

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 16th May 2024 at 7:30pm.
At Wall Village Hall.**

PRESENT	Cllrs: Elisa Wyrley-Birch (EWB) Vice-Chair, John Lamb (JL), Jane Michie (JM). Gina Scott-Middleton (GSM) Nick Morphet (County Councillor) (NM) Clerk: Alix Pearson (AP). Parishioner Andrea McKie of Middle Brunton
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NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
2624	1. Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Mark Wood and Stephen Blake. In the absence of the Chair, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair. Elisa Wyrley-Birch.
2625	2 Declaration of interests There were no declarations of interest, although Cllr Lamb had not realised his tree felling applications had reached the consultation stage and declared an interest at that point in the meeting.
2626	3. Approval of Minutes The chair welcomed Andrea McKie. The minutes were approved as true record of the previous meeting and signed.
2627	4. Approval of 23/24 Accounts AP presented the audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24 and explained that because of the additional grant income which had been received by the Parish Council for the new playground equipment and warm hub supplies, the total income of the council had exceeded the £25,000 limit which allowed Parish Councils to exempt themselves from external audit. Therefore the accounts will be subject to external audit at cost of £210 + VAT. Cllrs received and noted the Internal Audit Report, which had been completed by Michael Barker for the second year running. Michael had suggested some improvements to the risk register in 22/23 which had been implemented to his satisfaction. The Annual Governance Statement was APPROVED The Accounting Statements were APPROVED . AP set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights at 3rd June - 12th July 2024 AP to submit relevant documents to accountants and advertise exercise of Public Rights on website.

2628	<p>5. Review of Action Log</p> <p>The previous meeting had few actions so the action log was verbal.</p> <p>AP made the missing payments of 22/23 & 23/24 to the village hall - 13 meetings @ £15 per session £195.</p> <p>On the subject of Ultrafast Broadband, much progress had been made. Alex Carrithers had set up the website for customer consultation and FAQs but had not made it live because NCC contracted B4RN to undertake the Ultrafast Full Fibre upgrade across much of the North Tyne. The activities required from the parish are much the same as detailed in minute 2611, but we will be working directly with B4RN, who are currently completing installation in Barrasford. Alex Carrithers & Michael Barker will meet with B4RN soon to understand the scope of our involvement.</p> <p>B4RN to be invited to the Parish Council Meeting on 18th July.</p> <p>Chris Mowatt our mowing contractor had done his best with the waterlogged greens on his first cut in April and was happy to continue on his usual contract of 10 full cuts + two small cuts per year, paid per cut. Some wildflower islands have appeared in the green and Chris will cut as he thinks fit, referring back to Parish Council if necessary.</p>
2629	<p>6. Review of Planning Applications Log</p> <p>23/0426/FUL - Halton Grange extensive alterations GRANTED 24/01082?FUL West Dunkirk - holiday cottages - Ongoing 24/012522/LBC - St Oswald's Cottage - change of door and windows - Supported 24/01287/VARY - Peartree Cottage 24/01328/VARY - Peartree Cottage both Supported 022/852/2024 Tree felling, land east of Town Farm - Supported 022/1127/2024 Tree felling, NW High Barns - Supported</p>
2629	<p>7. County Councillor Update</p> <p>Cllr Morphet's comprehensive report appears at Appendix 1.</p> <p>Of particular interest was:</p> <p>Item 1 - Speed Survey in Village. Highways did not think the requested buffer zone would have much impact on speeding traffic and preferred to move to build-outs. Build-outs were not preferred by Cllrs, because of the additional noise from slow moving heavy vehicles as they pull away from a stop at a build out. Additionally, the build outs would cause significant obstruction for the rare, but necessary occasions that very wide agricultural vehicles needed to use the road. The regulations for length of a buffer zone in para 9.7 (p13) of the feasibility study led Cllrs to consider whether a 40mph speed limit could be imposed on the entire section of the A6079 from the lay-by to Brunton Crossroads. Given the concerns already raised several times about the safety of the narrow footway on HWNT it was agreed that this request could be made on the 25/26 LTP. Additionally, as part of a traffic calming scheme in Humshaugh, red 30mph roundel markings had been painted on the road. It was agreed that Cllr Morphet should request similar markings for the A6079 at Wall.</p> <p>Item 4 - erosion of stream bank on New Lane is discussed at minute 2631</p>

2630

8. Village Hall Report

Absent Cllr Blake had provided a comprehensive report to AP, which she read in full.

Key points to note are:

The AGM saw a 'changing of the guard'; Steve Blake stood down as Chair, replaced by Alix Pearson, Chris Jones stood down as Secretary, replaced by Amy Harris, Roly Taylor, after 30 years 'in post!' stood down as Treasurer, having been replaced by Bob Bell.

