

Longhirst Parish Council

Bi-monthly Parish Council Meeting

6PM on THURSDAY, 02 JULY 2020
(online)

MINUTES

[Minutes can also be found online](#)

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllr Peter Coates, Cllr Mark Davis, Cllr Catherine Farrell, Cllr Chris Marr, Cllr Richard Tordof

IN ATTENDANCE: Helyn Douglas (Clerk)
Cllr David Towns (NCC)
Janet Quinn (Mickelwood Residents' Association), Andy Robson (Longhirst Hall Residents' Association)
Tom Howard (resident)

APOLOGIES: Cllr Maureen Lowes
Maureen Carrick (Longhirst Colliery Residents' Association)

At the request of Cllr C Farrell, Cllr P Coates chaired this meeting as the main issue is the Anaerobic Digester

A	PUBLIC FORUM (10 minutes) There were no issues raised.
B	NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL UPDATE - CLLR DAVID TOWNS Cllr Towns reported that the Local Area Councils (LACs) should soon be up and running again; and Full Council should be held electronically in September (technical issues are currently being dealt with). The County Council is seeking to carry on business despite the lockdown. It has been able to process the various grant schemes and is working closely with networks of local groups through the Northumberland Communities Together initiative. NCC is also considering how best to reopen schools in September in line with changing Government guidance that will require children to return.
	Anaerobic Digester - 18/04533/FUL This item was moved up the agenda to allow Cllr D Towns (NCC) to participate. He was pleased to note that this application has been put back to a later Strategic Planning Committee meeting (in August). Parish Councillors thanked him for his help in supporting the arguments put forward by the Parish Council. He agreed that the increase in volume of traffic and size of the vehicles would present a major problem, adding to the already frequent highway damage. He also noted the shift from an agricultural facility to an industrial one. He had also circulated the photographs supplied by David and Annabel Fleming to the other Planning Committee members.

Councillors were grateful for his submission and delighted with the outcome, but were unclear exactly what the extension was intended to achieve. It did appear that insufficient public consultation was a key element in the decision to defer the decision; Cllr P Coates asked if there was any way Cllr Towns could help engage North East Grains?

Cllr Towns replied that it would be more usual for the applicant to initiate any public consultation, and felt it was outside of his remit and that of the County Council. However, he thought it appropriate for the Parish Council to write to NE Grains to request such a meeting.

If the proposal was successful Cllr Marr asked what would happen regarding the traffic issues? Cllr Towns suggested that 'conditions' could be applied through a traffic plan' (such as the routes used, arrival and departure times, and size of vehicles). But he noted that these can be amended afterwards so give no guarantees.

He also pointed out that the Highway Planners involved in the assessment are a specific set of officers that sit within the Planning Department, and are not the same as the Highways Department that looks after maintenance; and noted that there may not be very much coordination between the two. There is also no option to force the applicant to upgrade the road system. Cllr R Tordoff suggested involving the Highways Department in the existing road issues to get their engagement.

Tom Howard (resident) suggested refining the arguments around the use of the green belt for an industrial facility and the subsequent impact on the environment. The scale of the site was also a concern, Cllr P Coates stated that the site will be 500 kw, whilst the Cockle Park development is only 75 kw - making this proposal 6.7 times larger. The reason why such a large development is needed would be a key question to ask of North East Grains.

Members agreed to write formally to North East Grains to request a meeting, with representatives from the Parish Council and NCC Highways, and possibly one or two residents.

ACTION: CLERK

C RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION / GROUPS:

Longhirst Colliery - Maureen Carrick (apologies)

Micklewood - Janet Quinn (present)

Longhirst Hall - Andy Robson (present)

The key item for both Micklewood and Longhirst Hall residents remains the access to the village, though there appears to be no progress yet on opening up the existing gate for Mickelwood residents. Residents understand that the site owner maintains that once the first house in Dairy Lane is sold then access will be resolved (though the path will not be accessible to wheelchair or pushchair users).

Currently no work is going on at Dairy Lane. It may be that the delay is due to individual plots needing to be sold and the new owners having to find their own builder. The gap put in to the wall to allow access for construction traffic was limited to a two-year window.

