

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held in the Long Room, Gallery 45, Felton on Thursday 6 February 2025.

Present: Cllrs J Day, E Davidson, D Green, P Hantman and J Marshall. County Councillor Sanderson
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
Five members of the Public

The Chairman opened the meeting stating the Council meetings will, going forwards, be held in a different venue. Discussions took place with the Crematorium followed the December meeting and they requested the Parish Council find an alternative venue in view of our meetings being recorded on video. The Parish Council would like to thank the Crematorium owners for allowing meetings to take place within the parish at no cost. Meetings for the rest of the year will take place in Felton either at Gallery 45 or the Village Hall so residents should check the agenda carefully. After this we hope to settle on a permanent choice of venue, probably the Village Hall but this will be subject to availability.

The chairman also reported that Cllr Clarehugh has tendered her resignation after nearly 4 years on the Council. The Parish Council would like to thank her for everything she has done in the parish.

The Chairman also wished to inform residents that he and Cllr Davidson would not be standing in the May elections. Cllr Davidson has been a Councillor since 2011 and Cllr Marshall since 2012. The Chairman stated that it had been a privilege to be a Councillor and both he and Cllr Davidson are grateful to the residents and feel a lot has been achieved over the years. However recently it has been more difficult to make progress on parish-related issues with a lot of time spent dealing with criticism, complaint and challenge. Cllrs are all volunteers and he and Cllr Davidson felt that they had served their time and it is the right time to step way. There will therefore be at least 3 vacancies coming up at the next election in May.

81 Apologies for Absence – None

82 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda –

Cllr Hantman – In relation to South High Moor Farm Application under Planning (Agenda item 9)

83 Standing Orders were suspended to allow County Councillor Sanderson to give his report.

CC Sanderson stated he was extremely sorry to hear about the resignations as he feels all Councillors have done a brilliant job. Very straight forward and very transparent with the benefits of the parish at your heart.

CC Sanderson is working with National Highways (NH) to reduce the impact of the number of vehicles through Felton and Thirston which clog up the road especially over the bridge arzea. We must move quickly on this to tap into any funding that NH has available. A second meeting with NH took place 2 weeks ago to see what funding might be available. NCC Highways Engineers have been asked to produce drawings by mid-March for a meeting at the end of March, something on the lines of additions to the build out at the entrances to the villages, like a build up on the road, and signage at the A1 junctions to indicate not suitable for HGVs – hopefully in place by August.

Half of the footpaths in West Thirston have been improved and the other half will be done in the next financial year, the budget is there for this works. The Clerk stated residents have sent their thanks for this.

CC Sanderson and the Clerk have had discussions re various planning issues and the speed camera requiring attention.

Discussions are ongoing re the Nursery. Officers are talking direct to the nursery and CC Sanderson has asked for 20mph to be put in place and this should happen over the summer.

Cllr Marshall stated that as the A1 is not being dualled in the foreseeable can the Bockenfield signage and turning on/off the A1 be looked at in the NH discussions. The Clerk explained about the suggestion to move the bus stop from The Helm to Bockenfield layby. Councillor Davidson stated the bus stops at Tritlington, though costly, would be ideal. CC Sanderson asked for copies of the emails in relation to this.

Clerk

Cllr Hantman asked if the question raised by NCC to government asking for the funding to be spelt out re the A1 has been answered and CC Sanderson stated not as yet.

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NCC is concerned that more traffic is using the A697 to avoid the A1 and as this road is the responsibility of NCC the costs associated with the increased use.

NCC are nearly at the end of the budget process. It has been difficult again due to increased costs of Adult Social Care and Special Needs Children which have increased in numbers. NCC are once again looking to protect front line services. A questionnaire will soon be sent to all Town and Parish Councils to see where maintenance can be cut back or needs to be increased. NCC working towards complying with the Environmental Policy – ie encourage wild areas and reduce cutting side verges. Cllr Marshall stated that the Parish Council would like to do their bit however in some areas where there are no pavements verge cutting on one side of the road is required to ensure a safe “pathway” for residents to walk along.

84 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) –

A resident stated it was good to hear that the nursery issues are in hand and the 20mph limit would be welcomed however he asked who would be the person in NCC to speak to about painting white lines across the dropped kerb area. Parents parking their vehicles block the dropped kerb which blocks driveway and also when large vehicles parked either side it results in poor visibility with lack of sight lines. Clerk stated it would be Mr Neil Snowdon at NCC and can provide his details.

