

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Tuesday 27th May 2025 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall

Councillors present:

Chair: Martin Smith

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

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

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Martin Smith was unanimously elected Chair of the Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor M Brooks and seconded by Councillor A Fettis. The Chair read aloud and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

Councillor Margaret Brooks was unanimously elected as Vice-Chair. Proposed by Councillor M Smith and seconded by Councillor A Fettis.

3. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees. There were no formal apologies received, though the absence of some former councillors following the May elections was noted.

4. Co-option of Parish Councillors

The Chair introduced the five applicants for co-option: Mr Michael Robson, Mrs Marjory Taylor, Ms Sophie Heslop, Mr Robert Cornall and Mr John Young. Each candidate addressed the meeting and gave a brief statement outlining their background and reasons for applying.

Following a vote by ballot, the following four candidates were co-opted, each receiving the required number of votes:

- Michael Robson
- Marjory Taylor
- Sophie Heslop
- Robert Cornall

Mr John Young received fewer than the required number of votes and was not co-opted. The Chair thanked Mr Young for his interest in joining the Parish Council and also welcomed the newly co-opted Members to the Council.

5. Declarations of interest

The Clerk reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any item on the Agenda and also advised that this was solely the responsibility of each Member to declare such interests.

Councillor Iain Brown declared an interest in application 24/04252/FUL and duly left the room, taking no part in the discussion or vote on this item, as and when it was discussed.

6. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 20th March 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2025 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

7. Matters arising

It was noted that fundraising for the playground had so far raised £1,154, with a target of around £4,000 remaining. Additional contributions would be welcomed and recorded at the next meeting.

8. Public participation

A resident suggested that "correspondence received" over the preceding month may be a useful item on the Agenda, in order to ensure that a resident's correspondence and their issues were fully acknowledged and considered by the Parish Council. The Council agreed with this and agreed to include this in the Agenda going forward.

9. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison

Councillor Pattison gave a verbal report on local matters. She confirmed her continued support for improving the entrance to the village and would assist with communications to the County Council as necessary.

10. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative

Councillors M Brooks and D Moss were appointed to represent Craster Parish Council on the Embleton Joint Burial Committee.

Councillor Brooks reported that a meeting of the Committee was being planned in the coming weeks.

11. Report from Craster Community Trust representative

Councillor Martin Smith was nominated and appointed to represent the Parish Council on the Craster Community Trust.

The Trust's representative highlighted upcoming fundraising events, including one on 17th August, with all proceeds going toward the playground. Praise was given for the community effort involved in the VE Day commemorations.

12. Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024/25

Members reviewed the AGAR documentation and unanimously agreed the following:

- i. To accept the Internal Audit Report 2024/25
- ii. To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- iii. To approve the Draft Annual Accounts 2024/25
- iv. To approve the Accounting Statement and Explanation of Variances 2024/25
- v. To approve the Certificate of Exemption 2024/25

Thanks were extended to the Clerk for preparing the documentation.

13. Consideration of the new entrance to Craster Village

Members expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the newly installed entrance layout. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of visual impact of red surfacing, the inadequate and poorly positioned signage as well as public safety, pedestrian access and visitor confusion.

It was **agreed** that the Council should contact NCC and make the following requests:

- 1. Removal of the stones running most of the length of West End** – whilst the Parish Council understood the intention to deter parking along this road, the Parish Council is delighted that this road is double-yellow lined and has not experienced problems of vehicles parking up at this location. Moreover, the stones being in situ at present are making it difficult for the Parish Council's contractor to cut this grass. The Parish Council is keen to keep the grass nicely trimmed and therefore would appreciate the removal of these stones as soon as possible please.
- 2. Removal of the bird's mouth pedestrian fence coming out of the quarry car park** the Parish Council entirely understood the intention of wishing to encourage pedestrians leaving the quarry car park to use the formal footpath on the other side of the road. However, the two-way pedestrian foot traffic and narrow width of this footpath is resulting in pedestrians continuing to walk in the middle of the road. This fence is deterring use of the informal grass path on the car park side of the road. The Parish Council confirmed that they are happy to maintain this path to allow pedestrians to use this but will require the fence to be removed.
- 3. Installation of a new road sign clearly directing visitors to the quarry car park** – the Parish Council **agreed** that the existing signage fails to give visitors a clear enough message to use the car park. The Parish Council wants to see more usage of the car park to both protect the village from being overrun with displaced vehicles and at the same time increase parking income for the Council. The Parish Council felt that the sign from Holy Island would be a good addition to the right-hand side of the entrance (thereby within the line of sight for drivers). As an interim measure, the Parish Council also **agreed** to erect a temporary advisory sign for drivers to assist in increased use of the car park.
- 4. Seeding of the grass verge** – the Parish Council has previously **agreed** to assume responsibility for maintaining the new grass verges to the entrance of the car park. The Parish Council confirmed it is happy to do this although it was noted that the verge to the left of the entrance appears not to have been seeded and is now heavily covered in weeds. It was agreed that the Parish Council should request this be cleared and re-seeded.

