

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held in the Coquet Room, Felton Village Hall on Thursday 27 March 2025.

Present: Cllrs J Day, E Davidson, D Green and J Marshall.
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
4 members of the Public

The Chairman opened the meeting with the sad news that Winefride Noble had passed away. She was Clerk to TPC for many years and it was noted she had given a long and dedicated service as Parish Clerk for Thirston PC. Condolences were offered to her family.

96 Apologies for Absence – Cllr Hantman and County Councillor Sanderson. Thanks to Cllr Hantman for this contribution to TPC as he will not be standing for election in May.

97 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – Cllr Marshall – Planning – 24/02540/FUL (Previously declared).

98 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) –

A member of the public raised agenda item 11 – correspondence - Email - direct to one Councillor in relation to Airfield Liaison Group queried whether Councillors receiving copies of emails in their full version or doctored from the Clerk. The member of public objected to the use of the word “doctored” as he said that was not what he had stated in the email – he wanted confirmation that the Councillors were receiving full copies of the emails from the Clerk and not with sections removed. The email was sent to Cllr Day. The Councillors all agreed that, in their view, the word “doctored” has the same meaning as removing selected items from emails. Cllr Marshall stated that this was how the email was received and understood. The counsellors agreed that, in their view, there was no difference between ‘doctored’ and ‘sections removed’. The member of the public stated to make it clear he has only sent the email to Cllr Day. The counsellors made it clear that any correspondence sent direct to a Councillor is circulated among the rest of the Councillors.

99 The minutes of the meeting 6 February 2025 were agreed as a true record.

100 Matters Arising therefrom:

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

- a) Field run off at Eshott Village – NCC are going to undertake checks in the Eshott area and could have a ditching gang available for a couple of days in 2 weeks time. Photos have been provided by NCC for areas they believe are requiring works and the Clerk has forwarded this to Cllr Green to see if this covers his areas of concern. NCC met with residents at South High Moor and state works would be undertaken on their drainage in the new financial year. Clerk
- b) Felton Cemetery Joint Committee – Policies and Procedures update – All PCs to review before the next FCJC meeting in April for finalising. Clerk has circulated pdf version ToR and Financial Regulations to TPC for review. Clerk
- c) The Helm bus stop – CC Sanderson has confirmed that NCC is meeting with National Highways to discuss this proposal further.
- d) FPC/TPC suggestions for Highways issues – TPC has passed their suggestions over to CC Sanderson for him to raise at the next meeting with National Highways.
- e) Damaged kerbstone opposite Pumpkin Pie – NCC has confirmed this is on the action list and will be repaired when the pavement works are undertaken in the village. Clerk
- f) Defib locations – these have been listed in The Bridge.

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

- a) Repointing of stone wall on the Peth (14/12/23) – Still outstanding – Photographs have been sent into NCC highlighting the main problems areas. Clerk
- b) Water running down the Narrow Bank (14/12/23) – Work has been undertaken by NCC in this area. NCC reported this issue should be resolved but they cannot say for certain that this won't spring out at another location. The issue was an old abandoned pipe which a new pipe seems to of been laid over the top of in the past and the old pipe was never removed. The issue was remedied and water had stopped. Clerk to ask local resident to keep an eye on the footpath and alert the Clerk to any future issues. Clerk

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101 Report by County Councillor Sanderson – None

102 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

Cllr Day attended a CRAGs meeting giving feedback on the data collected over the last year on water quality at specific sites which was being recorded monthly and sometimes weekly.

Conclusion was that the river is in good health but there are areas of poor quality water. Main concern is how the Longhorsley sewerage treatment works, which flows down the Thirston Burn in the Coquet, spills once every 4 days on average. CRAG is looking to expand its testing sites to include along the Thirston Burn where no testing has currently taken place as the thought was the anglers were doing that. There will be some community events where members of the public can undertake surveys on invertebrates that the fish feed on as this is a good indication of the rivers health and fish population. Also looking at Himalayan Balsam removal along some of the burns, particularly the back burn and probably go back to the zoo as they have issues with HB in their area.

Felton CAN has planted almost 5000 trees in the last few years most of which were in our parish at the zoo and along Wintrick Road.

NWL are holding a meeting in April to explain about their future plans. Water companies have been given the green light to increase their rates by quite a lot and that money is to go into investment and NWL will be informing residents of how this extra money will be spent in investment and improvements to the existing sewerage and water quality over and above their existing 5 year plan. NWL and CRAGs do currently work together on passing on information and attending joint meetings.

