Minutes of the Meeting of Bowes Parish Council
held at Bowes Hutchinson's School on 16 June 2026 7.30 p.m.

Present
Cllr Hughes (Chair), Cllr Thompson, Cllr White, Mr Ross Woodley (Clerk and RFO)

1. Apologies and declarations of interest
Cllr Carlisle sent his apologies. There were no declarations of interest.
The Chair conveyed the sad news of the passing of Cllr Tipping and proposed a one-minute silence. Councillors, the Clerk and the three members of the public in attendance all stood to observe this silence.

2. Minutes of the Meeting
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held Tuesday 12 May 2026 (circulated as Appendix A of the agenda) were discussed.
It was **resolved to accept the circulated minutes.** Proposed by Cllr Thompson seconded by Cllr White.

3. Matters arising (unless dealt with later in the agenda)
The Chair stated that he had not yet added an invitation for interest in co-option on to the Council on the village Facebook page but would do so with greater urgency following the loss of Cllr Tipping. Neither the Chair nor the Clerk had received any communications from interested parties. The Clerk confirmed that he had sent a thank you letter to the organiser of the litter-pick as requested at the Annual General Meeting.

4. Finance & Accounts – See summary below.
(a) Receipts since last meeting £112.01 Investment Interest (March)

(b) Expenses since last meeting £350.00 Allotment Site Rent 26/27 – Youngs RPS
£270.00 Grass-cutting (2 cuts) – R Toward
£83.87 Subscription 26/27 - CDALC
£11.99 Email accounts (May) – Hugo Fox
£7.00 Bank charges (May)

(c) It was **resolved to approve the following payments** – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr White seconded:

- £673.91 Balance on swing repairs – Playdale
- £560.44 Clerk salary Q1 26/27 – R Woodley
- £270.00 Grass-cutting (2 cuts) – R Toward
- £172.52 Clerk overtime (16 hours) – R Woodley
- £140.00 PAYE on Q1 salary – HMRC
- £125.00 Internal audit 25/26 – J Linsley
- £84.99 Microsoft 365 Renewal – reimburse clerk
- £43.00 PAYE on overtime - HMRC

(d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the May 2026 meeting, or in the case of bank and email charges are monthly contractual payments.

(e) Budget Monitoring to 31 May 2026 (month 2)
The Clerk presented Appendix B for receipts and payments at month 2 of 2026/27
The Council are 3% (£1,310) below the profiled budget. However, this is due to the significant expenditure awaiting approval at item 4c above. The Clerk forecasts a break-even outturn leaving reserves at £38,500 in line with the approved 2026/27 budget. It was **resolved to accept the budget monitoring report** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

(f) Bank reconciliation at 31 May 2026 (month 2)
The Clerk presented Appendix C, for the bank reconciliation at 31 May 2026 (month 2). This shows the balances on the Unity Trust bank accounts (£14,910) reconcile to the cash book without any reconciling items. It also shows the £32,000 long-term investment with Redwood Bank as a memorandum item. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

(g) Internal Audit Report for 2025/26
The Clerk presented Appendix D, the 2025/26 report by the new internal auditor. The internal auditor completed an independent review of the Council's financial systems and governance and answered positively to each applicable control objective. The internal auditor issued a more detailed supporting report with no recommendations. The Clerk asked the Council to consider and approve the report. Cllr Hughes welcomed the positive report and sought clarity on whether the Council qualified for exemption from an external audit. The Clerk explained that an external audit would be conducted by BDO this year because the £32,000 investment during 2025/26 meant expenditure exceeded the £25,000 exemption threshold. All confirmed that they had no conflict of interest with BDO. It was **resolved to approve the internal audit report** – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded. The Chair and Clerk signed the BDO conflicts form.

(h) Annual Review of Internal Control for 2025/26
The Clerk presented Appendix E, the 2025/26 review of internal control. He explained that internal control is assessed as effective reflecting the positive internal audit report but also the Council's review of the risk register in March 2026. Cllr Hughes confirmed that he was not aware of any internal control deficiencies. It was **resolved to approve the annual review of internal control** – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.