Another resident stated they have no issues with the nursery but the parking is an issue and the culture of parents in relation to residents is, in some cases, unacceptable. One resident parks on the roadway as opposed to his driveway otherwise parents park directly outside his house on the pavement – not carefully – and get abuse when approached about it. The nursery is at full capacity and have not got the parking for their staff which is part of the issue as limited areas for parents to park. The 20mph is good news but would recommend speed bumps every 20 yards or so. The only issue with these are that they can cause issues of noise for residents. The Clerk to follow up on these two points with NCC to make sure they are picked up.

Clerk

It was also stated that since 20mph has been introduced in Wales villages accidents have dropped by over 25%.

85 The minutes of the meeting 19 December 2024 were agreed as a true record.

86 Matters Arising therefrom:

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

- a) Field run off at Eshott Village – Still not been addresses – Clerk to add to email to CC Sanderson. Clerk
- b) Felton Cemetery Joint Committee – Policies and Procedures update – TPC Clerk requested this be added to the January Agenda which it duly was.
- c) The Helm bus stop – the Clerk has requested an update as to what NCC has done in relation to seeking approved from Highways Agency. Clerk
- d) Verge cutting into West Thirston – still no ascertained the situation here but our contractor has undertaken one cut and will review what happens this year.
- e) Traffic through Felton/West Thirston from A1 diversions – CC Sanderson to hold another meeting soon with Highways as noted in item 83.
- f) FPC/TPC suggestions for Highways issues – Clerk to look into feeding information into NCC before their next meeting with NH. Clerk
- g) Clearing of The Peth – Cleared now but think this was due to wind rather than NCC. There are some tree branches down. Clerk to ask NCC Tree Officer to assess the trees again as trees seem to come down during every storm. Clerk
- h) Damaged Kerbstone opposite Pumpkin Pie – This has not been repaired as yet so Clerk to chase up. Clerk
- i) Defib locations – will put into the next edition of The Bridge. Clerk

2) Long-term Outstanding issues being addressed by NCC for information

- a) Repointing of stone wall on the Peth (14/12/23) – Still outstanding – copy to CC Sanderson and Clerk to take some more photographs to submit to NCC. Clerk
- b) Water running down the Narrow Bank (14/12/23) – Still outstanding and this broke through again with the last heavy rains early January and NCC stated they would investigate but no further information forthcoming. Clerk

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87 **Report by County Councillor Sanderson – Covered earlier in the minutes – item 83**

88 **Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC**

- **Airfield Liaison Group** – At previous meeting talked about the ToRs and the addition of a couple of items. Airfield agreed that ToR and notes of meeting would be included on website and also clearly define the purpose of the meetings to make this clearer. Next meeting likely to be on 16 April – probably via zoom so NCC Planning Officer can attend.
- **Cemetery Meeting** – The Committee are aware they need to generate more income and are looking into it. TPC cannot make a decision on the 10K reserves as still unknown if there are any restrictions in place on this. Clerk to ascertain how NotM&S PC has responded. Policies and Procedures need reviewing describing the process for consultation with other PCs if expenditure beyond the budget is proposed. Clerk to chase up with FPC.

Clerk
Clerk

The Cemetery leaflet has been circulated for amends/comments. Cllr Day's concerns were that until there is a strategy going forward there is little point in amending the leaflet. The Clerk stated the leaflet goes to the funeral directors and in the notice board and is to provide information on fees and whatever happens the leaflet will go out with new prices. It is just an A4 sheet and printed by the Clerk and therefore easily changed. Need to ask Committee to look at as a potential marketing tool and raise awareness. Cllr Marshall stated it is hoped that at the next meeting there is a strategy document that covers the costs of running the cemetery and the income and how to address any short falls. Cllr Day asked if the prices are set by NCC. The Clerk stated they are set by the Committee however they do look at the pricing of other Cemeteries in the County for a comparison to remain competitive.

The Clerk received an email response from FPC in relation to the wooden benches from the War Memorial being handed over to the School. The benches had been underwater a number of times and were recovered from the river on one occasion. Relatives for these benches were not able to be traced so FPC took over the responsibility of their maintenance. Given the poor state of repair they were deemed unsafe and in need of replacing. The school approached the previous Felton Clerk to state they would like them and would undertake repairs. This was not recorded in minutes as at the time there were no sub-committees meeting due to limited member numbers. Cllr Marshall stated he had viewed the new memorial benches which were metal, well constructed, secured down and were in keeping with the War Memorial. Cllr Marshall allowed a member of the public to speak on this issue having raised their hand. A member of the public stated they were not in a poor condition when they were removed from the ground, one slat was missing and they were washed away as they were not bolted down at that time. Another member of public stated the decision to change the benches has been made 18 months before the benches had been removed so were in a better condition than when they were removed.

