

MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Thursday 15th January 2026 – 6:30pm via Zoom

Agenda

Link to join this meeting:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88025727037>

Meeting ID: 880 2572 7037

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 **via Zoom** on **Thursday 15th January 2026 at 6:30pm** to transact the following business:

- 1. Welcome and apologies for absence**
- 2. Declarations of interest**
- 3. Co-option of a Parish Councillor on to Craster Parish Council** – application from Mr John Young
- 4. Confirmation of the minutes for the annual meeting held on Thursday 20th November 2025**
- 5. Matters arising**
- 6. Public participation**
- 7. Correspondence received to the Parish Council** – complaints relating to the icy conditions around the parish (particularly Tower Bank), broken light outside the Church and an ongoing development not holding to planning conditions.
- 8. Consultation on proposed overnight stay levy for the North East of England**
- 9. Report from the Chair following site meeting with NCC Cabinet Member re: signage coming into Craster village and Craster public toilets**
- 10. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison**
- 11. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative**
- 12. Budget proposal for financial year 2026/27**
- 13. Precept request for financial year 2026/27**
- 14. Report from Craster Community Trust representative**
- 15. Planning matters:**
 - Update on 25/03196/COU** | Change of use from former Tourist Information Office (Sui Generis) to a retail shop (Class E) selling food, gifts, alcohol etc during the day, and a bistro in the evening | Craster Quarry Car Park, Craster Tourist Information Centre West End Craster Northumberland NE66 3TW
 - Update on 24/04252/FUL** | Change of use of existing agricultural building from grain store to livestock building. (additional information received 13.03.2025) | Land North West of Dunstan Steads Farm Embleton Northumberland
- 16. Items for next Agenda**
- 17. Date and time of next meeting**

Thursday 19th February 2026 – 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 20th November 2025 – 6:30pm via Zoom

Councillors present:

Chair: Councillor Martin Smith

Parish Council members: Councillors Derek Moss, Iain Brown, Michael Robson, Marjory Taylor, Sophie Heslop, Ann Fettis, Robert Cornall and Allan Gregory.

Also present: Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Wendy Pattison and 4 members of the public.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

None received.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited Members to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda. Councillor Iain Brown had previously declared an interest in planning application 24/04252/FUL and indicated that he would absent himself from the meeting for that item. No further declarations of interest were received.

3. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on Thursday 16th October 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings, subject to the reference to "bats" in the play park being amended to "moles".

4. Matters Arising

The Clerk provided a detailed update on matters arising from the previous meeting. He thanked Members for attending the recent short-notice site meeting with the National Landscape Team regarding village signage, noting that despite time pressures, the meeting had been productive. Agreement had been reached on the overall design approach for new signage, including improved fingerposts and revised information boards, with additional destinations such as Piper's Pitch included and updated naming for local businesses incorporated.

The Clerk reported that the information board at the Quarry Car Park would be recycled, with further discussion required on its future location. He also confirmed that a new sign had been installed at the bottom of Tower Bank, thanking Councillor Ann Fettis and the Chair for their prompt action in arranging this, following a resident suggestion.

With regard to grass cutting and bulb planting, the Clerk reported that the contractor had completed the final cut of the season and that the Parish Council had paid its agreed contribution towards play park maintenance. Bulb planting was progressing well, with the Chair having taken delivery of bulbs and undertaken significant planting work in partnership with others.

The Clerk provided an update on the website and email migration, confirming that arrangements had been made with HugoFox for a new .gov.uk email system, with transition expected in the coming month. Outstanding queries remained regarding data protection and long-term access to historic emails to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Finally, the Clerk reported on the casual vacancy on the Parish Council following the passing of a former councillor. He confirmed that no by-election had been triggered and that, subject to formal confirmation from Northumberland County Council Electoral Services, the vacancy would be filled by co-option at the January 2026 meeting. Two expressions of interest had already

been received, and Members were reminded of the co-option procedure. The Council noted the update and **agreed** the proposed approach.

