

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 20th March 2023

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Jim Blythe (JB) Sheelagh Hume (SH) and Alison Murphy (AM). Also in attendance were Cllr Colin Hardy (CH), and Robin McCartney (RM) from Northumberland County Council Highways Department.

3.23.1 To accept apologies for absence

Apologies accepted from John Grahamslaw and Dougie Watkin.

3.23.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

None

3.23.3 To confirm Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd January were confirmed as an accurate record.

3.23.4 Matters arising from Minutes

i New proposed 20mph limit

RM was welcomed and thanked for attending. GS recapped that he had attended a lengthy meeting a few months ago to discuss the possibility of introducing a 20mph limit throughout Norham, on the basis that there was village wide anxiety arising from speeding traffic through the village generally, and particularly heavy agricultural vehicles. In effect RM had explained why this would not be possible, and this had been repeated in correspondence. It was confirmed that the new flashing 20mph signs at school were appreciated. But concerns were still there in particular in relation heavy vehicles – of which there were many as Norham is the only bridge across the Tweed between Berwick and Coldstream. RM was asked how the village could be made safer. RM explained that in effect the number of ‘injury’ accidents in Northumberland was falling, that of those the bulk of injuries were to people in vehicles, (not pedestrians or cyclists) and that nationally only 20% of accidents were speed related. There was lengthy discussion re the position in the Scottish Borders-but there is apparently no evidence as yet that the blanket 20mph limits there have made any difference to the accident rate. It was also agreed that heavy agricultural machinery may not in fact be speeding as such but because of the size of the vehicles there is a perception that they are. It was eventually agreed that RM would take NPC’s concerns back to his team to discuss the possibilities. He suggested developing closer contacts with the agricultural community. He also indicated that whilst NCC had well developed campaigns re e.g. Think Bike, they had never developed a strategy in relation to agricultural vehicles (though they were currently in discussion with timber transporters re problems raised by them). It was also suggested that a mobile speed camera might help. In addition, it was agreed that the data from the speed cameras in the village would be accessed where possible to see if that would provide evidence of speeding. There was also a query re the timing of the flashing lights outside the school. After discussion it was agreed that CH would contact Highways Dept to clarify.

ii Norham School – Education in Berwick Partnership Consultation

It was confirmed that the consultation period had now closed. CH indicated some anomalies had been thrown up by the process which were now being considered by NCC, though in general the two-tier system had been favoured. It was also important to encourage confidence in the school which perhaps had been shaken by this whole process. It was important to encourage parents to register their children at the school. There was discussion regarding the future of the school in general terms, and the importance of tying it more closely to the community if possible. A query was raised as to why there had been a perceived lack of communication from Norham School with residents earlier in the process. CH confirmed that a number of events had been held in Berwick to make information available which residents could have attended.

iii Approach to Diocese re Land at Glebefield

GS reported that a very low-key meeting (facilitated by Rob Kelsey and attended by GS, VLC and William Jackson one of the church wardens) had been held with an officer from the Diocese to discuss the possibility of the church releasing the other part of the Glebefield for affordable housing. It had been a useful discussion and the Diocese would discuss the situation at its next meeting.

iv Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Planning

The process was very slow. The current situation is that councils had been asked to identify areas which they would like protected as green sites of particular importance to the community. The village green, Ubbanford green and the jubilee field were all currently protected. GS suggested the school playing field so that whatever happened that might remain undeveloped.

v Play Areas

JJG continues to inspect weekly. GS confirmed issues raised by RoSpa at its last inspection would be dealt with shortly at the beginning of the season and before the next inspection.

vi Public Conveniences

Still in reasonably good order. Agreed after discussion to arrange for them to be cleaned three times per week for the foreseeable future.

vii Northumberland LED Street lighting/Undergrounding of cables

Nothing to report.

viii Village Map

The map is now up and much admired. VLC will investigate if it can be put on website as downloadable. Mr Blood of Osprey Design will be thanked for his patience in the process.

