

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held at Park View School, Lombard Drive, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 17th June 2025.

PRESENT Chairman: Councillor Craig Martin.

Councillors: Suzanne Brown, Margaret Caygill, Jackie Gregory, Maureen May, Patrick Driscoll, Dennis Hall, Darren Hawkes, Chris Veitch.

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm with the Chairman welcoming everyone, in particular Darren Hawkes who had applied for co-option to the Council.

Item 1. 25/65 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Glenn Batey.

Item 2. 25/66 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a County Councillor and as a Trustee of Park View Academy. Councillor Jackie Gregory declared an interest as a member of the North Lodge Remembrance Group. Councillor Chris Veitch declared an interest as Chairman of the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

Item 3. 25/67 Application for Co-option - Darren Hawkes

Mr Hawkes had applied to be co-opted to the Council. His application form had been previously circulated by the Clerk to all Councillors. Mr Hawkes left the meeting whilst Councillors discussed his application which was approved unanimously. Cllr Hawkes then returned to the meeting and was welcomed to the Council.

(Resolved - to co-opt Darren Hawkes to the Council).

Item 4. 25/68 Report of the County Councillor

The County Councillor gave his report which included the following matters -

a) A date and time for a meeting with the DCC Clean and Green team was agreed, b) re the advertising sign attached to the Prince Bishops sign at Barley Mow, Councillors agreed with the County Cllr's suggestion for a press release with accompanying photo, c) the County Cllr outlined the terms and conditions of his Neighbourhood Budget, d) in reply to Cllr Hall, the County Cllr advised that, following the recent elections, there had not yet been any staffing changes at the County Council.

Councillors thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 5. 25/69 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 20th May 2025, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

Item 6. 25/70 Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

In preparation and since being elected Chair, I've sought to meet with as many councillors as possible, on a one-to-one basis. To have a conversation about what they want from the next year and find out their initial thoughts on some the key decisions we'll be making. Anyone that hasn't had one of these conversations and wants one, I would welcome meeting up to have one. As you would expect, there were a wide range of views and opinions. I'm looking forward to ensuring that everyone gets to have their say in a constructive manner going forward. While guiding the parish through the decision-making process.

In addition, Cllr Gregory asked what the Chairman had gleaned from his conversations with Councillors. The Chairman advised that there was a mix of comments and opinions but with an emphasis on budget matters.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 25/58 section b). Cllr Caygill advised that some of the artwork from the Art Society had now been received and had been put on display in the bus shelter cabinets. More artwork was expected and these would be displayed in the noticeboards. The Art Society did not wish to have a donation of money from the Council.

b) Re Minute 25/59 section g). Cllr Brown advised that it was proving difficult to contact the new Estate Manager at Lambton Park.

Item 7. 25/71 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

Cllr Veitch's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

Since the last Parish Council meeting there has been posts on our social media regarding:

Mobile speed camera data

The latest Litter pick

The Brass festival in Durham

Chester le Street Splash pad timetable

Dementia awareness week

The upcoming Steam rally at Lambton Park.

As always if any Councillor has anything they would like placed on our social media please email me with details.

As updated via email to all councillors, the latest Litter Pick is being held on the morning of the 17th June. A verbal report will be provided at the June meeting regarding the results of the volunteers work.

Councillors thanked Cllr Veitch and all those who had taken part in the litter pick. A total of eleven bags of rubbish had been collected along North Road and Drum Lane.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

b) Crime and Community Safety

Cllr Gregory's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

POLICE

Crime

Theft from Motor Vehicles.

Motorists are being urged to lock their vehicles when leaving them unattended following a recent spate of break-ins.

Thieves appear to be specifically targeting Ford Fiestas in the **Chester-le-Street**, Stanley and Consett areas.

There is a quantity of steering locks available to the public for free that can be claimed on a first come first served basis at Chester-Le-Street Police Station.

Here are a few tips to help protect your vehicle:

Keep valuables out of view and remove items from your vehicle each night.

Secure your vehicle and never leave keys in the ignition.

Consider a security light or CCTV.

If you drive a keyless car, keep the fob in a Faraday bag to prevent signal copying.

Anyone with any information relating to the thefts are asked to call 101.

