

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall**

**Councillors present:**

**Chair:** Martin Smith

**Parish Council members:** Derek Moss, Ian Brown, Michael Robson, Marjory Taylor, Sophie Heslop, Ann Fettis and Allan Gregory.

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

The meeting commenced with a two-minute silence in memory of our beloved former colleague and friend Michael Craster.

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor R Cornall.

**2. Declarations of interest**

Councillor I Brown declared an interest in application 24/04252/FUL and left the meeting before this matter was discussed. No further declarations of interest were received.

**3. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

Members reviewed the draft minutes. Two textual corrections were agreed, the reference to the minutes should not refer to them as the minutes of the “annual,” meeting and therefore this word was removed. Moreover, the location reference should read “next to the old Coastguard Station,” rather than “Lifeboat Station”. Subject to these amendments, the minutes were **approved** and signed by the Chair.

**4. Matters arising**

On the wall next to the old Coastguard Station, the Clerk reported discussion with the landowner’s family: the wall sits on private land; it is not considered unsafe, and therefore falls outside Parish powers unless there is a safety concern. The Parish will continue to rely on goodwill to secure repair while noting potential negligence if the wall were to cause injury.

On mobile connectivity, members and the County Councillor had attended a North Northumberland connectivity event. Vodafone indicated they are close to accessing the existing mast, while EE remains uncertain. A merger context prevents firm dates; however, Vodafone noted the case made for Craster was strong, albeit with concern about winter user numbers. The Council agreed to continue lobbying—specifically to follow up in writing and to contact Cllr Glenn Sanderson to raise EE issues at the North East Combined Authority.

Regarding the sycamore tree removal, Steve was scheduled to complete the work; members noted he may be tied up with final seasonal grass cutting, but the task remains on his list.

**5. Public participation**

Residents raised routine maintenance and signage issues. One request concerned cutting back vegetation encroaching on the south-side path between Park and the harbour; this was noted for Steve. A further request was to remove an obsolete red “*New Road layout*” sign at the harbour entrance, which is obstructing pedestrians; the Chair agreed to arrange removal promptly. Separately, concern was raised about an often-overlooked litter bin on the West

End of the harbour (bottom of the gardens) that is missed by relief or new drivers; the matter had been passed to the relevant officer for regular emptying.

## **6. Correspondence received to the Parish Council**

On the public toilets, members recorded multiple complaints from residents and visitors about the unacceptable condition of the temporary portaloos and the reputational risk to Craster. NCC's Technical Services reported chronic air/pumping problems; significant pump upgrades 18 months ago had worked until a complete blockage occurred five weeks prior that resisted several attempts to clear.

NCC Property Services attended on 13<sup>th</sup> October and officers indicated the portaloos might be removed imminently if the fixed toilets can be brought back into use; however, as the portaloos are contracted by a third party, removal depends on the contractor's schedule. Members highlighted that the fixed toilets' telemetry/warning system is ineffective and that system issues have persisted for eight years.

The Council agreed a stepped approach: the Clerk will obtain the mobile number for Tony Bell (Construction Manager, Environment & Transport) from Cllr Pattison and call him to confirm repair status and any portaloos removal plan; the Clerk will write to service leaders (including Mark Mavin) seeking a substantive response on refurbishment within two weeks; and, depending on the response and progress, the Council will consider escalating to Environmental Health. Members will also write to Cllr Glenn Sanderson to underline the seriousness of the issue, including the scale of visitor numbers and car-park revenue risk.

There was a clear preference expressed by several attendees to remove the portaloos rather than continue with unsanitary facilities, but members agreed first to verify that the fixed WCs are operational before insisting on removal.

On overnight campervans at South Acres, members noted reports of vans sleeping in contravention of the TRO and discussed the limited practical enforcement by police given competing priorities. Although designated overnight parking exists elsewhere in the county, users share information via apps and forums, increasing volumes when a location is perceived as tolerated.

Members considered deterrent signage but acknowledged limitations; the discussion recognised that some issues arise elsewhere in the parish and that, while nuisance (noise/litter) is not constant, the trend requires monitoring. It was agreed that residents should continue reporting incidents to NCC, and the Parish would continue dialogue with police and consider targeted signage if it can meaningfully deter overnight stays.

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

Councillor Wendy Pattison updated members on county constraints and initiatives. Councillor Pattison highlighted the free tree scheme (whips supplied) available to residents, councillors, schools and community groups and suggested pick-up points.

Members linked this to the Parish's £500 "clean and green" planting budget and agreed a pollinator-friendly bulb mix (muscari, allium and daffodils) for village entrances and prominent verges, together with testing one or two fruit trees at the top of the Craster Trail where exposure is lower. Planting will be organised for November, with the contractor asked to avoid cutting over bulb sites.

Councillor Pattison also described changes to parking permits/"early bird" passes, including Blue Badge concessions, and fielded comments on local charging policy.

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

An update from the Committee confirmed repair of the archway into the burial area, completion of renovation works to the associated house, and successful letting with rent now paid regularly. The Committee is considering whether additional litter bins are appropriate near the arch without detracting from the setting.

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

The Trust reported progress on signage upgrades partially funded through external grant funding, with work at an early stage. It was also reported that the play park remains closed owing to the presence of moles.

The Trust is also hoping that the new acoustic tiling will be completed soon as a finishing touch to improvements to the Hall.

## **10. Countywide Community Governance Review of parish boundaries**

The Council considered the Community Governance Review and agreed to respond that the existing arrangements for Craster are appropriate. Members opposed any merger proposals on the basis that the communities are distinct, and while some felt Howick is closely linked to Craster, the consensus was to maintain current boundaries, Councillor numbers and unwarded status. The Clerk advised that he would therefore submit a "no change" response accordingly.

## **11. Traffic Regulation Order for Craster and review of signage for Craster village**

Members revisited signage options to support the TRO and improve visitor wayfinding. Following a resident suggestion, the Council agreed to request that NCC add clear wording to the Dunstanburgh Castle fingerpost at the bottom of Tower Bank: "No vehicle access to Dunstanburgh Castle – park in Quarry Car Park." Members felt explaining "why" would reduce attempts to drive through the village to the castle.

Following a proposal from Councillor M Robson, the Council also **agreed** press for a "No public parking beyond this point" sign at the village entrance to reinforce the Quarry Car Park message, while recognising necessary exemptions for community groups accessing leased or private land for bona fide activities.

Members noted that English Heritage has been asked to change the sat-nav postcode to direct vehicles to the Quarry Car Park, and that promised camera-based monitoring by Highways had yet to be delivered. The Clerk **agreed** to write to NCC Highways to progress both the additional sign and the outstanding monitoring commitment.

## **12. Planning for Christmas light switch-on and event**

The Chair reported that the working meeting for Christmas preparations was confirmed for Monday 27 October, 7:00pm, at the Lifeboat Station. The tree is ordered for installation the week prior to switch-on; new lights have been purchased at members' request; and ancillary activity will be finalised at the working meeting. The village switch-on date remains Sunday 30 November.

## **13. Planning matters:**

**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. The Council **noted** that this application was still pending consideration but that the Chair of the North Northumberland Planning Committee had confirmed that he would not be recommending a Chair referral to Committee on 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 carefully considered the additional documentation submitted as part of this application and **agreed** to retain its current position on this application.

#### **14. 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 November.

#### **15. Date and time of next meeting**

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 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  
(20<sup>th</sup> November 2025)**