14. Proposal on the telephone and broadband service to the Hall

Members were reminded that the Parish Council currently funds the phone and broadband to the Hall and has done for a number of years now.

Following agreement by the Parish Council in 2024, we made a specific request to BT for the copper line telephone service to be reinstated and retained in the Hall and this is in contract until June 2026. At the time, we received a time-limited free rental as a gesture of goodwill following a complaint as BT cut us off unexpectedly and the Parish Council wanted this reinstated.

The argument in favour of retaining the copper line was primarily centred around being able to make an emergency call in the event of a power-cut from the Hall. BT is not able to offer us a copper line/ broadband package.

Following the end of the time-limited free service, the Parish Council has been receiving higher bills and this aspect of the service is presently costing us £45.20/ month for – on average –

one phone call per month. We have monitored the usage of this line over a period of approx. 6 months.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has an additional contract for broadband (including a digital phone line) for £36.51 per month and this runs until May 2026 (total cost of £438.12). This has a guaranteed minimum broadband speed of 64Mbps.

The Clerk advised that if the Parish Council were to cancel the copper line today, this would instigate an early termination charge of £282.54 as opposed to (14 x £45.20 =) £632.80. A difference of £350.26.

The Clerk also highlighted that the Council could also cancel the digital phone line and broadband for an early repayment charge of £525.49 (the discount applied would be removed in the event of an early termination hence the higher amount).

If the Parish Council were minded to cancel both lines this would incur a one-off early termination charge of charge of £808.03. As the Parish Council received a time-limited free rental as a gesture of goodwill at the beginning of the contract, BT is now willing to reduce or waive this early termination charge.

In light of these higher charges, the phone usage within the Hall and other products now available on the market, the Parish Council is recommended to review these contracts. The Clerk advised that he has engaged with the Trust on the matter of the copper line and they agree that this is not producing value-for-money. With the phone mast now in place in Craster, all mobile network operators allow customers to dial 999 from any mast in the UK.

Alncom is not able to support the Parish Council with any early termination fees, however, because this relates to an account for a village hall, Alncom is able to provide a free-of-charge broadband service to the Hall and, from next month, a telephone service costing £10-15 per month. Based on the Government scheme, it is likely that the free-of-charge broadband service for community halls will be in place for the foreseeable future.

Alncom can install the new broadband service within one week and can guarantee a minimum broadband speed of 125Mbps.

Members were presented with a number of options and unanimously **agreed** to go ahead on the basis of option 2 as follows:

Option 2: pay the early repayment charge for the copper line contract only at £282.54 and continue the BT phone and broadband service at £36.51/ month until the end of the existing contract. A total saving from the existing contracts of £350.26. Following the end of this contract, the Council can look to Alncom for their services. **£720.66**

15. Update on securing the mobile phone mast

The Clerk advised that he had been continuing engagement with Atlas and iNorthumberland on securing EE and Vodafone for the mobile mast and the effort to gain their involvement in this project continues. The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council may wish to host a visit of local representatives from both companies to talk this through with them and this was **agreed** by Members.

16. Planning matters:

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

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

Update on 25/00759/FUL | The addition of a balcony across the larger first floor glazed area | Seahaven 37 Dunstanburgh Road Craster Northumberland NE66 3TT. Members **noted** that this application had now been approved, in spite of the Parish Council's objection to this proposal.

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. It was **agreed** that the Parish Council should maintain its objection to this proposal and await further information from the applicant, as requested by NCC's Ecologist.

17. Items for next Agenda

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

18. Date and time of next meeting

17th July 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
17th July 2025