



City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. Office 3, Clayport Library. 8 Millennium Place. Durham. DH1 1WA.

Telephone: 07510 074875 Email: parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

SUMMONS

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

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Environment Committee meeting** to be held **via Zoom at 10:30am on Tuesday 14th July 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/89202821815>

Meeting ID: 892 0282 1815

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 9th JUNE 2026**
- 4. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS**
- 5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT**
- 6. REPORT ON THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE COUNTY HALL MOSAIC**
- 7. DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO THE VOLUNTEER CLEANING OF ROAD SIGNS IN AND AROUND DURHAM CITY**
- 8. REPORT ON THE SUNFLOWERS FOR SOLAR PANELS PROJECT**
- 9. REPORT FOLLOWING THE DURHAM CLEAN AIR DAY**
- 10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

8th September 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom

13th October 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 9th June 2026 via Zoom

Present: Councillors C. Lattin (in the **Chair**), V. Ashfield, T Cleaver, F Robinson, G.Holland and M Wilkes.

Also present: Mr Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk) and Mr David Miller (member of the public).

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 12th May 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2026 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. To receive any public participation on the following agenda items

The Chair invited any public participation on the agenda items before the Committee.

No members of the public were present to address the Committee and no public participation was received.

5. To consider the latest Neighbourhood Warden report

The Chair introduced the Neighbourhood Warden report and welcomed the comprehensive update provided on the work undertaken since the previous meeting. Members noted the wide range of activities carried out by the Neighbourhood Wardens, including environmental enforcement, litter picking, responding to fly tipping and waste issues, supporting vulnerable individuals, assisting emergency services where required and undertaking proactive patrols across the city. The Committee recognised that the report demonstrated the breadth of responsibilities undertaken by the service and the significant contribution the Wardens continued to make in maintaining the appearance and safety of Durham City.

The Chair commented that, whilst the report itself was extremely positive and illustrated the commitment of the Wardens, it was disappointing that many of the same environmental issues continued to reoccur year after year, particularly towards the end of the academic year. Members observed that problems relating

to domestic waste, side waste, overflowing bins and the failure of some student households to return bins following collection remained persistent challenges despite ongoing education and enforcement. It was acknowledged that the continual turnover of the student population inevitably meant that the same messages needed to be communicated repeatedly to new residents each academic year.

A detailed discussion took place regarding the Parish Council's annual student engagement campaign. Members agreed that the most effective way of encouraging responsible waste management was through direct engagement with students shortly after they had moved into the city. Rather than simply delivering information leaflets through letterboxes, Members considered that personal visits to student properties had previously proved significantly more successful in encouraging engagement and ensuring that residents understood their responsibilities.

It was suggested that the Parish Council should once again organise a coordinated programme of door knocking during October, supported by the distribution of updated information leaflets explaining waste collection arrangements, recycling guidance and sources of local support. Members further discussed the timing of the campaign, recognising that students required a short period to settle into their accommodation before such visits would have the greatest impact. It was therefore agreed that the campaign should take place later in October rather than immediately at the start of term.

The Clerk informed Members that he was already preparing updated editions of the Parish Council's student information leaflets and intended to circulate revised drafts in advance of the new academic year. Members welcomed the proposal to continue distributing both the Parish Council's "What to do if you have a local issue in Durham" leaflet alongside the recycling information leaflet, considering that the combination provided useful practical information for students whilst reinforcing expectations regarding responsible waste management and community behaviour.

During the discussion, Members reflected on the extensive range of duties undertaken by the Neighbourhood Wardens, noting that the service extended well beyond waste enforcement. Particular reference was made to incidents detailed within the report where Wardens had removed offensive material from public places, administered first aid, provided assistance to Durham Constabulary by gathering evidence, enforced Public Spaces Protection Orders and undertaken community litter picks in addition to their routine environmental responsibilities. Members considered that the report clearly demonstrated the value of maintaining a visible Neighbourhood Warden presence within the city and expressed concern that any future reduction in the service would have a detrimental impact upon local communities. It was recognised that, whilst the service was not a statutory function, it had become an essential frontline resource for Durham City.

The Clerk further reported that, through discussions in his capacity as a member of Durham BID, agreement had been secured for the BID to provide funding equivalent to the Parish Council's own financial contribution towards the Neighbourhood Warden service. Members warmly welcomed this development,

noting that the additional funding would provide an extra ten hours of Neighbourhood Warden provision each week from September onwards. Whilst acknowledging that discussions continued regarding future service level arrangements beyond the current BID term, Members recognised this as a significant achievement which would further strengthen frontline services within the city centre.

In concluding the discussion, the Chair requested that the Committee's appreciation be formally conveyed to the Neighbourhood Wardens for their continued professionalism, commitment and hard work on behalf of the residents of Durham City. Members unanimously endorsed the request and asked the Clerk to pass on the Committee's thanks.

Resolved: That the Neighbourhood Warden report be noted; that preparations continue for the Parish Council's October student engagement campaign, including updated information and recycling leaflets and a programme of door-to-door engagement; that the additional funding secured through Durham BID be welcomed; and that the Committee's sincere appreciation be conveyed to the Neighbourhood Wardens for their continued outstanding work.

