



City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. c/o The Enginemen Secretary's Office
The Miners Hall. Flass Street. Durham. DH1 4BE

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SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee: Councillors C Lattin, V Ashfield, T Cleaver, G Holland and F Robinson.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Environment Committee meeting** to be held **via Zoom at 10:30am on Tuesday 10th March 2026** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown. The link to join this meeting is below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86898006890>

Meeting ID: 868 9800 6890

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. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS.**
- 3. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10th FEBRUARY 2026**
- 4. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS**
- 5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT**
- 6. PROPOSAL BY CLIMATE ACTION DURHAM REGARDING PLANS FOR CLEAN AIR DAY 2026 IN DURHAM CITY**
- 7. EAST DURHAM AND HOUGHALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE HOUGHALL CAMPUS - LANDSCAPE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
- 8. JUDGING CRITERIA FOR THE DURHAM CITY STUDENT LANDLORD OF THE YEAR AWARD** – briefing note included.
- 9. UPDATE ON PLANTING PRIORITIES FOR 2026-27**
- 10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

14th April 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom

12th May 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee meeting held on Tuesday 10th February 2026 at 10:30pm in the Waiting Room, The Miners Hall. Flass Street. Durham. DH1 4BE.

Present: Councillors C Lattin (in the **Chair**), V Ashfield, G Bignardi, T Cleaver, F Robinson and S Walker.

Also present: Mr Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk) and Ms Claire Dodds (Wear Rives Trust).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor G Holland. The Chair accepted that Councillor S Walker was attending today's meeting as a substitute for Councillor G Holland.

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 13th JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2026 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

None received.

5. REPORT FROM WEAR RIVERS TRUST ON PROPOSALS TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF THE RIVER WEAR

The Chair welcomed Ms Claire Dodds, project officer for the Wear Rivers Trust, to the meeting and advised that Claire was attending to update the Committee on the work of the Wear Rivers Trust as well as to present a funding proposal.

Members were reminded that protecting and enhancing the River Wear has been identified as a key strategic objective of the Parish Council within its forthcoming programme of work.

The Chair highlighted that the Parish Council recognises that this objective cannot be delivered in isolation and has therefore developed partnerships with organisations including Durham City Riverscape Community Group and the Wear Rivers Trust to address significant environmental issues affecting the river.

In setting its budget for 2025–26, the Parish Council approved a dedicated fund to support the work of partner organisations. Approximately £6,000 remains available within the current financial year, with a further allocation of £2,500 agreed for 2026–27.

Claire began by noting in particular that Durham County Council has granted consent for the Trust to carry out works at Pelaw Woods, representing a significant and welcome step forward in progressing environmental improvements

Claire advised that the Wear Rivers Trust, established in 2008, is an environmental charity dedicated to protecting, enhancing and restoring the River Wear and its wider catchment. The Trust operates across the full length of the catchment, from upland headwaters through rural and urban areas to the estuary, and works in partnership with landowners, statutory bodies, local authorities, environmental organisations and volunteers. Its activities include habitat restoration, water quality improvement, public engagement and coordination of the Wear Catchment Partnership.

Claire advised that a central element of its work is addressing the ecological challenge posed by invasive non-native species, which threaten biodiversity, destabilise riverbanks, alter habitats and, in some cases, present risks to infrastructure and public health. Claire presented a funding proposal for the 2026–27 financial year focused on the Durham Peninsula area, the total funding request amounts to approximately £6,000.

The proposal sought to enhance capacity for monitoring water quality, training staff and volunteers in pesticide application, undertaking targeted spraying of invasive species, conducting site surveys, and recruiting and coordinating volunteers.

The Chair reminded Members that concerns have been raised locally regarding water quality in the River Wear and its tributaries. Claire advised that her proposal includes the purchase of three water quality testing kits and the delivery of a training session for established volunteer groups, namely Friends of Keping, Durham City Riverscapes and Durham Amateur Rowing Club.

Claire advised that these groups would undertake monthly monitoring, record results using a dedicated application and escalate any identified breaches to the appropriate regulatory bodies, such as the Environment Agency or Northumbrian Water. This initiative would provide baseline data and support evidence gathering for future funding applications.

Claire also highlighted that the proposal also addresses current capacity constraints within the Trust relating to the spraying of Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. As previously trained personnel are no longer available, Claire advised that funding is being sought for one staff member and three volunteers to obtain PA1 and PA6W spraying qualifications

Claire highlighted that this would increase the Trust's ability to carry out treatment works in Pelaw Wood, Flass Vale, Aykley/Hopper Wood and the wider Durham Peninsula. Provision is also included for the purchase of glyphosate and for staff time to undertake targeted spraying, including work on unstable banks in Pelaw Wood where hand-pulling is not appropriate.

Members noted that effective treatment requires repeated intervention over a minimum of three years to achieve sustained control

In addition, the proposal included a walkover survey of Aykley/Hopper Wood to determine the extent of Himalayan Balsam on land for which permissions have been granted and to facilitate engagement with neighbouring landowners.

Volunteer recruitment formed a further element of the proposal, with engagement planned through Durham University and Colleges, Durham Cathedral, Durham Amateur Rowing Club, Houghall College, community groups and local schools. Members noted that activities involving children would be delivered in accordance with the Trust's safeguarding policy.

Claire also proposed to lead a series of volunteer events in Pelaw Woods, Blaid's Wood and Aykley/Hoppers Wood to undertake strimming and hand-pulling of Himalayan Balsam in order to prevent further spread. Claire further advised that the Trust will also attend EcoFest on 21st June as part of its outreach and awareness-raising work

The Committee expressed its strong support for the work of the Wear Rivers Trust and requested a formal written proposal from the Trust, in order that this could be presented with a recommendation to approve the full funding request to the next Full Council meeting.

The Chair thanked Ms Dodds for her attendance and contribution to the meeting. At this point, Claire thanked the Committee and left the meeting.

6. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee warmly welcomed the latest Neighbourhood Warden report and noted its heartfelt thanks to Antony Waterson and Brad Ford for their extensive work in particular in addressing waste related issues around the city.

7. JUDGING CRITERIA FOR THE DURHAM CITY STUDENT LANDLORD OF THE YEAR AWARD

This item was deferred until the next meeting owing to a technical difficulty with some Members being able to access the meeting virtually. The Clerk reported that there was still sufficient time to consider this matter at March's meeting and again onwards to Full Council, if the aim is still to present this award at the annual meeting of the parish in May which the Committee agreed was still the intention.

8. REPORT ON PLANTING PRIORITIES FOR 2026-27

The Committee considered a report outlining proposed planting priorities for the 2026–27 financial year, following the Council’s resolution to allocate £20,000 to support greening initiatives across the parish.

The Committee noted that the overarching aim of the programme is to enhance the quality of the parish area, increase biodiversity and respond to the climate crisis, while delivering environmental, social and visual benefits for residents and visitors.

Members noted that the proposed allocations include £4,000 for parish-wide spring bulbs, £4,000 for a fruit tree giveaway event in November, £1,000 for Viaduct planters, £2,500 for hanging baskets within the Viaduct area and £8,000 for hanging baskets on the main shopping streets.

The spring bulbs and fruit tree initiatives will be delivered in Autumn 2026. The fruit tree giveaway, first trialled in November 2025, was reported as a success and is to be repeated, providing further opportunity for community engagement and the distribution of pollinator-friendly planting.

The Committee agreed to retain the Viaduct planters at the Colpitts public house, Mistletoe Street and Allergate, acknowledging the contribution of local volunteers in maintaining them.

Members noted that certain other planters had been removed without approval and agreed that several remaining planters within the Viaduct area should be offered to local groups for maintenance or reuse. It was further agreed that a number of three-tier planters in prominent locations be removed, as they are not being planted and maintained as originally envisaged in partnership with Durham County Council.

In place of the removed planters, the Committee supported the installation of summer floral hanging baskets on selected residential streets within the Viaduct area and on shopfronts along North Road, Saddler Street, Silver Street, Back Silver Street, Lower Claypath and Elvet Bridge.

Members noted that several businesses have already agreed to participate and that this investment is intended to enhance the street scene within the town centre boundary. It was further noted that baskets will not be installed on Listed Buildings without existing brackets due to consent requirements.

The Committee **approved** the proposed planting plan for 2026–27 and **agreed** to put this forward as a recommendation to the next Full Council meeting.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

10th March 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom
14th April 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom

There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(10th March 2026)**

ITEM 6: PROPOSAL BY CLIMATE ACTION DURHAM REGARDING PLANS FOR CLEAN AIR DAY 2026 IN DURHAM CITY

Climate Action Durham's (CAD) 2026 Clean Air Campaign aims to bring together actors from across Durham to reduce air pollution in Durham City. It will use the national Clean Air Day (18th June) as a focal moment to catalyse and generate interest and action on clean air. The approach for an ongoing campaign will be shaped by the outputs of this event.

Activities on Clean Air Day will focus on two different groups: large organisational stakeholders, and local residents and community groups.

Large organisational stakeholders

- CAD is working to bring major employers and key actors in Durham together to discuss what they are doing on air quality, where they could go further, how they can work more effectively together, and what barriers they are facing.
- The aim is to build a sense of collective ownership for the issue of air quality, build momentum and ambition around clean air action, and to strengthen a coalition so that these actors are working collectively on air quality.
- This could result in a pledge from organisations on how they will be taking further action, for example a fossil fuel car free day.

Community groups and residents

- CAD will organise a Clean Air Fair to showcase existing Durham residents' clean air action and to engage more people.
- The aim is to mobilise Durham residents and community groups around air quality as a unifying issue.
- Clean Air Day will generate community engagement, identify actions residents would like to see a clean air campaign take, and empower them to start their own projects or take their own action.
- The event will include a range of sessions and activities, to be confirmed with community groups. For example:
 - A presentation on the state of air quality in Durham and why we should care about this issue.
 - Presentations from the stakeholders that attended the roundtable on what they are already doing and, crucially, what they will be doing going forward (additional to business as usual)
 - A competition among primary schools particularly affected by air pollution, resulting in a display and judging during the fair.

- Stalls from different groups taking action on air quality (that could include the large organisational stakeholders) with ideas and projects for residents to get involved with.
- A community brainstorm session of project ideas to tackle air quality and what residents want the ongoing campaign to look like. Ideally community groups take ownership of projects.
- Networking opportunities to create connections that will enable these projects.
- A pledge board, for each attendee to commit to an action following the event.

CAD will follow up on the two-part event, creating an ongoing campaign that is informed by the events' engagement and uses the momentum and coalition that it builds to take ongoing *action*.

ITEM 8: JUDGING CRITERIA FOR THE DURHAM CITY STUDENT LANDLORD OF THE YEAR AWARD

At its meeting on 26th November, Full Council considered a report proposing the establishment of an annual landlord awards scheme delivered in collaboration with *Rate Your Landlord*. At that meeting, Members resolved to defer a decision on the report, subject to the Environment Committee carrying out a review of the proposed award criteria

The Environment Committee subsequently met on 13th January to consider the matter and originally agreed a revised approach to the award criteria, which was also presented to Full Council in January, as set out below.

That said, it was clear from the range of responses from Members in advance of this meeting that this particular proposal would not attract sufficient support to advance further in its current form. Members in particular had queries around the practicalities of Parish Council-led property “inspections/ assessment”.

Rate Your Landlord is an online review platform designed to allow student tenants to share detailed feedback on their landlords or letting agents. The service is run in partnership with Unipol Student Homes and local student unions and provides an accessible, transparent means for students to record their experiences in private rented housing.

In Durham, the platform was introduced in September 2025 following an agreement between Durham University and the Durham Students’ Union. Its launch has already begun to create a public record of landlord performance, helping students make informed decisions while encouraging landlords to maintain higher standards.

<https://www.rateyourlandlord.org.uk/landlord-rankings/durham-rankings/>

The University and colleges are also listed as a landlord as part of the scheme as one of the major student accommodation providers in our City.

The original report proposed that the Durham Landlord of the Year award would be determined using a combination of Rate Your Landlord data and qualitative assessment by Neighbourhood Wardens.

The November report stated that:

“The Rate Your Landlord platform assesses landlords across several structured criteria intended to capture the full renting experience. These criteria include:

- the quality of the signing and letting process;
- customer service provided by the landlord;
- efficiency in dealing with repairs; the overall safety and security of the property;
- the value for money of the accommodation; how much the property felt like a home;

- the quality of the moving-out process; and
- the fairness with which deposits were handled.

Only tenants who rented the property in the relevant academic year are permitted to submit reviews, ensuring that ratings reflect recent and direct experience.”

The November report further proposed that: “The proposed Durham Landlord of the Year award would be based on a combination of Rate Your Landlord scores together with qualitative assessment by the Parish Council’s Neighbourhood Wardens. The Wardens’ perspectives—gained through their direct engagement with landlords, tenants, and neighbourhood issues—would provide a crucial layer of insight not captured in online reviews alone. Their feedback would cover matters such as routine property upkeep, responsiveness to community concerns, cooperation in resolving incidents of anti-social behaviour, and general standards of property management within the City.”

Under the original proposal, the Environment Committee would review this combined evidence and determine the final award winner.

Whilst Members were generally supportive of the principle of the award, Full Council requested that the criteria for this award be reviewed to ensure that community impacts were adequately reflected alongside student feedback and Members could have greater confidence in the evidential basis for the award decision.

Following its review, the Environment Committee further agreed a more structured, staged approach to the use of the criteria.

At its last meeting, the Committee agreed that:

- Rate Your Landlord scores will be used as the primary quantitative tool to generate an initial shortlist of high-performing landlord
- Once a shortlist has been identified, the Committee agreed that additional qualitative feedback will be sought from both Neighbourhood Wardens and local residents’ groups.

This feedback will focus on landlords’ performance against broader community-based considerations, including but not limited to:

- standards of external and internal property maintenance;
- responsiveness to neighbourhood and environmental concerns;
- willingness to engage constructively with Wardens and residents; and
- cooperation in addressing anti-social behaviour and wider neighbourhood impacts.

The Environment Committee also agreed that property inspections of shortlisted properties would strengthen the credibility of the award. The Committee noted that this will be a significant undertaking, but one that aligns with the aims of the

scheme. Members of the Environment Committee equally highlighted that garden condition and compliance around returning bins are key components to these inspections.

The Committee also reaffirmed that the purpose of the award is to recognise landlords who provide a high-quality renting experience for students as well as making a positive contribution to the local community and environment through responsible property management.

As such and to better reflect this focus, it was agreed that the award should be titled: "*Durham Student Landlord of the Year.*"

It is clear that some further consideration of the above needs to take place at Committee stage and this item was deferred at the last Full Council to facilitate this.

Members are reminded that the Committee is also seeking approval from Full Council to be delegated responsibility for determining the eventual winner of this award.