

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 16th November 2023 at 7:30pm.
At Wall Village Hall.**

PRESENT	Cllrs: Mark Wood, Chair (MW), Jane Michie (JM), Gina Scott-Middleton (GSM) Elisa Wyrley-Birch (EWB), Nick Morphet (County Councillor) (NM) Clerk: Alix Pearson (AP). Mr Michael Scott, Parishioner
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NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
2583	1. Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Steve Blake and John Lamb
2584	2 Declaration of interests GSM declared an interest in a Planning Application and would take no part in the discussion, but Mr Michael Scott would attend that part of the meeting to answer any questions.
2585	3. Approval of Minutes The minutes were approved as true record of the previous meeting.
2586	4. County Councillor Update NM's comprehensive report appears in full at appendix 1
2587	5. Clerk's Financial Report AP reported that the missing payment for the maintenance of the toilet block has been sought and received from NCC. It was estimated that there would be approximately £4,500 in reserves at the end of the financial year after planned expenditure.

Confirmed as a true record of Meeting:

6. Review of Action Log

a) New Playground Equipment

EWB and AP had met a new playground contractor, Pennine Playgrounds from North Tyneside, who had been most responsive and produced a fully costed quotation for the supply and installation of a medium sized climbing frame and an embankment slide. The costs excluding VAT are £10,500. EWB and AP had begun completion of the S106 Sport and Play fund application and this will be finished and sent to NCC for the application deadline of 17th November 2023. There were other funds which may be approached should the s106 funds be insufficient or unsuccessful.

Once the funds are in place, consultation will take place with the near neighbours to show the proposed equipment and its location.

RESOLVED - AP to complete s106 Application and sent to NCC.

b) Community Resilience Plan

Northern Powergrid Foundation rejected the bid for PVs for the Village Hall. Further grant opportunities will be sought.

RESOLVED - AP to explore grant opportunity from SUEZ Landfill

c) Book Exchange in Church

Tidying and preparation of the book exchange continues, but a larger bookshelf is needed in order to keep the books tidy and provide an attractive offer to visitors. **Action All to keep their eyes open for a bookshelf of the correct size which will acceptable when placed in the church.**

d) Wildflower Project

MW presented a comprehensive planting plan for the trees, showing suggested locations for 32 trees. Costs to purchase the trees will be approx £200 including suitable rabbit guards.

This expenditure was unanimously **APPROVED**.

Chris Mowatt the mowing contractor trimmed the area beneath the trees.

MW continues to source suitable oak trees to mark the Coronation.

e) Playground General Issues

GSM had sourced football nets at £40, expedite on which was unanimously **APPROVED**.

The nets will need to be taken down during periods of poor weather and in the moving season, so a suitable place to store them, allowing them to be accessed by all users, needs to be found.

ACTION - All to consider suitable places to store nets.

AP to ask NCC if we could place a storage container on the hardstanding outside the toilet block.

2590	<p>7. Review of Planning Application Log -</p> <p>21/03394/FUL Land on Hadrian's Wall holiday accommodation Ongoing enforcement actions are progressing. See NM's report at appendix 1 for full details.</p> <p>23/03918/FUL Braeside, Side extension, garage conversion and raise the roof for the rooms. Closing date for Comments 14th November 2023</p> <p>Mr Michael Scott attended to answer any questions regarding this proposal. The closing date had passed and there were several positive comments on the portal and no adverse comments. The Parish Council had lodged there was no objection to the proposal.</p> <p>The main concerns, of both the applicant and the Parish Council, was the impact that such a large building project would have on the area of green immediately outside the property. This area is low lying and poorly drained and has necessary vehicular traffic from Braeside and the Village Hall. Worsening climate has brought significant rainfall with the probability that this will become a feature of future weather patterns. Works to replace the roof of the Village Hall are currently in progress which requires additional vehicle access over the same area of green.</p> <p>It was agreed that some efforts should be made to discuss these problems with the landowner, Allendale Estates, and permission be sought to improve this area of the green by addressing drainage and surface.</p> <p>ACTION - EWB to approach Allendale Estate Land Agent to open discussion.</p>
2591	<p>8. Village Hall Report</p> <p>As apologies were given by SB, the Village Hall Report was given by MW. Roofing materials had been delivered to site and scaffolding erected. It was found that some Building Regulations Approval was still awaited, so work is likely to start in earnest at the beginning of December.</p>

Confirmed as a true record of Meeting:

2592	<p>9. Consideration of Charitable Donations</p> <p>At this time of year, the Parish Council considers donations to be made to important local causes, many of which have come to rely on such donations.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that whilst inflationary pressures had increased costs for many organisations, the precept from which our donations are drawn had remained static in 23/24 and therefore it was RESOLVED that the sum of donations could not be increased at this time.</p> <p>Regular donations have been made to The Great North Air Ambulance Service and this will continue APPROVED at £150.</p> <p>Similarly a donation to Tynedale Hospice at Home, was also APPROVED at £150.</p> <p>In previous years, food poverty had been the focus of donations and The People’s Kitchen in Newcastle had been the recipient of £100. It was considered that an even more local charity might be an appropriate recipient and West Northumberland Food Bank, based in Hexham was considered.</p> <p>ACTION - AP to arrange payments to GNAAS and THaH and investigate the opportunities to donate £100 to the West Northumberland Food Bank.</p>
2593	<p>10. Accessibility Issues in the Village & Environs</p> <p>As the widening of the footway between the lay-by and Brunton Crossroads has once more been unsuccessful in the LTP bid, further action is necessary to investigate alternative means of making the footway wide enough for the safe use of pedestrians and wheeled carriages. NM will undertake to conduct a Footway Accessibility Audit accompanied by an Officer of NCC .</p> <p>The date and time of this audit - likely to be a Saturday - will be circulated to allow Councillors and Parishioners to attend.</p> <p>ACTION - AP to post date on website, noticeboard and FB page.</p>
2594	<p>11. Additional Business</p> <p>a) Sycamore Tree outside Ridge Lea</p> <p>This tree, owned by Karbon Homes, has several branches overhanging properties in Mithras Court. They have been notified by phone of the issue but no action has been forthcoming.</p> <p>ACTION - AP to write letter to Karbon Homes requesting immediate attention. MW to hand deliver it.</p> <p>b) Starlings</p> <p>Wall Village played host to a significant number of Starlings during winter 22/23. The roosting caused significant damage to a number of trees on the west side of the village, many of which have had to be removed. It is believed that starlings often return to roosts for a number of years, so a small sub group of interested residents are monitoring previous roosts. Should there be signs of a fresh roosting infestation, deterrents will be deployed.</p> <p>c) Blocked drain at bottom of Old Lane</p> <p>It is unlikely that NCC will have the resources to attend to this recurring problem, requiring a more local solution.</p>
2595	<p>12. Date of next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 18th January 2024 at 7.30pm</p> <p>The meeting ended at 9.45pm</p>

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COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR WALL PC MEETING 16/11/23

I took the Highways Maintenance Area Manager (Andy Olive) on a tour of the parish on 3rd October. We started at **Chapel Lane**, and he told me it wasn't bad enough for his department to get involved and that I would have to contribute £40,000 out of my Members Local Improvement Scheme before they'd be willing to take the job on. He said that we should ask for it to be resurfaced through the Local Transport Plan – which we have done.

We then had a look at **Spouty Lonnen**, and he thinks that it's fine as it is. I have to say that I agree with him. It's rough but it's full of character, and we can't make every old lane smooth – even if they're adopted roads. The County Council's obliged to maintain every adopted road so that it remains "suitable for the ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood", and in the case of Spouty Lonnen I think they'd be able to argue that it's suitable for the traffic it gets.

We then headed up **New Lane**. There were no drainage issues on the day, so someone will need to photograph it and flag it on FixMyStreet when it next floods. Andy told me that if we wanted it resurfaced we'd have to request it through the Local Transport Plan programme. I then showed him the stream bank which forms the boundary between the highway and the land at Middle Brunton. He told me that the stream bank was stable and that it wasn't affecting the road, so it didn't need anything doing to it. That was quite frustrating, because I was told two years ago that there was a problem and that it would be investigated. I can't argue with the Area Manager though, so I'll pass the information on to the landowners and close the case.

We then drove to **Dunkirk** and I showed him the **drainage problem**. He said he would look into it, but he hasn't got back to me on that yet.

The **Local Transport Plan long list** has been released this week, and I'm afraid that it's mostly bad news for Wall. Chapel Lane is unlikely to be resurfaced in 2024/25, and the cycle path between Hexham and Low Brunton was rejected on grounds of cost. Unfortunately the improvements to the footway alongside the A6079 between Wall and Low Brunton were also rejected, this time on the grounds that there's no scope to widen the footway. I spoke to Neil Snowdon in Highways Programme about this yesterday, and I explained to him that the plan is to improve the footway by shoring up the bank, scraping back vegetation and resurfacing the footway, and not by taking any road. He's agreed to reconsider it, so I sent him the quote that Michael McMonagle had provided us with and told him to speak to Michael if he needed any more information. I've also reminded him that we've submitted an Expression of Interest to the Hadrian's Wall Ten Year Investment Programme.

