

**Blanchland Parish Council
Minutes of the meeting**

Blanchland Village Hall

On Tuesday 9th December 2025 at 7:00pm

1. **Present:** Councillors, Mr T Bowers, Mr M Kennedy Mr M Forster, Mr D Kelly, Mr G Kennedy, Clerk Mrs C Asquith. Members of the public (6)
 - 1.1: The Meeting was opened up the the Public at 7pm
2. **Apologies:** Councillor C Hornscastle
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Michael Kennedy, Michael Forster, Tim Bowers - Blanchland and Hunstanworth Show Committee. Dave Kelly - Blanchland and Hunstanworth Show Committee & Blanchland Village Hall. Mr G Kennedy,-Blanchland & Hunstanworth Show. Carolyn Asquith Blanchland Artisan Markets & Blanchland Village Hall Treasurer & Blanchland and Hunstanworth Show Committee
4. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd September 2025:** Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed.
5. **Matters Arising:**
 - 5.1 **Drainage and Highway Maintenance: Shildon Road and Clapshaw:** Issues in the Village regarding Shildon Road and a few new potholes were discussed and will be reported on Fix My Street. Shildon Road will be part of the Place making Scheme and is on the LTP, so nothing else will be done in the meantime.
 - 5.2 **Bridle Paths and Public Footpaths:** The Clerk has been in touch with Ed Hanson and the suggestion of using some of the land from the adjacent fields to create a wider path away from the river as proposed by Highways was taken to the Trustees, but they decided at this time not to pursue this, but we can revisit in the future. Duncan Lovatt from NCC was disappointed by this as there had been funds available, but we will keep monitoring the issue. The field team will however come and repair the boardwalk to Baybridge, although they believe it is DCC property and they removed a fallen tree further down river which was blocking the path. There is work to be undertaken near the sewage plant, but an alternative route will be created so the path can remain open.
 - 5.3 **Local Transport Plan/Blanchland Place Making Scheme:** Richard Mackenzie from NCC has responded to an email from the Clerk and explained that there have been unexpected delays, but the designer is engaged with the project and he will advise of any updates.
 - 5.4 **Slaley Forest Access Public Meeting:** The access route may continue to be closed next year, due to the timescale of the required works. There have been restricted vehicles using the road, but it is very hard to prevent this and by the time it is reported the vehicles have left the scene.
 - 5.5 **Artisan Market:** A complaint was received regarding the state of the field which was used for parking due to the high number of vehicles that arrived on the day, also that the event was too big for the village. The Village Hall Committee will put the field right at their cost, but work will only take place once the field has dried, as it has rained consistently since the event on the 22nd & 23rd November. It was agreed that the VH would find a solution for the parking and they would bring it back to a Parish Council Meeting for discussion in the New Year. It was agreed that the markets were a positive thing and if a parking solution could be found there was no issue with them going ahead in 2026.(please see appendix 1.1)
 - 5.6 **Village Hall Car Park:** A local resident has leveled out some of the holes, and has agreed to come back and help once the car park is dry again.

5.7 Funding from Colin Horncastle: The Village Hall has had the work completed by Ray Harrison and photos were shown to the Parish Councillors of the completed job. The fencing is now all the way around the Play Area and the farm gate has been moved to allow space for a new piece of equipment. The gates on the circular path have been changed and now have two farm gates which swing open to move livestock and stay closed to make the path wide and accessible for all users. The Council agreed the payment of £2000 and the cheque to R Harrison was signed (chq no. 091 signed by TB and MF)

5.8 Website: The new website and email will be sorted in March 2026, working with NALC, Geoff Kennedy believes that the migration of information will be completed by the new provider, the Clerk will look into this. The fee for hosting is more expensive than previously and is discounted for only 12 months, in light of this the Councillors discussed the Precept for 2026 - 2027 and agreed a small increase to cover the ongoing cost of the new website and .gov compliant email address. The increase will take the Precept from £1610 to £1700.

5.9 Pennypie: following the incident in August of this year, letters and emails have been sent to local bodies to see if the Parish Council could reach out to resolve the issue and ensure that future visiting groups understand and respect the country code. Despite recovering responses there has been no progress and no contact with the body directly involved with the organisation of the trip. In future if such a thing happens again, it should be reported to the Police.

6. Finances

6.1 Current statement/Balance: £2813.22

6.2 Petty Cash: Petty Cash in debit to the amount of £9.47, the Councillors agreed to top up the Petty cash balance by £20.00 leaving a balance of £10.53 (chq no. 092 signed by TB and MF)

6.3 Clerk Wages: £129.60 (chq no.093 signed by TB and MF)

6.4 VAT: The Clerk will be able to claim VAT back on some of the PC's purchases over the past 2 years.

7. New Business:

7.1 Donations: £150 goodwill gesture to Mr C Whelpton for his sterling work keeping the showfield looking good and keeping it well mown throughout the year (Chq no. 094 signed by TB & MF) Clerk will purchase a Christmas card to send to Cliff with the cheque enclosed.

7.2 Planning Applications: It seems that the Parish Clerk has not been receiving notifications of planning applications, she will address this with planning and going forward will notify Councillors by email with the link to new applications for them to consider prior to each meeting.

7.3 Salt/Grit Bins: Each bin is relatively full, the Clerk will monitor the situation as we head into winter.

7.4 Blanchland Christmas Tree: The tree is up and lit, there have been some negative comments on social media, however it looks very festive and has brought cheer to The Square. Michael Forster has spoken to the Forest Manager at Winnows David Robson and Mr Smedley has, as always been thanked for his kind and generous donation. The Councillors have received offers for next year's tree and this will be discussed next year.

7.5 Tour of the Reservoir: The Councillors were joined by Steve Walton and his wife, who explained the changes to the route for next year's tour of The Reservoir on the 7th June. There will be more information once the Risk Assessments have been signed off, but in principle it was agreed that there wouldn't be any issues, the road closures will be kept to a minimum and will be for short blocks of time, this will be carefully managed and overseen by Durham Police. Flyers will be posted to residents and signage will go up in the vicinity 2 weeks prior to the race, this will also be on social media. It was agreed that Steve would keep in touch with the PC through the Clerk and that communication was the key and vital to keep everyone informed.

7.6 Northumberland Design Code: A survey for residents to complete, the Clerk will place posters in noticeboards and on the PC Facebook page.

Meeting closed 20:30 pm **Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 17th February at 7pm 2026**