

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Annual Parish Council Meeting held in the Long Room, Gallery 45, Felton on Thursday 31 July 2025.

Present: Cllrs Carter, Cruden, Day, Green, Hoyle and Royal
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
3 members of the public

18 Apologies for Absence – CC Sanderson

19 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – Cllr Cruden for Felton Cemetery Committee.

20 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) – None

It was agreed to suspend Standing Orders for the PC to be given an update on 24/02540/FUL - High Park Farm. This application was due to go to Committee in August but following lobbying and legal representation in relation to concerns over traffic. NCC recently received additional highways information following an objection from Highways Development Management which needs to go out to consultation. A resident gave a comprehensive explanation and update of what has been found. The applicant intends to transport 40,000 Tonne per year of paper mill waste in HGVs. It is stated the HGVs will be “backloaded” however how can a vehicle with water materials into the site then take away dried materials out of the site in the same vehicle? There is still lack of information on Air Quality as a result of the processing used. The applicant has left it to NCC to decide the route – none of the routes proposed are suitable as the location is too rural. There are many issues to be addressed and PC to submit another objection to this and also circulate proposed routes to Acklington and Togston PCs as they may well be interested in then submitting their own objections to the application.

Clerk

21 The minutes of the meeting 29 May 2025 were approved as a true record.

22 Matters Arising therefrom:

1) Matters arising there from (excluding outstanding actions in relation to NCC)

a) Felton Cemetery Joint Committee – Policies and Procedures update – still waiting on updated version. Clerk

b) The Helm bus stop – The Clerk has reported to NCC and the bus company about buses not stopping here and also requested that some of the Highways money be put into installing laybys here as the bus stop cannot be moved to Bockenfield layby. Clerk

c) Parking at Pumpkin Pie – Ongoing issue and no response re the parking buddies. Also the issue with residents parking on the road instead of their drives has been raised however as previously stated they are doing this to ensure they have access to the road in the mornings instead of being blocked in by parents. One of the main issues is staff parking on the road so there is less room for drop off and pickup of children. Suggestions were made of staff directing traffic, drop off bays or red lines as yellow lines being ignored and look to see if there is a nearby field that could be rented with gravelled for staff parking. Clerk to look into suggestions. Clerk

d) Northumberland Rivers Trust – Japanese Knotweed – The Northumberland Arms are addressing the JKW down from the carpark and Cllr Day stated the Rivers Trust would treat the land down from the bridge that TPC does not cover.

e) Weldon Bridge and Bockenfield Road Signs – Three new signs have been installed for Bockenfield coming from the north but the Weldon Bridge sign has not been reinstated and the replacement signage coming from the south has still to be made.

f) Sat Nav investigation into stopping diversions through the villages – The Clerk has investigated whether this is possible and cannot find anything that would allow for such a change within Sat Navs.

g) Information to Councillors re planning guidance - circulated

2) Long-term Outstanding issues being addressed by NCC - None

23 Report by County Councillor Sanderson

Some major projects moving on well like the new Amble school and the new one in Berwick. Hopefully the planning will come through for the new Maltings Theatre in Berwick. NCC has not found a buyer for the old riverside leisure centre in Morpeth that fits the bill so looking to demolish

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and make a big difference to that area – some more car parking is desperately needed there and also the Bankside needs attention, but it will look lovely when we get started.

He has a meeting with National Highways in two weeks to get more waring for drivers heading awa from the bridge bottleneck and all being well a permanent 20mph through Thirston. Getting nicely on top of road work and he hopes everyone feels the same.

Cllr Cruden reported that Felton PC are lobbying to have no HGV signs at the entrance to Felton.

Clerk

Cllr Hoyle suggested that any parking at old riverside leisure centre should be at least two storey. Clerk to raise this with CC Sanderson.

24 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

Cemetery Committee Meeting

Cllr Day reported the following:

Minutes of the meeting cannot be found so he is using the notes he made from the meeting.