6. Damage to woodland by unauthorised construction of BMX track in Flass Vale

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Clerk to present the background to the report. The Clerk advised Members that concerns had recently been raised by the Friends of Flass Vale regarding the construction of informal BMX tracks within the woodland by young people. Members heard that temporary earth ramps and tracks were being created which had the potential to damage tree roots and areas of the woodland floor.

The matter had been brought to the Parish Council's attention by the Durham City Bicycle Mayor, Jacki Patrickson, together with representatives of the Friends of Flass Vale, who were seeking support in identifying an appropriate response. The Clerk explained that enforcement would be difficult in practice and that there remained a wider issue regarding the lack of suitable outdoor recreational facilities for young people within Durham City. Members were advised of proposals currently being explored elsewhere in the city, including fundraising for a pump track within Belmont Parish and early discussions regarding a possible skate park, although these initiatives remained at varying stages of development.

Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issue in detail and there was broad agreement that a balanced and proportionate response should be adopted. Whilst recognising the concerns expressed by the Friends of Flass Vale regarding damage to the woodland, Members also acknowledged the positive aspects of young people spending time outdoors, exercising and developing practical skills rather than remaining indoors. It was noted that similar informal BMX tracks had appeared in other open spaces across the city and often proved to be temporary in nature. Members considered that, provided significant environmental damage was not occurring, the activity itself should not automatically be discouraged.

Several Members commented on their own experiences of encountering young cyclists within Flass Vale, observing that they had consistently found them to be courteous, respectful towards other users and conscious of pedestrians and dog walkers. It was suggested that there was little evidence of antisocial behaviour and that the woodland recovered naturally from minor disturbance. Members therefore felt it would be inappropriate to adopt an enforcement-led approach where there was no evidence of deliberate vandalism or persistent damage. It was further recognised that Flass Vale provided an important recreational space for children and young people living within the North End and Durham Johnston areas, who were unlikely to travel to facilities located elsewhere in the city.

The Committee discussed a number of possible long-term solutions, including supporting the development of dedicated BMX or skate facilities elsewhere in the city, exploring whether portable ramps could provide an alternative to digging tracks into woodland, and considering whether an area within Flass Vale could be identified where young people could ride without affecting sensitive tree roots. Members also highlighted the importance of engaging directly with the young people involved rather than simply seeking to prevent the activity. It was suggested that a constructive conversation explaining the environmental concerns and involving the cyclists in identifying practical solutions would be considerably more effective than enforcement.

The Committee agreed that the Clerk should continue monitoring developments relating to the proposed Belmont BMX facility and report back as appropriate. Members further agreed that the Friends of Flass Vale should be encouraged to engage positively with local young people and that the Parish Council would be willing to assist in facilitating those discussions should this prove helpful. It was also agreed that the situation within Flass Vale should continue to be monitored and any evidence of significant environmental damage reported to the appropriate authorities.

7. Update on the blue plaques trail map

The Chair welcomed David Miller to the meeting and thanked him for the considerable amount of work undertaken in preparing the first draft of the proposed Heritage Blue Plaques Trail Map. Members recognised the significant time and expertise that had been devoted to developing the publication and expressed their appreciation for the high quality of the work produced to date. The Chair explained that the latest draft represented an important stage in the development of the project and invited Members to provide detailed feedback before the design progressed further.

The Clerk advised that he had undertaken a detailed review of the draft and had identified a number of suggested refinements. Whilst recognising that the publication should primarily focus upon the Parish Council's thirteen Heritage Blue Plaques, he considered that additional historical context could be provided for some locations to better explain the significance of the individuals and buildings commemorated. Members also discussed the potential inclusion of modern navigation tools, such as What3Words references, to assist visitors in locating the plaques more easily.

A detailed discussion followed regarding whether the trail should include references to other historical sites and commemorative plaques across the city in addition to the Parish Council's own blue plaques. David Miller explained that his intention had been to create an engaging and coherent walking route rather than simply linking together the Parish Council's plaques. He considered that carefully selected additional locations helped tell a broader story of Durham's history and produced a more satisfying walking experience, whilst ensuring that the Parish Council's blue plaques remained the principal focus of the publication. Members recognised the strength of this argument and generally agreed that limited references to other significant sites could enhance the trail, provided there was a clear historical or geographical justification and the publication remained centred upon the Parish Council's own initiative. Particular emphasis was placed upon retaining the strong theme of women's history which had become a defining feature of the Parish Council's blue plaque programme. Members also noted suggestions that additional reference could be made to Durham's mining heritage and wartime history where these complemented the route.

Considerable discussion also took place regarding the design and format of the leaflet. Members noted that David Miller had proposed a more compact folding format than the Parish Council's existing walking trail publications, explaining that the shorter route and available content lent themselves to a more concise publication. Whilst some Members initially questioned whether additional space should be created to include more historical information, David Miller advised that doing so would increase production costs significantly and risk diluting the clear, accessible format of the guide. He emphasised that the leaflet should act as an introduction to the city's heritage, encouraging visitors to undertake further research where particular topics captured their interest, rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive history within the leaflet itself.

The Committee also discussed accessibility, with Members noting national guidance regarding minimum font sizes and the importance of ensuring that the finished publication remained easily readable. It was agreed that the design and print company should be asked to provide advice on legibility and typography as part of the next stage of the design process. David Miller further recommended that a limited number of draft copies should be produced locally and used to trial the route with volunteers before final printing, enabling practical feedback to be gathered on the route, mapping, readability and overall user experience. Members welcomed this suggestion and considered that it would help ensure the finished publication was both informative and user-friendly.

Following discussion, Members unanimously agreed that the project should proceed to the next stage of development. The Committee agreed that the map should be refined in light of the comments received, that advice should be sought from the appointed design company regarding accessibility and presentation, and that approximately 20 to 30 trial copies should be produced for user testing before the final design was approved. The Chair concluded the item by again expressing the Committee's sincere appreciation to David Miller for his outstanding contribution to the project, sentiments which were warmly endorsed by all Members.

8. Coordinating Green Move In / Move Out fundraising and operation

The Chair reported that the University had confirmed a further contribution of £2,500 towards the Green Move Out initiative and welcomed the continued support being provided for the scheme. Members also noted that Durham County Council had agreed to provide the same additional refuse collection arrangements as had been delivered successfully during the previous year. The Committee considered the current financial position of the project, noting that more than £4,000 remained from the previous year's fundraising campaign, meaning that, together with the University's contribution, sufficient funding was available to support both the Green Move Out operation and, if required, Green Move In activities.

The Clerk presented the operational costs associated with the additional refuse collections and advised that Durham County Council had confirmed it would honour the previous year's pricing structure. Members considered the option of providing either four-hour or eight-hour additional collection shifts over two weekends. It was reported that operational feedback from refuse collection teams had demonstrated that the enhanced collections introduced during Green Move Out had been essential in preventing significant accumulations of waste and maintaining the appearance of affected neighbourhoods. Whilst Green Move In had generated considerably fewer issues during the previous year, Members agreed that retaining funding to support additional collections if required remained a sensible precaution.

Members discussed the annual fundraising campaign undertaken with local letting agents and landlords. In view of the healthy financial position of the fund, it was considered unnecessary to repeat the fundraising exercise during the current year. Instead, Members agreed that the campaign should resume the following year, when it could potentially be expanded to seek sponsorship for additional environmental projects, including the proposed Gilesgate floral display.

During the discussion, Members also reflected upon public awareness of the initiative. It was recognised that many residents remained unaware that the additional refuse collections were being funded through contributions secured by the Parish Council from landlords and other partners, rather than solely by Durham County Council. Members considered that greater publicity should therefore be given to the Parish Council's role in coordinating and funding the initiative. It was also acknowledged that waste problems arising during the summer were not solely attributable to departing students, with landlords and contractors undertaking property clearances also contributing to the volume of waste presented for collection. Members agreed that future publicity should better reflect this wider context and promote shared responsibility for maintaining the city's environment.

Following discussion, the Committee unanimously agreed to continue funding the enhanced Green Move Out refuse collections on the basis of eight-hour shifts, to retain sufficient funding to support Green Move In operations should they prove necessary, and to defer any further landlord fundraising campaign until the following year. Members also supported publicising the Parish Council's contribution to the scheme and highlighting the successful partnership working that had enabled the additional collections to be delivered.

9. Report on planting priorities for 2026–27

The Chair invited Councillor V. Ashfield to provide an update on the "Sunflowers for Solar Panels" initiative. Members heard that sunflower seeds funded by the Parish Council were now being successfully grown at Houghall College, whilst additional planting had been supported across the city through Climate Action Durham. It was reported that the project would culminate in displays forming part of the City of Durham Show in September, where dedicated sunflower categories had been introduced. Members welcomed the collaboration between the various organisations involved and recognised the opportunity to use the displays to promote renewable energy initiatives.

The Committee also heard that publicity material incorporating QR codes would shortly be produced to encourage voluntary donations towards the Big Solar initiative, supporting the installation of solar panels on community and commercial buildings, with income from future feed-in tariffs being recycled into further community projects. Members welcomed the innovative approach and noted ongoing discussions regarding potential solar installations at Waddington Street Church and Allington House.

The Committee then considered future planting priorities for 2026–27, including proposals relating to the former Gilesgate carpet bed. Members recognised the opportunity to develop a new floral display featuring the Parish Council's logo but acknowledged that such a scheme would require external sponsorship if it were to be delivered without impacting significantly upon existing planting budgets. It was therefore suggested that future fundraising activity with landlords and local businesses could also incorporate sponsorship opportunities for the carpet bed project. Members were supportive of exploring this approach and agreed that the proposal should continue to be developed alongside the wider planting programme.

In concluding the discussion, Members expressed their appreciation to all those involved in delivering the Parish Council's environmental initiatives and welcomed the continued partnership working with community organisations, volunteers and external partners. The Committee agreed to continue developing the planting proposals and receive further updates as the various projects progressed.

10. Dates of future meetings

14th July 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom
8th September 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom

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

Signed,

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(14th July 2026)**