Cllr Marshall said there were two questions to be answered 1) Was it prudent to replace the benches and 2) was the correct process used. More information is needed from the Committee before TPC can make a decision however FPC to take the lead on this as the benches are in their parish. Cllr Hantman asked if there were any pictures of the benches when handed to the school – Clerk to ask FPC.

Clerk
Clerk

89 **Potential Projects**

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – a New NCC person now looking after Thirston area and the concerns re erosion of the riverside footpaths has been raised awaiting a response.

Clerk

Cllr Hantman reported that the Bywell to Weldon Bridge road had new draining installed for water run off from the large field into a ditch. The pipes in the ditch were broken, the ditch was dug out, new piping installed and new pipes installed under gateway entrance to field. This ditch cannot empty fully due to the height the pipes that have been installed under the entrance gateway to the field and therefore surface water is running across the road again. Clerk to look into this with Mr Dundas along with the Eshott ditch issues.

Clerk

b) Landscaping – None

c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects

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- Village gateways – Issues about how to maintain planters. Need people to adopt the planters – Clerk to speak to resident to see if she is aware of a group of volunteers who could look after these if installed.
- Bus Shelters - Works will commence in the Spring. WI looking to paint inside of bus shelter. TPC will be happy to pay for the paint and this will be done once the swallows have left the shelter.

90 Planning:

To report on any planning decisions:

24/04013/VARYCO Burgham Park Golf Club - Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) on approved planning application 23/02686/VARYCO in order to submit alternative elevation and site plans relating to the approved clubhouse extension - REFUSED

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. **(23/04081/FUL)**

24/03613/FUL - The Club House Bockenfield Country Park - Retention of The Clubhouse to provide amenities for those at the site, including provision of refreshments such as food and drink, sale of ice cream, toiletries, basic food stuffs and cleaning materials

24/04166/FUL – Eshott Airfield - Retrospective Permission for a New Build Operations Building, along with car parking and landscaping – It was agreed to state to NCC that permission should have been sought first before the building had been built. Whilst the PC may well not have had an objection it is not acceptable to build and get retrospective permission.

24/04336/FUL - Hauxley House Burgham Park - Single storey rear extension, two storey side extension and single storey garage to front

24/04350/VARYCO - South High Moor Farm Felton - Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on approved application 22/03759/FUL in order to be in accordance with revised plans and show location of house slightly to the south. Cllr Hantman states that NCC state they are not worried about the privacy issue.

Planning Issues:

- Bockenfield Caravan Park – blue lights illuminating entrance – only two remaining and NCC state not affecting residents so not going to pursue.
- Felmoor Park – Entrance lighting and signage – NCC state that the owners claim this is covered under "deemed consent" however NCC did not necessarily agree with this case ref: 22/00662 was closed on 5.11.22. The files notes state that the walls and gates are permitted development. However NCC agrees this does not appear to relate to the issues the PC has raised so a new case will be opened. The Clerk made reference to condition 9 in the recent consent for 20/04177/FUL, adjoining Felmoor Park, specifically in relation to installing a sensitive lighting scheme which is on a site entrance well away from the A1 and public view. Condition 9 stating "Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority. Reason: To avoid impacts on biodiversity from lighting in accordance with Policies ENV2 and ENV4 of the Northumberland Local Plan" - this is a contradiction of what is currently being allowed at the Felmoor Park site entrance.
- Felmoor Park – Not complying with planning approval for timber cabins and blue lighting on this part of the site – NCC will be looking into this, and dependent on the reaction of the operator will consider formal action if required.

91 Requested Agenda Items:

Update on Felton Surgery – FPC has responded to state Lease has been signed by FPC, awaiting update from solicitors regarding Assura signing. Once done FPC will have a community update event open to the public with Assura and NPC. Clerk to request that TPC be informed of this event Clerk so residents can be informed. Also other parishes who may have residents using the surgery.

