

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 21st July 2026.

PRESENT Chairman: Councillor Craig Martin.

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

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

14 Residents

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone, particularly the residents.

Item 1. 26/72 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Darren Hawkes.

Item 2. 26/73 Declarations of Interest

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

Item 3. 26/74 Report of the County Councillor

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

As part of the early stages of developing a new County Plan, proposals have been put forward that could see all of the fields surrounding Picktree Village considered for development. I believe this would be completely unacceptable. It would destroy the distinct character of the village and create an unbroken sprawl of housing.

I want to reassure everyone that nothing has been decided. This is simply the first stage of the County Plan process, where the Council has invited suggestions for sites that could potentially be developed. However, as the County Councillor, I want to send a clear message to Durham County Council: our community does not support development on Picktree Village's green belt.

I support building more homes to meet future housing needs, but not at the expense of our village. The harm this development would cause would far outweigh any benefits.

There are other areas that have been put forward for development and they can all be viewed through:

<https://placemaker.durham.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/10/>

The residents were in attendance following these proposals being lodged under the Call for Sites section of the development of the next County Durham Plan, in particular for land for housing on Green Belt land in Picktree Village. Cllr Brown advised that she would be contacting the Lambton Estates Manager to ask what was the Estate's involvement in this. The Chairman invited Cllr Hall to open the debate and Cllr Hall advised of the process for the Plan that had led to the present situation, commenting that it had created tension in communities such as Picktree Village. All in

attendance agreed with Cllr Hall that Green Belt land throughout the County, including the land at Picktree Village, should only be considered for development under the most exceptional of circumstances and that there were numerous sites of other categories of land to Green Belt in the County that were less environmentally sensitive and should be developed first. There was clearly an overwhelming resistance within the Parish to any development of Green Belt land. It was agreed that the Clerk is to write to the County Council to ask a) that the commitment on Green Belt land in the current Local Plan is carried forward without change to the new Plan, b) that the County Council notes the Parish Council's view that there are no exceptional circumstances for any housing development on Green Belt land within the Parish, c) that the County Council notes the overwhelming local resistance to development on Green Belt land.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall and all residents who had attended the meeting and/or had made written submissions to the Parish Council on this matter and encouraged everyone to make their own contribution to the current Scoping Document consultation available on the County Council website at

<https://letstalkcountydurham.co.uk/en-GB/projects/county-durham-plan-scoping-document-consultation/3>

Residents who provided contact details would be kept up-to-date of any developments advised to the Parish Council.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Clerk together were authorised to take forward this matter on behalf of the Parish Council.

At this point, all the residents left the meeting.

Item 4. 26/75 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 16th June 2026, 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 5. 26/76 Chairman's Report

The County Councillor's report included the matter contained in his written report below -

I'd like to put on record my thanks for Cllr Gregory's notable service on North Lodge Parish Council. She was an absolutely passionate advocate for the tax payers of the parish. Always having a keen eye on the detail. The former Cllr Gregory's contributions to the improvement of North Lodge Parish are undeniably evident within the community.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 26/63 section b). In reply to an enquiry by Cllr Brown, Cllr Veitch advised that there had been several incidents of fires in the Parish, some of which were not caused initially by the recent hot and dry weather.

b) Re Minute 26/63 section i). Cllr Driscoll reported that the fallen large tree branch at Merlin Drive play area had still not been removed. Cllr Caygill kindly agreed to chase this up.

c) Re Minute 26/71 section c). Re weeds around the base of the artwork alongside the Park Road North/Picktree Lane roundabout, Cllr Veitch advised that these had been cleared.

Item 6. 26/77 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

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

Since the last Meeting in June there have only been 4 posts. These were relating to the following and placed on our social media.

1. Individuals with air rifles killing animals and birds on C2C route and Low Flatts Park.
2. Durham Brass Festival.
3. Reminder to residents about Parish Council meetings - Dates and locations.
4. Durham Fringe Festival.

I have also changed the banner photos on our Facebook and X accounts from the last group photo to a generic image with the recent resignations of councillors from the Parish Council who may now no longer wish to be associated with the council in any manner.

In addition, Cllr Veitch advised Councillors of the care needed to be taken with views expressed whenever posting on social media, whether as a Councillor or as a private individual.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

b) Crime and Community Safety

In the absence of a Portfolio Holder, no report was made. However, having established contact with the PCSO, Cllr Veitch was willing to accept the Portfolio until the next Annual Meeting.

