

MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Thursday 16th January 2025 – 6:30pm in the Craster Memorial Hall

Agenda

Dear Councillor,

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, I hereby give you notice that the **meeting of Craster Parish Council** will be held **in the Craster Memorial Hall** on **Thursday 16th January 2025 at 6:30pm** to transact the following business:

- 1. Welcome and apologies for absence**
- 2. Declarations of interest**
- 3. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 21st November 2024**
- 4. Matters arising**
- 5. Public participation**
- 6. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison**
- 7. To consider the results of the recent residents' consultation**
- 8. To agree the Parish Council's budget for 2025-26 – report included.**
- 9. To agree the Parish Council's precept request for 2025-26 – report included.**
- 10. To consider the nominations for a heritage blue plaque**
- 11. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative**
- 12. Report from Craster Community Trust representative**
- 13. Planning matters:**

Update on 24/00121/FUL | Construction of two holiday lets (Sui Generis) with associated landscaping. | Land North And East Of Dunstan House Dunstan Northumberland

24/04441/FUL | First Floor Extension | Quarry House 3 Norwell Brow Craster NE66 3TX

24/04252/FUL | Change of use of existing agricultural building from grain store to livestock building | Land North West Of Dunstan Steads Farm Embleton Northumberland

- 14. Items for next Agenda**
- 15. Date and time of next meeting**

20th February 2025 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall.

And pursuant to the provisions of the above-named acts, I hereby summon you to attend the said meeting.

Adam Shanley
Clerk of Craster Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Thursday 21st November 2024 – 6:30pm via Zoom

Councillors present:

Chair: Martin Smith

Parish Council members: Margaret Brooks, Michael Craster, Ann Fettis, Allan Gregory and Derek Moss

Also present: Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Wendy Pattison and 9 members of the public.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

None received

2. Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in application 24/03615/FUL and left the room as and when this application was discussed.

3. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 17th October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2024 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters arising

The Clerk and the Chair took the opportunity to thank former Councillor Nick Ringrose for his service as a Parish Councillor in Craster. The Clerk particularly thanked former Councillor Ringrose for his expertise and support in his role as an EJBC representative of the Parish Council.

5. Public participation

Mrs Jackie Reeves advised that the grit bins near the Hall were in a poor condition, with rubble and no grit. She suggested the grit bins locally need an overhaul as many are compacted. The Clerk advised that he would contact the relevant officer at NCC to arrange for this to be reviewed.

Mrs Helen Chamberlain requested a dog poop bin near the hall, as there has been an issue with dog waste along that route. The council discussed options like a dedicated bin or signage directing people to use the existing green bin by the hall.

Mrs Marion Gallon suggested the council do an audit of all the bins in the parish, as many have broken locks or are being left open, leading to litter issues. Marion also requested an additional directional sign for the castle.

Members **agreed** to do a bin audit with the Clerk in the new year and decide then on the best solution for a dog waste bin.

Mrs Fiona Robson raised issues with the disabled toilet at the former TIC site; noting the emergency cable is too high and the toilet seat did not fit properly. She asked the Council to report these issues to the County Council and the Clerk confirmed that he would look into this.

6. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison

County Councillor Wendy Pattison reported that she had recently travelled to Berwick and found the roads there to be completely clear of snow, while Craster and the surrounding area have been hit much harder. Wendy advised that she had reported the need for gritting in Craster, Embleton, and other areas to the relevant authorities.

Wendy advised that for issues with County Council-owned grit bins, the person to contact is Jonathan Park, who has taken over from Mitch Young. He can arrange for bins to be refilled or replaced if needed. In relation to the matters relating to the bins, the Parish Council purchased a few years ago, Wendy expressed disappointment that the County Council staff may not be properly maintaining and locking them. Wendy suggested speaking to Bob Hodgson about ensuring the bins are being cared for.