5. Public participation

The Chair invited comments from members of the public. No formal representations were made at this stage, though residents were advised they would be recognised by the Chair if matters arose later in the agenda.

6. Correspondence received by the Parish Council

The Clerk reported on correspondence concerning efforts to reduce inappropriate traffic through the village. He expressed appreciation to English Heritage for amending the Dunstanburgh Castle postcode on their website to direct visitors to the Quarry Car Park. While this did not resolve all sat-nav routing issues, it represented a positive step, and further engagement with mapping providers was ongoing through English Heritage officers.

The Clerk also noted that a recently proposed tourist accommodation development in Dunstan had been withdrawn by the applicant. The Clerk advised that he had received some correspondence on this matter.

7. Update on signage coming into Craster Village

The Council considered a detailed update on progress with village-entry signage. The Clerk reported that formal requests, including photographic evidence, had been submitted to Northumberland County Council Highways seeking "No public parking beyond this point" signage at the village entrance. Despite repeated follow-up, no response had been received from the responsible officer.

Members expressed frustration at the lack of engagement and discussed escalation options. County Councillor Wendy Pattison advised that a formal Member Inquiry could be submitted to secure a response, or alternatively, officers could be invited to attend a future Parish Council meeting. Members also discussed the possibility of raising the matter at a County Council meeting through a formal petition or public question.

The Council resolved to escalate the matter through County Council channels and authorised the Chair to represent the Parish Council if required. The Council **agreed** to pursue this course of action.

8. Update following correspondence regarding Craster public toilets

The Clerk reported further correspondence with senior County Council officers regarding the condition of Craster public toilets. He advised that the issue had been acknowledged at a senior level, with assurances that the matter was being actively investigated. Members reiterated concerns regarding public safety, visitor experience and reputational damage to the village.

The Council **agreed** to continue pressing for a timely and permanent resolution and to monitor progress closely.

9. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison

County Councillor Wendy Pattison provided a comprehensive update on County Council matters, including forthcoming changes to waste and recycling services. She explained the introduction of a third household bin for glass and mixed recycling, expected to be rolled out from autumn 2026, subject to infrastructure upgrades. Councillor Pattison outlined funding constraints, particularly affecting rural areas, and responded to Members' questions regarding holiday accommodation, bottle banks and service equity.

The Council thanked Councillor Pattison for her detailed report, which was noted.

10. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representatives

The Council discussed matters relating to the Embleton Joint Burial Committee. Members were informed that no recent meeting had taken place but that a meeting was scheduled for early December. The Clerk raised concerns regarding a newly indicated request for precept funding from participating parish councils, explaining the historical context and expressing concern at the sudden emergence of a funding shortfall.

Members discussed the management of the burial house tenancy, rent levels, use of managing agents and reserve levels. It was agreed that Parish representatives would seek further detailed financial information before any commitment was considered. The Council **agreed** that further clarification was required before any decision could be made.

11. Report from Craster Community Trust representative

The Council received a brief update on Community Trust matters, including progress on acoustic improvements to the Memorial Hall, which had been delayed due to insurance issues. Members noted the update and thanked the Trust for its ongoing work.

12. Planning for Christmas light switch-on and event

The Chair reported that a working meeting for Christmas preparations had taken place and that arrangements were progressing well. The Christmas tree had been ordered, new lights procured and the switch-on event confirmed for Sunday 30 November. The Council **agreed** to proceed as planned.

13. Planning Matters

25/03196/COU | Change of use from former Tourist Information Office (Sui Generis) to a retail shop (Class E) selling food, gifts, alcohol etc during the day, and a bistro in the evening | Craster Quarry Car Park, Craster Tourist Information Centre West End Craster Northumberland NE66 3TW. Members **agreed** to support this application.

Update on 24/04252/FUL | Change of use of existing agricultural building from grain store to livestock building. (additional information received 13.03.2025) | Land North West of Dunstan Steads Farm Embleton Northumberland. Members **agreed** to maintain the Parish Council's objection to this application.

