

Norham Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th November 2025

Bill White (Chair) (BW), Louise Cockburn (Vice) (LC), Moira Graham (MG), Paul Thompson (PT), Catherine Lorigan (CL) and Victoria Mann (VM)

Councillor Patrick Lambert

Invited Speakers: Rev. Rob Kelsey (Vicar of St Cuthbert's) and Lucy Carroll (Church Warden)

Parish Clerk – Alison Petrie

1. **Apologies for absence** - John Grahamslaw and Curtis Richie from Northumbria Police
2. **Declarations of interest** - BW has an ongoing dispute with Northumbrian Water on a personal matter.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting** – The Committee voted that the were an accurate representation of the meeting.
4. **County Councillor's Report** – Patrick Lambert - The main issue at the County Council is the forthcoming NCC Budget, which they hope to get voted through in January. The main issue that NCC has is the overspend in the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) which is running at about £7.5 million over at the Year to Date. PL suspects that money will come out of front-line services. There will have to be cuts somewhere or the deficit will be run forward into the next year. Spending on SEND Education is an issue countrywide, not just Northumberland Council.

Roads –In this area, the biggest road issue is the closure of Ford Bridge (B6354). It will be closed from the 12th of January until the beginning of May 2026. There will be no access over Ford Bridge, the diversion is via Cornhill. It is a one in 100 year repair. Hopefully it will be done by the beginning of May, **unless they find something to slow it down**. Councillor Mark Mather from Wooler is the Cabinet member in charge of roads at NCC.

Village Matters - PL has not had any issues with residents of Norham.

Norham Castle. English Heritage has appointed a new officer for this area, whose remit covers Norham Castle. The Bridges into the Castle have been condemned by the surveyors, so PL is trying to get hold of some outside funding to get the bridges repaired. They are being condemned because of the rot at the end of the timbers where they sit in the old stonework. They might last another 100 years, but it is a Health and Safety issue. The aim is to get it open. It is part of the Tweed Trail, which has spent money in Horncliffe with the Grinham Wood. Norham should be able to access the funding. Northumberland Council are quite happy to advertise Norham Castle as part of the Lower Tweed trail, but the crowd-control barriers and restricted access are not very welcoming. PL is determined to get it sorted, funded and open. PL is speaking to the EH Officer. English Heritage is struggling for money. The fact that Norham Castle is not a pay site, means that they will have to get the money from somewhere else.

LNER trains stopping at Berwick

The new timetable comes in at the beginning of December. If you get a train from Edinburgh to London for 1 o'clock, there are currently 13 trains leaving Edinburgh from 5.45 which will get you there in time. 6 of those trains stop in Berwick. From December there will only be 3 under the new timetable. There are more services (Trans-Pennine, Lumo, Cross Country but mostly will involve a change). - PL has spoken to David Smith MP (MP for North Northumberland), and John Lamont MP (MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk). Berwick station serves a much wider hinterland than Berwick and North Northumberland.

5. **Community Police Report** - PC Curtis Ritchie has nothing to report locally. He raises the issue of quadbikes being stolen. Reminds owners to lock them away when not in use.
6. **Mobile Phone Signal** – Janet Young is in correspondence with Vodafone/3. There are surveys to be carried out, in early December to see where they will position them on the village hall. They need to apply for planning permission, but they are confident that NCC is on side because they are keen to get the Broadband and mobile phones working in the village. Ongoing. LC stated that the village hall committee has approved it in principle.
7. **Traffic Calming** – nothing to report on the suggested white lines opposite the bus stop.
8. **Sewage and water issues** – no feedback from Northumberland Water. BW will continue to push this matter forward.

9. **Public Toilets** – The committee have agreed to give Sheila Broadbent additional money. She had resigned from the post because of having to clear up the excrement and Nutella Chocolate Spread.

There is a new cleaner, **Roksana**, she has a local job here and has experience with cleaning the WC's in Bamburgh.

10. **Parish Council Website** – The new Norham Life website is now live. However, NPC has decided that it will have basic information on the Norham Life website (Councillors and contact details) and a link to the NALC website. **Delete rest as approval given further down**

NPC will use NALC (Northumberland Associations of Local Councils) websites. This would bring NPC in line with the other parish councils. It would help with compliance, accessibility statements, Statutory requirements etc. NPC has to make sure that we have the appropriate parish council documents available on our site. Any problems (technical) would be sorted by the team at Hugofox.com.