7. Proposals to NCC Assets relating to the procurement process for the former TIC building and associated matters following recent risk assessment meeting

The Chair reported that, following the recent risk assessment meeting, the Parish Council had decided not to pursue taking on a lease or head lease for the former TIC building. Instead, the Parish Council had agreed to propose to Northumberland County Council that they put the building on the open market, allowing any interested parties to submit expressions of interest.

The Chair also reported that the Parish Council had also agreed they would like to be involved in the procurement decision-making process, to ensure the outcome benefits the community.

Additionally, the Parish Council discussed supporting one of the existing local businesses that has to regularly re-tender for their lease, by advocating to the County Council to review and potentially extend the lease term.

Following the Chair's report, Members unanimously **agreed** not to take on the TIC building directly, but to work with the County Council to facilitate an open procurement process and support existing local businesses in the village.

8. Planning for events over the Christmas period

The Parish Council discussed plans for the Christmas lights switch-on and movie night event on December 7th. Mr Michael Robson volunteered to put up the Christmas tree, whilst the Chair agreed to handle the Christmas lights.

Councillor Derek Moss offered to provide the mince pies for the event. Members agreed to that the Christmas light switch on should take place at 6pm, followed by a Christmas movie screening in the hall at 7pm. The Parish Council agreed this would be a good opportunity to combine the lights switch-on with the regular monthly film night, creating a festive community event.

The Clerk offered to promote the event on Facebook to encourage attendance. Members coordinated the various volunteer roles and logistics to put on the Christmas lights and movie night event on December 7th.

9. Update on Spring planting project at South Acres

Members discussed potentially delaying the planned spring bulb planting at South Acres due to the poor weather forecast for the originally proposed weekend. There were concerns that with the forecasted high winds and rain, it may not be feasible to plant the bulbs as intended.

Members considered alternative options, such as having a contractor like Steve Tenant handle the planting, rather than relying on volunteers. There was also discussion about potentially involving the local school children in the planting, but concerns were raised about the weather conditions being unsuitable.

Ultimately, the Parish Council **agreed** to get a quote from Steve Tenant to handle the planting, rather than trying to coordinate volunteers, given the weather challenges.

10. Publication of the AONB's Conservation Area Character Appraisal

The Clerk presented the key points from the recently published AONB character appraisal document, which provides a detailed assessment of Craster's built environment and heritage. The Clerk noted that the appraisal identifies a number of non-designated heritage assets within the parish that contribute to Craster's unique character.

Mrs Fiona Robson raised concerns that residents need to be made aware of the implications of living in a Conservation Area. Members agreed with Mrs Robson's points, stating that the AONB will be holding a drop-in session for residents to discuss the potential Conservation Area designation and its impacts.

The Parish Council agreed that providing this information to residents is important, so they can be informed and prepared to ask questions at the upcoming drop-in session.

The Chair clarified that they are not the decision-makers on whether a Conservation Area is designated and the Parish Council is simply facilitating the dialogue between the AONB and the community.

Overall, Members recognised the need to ensure residents are well-informed about the conservation area proposal and its potential effects.

11. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative

Councillor Margaret Brooks, the Parish Council's representative on the Embleton Joint Burial Committee, reported that the diocese had refused to consecrate the additional areas of the cemetery that the committee wanted. As a result, the committee is now going back to their solicitor to explore other options for moving forward with the cemetery expansion. Councillor Margaret Brooks noted that the Committee has not yet had a meeting to discuss this latest development, but she will continue to represent the parish council on the Committee.

The Clerk acknowledged that he has received communication from Terry Howells, the Chair of the Embleton Joint Burial Committee, indicating that they do not need to appoint a second Parish Council representative at this time, as there are only two meetings left before the upcoming elections. The Parish Council **agreed** to maintain Councillor Margaret Brooks as the sole representative on the Embleton Joint Burial Committee for the remainder of the current term of the Council.