Speed Monitoring

The Mobile Speed Monitoring vehicle has visited the parish.

Data obtained from the Mobile Speed Monitoring Camera which was deployed on 32 occasions between January and April 2025 in Blind Lane, A693, revealed the following information:

9 drivers fell within the Process Level (Court action)

46 drivers fell within the Conditional offer level (fine and points)

673 drivers fell within the Speed Awareness Course level

To put this in some context, this worked out at about 23 triggers per visit with each visit lasting approx. 1 hour 26 mins (so around 1 trigger every 4 minutes).

For all reported crimes for North Lodge, please check Police.uk website

Community Safety

Drugs

Drugs sold in the county have been found to contain spider webs, pesticide, asbestos, anti-freeze, wallpaper paste and polyester. Composition analysis of recent drug seizures in County Durham and Darlington have revealed these findings.

Ahead of the Summer festival season and upcoming music events, officers are keen to warn and inform people of what it is they are ingesting and these substances can have fatal consequences.

For more information or to get help with addiction,

Operation Drive targets key community concerns including drugs and more issues.

visit <https://codurhamrecovery.co.uk/>

Operation Close Pass

Changes were made in 2022 to make the roads safer for vulnerable road users including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

Durham Police's Roads and Armed Policing Team officers are stepping up to keep everyone as safe as possible on our roads.

The Highway Code states that drivers must pass horse riders no less than 2m away and at no more than 10mph. Crossing white lines is permitted when passing a horse if it is safe to do so.

Buckle Up

From 2020 to 2024, 65 people were killed or seriously injured because they were not wearing their seatbelt - a simple act that can make the difference between surviving a collision or not.

The Fatal Four include speeding, driving under the influence, using a mobile phone and not wearing your seatbelt.

Don't become another statistic, buckle up every time

Knife Crime

Durham Constabulary is taking a firm stand against knife crime, launching a powerful month-long campaign from May 19.

The message is clear: carrying a knife in our communities is pointless.

Durham Constabulary consistently has one of the lowest rates of knife crime in the country - and want to make sure it stays that way.

The campaign focuses on three stark realities of carrying a knife:

Pointless risk- Carrying a knife makes you more likely to become a victim yourself.

Pointless to carry- There is no justification for carrying a weapon.

Pointless choices- One bad decision can destroy lives, leading to serious injury, death or prison. Police will be holding over 80 workshops with local schools to educate young people on the dangers and impact of carrying knives.

Telephone 999

Accidentally dial 999, whether it's a pocket dial or your little ones have got a hold of your phone without you knowing, it happens more often than you think.

But here's the important bit:

If you accidentally call 999, don't hang up.

Hanging up leaves police call handlers unsure if you're in real danger and they must follow emergency protocols, which could mean sending help your way just to be safe.

Stay on the line. Let police know you're ok.

It only takes a moment, but it saves valuable time and resources for real emergencies.

Please visit Durham Constabulary's social media accounts for more information.

Seen something suspicious? Report it via our Live Chat at:

<https://www.durham.police.uk/.../af/how-to-report-a-crime/> or call 101.

Alternatively, call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

For any emergency please use telephone number 999

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

Water Safety

If you were struggling in the water, would you know what to do?

Here's the life-saving advice you need to know.

Flip onto your back.

Tilt your head back and use your hands to help you stay afloat.

When you are floating, call for help or try to steer with your arms towards shore.

Free Smoke Alarms

CDDFRS wishes to promote free visits firefighters make to homes across County Durham and Darlington to ensure residents are safe and well.

Everyone is entitled to a Home Fire Safety Visit and you can also nominate someone, such as a neighbour, that you're concerned about, or suspect could be living without working smoke alarms. Firefighters will visit houses and flats of all sizes, as well as residential caravans and install smoke alarms for free.

CDDFRS asks that you please speak to your family members, friends and neighbours to help spread the word and encourage them to book a visit or support them in booking a visit.

Give us a call on 0345 223 4221 or visit our website to book.

Wildfires and BBQ safety

CDDFRS urge people to pack a picnic, not a BBQ to prevent the risk of wildfires.

The warning follows a 230% increase in outdoor fires in County Durham and Darlington in April, compared to the same period in 2024.

