

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 11th February 2025 at 13:00pm via Zoom

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

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley, Councillor J Ashby and Mr Roger Cornwell (member of the public).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and **accepted** from Councillor N Brown.

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 14th JANUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

Mr Roger Cornwell advised that he was attending the meeting to hear and contribute to the discussions on Items 6a. I) and 6b. III).

Councillor J Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting to contribute to the discussion on item 6b. II)

5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee warmly welcomed the excellent report and work by the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens over January. The Committee particularly thanked the Wardens for their proactive work in addressing significant waste issues around the City.

6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

6a. To decide:

I) Request to take over responsibility for a claimed public byway between the end of John Street to the end of Holly Street

Mr Roger Cornwell explained that this byway has existed for around 150 years, but there was an attempt to build over it which was successfully opposed by a local resident. Gladwin (the local resident) had compiled documentation and witness statements proving the historical use of the byway, and she had officially registered the claim with the county council.

Roger advised that he is currently the claimant, but he would like the Parish Council to take over responsibility for maintaining the claim. Members expressed their general support in taking this on, primarily as this would help preserve an important local footpath.

There was some discussion about the potential maintenance and liability implications, but overall the Committee agreed that the Parish Council should formally take over the claim from Roger subject to further advice from the Footpaths Officer at DCC and an agreement to do so by Full Council. The Committee agreed to work with Roger to get the necessary paperwork transferred, and then pursue getting the byway officially recognised and protected.

II) Proposal to support the Wear Rivers Trust as part of the Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) project

The Chair advised that the Parish Council has agreed a fund of £5,000 for this current financial year (2024/25) towards a project aimed at improving the River Wear. This has been a significant priority for the Council's Environment Committee since as early as 2022 and this has usually taken the form of both funding and collaboration with the Wear Rivers Trust as part of its Durham Peninsula Invasive Non-native Species (DP INNS) project.

The Chair highlighted that the Durham Peninsula Invasive Non-native Species (DP INNS) project is a long-term project aimed at connecting the dots across the project area to achieve a joined-up approach to managing, and raising awareness of, invasive non-native species (INNS), particularly Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, and Giant Hogweed.

The Chair also advised that it is looking very promising that WRT will be able to tackle INNS in DCC woodland this year, an issue which has limited progress over the past few years. WRT have requested permission to remove invasive species and litter pick in Pelaw Woods, Aykley Woods and Flass Vale between March and October 2025.

Members considered the project proposal by the Wear River Trust for funding towards volunteer events as well as engagement with schools. Whilst the engagement with schools was welcomed and this has been funded each year since 2022, the Committee felt that the priority for the work ought to be geared towards volunteer recruitment and activities.

The Committee agreed to delegate responsibility to the Chair of the Environment Committee to engage with WRT more closely on this.

Additionally, the Chair reminded Members that the Committee has also supported the work of the recently established Durham City Riverscape Community (DCRC) Group.

The group, made up of 213 members, is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the beauty of the River Wear through Durham City. Their skills help keep the riverscape looking its very best while functioning for the enjoyment of all, residents, visitors and wildlife alike. As well as the much-publicised monthly litter picking events hosted by this group, the group shares thoughts, ideas, vision and creative solutions to the issues facing the City's primary and outstanding natural asset.

The Environment Committee **agreed** to the following funding proposal by the DCRC:

Item	Justification	Cost	Potential supplier
Insurance for the activity	Without it we cannot continue as an organised group	£112	Already agreed by Adam and Graham
Long reach poles & hooks (3 off)	To be used to retrieve litter currently inaccessible due to terrain	Pole £74 ea. Hook £20 ea. Total £282	Docazoo (on Amazon) PC ay have preferred suppliers
Printed logo on Hi Viz Vests we currently have or retrospective printing with Riverscape Logo	To give the group a sense of identity and bring attention to the activity and its importance to the community. In an effort to engendering as more responsible attitude to littering along the river and in the city.	£3.5 each for 50 in total. Total £175	Hi Viz (Potentially can be sourced locally)
Tear drop flag to publicise activity 2 off	As above the plan would be to site at each end of the stretch, we are picking	Base £25 Flag £125 X 2 Total £300	Vista Print Potentially can be sourced locally
Supply of disposable rubber gloves	Provide protection from infection from contaminated litter	£11 per pack of 50. One year's supply say £132	Screw fix
Sustainable dispensers for antibacterial gel.	Currently Antibacterial (Alcohol) gel is available in the club boat house purchased by	£15.71 ea Handy Dryers	BLT Direct

	members in disposable dispensers a more environmentally sound and cost-effective alternative is durable dispensers filled from a bulk container	Refillable Sanitiser Pump Bottle x 3 =£47.13 Gel in packs of 5l £22 ish each x 3 for 1 year = £66	PC probably has preferred supplier but widely available
		Total: £1,067	

III) To consider a joint letter, with participant schools of the OASES Breath Clean Air project, to DCC on clean air in Durham City.

Councillor R Friederichsen presented the draft proposed to send alongside all participant schools in the OASES project for co-signing and eventual sending to DCC colleagues. The Committee reviewed the draft letter and **agreed** it was a good starting point.

However, the discussion then shifted to the broader context around clean air initiatives in the city, including the proposed 20mph zone on Church Street. Councillor V Ashfield raised concerns about ensuring consistency across different clean air and traffic calming measures being considered.