A NALC site it is £9.99 & VAT with a one-off payment £149.00 plus VAT for transferring information across and setting it up. . They would do all the setting up, and then amendments and tweaks and it comes with 24 hour email back up. The Committee agreed to take this route.

NPC currently makes a donation of £75.00 a year towards the Norham life site. There are a lot of groups that have a presence on the site. It was agreed to continue with that funding, **to support the groups in the village**

LC will go back to Hugo Fox, whose company www.hugofox.com would create our new site, to say that we want to go ahead with our site. It will not take long to set up, and that will give us the basic accessibility statements etc.

We can upload photographs, so please submit good village photos.

There is also the option to have a '.Gov' email which is not overly expensive. **Graham Popey at NALC is in discussion with NCC for them to provide email addresses, awaiting the outcome of these discussions before going down the .GOV route**

11. **Village Board Map** – There are options to put information on the left and right hand sides of the board and the reverse. **BW supplied a list of suggested additions to the board, asked for further suggestions.**

12. **Play areas** – the signs at the playgrounds **and the WC** have got the wrong email contact on it – BW to investigate. The swing has been done.
13. **Jubilee Field** – no update on the jubilee field from John Grahamslaw. He has cleared away the collapsed tree. BW when Philip Bradley came down to look at Fisher's Walk, he also looked at the bridge between the Jubilee Field and the Castle Field, because we have been concerned about the stanchions across the Den. He had a very thorough look and the bridge has been put on a monitoring list. Philip seemed to think that although the timber is rotten it is still sound.
14. **War Memorial** – BW has been in contact with 'Signs of the Times', the company who can do the bronze plaque for the rear of the memorial. This is to preserve the names and to correct the errors. All the names and grammar need to be checked over. It goes straight into the back of the memorial. The cost of the plaque with associated work comes in at £3,543.00 plus VAT and carriage. We were thinking along the lines of starting up the War Memorial Fund. We can then raise some more money from other sources if they want to contribute to it.

Bill and Louise – think this should be in finances. It seems to have been discussed under the war memorial...- Yes agree have moved it

PL – The Good News is that PL has a Councillor fund, and he has given some money to Horncliffe for Grinham Wood for seats and memorials, so he is going to enquire about the possibility of donating £3000.00 for the memorial. **He was going to keep some for the village hall, but they have not got organised yet, he will give it to a more worthy cause.** B&L – It is defo for £3000. PL has 9 parish councils in his ward, and he has £15,000 pa (?) to distribute fairly. He feels strongly about projects like war memorials. BW and PL to get on with paperwork etc. **Don't think we can say that we should be seen – implies not really v interested just doing it for the sake of it – all this can be deleted and BW below**

BW feels that there should still be a contingency fund opened.

Lucy Carroll **a member of the public** has been researching war memorial restoration, and said that there is a fund available, and BW has also looked into the War Graves Commission who have a fund and have given advice as well. There is an opportunity to approach them again.

An initial list of the names on the memorial was circulated but needs verifying , There is a name missing and one not in the right regiment. Lots of apostrophes needed to get the grammar right. Eg: King's Own Scottish Borderers.

15. Fisher's Walk – Philip Bradley NCC's Footpaths officer visited last Thursday, he thinks it will be an improvement if scraped back, he looked at the path and the hedgerows are the responsibilities of the landowners on either side. Underneath the vegetation on the path, there is a stone 'path'. Mr Bradley thinks it will be beneficial. The Footpath is owned by Simon Orpwood. He has no objections to us doing any improvement, as long as, we consider that he is part of an environmental programme. We do not plan to use chemicals. BW thinks that the hedgerow on the west side belongs to the Diocese, BW will still write to them to make sure. John Grahamslaw is quite happy to get the digger in to scrape it all back.

Philip Bradley asked BW if we wanted to reinstate Lady's Walk.

MG mentioned the state of the steps at the river end of Fisher's Walk. Purely down to wear and tear.

16. Planning Applications –There are 3 applications, 2 for solar panels and 1 for telecommunication poles.

PL – on Boathouse Lane, there is an application for 2 x 9m telegraph poles on the verges, one below Silancha on the tidy grass lawn. On the right-hand side of Boathouse Lane there are already telegraph poles which PL thought could be used. PL wondered if they could attach the lines to the existing poles. Different company. The application is from Alncom.