103 Potential Projects

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – NCC Area Countryside Officer has reviewed the riverbank erosion near to Footpath 422/006, West Thirston and High Park. Currently there is still sufficient room for people to walk along this permissive path as there is a large headland around the farmed arable land. She will continue to monitor this area.

b) Landscaping – None

c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects

- Village gateways – Issues about how to maintain planters. Clerk has received a response stating an email could go out to ask for volunteers from the residents and the suggestion that hardy herbs that do not require lots of watering could be placed in tubs. Clerk to look to see if NCC would give permission for planters to be placed at entrances to villages. Clerk
- Bus Shelters – primulas have been planted at the shelter at the top of The Peth and more bulbs are to go in. Cllr Day has seen some photos of the planting and promised more from the WI. Cllr Marshall thanked the WI members who had been involved and the Clerk will also write to thank the WI for the planting. Clerk

104 Planning:

To report on any planning decisions:

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 foodstuffs and cleaning materials - APPROVED

24/04166/FUL – Eshott Airfield - Retrospective Permission for a New Build Operations Building, along with car parking and landscaping - APPROVED

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

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 - APPROVED

Planning applications pending:

24/01531/VARYCO - Eshott Heugh Paintballing Site – variation to a number of conditions following detailed drainage report. A change of use application is probably going to be submitted for this application.

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)** – Further information has been submitted on this application, it is due to go to Committee in April however it is unsure as to which PC will be

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representing the residents as it is in Acklington Parish. Clerk has written to CC Watson for clarification on this and suggested the residents leading on this contact the PC direct. Clerk to find out who is going to represent the PCs and ensure they are briefed of the PCs response.

Clerk

25/00672/VARYCO - Burgham Park Golf Club, Burgham Park - Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) on approved planning application 20/02093/FUL in order to submit alternative elevation and site plans relating to the approved clubhouse extension

25/00765/LBC - Thirston New House Farm - LBC for internal works to include addition of ensuite bathroom (and associated SVP), thermal upgrades to roof and general redecoration works.

Replacement of 4no. conservation rooflights.

25/00675/FUL - 1 Beech Avenue, Burgham Gardens – extension to new build property as per approval 24/02501/VARYCO for similar property at this site.

Planning Issues:

- Felmoor Park – Entrance lighting and signage – NCC Enforcement still investigating this.
- Felmoor Park – Not complying with planning approval for timber cabins and blue lighting on this part of the site – NCC has responded to state “I write further to your enquiry received by the Planning Enforcement Team concerning to lack of adherence to the Design & Access statement submitted as part of planning application 18/03736/FUL. From our records it appears that planning permission which was granted on 24.07.2020 did not list the Design & Access statement as an approved document therefore I am unable to make the developer adhere to it. As there is no breach of planning control the Local Planning Authority can take no further action in relation to this matter, and I intend to close my file in relation to your enquiry”. The Councillors believe that it is a basic requirement to have the design and access statement as an approved document. Clerk to write to NCC to state this and ask what procedures they have in place to ensure such important documents are not omitted in future. This is the second time there has been an issue, with the Dog Training Centre having a planning condition wrongly discharged when the condition had not been met.

Clerk

Clerk

105 Requested Agenda Items:

- **Review of Policies** – Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Disposal Policy, Publication Scheme, Risk Assessment, Complaint procedure – Clerk circulated these prior to this meeting.
 - Financial Regulations – Minor amendments to bring in line with SOs and monetary authorisation levels – this was approved and adopted by the Council.
 - Standing Orders – a number of changes 1.4, 2.1, 4, 5.3 and 5.6.3 to bring into line with NALC recommendations. Also change Chairman to Chair throughout - this was approved and adopted by the Council.
 - Disposal Policy – no changes required - this was approved and adopted by the Council
 - Publication Scheme – Only change is Clerks phone number - this was approved and adopted by the Council
 - Risk Assessment - no changes required - this was approved and adopted by the Council
 - Complaint procedure - only change was Chairman to Chair - this was approved and adopted by the Council
 - Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation Policy – a new policy which was approved and adopted by the Council.
- **Cemetery Committee** re long term strategy - The committee had discussed how to promote the awareness of the cemetery which included: including having an article in the Gazette to promote its beauty and raise the profile of the Cemetery. Also areas were to be reviewed as to where costs could be cut. In terms of the cemetery being transferred to NCC the following was the response from NCC - it is not a closed cemetery so transfer will be treated very differently. They have never been asked about the transfer of an open cemetery. If transferred, NCC would not look after the graves, excavations or internments as FPC hold the records. If it is just the maintenance of the cemetery and FCJC would need to specify exactly what would need to be undertaken, ie. strimming, grass cutting, path clearing etc. There would need to be a service level agreement put in place to cover all costs. NCC also asked when the cemetery opened, what denomination is the cemetery and who holds the internment records. All this would have to be put in writing to Paul Lowes the Cemetery Area Manager. NotM&S PC suggested that NCC were responding on a grounds maintenance contract as opposed to taking over the Cemetery

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and that Paul Lowes should be contacted and possibly include NALC as this could also be a situation for other cemeteries in Northumberland. NCC would have more time to discuss this after the forthcoming elections.