(i) Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26
The Clerk presented Appendix F, the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement. He explained that this page of the Annual Governance and Accountability Act (AGAR) had been left blank because the Council needed to review each of the assertions and confirm that they were satisfied they had been complied with. Cllr Hughes confirmed that following the discussion of appendices D and E there was no reason to answer any assertion negatively. The Clerk completed the Annual Governance Statement by answering yes to each assertion except the trust funds assertion, which was not applicable. It was **resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement** – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded. The Chair and Clerk then signed and dated the Annual Governance Statement.

(j) Accounts for 2025/26
The Clerk presented Appendix G, the 2025/26 accounts. He explained that he had already signed the accounts as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and once approved the Chair will sign and date the accounts and authorise the submission of the complete AGAR to the external auditor in advance of the statutory deadline of 30 June 2026. The AGAR includes the accounts, Annual Governance Statement, and the internal auditor's signed report. The Clerk will publish the AGAR with the public rights notice within 24 hours and the thirty working day public rights period would commence the following day.

It was **resolved to approve the accounts and the submission of the AGAR to the external auditor** – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded. The Chair then signed and dated the accounts.

5 Hope Moor Wind Farm and other planning applications

Cllr Hughes declared that there were no planning applications within the Council's boundaries this month but in view of the scale of the proposed wind farm at Hope Moor and extent of public interest this was worthy of consideration as a separate agenda item. He welcomed the three members of the public in attendance and stated that this was the most consequential planning application for the parish for decades.

Cllr Hughes summarised the Council's current position. The Hope Moor Wind Farm stage one consultation is in progress and ends on 30 June. As the proposed development is outside the parish boundaries the Council are not statutory consultees and it is not the Council's usual policy to respond to planning proposals in these circumstances. However, the Council appreciates that the scale of the proposed development will impact on the village and many residents are concerned about the proposals. Accordingly, the Council are maintaining an impartial watching brief, attending the Hope Moor Community Liaison Group (HMCLG) meetings, and feeding back to the next parish council meeting.

Since the last meeting, Cllr Hughes and Cllr Thompson attended a consultation event at Bowes and Gilmonby Village Hall and a meeting with Durham County Council explaining the process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Proposals. The extent of public unease prompted Cllr Hughes to read the 900-page scoping report and identify numerous concerns. As this is the last meeting of Bowes Parish Council before the end of the initial consultation, Cllr Hughes invited fellow councillors to formally review the Council's position on the proposal. Although there will be a further consultation period (due winter 2026) when the plans for the wind farm will be more detailed and a final decision on the planning application is not anticipated until 2029, he believed the Council may now wish to submit a formal response as part of the initial consultation.

Cllr White asked if the scoping report had clarified the method of onward transmission. Cllr Hughes said that onward transmission was explicitly excluded and although it was customary practice to build a wind farm and assess the environmental impact of onward transmission separately, he questioned if this was acceptable. All agreed that the environmental impact assessment should include onward transmission as without it the wind farm would be obsolete. Accordingly, a formal response to the initial consultation was required.

Cllr Hughes led a discussion of other points in the scoping report that the Council may wish to cover in this response:

- The height of the turbines;
- The absence of a local LIDAR survey;
- The lack of a deterrent for bird collisions;
- Aviation safety and flight paths; and
- The impact of construction materials on the pH level of soil.

Cllr Hughes invited comments from the members of the public. All three spoke and raised concerns, with one explaining his credentials as a wind farm expert. Their concerns mostly overlapped those raised by Cllr Hughes, but they were sceptical about the need for more onshore wind farms and appeared ideologically opposed to building one at Hope Moor. Cllr Hughes reminded them that the Council could only consider the impact on the parish and not the greater impact on communities closer to the proposed site. However, he agreed that three of their concerns could be reflected in the Council's consultation response:

- The lack of evidence that planned peat remediation work would preserve carbon capture;
- The potential for the wind farm to be the first in a cluster as has happened in Scotland (ignoring speculation that this was already planned); and
- The impact on dark skies and stargazing.

Cllr Hughes thanked everyone for their contributions and the members of the public thanked the Council for listening to their concerns and facilitating the debate. He suggested that the Council responded to the consultation request with a letter stating that the Council remained neutral at this stage but had identified nine concerns that it wished the developers to explain or address before stage two consultation.

It was **resolved that the Council would respond to the invitation for feedback as part of the stage one consultation on Hope Moor Wind Farm and raise the nine concerns identified above in its response** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded. The members of the public then left the meeting and the Clerk agreed to draft the consultation response for the Chair to edit. The Clerk would submit the letter as an official response from the Council.

