

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Monday 25th January 2021 – 5.00pm via Zoom

Councillors present:

Chair: Martin Smith

Parish Council members: Marilyn Bagley, Stephen Bagley, Margaret Brooks, Michael Craster, M Green and E Pearson.

In attendance: 28 members of the public, County Councillor Wendy Pattison and Terry Luck and Neil Snowdon, DCC Highways team.

Clerk: Adam Shanley

2361 Apologies for absence

None received.

2362 Declarations of interest

Cllr M Green declared an interest in item 2376 of the Agenda and took no part in the discussions on this item.

2363 Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 19th November 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th November were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

2364 Matters Arising

None received.

2365 Public participation

Mrs Marion Gallon expressed a concern about the continued high number of visitors Craster is receiving in spite of the Covid-19 lockdown measures. Mrs Gallon asked if a sign could be installed in Craster reminding people of the regulations and the stay at home message.

The Clerk advised that he had raised this with the Director of Local Services at NCC and had received the following response:

"We will be placing a VMS sign at the cross roads on the B1339 / Windyside Hill to reinforce the 'Stay Home - Essential Travel Only' message so that we pick up traffic travelling on one of the main routes to Craster before they get to the village (as once at the village it's very unlikely they will be deterred from continuing their journey and parking up), whilst also picking up people also travelling towards Embleton and Longhoughton."

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should request an additional sign for Craster village and also ask the Police how they are approaching enforcing the rules when they come across visitors in Craster.

Mr and Mrs Reeves raised the concern about the U3014 road in Dunstan. Mr and Mrs Reeves advised that the road allows for water to gather and this is now freezing in the cold weather and proving extremely treacherous for local residents, not helped by the steep topography of the road. Mrs Reeves advised that this was reported last year and nothing was done about this. The Clerk agreed to write to NCC Highways to see what could be done as a matter of urgency.

2366 Presentation by NCC Highways Officers on a proposed new parking scheme for Craster.

The Chair welcomed Terry Luck and Neil Snowdon, DCC Highways Officers, to the meeting to discuss the results of the Residents Permit Parking scheme.

The Chair reminded everyone that 67% of residents in Craster had voted in favour of this last year.

Neil began by stating that NCC Highways had reviewed the results of the consultation, and whilst the majority of respondents had voted in favour of the scheme, the total number of responses represented only 60% of the village and the highways criteria for introducing the

scheme meant that 70%+ of respondents needed to be in favour of the scheme before it is considered.

Neil advised that NCC Highways team had looked at the Residents Permit Parking scheme and felt that this would not work for Craster. In particular, there was a concern that this would lead to neighbourhood disputes in the village.

Neil advised that the results of the consultation had however highlighted the serious issue of parking within Craster village and the strength of public opinion on this matter. As a result, an alternative experimental pedestrian zone scheme was now being proposed for Craster.

Terry presented the plans for this experimental scheme and indicated that this has a number of advantages over the Residents Permit Parking scheme. Mainly that the legal process to introduce the scheme would be much shorter and could therefore be introduced prior to the Easter holidays where there are concerns about visitor numbers. In addition, the scheme would have a number of road safety and environmental advantages.

Terry also advised that the scheme could be adapted at any point during the 12 month trial period, in line with the ongoing feedback which is available for this Order.

Terry also advised that the Parish Council and local County Councillor could be part of a 6 month review of the scheme, following the date of its introduction.

The scheme would include:

- The removal of the existing tourism parking signs and the erection of "no visitor parking beyond this point" signs.
- The introduction of planters in wooden barrels to control traffic and add to the aesthetics of the area once planted up. This would include the introduction of oak half whiskey barrel planters behind edge of carriageway markings to visually narrow road to Craster whilst reinforcing the change in priority at the quarry car park access.
- The introduction of a chicane to provide for priority traffic flows.
- The erection of "pedestrian zones, no vehicles" signs.
- Priority of road amended with traffic heading west from the village giving way to traffic entering quarry car park.
- The erection of an overflow car park sign.

Some members of the public were unhappy that the Residents Permit Parking scheme was not going ahead and felt that NCC were ignoring a democratic decision by local residents. Neil advised that the Permit Parking scheme was not being scrapped completely and committed that, should this Order be deemed not to be working, the Permit scheme would again be considered by NCC as an alternative. Neil insisted that the work the Parish Council had carried out on this had highlighted the issue of parking as a serious concern in the village.