£10k ringfenced money for new cemetery – The Chair of the FCJC stated this was discussed as part of the last meeting - there are no restrictions, it wasn't a donation or restricted in any way. It was started when cemetery was busy and monies were put aside over successive years by the FCJC. As there were no restrictions in place then to transfer these funds to general reserves would be of benefit to the FCJC. This information has been relayed by the Clerk to NotM&S PC for their input. They are still seeking the approval of the two PCs. TPC are reluctant to give approval until a financial strategy is put forward to show the cemetery is financially stable going forward. Expenditure outweighs income and unless there is significant change the cemetery will run out of funds or they will request increased funding from the PCs which is money that cannot be used for the benefit of the rest of the community. There has been some progress in relation to the long-term strategy. FPC is the lead PC on this and therefore need to drive this forward. In reality if the transfer does not go ahead the PCs will be asked for an increased contribution however if the transfer is made it is a short-term measure. Need to understand more on what NCC require. It may require the PCs to have a consultation with the residents setting out what the options are and inviting views to get a wider view about how people feel. Clerk to relay to FPC.

Clerk

Benches – TPC has written to FPC stating it is appropriate that the rules relating to what happens if there is unbudgeted additional expenditure required or desired is made clear. A budget must be agreed for the year for FCJC, and if this needs to be revised or there is a desire for further expenditure, FCJC need to seek approval from all the Parish Councils involved before that expenditure is committed to or incurred. Any request should be accompanied by a paper explaining the rationale for the expenditure so it can be considered fully by each PC. Tight control of expenditure is critical in view of the dwindling state of the reserves.

- **Parking at Pumpkin Pie** – NCC has confirmed they are looking at a permanent 20mph speed limit for West Thirston, this will need to be consulted on, NCC hopes letters will be issued over the next week or so. As to resolving the problems with inconsiderate parking these are not straightforward to resolve. NCC hope that parking buddies referred to last time are helping and also plan to speak with the nursery again to ask if their staff refrain from parking outside the nursery meaning this space would then be available for parents to drop off their children and discuss any other options which may assist. A resident has responded to this stating their own suggestions with Tim Speed's report, based on the detailed monitoring by NE Traffic Data. No response has been received to these suggestions as yet. Cllr Marshall stated it will be interesting to see if people take notice of the speed limit as currently quite a number of vehicles exceed the 30pmh limit. Clerk to ask NCC whether the parking buddies are being used.
- **Bockenfield road sign - Reference: FMS7211945** – the road sign going North for Bockenfield has been hit by a vehicle and needs replacing – this has been reported to National Highways.

Clerk

106 Correspondence:

- NCC - Northumberland Open Space Assessment – questionnaire in relation to how people want to see NCC dealing with open spaces – Clerk to complete for TPC and put on Facebook for residents.
- NCC - Elections - Nominations Process Briefing - Monday 6th March 6pm - Clerk attended
- NCC – Digital Switchover BT Roadshows in April – notices to go into noticeboard and on Facebook nearer the time.
- NCC – Mobile Phone Coverage Survey – This has been put on Facebook and Clerk has responded.
- NCC - Acklington Neighbourhood Plan - this has now been voted on and adopted.
- NCC - Community Conversation, Supporting Nature in our Green Spaces Consultation – as above
- NALC - Allotment Survey – not applicable to TPC
- NALC - Emergency Planning and Local Councils Survey – Clerk responded on behalf of TPC.