6 Correspondence

(a) Durham County Council sent the Clerk a leaflet advertising their Durham Explorer bus service connecting Barnard Castle and Durham City with local tourist attractions throughout Summer 2026. The Clerk advised the Council to consider if they wish to consider displaying the leaflet on the noticeboard and / or as a news article on the website. Cllr Hughes said that the bus shelter was the perfect location for a notice on bus services. It was **resolved that the Clerk would send councillors the leaflet on the Durham Explorer bus service for printing and display on the noticeboard at the bus shelter** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

(b) The Clerk has received a one-page poster about the mandatory switch-over from wired landlines to digital landlines due in January 2027. He suggested the Council consider displaying the leaflet on the noticeboard and / or as a news article on the website. Cllr Hughes thought there would be sufficient awareness raising before the switch to avoid the need for a news article on the website but was comfortable with displaying the leaflet on the noticeboard if there was room after displaying the bus service leaflet and statutory material such as the summons and agenda. It was **resolved that the Clerk would send councillors the leaflet on the landline switch-over for printing and display on the noticeboard at the bus shelter (room providing)** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

(c) CDALC have invited councillors to a meeting at Cotherstone Village Hall on 1 July 2026 (6.30pm) to explain their work, present awards and provide an opportunity for networking among Teesdale parishes. Cllr Hughes asked the Clerk to register him for the event as he would like to attend if possible.

7 Cemetery & Village maintenance

The Clerk confirmed that he had completed the reconciliation of burial records to the cemetery plan. This involved checking the 752 registered burials since the cemetery opened to allocated graves on the plan. There remain 167 spaces in the cemetery, 75 of which are reserved. The exercise identified an error rate of approximately two per cent. The Clerk has made the appropriate changes to resolve these discrepancies and claimed overtime as agreed at the last meeting to reflect the significant additional work that such historic data cleansing involved.

Cllr Hughes thanked the Clerk for this arduous work and asked, considering the updated information on plot availability, how many years it would take before the cemetery was full. The Clerk said he intended to review this when preparing the 2027/28 Budget as he thought it was longer than previously assumed. Most of the burials which had taken place recently were in reserved plots. He thought that there was a maximum of two a year in unreserved plots, sometimes none, and the exercise had identified almost 100 unreserved vacant plots. Cllr Hughes agreed that the Council might need to re-assess its reserve strategy if this was the case. Replacing the play equipment could be a more urgent call on the Council's reserves.

8 Allotments

Cllr Hughes confirmed that there were no matters for consideration at this month's meeting regarding the allotments.

9 Play Park

Cllr Hughes said that he had inspected the play equipment and stated that there were no new issues arising. He asked the Clerk to print down and bring inspection sheets to him for the next meeting, as he was currently without a working printer.

10 Footpaths

The Clerk confirmed that he had informed the two potential contractors of the contract award at the May 2026 meeting in respect of 2026/27 footpath repairs funded by Durham County Council. He asked the Council to remind him of the additional footpath requiring repairs noted after bids were sought. DCC may decide to undertake this work directly or suggest the Parish Council include it in their 2027/2028 grant application.

Cllr White replied that this footpath repair was on the path south from Back Lane to the River Greta, west of Gilmonby Bridge and had the WTW coordinates *'Alley/Starring/Evening.'* The terraced slope down to the River Greta was becoming increasingly steep and worn down posing a potential risk to health and safety. The Clerk agreed to inform DCC.

11 AOB

Cllr White said that he had made some enquiries about the anonymous report of drug dealing in the village, but this had only led to a discussion of historic crime. The Clerk confirmed that the caller had mentioned a recent event from the boot of a car parked outside the church. Cllr White said that such exchanges usually transpired to be items other than drugs. Cllr Hughes said that whilst the Council had a duty to consider the impact of crime and disorder, responsibility to prevent and detect crime rested with Durham Police. As the incident had been reported to the Police there was no need for the Council to formally consider the issue at the next meeting. However, all councillors should remain alert and inform the Clerk of any added information.

12 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting.

The Council agreed a 2026/27 meeting timetable at the last meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for 14 July 2026.

Meeting closed at 9.05 p.m. In accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) the impact of resolutions on crime and disorder in the parish was considered but no significant impact was identified. See item 11 for consideration of a potential impact.