



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of Summons: 5th June 2024

SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee: Councillors V Ashfield, L Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, C Lattin and S Walker.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Environment Committee meeting** to be held **via Zoom at 13:00pm on Tuesday 11th June 2024** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

The link to join this meeting is below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82318453963>

Meeting ID: 823 1845 3963

Members of the public and press are also cordially invited to attend. Members of the public may address Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meetings for up to three minutes, with the agreement of the Chair of the meeting, provided that the statement is related to an item on the agenda. The speaker should approach the Clerk before the meeting commences to request to speak during the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Civility and Respect and Human Rights plus Social, Economic and Environmental matters.

Yours faithfully,

A. Shanley

Mr Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council

AGENDA

- 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE**
- 2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE**
- 3. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
- 4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS.**
- 5. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14th MAY 2024**
- 6. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS.**
- 7. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT**
- 8. REPORT ON DCC'S AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN**
- 9. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:**
 - 9a. To decide:**
 - I) Proposal to fund a noticeboard at Peskies Park in the Viaduct Area
 - II) Update on the landlord voluntary contribution scheme for 2024-25
 - III) Update on Green Move Out for this academic year in the City
 - 9b. To complete:**
 - I) Funding for the planters in the Viaduct Area of the City.
 - II) To consider the latest updates on the blue plaques for Prof. Dame Rosemary Cramp and 33 Claypath.
 - III) Battle of Neville's Cross signage and walking leaflet
 - IV) Progressing the plans for the new layout of Durham Market Place.
- 10. AOB** (please note for information only and not for formal decisions).
- 11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Tuesday 9th July 2024 at 1pm
Tuesday 10th September 2024 at 1pm
Tuesday 8th October 2024 at 1pm

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), L Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Ms Dasha Murphy (Durham University).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

None received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS.

None received.

3. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9th APRIL 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2024 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS.

None received.

5. DISCUSSION WITH DURHAM UNIVERSITY'S NEW COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER DASHA MURPHY

The Chair warmly welcomed Durham University's new Community Liaison Manager Dasha Murphy and congratulated her on her successful appointment.

Dasha advised that she had previously worked as a Team Leader at Huntsman prior to this role and also advised that she is originally from Russia and moved to North East England in 2010.

Dasha advised that she has been working closely with Hannah Shepherd and is already aware that this is a veery big role with lots of stakeholder engagement needed. Dasha advised that she was delighted to meet with the Parish Council and understand what the main issues are in the City.

The Chair highlighted that many residents and the Parish Council recognise the tremendous role of the University and the benefits of students to the parish.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that the biggest issue from parishioners relate to both transient noise and bins. Councillor V Ashfield advised that she felt that these issues were being tackled successfully by the Parish Council.

Dasha advised that the student wardens are also carrying out work to help educate students on the issue of bins and she would be delighted to work with the Parish Council more closely on this.

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that he was concerned about air pollution in the city centre and asked Dasha to do all she could to promote students using active and sustainable travel modes and to not bring a car to Durham.

Dasha advised that she was aware that this was a massive issue in Durham and that she is meeting with the Elvet Clean Air Group soon to see what further action can be taken on this matter.

Councillor V Ashfield also raised the issue of student housing and the concern that she has that students were pressurised some years ago to sign up with certain landlords when in fact there is an excess of bedspaces in Durham City. Councillor V Ashfield expressed the hope that more properties could be converted back to family homes, particularly if the student housing market is tending towards PBSAs now.

Councillor S Walker expressed her thanks to Durham University students who are regularly volunteering in the Merryoaks Community Hall and also highlighted one example of a young student who had already carried out over 100 hours of volunteering for the Hall.

Dasha expressed her thanks to Members for these issues and advised that she would be working very closely with Parish Councillors in future on these topics and she looked forward to doing so.

6. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee warmly welcomed the excellent report from Neighbourhood Wardens Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson and thanked them both for their excellent work in the City.