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Review of Policies for March meeting – The Clerk suggested reviewing policies at the March meeting before the election as it is likely that after May there will be new Councillors in place who would not be up to speed with policies. This was agreed and Clerk will review and circulate any changes for a decision at the March meeting.

Clerk

92 Correspondence:

- HMRC – tax code information – Clerk will update details in new tax year
- SLCC – Election information in preparation for May 2025 elections – for information
- NCC – Election information with costs for May 2025 elections - ie more than 6 candidates standing it would be about £750 plus hall hire costs (split with Felton). If we are unquorate - ie less than 3 people standing then we would be charged £450 for a re-election
- NCC – email in relation to Acklington Neighbourhood Plan - The independent examiner concluded that it would be necessary to modify five of the seven policies contained within the Submission Draft Plan. The County Council accepts these modifications. The plan will now proceed to referendum. Clerk to send link to Councillors. Clerk
- NCC - Invitation to join the Northumberland Cycling Campaign and to respond to NECA Transport consultation. Aiming to be a collaborative voice campaigning for safer cycling and cycling infrastructure, sharing our views with the County Council and the North East Combined Authority (currently consulting) and to promote existing and new cycling activity within the County – TPC does not wish to become members.
- NCC – Email Re: Introduction to the Wheeled Action Sports Strategic Document – deadline 2/3/25 - The survey aims to gather feedback on the current state of wheeled action sports infrastructure, such as skateparks and BMX tracks, areas for improvement, and any gaps in facilities and programming. Clerk to put on facebook for residents to respond. Clerk
- FCJC – Email with details of budget for 2025/26 - circulated
- Emails – copies of comments re application 24//04350/VARYCO - circulated
- Email – Cemetery Leaflet for any comment/amend before March update – Covered under 88.
- Email – Copy of email to NCC re Pumpkin Pie traffic issues – circulated for information
- Microsoft - End of support for windows 10 in October 2025 - After 14 October 2025, Microsoft will no longer provide free software updates from Windows Update, technical assistance or security fixes for Windows 10. The PC will still work, but Microsoft recommend moving to Windows 11. This is free. Clerk to move to Windows 11. Clerk
- Email – Cycling Strategy for Tynedale – same email as the NCC one above.
- Citizens Advice Impact Report 2023/34 – circulated for information
- Email – Invitation to Launch of the Northumberland Environment & Climate Fund – circulated,
- Email – Copied in on request to NCC for an update on parking issues in West Thirston – circulated for information
- Email – Copied into email re potential air proximity report – circulated for information
- Email – Missing FJCC minutes 22 August 2024 and FJCC Agenda summons for 26 September 2024 – email was circulated to Councillors.
- Emails – FOI request for emails and papers following a decision by the ICO relating to NotM/S PC – The Clerk responded to this stating TPC has no paperwork. A further email was received requesting papers again and the Clerk again responded to state TPC has no paperwork.
- Email - Enquiry no1 following incident at TPC meeting 19 December 2024 – Cllr Marshall responded to this.
- Email - Enquiry no2 following incident at TPC meeting 19 December 2024 – The Clerk responded to this.
- Email - Enquiry no3 following incident at TPC meeting 19 December 2024 – A response was included in Cllr Marshalls email.
- Northumbria Connect email alerts
- NALC News - Circulated
- CAN News - Circulated

93 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £13,643.15 TPC funds and £3,106.33 FCJC Funds totaling £16,749.48. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and Cllr Davidson signed the statement to confirm this.

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(b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
SO	To resident for electrics for defib machine paid 15/01/25	£50.00
IB208	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 35 hours at £19.66 (£688.10) Home working allowance of 7 weeks (£7.00)	£695.10
IB209	John Hood Landscaping	£474.00
IB210	Felton Parish Council – Recreation Field contribution	£500.00
IB211	Felton Parish Council – Second installment for Cemetery	£442.24

The Direct Debit to the ICO has increased from £35 to £47 and this will be taken from the PC account at the end of February.

(c) **Income** - None

94 Urgent Items –

Invitation for nomination to attend Kings Garden Party – Deadline Friday 14th February 2025.

The WI asked if TPC would like knitted poppies for the railings at The Peth – this was agreed and details to be finalized at a later date.

95 Items for next agenda –

Review of Policies
Feedback from Cemetery Committee re long term strategy
Parking at Pumpkin Pie
Apologies from Cllr Hantman

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.51pm

Date of Next meeting: 27 March 2025 in **Coquet Room, Felton Village Hall**