Dry weather creates the perfect conditions for wildfires, which can have devastating consequences to wildlife and community areas.

Wildfires can be caused by careless actions such as leaving a BBQ to smoulder, or, through deliberate fire setting.

When firefighters attend preventable fires, it can impact its ability to respond to other emergencies. But if you must have a BBQ, we would urge everyone to follow these top tips safety tips:
Never place a BBQ inside or near the opening of a tent or caravan and make sure there is plenty of space around you when cooking.
Never place the BBQ on anything flammable as the foil base gets very hot.
The ground underneath a BBQ can stay dangerously hot for hours after it's been removed - a hidden risk to people and wildlife.
Make sure you're following the instructions on the BBQ packaging, especially when it comes to setting it up, lighting it, and putting it out.
Make sure your disposable BBQ is fully extinguished by pouring plenty of water or sand onto it.
Do not place a disposable BBQ in a rubbish bin until the coals are fully out and it has cooled down completely.
Don't put the BBQ or burnt charcoal in your car or tent. When BBQs cool, they release carbon monoxide fumes, which can be deadly.
If you see a possible wildfire, get to a place of safety immediately and then call 999 and ask for the fire and rescue service.

Accidental Fires

CDDFRS has recorded the lowest ever number of accidental house fires since records began. From April 1st 2024 to March 31st 2025, we recorded 180 accidental dwelling fires (ADFs). This is a 21.05 per cent reduction in the last five years - based on the 2019/2020 figures.

If you have any information about deliberate fires, you can report it anonymously by calling Fire Stoppers on 0800 169 5558 or online through their website.

Please visit the CDDFRS's social media accounts for more information.

In all emergencies please use telephone number 999

Durham County Council

Job Vacancies

We've got vacancies for a wide range of jobs available at Durham County Council including:

Social Work - Adult Service

Administrative Officer

School Crossing Patrol

Business Administrator Apprentice

You can find details of all our current vacancies and how to apply on our website:

<https://ow.ly/IHk450W0VP9>

[Durham County Council Jobs and Careers](#)

Please visit Durham County Council's social media accounts for more information.

To contact the council please use telephone number 03000 26 0000

In addition, Cllr Gregory had emailed the PCSO re the number of accidents/near misses at Northlands roundabout. Cllr Hall suggested a campaign to draw attention to the increasing dangers of the traffic flow at the roundabout. The County Cllr will ask for a report from the County Council. The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

c) Finance

Cllr Veitch's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

I have inspected the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears correct.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

d) Highways and Community Assets

Cllr Driscoll's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

Prior to this month's bus shelters inspection there are three issues to report on from late May. Firstly, the new black composite seat has been installed by the County Council at the bus shelter near the Barley Mow mini roundabout, replacing the previous rusting green metal seat. Secondly, the rear upper right glass panel was smashed at the glass shelter near the Spire Hospital in Picktree Village. The shattered glass has been removed from the hard standing and a new glass panel will be installed.

Finally, a request has been put in by the Parish Council to the Highways and Traffic department at the County Council, as to when a schedule will be available for the re-instatement of the appropriate metal barriers at the Northlands roundabout. This is required to replace the patchwork quilt of temporary plastic barriers representing the recent spate of traffic accidents.

The monthly bus shelters inspection was carried out on Thursday the 5th of June. Aside from the glass shelter in Picktree Village, all other shelters appeared to be in good order. Some minor seat cleaning and tidying was required, whilst all the remaining six glass cabinets have had a variety of new art posters included, replacing last year's offering, and kindly supplied by Chester- Le- Street Art Society.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

e) Horticulture

Cllr May's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

SUMMARY

The Summer Bedding has now been planted. Unfortunately a lot of damage has been done to flower beds, particularly south of Barley Mow roundabout. Damage by tyre tracks from motorised bikes, rabbits eating flower heads and plants being pulled out and thrown behind beds. We have video evidence of damage and tyre marks across beds - discussion with Sub Group around changing these beds to colourful shrubs! They are shaded by overhanging trees and struggle to grow. Stephen Makepeace & staff continually water, fertilise all plants and appropriate grass within the Parish.

At the June Parish Council meeting, the team will request funding for two horticulture projects.

