

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 20th March 2025 at 7:30pm.
At Wall Village Hall.**

PRESENT	Cllrs: Mark Wood Chair, Elisa Wyrley-Birch Vice-Chair, Steve Blake, John Lamb. County Councillor Nick Morphet. Clerk: Alix Pearson. Parishioners of Wall. Conservative Candidate for CC Election.
----------------	--

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
2711	1. Apologies for absence and Declaration of interests Apologies were received from Jane Michie. There were no declarations of interest.
2712	2. Approval of Minutes The minutes were approved as true record of the previous meeting and signed. There were no matters arising that were not addressed in the agenda.
2713	3. Clerk's Financial Report The clerk presented the figures to date for Q4 and Councillors approved the expenditure. Carried Forward at 20/03/25 - £8585.50 Anticipated carry over at year end: £8585
2714	4. Election Briefing The clerk provided information relating to the forthcoming Parish Council Elections on 1st May 2025. This was also the date of the County Council Elections, at which Cllr Morphet will stand down. The Chair and all Councillors offered their very grateful thanks to Councillor Morphet for his dedication to the parish over the past four years. Councillors made specific mention of the grant which was the final sum to enable the Village Hall roof to be replaced; of the support over the removal of the unlawful glamping site at Planetrees; for the additional speed sign at the north end of the village and for the establishment of the species rich grassland at the end of New Lane. Cllr Morphet will be missed and warm wishes are extended for the success of his future activities. Cllr Blake had indicated his desire to stand down at the forthcoming election and was warmly thanked for all of his service for the people of Wall. Of particular note was the enormous amount of work undertaken in wake of Storm Arwen when Cllr Blake was newly in post as Chair, and his efforts as PC representative and Chair of Village Hall Trustees, in arranging and managing the replacement of the Village Hall roof. This work has allowed at future works on the Village Hall to be worthwhile. The remaining 4 Councillors indicated their intention to stand again for another term and two parishioners attending as observers agreed that they were also willing to stand. All current councillors will remain in post until 6th May 2025. The clerk outlined the various deadlines pertaining to the presentation of nomination forms and announcement of outcomes.

2715	<p>5. Review of Planning Applications</p> <p>There had been very few planning applications or decisions since the meeting on 16th January and there was little of note to discuss.</p> <p>It was noted that work appeared to have started at Halton Grange. Some concerns had been raised by parishioners over the work taking place at St Oswald's Cottage which is Grade 11 listed. Cllr Wood undertook to try and speak with the builders and/or the new owner to establish what is being done and whether the Conservation Officers are aware.</p> <p>It has since been discovered that a member of the public had reported the building work at St Oswald's Cottage to the Planning Department and it is understood that the owner has received a Cease & Desist Notice.</p>
2716	<p>6. County Councillor's Report</p> <p>Cllr Morphet's comprehensive report appears at Appendix 1</p>
2717	<p>7. Chair's Maintenance Report</p> <p>The Chair has inspected all the recently planted trees on the bank at the back of the green and found them to be mainly still living.</p> <p>The previously recorded actions of strimming and cutting back overhanging branches in the area next to the Public Conveniences are still outstanding.</p> <p>Specifically mentioned was the tree survey which was undertaken in 2022 and which should be revisited to follow up recommended actions.</p> <p>It was agreed that the 2022 report should be an agenda item at the next meeting.</p>
2718	<p>8. Fix My Street Review</p> <p>Cllr Wyrley-Birch had undertaken a review of outstanding items in the Parish on Fix My Street. It was thought that these items had been addressed but the report had not been cleared.</p> <p>Cllr Wyrley-Birch undertook to compile a review of Fix My Street items for every Parish Council meeting and this will become a standing item on the Agenda.</p> <p>The date for the 2025 litter pick is 12th April. Clerk to arrange litter pick equipment and place notices on the board and on FB page.</p>
2719	<p>9. Village Hall Report</p> <p>Cllr Blake made the following VH Report to Parish Council:</p> <p>The Suez project is now completed. There was an underspend on the awarded amount so the Chair of Trustees asked if certain items could be included to take up the underspend. The hall now has a commercial plate warmer, and a speaker system.</p> <p>Bid has been submitted to National Lotteries Communities Fund for £10k to refurb Gents toilets and replace and automate front doors.</p> <p>VE80 party planned for 11th May, tickets £5.00 per person. Afternoon tea and activities for old and young. Tickets from AP, the Watsons, Kathy R, Susie and Ros Elliott.</p> <p>The Birtley Garden Club are shifting their meetings to Wall, which is a welcome replacement for the WI income.</p> <p>As Cllr Blake is standing down as Parish Councillor, he will retain his seat as a Village Hall Trustee, but will no longer be the PC representative Trustee, a post which will be filled after the election. Once again, Cllr Blake was thanked for his service.</p>
	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 15th May 2025 at 7.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 9.00pm</p>

dCOUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR WALL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 20/3/25

1) A new iteration of the LTP programme for 25/26 was released in February. Unfortunately, the **improvements to the footway between the lay-by and Low Brunton** that I requested haven't made the programme. They haven't ruled out **repairs to the A6079 within the village**, but it's contingent upon them securing extra funding. If it doesn't make the 25/26 programme it'll be high priority for 26/27.

