

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting  
held on Thursday 18th July 2024 at 7:30pm.  
At Wall Village Hall.**

<b>PRESENT</b>	<p>Cllrs: Mark Wood (MW) Chair, Elisa Wyrley-Birch (EWB) Vice-Chair, Steve Blake, John Lamb (JL)</p> <p>Clerk: Alix Pearson (AP). Parishioner Alex Carrithers of Falshaw</p> <p>Also Present were Nick Hall and Sarah Saul from B4RN</p>
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	<p>The meeting was preceded by a short presentation from B4RN (Broadband for Rural Northumberland) who explained how the company works with communities to achieve connection to full fibre ultrafast broadband for every property in the parish. The Parish Council will work with B4RN and any volunteers from the community, with an intention of maximising the grant income that B4RN can receive to fund the installation, thus contributing to the viability of the project.</p> <p>There will be a public meeting in the Village Hall on 14th August where parishioners can gain more information.</p>
<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
2633	<p><b>1. Apologies for absence:</b> Apologies were received from Cllr Nick Morphet, Jane Michie and Gina Scott.</p>
2634	<p><b>2 Declaration of interests</b> There were no declarations of interest.</p>
2635	<p><b>3. Approval of Minutes</b> The minutes were approved as true record of the previous meeting and signed. There were no matters arising.</p>
2636	<p><b>4. Local Transport Plan Priorities 25/26</b> Cllr Morphet had sent his written report in advance of the meeting and AP read the information relevant to the LTP. Cllr Morphet's comprehensive report appears at Appendix 1. Areas of concern which had appeared in previous LTP submissions, namely: clearing of the footway between the layby and Brunton Crossroads and resurfacing of Chapel Lane were to be addressed by other means, so did not need to be LTP priorities. Cllrs discussed the areas of concern that were most frequently observed and brought to their attention by parishioners. The following three <b>priorities were agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For additional traffic calming measures on the A6079 through the village.</li> <li>• For the safety and comfort of walkers on the HWNT New Lane to be Access Only for vehicles.</li> <li>• For a repair programme for Old Lane which is in a dangerous and dilapidated state.</li> </ul> <p><b>AP to submit relevant documents to NCC Highways Programme.</b></p>

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### 5. Playground Safety

In January, the Parish Council received grant funds from NCC to pay for the newly installed play equipment on the back green. Conditions attached to this grant was that the play equipment should have a 10 year guarantee.

The legislation that covers playgrounds is BS EN 1176; part 7 deals with inspections. The two types of inspection covered are Annual Inspections and Operational Inspections.

**Annual Inspections** are a requirement of BS EN 1176 Part 7 and this type of inspection should be carried out by an independent specialist not connected with the playground operator or owner. In the case of Wall Parish Council, this inspection is carried out by ROSPA. Many suppliers also require playground owners to have records of this type of inspection to validate their equipment guarantees.

**Operational Inspections** should be carried out on a monthly or quarterly basis, depending on risk assessment. Many suppliers also require owners to have records of this type of inspection to validate their equipment guarantees.

This inspection may be carried out ourselves, provided we have an appropriately trained member of staff (minimum RPII Operational Inspector). Wall Parish Council has been undertaking these inspections ourselves for many years, but not by a person with the recommended qualification..

With a new awareness of the requirement to undertake Operational Inspections by a qualified person, a maintenance contract was entered into with Pennine Playgrounds, the equipment suppliers, for 3 x Enhanced Operation Inspections, at a cost of £150 per inspection. The inspection will cover all pieces of equipment.

*From the invoice from Pennine Playgrounds:*

*Enhanced Operational Playground Inspection.*

*This inspection looks in detail at the condition of the equipment, providing a quality control check on the more regular inspections and identifying wear and tear on the equipment. It also includes minor maintenance including the following:*

- *Tightening loose bolts / replacing caps*
- *Replacing worn shackles*
- *Greasing moving parts*
- *Sanding sharp edges or splinters*
- *Removing surface weeds from surfacing*

The dates for our contracted Operational Inspection are:

Operational 1 - 23rd May

Operational 2 - 24th July

Operational 3 - 24th Oct

Our first Operational Inspection took place on 23rd May. All playground items were inspected and all items were reported as satisfactory, with no action required.