14. Items for next Agenda

Members were invited to submit items for inclusion on the January 2026 agenda.

15. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 15 January 2026 at 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
(15th January 2026)**

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

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026

A new year, a fresh start, and endless possibilities ahead. Wishing you joy and success in everything you do.

WINTER GRITTING

The Council schedule gritting when weather forecasts indicate that temperatures will drop to 0°C or below, when conditions suggest a risk of ice, frost, or other hazardous surfaces forming on the network.

It takes 3 hours to cover all of Northumberland. We aim to have busy routes gritted by 8am. Gritting does become less effective if the temperatures continue to drop. In extreme conditions, like freezing rain, gritting will not prevent a surface icing over. These weather conditions are very rare. Find out more in our [winter services policy document](#) (PDF).



Where we grit - Routine gritting takes place on a network of 28 main routes. We also grit busy footpaths, car parks and shopping areas during persistent icy conditions.

[Precautionary gritting routes](#) (map)

Our [Highways in Winter leaflet](#) provides more information.

Priority roads

The route we grit is planned so treated roads can be reached within:

- no more than 5 miles for rural residents
- no more than one mile for urban residents

Main bus routes and distributor roads with steep approaches to main road junctions are also made a priority

Second priority roads

We grit when widespread ice is expected to continue through the day and in light snow falls. These roads include:

- access roads to communities with no alternative gritted roads
- important bus routes
- urban distributor roads (roads that connect local streets to major roads)

Grit bins and heaps

These are available, where routine gritting doesn't happen, such as:

- selected steep hills
- verges
- sharp bends
- near steps

You can use this grit to clear snow and ice from roads and pavements around your home. It should not be used on private prop

The Council's gritter drivers have been working extended shifts round the clock this week as wintry weather continues to affect the region.

Over the last few days, temperatures have remained consistently low, with road surface temperatures dropping to almost -10°C in several areas where snowfall had been forecast, with the snow moving further inland than originally predicted.

In response to these conditions, winter service gritter drivers have been operating on extended 10-hour shifts around the clock since 31st December. This has enabled teams to complete all main primary gritting routes and maintain coverage of secondary routes. As well as its fleet of gritters, the Council's 4x4 support vehicles have been helping with inspections, responding to incidents and accessing more remote or severely affected locations.

Trunk roads like the A1 and A19 are the responsibility of National Highways who manage their own arrangements for dealing with ice and snow on their network.

Little change is expected this week, with road surface temperatures continuing to fall across the county and snowfall forecast.

During their shifts over the coming days, the Council's drivers will be responsible for completing the main routes and secondary routes as a priority. In addition, they will respond to any service requests that are received throughout the shift.

Councillor Mark Mather, Cabinet Member for Roads and Highways at Northumberland County Council, said: "Our Winter Services Team is well practised in keeping our roads clear and residents safe.

"This is a dedicated effort to ensure our communities remain connected and supported all winter long.

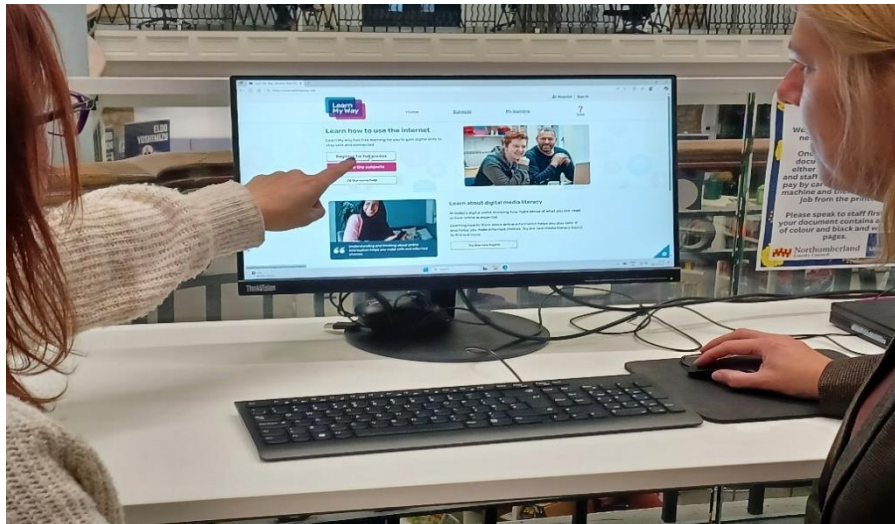
"In this current spell of wintry weather, once the main and secondary routes have been completed, drivers will then deviate from the standard routes to cover additional areas, including residential streets and housing estates.

"This will allow us to extend coverage into areas that are not normally included on the main runs and to address any outstanding issues." More information on our winter services is available at: <https://nland.cc/winter-services>

For more information on reporting issues via our Fix My Street system go to: nland.cc/fix

Northumberland Libraries to lead the way on digital inclusion

Northumberland Libraries is leading the way in a landmark programme to improve digital skills and boost confidence in AI.



The project, delivered in partnership with Libraries Connected - the national membership body for public libraries, Good Things Foundation and WSA Community, will develop a practical guide for supporting digital inclusion to ensure those most vulnerable to AI, misinformation and rapid digital change are not left behind.

Funded by the Government's Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund, the project will run until March 2026 across 121 libraries in four areas of the UK, including, Northumberland.

Councillor Wendy Pattison, Northumberland County Council Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, said: "Digital services and AI are now part of our everyday lives and there are both great opportunities and great risks associated with this, especially for the most vulnerable in our communities.

"For older people, low-income families, or those with disabilities the fast pace of digital change can be especially daunting and may even make them fearful of using technology. "Boosting confidence in recognising and using AI and other digital tools, will not only keep people safer online, but will help them access services that can make their lives easier or support them to stay socially connected."

The project has been granted £310,400 by the Department for Science, Industry and Technology (DSIT) to fund activity across the four library services. The new guide for library staff will be co-designed and tested with communities and will have a particular focus on the benefits and risks of AI tools, and media literacy including mis- and disinformation. A national network for sharing ideas and experience among library workers will also be established.

Isobel Hunter MBE, chief executive of Libraries Connected, said: "We're thrilled to receive a grant from the Digital Inclusion Access Fund, working with our partners Good Things Foundation and WSA Community Consultants. Around 8 million people in the UK lack basic digital skills. Without targeted action, they will fall further behind as technology – especially AI – moves forward.

"Libraries already help thousands every day to keep in touch, find jobs, save money and access services online, but the digital world is changing fast. This project will give library staff the tools they need to keep pace – and provide important new evidence for what works in tackling digital exclusion among vulnerable groups."

Ask at your local library to find out about the support available to improve your digital skills.

Council responds to provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

Leading County Councillors have expressed concern over next provisional local government finance settlement - fearing rural counties such as Northumberland are losing out at the expense of metropolitan areas.

The provisional settlement sets out the Council's grant funding for the next three years following the government's Fair Funding Review.

Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Nick Oliver said: "Our initial assessment suggests that the funding settlement will leave our Council with a budget gap of between £8m and £10m next year - even after delivering planned efficiencies of £27.4m.

"The Government's calculations of increased core spending power for Northumberland forces us to make the maximum permitted increase of 5% to Council Tax in each of the next three years. That means more than 80% of the forecast increase in core spending power will be funded by local taxpayers - this is the largest forced increase in local taxes in living memory.

"Whilst there's a small cash increase in our funding allocation, we face much higher cost pressures from rising demand for Children's and Adults services plus inflation which increases the costs of all the everyday supplies the council needs to buy to keep frontline services going.

"Most disappointingly, government has chosen to direct significant funding to urban areas through the recovery grant and, other than for adult social care, has removed the 'remoteness' element of the area cost adjustment, which reflects the higher costs incurred by councils such as ours in providing services across our very large county.

It's becoming clear that recent changes in Government's initial funding proposals will benefit London and metropolitan areas at the expense of rural counties and I believe this raises serious questions about fairness in how funding to councils is allocated."

Council Leader Glen Sanderson added: "I believe that sadly politics has got in the way of facts again - the so-called increase of £100m is money over five years, not one, and 80% of that will come from the Council Tax residents' pay." "The consultation on these funding proposals runs to 14th January and we will be making our views known to Government in the strongest possible terms.

"I would also call on our local MPs to support us in making the case for a final settlement that is fair to all areas."

The Council's Cabinet

The Cabinet is made up of elected councillors appointed by the Leader of the council, who each take responsibility for a portfolio. The current Cabinet members are:

Details of each portfolio:

- Leader of Council - [Cllr Glen Sanderson](#)
- Deputy Leader - [Cllr Richard Wearmouth](#)
- Finance and Value for Money - [Cllr Nick Oliver](#)
- Children and Young People - [Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson](#)

- Adults' Services and Health - [Cllr Eve Chicken](#)
- Public Safety - [Cllr Gordon Stewart](#)
- Culture, Leisure and Tourism - [Cllr Wendy Pattison](#)
- Roads and Highways - [Cllr Mark Mather](#)
- Environment, Rural and Farming - [Cllr John Riddle](#)
- Housing and Planning - [Cllr Colin Horncastle](#)

Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council - Chair of the Council [Cllr John Beynon](#), Deputy Chair of the Council [Cllr Daniel Carr](#)

ITEM 12: PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET 2026/27

Members are reminded that the Parish Council is required to submit a precept request for the financial year 2026-27 to the County Council by the end of January 2026.

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 £5,500 remaining in the bank account and it is recommended that £5,000 still be retained as a general reserve.

The Embleton Joint Burial Committee has also asked for a contribution from the three Parish Councils for the first time for this coming financial year as follows:

Embleton: (64.9%) £3971

Craster: (20.9%) £1278

Newton: (14.2%) £868

There has also been a suggestion that the Parish Council may wish to undertake some form of memorial project for Councillors who have recently passed but this isn't included in the proposed budget below.

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	£516.00
RBL Appeal	£25.00
Christmas tree	£180.00
Cutting of grass verges – incl. Tower Bank and Dunstan. Entrance to the village and 50% contribution to playpark	£1,800.00
NALC subscription	£120.00
Website and .gov.uk email account	£180.00
Hall hire	£288.00
Community events	£250.00
EJBC request for precept	£1,278.00
Greening/ planting budget	£500.00
Stationary	£100.00
Total:	£15,087.00

DECISION REQUIRED

Councillors are asked to consider the above information and agree a budget for financial year 2026-27.

ITEM 13: PRECEPT REQUEST 2026/27

Budget

Please refer to Item 12 for consideration of budget priorities for 2026/2027.

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.

The 2026/27 Tax Base is 197.49. The 2025/26 Craster Parish Council Tax Base was calculated at 196.09. Our Tax Base has therefore increased by 1.40.

Precept request

The precept request must be submitted to Northumberland County Council by the end of January 2026.

The Parish Council's current precept charge for Band D currently sits at £76.50 and generated a total income of £15,000 for the Parish Council in 2025/26.

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 £76.50, this will generate a total precept income of £15,107.99.

Option 2 (raise the precept in line with inflation) - As at November 2025, the UK's inflation rate was 3.2%. Should the Parish Council wish to increase the precept in line with inflation at 3.2%, this will equate to a Band D charge of £78.95 and generate a total income of £15,591.84

Option 3 (raise the precept as per Member's consideration of additional project requests) – this will be dependent on the discussion during the meeting.

DECISION REQUIRED	Councillors are asked to consider the above information and propose a precept level for financial year 2026/27
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