

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 20 January 2025

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), John Grahamslaw (JJG), Dougie Watkin (DW) Sheila Johnson (SJ) and Sheelagh Hume (SH). Two members of the public were also present, as was Cllr Colin Hardy (CH)

1.25.1 To accept apologies for absence

None

1.25.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

GS and JG declared an interest in any items relating to Norham Development Trust (NDT), as directors of NDT, and to Norham Recreational Trust (NRT), which governs the Jubilee Field, as Trustees of NRT. JJG declared an interest as a Trustee of NRT.

1.25.3 To confirm Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting of 25 November were agreed and signed.

1.25.4 Matters arising from Minutes

i. Casual Vacancy

The council currently has a causal vacancy but is prevented by law from holding an election to fill it as the vacancy fell within 6 months of the full elections to be held on 1st May 2025. It is however open to the council to coopt a new member. After discussion it was agreed unanimously not to coopt.

ii Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan

Not very much progress, but the proposed Housing Needs Assessment for all parishes involved in the process is proceeding. JJG pointed out an inaccuracy in the map which will be brought to the attention of AEcom who are dealing with this matter.

iii Public Conveniences

It was agreed the village should be proud that it has managed to retain public toilets which are functioning, free and open 24/7. They are in need of a refresh which will be carried out shortly. The public toilets are well used.

iv

Play Areas

Still being inspected weekly. GS and JJG will meet to consider the RosPA recommendations with a view to considering implementation.

v

Community Police Report

The Community Police officer has reported that as regards Crimes and incidents The only thing of note relates to complaints again about the use of motor bikes both on and off road, in particular without lights. It is requested that if anyone sees or hears these types of bikes being used then to get in touch with the police immediately so that the incident can be recorded at the time, and if police are available, they can attend and deal with the matter there and then. The only circumstances in which these bikes can be lawfully used is on private land with permission of the landowner. There has also been a report recently of daytime poaching with dogs in the surrounding area. Should anybody witness this type of activity they should contact the police. It is also reported that Northumbria Police are currently involved in a pilot project, to take DNA from attacked sheep following dog attacks. For anyone involved in farming and likely to have lambs out, if there has been a suspected dog attack the police ask that they be contacted -the caller should ask to speak to a wildlife officer for guidance.

vi

Undergrounding of cables

Nothing to report.

vii

Norham Development Trust

At the parish meeting on 20th November, it was agreed that NDT would provide some further information. They have obtained information on 2 of the 3 issues raised but are awaiting the third. As soon as this becomes available, they will publicise it all. The new tenant is in now in the property at Tower Cottages and is happy with everything – except the mobile phone signal....

NDT continues to run Newsround, and the village website is in the process of a refresh and will be relaunched withing the next month or so.

viii

Jubilee Field

Nothing to report – pointing required to the boundary wall will be carried out as soon as the weather permits.

ix

Traffic Calming

A number of councillors met with Robin McCartney from NCC who ran through all the possibilities for traffic calming measures in the village. He is currently considering matters and will revert to the council shortly.

x

Land at Glebefield

Nothing to report, except that the results of the ongoing Housing Needs assessment may inform any decisions.

xi

Lower Tweed Trail

NCC have apparently carried out some works at East Ord on the path. It is hoped that Destination tweed project may also provide some benefits.

xii

Paton & Co Donations – Request for Grant for Flower Festival

Paton & Co have recently indicated that they have a further £750 to pass over in terms of their agreement with the council, and there will be a further £750 forthcoming in due course. Thereafter they have indicated that the agreement with parish council will come to an end but have confirmed that if any project arises in the future for which funding/sponsorship might be needed they would be happy to consider it. It was agreed that Paton & Co have been more than generous so far. In that regards an application for £750 from the Church Flowers Team towards the costs of the planned Flower festival in June (to mark 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day) was discussed. It was agreed to make the funding available.

xiii

Heat Pumps St Cuthberts Square

VLC confirmed she had emailed Bernicia regarding the issues of the noise/vibration of heat pumps and was awaiting a response from them. However, their Head of Asset and Retrofit had made a site visit in December and had apparently conceded there was a problem.

Whilst this is not a parish council issue as such it will be pursued in support of residents.

xiv

War Memorial

The Conservation Officer at The War Memorials Trust has been in touch in response to the photographs and information regarding the condition of the war memorial which were uploaded to warmemorialsonline.or.uk. In summary it is not recommended to carry out works on the memorial as this may do more harm than good. They suggest that a new inscription panel be made and placed near the memorial so that inscriptions can still be read without any damage to the historic fabric of the memorial itself. After discussion it was agreed that a new plaque perhaps in bronze might be considered – the war memorial is listed so planning permission would be required if it were to be placed on or very close to the structure.

xv

Mobile Phone Signal

A very interesting and productive meeting was held with representatives from Digital and IT in NCC, and from Vodafone, to discuss issues with mobile phone signal in the village. This is the first time a mobile provider has come to Northumberland in association with NCC to try to address these issues, in part as a result of all the work the parish council has put in to raising the profile of the issue with NCC. They were essentially on a fact-finding mission, had a walk round, visited most of the business in the village and also held a very well attended drop-in session. They have suggested that some of the problems might be solved with a small cell which could perhaps be installed in some central location (possibly the village hall) which would effectively boost the signal for a 500m radius. They will have to carry out a detailed survey of the signal and look into other matters which would need addressed e.g. planning permission and funding but are keen to try to improve connectivity. CH confirmed NCC (to the highest levels) are also keen to progress this and are looking into funding. Norham is being seen as a pilot project. Since that meeting it has also been suggested that a similar drop in be arranged with Alncom as a number of people had mentioned issues with WIFI. It was agreed that this should proceed – it will be organised by NCC but facilitated by the parish council.