12. Report from Craster Community Trust representative (including discussion on play park lease)

Mrs Jackie Reeves, representing the Craster Community Trust, provided an update on the work being done at the play area. Jackie advised that much of the play equipment is over 25 years old and in need of replacement, so the Trust is having to spend a significant amount of money on new equipment.

Specifically, the cradle swings and their framework are being replaced, at a cost of over £4,000, with the work planned for the coming weeks.

The Trust is also holding a meeting tomorrow with around 15 people attending, and they have decorations going up in the hall next Thursday.

The Chair thanked Jackie for her report and the Trust for their excellent work in the playpark.

13. Planning matters:

Update on 24/00121/FUL | Construction of two holiday lets (Sui Generis) with associated landscaping. | Land North And East Of Dunstan House Dunstan Northumberland.

The Clerk provided an update on the Dunstan House planning application, which has been called in for consideration by the County Council's planning committee.

The Clerk explained that the planning officer had initially been minded to refuse the application, but has now decided to take it to committee instead and could not commit to what his recommended decision would be as yet as he had requested further information from the applicant.

The Parish Council **agreed** to maintain its objection to this application and await further information from the applicant on this scheme.

24/03615/FUL | Replacement rear elevation conservatory | The Woodlands Dunstan Village Dunstan Northumberland NE66 3SZ.

The Chair left the room whilst this application was being discussed and therefore took no part in the discussion or vote on this proposal. It was **agreed** to note this application.

14. Items for next Agenda

The Chair reminded Members to contact the Parish Clerk should they wish to have an item included in the next Agenda.

15. Date and time of next meeting

16th January 2025 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

**Chair of Craster Parish Council
(Thursday 16th January 2025)**

CRASTER PARISH COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT



COUNTY COUNCILLOR WENDY PATTISON

wendy.pattison@northumberland.gov.uk - Tel. 07779 983072 and on Facebook
– Cllr Wendy Pattison

CRASTER PARISH

Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year and a wonderful 2025.

SECOND HOMES COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM

From 1 April 2025 a 100% Council Tax Premium is applied and is payable in addition to the standard Council Tax liability in respect of "Second Home" dwellings.

The introduction of a new Council Tax Premium for Dwellings Occupied Periodically ("Second Homes") was approved at a meeting of Full Council on 21 February 2024, coming into effect from 1 April 2025.

This follows changes to legislation for Council Tax included in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which amends the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The change means that a 100% Council Tax Premium is applied and is payable in addition to the standard Council Tax liability in respect of "Second Home" dwellings that meet the following conditions:

- there is no resident of the dwelling (sole or main residence), and
- the dwelling is substantially furnished.

There may be exemptions where this premium cannot be applied, which are pending the outcome of Government consultation.

If our records state you are a second homeowner, we will write to you in 2025 to notify you of the charge.

TEAMS READY AFTER AMBER SNOW WARNING

03 Jan 2025



With an amber warning for snow in the north of England from Saturday night (January 4) into Sunday (January 5), Council teams in Northumberland are mobilised and ready to respond.

The County Council's Winter Services Team is prepared to keep roads clear and people safe, no matter the conditions. Its 28-vehicle fleet are equipped to handle any weather challenges.

Vehicles and teams are already working round the clock and will continue to do so as temperatures remain low.

In addition, spreaders and ploughs are fitted to 4x4 vehicles, strategically positioned around the county to respond to reports in areas which are difficult to access for larger vehicles.

Winter Preparedness in Numbers:

- 105 dedicated staff members, including managers, supervisors, and drivers.
- 44,000 tonnes of salt stockpiled and ready.
- 28 multi-purpose gritting vehicles.
- 2 specialised snow blowers.
- 1,600 grit bins and 200 grit heaps distributed across the county.
- Coverage of over 3,000 miles of Northumberland roads.

If you require gritting support or need to report an issue, you can do this via: <https://nland.uk/grit>

Away from the roads, a network of community spaces will open across Northumberland during the winter months so people can come together in a warm, safe and welcoming environment.

