

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Learning from the past. Building for the future

DECEMBER 2025

City of Durham News

your monthly newsletter from the City of Durham Parish Council



BLUE PLAQUE UNVEILED FOR UK'S FIRST OPENLY GAY ELECTED COUNCILLOR FROM DURHAM

A blue plaque commissioned by the City of Durham Parish Council and celebrating the life and legacy of the late Councillor Sam Green, believed to be the UK's first openly gay elected politician, was unveiled in Durham by Sir Ed Davey, Leader of the UK Liberal Democrats.

In 1972, Sam made history when he was elected to the now-abolished Durham City Council for the Crossgate ward as a Liberal councillor. The plaque is located at his former home in the Avenue.

Sam's victory, achieved just a few years after the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality, was unprecedented. Green stood for election as a Liberal, making him the first known politician in the UK to be out as a gay man.

Speaking at the unveiling, Sir Ed Davey said: *"Councillor Sam Green was a true pioneer, a man of conviction, compassion and extraordinary bravery. At a time when being openly gay was still an act of defiance, Sam stood up not just for himself, but for fairness and equality for everyone.*

I am incredibly proud to be celebrating his groundbreaking life and ensuring his legacy is recognised here in Durham and beyond. It's a moment to reflect on how far we've come as an open and far more tolerant society - even as we recognise there is much more work to do."

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PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD RECOGNITION FOR CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL CLERK

The City of Durham Parish Council Clerk Adam Shanley has been honoured with this year's Public Service Award 2025 at the County Durham Together Awards.

The award highlights Adam's leadership in supporting the work of the Council, his commitment to strengthening local democracy, and the positive impact he has made across the parish since the Council was established seven years ago.

Reflecting on the award, Adam said: *"I am honoured by this recognition. The City of Durham Parish Council has only been going for seven years, and to already be one of just three parish councils with Quality Council Award status from NALC in our county is a real testament to what can be achieved when a community works together."*

He added: "It is a joy to work alongside 15 hardworking volunteer councillors who give so much of their time and energy to serving our parish."

Councillors have praised Adam's work behind the scenes to ensure the Council delivers high-quality services and meaningful representation for residents across the parish area on a number of local issues.

PARISH COUNCIL HOSTS DURHAM CITY REMEMBRANCE EVENT

The City of Durham Parish Council was honoured to once again host the Durham City Remembrance Sunday commemorations, one of the largest events of its kind in the North of England. This year's parade carried special significance as County Durham marked the final year of active service for its adopted warship, HMS Bulwark.

HMS Bulwark is due to be decommissioned in 2026. Adopted by County Durham and granted the Freedom of the City in 2016, the ship has long held a cherished relationship with both the City and County of Durham. For many residents, its involvement in this final Remembrance parade was a moment of reflection and pride.

Councillor Susan Walker, Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council, praised all those who participated: "It is a profound honour for our Parish Council to host Remembrance Sunday once more in Durham City. Each year, our community comes together to recognise the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, past and present. Seeing so many residents, veterans, families, and young people lining the streets reminds us of the deep gratitude we share. My sincere thanks to everyone involved in this exceptional event"



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PARISH COUNCIL'S FRUIT TREE GIVEAWAY BEARS FRUIT FOR LOCAL INDEPENDENTS AND TRADERS

The City of Durham Parish Council's 2025 Big Fruit Tree Giveaway has been hailed as a resounding success, drawing large crowds to the Outdoor Market and delivering a major boost for the city's independent traders.

The initiative, which offered a free fruit tree to anyone spending £20 with a local independent business in November, saw enthusiastic participation from residents eager both to support local shops and to take home one of the 1.5-metre saplings available on the day.

Queues formed early on the last Saturday in November as residents arrived with shopping receipts in hand, helping create what many traders described as one of the busiest and most positive market days of the year.

James Wilson, Durham Markets Manager, praised the collaborative impact of the initiative: "This is yet another wonderful initiative from the City of Durham Parish Council supporting the environment and local traders. Many traders reported one of the best day's trading of the year thanks to this."

The giveaway emphasised a win-win approach: encouraging residents to shop locally while simultaneously planting for the future. Residents commented on the Pairsh Council's commitment to supporting local businesses and Durham wildlife. Councillor Carole Lattin, Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee, celebrated the environmental benefits of this initiative. She said: *"by encouraging residents to plant fruit trees, we are helping to create new habitats for wildlife and enriching the greenery across our community. It's a simple action with many real and long-lasting environmental rewards."*

Councillor Victoria Ashfield highlighted that many traders enjoyed increased footfall and a welcome uplift in sales at a crucial time of year thanks to the initiative and reflected that this built on a lot of work by the Parish Council alongside local residents earlier in the month to plant over 70,000 Spring bulbs across the parish area.

She said: *"As the Parish Council continues to build on initiatives that benefit both the environment and the local economy, the Fruit Tree Giveaway stands out as a model of how creative community-minded action can bear fruit for all. On the day we gave away over 80 semi-mature fruit trees of different varieties, such as apples, pears, cherry and plum and it was really wonderful to see so many residents walking away with a tree to plant around our city. A lot of people had spend in excess of £100 which was really great to see and let's do more"*





CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S UPDATES

The City remembers the Fallen

Can I firstly offer my sincere congratulations to all those involved in planning such a fantastic set of Remembrance events in our City – from the Festival of Remembrance, Remembrance Sunday itself and Armistice Day. A big thanks to Arthur Lockyear and his team for their incredible work and may I also thank everyone who attended the Remembrance Sunday event. This was by far the busiest event of its kind in living memory and I was delighted to hear that the Lord Leuitenant had passed on her congratulations and thanks to the Parish Council via our Clerk.

A new Lord Lieutenant for County Durham

His Majesty The King has recently appointed the Brigadier Michael Butterwick (Retd) CBE DL as the new Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, effective from 1st April 2026. I have already taken the liberty of writing to Brigadier Butterwick and offered our sincere congratulations on his appointment. We are sure to work very closely with the new Lord-Lieutenant particularly on the delivery of the Remembrance Day event.

Consultation on County Council's budget and medium term financial plan

Can I take this opportunity to remind everyone about the ongoing consultation regarding the County Council's budget and medium-term financial plan? I must express my sincere disappointment that very little of what the Parish Council had to say during phase one of the consultation stage appears to have been taken into account heading into phase two.

Iconic events return to Durham City with the support of the Pairsh Council

I am also pleased to highlight the Parish Council's involvement in upcoming events such as the Christmas light switch on, the Christmas Festival and Lunar New Year. A very big thank you to the Parish Council's active Business Committee for their work on these events as they are the key drivers for footfall in our town and the viability of our businesses.

A new office location for the Parish Council

Just to make everyone aware that the City of Durham Parish Council has moved its office location from the former site at Clayport library to the Redhills Miner's Hall in Crossgate. We look forward to serving our community from this new home.

A very Merry Christmas one and all

Finally, may I wish everyone in our community the most wonderful Christmas and New Year with family this year. All the best for a great 2026. It has been truly wonderful with so many community groups, volunteers and individuals residents during 2025 on so many great projects.



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THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL MADE THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS AT ITS LAST FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26th NOVEMBER

- Councillors approved the City of Durham Parish Council's response to the consultation on the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan 2025–2035, endorsing the plan's vision and recommendations.

- Councillors agreed to support the establishment of an annual Durham Landlord of the Year Awards scheme, to be delivered in partnership with *Rate Your Landlord* and approved the request for the award to be determined by the Environment Committee (subject to an agreed criteria) and presented at the Annual Parish Meeting in May.

- The Council approved its Strategy for 2026/27, setting out key priorities across planning, the environment, business engagement, and climate action, including a renewed focus on improving the cleanliness and appearance of the parish, supporting community facilities, and enhancing wellbeing.

- Councillors approved the Parish Council's budget for the 2026/27 financial year, confirming allocations for all Committees and agreeing a total planned expenditure of £305,100 to support priority projects such as community grants, events, planting schemes and supporting community centres within the parish area become more sustainable.

- The Council agreed its precept request for 2026/27, based on the approved budget and the updated Council Tax Base. Councillors agreed that the precept should once since in line with inflation at 3.8% taking the precept from £63.20 to £65.61 (per year) for a Band D property.

- Councillors endorsed the Parish Council's response to Durham County Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan consultation, raising concerns about proposed service changes and reaffirming support for a fairer Government funding settlement for County Durham.

- The Council agreed to continue lobbying the North East Mayor for the prioritisation of zero-emission buses on Church Street and to write to the Cabinet Member at Durham County Council seeking clarity on imminent actions in the Climate Emergency Response Plan.

- A special person working in our parish is set to receive the Freedom of the Parish Award.

parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk



DURHAM CITY HIGHLIGHTS – DECEMBER 2025

Your seasonal round-up of what is happening across the city centre this Winter. Wrap up warm and make the most of these amazing events in our City

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK –20TH NOVEMBER - 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Durham Gala Theatre, various times showings

A lively and family-friendly twist on the classic tale, with dazzling costumes, sing-along songs and magical adventures at Gala Durham.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S CEREMONY OF CAROLS, SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER, 6.00PM

Durham Cathedral

Hear the sound of the Vespers for Christmas sung in half-light by the Cathedral's Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars, before the Choristers process through the cathedral singing plainsong. Harpist Tomos Xerri will be playing the sounds of Benjamin Britten, as the Ceremony of Carols are sung by the Choristers.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL, WEDNESDAY 17 DECEMBER, 7.30PM

Durham Cathedral

On Christmas Eve night, the miserly and cold-hearted businessman Ebenezer Scrooge embarks upon a journey through his past, present, and future, learning along the way to appreciate the true meaning of Christmas. All the family can enjoy this authentic and joyful adaption of Dickens' beloved tale at Durham Cathedral.

GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES REIMAGINED: AN ART TRAIL, 12th – 14th DECEMBER, 10:00AM-16:00PM

Crook Hall and Gardens

Taking inspiration from Grimms' Fairy Tales, Art Foundation students from Durham Sixth Form Centre have created a series of curious original artworks. From familiar classics like Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood to lesser-known tales, each of the stories is infused with magic and mystery. The students have put their own twist on these tales, using a variety of mediums.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY, WINTER CONGREGATION EVENTS 2026, 8th – 9th JANUARY 2026.

Durham Cathedral – please note limited public access to the Cathedral over this time.

Durham University's Winter Congregation (graduation) for 2026 will take place at Durham Cathedral on Thursday January 8th and Friday January 9Th 2026, featuring ceremonies with specific timings for different faculties, allowing graduates to celebrate their achievements with live-streamed events and college dinners.

LUNAR NEW YEAR IN DURHAM CITY, 21st FEBRUARY 2026

Happy Lunar New Year 2026: The Year of the Horse on Saturday 21st February. Various locations across Durham city including Durham Town Hall, Clayport Library, The Oriental Museum and city centre streets, 10.00am - 4.00pm.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Neighbourhood Wardens continued their proactive work across the parish throughout November, responding to a range of environmental issues and supporting efforts to keep the city centre clean, safe, and welcoming for residents, students, and visitors.

Several areas experienced recurring problems with waste presentation, particularly East Atherton Street, Atherton Street, Highgate, and Claypath. To address these issues, Wardens delivered letter drops to all properties on the affected streets and investigated instances of waste being left beside bins.

Four Fixed Penalty Notices were issued to individuals—mainly students—who accepted responsibility for leaving rubbish outside containers rather than disposing of it correctly. Wardens also carried out litter picks around East Atherton Street and Highgate, removing excess bags and working to restore the appearance of the area. Noting that these streets have fewer bins available, the Wardens are recommending that additional bins be installed to prevent further problems.

At Claypath, signage was added to problem bins to encourage better compliance, and follow-up visits will be undertaken to ensure bins are taken in after collection. Partnership working remained an important part of the Wardens' activity this month.

Joint litter picks were completed with the Student Community Wardens, with further activity planned for December, and the concerns raised were also discussed at a recent waste meeting with Durham County Council. Alongside waste management, the Wardens continued to focus on littering enforcement, with particular attention given to North Road and the Bus Station area.
Littering and ASB are taken extremely seriously and enforcement helps underline the expectation of respectful conduct in public spaces. The Wardens will continue monitoring identified waste hotspots, working with students, residents and landlords to support responsible waste practices.

Please continue to report local Council issues via the County Council's doitonline page: https://doitonline.durham.gov.uk/

parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk **cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk**



LIST OF USEFUL CONTACTS IN AN EMERGENCY

NAME/ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE:
Emergency Services	999
Police non-emergency enquiries Anti-Terrorism hotline Crime stoppers	101 0800 789 321 0800 555 111
Fire and Rescue Service - non-emergency enquiries	0345 305 8383
Civil Contingencies Unit email for activation notification Civil Contingencies Unit telephone number for office hours enquiries	ccuenquiries@durham.gov.uk 03000 264654
Health - non-emergency enquiries	111
Gas emergencies	0800 111 999
Electricity emergencies	0800 66 88 77
Emergency water leaks and sewerage	0345 717 1100
Social Care Direct - for concerns about someone's welfare	03000 267 979
Durham County Council Customer Services	03000 26 0000
Northern Powergrid general enquiries: For power cuts, 24-hour emergency number:	0800 011 3332 0800 66 88 77
Northern Gas Networks	0800 040 7766
Durham County Council Environment, Health and Consumer Protection	03000 261 016