ix Norham Development Trust

JG gave brief update on renewables project, namely that a grid Connection had now been offered. This raised issues re funding which might be dependent on obtaining planning permission. After discussion it was agreed that CH would contact NCC planning to try to facilitate a meeting to progress matters.

x Jubilee Field

The work required to the wall has still not been done. GS will chase. The dog fouling notices had been obtained and will be put up shortly. The information board has been delivered so date to be fixed for installation, and unveiling and planting of tree.

xi Community Police Report

No report.

xii Tourism

The draft from NCC is being worked on, and will be circulated shortly.

xiii Sustrans – Declassification of National Cycle routes

Further discussion re this problem. CH again confirmed it is a nationwide issue as Sustrans have declassified 3000 miles of National Cycle Routes. Ironically NCC is trying to establish the county as a destination of choice for cyclists.

xiv Tweed Valley Railway Campaign

A representative of the campaign will attend the July meeting to give a presentation on its aims.

xv Paton & Co Donations

After lengthy discussion agreed that improvement (rather than full replacement which would be excessively expensive) of the bus shelter was an option. GS and JB will produce designs for consideration. (VLC also to contact Border Buses re broken Perspex on their timetable board)

xvi Electric Vehicle Charging Points

A meeting has been held with Richard McKenzie from NCC. He confirmed the EVCs would not be moved from the position they are now in. He will ask his team to consider echelon parking along the widest part of Castle Street to try to improve the situation. Agreed the situation had been badly handled by NCC, for which they had apologised.

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3.23.5 Trees at Bow Well

Proprietor of the garage had complained re the trees at Bow Well, interfere with his phone line and deposit sticky residue on to cars parked below. NCC Tree Officer, Barry Wilson has visited-a small amount of work had been carried out on upper branches, but otherwise he confirmed NCC do not cut down otherwise healthy trees. The only option would be for

NPC/the garage to pay privately for pollarding. GS obtaining a couple of quotes to establish how expensive that would be.

3.23.6 Path Works Tender

JB, AM and GS had met to discuss which paths should now be included in the footpath maintenance contract bearing in mind that AM now cuts a number of them (though not in her capacity as parish councillor). A couple of contractors will be invited to tender, and it will be advertised in Newsround. Re paths, a tree trunk had rolled off bank at the back of the Castle and had smashed pedestrian bridge. The path has been officially closed by Philip Bradley NCC Footpaths Officer, who is considering the possibility of a temporary bridge.

FINANCE

3.23.7 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Paid: 1st Feb Osprey Co £1620 (jubilee field information board); 1st Feb S Broadbent £232.73 (WCs); 1st March NNEG £250 (donation); 8th March S Broadbent £178.05 (WCs)
Received: Nil

3.23.8 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Account

As at 20th March Current Account stands at £10055.37, and Business Account £744.89

3.23.9 To look at Planning Application decisions

10 Pedwell Street: Withdrawn

3.23.10 To look at state of Roads and Pavements

JB referred to a number of large potholes which he will report (including one at Duddo crossroads which had been previously reported). CH confirmed there is still no official date for the opening of the Chain Bridge.

3.23.11 General Correspondence

VLC confirmed NPC had been a signatory (one of 17 parish councils) to a letter to local MP expressing disappointment/frustration that A! dualling was still being delayed.

Any Other Business (For information only)

New Union Jack to be purchased, in time for coronation of King Charles in May.

JG raised a problem that he and other residents of Boathouse Lane were having with Alncom. In brief Alncom had discovered technical issues re bringing the cables along the lane which would require closure of the lane for digging, and which would be more expensive. After discussion agreed that NPC would support these residents who should be treated the same as all other residents to enable them to have fibre broadband.

SH confirmed the Tractor Run had been a great success and had raised £436 for each of Hospice Northumberland, Help for Heroes and Bobby Robson Clinic at the Freeman Hospital.

Date of next meeting:

10th May 2023 (PLEASE NOTE AMENDED DATE)

