 th June 2024	£10,918.30
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Public sector Deposit Fund of CCL bank balance as of 30 th June 2024	£60,000.00
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New Financial Regulations

Cllr Kirk said that he had almost completed the process of reviewing the new financial regulations and adopting these for Allendale Parish Council.

Lloyds Bank Mandate

The Clerk was arranging to remove Cllr Graham and add Cllrs Swaile and Gray to the mandate so that they could become signatories and authorise online BACS payments and sign cheques.

16) Matters for 1st August 2024 agenda.

The Council agreed to hold a meeting in August with a paired down agenda to discuss any planning applications it was sent and to authorise the monthly payments.

17) Confidential agenda item (for Council only)

There were no items.

18) Date of next Parish Council

The next monthly Parish Council meeting would take place on **1st August 2024** at 7pm at **Allendale Village Hall**.

The meeting ended at 21:10