

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting on:	10th March 2026
Meeting at:	Longframlington Memorial Hall
Meeting Time:	7.30 p.m.
Present:	Steve Bray (SB), Richard Elphick (RE), Lesley Turnbull-Hall (LH) Mark Fenwick (MF), David Owen – Chair (DO), Jackie Scarpa (JS), Jamie Whicker (JW)
In attendance:	Paul Barrett (PBT), Community Development, Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT), Peter Batchelor (PBr), Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT); Brenda & Des Barker - Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee (CC&BC). Roger Powell (CC&BC), Clerk: Garth Rhodes.

The meeting opened at 7.30 p.m.

- 1) **Apologies for Absence.** None
- 2) **Table Urgent Business to be discussed in 19 below.** Only urgent items councillors have become aware of since the publication of the agenda will be discussed at the end of the meeting.
 - a) Great British Spring Clean 13 - 29 March 2026.
 - b) Town of Culture 2028: Expression of Interest (EOI): Request for Support. Deadline 31st March 2026
 - c) Confidential - Sycamore Gap Saplings
- 3) **Declaration of Interests.** None
- 4) **Gifts and Hospitality.** None
- 5) **Update on the Wildlife Trust purchase of the Rothbury Estate. Paul Barrett (PBT), Community Development Rothbury, Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT) & Peter Batchelor (PBr), Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) in attendance.** The Chair welcomed Paul and Peter to the meeting and the Cllrs and attendees introduced themselves. Paul then provided an extremely interesting thought-provoking presentation on the purchase and developments of the Rothbury Estate. Key elements included:
 - Not decided who will run the estate; NWT, RSWT or some other body.
 - Size of entire estate c 3800 hectares estate/9500 acres
 - West side of the estate including Simonside already purchased. This is mostly upland/woodland and rough pasture. Eastern side yet to be purchased is mostly pasture and woodland. The area of the parish within the estate sits in the eastern side.
 - The large size of the estate offers scale which greatly helps in increasing and re-establishing plant and wildlife.
 - The estate will form part of a 40-mile green corridor to the coast (and includes the area in Brinkburn along the Coquet where the Parish's biodiversity activity has been focussed).
 - Trust fully embraces farming as an essential element of the development. Indeed, the Trusts are farming a considerable acreage and whilst reducing sheep numbers have already begun a balanced re-introduction of cattle onto the land. The nature of cattle's grazing habits and 'churning' the land rather than compacting it encourages plant and wildlife. Local and very experienced farmworkers are employed to manage the farmland.
 - Community Engagement is a priority. The focus is on stewardship with the intention of listening to and working with the community to maintain and develop the biodiversity of the estate and at the same time maintaining its traditional uniqueness e.g.
 - Cauldhole Moss (Triple SSI) is the focus of current significant activity, encouraging ecologists, volunteers, schools, universities, youth groups to study and work to reinstate this bog to its former glory and make into a wetland area again. Drainage work has caused a good deal of erosion and washing of peat into the Coquet. Bogs are wonderful for carbon capture. Work being carried out to block the drainage outlets and thus the bog will revert to becoming a filter producing clear water run-off. There are an abundance of plant species and wildlife and work to revert the bog should significantly increase numbers and varieties.
 - Garleigh & Lordenshaw has a great deal of social history and much evidence of cup & ring marks and standing stones. The Trust is leading on a citizen science project to map and interpret the area.
 - If the east side sale goes through the Trust would like to develop the disused railway line (Morpeth-Rothbury) that runs through the estate and open it open to walkers and cyclists. (This development fits well with BHCP's ideas of a biodiversity corridor along the route).
 - Misconceptions that have arisen, not based on fact:
 - No plan to introduce lynx.
 - The Trusts did not ban shooting or heather burning. Heather burning though is not their preferred method to manage moorland. The Trusts are working with the Fire Service and others to develop a 'safe as possible' management plan.
 - Farming will not be discouraged. Tenants will continue to farm the way they have. Trust farmland will be focussed on regenerative farming, and it is hoped that tenants will move in that direction.
 - No-one will be forced out of their properties or the land.
 - Not anti-sheep, they are necessary to maintain the traditional landscape but will be encouraging a better balance of sheep and cattle.
 - Not reducing access onto the land; the exact opposite to encourage more access to sensible/sensitive users.

