

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – 6:30pm in the Craster village Hall**

**Councillors present:**

**Chair:** Martin Smith

**Parish Council members:** Margaret Brooks, Ann Fettis, Rosie Robson, Mark Green and Allan Gregory.

**Also present:** Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Wendy Pattison and 10 members of the public.

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor M Craster.

**2. Co-option of a Parish Councillor**

The Chair welcomed Nick Ringrose of Craster to the meeting and advised Members that Nick wishes to be co-opted on to the Parish Council.

Nick began by thanking the Parish Council and explaining a little about his background as follows:

*I grew up in the North East and went to RGS in Newcastle. After Cambridge University, I worked all over the place as a management consultant, though also as management accountant / finance director and corporate treasurer. I have also run HR and Comms functions, led large-scale procurement exercises and worked across both public and private sectors.*

*We bought Avala in late 2015, and moved here after early retirement in 2019. Originally, I hadn't originally considered joining the PC because: a) I didn't feel I had a good enough grasp of local issues - I will have lived here 5 years this summer and b) we hoped to travel more, but our dogs living at home and my parents' health make that difficult, so I can commit to be here more easily.*

*I get a real buzz out of helping people, I'm a very ethical person and fight when I believe things to be wrong or unfair. Over the past few years, I have grown increasingly more involved in the balance of protecting and enhancing our community, so now offer to join as a PC "to step up." I personally commit to representing the views and concerns of our parish without a personal agenda.*

The Chair thanked Nick for his statement and proposed that Nick be immediately co-opted to the Parish Council. This was seconded by Councillor A Gregory and unanimously **agreed** by Members. Nick took his place as a Councillor.

**3. Declarations of interest**

None received.

**4. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

**5. Matters arising**

The Clerk confirmed that the pedestrian footpath sign requested by a resident had now been installed at the bottom of Tower Bank.

**6. Public participation**

Mr Douglas Hogg expressed his opposition to the proposal for a Conservation Area for the harbour. Mr Hogg advised that he was concerned that this would add further red tape to his work at the harbour.

## **7. Promoting the Alcom broadband scheme amongst local residents**

Members expressed their gratitude to the Managing Director of Alcom Steve for attending the last Parish Council meeting. The Clerk advised that he would be happy to produce a leaflet with FAQs included to be distributed around the parish area.

Members felt that Alcom should first be invited to speak and answer any queries from residents at the next annual meeting of the parish.

## **8. Preparing for the annual meeting of the parish in May**

Members agreed that the annual meeting of the parish should take place on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and that issues such as Alcom broadband, the AONB's Conservation Area proposal and the Tourist Information Centre should be included on the Agenda.

## **9. Hosting a resident volunteer day to clear paths and planting.**

Councillor M Brooks highlighted that the Oak tree had now been purchased and planted as agreed, in order to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Councillor M Brooks took the opportunity to thank the wildlife trust for their positive engagement on this project and asked Members if they would like to see a sign erected to show what this tree is for. Members agreed to arrange for a piece of whinstone from the quarry with a plaque on it as the most suitable sign in this area. The Clerk and Councillor M Brooks **agreed** to arrange this.

The Clerk also highlighted the issues last year with footpaths up the bank and behind Smithy Court being completely overgrown with weeds and nettles. The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council ask Steve Tennant to cut these areas back in the first instance and for the Parish Council to host a volunteering day to prevent further weeds.

Members expressed a preference that NCC be asked to do this in the first instance and, failing a response from them in the coming weeks, the Parish Council asks Steve to undertake this work.

## **10. Update on the proposal on the future of the Craster Tourist Information Centre**

Councillor M Green provided a report to the Parish Council on the proposal on the future community use of the TIC. Councillor Green advised that, following an email exchange in advance of the meeting, it was now confirmed that NCC is happy to consider a transfer to the Parish Council and support the Council in the process, however in these circumstances, NCC would normally also market the property to assess all the potential interest before making any decisions. Councillor M Green advised that NCC has confirmed that they are happy to put a hold on the disposal process to allow time for the Parish Council to secure funding and assess options, through a feasibility study.