There is a little bit of good news for the parish in the Local Transport Plan. The A68 to the south of Bingfield *might* be surface dressed in 2024/25, and the A6079 between Low Brunton crossroads and Dunkirk will be resurfaced as phase two of the resurfacing work that they did this year and doesn't need to be requested by the parish council or myself. Unfortunately, it won't necessarily be resurfaced in 2024/25.

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I spoke to Will Rutherford at Shotton Waste Services about **the double yellow lines on Brunton Bank**, and he's fine with us giving them a go. His only concern is that people will be more likely to park in front of his garage, so he's going to think about ways that he can stop that happening. I suggested that we could put a sign up telling people about the laybys on the Wark road, and he liked that idea. He suggested it could be fixed to the post of an existing road sign, either pre-emptively or if and when we encounter any problems. I spoke to Neil Snowdon about the double yellow lines yesterday. He was still keen to put them on the back burner, but I told him that residents, parish councillors and myself wanted him to press on with them.

I spoke to Richard McKenzie in Highways Programme about **the centre line on the A6079** through Wall. He told me that the line had most likely been left in place at the top of the village because it was felt that the bend in the road would benefit from having one. He also told me that they'll be back at some point to tidy the centre of the road up and make it look neater.

Talking about speeding traffic, I've been doing **Community Speedwatch** in Hexham and I'm keen to start doing it in Wall – so if you speak to anyone who'd like to partner up with me please ask them to get in touch.

A decision's still to be made about **making the green light on Chollerford Bridge longer for the benefit of cyclists**. The decision now rests with a Sustainable Transport officer called Alex Thompson. His first suggestion was to introduce an Advanced Stop Line for cyclists, which is one of those boxes which allows cyclists to go to the front of the queue. I told him that I didn't think it would help, because being at the front of the queue isn't enough to guarantee that a cyclist will be able to get across the bridge on a green light from a standing start. Having a car behind them might give cyclists a little bit of protection if cars started coming towards them though! An Advanced Stop Line would also require a "feeder lane" to allow cyclists to access it safely when there's a queue of traffic, and we don't know if there's room for one yet.

Keith Hopper hasn't been out to look for a suitable location for **an EV charger on the village green** yet, but I spoke to him today and it seems to be because the funding for the charger isn't in place yet. He said he'd look into it in January when the funding was in place.

The only two **funding opportunities** that Delia suggested **for the playground equipment** was the Suez Landfill Communities Trust – which I emailed Alix about – and the Starbuck's Nature Hubs Fund which she told me about on Friday. I can send you more details if you're interested. Don't forget that the next deadline for S106 Sport and Play applications is tomorrow!

Alex Campbell in Planning Enforcement has obtained a quote for the removal of the toilet hut from **the glamping site on Brunton Bank**, but it hasn't been authorised yet – so the toilet hut hasn't been removed. If the quote isn't authorised she'll commence prosecution. The deadline for complying with the Enforcement Notice for the unauthorised entrance is Friday 24th November, and if the landowner hasn't complied by then Alex will start to gather quotes from contractors to put it back to how it was.

Since the County Council declared an **ecological emergency** in July it's been working hard to provide residents with information about the actions that it's taking (and intends to take) on environmental

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issues. One of the ways that it's done this is by publishing an **Environmental Policy Statement**, which is well worth reading. I can share a link to it via Alix (it's p7 to p30):

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2257/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-Oct-2023%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

Cabinet agreed the scope of **the next Climate Change Action Plan** last week, and it's going to contain more on adaptation to the impacts of climate change than the last one did. They also agreed to set a target for Northumberland to be net zero for all greenhouse gases by 2040. That'll require us to reduce our methane and nitrous oxide emissions as well as our CO₂ emissions. The current target for Northumberland to be net zero for CO₂ by 2030 has been retained, and a new target for the County Council to be net zero for CO₂ by 2030 has been set. The new Climate Change Action Plan will be published next year and will run until 2026. I can share a link to the report with you via Alix (the CCAP agenda item is on pages 23 to 36):

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2258/Public%20reports%20pack%2007th-Nov-2023%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

And finally, I thought you might be interested to hear that **Hexham Town Council declined my offer to present to them on sewage pollution of rivers**, on the grounds that my offer might be politically motivated! So it looks like I'll have to take my politically motivated efforts to clean up our rivers for the benefit of everyone elsewhere! I'll be asking Climate Action Newbrough and Fourstones if they'd like me to do a presentation for them, and if they're keen we might be able to make it a public event.

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