The Committee particularly noted the ongoing issues of graffiti around the parish area and the desire of Kirk and Ant to receive some training to eradicate this. The Committee agreed to request this from DCC management on Kirk and Ant's behalf or else to commit to fund this if required.

7. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

7a. To decide

1) To consider the proposal for a new blue plaque for 33 Claypath

Members considered the proposal for a new blue plaque for 33 Claypath as the former Women's Hostel linked to St. Mary's College and which helped to provide residential accommodation for women to access higher education.

The Chair highlighted that Durham University's St. Mary's College is celebrating its 125th Anniversary this coming Academic Year 2024/25 and this would be an important aspect of events taking place over this Academic Year to celebrate this milestone in the College's history.

Members unanimously agreed to fund this new blue plaque and to recommend this for approval at Full Council. Members also agreed, in light of the number of plaques delivered by the Parish Council to date, that this would be the final plaque for this financial year.

II) To progress the landlord voluntary contribution scheme for 2024-25

Members unanimously **agreed** to launch the voluntary contribution scheme again this year and Councillors Ashfield and Lattin agreed to support the Clerk in this work.

III) To consider a proposal to improve the Milburngate coach drop-off point and improving the riverside walk.

The Clerk advised Members that the Council held a special meeting of the Business Committee alongside local resident Colin Jubb on 2nd May to look at the issue of Framwellgate waterside coach drop-off and this followed a site visit which the Clerk advised he had undertaken with Councillor Ashby earlier that week.

At that meeting, the Clerk advised that it was agreed that a fully-costed landscape plan should be sought, in order to assist the Parish Council in a) designing an appropriate scheme and b) access wider funding such as BNG funding within the parish. The Clerk advised that Stuart Priestley discussed this with him and advised that, whilst the answer was not an all out 'no' in terms of accessing this funding, DCC would need to see a fully worked-up plan first. The Clerk advised that he had contacted a number of companies to provide a cost for this work.

At the meeting, the Clerk advised that it was also identified that whilst the Business Committee may not have a budget for this, this could potentially be drawn from the Environment Committee's budget to improve the River Wear.

The Environment Committee considered this proposal and agreed to support the proposed improvements to this part of the City in principle, however Councillor D Freeman advised that an application for the 2nd phase of Milburngate may be coming forward soon and a number of Members were also concerned that phase 1 of the site is still unfinished and therefore it was not clear if this current coach drop-off site might be needed as either a compound or other space to facilitate the completion of phase 1 or start of phase 2.

In light of this uncertainty, the Committee agreed that it wouldn't be appropriate to dedicate funds to the wider initiative for landscape design at this present time. However, as an immediate albeit temporary uplift and improvement of the area, it was agreed that the Environment Committee funds the installation of 3 x 3-tier flower planters.

The Clerk advised that he would communicate this to the Business Committee and seek costs for the new planters.

IV) Update on Green Move Out for this academic year in the City

The Chair advised that she had attended recent meetings of the Green Move Out working group from Durham University and was very impressed with the planning and operation so far. The Chair advised that this is certainly an initiative the Parish Council should support and confirmed that she and Councillor Ashfield would be working with Durham University on this.

7b. To complete:

I) Progressing the Community Emergency Plan initiative for the City of Durham parish area

The Chair provided a report to Members as a follow-up from the meeting of 10th April. The Chair advised that the turnout of members of the public had been poor but that she would be meeting with residents to progress these plans. The Chair particularly highlighted the efforts of Martin Hiles in Crossgate and advised that she would be discussing this with him in due course.

II) Funding for the planters in the Viaduct Area of the City

Councillors Ashfield and Walker confirmed that they would be looking to get new plants installed into the planters alongside volunteer student residents as soon as possible.

III) To consider the latest updates on the blue plaque for Prof. Dame Rosemary Cramp

The Clerk advised that planning for the blue plaque unveiling is going very well indeed although the Clerk did advise that the Council's Design and Conservation team had expressed some concerns over the wording of the plaque and felt that the plaque should be for Professor Dame Cramp herself as opposed to 12 Church Street as this seems to be more in line with English Heritage guidance. The Clerk advised that he would be liaising with the planning department on this and would try and get this sorted out.

The Clerk also took the opportunity to thank Durham University for all of their tremendous support with this event and he hoped this would be a great success for the Council in June.

IV) Battle of Neville's Cross signage and walking leaflet

The Clerk advised that he, David Mason and David Butler had now completed editing work on the Battle of Neville's Cross walking leaflet and he had ordered 10,000 copies of these. The Clerk reminded Members that this would be funded entirely through S106 funds from the Neville's Cross division.

The Clerk also confirmed that the new signage is imminent for the two bridges in Neville's Cross as part of this walk.

The Committee took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for his excellent work on this initiative.

V) Progressing the plans for the new layout of Durham Market Place.

The Clerk advised that he was still awaiting confirmation of the next steps with this project from DCC and would report back ASAP.

8. AOB

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she had chaired a recent meeting of the Walking Festival Working Group. Councillor V Ashfield advised that the meeting was well attended from the National Trust, Visit County Durham and DCC.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she wasn't sure if the Walking Festival would necessarily add great value to the City as Visit County Durham already sponsors approximately 195 different walks throughout the year. However, Councillor V Ashfield advised that she would continue to attend meetings and keep the Committee updated.

The Chair also provided an update on the empty pill packet recycling scheme at Whitfields. The Chair advised that the Terracycle boxes from the City of Durham Parish Council have been delivered and there has been a lot of appreciative messages on Facebook for this initiative.

The Chair also advised that Belmont Parish Council has also agreed to fund £1,000 worth of Terracycle boxes too. The Committee thanked the Chair for her work on this initiative.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 11th June 2024 at 1pm

Tuesday 9th July 2024 at 1pm
Tuesday 10th September 2024 at 1pm

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(11th June 2024)**

ITEM 8: REPORT ON DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION ON THE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

By Cllrs Victoria Ashfield and Rupert Friederichsen

1. Introduction

The County Council is required to produce a revised Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) and is currently consulting on a draft.

Air pollution is associated with adverse health impacts and is specifically recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. Key measures to reduce air pollution have significant co-benefits for health (active travel) and climate (active travel and public transport).

Several areas of the city have long been identified as air pollution hot spots. The Parish Council and residents have previously urgently been exploring solutions to localised air pollution problems and supported the more decisive encouragement of active travel.

The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to engage with DCC around the AQMP and all measures that will improve air quality in Durham city.

2. Analysis of the AQMP

There is a contradiction at the heart of the AQMP. It is that a) the root causes and the nature of the problem of air pollution are very well understood by all key actors, and b) the existing policy vision and policies are clear about the direction to take; however, c) the impact of the solutions is not sufficiently measured, the implementation of solutions is not resourced appropriately or implementation is insufficient for other reasons, which means the problem has persisted for over a decade and it will continue to persist. The evidence for this reading of the AQMP can be found in the AQMP itself as follows.

Causes and nature of the problem: The AQMP states that the main source of air pollution is road traffic (p. 12) and differentiates in detail which categories of vehicles cause which locations to be affected by air pollution.

Figure 1 (p.13) illustrates the extent of the AQMA right across the city from Stonebridge in Southwest to Sunderland Road in the Northeast; and from New Elvet to Church Street. The worst affected locations, listed on p. 14, are located within the AQMA and NO₂ mean annual concentrations are **predicted** to be between 32 and 40 µg/m³. The national air quality objective for NO₂ is 40 µg/m³ which was due to be achieved by 31 December 2005 (and maintained thereafter) (see [DEFRA online](#)). The WHO guideline level for NO₂ is 10 µg/m³ (See [WHO Air Quality Guidelines](#)).

The AQMP fully acknowledges the complexities of air pollution. Its health impact which tends to affect deprived areas most, the connection to climate action, and numerous policies and plans that affect air quality (pp.17-20).

Overall, the Parish Council is satisfied that the AQMP presents the nature of the problem of air quality appropriately. However, the report fails to acknowledge the frustrating lack of progress on air quality. It is content, with qualifications, that “air quality is improving” (p. IV). There is no summary assessment of the impact on air quality made by the previous AQMP and the current plan does not convey a sense that DCC wants to learn from experience regarding which measures have worked and which haven’t.

Stating plainly that, despite the AQMA being in place since 2011, significant numbers of Durham residents are and will continue being denied their legal right to clean air would signal a more appropriate level of urgency (see Figures A15 to A17 on pages 74-76 marking non-compliant properties. The residents of the properties marked with red dots are the worst hit and they will continue to suffer dangerous and illegal levels of air pollution, keeping in mind that the UK legal standard itself is four times the level internationally agreed as safe.

Vision and policy context:

The AQMP lists the visions of various policy documents, including

- the Northeast Transport Plan vision of “moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East” (p. 18), and
- the Durham County Council Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-29 vision “to make cycling and walking part of Durham’s culture and to make them safe, affordable, enjoyable, everyday modes of transport for everyone.” (p. 19)

Moreover, the resulting imperative to **increase highway space for active travel**, to reach air quality as well as climate targets is mentioned (p. 19).

The Parish Council strongly supports the policy vision presented in the AQMP and to which it is designed to contribute. We also note that the connections between the AQMP and CERP are only mentioned most briefly (p.18); they fail to point out the very important alignment of climate and clean air policy goals that can be reached through transport policy. We are very concerned that the ambitious target mentioned in the Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 (p. 122 – to achieve “35,000 fewer petrol and diesel cars on our roads” across the County between 2019 and 2023) is not updated and broken down to a goal to reduce the number of cars on the roads of Durham City as part of the AQMP.

Implementation, impact and resourcing:

Table 11 on pages 40 to 47 detail the AQAP Measures. They are not ordered from top to lowest priority, but it is not explained how they are ordered.

The table’s column “Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure” is the closest the report gets to quantifying the impact of the proposed measures. The reductions in air pollution to be achieved by each measure are most welcome but the amount of data provided is very limited. As a consequence, the Parish Council feels that the AQMP fails to give it the required information to monitor and assess the impact of the AQMP as a whole. Therefore, the AQMP fails to give levers to residents and the Parish Council to hold the County Council accountable for the success of the AQMP.

The Parish Council wishes to comment on the AQMP actions by **key theme** and in descending order of priority as we perceive it (numbers of actions are as in the AQMP, pages IV and V).

1. Active travel: Despite its focus on the health impact of air pollution, the AQMP does not mention that the health benefits of active travel constitute significant co-benefits, which may be part of the reason why the action "Implement the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029" is item 20, i.e. the second lowest priority on the list of 21 actions (p. IV). This action should be given a much higher priority. The resourcing of this line at £10k-£50k and the comment "not progress to date" (p. 44) consolidate the impression that, in total contradiction to the vision for active travel, it's actual promotion is in fact being utterly deprioritised. This impression is further exacerbated by the recent changes made to the crossing outside White Church which did not make any provisions for cycling whilst focusing entirely on improving the flow (and increasing the number) of cars.

Public transport: We welcome the intention of action 8 to reduce the level of pollution caused by buses but note that it is resourced at only £10k-50k and are concerned that this is a minor action with potentially very minor impact. We urge DCC to add the stretch action to the final AQMP. We welcome actions 14, 15 and note that action 15 will have negligible impact on the city's air quality.

We feel that opportunities afforded by the new bus station have been missed: Only bus providers using electric, or retrofitted buses should be allowed to use the bus station. For years climate campaigners have been asking DCC to engage with bus operators to agree dates for the upgrading of buses. No agreements have been negotiated. We strongly suggest adding a timetable for the exclusive use of electric buses at the new Bus Station.

2. Park and ride: We welcome actions 5, 7, 11 and the work that has already begun to expand park and ride sites. We would like DCC to consider means of incentivising more people using fewer cars to come to the Park and Ride, e.g. by applying charges per car instead of per bus passenger. More passengers riding in fewer cars would reduce the air pollution in the periphery of the city.

3. Planning: We welcome actions 2 and 3. However, the development at Bent House Lane is very much in contradiction to the AQMP: This huge development has been allowed to commence without any requirements for ceasing gas use in houses and improving bus routes so that they serve the whole of the development. We urge DCC to engage with the Parish Council and developers to avoid increasing further the flow of polluting traffic through Gilesgate.

4. Freight and delivery freight: We welcome action 19 because it addresses the growing issue of home deliveries. We are concerned that "obtain a better understanding" and "potentially followed by a feasibility study" demonstrates a low level of ambition.

5. Parking: We welcome action 6.

6. Electric vehicles: We welcome actions 4, 12 and look forward to learning how much impact it will have had in due time.

- 7. Workplace travel plans:** We welcome action 9 and look forward to learning how much impact it will have had in due time.
- 8. Awareness raising:** We welcome actions 10, 13, and 117, and look forward to learning how much impact they will have had in due time. We note that given the start of AQMA in 2011, it feels very late indeed to "Define and Implement a Public Awareness Campaign focusing on air quality" in 2024.
- 9. Taxis:** We are disappointed by the lack of ambition of action 16. We urge DCC to go much further, starting with setting strategic goals for the reduction of emissions by the taxi fleet and the level of its electrification.
- 10. Green infrastructure:** We note action 18 is at a very early stage and look forward to learning more about the potential contribution of Green infrastructure to reducing air pollution (and contributing to the resilience and adaptation capacity of the city during the climate emergency).
- 11. Traffic flow:** We are pleased that the Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system is operational (action 21) and would welcome further improvements it might deliver for Claypath. We are disappointed to not see more ambition on reducing the amount of traffic through the city.
- 12. Cross-cutting measures:** We support an overall higher level of ambition, as recommended, for example, by Climate Action Durham ([2023, p.2](#)) stating that "DCC should introduce traffic filtering, road charging or bus priority measures on main bus routes into Durham City to speed up public transport from the rest of the county, encouraging car traffic onto the A690, A691, A167 and A177 instead, thereby allowing the historic arterial routes to become quieter 20mph residential zones for walking, cycling and public transport."
- 13. Actions missing from the AQMP:** We urge DCC to work with
 - a. schools across the county to find ways to reduce car-based school journeys, implement "school streets", and parking enforcement in the vicinity of schools, and
 - b. Durham University to support the introduction of restrictions on student cars.
- 14. Making progress on the AQMP transparent and enabling accountability:** We note the detail provided in table 11 but strongly suggest it is insufficient to enable residents to monitor progress satisfactorily. In particular, each action in the AQMP must have a) a target that specifies the measurable improvement in air quality each action is expected to deliver; b) clear timescales (start and completion dates); c) monitoring (who is responsible for checking that progress towards targets is on track at regular intervals).

3. Conclusion

The Parish Council concludes that the AQMP in its current form does not provide a credible path towards solving the problem of dangerous and in certain places illegal levels of air pollution in Durham City.

We appreciate the measures proposed in the AQMP and have detailed requests for additional and more ambitious measures to bring the AQMP in line with DCC's stated policy visions and national air quality standards.

Significant detail must be added to the plan to enable the measurement of progress towards specified targets. In the absence of mechanisms that allow residents to check and verify the level of progress made, the AQMP is not a credible tool to achieve safe and legal air quality for all Durham City residents which calls into question its very purpose.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to note the above report on DCC's consultation on the AQMP. 2) For Members to agree to seek Full Council approval for the main content of this report to be submitted as the City of Durham Parish Council's position on the AQMP.
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