Clerk

Clerk

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- Email - Nadara Sisters and North Steads Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund – grant funding for up to £20k applicable to East Thirston and Eshott.
- Email – request from History Society for funding towards archaeology dig in East Thirston – Clerk forwarded the Nadara Sisters fund details and the TPC agreed to write and state TPC approved a pledge of up to £100 once more information has been received as to what they are looking in terms of funding. Clerk
- Emails x 2 in relation to application - 24/02540/FUL - High Park Farm circulated for information.
- Space for Nature Talk – Swarland Village Hall 6 March – circulated and put in noticeboard
- Phone call re branch overhanging road at Hemelspeth Farm – Clerk arranged for the removal of this branch.
- Email re East Thirston street light facing wrong direction – Clerk reported to NCC and this was resolved within 48 hours.
- Emails and messages re railings at top of The Peth – part of the railings collapsed and were lying on the footpath. Clerk submitted an urgent email to NCC and railings were removed and temporary barriers installed that same morning. It may take some time to get the railings replaced as rusted through. Clerk to request the rest of the railings be thoroughly checked for defects. Clerk
- The Circuit – email stating defib machine had been used – Clerk checked and this information was incorrect and defib was intact. New pads are required by May 2025 and it was agreed the Clerk would arrange to purchase these. Clerk
- Eshott Airfield Newsletter – Circulated
- Email – requesting a copy of the Airfield newsletter – this was provided however the requester was once again informed that this information is available from the Airfield to anyone and that they should register to receive this direct.
- Email – question raised about runway extension at Eshott Airfield – The Clerk had already raised this with the Airfield due to this not being mentioned at the Liaison Group. The airfield responded to state “It wasn’t mentioned at the CLG as we currently don’t have any definite plans to extend the runway. As per our initial meeting with neighbours and members last year, yes we would like to extend the runway to give pilots a bigger margin of safety, but this is a long term wish and any such changes would be discussed with all relevant parties at the appropriate time. However, it was raised by our member council in December as they would like to see the runway extended asap so we provided a brief update on the unused bit of runway at the end of runway 01/19 where farm stuff is currently stored and added this to the newsletter. The update was simply that access to runway is paid for and that we’d need to do significant work around access, condition, costs and timescales to understand what might be possible”.
- Emails – numerous re Low flying over Blackbrook Farm & Airfield Liaison Group – circulated.
- Emails – copied into numerous complaints of low flying by G-BYSJ Chipmunk – circulated.
- Email – re flying in event at Eshott Airfield – circulated.
- Email - direct to one Councillor in relation to Airfield Liaison Group which progressed into queries in relation to Councillors receiving copies of emails in their full version or doctored from the Clerk – already discussed in public questions.
- Emails x 2 – copied in re employment numbers quoted in Airfield applications – circulated.
- Email – another email re Enquiry no1 following incident at TPC meeting 19 December 2024 – circulated.
- Email – Giving details of the external auditors report for FPC – circulated.
- Email – copied in on email sent to Chairman of FPC – circulated.
- The Clerk inadvertently omitted this email from the agenda. Email in relation to Matters from February meeting – query regarding VAT registration of supplier, Bockenfield road safety, Disparaging remarks re caravans. In relation to VAT it is the PCs responsibility to check the invoice address and banking details via the bank when making payment to comply with due diligence. It is the responsibility of the business owner to ensure the VAT registration is correct The Clerk understands changes are being made by this supplier to correct an error but require to go through the probate system. The question in relation to Bockenfield road safety was in relation to the changes now the A1 is not being dualled and the potential relocation of the bus service so has no bearing on planning application responses and safety issues. In relation to the reference to caravans made of plastic material being disparaging, it was not felt this criticism was justified. The query has been addressed under planning issues above.

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- NALC News – circulated.
- CAN News – circulated.
- Groundwork newsletters – circulated.

107 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £11,791.51 TPC funds and £3,106.33 FCJC Funds totalling £14,897.84. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and Cllr Davidson signed the statement to confirm this.
- (b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
	Bank Service Charge – monthly	£4.25
IB212	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 40 hours at £19.66 (£786.40) Home working allowance of 8 weeks (£8.00) Cartridge Reclaim (44.82)	£839.22
IB213	Complete Weed Control (JKW Treatment)	£150.00
IB214	Swarco UK – Speed cameras maintenance contract	£469.06

- (c) **Income** – VAT refund of £310.95
- (d) **Internal Auditor** – It was agreed that the current internal auditor fits the required criteria and the PC would continue with his services.

Cllr Day asked what is covered by the JKW (Japanese Know Weed) treatment. The Clerk confirmed that it is the area from the bridge going down the river around the area accessible by the public. Cllr Day stated that the Northumberland Rivers Trust is treating JKW along the river. The Clerk stated that TPC relayed the info to NRT as to which areas TPC are covering. Cllr Day states there is still JKW in this area so might not be being treated correctly. The Clerk stated that this area can be treated however there is no control over what comes down from further up river. Cllr Day stated that CRAG has not found any JKW further up river from Felton. Cllr Day to check if NRT are covering the TPC area and then take it from there.

Clerk

108 Urgent Items –

Cllr Marshall wished the Councillors who are remaining the very best. We are currently in the position where there are two parish councillors who have indicated a willingness to stand again out of a total of 6. We have had quite a turnover this year and in total there has been a net loss of 5 councillors from TPC, either by resignation or choosing not to stand for re-election. He also added his thanks to the Clerk thanks for all the work goes on behind the scenes – there is a huge amount of work for a small PC and it is being done efficiently and effectively. Cllr Marshall has enjoyed working with everyone.

Cllr Davidson asked that it be minuted that he does not want to leave the PC but this is due to the actions of one man and one man only and that is the only reason he is leaving the PC.

Cllr Day, on behalf of the PC, would like to thank Cllrs Marshall and Davidson for the work they have done over many years working and supporting the community.

109 Items for next agenda – None

Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm

Date of Next meeting: 8 May 2025 in **Gallery 45, Felton AFTER THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**