- Heather here to stay but recognise it has to be sensibly and safely managed. Cattle will help to reduce areas where bracken has taken over. It is hoped that a mosaic of habitats will emerge that will encourage and increase varieties of plants and wildlife.
- Question of how certain the Trusts were in obtaining the money to buy the rest of the estate? Quietly confident there are a number of large donors waiting in the wings. Awaiting the announcement of two large bids, expected in the next couple of weeks. Trust is already leasing some of the unpurchased land for farming.
- No plans as yet to set up a visitor centre. If this was what was wanted, likely to be in Rothbury and not on the Estate. This will help revitalise the town, its shops and facilities. Any development would be made in consultation with the local community.
- The Trusts welcomed ongoing discussion with the Parish Council. It was of great interest to them to hear about BHPC's diversity work and would welcome the opportunity to attend the BHCP biodiversity information event in July.

The Chair thanked Paul and Peter for their presentation and welcomed future engagement.

PBt and PBr left the meeting.

There followed a brief discussion. Members were heartened by what they had heard. MF suggested three specific areas for future discussion:

1. The future of the Simonside Show
2. The future of the Gate pub
3. Parish/Community Hall for Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst

6) County Councillors Report. Written report received from GS:

'A brief update - but please let me know if I can help with anything.

The County Council Budget was agreed almost unanimously with cross party agreement - the first time I can remember this happening in 20 years. Other political groups put forward helpful amendments with which I could agree so compared to the usual arguments - and occasionally bad temper - a consensual approach won the day and this was a way I much prefer! Like almost all Councils, the Council tax will need to go up by 4.99%. That breaks down to 2% solely towards increasing the money for adult social care, and 2.99% for Council services. At a time when inflation is running at over 3% this means we need to run a very tight ship and be very careful with money whilst at the same time protecting our front-line services and doing the things that you want us to. We will keep free town centre car parking, building new superschools and keep our Leisure offer as fresh and well liked as it is.

Best wishes
Glen'

7) Minutes of Previous Meeting. The minutes of 13th January 2025 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record.

8) Matters arising out of Minutes. To receive updates on matters not appearing elsewhere on the agenda including:

- a) Quality of DAB reception in the Coquet Valley. No further information. DO agreed to follow up the link to the BBC information page. **Action: DO**
- b) David Smith (DS) MP: Letters to Boundaries Commissions. No further information.
- c) Bus Stop Sign New Houses B6344 Crossroads X14 Service. The following email had been received from Neil Easton NCC on 20/01/26 but nothing further:
'In respect of the bus infrastructure at New Houses B6344 Crossroads, these improvements have been included in a programme of works submitted to North East Combined Authority (NECA) for funding. The programme is subject to assurance works and NECA cabinet sign-off, we are confident the funding bid will be successful with approvals expected in the next 4-6 weeks.'
- d) Hedging in the Playground. JW reported that the cutting by volunteers had not taken place due to the bad weather. David Boyson had inspected and indicated that the hedge was unsuitable for laying. Meanwhile the contractor who had previously cut the hedge had undertaken (without any formal agreement) to cut it. The PC should anticipate an invoice for this work. **Action: Clerk**
- e) Grass Cutting of the Parish Playground opposite Embleton Terrace. Clerk had asked GS if he could clarify the situation about grasscutting of public areas. GS approached Greg Gavin (GG) Head of Neighbourhood Services who had responded to say:
'Where a Town or Parish Council's lease or own a plot of land it is their responsibility to maintain that land. There are plenty of fields and sports pitches in Parishes that the County Council are responsible for cutting because we own the land or have an agreement in place with the landowner, but where we do this on their behalf we typically charge for that service'
Glen had responded to GG to suggest that 'the Parish Council may wish to meet with him to see how this might be moved forward. The PC agreed to maintain the current arrangements for grass cutting at the playground.

9) Police Update:

'There's nothing to report for the last month for the Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst area. That said, more broadly for the area, thefts of ATV's and Trailers have continued, where owners of high value property should take action.'
PCSO Peter Johnson 4187'

10) Finance.

a) **Notification of receipts since the last meeting.** Approved.

27/02/2026	CAN Northumberland	WWCF 141 Grant x2 emergency radios	171.00
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b) **Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments since the last meeting.** Approved.

09/02/2026	Thropton Parish Council	Cluster Fees 25/26	23.30
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Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council



- c) Requests for donations
- i) Donation to FramNews. DO had suggested this at the last meeting in recognition of additional copies for the Parish. No further action agreed at this time.
 - ii) Embleton Terrace Centenary. Email received from Samantha Davidson saying that the Wind Farm Fund had granted half of their bid for the historical side of their project. However, they had been asked to re-submit the bid for food and entertainment. She asked the PC to consider an amount to contribute towards this event. It was agreed to donate £100 on the proviso that it was open to all residents of the parish. **Action: DO**

- d) Bank Reconciliation. Approved.