Our Annual ROSPA Inspection took place on 13th June and several items were reported to require some attention.

The usual items of concern appeared: strimmer damage to posts and the Rogstad's garden wall (which has been repaired, but apparently not to ROSPA's standards). Of more concern were the comments relating to the newly installed equipment. The fastenings to the basket swing were reported as being loose and requiring lubrication. The basket swing and the clamber stack were 3cm taller than the maximum height allowed for there being no protective floor surface.

2637 cont	<p>AP raised this with the installers and they returned to the site to deal with the basket swing. The height of the clamber stack and swing were debatable, as the surface below was variable in depth and the highest point of each piece of equipment was not a point that should be in use, so the interpretation of the regulation seemed to be in question.</p> <p>This left Councillors with a number of issues to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the Pennine Playground maintenance contract was value for money.</li> <li>• Whether the equipment guarantees require more than an annual inspection.</li> <li>• Whether any action needed to be taken in respect of the play surface beneath the basket swing and the clamber stack.</li> </ul> <p>More information was required before these decisions could be taken.  <b>AGREED that AP &amp; EWB should carefully examine both the ROSPA report and the equipment guarantees.</b></p> <p>The next Operational Inspection in on 24th July. It would be very helpful if at least 1 Cllr could be present when the inspector arrives on site, so that some of the issues above might be discussed with them. <b>EWB to message Pennine Playgrounds to request this.</b></p>
2638	<p><b>6. Review of Planning Applications Log</b></p> <p>24/01082?FUL West Dunkirk - holiday cottages - GRANTED  24/012522/LBC - St Oswald's Cottage - change of door and windows - GRANTED  24/01287/VARY - Peartree Cottage GRANTED  24/01328/VARY - Peartree Cottage GRANTED  022/852/2024 Tree felling, land east of Town Farm - GRANTED  022/1127/2024 Tree felling, NW High Barns - GRANTED  24/02097/FUL Fir Trees Farm Wall - Replace pole barn with double garage and store - NOTED</p>
2639	<p><b>7. Clerk's Financial Report</b></p> <p>The clerk explained that financial reports would now be presented quarterly, in line with standard accounting practice.</p> <p>Q1 (April - June) would be presented at the July meeting.  Q2 (July - September) would be presented at the November meeting.  Q3 (October - December) would be presented at the January meeting.  Q4 (Jan - March) denotes the end of the financial year and is presented with the AGAR and full accounts at the May meeting.</p> <p>The clerk presented Q1 accounts, from 1st April 2024 - 30th June 2024.  Brought forward from 23/24 accounts: £3775  Income received during Q1: £8816.52 comprising £4372 precept, £915 resilience grant, £3529.52 VAT refund 23/24.  Expenditure during Q1: £2627.91  Thus leaving £9963.71 in the current account.</p>