The Hall Trustees now comprise:

Chair: Alix Pearson

Treasurer: Bob Bell

Secretary: Amy Harris

Bookings Secretary/Events: Rob Say

Member/PC Representative: Steve Blake

Member/Village Society Representative: Mark Wood

Member/PCC Representative: Muriel Horne

Member/WI Representative: Alison Henson

Member: Chris Jones

Member: David Watson

Member: Stephen Porteus

The new roof project is finally concluded with the works being signed off by the Local Authority Building Control and Regulations Officer on the 28th of March. All bills are now paid. The project came in slightly under budget, leaving the hall enough cash to consider some additional 'projects'. Once again the Committee would like to thank our local Councillor Nick Morphet for the generous contribution of £10,000 from his Local Improvement fund, without which the project would not have been viable. The roof will last for the foreseeable future, weatherproofs the building whilst letting in more light, all the while reducing our heating bills to boot. Indeed the clear windows allow in so much light that we are in the process of fitting blinds to darken the venue if required.

The committee are now considering additional improvements - a new gas cooker for the kitchen, and modifications to cupboards. We are reviewing the internal lighting. Some equipment has been refreshed courtesy of the NCC Communities Together fund – a new coffee machine has been purchased. In conjunction with the Village Society we are hopeful of procuring our own LED projector and a larger screen. These will make any presentations somewhat easier to manage and view.

In the longer term the hall remains part of a Community Action Northumberland (CAN) project to install solar panels and batteries in village halls. This is likely some way off, but will offset some of the halls electricity used and with a battery provide a modest amount of 'resilience' in the event of a power cut. Mark Wood on behalf of the committee is enquiring with the local Church Commissioners about the acquisition of a strip of land that would extend the rear hardstand along the full length of the building. Enquiries are far from complete, but are promising.

So it has been a busy year, far busier than it ever appears to those not on the committee.

2631	<p>9. Additional Business</p> <p>Cllr Morphet introduced Andrea McKie, who attended to tell councillors about her serious concerns over the deterioration of the stream bank on New Lane. Mrs McKie has been engaging NCC in this issue since 2012, during which time she has noted an increase in traffic, some of which is heavy, and a subsequent deterioration in the road verges and stream bank. Recent careless driving had damaged a wall and some boundary fencing. Heavy rainfall had also further disturbed the stability of the verges. Cllr Morphet's report at appendix 1 also refers.</p> <p>Mrs McKie's concerns were for the safety of both drivers and pedestrians, reminding Councillors that the New Lane forms part of the Hadrian's Wall National Trail and therefore ought to be safe and suitable for pedestrians, which she felt it was not. All Councillors listened carefully and shared their own concerns and efforts to influence NCC to improve parts of the HWNT which passes through the village, which had been unsuccessful.</p> <p>It was agreed that once more, attention to this area would be a feature of our LTP proposals, requesting again, the scraping back of the footpath from the lay-by to the New Lane and suggesting that the New Lane could be stopped up to through traffic, for access to properties and farmland only.</p> <p>For grants relating to the dilapidated sign at St Oswald's, Cllr Morphet suggested that the best people to speak to regarding the information sign at St Oswald's is the St Oswald's Way Management Group:</p> <p>https://www.stoswaldsway.com/contact-us</p> <p>David Pott, Pilgrimage Consultant for the Diocese of Durham and contact for the Northern Saints Trails, may have some advice. His email address is dlpott@gmail.com.</p>
2632	<p>10. Date of next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 18th July 2024 at 7.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 8.58pm</p>

COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR WALL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 16/5/2024

1) I asked Richard McKenzie in Highways Programme whether we could have **40mph buffer speed limits** at each end of the village instead of build outs within the village, and he said that build outs are always far more effective than buffers. He thinks that buffers will be even less effective in Wall's case because they'll be in open countryside. However, the parish council is welcome to request build outs, buffers or both – and will be able to do that through the LTP programme for 2025/26 in the next month or two.

I did **Community Speedwatch** in Wall for the first time last week, and we only caught one person speeding in an hour and a half (and they were only doing 35mph). We catch dozens of speeders every time we do it in Hexham, which makes me wonder whether Wall's speeding problem is perceived to be worse than it actually is because of the volume of traffic and the size of some of the vehicles.

2) I sent our **footway proposal** plans to Michael McMonagle in Highways Programme, asking him if he'd walk the route with us and let us know what he thought of our plans. Unfortunately he's been moved to a different team and won't be able to join us. I've since sent them to the main Highways Programme inbox, along with the main **Footway Accessibility Audit** plans. I've asked them if they'll walk the route with us before we have to make this year's LTP requests.