Solar Panels for the village hall and Galagate Barns.

LC said that the solar panels for the Village Hall were originally going to be on the back , but they are now saying that they think they will be more efficient on the front (looking up West Street?). It would be harder to refuse because of all the others on West Street. The Village Hall committee has no issue with it, **but do we as a Parish Council? They will be very prominent on the front elevation as you come up through the village from West Street. Something to consider if the application comes to us**

for input/approval. not sure that we should be making all our thoughts public until we have seen the application and commented through the appropriate channels

The planning application on Boathouse Lane for the site just past Larchside. It has been agreed in principle for one dwelling. No drawings submitted. There is currently a very big mobile home on it. PT thinks it might be a permanent dwelling as it resembles a park home/chalet. Needs to be investigated.

VM reported that they have cut back the shrubs at 4 Cross View. MG commented on the mess that has occurred after the trimming of 4 Cross View. The Council say it is a work in progress, and that they have started. It has been cut back to what it was originally.

The application for extending the Caravan park at the Salutation has been removed.

17. Finances -

Some donations have been sent out, but it has taken as while because we are trying to pay by BACS not cheques.

Louise – how was the wreath for the War Memorial Paid?? – Cheque

CL, LC and BW have done an on line Finance course with NALC. One of the issue that came up was that PC's should ideally hold a contingency fund over and above the Precept payment for one off payments such as elections etc . The sum held should be no more than the precept figure . It was agreed that a contingency account would be opened

NPC Business Account has approx. £600 in it, which came from the Castle Lighting some time ago. It could be used as a starter for the war memorial. Paton and Co are not doing the £200 per house sold in the village. They have indicated that they would be happy to support us in raising funds

BW, CL and LC did a NALC finance course and it was relatively illuminating. There are items of expenditure that come up which you don't foresee, so when you do your precept, these are over and above. This is where an additional account would be useful, ie: If any sort of election is needed, NPC has to pay for that. The last one was just short of £2500. We think that we should probably open a new account, where

each year we put money into that. LC is going to look at what other payments we have coming up between now and the end of the year – 31st March 2026. We do not know if we have big lump sum items before we get to the year end. The proposal is that we open a new account, and move some money into that to start building up funds. We are perfectly within our rights to do that and can hold as much as NPC gets from the council. It is not accounted for....? If everyone is happy LC will open another account. For the next meeting LC will have a better idea of what incomings and outgoings there are between now and March 31st.

There was quite a lot of other items covered in the NALC finance meeting, in terms of how we manage the money, the upcoming precept, and what we think is needed for 2026-7. The paperwork is through for the Precept, which does not have to go through until the end of January. We need someone in the village, not on the NPC, who would be willing to have a look at it all when it is completed. It is basically a form filling exercise. LC asked for suggestions. CL thinks it would be good to have someone with a long association with the Village. Some payments need approval. Sheila used to buy materials for the Public Toilets. LC has now ordered floor cleaner, hand disinfectant and Urinal Crystals. BW paid for the Swing sheet. Everyone was happy to reimburse LC and BW. **Delete all covered by green paragraph above**

It was agreed that payments for cleaning of the toilets and toilet supplies could be made without prior approval of the committee, they would be noted on the next financial statement. In addition where necessary purchases up to £100 could be made with retrospective approval

NALC meeting – that AP as a Clerk cannot approve payments, so the bank needs to be contacted and changed.

PL - If inflation is running at 4% plus, can we automatically claim accordingly. **LC says that NPC will be given whatever we ask for, there is no monitoring of it. Risk of people thinking there are no controls** would want to double check before including it is a question of seeing how much has been spent in the past, and what was left over. We need to justify what we are asking for.

CL says she did not understand if you are a PC in an area with a lot of low income houses, and therefore the Council tax doesn't meet the requirement of the Precept which has an impact on the Council and its finances. CL just wondered what the checks and balances are in that case. It sounded as if it wasn't an issue for Norham, but it struck CL that it is an issue for the Council.