2640	<p><b>8. Drainage on the Back Green.</b></p> <p>Heavy rainfall over winter and well into spring seems to have created a pattern of water travelling off the fell and down onto the back green. Recent diversions of water courses further up the fell has created a significant run off into the green behind the Millennium tree. Cllr Wood had undertaken a survey of the back green alongside Derek Robson who has significant experience of ground working. It is suspected that a stone pipe or cundy under the green has collapsed, but this needs a physical examination to confirm, which requires the hire of a mini digger. Cllr Lamb confirmed that he has plans to hire a mini digger over the next few weeks and would be able to let the Parish Council use it during this time.</p> <p>Cllrs were grateful for this offer which will save a considerable amount of additional effort. <b>EWB to inform Allendale Estates</b> that the green will be disturbed and re-instated for this investigation.</p>
2641	<p><b>9. Chair's Inspection of Parish Assets.</b></p> <p>The Chair reported that the recently planted trees were all growing well as were the wildflower meadows on the back green. Some strimming needed to be done, which he would do when time allowed. Parishioners, David Watson and Robert Bell had helped the Chair clear vegetation from the path between Halton Grange and the lay-by. Cllr Blake wished to be informed if any further efforts were to be made as he would also help. Concern was expressed about the condition of low branches in the trees in God's Piece and it was agreed that action could be taken if they are thought to be dangerous.</p>
2642	<p><b>10. Village Hall Report</b></p> <p>Cllr Blake presented the following report:</p> <p>A Routine Meeting of the Management Committee took place on the 16/07/24</p> <p>Mr Stephen Blake was elected the Vice Chair of the Trustees Committee. It has been agreed that the outgoing Chair will take on the Vice Chair role for a year after tenure as Chair.</p> <p>The Treasurer submitted a well researched case for the VH to change it's bank to a more contemporary provider with suitable facilities. This was discussed and agreed unanimously. The recommended bank is The Charity Aid Foundation Bank. The Treasurer will submit the application for the transfer of our business.</p> <p>The provision of ultra fast broadband to the village by B4RN was discussed. On the basis of an initial visit B4RN have suggested the hall's rear hardstand would be a suitable location for their fibre cabinet. The hall would get free broadband. Much remains to be discussed about the wider provision through the village – a presentation by B4RN will take place in due course.</p> <p>The Chair updated the committee on the status of our grant bids. The cooker money has arrived and currently resides in the PC account. The Suez grant has succeeded with a grant of £11.5K awarded, and a grant of @£300 has been awarded by Communities Together for the purchase of a Cornhole set.</p> <p>The roof has been surveyed (again) by Hadrian Electrics for the installation of Solar and Batteries by Northumberland Community Energy. This remains in the very early stages of development.</p> <p>The Treasurer made a very useful report with projections of costs vs income. The upshot is that the halls charges/bookings have increased to £20.00.</p> <p>The aspiration to purchase a small strip of the Vicarage's garden to enlarge the concrete to the rear, remains a work in progress.</p>
2643	<p><b>11. Date of next meeting</b></p> <p><b>Thursday 19th September 2024 at 7.30pm.</b></p> <p>The meeting ended at 9.15pm</p>

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR WALL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 18/7/24**

I spoke to Richard McKenzie in Highways Improvement about **traffic calming measures on the A6079 within the village** yesterday. Apparently buffer speed limits will no longer be allowed, because the criteria for a 40mph speed limit aren't met on the approaches to the village. I didn't get a chance to ask him, but it sounds as though government guidance has changed. He told me that it was worth requesting traffic calming measures through the 2025/26 Local Transport Plan programme, and that although we're asked to explain the problem rather than suggest solutions, there would be no harm in commenting on whether you do or don't favour build outs, and asking the officers to consider the traffic calming measures that are about to be implemented at New Houses, Chollerford (dragons' teeth, gateways, "slow" roundels, red rumble strips etc).

Alix and I joined Conor Edgar (Technical Transport Assistant) for a look at **the footways in Wall** on 10<sup>th</sup> June. Michael McMonagle (Transport Programme Officer) then provided me with a rough estimate of the cost of widening the footway by 50cm from Falshaw to Hillhead House and alongside the gable end of Penrhyn. The total cost would be about £50,000. It seems that the road is wide enough that the footway could be widened without the need to make any changes on the other side of the road. This would leave a narrow section of footway between Falshaw and the garage (which Michael hasn't given me an estimate for yet) and a narrow section alongside The Bungalow which could be widened by cutting the hedge back. The first step would be a Road Safety Audit, which would tell us if these changes are possible. It would cost about £2,000 and we would have to find the money ourselves.

I also spoke to Richard McKenzie about **New Lane** yesterday. He didn't think that a request for a barrier to stop walkers from falling into the stream was likely to be successful, because there's no evidence of an existing safety problem. He pointed out that if the owner of the adjacent land wanted to rebuild the fence that separates the road from the stream they'd be welcome to. He's aware that the landowner has spoken to Tim Fish about this issue and will speak to Tim Fish about it to find out what was agreed. I asked Richard whether New lane could become "access only" and he thought that this would make for a very good LTP request.

Richard felt that, due to the expense, it would be better to wait until we've got our hands on funding (for example, through the Hadrian's Wall Ten Year Investment Programme) before requesting **improvements to the footway on the A6079 between the layby and Low Brunton crossroads**. Tony Brown (the Rural Growth Manager) was keen to meet us on site to have a look at the problem, but hasn't responded to my last email. I'll nudge him again soon and let you know if I manage to arrange a site visit.