The Committee decided it would be best to hold off finalising this letter until after the Parish Council's Finance Committee meeting on Friday, where the Church Street proposals would be discussed. Councillor V Ashfield offered to take another look at the letter draft and incorporate any relevant points from the Finance Committee discussion.

The Committee **agreed** that Councillors R Friederichsen and V Ashfield should work together to get the letter completed and shared with the schools in the next month or so.

IV) To consider what action the Parish Council might take in relation to the proposed new Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (TVERF) in Teesside.

Councillor V Ashfield raised concerns about the TVERF project, noting that there are health and environmental risks, as well as doubts about its ability to reduce non-recyclable waste going to landfill as intended. Councillor V Ashfield suggested the Parish Council should consider taking a position on this and raising it with the County Council.

Councillor D Freeman expressed support for the TVERF project, arguing that incineration is the best available option for dealing with waste that cannot be recycled, and that landfill is an unacceptable alternative.

The Committee discussed whether it was within their remit to take a stance on this county-level issue. Councillor V Ashfield suggested that whilst it may not be their direct responsibility, the Parish Council could still provide feedback to the County Council, especially if local groups like Climate Action Durham are actively engaged on the topic.

The committee **agreed** that Councillor V Ashfield should prepare a report outlining the key issues and arguments around the TVERF project, which could then be presented to the Full Parish Council meeting in February for discussion and a potential position to be taken. This would allow the Parish Council to provide input to the County Council's ongoing considerations around the facility.

6b. To complete:

I) Report from Claire Murray-Kemp on an update re: fundraising efforts to fund new green roof bus shelters

The Clerk provided an update on the status of the funding for the new green roof bus shelters. The Clerk noted that there is around £65,000 remaining in the relevant Section 106 funds, which could potentially cover the cost of 3 bus shelters.

The Committee discussed prioritising the locations for the new bus shelters and agreed that the Committee may need to potentially scale back the original plan for 4 shelters down to 3, given the funding constraints.

The Clerk also highlighted some technical concerns from the highways department about the weight and carbon capture effectiveness of the green roof shelters, which he has relayed to the project lead Claire. The Committee felt these issues could likely be addressed.

The Committee was very supportive of moving forward with the bus shelter project using the available Section 106 funds. The Committee **agreed** that the Clerk should work with Claire to finalise the application and get it submitted to the County Council as soon as possible, with the goal of having this approved in the coming weeks.

II) Update on the proposal to reinstall the boundary stone between the City of Durham and Shincliffe parishes

Councillor J Ashby provided an update on the progress made by the Shincliffe Local History Society in taking ownership of this project.

Councillor J Ashby set out that the key points with this project were:

- The history society has written a detailed plan of action, which includes:
- The history society is contacting the County Council as the highway authority to get guidance on the appropriate location for reinstalling the boundary stone.

- Ensuring the County Council's design and conservation team is aware of the project
- Approaching both the Shincliffe Parish Council and the City of Durham Parish Council about potential funding.

The Clerk advised that he has also written to the Shincliffe Parish Council to make them aware of the project and get it on their agenda.

The Committee was very supportive of this project and **agreed** the Parish Council should be prepared to provide funding, as it is an important historical marker within the parish.

The next steps are for the Shincliffe Local History Society to continue their outreach to the relevant authorities, and then come back to the City of Durham Parish Council with any funding requests. The Committee expressed their appreciation to Councillor J Ashby for his work in driving this initiative forward.

III) Update on the proposed new blue plaque commemorating former Crossgate Councillor Sam Green

The Clerk provided an update on this proposal, noting that the Committee's previous suggestions for high-profile individuals to unveil the plaque have not panned out, as the proposed guests are not available this year.

The Committee discussed alternative options, with Roger suggesting musician Tom Robinson as a potential VIP guest, given his local connections. John Ashby also offered to reach out to Tom Robinson's brother Matthew, who was in John's school form.

The Committee agreed that having Tom Robinson or another suitably prominent LGBTQ+ figure unveil the plaque would be ideal, as it would help recognise the national significance of Sam Green's work.

They also supported the idea of having Malcolm, the former CHE chair, or Councillor E Ashby involved in the unveiling.

The Committee expressed its thanks to the Clerk for this progress on this project and asked the Clerk to continue pursuing options for a high-profile unveiling event.

IV) Update on the production of a Community Emergency Plan.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for his work in producing a Plan which has now been presented to DCC's Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) for them to review this and finally test this.

The Chair thanked residents involved in this significant work and advised that she would keep the Committee updated on how this plan progresses.

6c. To note:

I) To consider the Durham City Green Corridor project being delivered by DCC and the National Trust.

The Clerk advised that he was liaising with colleagues at the National Trust to arrange a presentation regarding their proposed Durham City Green Corridor project.

II) Ongoing efforts to resolve issues in relation to the new parking permit scheme by DCC.

A number of Members raised concerns about the new parking permit scheme introduced by DCC. The Clerk advised that he had also received similar complaints and had been liaising with DCC officers on a solution and had managed to arrange for the Customer Access Point at Clayport library to be a designated area where residents could go if they needed support with the online system.

7. AOB (please note for information only and not for formal decisions).

None received.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 1pm

Tuesday 8th April 2025 at 1pm

Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 1pm

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

Signed,



**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(11th March 2025)**