Issues with Northumbrian Water/Sewage

Northumbrian Water has been contacted on this issue and have indicated they will be in touch by the end of this month.

1.25.5 Resignation of Clerk

It was confirmed that VLC has handed in a notice of resignation - 2025 will be her 10th anniversary in the post. She has indicated she will stay on to draw up this year's accounts and if necessary, until the meeting currently proposed for 12th May which will be the first meeting of the new term of the parish council after the elections. Her resignation was accepted with reluctance, and she was thanked for all the work she has put in over the years. It was agreed the vacancy would be advertised at first in Newsround, on Facebook and on various noticeboards in the hope that someone local might be interested.

1.25.6 Bus Travel

The issue of discounted bus fares had been raised in the public question time at a previous meeting. It had been pointed out that on the 67 cross border route Border buses did not accept discounted bus fares even if the passenger got on the bus in England to travel with in England e.g. Cornhill to Berwick. VLC had contacted the office of Kim McGuiness, the Mayor for the North East who has been publicising new discounted fares in various areas including North Northumberland. The response indicated that they appreciate that all residents in the region should have access to good value fares, which is why the Mayor stepped in to provide additional funding to reduce the fare cap in the region to £2.50. They indicated they are keen for this to be available on all buses in the region. Borders Buses did not previously take part in the £2 fare cap due to the funding issues with cross border journeys into Scotland. However, as Border Buses have agreed to take part in the government's £3 fare scheme, the Mayor's office are in active discussions with them to implement the £2.50 fare cap for journeys within England and to see whether there is anything that can be done for cross border journeys. In the meantime, from 13 January Borders Buses will be selling and accepting our Northumberland Day Rover (£5), Regionwide Day Saver (£6.80), £1 Under 22 single and £3 Under 22 day ticket on the B1, 266, 267, 418,

464, 477, 918 routes. In addition, the adult single on the B1 service is a flat £2.10. They are sorry that it has not been possible to bring Borders Buses into the £2.50 cap from the start, but will advise when there is further information on this.

1.25.7 Parish Council Website

The parish council information/documents are currently hosted on www.norhamlife.co.uk . However, it is now recommended that all councils websites and email addresses end with gov.uk. This is in part to address data protection issues. It was a concern when council external auditors have indicated that they would qualify audit reports if councils did not have gov.uk addresses, but they have now accepted that this is at this stage simply a recommendation. However, NCC have indicated, after the May elections, they will look at the possibility of providing an umbrella gov.uk website to host parish councils' sites, much as they do at the moment, as this would save parishes a great deal of money, and because NCC have the expertise. To be reconsidered in due course.

FINANCE

1.25.8 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Current Account Payments:

4 th Dec	S Broadbent	£150
10 th Dec	G Straughen Ltd	£25.14
6 th Jan	S Broadbent	£150

Current Account Receipts:

Nil

Business account Payments:

Nil

Business Account Receipts:

2 Dec	Interest	£2.30
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1.25.9 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Account

As at 20 January 2025

Current Account: £8716.58

Business Account: £616.01

1.25.10 To look at Planning Application decisions
4 Cross View: Refused

1.25.11 To look at state of Roads and Pavements

The footpath round the village hall will be upgraded – with the help of funding from Cllr Hardt's small schemes fund. He was thanked for his assistance with this. The state of Boathouse Lane was noted – this has already been confirmed as one of the parish council's priorities in its request to NCC for 2025-26 Highways Programme.

1.25.12 General Correspondence

VLC reported receiving a complaint (from a non-resident) that Norham, an English village, was flying a Saltire.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to Ladykirk Estates thanking them for the Christmas tree and for granting permission to turn on floodlights at Ladykirk church. GS confirmed new lights for the Christmas would be needed next year. CH confirmed the Community Trust would look at an application for funding – and that a number of villages have asked NCC for electric plug in points for festive lights. GS confirmed battery operated lights worked well. The WI have asked for permission to place a planter outside the village hall, to mark their 100th Anniversary. This was agreed.

Any Other Business (For information only)

SH indicated that the advent windows had been lovely again this year, as had the number of door wreaths in evidence. She also asked whether WI could add a dog to their Remembrance Day poppy display. It was indicated that that was not a parish council matter. There was however a general discussion regarding displays of poppies. It was recognised that not all opinions will be the same, but that also displays do not just mark those who died in the two World Wars but also more recent conflicts, and they are a reminder to the young.

There was also a query regarding the status of the pétanque piste. In brief it has been confirmed that in 2002 Berwick Borough Council granted a licence to Norham Paris Council for that area, as the pétanque club did not have a formal constitution. Some years thereafter it was agreed between the parish council and the pétanque club that they would pay the rent direct to NCC (as Berwick Borough Council no longer existed). In effect the pétanque club are responsible for its

upkeep and the rent. The area should however be added to the Parish Council's Register of Assets.

SJ also raised the issue of parking by dropped kerbs. It was confirmed that this is an offence. CH confirmed that dropped kerbs can be painted -they can be reported with a request for painting via FixMyStreet

Date of next meeting: 24th March 2025