(See individual email)

- a) Queen's Canopy Trees x 3 (Vigo Lane)
- b) Re-vamping of shrub bed in Longdean Park

These two projects were postponed from last years financial budget.

In addition, the Chairman asked that Councillors approach the Horticulture sub-group with ideas and comments for next year's planting so that an overview can be produced.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

In the absence of Cllr Batey, no report was made.

g) Picktree Village

Cllr Brown's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

Firstly, may I thank you to those who voted for me as Vice Chairman of North Lodge Parish Council. I look forward to supporting and working with Chairman Craig over the next Council year. We live in a delightful area and as such we must look after it and make sure residents enjoy a safe and pleasant home life in the area. Picktree village is looking colourful at the moment as the bedding plants are in but need plenty of dry weather and sunshine. I have noted a speed monitoring van near the Spire for a short time last week. A couple of hours does not in any way give a true

picture of the excessive speed of so many vehicles through the village. As I came home from the roundabout and up the lane drivers were helpfully flashing their lights to alert me to the camera van!! I honestly still feel that instant fine for over the speed limit is the only solution. Graffiti on the bus shelters and Lambton wall has been washed and smudged by the rain. Hopefully it will not appear again. A bungalow in the village sold in 24 hours which indicates that the Village is still a nice place to live. I know that residents look after the area and do alert authorities to any anti social behaviour.

In addition, Cllr Brown thanked Cllr Driscoll and the Clerk for overseeing the repairs to the damaged bus shelter.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

h) Planning

Cllr Gregory reported on a recent consultation event for a proposed new Lidl store at the former bus garage site. Many comments had been made at the event re traffic volumes at the site and at the nearby roundabout. The County Cllr advised that he continued to press for the installation of traffic lights at the roundabout.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

i) Play Areas

Cllr Caygill's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

I am pleased to report that on inspection again today the equipment on both Merlin Drive and Low Flatts play areas appear to be in good working order.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

j) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

Remote Meetings Update:

Consultation outcome: (Published 5 June)

Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings (5 June)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at-local-authority-meetings>

and see...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/61170-councils-to-be-allowed-to-develop-own-policies-on-remote-attendance>

and response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at-local-authority-meetings/outcome/remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-in-local-authorities-consultation-results-and-government-response>

Key Points:

The Government has confirmed it plans to permit local authorities to develop their own locally appropriate policies, if they decide to hold remote meetings.

In its response to a consultation, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) also set out its stance on proxy voting, revealing that it plans to require principal (unitary, upper and second-tier) councils to implement proxy voting schemes for meetings of full council.

The MHCLG said it planned to legislate to support permanent provision in relation to both remote attendance and proxy voting, "when parliamentary time allows".

The consultation response said: "***The government is of the view that in-person authority meetings remain vital for local democracy, but that hybrid and remote attendance, and proxy voting, will enable local authorities in England to develop more modern, accessible, and flexible working practices***"

The Ministry said the proposed requirement for proxy voting schemes for meetings of full councils was “*to provide consistency for members who are absent when they become a new parent, or for serious or long-term illness*”.

For all meetings other than full council, proxy voting may be used but will not be required, and substitute or pairing schemes may be more appropriate, it added.

The consultation response said: “**We plan for other local authorities not listed above* to be enabled but not required to implement proxy voting schemes, for any of their meetings, in the context of member absences for serious or long-term illness or becoming a new parent.**”

***The listed authorities in the Government response are unitary, upper and second tier authorities. Parishes will therefore not be required to implement proxy schemes**

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

k) Project Development, Business and External Relations

Cllr Martin provided updates on progress with the Remembrance Artwork project and the activities of the Drum Business Group.

Councillors thanked Cllr Martin for his report.

Item 8. 25/72 Correspondence

1) From Durham Constabulary

- a) email re mobile speed camera in Blind Lane.
- b) email re Northlands Roundabout.

2) From npower

email re Unmetered Supply tariff.

The Clerk advised that the Council’s electricity supply for the North Road tree lights had been moved to npower’s UMS tariff which appeared to be much more advantageous to the Council.

3) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following application was within North Lodge Parish:-

Application for relocation of two benches, installation of public artwork and associated paving, at land to the west of 2 Lombard Drive.