Voluntary groups, community organisations and others from our communities have opened up the warm spaces in venues such as community centres, church halls, libraries and community hubs.

For more information on warm spaces in Northumberland, opening times and the offer of support go to: nland.cc/Warmspace

The latest Met Office forecasts are available at bit.ly/WxWarning

The Met Office has also provided some top tips for staying safe in wintry conditions:

- It is safer not to drive in these conditions, but if you need to make an essential journey, consider alternative forms of transport, to keep you and others safe. If you must drive, do this more safely by: using dipped headlights; accelerating gently, using low revs and changing to higher gears as quickly as possible; starting in second gear to help with wheel slip; maintaining a safe and steady speed, keeping distance from other vehicles; using a low gear to go downhill, avoiding braking unless necessary; steering into skids, not taking your hands off the wheel, and avoiding slamming on brakes.
- People cope better with power cuts when they have prepared for them in advance. It's easy to do; consider gathering torches and batteries, a mobile phone power pack and other essential items.

If isolated due to snow, follow these simple steps to keep safe and well:

- keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night;
- turn off electrical heaters and put out your fire before going to bed;
- ensure pets are safe by keeping them warm and comfortable;
- prevent frozen pipes by opening kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing;
- stay indoors, wrap up warm and close internal doors to keep the heat in

Useful Numbers:

- Northumberland County Council out-of-hours service: 0345 600 6400
- Northern Powergrid <https://northernpowergrid.pulse.ly/xde9rlflr4>..... or call 105.
- SP Energy Networks https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/.../postcode_lookup... or call 105.
- One Call (for concerns about vulnerable residents or safeguarding issues): 01670 536400.

WINTER WARM SPACES REMINDER

With the current cold snap, the County Council is reminding residents that a network of community spaces are open across Northumberland so people can come together in a warm, safe and welcoming environment during the winter months.

Voluntary groups, community organisations and others from our communities have opened up the warm spaces in venues such as community centres, church halls, libraries and community hubs.

These warm spaces are invaluable for some residents - they're a place to meet others or simply spend some time quietly in a warm and welcoming environment.

With the current spell of very cold weather it's important we remind people of the support available.

Some warm spaces offer hot drinks, activities or free access computers and WiFi. They are free to visit, but each warm space is different. No matter which warm space residents visit – a warm welcome is guaranteed.

Organisations offering warm spaces not already part of this network and would like to be are encouraged to get in touch.

For more information on warm spaces in Northumberland, opening times and offer of support go to: nland.cc/Warmspace

Or contact Northumberland County Council on 0345 600 6400 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

COUNCIL WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR INNOVATIVE USE OF DATA

Northumberland County Council has won the Best Use of Data category in the regional Dynamites Tech awards setting a benchmark for public sector innovation.

This recognition highlights the Council's forward-thinking approach to harnessing data and its commitment to transforming service delivery for residents, businesses, employees, and visitors.

The judges were impressed by how the Council leveraged data not only to solve problems but also to support its broader mission of improving lives across Northumberland.

One of the standout projects from the Council's strategy is the Communities First Initiative, which uses powerful data insights to identify communities most in need across the county. This initiative is making a tangible difference, enabling the Council to connect with residents and provide timely support.

With the appointment of a Head of Data and the introduction of a bold five-year strategy, the Council's data-driven approach sets a new standard in local government.

The Council's Data & Business Intelligence Strategy is built on three core principles of engineering, skills and culture. So far 76 learners are undertaking digital training which is fostering data literacy across all levels of the organisation.

The result is a model for how local governments can use data to innovate, improve services, and better understand the communities they serve.

Focusing on building data expertise, encouraging a data-driven culture, and developing proactive solutions allows us to improve how we serve our communities.

Looking to the future, the Council is set to launch the Living Archive Data Observatory, an innovative platform blending data insights with real community stories to document Northumberland's evolution over the next 20 years.