Bank Reconciliation at 8th March 2026	£
Balance per e-bank statements at 08/03/2026	3625.47
Less unpresented cheques	0.00
Uncredited Deposits -	0.00
Balance	3625.47
Balance per cash book	3625.47

- e) Annual Accounts – Produce Annual Accounts for Parish Council & Review of Assets and Reserves
- f) Arrange for Internal Audit and prepare Annual Governance & Return.
The Clerk hoped to have the accounts and AGAR submission completed for w/b 27th April ready for internal audit. The AGAR documentation for this year had not yet been received. DO to inform the internal auditor. **Action: DO**

11) Action Plan: March – April 2026. To address regular duties, prioritize initiatives, allocate resources, and track progress towards important goals not appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

- a) Parish Inspection – check, roads, pavements, tree review and infrastructure for report to NCC. It was agreed to adopt the maintenance checking record operated by Whitton & Tosson Parish Council. JS agreed to carry out the inspection. **Action: Clerk/JS**
- b) Annual Village Meeting Date agreed 12th May at 7.00 pm. **Action: Clerk**
- c) Playground – Inspect condition and record equipment JW had completed the inspection and no major issues of note.
- d) Review Risk Assessments for Parish Council and Biodiversity Committee. DO agreed to carry out the assessment, A copy of the procedures to be circulated to councillors for their comment. **Action: DO/Clerk/ALL**
- e) Review Internal Procedures and Regulations scheduled for review. Ongoing. Clerk would need to develop a review schedule in order to meet compliance regulations. **Action: Clerk**

12) Planning.

- a) To note and discuss any planning issues since previous meeting

Reference	Address	Status	Parish Council Comments
25/04663/FUL	9 Embleton Terrace	Permitted	No Objection
26/00097/FUL	20 Embleton Terrace	Registered	Insufficient responses from members to submit a PC comment.

13) Highways.

- a) Highways and Footpaths Report. No issues to report at this meeting.
- b) Report on any issues raised/ to raise with NCC Highways.
 - i) Road conditions between the Lee and Todd Burn, (particularly between the Gusset & Embleton Terrace Crossroads, around Magin Burn and Todd Burn) and also between Forest Burn and the Lee Siding (particularly at Suers' Hill). Clerk had written to GS about the PCs concerns. GS asked Graham Bucknall to respond. Jonathan Park, Highways inspector had been asked to carry out a general inspection of the roads in the Embleton Terrace / The Lee area and repair any actionable defects. Anything over and above that would require more than general maintenance, to be forwarded to the Asset Management team for future LTP consideration. He noted that a scheme for the C136 through the Low Hesleyhurst, plus a scheme on the B6342 at Forestburn Gate already appeared in the draft 3-year LTP programme. Members were very concerned about the deteriorating condition of the road and asked the Clerk to follow this up. **Action: Clerk**
 - ii) Repairs at Lee Ford bridge. DO had reported the serious condition of the wooden bridge. Repairs had been carried out with timbers secured and tarmac infills laid. Larger area of tarmacking scheduled for repair.
- c) B6334 Signage. Over the last week a significant number of traffic warning signs had been installed along the B6334. This may be as a result of our LTP priorities. Clerk to write to thank Highways and clarify if the work was as a result of the LTP. **Action: Clerk**
- d) B6334 at Cockshot Burn MF reported that there had been extensive surveying along the road at this point. It appeared there were concerns about road slippage.
- e) Todd's Place. During the recent visit Mark Shipperlee had informed the group that the project was applying for increased access to Todd's Place. Members were asked to pay particular attention to any application for this, given that the access was on a particularly dangerous stretch of road.
- f) Environment and Transport Update. Noted.

14) Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund.

- a) Report. SB reported that there had been three recent applications for funding considered:

- i) St Helen's Old Wood. £9k was requested from WWCF of a £28.5K project. They had been asked to provide detail of where the rest of the funding was to be sourced.
- ii) Mountain Rescue. £4800 agreed.
- iii) Morpeth Air Cadets. £1750
- b) Notice boards at Todsteads & Weldon Bridge application. JW was in the process of obtain quotes from Northumberland National Park and the Barn Community Workshop. **Action: JW**
- 15) Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee Report.** To receive a report from the Committee.
- a) Litter Picking. RE had now taken the lead on this. Significant amount of rubbish collection undertaken along the **B6334**. Despite concerns from some previous volunteers about the dangers of the road, the collections were undertaken following clear H&S procedures and were perfectly safe. Lots of litter picking being undertaken by individuals including Archie, the Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteer.
- b) Bird Boxes A further 16 boxes had been sited on the Brinkburn estate.
- c) Information Event To take place weekend 11/12 July.
- 16) Emergency Planning including:**
- a) Check and oil flood warning signs. Completed
- b) Test emergency two- way radios. Completed
- c) Defibrillator status. Completed. All fine
- d) Flood Plan. All agreed the flood warden's meeting had been worthwhile.
- 17) Coquetdale Cluster Meeting.**
- a) Items to discuss from the latest Cluster Meeting. No meeting since last PC meeting.
- b) Items for next Cluster Meeting Agenda. To report on BHPC/Wildlife Trust meeting.
- 18) Cemetery & Joint Burial Committee Reports.**
- a) Longframlington Cemetery. Work to be carried out to repair puddling at entrance. General safety Inspection to be carried out.
- b) Rothbury JBC. JW had been unable to attend the last meeting.
- 19) New.gov domain, Parish Website and Email address and Assertion 10.** Assertion 10: Digital and Data Compliance, was a new requirement in the AGAR for the 2025/26 financial year. It mandated that smaller authorities demonstrate compliance with a range of digital governance and data protection standards. To meet the assertion authorities must:
- operate a website that meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA standards
 - ensure the website includes documentation required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities (for councils under £25k)
 - use a council-owned domain for email communications
 - comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018
 - maintain an IT policy governing the secure and lawful use of digital tools and data.
- Hence the reason why the PC was having set up a .gov domain, Website and Email.
- Clerk had attended the online training for the management of the new website given by Hugo Thompson of Hugo Fox. This was an excellent training session. The website management was straightforward but there is an inordinate amount of work to ensure compliance and that all data had been transferred. The members approved the new IT Policy and Privacy Policy. Most of the policy documents would require reviewing to ensure they were compliant. It was agreed for this work to be undertaken over the next 12 – 18 months following the website launch. The new domain, email and website to be launched before 31st March to meet regulatory requirements and prior to the closing down of the existing NALC Northumberland website in which our current website sits. Additionally, the PC had been registered with the Information Commissioner's Office as it employed 1- 10 employees and held personal data on individuals. **Action: Clerk**
- 20) Neighbourhood Plan for BHCP.** Clerk reported that he had been unable to set up meeting with Rob Naples NCC Planning. However, Longframlington (L/fram) PC had a meeting with him. Key outcomes:
- Significant imminent changes to national planning laws with a likely increase in new housing numbers across the county from 885 to 1700 per year between 2025 -2045. L/fram expected to have to accommodate up to a further 140 houses by 2045.
 - NCC revising its Local Plan to make ready for the changes.
 - Boundary statements within Neighbourhood Plans are threatened and require strengthening.
 - L/fram if it was to revise its NP would have to do this in its entirety including the extensive local consultation process.
 - Government has withdrawn funding and technical support to develop Neighbourhood Plans.
 - NCC will continue to support parishes to develop NPs but have only 2 officers for the whole county to do this. They are unable to provide financial support.
 - L/fram has taken decision not to revise/develop new plan but has proposed they work in partnership with NCC to develop effective solutions to meet the new constraints .
- Agreed that BHPC would not pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan at this time. A watching brief to be kept.
- 21) Stage 1 Community Governance Review 2026.** Agreed to submit same response as given at pre-consultation. **Action: Clerk**
- 22) Libraries Consultation 2026.** Northumberland County Council had launched a consultation about how they will deliver our Northumberland Library Service going forward. DO to make response. Deadline 13th April **Action: DO**
- 23) NCC Inequalities Plan 2022 -2025** Noted.
- 24) Any Urgent Business.**

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- a) Great British Spring Clean 13 - 29 March 2026. The Great British Spring Clean to take place from 13 to 29 March 2026. RE to provide numbers of bags collected & those involved. **Action: RE/Clerk**
- b) Town of Culture 2028: Expression of Interest (EOI): Request for Support. Deadline 31st March 2026. BHCP agreed to support. **Action: Clerk**
- c) Confidential - Sycamore Gap Saplings. Agreed to request a sapling **Action: Clerk**

25) Items for Next Meeting.

- a) Risk Assessment

26) Date of Next Meeting:

Annual Meeting of the Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Parish Council	Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 7.00 p.m.
Meeting of the Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Parish Council	Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 7.30 p.m.
In the Memorial Hall, Rothbury Road, Longframlington.	

The meeting closed at 9.58 p.m.

Garth Rhodes, Clerk, 5 Wardle Terrace, Longframlington, NE65 8AB, Tel: 01665 570347, Email: Clerk@Brinkburn.net