Some residents of Dunstan asked why they had not been given the opportunity to respond to the consultation as they would have voted in favour of this scheme. Neil advised that this was a Craster consultation only as the scheme would only apply to Craster and not to Dunstan.

Some residents expressed concern about the introduction of the chicane as part of this scheme. Neil and Terry advised that this is integral to the scheme as a whole and the scheme would not work without this. The introduction of the chicane is based on evidence and will be introduced in a manner which does not cause risk to health and safety.

Neil and Terry advised that a similar scheme had recently been introduced in Holy Island and this was proving popular and effective. Mr Michael Robson advised that he was aware that this is not the case.

The Chair highlighted that parking is a significant issue for Craster and he is aware of growing concerns in the community about the potential for a high number of visitors again to Craster over the Spring and Summer months. It was therefore imperative that a scheme to alleviate the parking problems be introduced in time for this period. Terry advised that the Permit scheme could not be introduced in time for Easter though the Experimental Order as described at the meeting could be.

The Chair asked Members to vote on whether to accept the Experimental Order as set out in the Officers' report. It was agreed that this scheme should be trialled and reviewed in 6 months' time.

Terry Luck finished by stating that the Order would come into force by 4th April.

At this point, Terry and Neil left the meeting.

2367 Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison

County Councillor Wendy Pattison advised that she was aware of parking problems in the village, particularly as lockdown eased and she felt that there needed to be action taken to resolve these problems, particularly with Easter approaching.

Councillor Pattison advised that the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine seemed to be going well, with lots of the most vulnerable receiving their vaccine.

Councillor Pattison advised that the second round of support from Government during the pandemic for local businesses is to be rolled out and details of this can be found on the County Council's website and the Government's website.

2368 Parish Council budget 2021-22

The Clerk advised that it is expected that the Parish Council will finish the current financial year with approximately £3,000 remaining in the bank account. This is needed to be held in reserves in case of any unforeseen expenditure.

The following was **agreed** as proposed expenditure for the forthcoming financial year:

| Item of expenditure | Expected expenditure |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Staffing costs (including on costs) | £3,600 |
| Insurance | £177.88 |
| Wifi and telephone to the Hall | £468 |
| RBL Appeal | £20 |
| Christmas tree | £150 |
| Cutting of grass verges | £340 |
| Bins | £1,500 |
| NALC subscription and website | £170 |
| EJBC precept request | £1,000 |
| Stationery and printing | £100 |
| Hall hire | £288 |
| Charity donation | £1,000 |
| Total | £8,813.88 |

Mr M Robson requested that the Parish Council reviews its policy on the number of bins and asks NCC how often they are emptied, to see if the bins warrant being in each location and to review the expenditure of £1500.

2369 Parish Council precept request for the financial year 2021-22

The Clerk reported that the 2021/22 Craster Parish Council Tax Base has been calculated at 148.97. For 2020/21 the Tax Base was 161.44. Craster Parish's Tax Base has therefore decreased by 12.47. This is due to 2 x Band C dwellings moving from Craster to Longhoughton Parish following a Community Governance Review, carried out by NCC.

The precept for the forthcoming financial year was **agreed** at £10,000. The Band D charge for the Parish Council precept would therefore be £67.13.

It was also reported that, in addition to the precept request, the Parish Council has successfully acquired external funding over and above the amount precepted for each year for at least the last 3 years; for instance the LEADER grant, the Transparency Fund, the Locality grant, funding from the Local County Councillor Wendy Pattison, voluntary contributions towards the precept, etc.

2370 Proposed letter to all holiday lets in the Parish requesting a voluntary contribution to the Parish Council precept

The Clerk advised that over £700 had been raised in the previous financial year from the letter to all holiday let owners in the Parish, requesting a voluntary contribution towards the precept. It was **agreed** that another letter should be sent to all holiday let owners again this financial year requesting the same and specifying what projects this would go towards funding.

It was also suggested that the Parish Council looks to have a donation box installed in the parish in order to capture funds from visitors towards the upkeep of the village. It was **agreed** that the Clerk should draft a proposal to the next Full Parish Council meeting for consideration.