The Dynamites are the North East's premier IT and tech awards. Organised by North East tech sector business network Dynamo, the awards celebrate the innovation and excellence of the best and brightest of North East tech.

ITEM 8: PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET 2025/26

Members are reminded that the Parish Council is required to submit a precept request for the financial year 2025-26 to the County Council by the end of January 2025.

In order to assist Members in deciding an appropriate precept level, it is also necessary for the Council to agree a budget for the forthcoming financial year.

It is expected that the Parish Council will finish the current financial year with approximately £6,000 remaining in the bank account and it is recommended that £5,000 still be retained as a general reserve.

Members are also reminded of the recent Government changes to employer national insurance. The Government have lowered the threshold at which the new (higher) rate shall apply. As such, this equates to an additional £49.95 per month under staffing costs.

In November 2024, the Parish Council launched a public consultation with residents on their priorities for 2025-26. The results of which have been shared with Members and the proposed budget below reflects some of these priorities.

The below offers a guide on the proposed expenditure for the forthcoming financial year:

Item of expenditure	Expected expenditure
Staffing costs (including on-costs following changes to employer NI contributions (previously exempt))	£9,600.00
Insurance	£250.00
Wifi and telephone to the Hall	£400.00
RBL Appeal	£20.00
Christmas tree	£180.00
Cutting of grass verges – incl. Tower Bank and Dunstan. Entrance to the village and (possibly playpark)	£1,800.00
NALC subscription and website	£170.00
Stationery and printing	£100.00
Hall hire	£288.00
Community events	£500.00
EJBC request for precept	£0.00
Replacement of bins	£1,200.00
Greening/ planting budget	£1,500.00
Total	£16,008.00

DECISION REQUIRED

Councillors are asked to consider the above information and agree a budget for financial year 2025-26.

ITEM 9: PRECEPT REQUEST 2025/26

Budget

Please refer to Item 8 for consideration of budget priorities for 2025/2026.

Information on Council Tax base

Council Tax base is calculated by taking the number of houses in the City of Durham Parish Council area, allocating a weight to them based on their council tax banding and adding up the total of the weighted households. For example, higher council tax band properties carry a higher weighting and lower council tax base properties carry a lower council tax weighting. The Council Tax Base can therefore fluctuate from year to year based on the number of properties in each area. For example, council tax base will increase if any new houses have been built and the occupants have started to pay council tax but may decrease if for example any houses have been demolished in an area or have changed their use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C4 or sui generis (non-tax paying Use Classes).

The 2025/26 Tax Base is 196.09. The 2024/25 Craster Parish Council Tax Base was calculated at 151.48. Our Tax Base has therefore increased by 44.61.

Precept request

The precept request must be submitted to Northumberland County Council by the end of January 2025.

The Parish Council's current precept charge for Band D currently sits at £67.12 and generated a total income of £10,168 for the Parish Council in 2024/25.

The Band D charge in Craster parish area remains one of the lowest in Northumberland County.

Precept options

Option 1 (freeze the precept) - Should the Parish Council wish to freeze the precept at £67.12, this will generate a total precept income of £13,161.56. Given the budget proposals exceed this amount, this is not recommended as a course of action, should the Parish Council wish to deliver on all of its identified priorities.

Option 2 (raise the precept in line with inflation) - As of November 2024, the UK's inflation rate was 2.6%, which is higher than the previous month's 2.3% but lower than the long-term average of 2.82%. Should the Parish Council wish to increase the precept in line with inflation at 2.6%, this will equate to a Band D charge of £68.87 and generate a total income of £13,504.72

Option 3 (raise the precept in line with budget requirements) - if approved as presented, the proposed budget for 2025/26 equates to a total of £16,008.00. In order to achieve this level of income, the Band D precept charge would need to be increased by £14.52 to £81.64 - an increase of 21.63%

DECISION REQUIRED	Councillors are asked to consider the above information and propose a precept level for financial year 2025/26
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