Meeting started with a walk around the Cemetery and found issues that need addressing which will be actioned. There is now a drone picture of the graves. Talk of releveling the ground where graves have sunk. A new software suite for accounting and separate bank accounts have been agreed. The Clerk raised concerns with this as some time ago the two had to be merged on the instruction of the auditor and accounts for a number of years restates so advises that this is looked into further before committing to the changes. There is not much progression on the strategy to increase income other than talk of a promotional leaflet. An analysis of Rothbury Cemetery and Felton Cemetery costs show the same per m2 however Felton's incoming is a lot less.

Working group removed ivy and the next meeting will be planning the Remembrance Day Service.

Cllr Royal stated there is a stone bench carved with names from Napoleonic War and perhaps this memorial bench may be eligible for heritage funding. Cllr Day to take to next meeting.

Cllr Day
Cllr Day

Cllr Royal asked if there was room for a cemetery wood where trees could be planted with plaques below and ashes buried there which could generate revenue. Cllr Day to take to the next meeting.

Meeting with NCC and Airfield Operator

Cllr Day and the Clerk met with CC Sanderson, Rob Murfin and Darren from the airfield

The following was agreed at this meeting:

- All complaints to be sent to the airfield in the first instance and if no response is received or action taken within a reasonable time period then issues should be forwarded to NCC.
- NCC decided that a Liaison Group as per the Management Plan was no longer required as this was put in place to try to engage with the previous operators and at present the new operators are engaging with NCC, the Parish Council and residents. It was suggested the alternative would be to have an annual meeting to discussion future plans. If this situation changes then NCC can reinstate the requirement for a Liaison Group.
- The Management Plan to be amended to incorporate changes.
- NCC are working with the Airfield in relation to the treatment centre and both parties are aware this should have been in place by now.

It was suggested the email address be circulate for complaints. Clerk confirmed that there is a complaints button on the website or emails can be sent to ops@eshottairfield.com.

CRAGS meeting (Coquet River Action Group)

Cllr Day attended the AGM in June where as update was given.

47 test sites in water with 16 different groups involved. Conclusions were that the main river is pretty good however tributaries are not so good – ie Longdyke Burn from Longhorsley down through Thirston parish. Invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed are being treated and a working party is removing Himalayan Balsam from Old Swarland to the War Memorial (the Back Burn). E-Coli testing has been undertaken to see if rivers safe for bathing. Not particularly high in Felton and Brinkburn but high is Rothbury, Warkworth and Amble. Currently no mechanism in place to alert residents. Looking to apply for bathing status at Amble.

Felton Sewerage Works are putting together a new plan for an environmental improvements project to be established.

Eshott Hall Development

Cllrs Green and Day attended a presentation on the plans for the development of Eshott Hall. The plans are based on an existing site the new owners run. The impact on the villagers will be minimal

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and less invasive than the Hall being a wedding venue. Cllr Green put information through the doors of residents and there were no issues raised except one concerned about increased traffic however a traffic management plan is in place and it should not caused added traffic.

25 Potential Projects

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – Tree was blocking riverside footpath and Clerk informed NCC.

b) Landscaping – None

c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects –

- Village gateways – Awaiting a response from NCC as to whether gateways can be installed at two locations into West Thirston
- Bus shelters – agreed once prepared then the QR timetable code, taxi list, licensed premises listed in the shelter. It was raised that there are no bus stop signs denoting where bus stops are when there is no bus shelter. Clerk to look into getting these installed.

Clerk

26 To report on any planning decisions:

25/01400/LBC - The Forge 3 East Thirston Farm Steading - Listed Building Consent for one additional conservation style rooflight to comply with fire escape provision regulations - APPROVED

25/01075/VARYCO - Burgham Park Golf Club - Variation of Condition 19 (Boundary Treatment) on approved application 23/04075/VARYCO - in order to utilise drawing 120267/8011 Rev H as the approved Boundary Treatment Plan - APPROVED

25/00992/LBC - Old Farm House, West Thirston - Like for like replacement of roof tiles, stone coping and chimney stacks due to weather damage - WITHDRAWN

25/02118/LBC – Old Manse Cottage West Thirston LBC for replacement windows - APPROVED

Planning applications pending:

24/01531/VARYCO - Eshott Heugh Paintballing Site – variation to a number of conditions following detailed drainage report

24/02540/FUL - High Park Farm – Resubmission of plans for Change of use of agricultural building to a facility to dry paper pulp to produce animal bedding to include feeder, drum, burner, stack installation and control room. Due to go to Committee but now not the August one (see above).