3) **Old Lane**'s been swept now and is looking much better. It was the council who did it, but the farmer has also been asked to keep it clean. One of the reasons that it took a long time is because Old Lane is one of only three roads in the ward which are looked after by a different Highways Inspector. I'd spoken to Michael Rowe, who then passed it on to his colleague David Dover, who decided to book it in for the council to sweep rather than bothering the farmer. David looks after New Lane and the road through Fallowfield too.

4) **New Lane** took quite a hammering during Storm Kathleen. Hadrian's Wall National Trail became a torrent and the water then poured down New Lane and into the stream that runs alongside the road on the NW side. Part of the stream bank collapsed and has since been repaired. Tim Fish and the Hadrian's Wall Path ranger (Gary Pickles) had a look a few days later and removed a fallen tree which was damming the little stream which runs alongside Brunton Bank and they think had diverted water onto the path. The Highways Inspector later identified a drainage problem close to where the path emerges onto New Lane, and that's now on the Highways Maintenance jobs list. A resident has expressed a concern that the council are taking a reactive rather than proactive approach to the erosion of the stream bank, but I visited the site with the Highways Maintenance Area Manager (Andy Olive) and he felt that a reactive approach was the only suitable approach to take.

5) I spoke to the climate change officer who deals with **EV charge points** and he confirmed that the funding for new chargers has dried up. Apparently the On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme (ORCS) has come to an end and an application for Local Electrical Vehicle

Infrastructure (LEVI) funding was unsuccessful. A repeat submission to the LEVI fund will be made soon, and I'll let you know if it's successful.

6) I met with Tony Brown (the Rural Growth Manager) to discuss the Expression of Interest for **improving the footway between the layby and Brunton crossroads**. He told me that the Expression of Interest had been safely received and put in the "orientations" category. I brought a few mistakes which the Borderlands team had introduced to his attention and also re-sent him Michael McMonagle's quote. Tony said that he didn't think the work would be done through the LTP programme, but that there's no harm in requesting it again if you have a request to spare. He also said that he'd like to meet us on site to have a closer look – so I'll try to get that in the diary for some time over the summer.

7) **The advance stop lines at each end of Chollerford bridge** haven't been installed yet, because they're going to be installed at the same time as the traffic calming measures at New Houses, which haven't been implemented yet. Councillors didn't receive monthly updates for April, so I'm not feeling quite as well informed as I might have been. The traffic calming measures are part of last year's LTP programme, so are now overdue. I emailed Highways Programme for an update last week, but they haven't replied yet.

8) I haven't heard anything about **the double yellow lines in Low Brunton** since just before the last meeting, when Neil Snowdon (Principal Programme Officer, Highways Improvement) told me that he was considering monitoring the situation over the summer. I thought he was just trying to kick the can down the road so I asked him who would do the monitoring, how they'd do it and whether it would delay the implementation of the double yellow lines. I didn't receive a reply, and he hasn't responded to the reminder email that I sent him on Monday. I'll let you know if I receive an answer from him, but as things stand there's no progress at all.

9) Highways Maintenance have been preparing to surface dress **the A68 between the Military Road and Bingfield**. It was closed at the weekend for preparatory work and the section between the Military Road and Beukley will be closed on Monday and Tuesday for the next stage, which I think is the actual surface dressing. There'll be more closures to come over the summer, and I'll post about them on my Facebook page as I receive the alerts.

10) The report on a petition asking for the council to implement **traffic calming measures on the A68** at Beukley will be coming to Tynedale Local Area Committee on Tuesday. The meeting is in Hexham House (in Hexham) and starts at 6pm. The report recommends no action other than to continue to monitor the situation, but I'm planning to push for a lower speed limit.

11) **The Local Bus Board** has finally had its first meeting. I'd been led to believe that they'd be deciding how they wanted parish councils and county councillors to engage with them so that we could start pushing them for better bus services, but apparently they didn't get that far! I expect they will at their next meeting, and I'll let you know what they decide.

12) **The new Climate Change Action Plan** will be going to Cabinet in draft form on 11th June. I haven't managed to get my hands on a copy yet, and I'm just hoping that it's as good as

Confirmed as a true record of Meeting: Original Signed

Nick Johnston (the **climate change team leader**) said it was. Nick left soon after finishing the draft action plan, and I haven't heard whether he's been replaced yet. I also haven't heard whether the new **climate change website** has been launched yet, so I'm assuming that it hasn't been. We've got a Climate Change Working Group meeting on the 29th May, so I'll be able to get updates on the website and team leader situation then.

13) And finally, Elisa suggested that I nominated the two **species-rich grassland projects** for a **Love Northumberland award**, so I did – and we've been shortlisted for a Best Countryside Project award. The award ceremony is at Alwick Garden on the afternoon of Thursday 13th June, and four people are allowed to represent the two projects. There'll be one or two spaces available for anyone who's been involved with Wild Wall. Would anyone like to join me?