Councillor M Green also highlighted that NCC has advised that they could not recommend that the County Council transfers the freehold of part of the building so any arrangement would have to be on the basis of a lease. Councillor M Green advised that NCC would normally expect interested parties to put forward a proposal for a lease length, rent etc. From an NCC viewpoint the longer the term offered to better. Mike Robbins at NCC has confirmed in writing that, if this were a transfer to the Parish Council, NCC would consider this under the Community Asset Transfer process where a nil rent could be considered.

Considering this correspondence, Councillor M Green advised that he felt that the proposal for feasibility study should be progressed accordingly with the works on this fully funded through grants. It was also agreed that the transfer would be undertaken by NCC as this has additional audit requirements on the Parish Council.

Members unanimously **agreed** to progress with the funding bid for a feasibility study for a future use of the building, except the public toilets which are being retained and managed by NCC.

## **11. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison**

Councillor W Pattison began by advising everyone that she was aware of concerns relating to Alnwick medical group no longer offering the Spring Covid-19 jabs. Councillor W Pattison advised that the Spring jabs would now be administered at Willowburn instead and the Council and members of the public thanked Wendy for her speedy work on this excellent result.

Councillor W Pattison also advised that NCC has now appointed a contractor to deal with the backlog of road repairs and potholes and she hoped this would make a good difference to the condition of the roads.

## **12. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative**

Councillor M Brooks advised that the EJBC had not met since the last Parish Council meeting and therefore there were no updates to report to the Council at this stage.

## **13. Report from Craster Community Trust representative**

In Councillor Craster's absence, Mrs Helen Chamberlain provided the CCT report to the Council. Helen advised that Hall is looking to renew its lights over the coming weeks to LED lights inside and also to add a light to the outside of the building too.

Helen also advised that there will be a further meet and eat event in the Hall on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May and advised that all were welcome to attend.

Helen also highlighted the new history of Craster pictures in the Hall which had recently been installed and thanked those involved in this wonderful project.

Mrs Marion Gallon also highlighted that the Hall's food hygiene rating had just been renewed and that, once again, the Hall is rated 5 stars for hygiene.

The Chair thanked Helen and Marion for their update and excellent work.

## **14. Update on the Conservation Area Character Appraisal report for the parish**

The Clerk advised that he had received a copy of the proposed boundaries for the Conservation Area from the AONB's consultant but that he was still awaiting a copy of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal. The Clerk advised that this will be published for wider consideration from members of the public to add their comments and thoughts to the process.

The Chair and the Clerk reminded Members that this is an AONB project and that the Parish Council is facilitating a wider public engagement as part of this proposal.

## **15. Update on the works on the construction of the mobile phone mast**

The Clerk expressed his gratitude to members of the public and Councillors who had recently attended the Parish Council's virtual public consultation regarding the works to the mast. The Clerk advised that this had been an exceptionally positive meeting, with work set to commence on the mast on 15/16<sup>th</sup> April in the village.

The Clerk advised that the works will be delivered in 3 stages with the mast expected to be erected in June 2024 and signal achievable by November 2024.

The Clerk advised that there may be some small disruption but those present felt that the wider public benefits outweighed any short-term disruption or noise in the village.

Members thanked the Clerk for all his work on this issue.

## **16. Planning matters:**

**24/00121/FUL** | Construction of two holiday lets (Sui Generis) with associated landscaping | Land North and East Of Dunstan House Dunstan Northumberland. The Parish Council noted the response from NCC's Public Protection team and their specific reference to this development being residential as opposed to commercial. The Parish Council **agreed** to maintain its objection to this proposal and to await further responses to this development from NCC's Built Heritage team and the AONB to these plans.

The Clerk noted that he had received a complaint from a member of the public in relation to the Dunstan Says No signs in the village and the reasons for this.

**17. Items for next Agenda**

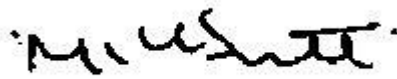
The Chair advised that Members to get in touch with the Clerk if they wished to have any Agenda item considered at a future meeting.

**18. Date and time of next meeting**

16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. S. Smith', is written on the page.

**Chair of Craster Parish Council  
(Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024)**