The Parish Council is happy to offer its support to the Residents' Associations if they wish to pursue this matter with the owner - but emphasizes the need for this to come from the residents.
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1 APOLOGIES

Apologies are listed above. During this Covid-19 lockdown the Chair has given permission for absence to any Councillors not able to join these online meetings.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

[Use this link to check individual Declarations of Interests for Longhirst Parish Council](#)

Please note that if a councillor has a change to make to their form, they do not need to complete a brand new form, but have to advise of the change in writing to:

democraticservices@northumberland.gov.uk

New template if required - [Updated Northumberland DOI register form - January 2020](#)

3 PREVIOUS MINUTES - [04 June 2020](#)

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING (not covered elsewhere)

4.1 Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2019/20

The information has been posted to the website, and the papers sent to the Chair for signature.

4.2 Letter of thanks to L Carey

This has been done, and a reply received.

4.3 [Land East of Old Vicarage - 20/00109/FUL](#)

The Parish Council response has been submitted and further information is awaited.

4.4 Rob Murfin - Planning meeting

Some meeting dates had been offered but Councillors decided to wait and get updates from the Northumberland Association of Local Councils.

4.5 Fly Tipping

Cllr P Coates reported that Cllr Glen Sanderson (NCC) advised a recent NALC meeting that the Ashington area has seen a significant increase in this problem during lockdown. Both residents present did note the value of reporting any fly tipping incidents immediately to NCC whose responses have been very timely.

4.6 Support for Village Hall

A donation of £2,000 has been given to the Village Hall to help meet the loss of income from bookings due to Covid-19.. The Hall has not been able to access the grant of £10,000 available to Village Halls - technically it is still registered as a Church Hall and was therefore ineligible. Cllr D Towns (NCC) understood that a Council Officer had contacted Mike Elphick to sort this out but the outcome was not known. Cllr Towns offered that Mr Elphick could contact him direct if the matter was not resolved.

4.7 Road Signs & Speed Reduction Measures

The process has taken some time but the new road signs are now up at the entrance to the village, and the vegetation has been strimmed back. We have

received some favourable comments from residents. The speed reduction warning signs have still not yet been fitted but after further contact with the County Council are due to be installed shortly.

Maureen Carrick (Longhirst Colliery Residents' Assoc) had made a request for a similar sign at the entrance to Longhirst Colliery. Cllr D Towns offered to pay for this sign from his Small Schemes Fund. Councillors thanked him for that; the Clerk is to contact Mrs Carrick to clarify the exact location.

ACTION: CLERK / CLLR D TOWNS (NCC)

4.8 Highways Issues

Cllr P Coates reported that three of the large manholes on Ashington Road have now been covered. The County Council is discussing with BT about who is responsible for maintaining these. The kerbs at the cross-roads and on the first bend West of the level crossing appear to have been damaged by heavy goods vehicles - but no remedial action has yet been taken.

Cllr C Marr asked if there was any further information on damage to the level crossing caused by HGVs, an issue cited by some people objecting to the Anaerobic Digester. Cllr G Fahy felt that this was most likely repair work being over time during quiet periods, rather than multiple repeated incidents of damage. It was noted this work does usually involve a temporary road closure so can appear disruptive, but was not thought of as evidence of serious damage.

5 PLANNING

5.1 Anaerobic Digester - 18/04533/FUL

Covered above.

5.2 20/00465/PREAPP Stobswood Haul Road

Councillors stated that they had been unable to access the associated documents on the NCC Planning Portal. Whilst generally supportive of the principle they felt unable to comment due to the lack of information. The Clerk is to check this.

ACTION: CLERK

6 BUSINESS

6.1 Support for village groups during Covid-19 crisis

Councillors were not aware of any groups currently requiring support.

7 BUDGET

7.1 [Bank Statements 20/21](#) & [Budget Forecast 20/21](#)

The statements were made available and the forecast was reviewed.

7.2 Pensions Declaration

The Clerk confirmed that the relevant declaration had been made to the Pensions Regulator (no scheme is required due to the small number of hours worked by the Clerk).

8 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 [Revised Model Code of Conduct, NALC](#) - (closes 17 Aug 20)

Cllr D Towns (NCC) commented that there is a change of emphasis in the draft suggesting the code should extend to Councillors beyond their professional life and into personal public communications as well. He stressed this is a 'model' code and a different emphasis could be put on any future version adopted by the Parish Council.

9 REPORTS from Councillors

There were no items raised.

10 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items raised.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Communications Mast

Cllr G Fahy has seen a notice that a communications mast is proposed for installation by Network Rail on the s-bend on the Ashington Road - but had not seen any planning application relating to this. The Clerk is to investigate.

ACTION: CLERK

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6pm on Thursday, 03 September 2020

CLOSE OF MEETING AT 7.10PM