Item 9. 25/73 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) The Annual Newsletter

Cllr May gave an update on progress. All items had now been submitted by Councillors. A discussion was held on the layout of the newsletter. Cllr May was thanked for her work to date on this matter.

b) Parking and Waiting Restrictions Amendment Order

Cllr Gregory outlined the recent Order which had been issued by the County Council for consultation. Councillors agreed that the Order should be supported. The Clerk will advise this to the County Council. Cllr Gregory was thanked for all her work on this matter.

Item 10. 25/74 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/2025

Councillors discussed the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/2025, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the Statement.

(Resolved - to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/2025).

Item 11. 25/75 Approval of the Accounting Statements for 2024/2025

Councillors discussed the Accounting Statements for 2024/2025, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the Statements.

(Resolved - to approve the Accounting Statements for 2024/2025).

Item 12. 25/76 Application by the Horticulture Sub-Group for Funding

Cllr May outlined two projects requiring funding and advised that the Sub-Group intended to apply to the County Cllr's Neighbourhood Budget. Councillors advised that they had no objections to this.

Item 13. 25/77 Review of the Chairman's Allowance

At this point, the Chairman left the meeting with Vice-Chair Cllr Brown taking the Chair. Councillors discussed the Allowance and agreed that the amount of payment should be increased by £32 per annum with immediate effect.

(Resolved - to increase the Chairman's Allowance by thirty-two pounds per annum with immediate effect).

At this point, the Chairman returned to the meeting and thanked Councillors for their deliberations.

Item 14. 25/78 Review of the Clerk's Salary and Expenses

At this point, the Clerk left the meeting. Councillors discussed a) the Clerk's salary and agreed that it should remain linked to the national agreement and b) the Clerk's expenses and agreed that the amount of payment should be increased by £5 per month with immediate effect.

(Resolved - that the Clerk's salary is to remain linked to the national agreement and that the amount of the Clerk's expenses is to be increased by five pounds per month with immediate effect).

At this point, the Clerk returned to the meeting and thanked Councillors for their deliberations.

Item 15. 25/79 Review of the Bank Accounts' Signatories

The Clerk advised that there were presently four signatories to the bank accounts and he considered that, to ensure at least two signatories were present at each meeting of the Council, it would be prudent to add a further signatory. Councillors discussed this and agreed that Cllr Martin should be added to the list of bank account signatories.

(Resolved - that Councillor Craig Martin should be added to the list of Council bank account signatories).

The Clerk will make the arrangements with the Bank.

Item 16. 25/80 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 644.28	Salaries June 2025	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses June 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1976.51	Horticulture June 2025	£329.42
DSJ Property Services	£ 300.00	Repairs to Bus Shelter	
Craig Martin	£ 203.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Durham County Council	£ 596.58	Supply and Install Seat	£ 99.43
Total of Above Payments	£ 3830.37		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription June 2025	£ 7.71
Post Office Ltd	£ 40.80	Postage Stamps	
Amazon	£ 3.25	Envelopes	£ .54
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 565.94	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 236.78	Employer's N.I.C.	
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 893.02		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 17. 25/81 Other Matters for Information

- a) Cllr Caygill outlined the work at the riverside park of the Cestria Community Gardening Group.
- b) Cllr Caygill expressed disappointment over how the town had developed over the last few years.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.39pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 15th July 2025.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries July 2025	
Expenses	£ 115.00	Expenses July 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture July 2025	£
Total of Above Payments	£		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - July 2025	£ 7.71
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 46.25		

Balance to 24th June 2025

Balance b/f	£69276.29	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - June 2025	<u>£ 3830.37</u>	Community Account	£ 1649.06
	£65445.92	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£63992.78</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 893.02</u>	Total	£65641.84
	£64552.90		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 45.61</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 1049.58</u>
	£64598.51		
Deduct Bank Charges	<u>£ 6.25</u>		
	£64592.26		
Balance c/f	£64592.26		£64592.26

Three cheques not yet presented -

£250.00 cheque number 1668 dated 20/05/25 payable to The Office of Durham PCC for donation.

£203.00 cheque number 1673 dated 17/06/25 payable to Craig Martin for Chair's Allowance.

£596.58 cheque number 1674 dated 17/06/25 payable to Durham County Council for installation of seat.