

Please retain for reference throughout the year



North Lodge Parish Council

NEWSLETTER 2026

Editor: Councillor Maureen May



This summer, residents may have seen the new Remembrance Artwork erected on Lombard Drive. This is a culmination of many years of work, by North Lodge Parish Council, North Lodge Remembrance Group, and our County Councillor.

This will act as a focal point, in the heart of our community, for future civic events as well as the annual remembrance service, run by the North Lodge Remembrance Group. It is hoped this piece will bring our brilliant community even closer together.

The artwork was produced by renowned artist Graeme Hopper. It represents the futility of war, all the brave souls who fought and died for this country, and ultimately brought about peace. Leaving a lasting message to future generations



From the Chairman

It has been an absolute pleasure to serve as Chair of North Lodge Parish Council over the past year and to witness the many improvements across our community—many of which are highlighted throughout this newsletter. North Lodge is far more than its Parish Council; it is defined by every resident who lives here. The pride and effort shown by the community are evident in the area's appearance, cleanliness, and overall sense of place.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all parish councillors for their continued commitment, as well as to the many residents who work hard to make North Lodge a better place. If you are interested in contributing further to our community by becoming a parish councillor, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Councillor Craig Martin,
Chairman, North Lodge Parish Council



Crime & Community Safety

North Lodge continues to experience very low crime rates compared to other areas of Chester-le-Street and Co Durham.

PCSO Paige Goodwill has arranged Police and Communities Together meetings (PACT) in the parish. Details of these meetings are advertised on the parish council social media accounts and the parish notice boards. It is your chance to chat to the police and other community representatives.

Paige, along with parish councillors and residents, have undertaken speed monitoring in North Road. She also regularly visits Lombard Drive, regarding the issue of stationary vehicles parked whilst waiting to collect pupils from Park View school at the end of the school day. Durham County Council (DCC) is in the process of refreshing the road markings in that area.

The use of illegal motorcycles continues in the parish however, this is not only a local issue but a national problem.

If you witness any of these bikes being used in the parish, usually on the C2C route and without placing yourself in any danger, please obtain as much detail as possible. For example, the time or colour of clothing worn by the rider and pillion rider (if there is one) or the make of bike or in the likelihood of the bike having a registration number, make a record of that too. Any information no matter how small, helps police when dealing with this issue. This information should be reported to the police either using telephone number 101 or through Durham Constabulary's website. The more data obtained means that the area can be considered for specific action by police.

The police speed monitoring vehicle continues to visit Blind Lane (A693). All monitoring data is published on the parish council social media accounts.

Crime Prevention - Please make sure to lock vehicle doors when stationary and unattended. Remove all valuables



**PCSO
Paige Goodwill**

from sight and if possible, remove completely from the vehicle. In summer time, make sure to close windows and lock garden shed doors. Winter time, consider using lamp timers to give the impression that the property is occupied when you are away.

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service offer home safety visits including checking fire alarms. To see if you qualify, please use telephone 0345 223 4221 or contact the safety team at csenquiries@ddfire.co.uk

Both Durham Constabulary and Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service continue to be recognized countrywide for the dedication and service shown to the residents of this county. Well done and thank you.

The parish council reminds residents to report any crimes or community issues directly to the appropriate authorities. Commenting on social media, may not resolve the issue.

For all non-emergency calls, please use telephone number 101 or visit Durham Constabulary's website to see other ways to report.

For all emergency calls, please use telephone number 999.

**Former Councillor Jackie Gregory
Portfolio Holder,
Crime and Community Safety**

Play Areas

The Parish Council has two Play Areas which are of a high standard, well used and enjoyed by all as well as being of great benefit for the welfare of our children. They are -

LOW FLATTS - at the west end of Low Flatts Road and is owned by North Lodge Parish Council.

MERLIN DRIVE - at the eastern end of Lombard Drive and owned by Durham County Council.

For those new to the area, a map giving the exact location can be seen in our parish noticeboards.

Both areas are monitored by NLPC and inspected by DCC and any issues addressed.

Low Flatts has suffered some anti-social behaviour and we ask residents to report such incidents direct to the police.

We ask users of these areas to help us maintain standards of health and safety by:

NOT ALLOWING DOGS WITHIN THE FENCED AREAS.

PICKING UP DOG FAECES AND LITTER AND PLACING IN BINS PROVIDED.

NOT USING METAL DETECTORS IN ANY PLAY AREA.



As your parish councillors, we will do our utmost to retain, maintain and improve these areas for the continued enjoyment of all.

Councillor Margaret Caygill,
Portfolio Holder, Play Areas

Planning

Planning shapes how our community grows, how our green spaces are protected, and how future generations experience the place we call home. Although North Lodge Parish Council does not make final planning decisions, we can play a crucial role in representing local voices and ensuring development is thoughtful, balanced, and in the community's best interests.

Every planning application—whether it is a new housing development, an extension to a building or tree works—has the potential to alter the look and feel of the parish.

As the planning portfolio holder, it is my responsibility to ensure residents are made aware of any planning applications within the parish, and any concerns you have relating to them are directed to the relevant person.

Any applications within the parish can be found within the monthly meeting minutes in the link below.

<https://northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk/agendas/minutes/monthly-meeting-of-north-lodge-parishcouncil/>

For all DCC planning information follow the link below.

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3276/Planning-applications-and-advice>

Councillor Darren Hawkes
Portfolio Holder, Planning





also blights the area. Thank you to the residents and Parish Councillors who regularly collect this litter which is a health hazard and looks awful in our semi-rural setting.

The Parish Council continues to lobby Durham County Council regarding the speeding concerns but possible action is data driven and not in response to residents' complaints. There is not one fixed penalty camera in the whole County. A missed opportunity I feel.

On a positive note, the Parish Council has planted three Celebration trees on Vigo Lane near to the Pictree Lodge entrance. They are Cherry Prunus Serrula and have beautiful shining red bark. As they mature this bark will look spectacular. They have been planted to celebrate the Green Canopy project of the late Queen Elizabeth II, the Coronation of King Charles III and the Commemoration of VE Day 80. I hope you enjoy their beauty as they grow.

Have a lovely sunny summertime and appreciate the pleasant surroundings in which we live.

Councillor Suzanne Brown
Portfolio Holder, Picketree Village

Picketree Village

Picketree Village is a pleasant place to live. Residents care about their homes and gardens and the environment. I have a good contact with the Lambton Estate Manager and can resolve any common issues.

Picketree Village was often referred to in the past as a "sleepy hollow" but not so much these days. Traffic has steadily increased and speeding drivers and commercial vehicles large and small are destroying the road surface and causing concern for residents. Litter on the lane



Horticulture

As our climate changes, we are constantly monitoring our horticultural assets to see if they require changing.

Do we need plants that can survive drought for example or should we pick those that can withstand damp conditions? It is a conundrum.

Luckily our parish gardener Stephen Makepeace has been able to attend to drought conditions as he has a water bowser which has been used to good effect over the past years.

We have changed the diamond beds at Picketree Lodge which were planted by Durham County Council who, in our opinion, failed to maintain them.

New shrubs have now been planted by the Parish Council and the beds are looking much better and are being maintained by Makepeace Landscapes.

Special Thanks

'Makepeace Landscapes' continues to give the parish exceptional service and Stephen Makepeace has said that he enjoys the work and is proud to work with us. We thank Stephen and his team for all their hard work and commitment.

Councillor Maureen May
Portfolio Holder, Horticulture
Supported by the Horticulture Sub Group comprising
Councillor M Caygill, Councillor S Brown & Councillor C Veitch



Highways and Community Assets

The nine bus shelters in the parish are given a monthly inspection to resolve issues with vandalism, littering, graffiti, and general damage, all of which have occurred in the last year. The six glass cabinets, all displaying art posters, are cleaned and checked as are the parish notice boards.

Any issues surrounding these assets or materials, within the parish infrastructure, should be reported to the Clerk of the council, to help instigate the repair and resource process.

Councillor Patrick Driscoll,
Portfolio Holder,
Highways and Community Assets

North Lodge Remembrance Group

The North Lodge Remembrance Group, formed in 2019, is well-known for its tributes across the North Lodge, Picktree and Chester-le-Street areas, including the famous “Mr Poppyman” at The Lambton Worm and the hundreds of poppies seen on local lamp posts every November. It has always worked closely with North Lodge Parish Council, with several councillors also being members of the group.

Now, the group is helping to make our community safer by providing free training to local businesses that back their work. The sessions are led by a resident who is volunteering his time to teach staff how to use defibrillators and bleed control kits; specialist medical equipment already installed by the group at The Lambton Worm and The Wheatsheaf.

Group Chairman, Chris Veitch, a firefighter and Parish Councillor, believes the training is a vital way to give back. He said: “Our local businesses do so much to help us, and I’ve seen first-hand how important a quick response is. As a firefighter, I know that the first few minutes are the most critical. This training is our way of giving back and making sure that if a resident has an emergency, someone is ready to help.”

Group member and Parish Councillor Darren Hawkes added: “We want to make sure these kits aren’t just boxes on a wall. By getting expert training into our local businesses, shops and pubs, we are giving the staff the confidence to step in and save a life if they ever need to.” Any business in North Lodge, Picktree or Chester-le-Street that would like to support the group’s work and arrange a free training session can get in touch through the North Lodge Remembrance Group Facebook page or by contacting the team directly.

Project Development, Business and External Relations

Over the past year, much of my work has focused on overseeing and delivering the Remembrance Artwork project. This will be situated at the entrance to Lombard Drive and may even be in place by the time you receive this newsletter. The community consultation generated a high level of engagement and demonstrated overwhelming support for the project.

We intend for this artwork to become a focal point for the community, with events and commemorations centred around it in the future. I look forward to the opportunities it will bring to strengthen community spirit in North Lodge and to bring residents together.

Councillor Craig Martin
Portfolio Holder, Project Development, Business,
and External Relations

Resignations

Over the last year, three Parish Councillors have resigned.

Councillor Glenn Batey

Councillor Graham Watson

Councillor Jackie Gregory.

We thank them for their help and wish them well for the future.

Special thanks go to Councillor Gregory for her service as Portfolio Holder for Crime and Community Safety and whose last report is featured in this edition of our newsletter.



North Lodge Parish Council Governance Report

Once again, the Policy and Governance remit remains one of the busiest areas to cover for the Council, with national and local government issues and initiatives being in the news on a daily basis...

There has been a constant flow of new strategies, new priorities and my role is to present before Councillors those things of real importance to our community...

In the early months of the current Council year, Government published much awaited plans to introduce 'remote Council meetings, something that was put in place during COVID, and which many Councils continue to support...

Major changes to all aspects of local government came with the introduction of the Government's English Devolution and Empowerment Act heralding new Councils in some areas, new powers, new funding structures and changes to member codes and standards of conduct...

Government is also focussing on bringing in new arrangements concerning 'neighbourhoods' and introduced their 'Pride in Place' Initiative which has brought new funding into County Durham...we are yet to see how this will develop fully and what new role Parishes might have; but the current Area Partnerships will be caught up in these changes locally...

Of interest to our residents are the new initiatives that matter to every day issues and problems...inconsiderate pavement parking...fly tipping...litter...dogs causing harm...changes to planning laws and regulations...all of these issues have been the subject of new policies, powers, rules and regulations and your Council has kept alert to what we can do to improve the area where these issues occur...

And finally, from me, whilst we have not been involved in elections this year, some novel trials are taking place of new places where you can perhaps more conveniently 'cast your vote' in future years...supermarkets...stations and other public areas....

Over the coming months your Parish Council will continue to assess the impact of forthcoming legislative and policy changes that may be likely to affect our community

Councillor Dennis Hall
Portfolio Holder, Policy & Governance

Social Media

The Parish Council has its own social media and website. These are used for Information/Notice Board purposes only and highlight work, activities and issues within the Parish.

Our social media and website can be found by searching:

 **Website** - <https://northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

 **Facebook** - North Lodge Parish Council

 **(Twitter)** - @northlodgepc

Councillor Chris Veitch
Portfolio Holder, Communications & Social Media

Finance

As a Parish we receive an income annually which is raised through the Council Tax precept. We have responsibilities for looking after your money and spending it wisely, endeavouring to achieve best value.

All Parish Councillors complete a Register of Interests Form and all Councillors (apart from the Chair who receives a small allowance to cover some of the costs of the additional work involved in that office) have declined to receive any financial allowances they may be legally entitled to receive in order to carry out their duties.

The Parish Council set a Precept (our share of the Council Tax) for the financial year of 2026/2027. For the average property in the Parish it is £36.78 in total for the year. This will show on your Council Tax bill as a 16.76% increase but it is also just a 10.2p per week increase for the average property. That's an annual increase of £5.28. It is 7 years since we last increased this amount, despite rapidly rising prices, and the increase will allow us to continue to maintain and improve on the high standards of the appearance of the Parish.

Councillor Chris Veitch
Portfolio Holder, Finance



New Celebration Trees Planted

Our newly planted celebration trees on Vigo Lane near the Picktree Lodge entrance.

Cherry Prunus Serrula



North Lodge Parish Council

is non political and is grateful for the support and advice received from our North Lodge Division County Councillor Craig Martin (who is also a Parish Councillor and current Parish Council Chairman)

Members of the Parish Council **wish to thank Mr David Murrell**, Clerk to the Council, for his continued support and advice throughout the past year.

Parish Council Members

Craig Martin - Chair	craig.martin@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk	Dennis Hall	dennis.hall@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk
Suzanne Brown - Vice Chair	suzanne.brown@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk	Darren Hawkes	darren.hawkes@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk
Margaret Caygill	margaret.caygill@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk	Maureen May	maureen.may@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk
Patrick Driscoll	patrick.driscoll@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk	Chris Veitch	chris.veitch@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

Please Check your Hedges

...and show consideration by ensuring that your hedges, shrubs and trees do not extend at all beyond your property's boundary with public footways, throughout the whole year.

North Lodge Parish Council Annual Report

This report, written by the North Lodge Parish Council Clerk David Murrell, is very informative and makes for extremely interesting reading. The full report can be found on the Parish Council website:
www.northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

Participation by Residents

Residents are welcome to attend and observe all our Council meetings. We always encourage the involvement of residents and local businesses in Parish matters and we will continue to strive for the improvement of North Lodge Parish.

Parish Council Meetings

Parish Council Meetings are held in Park View School, Lombard Drive, North Lodge, at 6.30 pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except August and December).

However, the council is currently investigating other venues in which to hold the meetings. Please look out for updates on the Parish notice boards and website.

Parish Council Notice Boards

Parish Council notice boards are located in Picktree Lodge, Picktree Village, Lombard Drive, Merlin Drive, North Road (next to the Lambton Worm Hotel) and Vigo Lane (next to the western entrance to Wanstead Crescent).

Our thanks go to **Chester le Street Art Society** for providing their work for our notice boards. This helps to brighten our parish and to display the beautiful work they are producing.

New Councillors

We now have opportunities for new Councillors to join the Parish Council. Whilst there is no restriction on where a Councillor lives in the parish, it would be good to have representations from both the Picktree Lodge and Barley Gate areas.

Residents wishing to raise concerns should contact: David Murrell, Clerk to North Lodge Parish Council, Tel: 0191 3892516, e-mail: clerk@northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk or any Parish Councillor or contact us via social media on **X** or **Facebook**  

Parish Council Website - Live since September 2011

For regular continued updates or more information, find our website online by searching for 'North Lodge Parish Council' or northlodgeparishcouncil.gov.uk.