



**CITY OF DURHAM  
PARISH COUNCIL**

Learning from the past  
Building for the future

**APRIL 2026**

# City of Durham News

your monthly newsletter from the City of Durham Parish Council



## MAJOR CASH BOOST FOR CITY COMMUNITY CENTRE “AT THE HEART OF LIFE IN DURHAM”

The City of Durham Parish Council has awarded a significant funding package to support the future of Alington House, a much-valued community centre at the heart of Durham city.

Through its Community Centre Support Initiative, the Parish Council has allocated over £30,000 to help improve the sustainability of the building and ensure it continues to serve local residents for years to come.

The funding will be used to replace ageing windows, helping to reduce heat loss and improve energy efficiency within the historic building. An additional contribution has also been agreed to support the

necessary planning and heritage work required to deliver these improvements.

Alington House plays an important role in the life of the city, providing a welcoming space for a wide range of community groups, activities and events. By investing in the building's long-term condition, the Parish Council is helping to secure its future as an accessible and inclusive space for residents.

Councillor Phil Layton (pictured) said: *“This project forms part of the Parish Council’s wider commitment to supporting community facilities and strengthening local infrastructure across Durham and we look forward to seeing this investment’s impact”.*

## WHAT’S INSIDE



## PARISH SMALL GRANTS SCHEME NOW OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS



## PARISH COUNCIL GIVES ITS BACKING TO PRINCE BISHOPS REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS



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### PARISH COUNCIL SMALL GRANTS SCHEME NOW OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

Community and voluntary organisations across the parish are invited to apply for funding as the City of Durham Parish Council launches its Small Grants Scheme for 2026–27.

The scheme provides financial support to local groups delivering projects and activities that benefit residents and strengthen community life. From events and wellbeing initiatives to services that support inclusion and local engagement, the Council is encouraging a wide range of applications.

This year's programme reflects the Parish Council's continued commitment to investing in grassroots organisations and expanding opportunities for community-led projects. By increasing support through the scheme, the Council aims to help groups make a positive and lasting impact across the parish.

Funding is intended for projects that clearly demonstrate local benefit and align with the Council's priorities around wellbeing, participation, and community cohesion.

Further details, including application guidance and deadlines, can be found here: [Parish Council's small grants scheme funding window opens to community and voluntary organisations \(2026-27\) - Durham Parish](#)

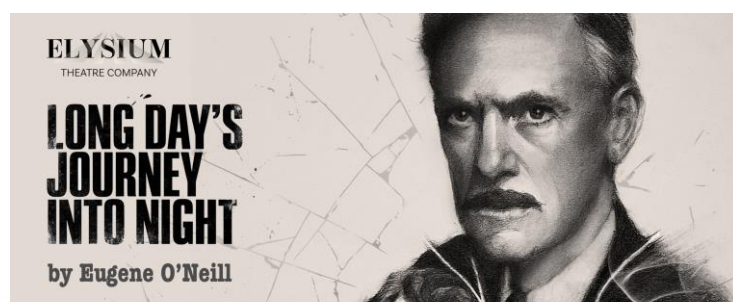


### THEATRE COMPANY SUPPORTED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL'S BUSINESS EVENTS GRANTS INITIATIVE SET FOR THE BIG STAGE

Durham's award-winning Elysium Theatre Company makes history this coming month with its stunning 70th Anniversary production of Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece 'Long Day's Journey Into Night' at the Gala on 19th May. Universally regarded as one of the greatest plays to come out of America, this will be the first time it will ever have been performed in the City, making it a Durham premiere.

Directed by Elysium's Artistic Director Jake Murray, it tells the story of the Tyrones, an American family in New England in 1912. A magnificent autobiographical drama of family, loss, love and longing, this is a once in a lifetime chance to see one of the world's greatest plays.

19 May 7pm Gala Theatre, Durham Tickets from £10+  
<https://galadurham.co.uk/galapost/long-days-journey-into-night/>





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## NEW BICYCLE MAYOR APPOINTED TO 'CHAMPION' CYCLING IN DURHAM

**A chartered civil engineer has been appointed as Durham's new bicycle mayor.**

Jacki Patrickson will serve in the role for a two-year term as part of the Bicycle Mayor Network, a global programme that champions cycling and active travel in cities around the world.

Ms Patrickson has lived in Durham for 16 years and is a long-standing advocate for cycling, regularly commuting by bike, coaching others, and leading group rides.

Jacki Patrickson said: "I'm really excited to be joining the Bicycle Mayor Network to represent cyclists in Durham city. Over the next two years, I want to focus on

*encouraging more children to cycle (and actively travel) to school as well as normalising cycling as a great way of travelling for leisure and commuting. I want to thank City of Durham Parish Council, Durham Bike Repair, and British Cycling North East for supporting my nomination."*

Councillor Susan Walker said: "The City of Durham Parish Council is delighted to welcome the appointment of Durham's new Bicycle Mayor Jacki Patrickson.

*"This is a wonderful opportunity to champion cycling across our city and to encourage more people of all ages to experience the many benefits of getting around by bike."*

She said: "We are confident that Jacki will be a passionate advocate for cycling in Durham, helping to

*inspire residents, visitors, students, and families to see the bicycle as a healthy, sustainable, and enjoyable way to travel. Initiatives such as the Bicycle Mayor programme play an important role in promoting active travel and building stronger partnerships between communities, organisations, and local authorities."*

During her tenure, Ms Patrickson has identified four key priorities for Durham: campaigning for improved cycling infrastructure, establishing "bike buses" to help students travel safely to schools and colleges, raising the profile of cyclists in the city, and organising an annual festival to celebrate Durham's cycling culture.

Jacki is driven by her commitment to promoting active travel for both leisure and commuting and looks forward to collaborating with communities, schools, policymakers, and local organisations.

She can be contacted at [durhambicylemayor@gmail.com](mailto:durhambicylemayor@gmail.com) followed on Facebook at [facebook.com/share/1RCNjPRSsY/?mibextid=wwXlfr](https://facebook.com/share/1RCNjPRSsY/?mibextid=wwXlfr) and on Instagram at [@durhambicylemayor](https://www.instagram.com/durhambicylemayor/).

For further details about upcoming events or about the Bicycle Mayor Network, please visit our website at: <https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/durham-city-bicycle-mayor/>



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## CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S UPDATES

### **Spring has truly sprung in Durham – thank you to all our amazing volunteers**

Firstly, may I say that Spring has certainly sprung in Durham this year. An enormous thank you to all of the volunteers who worked with us last Autumn to make this Spring in Durham City look so fantastic. It is wonderful to see areas like the A167, Elvet, Gilesgate bank, Neville's Cross and many more looking so brilliant and colourful. We look forward to doing this again later this year.

### **Hallgarth Care Home appeal hearing – the fight goes on!**

Can I also thank Councillors Liz Brown, Roger Cornwell and Grenville Holland as well as a team of local residents for their role in the public hearing regarding the Hallgarth Care Home appeal.

I understand that this was a lively hearing to say the least. As everyone is aware, the applicant is seeking to turn this former Care Home into Purpose-Built Student Accommodation and the Parish Council and other interested parties are making the case against this proposal. We look forward to hearing the outcome of this in due course.

### **Progress on the hospital parking issues at UHND**

I am also pleased to hear that there has been some progress on the matter of the parking situation at the UHND. Earlier this month the Trust's Chief Executive Steve Russell wrote to our Clerk to confirm that a temporary agreement has been struck with County Council to allow the use of their car park and, in so doing, free up 150 spaces at the hospital itself. Our Clerk has responded swiftly to

seek further assurances on the construction of at least the new car park element of the A&E application and also to ask what more can be done to promote the use of the Park and Ride Service.

### **A celebration of Observatory Hill and one of the major views of our World Heritage Site.**

The Parish Council was delighted to host a small event in March to mark the new footpath and gate at Observatory Hill – one of the most important views of our precious World Heritage Site – alongside colleagues at the Observatory Hill Research Group and Ustinov College. Our thanks to the Ustinov for hosting us and it was wonderful to welcome the Mayor Gary Hutchinson to cut the red ribbon.

### **Congratulations to our Mayor on a successful fundraiser**

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Mayor on what I understand was a fantastic fundraiser event on Friday, all in aid of St. Cuthbert's Hospice in our parish.

### **Litter picking day with the Durham City Riverscape Community Group**

An enormous thank you to everyone involved in the Durham City Riverscape Community litter pick in April. The team does such an incredible job as volunteers and I gather that they have filled their 500<sup>th</sup> bag of litter this session since starting as an organisation.



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# THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL MADE THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS AT ITS LAST FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026

- Councillors noted the content of the Durham County Council's proposed HMO interim policy and the substantive report presented to the March DCC Cabinet meeting and agreed to engage positively with the upcoming consultation; with responsibility delegated to the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee to draft a response to this proposed policy, to be presented and approved at the April Full Council meeting.
- Councillors approved the establishment of the City of Durham Partner of the Year Award; aimed at recognising outstanding commitment to parish life, including exceptional contributions to voluntary or community activity, support for others and achievements that benefit the wider community. Nominations for eligible organisations will be invited for consideration at the April Full Council meeting.
- Members warmly congratulated the talented students of Houghall College on their success in showing at this year's iconic Chelsea Flower Show. In supporting the students to do this, Members approved the allocation of £3,000 (from underspent budgets) to support the floristry students in delivering their installation at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.
- Members approved the adoption of a new set of procedures and policies to deal with GDPR and data protection matters, as part of the Annual Audit process.
- Members approved the allocation of ££33,703 towards the restoration of the Grade II Listed Alington House's windows, as part of a fabric-first approach to improving the sustainability of the centre. This funding was allocated as part of the new Community Centre Support Initiative.
- Members also approved the contract for a new grant funding bid writer; in order to secure large funding for the City Theatre as part of a cultural investment in the City.
- Members also approved the nominations of Julie Marshall, Stuart Lloyd and Win Coleman as this year's Durham Citizen of the Year Award.
- REMEMBER THAT ALL PARISHIONERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF THE PARISH COUNCIL – **OUR NEXT MEETING WILL BE TAKING PLACE ON WEDNESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> 2026 FROM 7PM AT MERRYOAKS COMMUNITY HALL**



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## PARISH COUNCIL THROWS FULL WEIGHT BEHIND PRINCE BISHOPS REDEVELOPMENT PLANS



The City of Durham Parish Council has thrown its full support behind the proposed redevelopment of Prince Bishops Place, backing plans to transform the ageing shopping centre into a vibrant, mixed-use destination at the heart of the city.

The current application is a variation of condition scheme, building on a planning permission granted in 2024/2025 for the comprehensive redevelopment of the shopping centre. That earlier consent included a hotel as part of the mix of uses. However, following detailed viability work and engagement with potential operators, the applicant has brought forward revised proposals

which replace the hotel element with additional purpose-built student accommodation, alongside design refinements to the upper levels and façades.

At its most recent Planning Committee meeting, the Parish Council said it recognised that this evolution reflects the practical challenges of delivering a hotel on the site and ensures that a viable and deliverable scheme can come forward without delay. The revised proposals aim to respond to these challenges by creating a more flexible, mixed-use environment that supports independent retailers, introduces new public space for events and

activity, and brings additional footfall into the city centre throughout the day and evening.

Speaking at the Committee meeting, Coun. Rory Handy, said: *"This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine one of Durham's most prominent city centre sites. The original consent established the principle of redevelopment, and this updated proposal ensures the scheme can be delivered. By adapting the mix of uses to reflect market realities, it provides a credible route to transform the retail landscape of the City."*

*The proposals will open up the site and create a high-quality public square as well as hopefully supporting a more diverse retail offer. The inclusion of purpose-built student accommodation to the upper floors of the site will help to strengthen the full use of the site in a highly sustainable, central location".*

He added: *"The Parish Council and partners are set to deliver a superb range of events across the City this year at a time when we are already hearing that footfall is growing; making Durham the vibrant visitor destination it should always be".*



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## NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Neighbourhood Warden Service continues to prioritise environmental quality across the City of Durham, with particular focus during March on waste management, litter reduction, and targeted interventions in known problem areas.

Persistent issues with refuse management have been observed in several locations. Mavin Street remains a significant concern, with repeated instances of improper waste disposal despite enforcement action, including the issuing of two fixed penalties. The area has subsequently deteriorated again, and discussions are underway to convene a multi-agency meeting to explore longer-term solutions, including potential changes to bin provision and site access arrangements. In contrast, Atherton Street and Albert Street have shown notable improvement, supported by direct engagement with residents and students to provide guidance on correct bin usage; in one case, this has led to a household applying for additional capacity.

Further proactive work has been undertaken across the city. A coordinated litter pick at Whinney Hill, delivered in partnership with Durham Student Community Wardens, resulted in the removal of multiple bags of waste, with further sessions planned. At Highgate, additional bins have been installed to improve provision and reduce overflow, while at Claypath, engagement with residents has successfully resolved earlier issues, although an abandoned bin near Metropolis House is awaiting removal.

Fowlers Yard continues to present ongoing challenges; however, recent enforcement measures, including the issuing of Community Protection Warnings to businesses, have begun to yield positive early results in maintaining cleaner bin storage areas. Progress will be reviewed in the coming month to assess the effectiveness of this approach.

Littering and anti-social behaviour remain a concern in the vicinity of the bus station despite the installation of additional waste facilities. Wardens have taken enforcement action where appropriate, issuing ten fixed penalties and continuing to move on individuals engaged in street drinking. The service will maintain a visible presence in this area to support ongoing improvements in public cleanliness and safety.

**Please continue to report local Council issues via the County Council's [doitonline](https://doitonline.durham.gov.uk/) page:**  
**<https://doitonline.durham.gov.uk/>**



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## **COUNCILLORS DEMAND INVESTIGATION INTO HISTORIC DURHAM POLICE MAST “DUMPED TO ROT”**

The City of Durham Parish Council is calling for an independent investigation into the destruction of a Grade II Listed radio mast by the Durham Police Authority.

The Grade II mast, a 49.5-metre structure designed in the 1960s by the internationally renowned engineering firm Ove Arup and Partners, was a distinctive feature of Durham’s skyline and was recognised as an important part of the city’s modern architectural heritage.

The structure was dismantled in 2017 to facilitate the redevelopment of the former police headquarters site for housing. Planning permission for

that redevelopment was granted on the clear condition that the mast would be carefully relocated and re-erected at the new police headquarters at Aykley Heads.

Nearly a decade later, the mast has still not been reinstated and community leaders have reacted in outrage as the dismantled components have essentially been “dumped to rot” in spite of the Police Authority losing its bid to gain planning permission in 2022 to formally demolish the structure. No subsequent appeal was lodged within the statutory timeframe.

The Parish Council has expressed serious concern that planning conditions requiring the mast’s re-

installation have not been fulfilled, that a listed heritage asset has now effectively been destroyed and that public authorities may have failed to uphold their legal and planning obligations.

The removal of the mast enabled the redevelopment of the original site, raising questions as to why adequate provision was not maintained for its restoration as originally agreed.

City of Durham Parish Councillor Rory Handy (pictured) said: *“Many residents will be aware of the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the former Durham Police communications mast at Aykley Heads. The mast is a listed structure and an important part of Durham’s modern heritage. Its removal was permitted on the basis that it would be rebuilt, yet several years on, that commitment has not been fulfilled”.*

He added: *“This raises a broader issue about consistency and trust in the planning system. Residents and local businesses are rightly expected to comply with planning conditions, and it is only fair that the same expectation applies to public bodies”.*