2371 Proposal to have land outside Bark Potts development registered with the Parish Council

Mr M Robson offered to donate the strip of land to the east between the development and the neighbouring garden which to the Parish Council and advised that his solicitor will deal with this.

The Parish Clerk also agreed to look into the ownership of the land at the Bark Pots Development between the north of the burn and the road. Cllr Mark Green **agreed** to act on behalf of the Parish Council to carry out the searches and land registry.

2372 Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative

Cllrs E Pearson and M Brooks advised that the Cemetery House has now been let to a family and again took the opportunity to thank the contractor who had done such marvellous work on this.

Cllr M Brooks also advised that the EJBC would not be requesting a precept this financial year.

2373 Craster Community Trust report

Cllr M Craster advised that the Hall remains closed for public use due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

2374 Planning Matters:

- **20/04293/FUL - Land West Of Heugh Wynd Whin Hill Craster Northumberland.**

It was **agreed** to note this application.

- **Correspondence regarding new constructions at Dunstan**

The Clerk advised that he had received complaints from members of the public about the installation of a number of constructions at the development site on land to the north of Heugh View in Dunstan. The Clerk advised that he had corresponded with the planning enforcement officer at NCC on this matter and had been assured that they were put in place to support the development works, were temporary and benefited from permitted development rules. It was **agreed** to both monitor the situation and also to write to the developer to ask that he remain in communication with the parish council on key stages of the development and to also request that the developer carry out the works on site in accordance with the agreed Construction Method Statement for the development.

2375 Pathway proposal on the C74 between Dunstan and Craster, from the junction with the U3014.

Members considered the following proposal from Mr and Mrs Turner of Dunstan village:

"We would, firstly, like to commend the Parish Council for funding the recent installation of the new pathway from Craster Tower to the Howick Coastguard Rescue Station, which we use regularly and which has markedly improved the safety of pedestrians and drivers in the vicinity.

In the light of this, we would appreciate consideration of a feasibility study on the construction of a similar pathway on a short section of the C74 between Dunstan and Craster, from the junction with the U3014 (Dunstan to Embleton road). This particular stretch of road is a steep hill with 'blind' bends at the top and bottom of it.

The C74 necessarily accommodates larger vehicles including lorries, buses and motorhomes, which are unable to safely pass under Craster Tower. This, together with relatively high volumes of pedestrians, especially in summer months, can lead to potential hazard for walkers and drivers alike. Indeed, this stretch of road was once described by a Parish Councillor as 'an accident black spot' in discussions about a planning proposal on adjacent land.

In addition, the area is populated by many overhanging trees thereby reducing natural light and potentially resulting in increased hazard.

Whilst the road width appears to be relatively narrow, the verge on the left (descending) is covered with bushes which it may be possible to clear back to the boundary fence of the adjacent field (now a building plot) leaving adequate space for construction of a new pathway.

We acknowledge that there is an existing diagonal pathway from the left side of the hill (ascending) taking pedestrians south west towards the centre of Dunstan. However, this is not helpful for those wishing to venture northwards from Craster nor south east towards Craster from the north of Dunstan. Furthermore, when using this pathway from the centre of Dunstan down the hill, the exit brings walkers out directly into oncoming traffic travelling round the blind bend at the bottom of the hill.

We would be happy to discuss further any aspect of this request should this be helpful and, in the meantime, would like to thank the Committee in advance for kindly considering the proposal”.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should contact the Footpaths Officer at NCC in order to investigate this matter further.

2376 Request from Embleton Primary School for the Parish Council to fund Chromebooks for its pupils

Members considered the application by Embleton Primary School to fund Chromebooks for its pupils. It was noted that this was necessary due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the schools being closed to all but certain children and the need therefore for most children to be educated at home. It was also noted that there were a number of children from Craster Parish who attended this school. It was **agreed** that the Parish Council should provide sufficient funding towards the funding of two Chromebooks for the school, at a total cost of £333.32.

2377 Items for Next Agenda

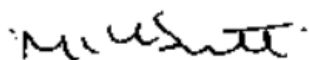
The Chair reminded Members to request for any items to be added to the Agenda in writing to the Clerk.

2378 Date and time of next meeting

18th February 2021 – 18:00pm via Zoom.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Signed,



**Chair of Craster Parish Council
(18th February 2021)**