Councillors accepted this offer with thanks and asked that monthly reports could be limited to local issues. Cllr Veitch advised that he would soon be arranging the next PACT meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for accepting the Portfolio and advised that he expected there to be a review of Portfolios in advance of the next Annual Meeting.

c) Finance

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

I have inspected the financial information for our Bank accounts, and as always I 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 -

The monthly bus shelters inspection was completed on Monday the 6th of July 2026. The shelters appeared to be in good order. Seat cleaning, bush clipping, and some minor leaf clearance were the only specified tasks required.

Prior to this, on Thursday the 25th of June, three new "Marmax" black composite seats were installed by the County Council on North Road, replacing the rusting original green metal seats. This was adjacent to the shelters at Northlands, the "Lambton Worm", and Kingsmere, and now complete a full set of black composites on North Road.

These were requested by the Parish Council, and budgeted within our Community Improvement Fund.

In addition, re new artwork for the bus shelters and notice boards, Cllr Veitch suggested photos of the Parish and Cllr Caygill suggested historical items from George Nairn.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

e) Horticulture

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

SUMMARY / UPDATE

Picktree Lodge Flower Beds (Perennials)

Getting more established. Regularly monitored. Stephen Makepeace has received very good comments from Residents regarding these beds.

Longdean Park Shrub Bed

All funding now available. Stephen Makepeace will refurbish this bed approximately end of August

Tree Stump North Road

Cost for removal of the tree stump by Stephen Makepeace = £1,200 + vat.

Kings' Seat

Sub Group has identified a suitable site for the new King's Seat - In front of the old police houses on North Road. The Sub Group have in mind a suitable design for the seat - to be discussed at Parish Council meeting.

Cost of installation of hard stand for placement of seat:-

Makepeace Landscapes -Cost : £2750 + Vat

Durham County Council - Cost ?

New Queen's Canopy Trees

Concern was raised about the healthiness of the trees due to drought. However due to the timely intervention of Stephen Makepeace the trees seem to be surviving. The tree plaques were looking a little dull. Thanks go to Councillor Brown who has now kindly cleaned them.

Flower Beds (Throughout Parish)

Majority of flower beds are flourishing well.

Three flower beds are causing concern due to rabbits etc eating plants as the grass is so sparse and the animals have only plants to eat.

Entrance to Lombard Drive. Remainder of plants to be removed.

Jubilee tree. Remainder of plants to be removed.

Bed at beginning of North Road (near Barley Mow). Plants to be removed and grassed over after summer.

Re the tree stump removal, Cllr Veitch kindly agreed to source an alternative quote and this will be discussed at the next sub-group meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

No report was given.

g) Picktree Village

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

It is a pleasure to see the colourful flower beds in the village at the moment. They seem to have escaped the munching rabbits who have created havoc in other parts of the Parish. This recent hot weather has been testing for us all but seems to be the summer norm now.

The usual bedlam is still there in the village with litter, speed and the volume of traffic using the lane as a shortcut onto and off the motorway. It appears we as residents are fighting a losing battle as data suggests there is not a serious problem.

Recently we have become aware of the contentious issue of development sites for house building. Fields around the village are included in the scoping. I cannot image any of our residents here are delighted by the thought of house building so close. More litter. More vehicles. More speeding etc etc. More damage to the road surface. Thank you DCC Councillor Craig for informing us of this

possibility and including us to give an initial response. Enjoy the summer everyone and stay safe until we meet in September.

In addition, Cllr Brown advised that she hoped to make contact with the owner of the land of the demolished bungalow.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report..

h) Planning

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Hawkes had provided the written report below -

I would like to bring the following link to the attention of all Councillors.

<https://letstalkcountydurham.co.uk/en-GB/projects/countydurham-plan-callforsites>

On this page there is a link to an interactive map (below), where you will find that there are submissions of land around Picktree Village.

<https://placemaker.durham.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/10/>

I did attend an unrelated meeting last month with the Leader and Deputy Leader of DCC, and I brought up the subject.

Development of this land has previously been rejected by DCC, and the current administration are very much against building on Green Belt sites. Hopefully, this will come to nothing, as there are many sites that would be more suitable for development, but better that the local residents are aware of the situation. I believe the areas of land submitted belong to the Lambton Estate?

I have since been CC'd into an email chain of correspondence received by Dennis from a former neighbour, reference - Housing Development Proposals: farm land adjacent to Danesmead Picktree Lane.

Although at this stage, sites are only being assessed to determine their suitability etc, can I urge everyone to register and place their comments using the links at the bottom of this page.

<https://letstalkcountydurham.co.uk/en-GB/projects/county-durham-plan-scoping-document-consultation>

Findings will be published in Spring 2027

Planning applications -

W/E 19th June

There are no new applications within the parish.

W/E 26th June

There are no new applications within the parish.

W/E 3rd July.

There are no new applications within the parish.

However, please see approved list as follows.

North Lodge/North Lodge/East North	DM/26/00721/FPA Mrs Mariaclare Sangster	Sangere 2 Napier Close Chester-le-Street DH3 4BN	First floor side extension with juliet balcony to rear
North Lodge/No Parish/East North	DM/26/00901/FPA D.O.H. Construction Ltd	15 Highfield Rise Chester-le-street Chester-le-Street DH3 3UX	Single-storey rear extension

W/E 10th July

There is one application within the parish.

North	DM/26/01691/	Land To The
Lodge/No	TPO	South West
Parish/East		Of Castle
North		View Private
		Day Nursery
		Blind Lane
		Chester-le-
		street
		DH3 4AF

Beech (T8, T86) - crown clean and deadwood,
Conifer (T45) and Willow (T54) - crown lift to 5m,
Willow (T56) and Ash (T65) - fell as close to ground
level as practical, Willow (T64, T67) and Beech (T89) -
crown lift to 4.5m

W/E 17th July

There are no new applications within the parish.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hawkes for his report.

i) Play Areas

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

I have inspected the Play Areas again today and the equipment on both sites appears to be in good working order.

Coun. Veitch reported the killing of wildlife in Low Flatts which is a criminal offence.

In addition, 1) there had been no reply from the County Council re the request for a replacement dog waste bin at Low Flatts. The Clerk is to chase this up, 2) Cllr Veitch advised that he had reported to the Police the killing of wildlife and he had also posted an item on social media. The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

j) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall advised that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall.

k) Project Development, Business and External Relations

Cllr Martin advised that the Remembrance Artwork would be in place by Saturday 1st August. There would be a short, small-scale unveiling event with a 10.30am start on that day with some community members giving a series of short speeches.

Cllr Veitch advised that the event would be publicised on social media and by word of mouth.

Councillors thanked Cllr Martin for his report.

Item 7. 26/78 Correspondence

1) From PCSO Adrian Richards

Thank you for message of congratulations.

2) From former Councillor Jackie Gregory

Advice of resignation from the Council.

3) From Durham County Council

Sealed Lease for land at Lombard Drive.

Item 8. 26/79 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) The Annual Newsletter

Cllr May outlined progress to date. A photo of the new Remembrance Artwork would follow soon for inclusion in the Newsletter which would then go to the printers.

Cllr May invited Councillors to consider taking on in her place this important function of preparation of the Newsletter. This will be included in the forthcoming review of Portfolios before the next Annual Meeting.

Councillors thanked Cllr May for all her work on this matter.

b) An Alternative Venue for Council Meetings

The Chairman advised that he and Cllr Hall would inspect other facilities within the School buildings. This item will be included in the Agenda for the next meeting of the Council.

c) A Defibrillator for Picktree Village

Cllr Veitch outlined this proposal for a solar-powered defibrillator at the bus shelter near to the Ash Meadows junction. Councillors were happy to agree in principle to this project with funding to come from the Community Improvement Fund and the County Councillor's Neighbourhood Budget. The County Councillor is firstly to consult with residents to gauge their opinions on the proposal.

d) Inaugural Event for the Remembrance Artwork

This item had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Item 9. 26/80 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 663.96	Salaries July 2026	
Expenses	£ 118.00	Expenses July 2026	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 2144.51	Horticulture July 2026	£ 357.42
Durham County Council	£ 815.00	Legal & Surveyor's Fees re Artwork	
Durham County Council	£ 652.25	Festive Lighting	£ 108.71
Total of Above Payments	£ 4393.72		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - July 2026	£ 7.71
Cartridge Discount	£ 21.99	Printer Cartridges	£ 3.67
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 68.24		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 26/81 Other Matters for Information

a) The Chairman advised that the School was looking for volunteers to tend to the flower and shrub beds within its grounds.

b) Cllr Driscoll remarked on the increasing number of unsolicited emails being received through his Council email account. The Clerk advised that he was experiencing the same issue.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.12pm, thanking everyone for their contributions to the meeting and wishing everyone an enjoyable summer recess.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st July 2026.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 663.96	Salaries July 2026	
Expenses	£ 118.00	Expenses July 2026	
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Balance to 30th June 2026

Balance b/f	£73274.72	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - June 2026	£ 4388.47	Community Account	£ 3430.41
	£68886.25	Commercial Instant Access	£67219.34
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	£ 958.46	Total	£73274.72
	£67927.79		
Add Bank Interest Received	£ 29.21	Deduct cheque not yet presented	£ Nil
	£67957.00		
Deduct Bank Charges	£ 7.25		
	£67949.75		
Add Grant Received	£ 2700.00		
	£70649.75		
Balance c/f	£70649.75		£70649.75