Richard felt that requesting **dropped kerbs** at The Chare and Warden View was sensible. He's given me permission to combine requests for dropped kerbs in various villages into one, so there's no need for the parish council to request them.

There's no need to request **the resurfacing of Chapel Lane**. Highways Maintenance are already aware of its condition and it will be considered for resurfacing in 2025/26.

The traffic calming measures at New Houses, Chollerford, haven't been implemented yet – so the **advanced stop lines** for cyclists on the bridge haven't been implemented either. The delay is due to an officer being off sick, but he's back now and has promised to prioritise the work.

Neil Snowdon (Principal Programme Officer, Highways Improvement) is grateful that parish councillors are willing to monitor **the parking problem between Low Brunton crossroads and the bridge**. I've asked him whether we could be ready to implement the double yellow lines quickly if the weather improves and the problem returns.

Neil Snowdon presented a report in response to **the A68 traffic calming petition** at Tynedale Local Area Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> May. His report stated that no action was required, but at the meeting he agreed to consider a lower (50mph) speed limit following a repeat traffic speed survey. He also agreed to share the 2021 A68 Route Safety Study report with councillors, and I can share it with anyone who'd like to read it. We're hoping to receive an update at a TLAC meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Residents met near Beukley on 12<sup>th</sup> June and again last night to discuss how to push NCC to take effective action to improve road safety.

I haven't managed to get an update on **the glamping site on Brunton Bank**. I suspect that the landowner still hasn't complied with the Enforcement Notice for the unauthorised access. I've asked what steps Planning Enforcement intends to take next, and expect to have an update for you in time for the next meeting.

My **species rich grassland** projects were "specially commended" at the **Love Northumberland awards**, and we received a framed certificate which is currently on display at Chollerford First School, a heart-shaped plaque which you're welcome to display in Wall village hall and £50 which we're planning to spend on wooden rakes. This is being paid into Wall Parish Council's bank account. I'll provide Alix with my own bank details so that the money can be transferred, and a receipt for the rakes once I've bought them.

The **new Climate Change Action Plan** has been released. I haven't read it yet, but intend to get stuck in over the next few weeks. It's an important document, and I'd encourage everyone to read it. It's long, but you can pick the chapters that interest you. You can find it here: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/News/2024/March/Square/Climate-Change-Action-Plan-2024-26.pdf>

The council has decided to extend the **Environment and Climate Fund** for another year. There'll be £50,000 available in grants of up to and possibly over £5,000 for community groups with eligible projects. Applications haven't opened yet, but I'll let you know when they do.

The council has also decided to produce a **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy** for the county by the end of this financial year – which is great news and long overdue.

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The council has secured another £12.4m for home energy efficiency improvements through the **Warmer Homes** scheme. Due to high demand, they'll only be able to guarantee that the work will be done if applications are received in the next few weeks. Applications received after that will be placed on a reserve list.

A **new climate change team leader** will start work on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Her name is Leanne Wilson, and she has a PhD in climate change and loads of relevant experience – so she sounds perfectly suited to the job.

The Environment Agency released **river sewage pollution data for 2023** in April, and I forgot to mention it at the last meeting. The good news is that the monitoring upstream of Wall was generally better than in 2022, and that the discharge from Colwell sewage treatment works decreased by 61% (from 4737 hours in 2022 to 1846 in 2023). The combined result is that known sewage discharges upstream of Wall decreased by 8% (from 7,694 hours in 2022 to 7,080 in 2023). Unfortunately, known sewage discharges on the South Tyne rose by 104% and known sewage discharges for the Tyne at Watersmeet rose by 32%. Some of these increases will have been due to better monitoring - until all sewage assets are well monitored we have no way of knowing if increases are due to better monitoring or worse sewage pollution.

The County Council is conducting a public consultation on its review of **polling districts and polling stations**, and it closes on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July. No changes are proposed for Wall parish, but other changes are proposed for the Humshaugh ward and many changes are proposed across the county. This is a link to the summary document:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Councillors-and-Democracy/2022%20election%20results/Polling-District-Summary.pdf>

Responses to the consultation are to be emailed to [PDReview@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PDReview@northumberland.gov.uk) or posted to the Election Office at NCC, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF.