

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Thursday 17th July 2025 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall

Councillors present:

Chair: Martin Smith

Parish Council members: Margaret Brooks, Derek Moss, Allan Gregory, Michael Robson, Marjory Taylor, Sophie Heslop and Robert Cornell.

Also present: Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Wendy Pattison, Mr Robin McCartney (NCC Highways) and 5 members of the public

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors A Fettis and I Brown.

2. Declarations of interest

The Clerk stressed the importance of the need for all Members to declare all interests on items under discussion on today's Agenda. No declarations were received.

3. Confirmation of the minutes for the annual meeting held on 27th May 2025

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 27th May 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters arising

None received.

5. Discussion with Mr Robin McCartney, NCC Highways Infrastructure Manager, on the new entrance scheme to Craster village

The Chair welcomed Mr. Robin McCartney, Highways Infrastructure Manager at Northumberland County Council, who attended to discuss concerns relating to the recently introduced gateway scheme for the village. The Council first raised the matter of the stones placed along most of the length of West End. While acknowledging that these were intended to deter roadside parking, members noted that double-yellow lines are already in place and have proved effective, with no significant parking issues observed. It was further highlighted that the presence of the stones is obstructing the Council's contractor in carrying out grass cutting, and therefore their removal was requested as soon as possible to allow the grass to be properly maintained.

It was also highlighted that a new informal layby had been formed where cars were parking next to Parkburn Court and the stones going there could prevent this parking. Councillor M Robson expressed his discontent that the workmen from NCC could not have moved the stones as requested due to lack of time but that their work on-site had finished midday on Friday. Robin advised that he would feed this back and look into how to resolve this issue.

The second matter concerned the bird's mouth pedestrian fence located at the exit from the quarry car park. The Council recognised the aim of encouraging pedestrians to use the formal footpath on the opposite side of the road. However, due to the narrow width of this footpath and the volume of two-way pedestrian traffic, many people continue to walk in the road itself. The positioning of the fence is also preventing use of the informal grass path on the car park side of the road, which the Council considered could provide a safer alternative route. Members expressed their willingness to maintain this path to ensure it is suitable for pedestrian use and therefore requested that the fence be removed. Robin advised that he would look into this with the team and report back to the Parish Council on this matter.

The third issue discussed was signage to the quarry car park. The Council expressed concern that the current signage does not adequately direct visitors into the car park and that improved, more visible signage is required to encourage greater use. Members stressed the importance of maximising car park usage both to reduce the risk of the village becoming congested with displaced vehicles and to support the generation of parking income for the County Council.

Councillor M Robson made reference to the effective signage used at Holy Island, which the Council felt could be a suitable model, with a sign positioned on the right-hand side of the car park entrance to ensure visibility for approaching drivers. The Council indicated its willingness to install a temporary sign in the interim period but requested that a permanent solution be provided as part of the gateway scheme.

Robin advised that he felt that the signage in place at present was sufficient in letting visitors know to use the quarry car park but advised that his team would be monitoring its efficacy over a period of time, in order to ensure that this was meeting the requirements intended. Parish Councillors expressed their disappointment at the signage.

Councillor M Robson also expressed his disappointment at the way in which the car park is managed. Councillor M Robson highlighted that the bushes to the entrance of the quarry are overgrown and could damage vehicles and that the car park is covered in litter and this should be regularly litter picked. Robin advised that he would feed this back to Neighbourhood Services.

Councillor M Smith also raised a concern about the condition of the footpath kerb at the bottom of Norwell Brow in Craster and asked that this be looked into urgently as he had witnessed a wheelchair user fall into the road recently. Robin advised that he would look into this with the team.

There being no further questions from Members, the Chair thanked Robin for his time. At this point, Robin left the meeting.

Following the discussion with Robin, Members **agreed** to look into erecting signage on private land to direct cars into the car park as well as provide "strictly no parking" signs for front gardens to any resident wishing to make use of one.

6. Public participation

A resident asked if the Parish Council is aware of a timescale on the proposed renovation of the public toilets linked to the former Tourist Information Centre. A resident complained that the toilets were in a poor state of repair and this needs to be done as a priority.

7. Correspondence received to the Parish Council

The Clerk advised that he had received a complaint from a member of the public regarding the poor state of the coastal footpath East from the Jolly Fisherman. The Clerk advised that he has been in contact with the coastal care team about this to see if they could support the Parish Council with this issue as the ownership of part of the footpath was in doubt.

The Clerk also advised that he had received a complaint that application 25/00759/FUL had not gone to Committee at NCC in spite of the Parish Council and neighbour's objections. The Clerk advised that the case officer had responded explaining the process by which an application can come to Committee and had confirmed that this application had not met this criterion. The Parish Council agreed to take no further action on this matter.

The Clerk advised that he had received a complaint about overgrown vegetation obstructing footpaths on Heugh Road. The Clerk advised that he had reported this to NCC to resolve.

8. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison

In addition to her report provided, Councillor Pattison highlighted her new role as the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism and advised that she had recently visited Woodhorn Museum and was keen to see this offering expanded to other parts of the county.

9. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative

Councillor M Brooks advised that the Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Full Council, however works were underway in relation to the cemetery house and that the contractor is continuing to maintain the area extremely well.

10. Report from Craster Community Trust representative

Mrs Jackie Reeves advised that the Community Trust would be planning events as part of the 80th Anniversary of Victory over Japan (VJ) Day and this would commence with a playing of the bagpipes by Andy from Piper's Pitch at 6am, followed by the showing of the movie Bridge on the River Kwai later in the evening.

Jackie also advised that the Trust is still intending to progress the installation of the acoustic tiles to the Hall, in order to improve the sound quality for all Hall users.

The Chair thanked Jackie for her report and the Trust for all of their hard work in the community.

11. Report by Councillor R Cornall on the path between Craster and Embleton

Councillor R Cornall advised that he would like to have the Parish Council's support in relation to register a Public Right of Way.

Councillor R Cornall advised that the path that runs along the fields to the South of Dunstan Steads marked in yellow has been in use by members of the public for many years. Councillor R Cornall advised that it is a through route and also a regular circular walk for local dog walkers. Councillor R Cornall advised that this path was blocked in late May 2025 by a locked gate where the red line is on the map. Councillor R Cornall advised that this means pedestrians coming down the footpath from Dunstan Hill caravan site now have to turn left at the new gate (on the officially recognised footpath) down to the road at Dunstan Steads and then along the road to the beach.

Councillor R Cornall advised that this is obviously more dangerous for walkers (including children going from the caravan site to the beach) as more pedestrians are mixed with cars for longer. In the opposite direction people can still use the path in yellow but the gate is locked so they would have to retrace their steps, as there is no sign to say the path is now blocked, and again use the road route. Similarly, people coming down the concrete road from the farm at Dunstan Square (blue line) would often use this route and can no longer do so.

Councillor R Cornall advised that this has caused much upset from people living and holidaying at Dunstan Steads and Councillor R Cornall advised that he had been in touch with the caravan site manager at Dunstan Hill who has also said the people who stay there are concerned as this is the traditional route to the beach at Embleton Bay.

Councillor R Cornall advised that NCC have stated that this is not a recorded public right of way but there is a process whereby a resident can ask for it to be recognised as such if there is evidence from 6 people that it has been in use for 20 years or more without restriction.

Councillor R Cornall advised that he is in the process of submitting this evidence and there is then a legal process to follow. Councillor R Cornall advised that he is presenting this report to ask if Craster Parish Council would be able to support that application.

Councillor R Cornall advised that he is uncertain who the land owner is for this path, but if the intention of the gate was to restrict vehicular access, Councillor R Cornall advised that he would think this is not necessary as there are locked gates on all approaches to the path (marked with a black line) and also at Dunstan Square farm with pedestrian only access through side gates.

The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council would be formally consulted on this if the application were to be accepted by NCC and Members advised that they would support this in principle.

Two residents attending the meeting also confirmed that they would like to support this application as they had previously used this path for many years.

12. To consider the Minister's response to our MP on holiday let Use Classes

The Clerk reported that, following the meeting with Mr David Smith MP on 17th February, the Chair of the Parish Council had written to him on 20th February 2025 to set out the Council's concerns regarding the continuing proliferation of short-term holiday lets in Craster and Dunstan. The letter referred to the Northumberland Local Plan and the Craster Neighbourhood Plan, both of which seek to preserve principal residence housing but have limited powers over the existing housing stock. The Parish Council highlighted that more than 55% of homes in Craster parish are now in use as either second homes or holiday lets, with significant consequences for affordability, permanent residency, local services, and community cohesion.

The letter further asked the MP to raise with the housing minister the importance of implementing the previous Government's proposals for a new Use Class C5 to regulate holiday lets. These proposals included a requirement for planning permission when converting residential properties to holiday accommodation, automatic reclassification of existing holiday lets into the new class, and the creation of a mandatory national register to enable better monitoring and management by local authorities. The Parish Council stressed that while it values the contribution of existing holiday let owners, unchecked expansion is undermining the sustainability of the community.

The Clerk further reported that a response had since been received from the Minister. The Minister acknowledged the concerns raised and confirmed that the Government recognised the need to balance the benefits of the tourism economy with the protection of local communities. He stated that a national registration scheme for short-term lets was being developed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with testing and refinement of its design currently under way. In addition, the Minister confirmed that from April this year the Furnished Holiday Let tax regime would be abolished, thereby removing the financial incentive for landlords to favour holiday lets over long-term tenancies. He also confirmed that councils would be enabled to apply a council tax premium of up to 100% on second homes, also effective from April, which would provide additional resources for local services.

The Minister concluded by noting that the Government was considering further powers to support local authorities in managing the impact of short-term lets. However, no reference was made to the introduction of a new planning Use Class C5, which the Parish Council had identified as a key measure in addressing the problem.

Members expressed disappointment that the point about Use Class C5 had not been addressed in the Minister's response and therefore **agreed** to write back to the Member of Parliament on this issue, to seek a further assurance that this Use Class would be introduced.

13. Supporting Craster Lifeboat Day 2025

Members noted that £250 had been set aside for supporting the Craster Lifeboat Day 2025 and the Chair **agreed** to discuss this further with the Committee, in order to ascertain the best use for this funding.

14. Website/ .gov.uk email account update

The Council received a report from NALC regarding the future provision of parish websites. Members were advised that NALC's current website provider will cease supporting both NALC and individual Councils from 31st March 2026, and therefore a new provider must be secured before this date.

Following a review, the County Committee has recommended moving to HugoFox, the UK's largest community website provider, supporting over 400 parish council websites. HugoFox offers a fully GDPR and WCAG 2.2 AA compliant platform, with unlimited pages, unlimited email support, a .gov.uk domain, hosting, and an SSL certificate included.

The Bronze Package is currently priced at £9.99 plus VAT per month, however HugoFox have agreed to provide a 50% reduction for the first 12 months, and NALC will match this contribution, resulting in a full year's free bronze subscription for Councils joining the scheme. Councils will then have until 31st March 2026 to transfer content and populate their new website, with support provided by HugoFox and the option of bespoke build services if required. The Council also noted that from 1st April 2026 all Parish and Town Councils must operate with a .gov.uk email address or a similar authority-owned domain, and HugoFox currently offer individual accounts at £2.49 plus VAT per month.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Craster Parish Council will move to the HugoFox platform as proposed by NALC, and that a single .gov.uk email account should be obtained for the Parish Clerk.

15. Planning matters:

APP/P2935/W/25/3367376 – appeal against refusal of application for the construction of two holiday lets (Sui Generis) with associated landscaping on Land North and East of Dunstan House Dunstan Northumberland. Members **agreed** to maintain the Parish Council's objection and submit a follow up Statement of Case to this appeal.

Update on 25/01691/FUL | Proposed front porch; install solar PV and dormer extension to front roof elevation; mansard extension to rear roof elevation to facilitate conversion of existing roof space; alterations to front garden area to form driveway / off road parking | 14 South Acres Craster Northumberland NE66 3TN. Members **noted** that this application had now been withdrawn by the applicant.

Update on 25/01675/FUL | A small single-story extension to the rear with flat roof and roof lights, single story extension replacing the porch to the front elevation, two dormer windows to front and rear roof elevations as well as additional velux windows | 14 Whin Hill Craster Northumberland NE66 3TP. Members **noted** the objections from the National Landscape and Highways team to 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. No further updates were provided on this application since the last Full Council meeting.

25/01265/FUL | Proposed side extension over existing single storey flat roof with increased footprint and full height to match existing main building, extended road side dormer, rear roof extension to form second floor ensuite and associated internal works to provide accessible accommodation | Maries Cottage 1 Dunstanburgh Road Craster Alnwick Northumberland NE66 3TT. Members **agreed** to note this application, subject to further plans being submitted

showing the car parking arrangements as well as a reduction in the size of a number of the windows, most especially the window to the top of the front door, as proposed. The applicants agreed to make those amendments.

16. Items for next Agenda

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

17. Date and time of next meeting

18th September 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
(18th September 2025)**