25/00765/LBC - Thirston New House Farm - LBC for internal works to include addition of ensuite bathroom (and associated SVP), thermal upgrades to roof and general redecoration works. Replacement of 4no. conservation rooflights.

25/01854/ADE - Pumpkin Pie – Retrospective application for signage and fencing. Applicant states this application is going to be removed and the signage however neither have been done. Clerk to follow up.

Clerk

25/01523/REM - Eshott Heugh, Paintballing Site (known as Cheviot View) - Leisure Complex – this is a reserved matters application for when you already have outline planning permission but need to submit more detailed plans for approval. No Objections

25/01853/FUL - Pumpkin Pie Childcare Ltd – retrospective for construction of timber fencing and 1no fascia sign

25/02336/FUL - Bywell Shooting Ground – Field Shelter – No Objections

25/02376/FUL - Eshott Hall Refurbishment and alterations to Grade II Listed Eshott Hall including alterations to walled garden, conversion of existing outbuilding to gym and health studio, erection of 4no. wellness cabins, erection of night sky appreciation cabin, erection of 14no. 1 bedroom timber framed guest accommodation cabins and 1no. 2 bedroom timber framed guest accommodation cabins, erection of support cabin for wild swimming, creation of a new vehicular car park and all associated infrastructure – No objections

Planning Issues:

Felmoor Park – Entrance lighting and signage – still no action from NCC

25/00928/screen – Anaerobic Digester Environmental Impact Assessment – Thirston Parish Council has requested that an EIA is undertaken. At no point do any of the documents submitted by the applicant make reference to the proximity of the Woodland Burial Ground – only referring to Eshott Airfield and the A1 – this is not a true reflection of the site. The recent submissions in relation to surface water and air emissions again only refer to the land adjacent to Eshott Airfield. It was agreed to submit a further request for an EIA to be undertaken and state once again no reference to woodland burial ground – also inform CC Sanderson of the PCs concerns.

Clerk

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27 Requested Agenda Items:

Year End Accounts to be covered under Finance

28 Correspondence:

- NCC - Corporate Performance Report – circulated for information
- NCC - Email from Cllr Mark Mather - Portfolio Holder for Highways – with contact details – circulated for information
- NCC – letter of works at East Thirston commencing 28 July – 18 August – circulated for information
- NCC - Northumberland Call for Sites 2025 – PC to respond with any possible sites – environmental risk to woodland burial with proposed anerobic digester; St Oswalds Way – environmental area and special status. Clerk to check on current status of St Oswalds Way before responding to call. Clerk
- NALC – email to include revised payrates for Clerks – circulated for information
- Email from NALC welcoming new Councillors and advising signup – circulated for information
- Email re NALC Star Council Awards – circulated for information
- Email from NALC re .gov website and email – TPC are required to sign up to a new website and get generic email addresses. Clerk proposes a generic email for the Clerk and the Chair as in thirstonparishcouncilclerk@gov.uk and same for chair. Also look at possibility of a joint website with Felton PC to reduce costs. Clerk
- Email from Bywell PC Chair proposing meeting of Parish Council Chairs – Cllr Green has acknowledged his interest in attending a meeting when held later this year.
- Emails copied into re Financial and Procedural questions on Purchase of 51 Main Street Felton for Conversion to a surgery – circulated for information
- Email re payment of an invoice by FCJC – circulated. It was agreed to ask for a breakdown of grave digging records to see if these matched up against payments Clerk
- Emails – copied in in relation to Audit questions in relation to Felton PC – circulated for information
- Emails x 3 re High Park Farm planning application – circulated for information
- Email re withdrawal of Pumpkin Pie signage application – circulated for information however signage is still in place and application is still live on the NCC planning portal. Clerk
- Email request for information for Northumbria Police – an email request was submitted by a member of public asking for details of another member of the public, by return, so this information could be handed to the police. The Clerk refused to provide this information but would if contacted by the police. The police duly contacted they Clerk and this information was provided direct to the police.
- Email from Northumbrian Water re sewerage treatment works completion – circulated for information
- Email from resident re defibrillator – Resident asked if the machine is checked, how often and who does this. Clerk responded giving details. Clerk also to ask if the resident who looks after the defib machine would look after the one at Felton – he had offered in the past. Also Felton one needs to ensure it is linked to The Circuit. Clerk
- Email requesting verge cutting – from Thirston New Houses to the bus stop – work was completed.
- Message re tree blocking footpath on riverside – this was relayed to NCC with pictures and NCC stated they would deal with this.
- Email re New Network Rail Tree Planting Fund opportunity – circulated however PC has no land to plant trees on
- Email asking how to apply to join the Parish Council – information given and informed that Clerk would contact them when a vacancy arises but explained that it would have to be published for anyone to apply.
- Emails x 2 in relation to Airfield Café and their further developments re Alcohol license and opening hours in this license application – for information.
- Email re 2 planes breaching flying times on 31 May 2025 – circulated for information
- Emails x 2 planes breaching flying times on 18 July 2025 – circulated for information
- Email – copied in on request for update on Eshott Airfield - 25/00446/BRCND for information.