LC – It is something to consider, because the Diocese is keen to have more social housing added to the village, but if they are not going to be paying Council Tax towards the village, you have to have a mix, otherwise the village is going to find itself in a position where it cannot actually afford stuff because there are less people paying for it. Quite an interesting conversation. – **not sure that we should include this think it will offend some members of the community - adequately covered by Paragraph above with out being to specific**

BW – Between bi-monthly meetings, it is suggested that any two parish councillors can agree a payment of up to a certain account. Other parish Councils do the same. It would make sense if the Councillors would agree that payments to the new cleaner of the Public Toilets was made monthly. Other councils have an authorisation up to a sum of money to spend in advance. Agreed and payment set at £100.00. – **covered above**

18. Donations – have been covered in Finance – CL reminded them that they were going to carry on with recipients of donations for now, but that at some point we are going to review them. **Is that part of the precept -In a round about way but doesn't need to be covered specifically** The only donation that is outstanding that has been previously agreed is to NDT for the website, LC has not been given any details / bank account details for NDT.

MG confirmed following previous discussions that Norham in Bloom has not received direct money from the PC in the past but has been MG has asked within the group. It is in the September Minutes (item 17). LC thinks it would be helpful if the smaller groups could ask for the money. LC to have another look at it. – **Stated amending this but think on reflection we should delete, whilst the PC may not have given money directly I believe they may have past on Paton & Co donations . don't think we should imply the previous PC didn't support them . Ee can approve a payment to them next year if we wish**

19. General Correspondence / AOB

Salt / grit bins – there are 5, LC has checked 3. These were all currently full. There is a machine for spreading grit. Hoping to find a couple of people willing to take on the gritting of pavements. Call ‘Fix my street’ to refill. Bad areas are the Square and North Lane **and pavement on Castle St** Seeking volunteers. PL suggested speaking to the Humes down Boathouse Lane. PL suggested a little fund **for ?**

ID code from NCC to Victoria Craig, LC and AP to investigate. To do with the electoral roll.

Email from Isabel Hunter asking if anyone wanted to be a Norham and Islandshires representative on the NALC County Committee. AP will find out what is involved and pass it round.

AP asked what could be done with the metal grids over the ditch on the lane beside the school. John Grahamslaw indicated work is underway to repair/ replace

Following September's minutes, just wondered if there has been any progress on the By-Laws concerning vehicles parking in the village overnight/camping.

[Emergency contact was to do with removing the vehicle.](#)

The car opposite Galagate farm was removed as well by the DVLA ([Bill can you confirm this is right.](#)

Rob Kelsley and Lucy Collins made a presentation on behalf of the Village Church – The Church is about 860 years old. They want it to be as integral a part of the village as possible, and would like people to make good use of the building and learn about its history etc. Roughly 40 worshipping on a Sunday, but RK thinks that there are twice that involved in the life of the church. It is a venue for concerts as well as worshiping. The church is very cold in winter and dark. Norham School used to have Carols in the church but have stopped because it is too cold as have the Male Voice Choir. The heating and lighting need to be improved to get the church put to better use. Over the past 5 years, they have been doing a lot of research into the various options, and they have zeroed in on what is needed and already some changes have been made. New curtains behind the Chancel Arch.

There is a concert on the 6th on December. – [move further down as sitting in section on church funding](#)

There is now a need for significant funding – St Cuthbert's Project – need to expand it for all year use. As well as heating and lighting, there is restoration need on the two pillars at Brides Pathway and the path leading to the church entrance needs upgrading. Also interpretation of the history of the church and the building.

The dream is to be able to employ an interpretation specialist to bring the information up to date and more contemporary to relate well with children and all

ages. They want to make it a community building, not necessarily a tourist destination, although it has a good footfall of tourists. Make it more comfortable and accessible.

The total project costs come to £350,000 approx. There is a lottery heritage fund application has been done for £240,000 approx. which they are hoping to hear from imminently. In addition, the church has received a legacy from Bill Mills. Applications have been made to other funding bodies and trusts. £10,000 has been received from the Northumbria Historic Churches Trust. So, they will continue fundraising until they get there.

It is a medieval church made of stone, so it is never going to be toasty warm, but they are looking at Farr Infrared heaters installed which heat the person not the space. Tried and tested elsewhere. Aiming for warmer and brighter.

St Cuthbert's Project aims to improve the heating, lighting, seating and heritage interpretation in order to make the church building more user friendly and more useful to the wider community. Lucy offered to show NPC members what is proposed. – repeat of earlier paragraph

PT - the pillars at the Brides Gate are on the Council's list from a few years ago.

PL – has experience of the lack of action by NCC re maintaining the graveyards in his area.

BW closed the meeting at 8.20pm

Date of the next meeting is 26th January at 7pm