It doesn't look like the **traffic calming measures on the A68** at Beukley that were requested via a petition have made the list, although I haven't received any formal confirmation. They'd originally been rejected due to a lack of serious accidents, but the Highways Programme officers agreed to re-consider it after I reminded them about the recent fatal accidents. A report's due to come to LAC, and we'll find out what the decision is when it does.

Making New Lane access only is still under consideration. The decision is in Neil Snowdon's hands, and I've been told that he has some concerns about how enforceable it would be.

I've been told that the budget won't stretch to **dropped kerbs** in all of the locations that I've asked for them in, and they've asked me to help them to decide where to put them. I intend to include the Wall dropped kerbs in a longlist of priority locations which the officers will then whittle down to a short list.

The surface dressing of the Military Road between Stagshaw roundabout and the Fawcett Hill turn off is still in the programme, as are the carriageway repairs to the U8176 at Codlaw Dene.

2) I read in the minutes that **the drainage problem at Dunkirk** had been mentioned at the last meeting. I'd flagged it up via FixMyStreet almost two years ago, and was told that it wasn't the County Council's responsibility. I'd then tried the Environment Agency and been told that it wasn't in their remit because it wasn't causing loss of soil or pollution. However, when I received complaints about ice on the road during the cold snap in January I spoke to the Highways Inspector about it. He told me that Highways had been in touch with the landowner and the landowner had investigated but hadn't been able to identify the cause. Apparently the land ownership has changed, and the land's now owned by a Mr John Reay.

3) Don't forget that if you'd like to investigate the possibility of getting **the footway alongside the A6079 in Wall** widened you'll need to pay £2,000 for a Road Safety Audit. It's possible that your next County Councillor will be able to contribute towards the cost out of their MLIS allowance. The widening work would cost c. £75,000 though, and the parish council would need to raise the money themselves!

4) The public transport officers were grateful for my suggestions for **improvements to bus services**. They're looking into the possibility of providing more 680 buses in the evenings and on Sundays, and they're also looking at improving the 682 service between Hexham and West Woodburn. Some Gunnerton residents have recently complained to me that the 682 drops them almost a mile from the doctor's surgery in Humshaugh, so I intend to ask the public transport officers to consider a detour into the village. Unfortunately it won't be possible to re-introduce hourly services on any route yet, but that could change if usage increases.

5) There's been no further progress regarding **the glamping site on Brunton Bank**. The new landowner hasn't been identified or contacted yet. The letter that the Enforcement Officer left for them at the site entrance hasn't been removed yet. If anyone sees anyone on site, the Enforcement Officer would be very grateful for a phone call.

6) Mark very kindly strimmed the Wild Wall species-rich grassland site for us a week or two ago, and we're hoping it's going to help the flowers to compete with the grasses. My colleague Antonia is very keen to get involved with both of my SRG projects, if she gets elected. I'm keen to stay involved too, and hope to be in the area each September to help with raking.

7) You might remember being asked about the quantity, quality and accessibility of **open spaces** in the parish by a company called Ethos, between November 2023 and January 2024. Ethos also did their own research and open space audits, and have now released their results in the form of a 240 page document. In terms of quantity, Wall was felt to have enough amenity green space and recreation ground, but not quite enough children's play space, not enough allotments, and not enough play space for youths. However, the report also points out that parishes with fewer than 1,000 parishioners aren't expected or obliged to provide allotments or play space for youths. Wall's playing field was felt to be of good quality, although the report does suggest that it could be improved by the addition of welcoming signage. The children's play area was felt to be of fair quality, but equipment quality was felt to be good. The report recommends "the addition of hard surfacing below play equipment to improve access from entrances" – which doesn't make a lot of sense to me! The accessibility of Wall's open spaces was felt to be acceptable.

Report: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/NorthumberlandOpenSpaceAssessment2024.pdf>

Map: [Open Space Assessment](#) (this is the best way to check quality scores and recommendations)

8) The Northern Powergrid Foundation's **Community Resilience Grant** re-opened for applications this week, and will close on 11th May. Up to £20,000 is available for improvements to community resilience including solar panels, batteries and heat pumps for village halls. Organisations which have received grants in the past are welcome to re-apply. For more information, go to: <https://www.northernpowergridfoundation.com/>.

9) The County Council has just launched a consultation on **how it can better support nature in its parks and green spaces**. It's open until 21st April. To complete the consultation, go to: <https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/waste/2025-grounds-maintenance-consultation/>.

10) The county's **new Rights of Way Improvement Plan** was adopted by cabinet last week – two and a half years after I first drew the Leader of the Council's attention to the fact that the existing RoWIP was six years out of date. The Rights of Way officers and Local Access Forum members (including myself) have put a huge amount of work into it, so it's great to see it being adopted. Please read it – and then push the County Council to act on it. You can find it here: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Public%20Rights%20of%20Way%20Orders/DRAFT-ROWIP-for-consultation-2024.pdf>.