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- Email – request for update on situation with regard to airfield complaints and breaches – for information.
- Donation request from Citizens Advice Bureau – No donation to be made
- Air Ambulance pledge request email for £500 – This is too large a request for the PC to consider Clerk however email to be forwarded to Felton Fair Committee.
- NALC newsletters - circulation
- Groundwork newsletter - circulated

29 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £13,804.52 TPC funds and £2,052.19 FCJC totaling £15,856.71. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and Cllr Cruden signed the statement to confirm this. The Clerk explained that the Felton Cemetery accounts were inaccurate in 2023/24 year so the Clerk was required to restate the 2023/24 accounts and this also required the Certificate of Exemption signed at the last meeting to be changed. This was duly signed and the Clerk will sent to the external auditor with a full explanation of the change. It is a minor change (£29) so does not change the exemption. Clerk
- Cllr Cruden suggested the PC look at the Link Account provided by Lloyds which is interest only with 3.99% rate and up to £4k can be deposited. Clerk
- (b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members since the last meeting due to the Council bring inquorate and unable to make payments after 5 May:

Payments approved at this meeting:		
SC	Lloyds Bank Service Charge x 2	£8.50
IB221	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 45 hours at £20.66 (929.70) 45 hours backdated increase x 0.66p (29.70) Home working allowance of 9 weeks (£9.00) Felton Village Hall Invoice (£20.00)	£988.40
IB222	HMRC Employer NI payments period 1-4	£106.40
IB223	Gallery 45 Room Hire February 2025	£26.25
IB224	Northumberland Estates – Rental	£5.00

- (c) **Income** – Lloyds Bank £60.00 as an apology for mismanagement of account. This is an issue that the Clerk and Cllr Green need to resolve to enable Cllr Hoyle to be added as a signatory as currently the Clerk does not have full access to the account to do this and only Cllr Green can change the mandate. Clerk
- (d) Internal Auditor report on year end accounts – The full report was circulated and the Auditor has signed the Internal Audit report with no issues.
- (e) Approval of Annual Governance Statement – This was approved unanimously and duly signed.
- (f) Approval of Accounting Statements – This was approved unanimously and duly signed. Clerk
Clerk

30 Urgent Items –

Speeding restrictions at West Moor – resident has requested this be looked at – Clerk forwarded to CC Sanderson for him to ask for the area to be reviewed.

Speeding restrictions at East Thirston – resident has requested 20mph speed – Clerk forwarded info to CC Sanderson to response.

Dog bin request at Burgham Development – Clerk asked for permission to look into purchasing one should Cussins agree to a bin being sited on their land – Clerk to circulate costings if permission given.

31 Items for next agenda – None

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30pm

Date of Next meeting: 25 September 2025