

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14th October 2025 at 10:30am via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, G Bignardi, F Robinson and T Cleaver.

Also present: Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk) and Councillors R Cornwell and D Freeman

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and **accepted** from 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 9th SEPTEMBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2025 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. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee received the latest Neighbourhood Warden update. During strategic aims discussion, the Committee confirmed the importance of continuing support for neighbourhood warden services as a core priority of enhancing the appearance and cleanliness of the city. It was confirmed that the contract for these services is fixed for 3 years, therefore budget allocation for this is not variable.

Committee members reflected that this funding contributes significantly to improving the visual amenity of the city and managing issues such as waste, anti-social behaviour and general environmental upkeep. The Committee reiterated that retaining this service is essential and therefore agreed to maintain the current funding commitment.

6. TO REVIEW THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2026/27

The Chair reminded Members that the aim of the Parish Council's strategy is to give local residents, Councillors and Officers a clear understanding of what the

council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its aims and objectives. The Clerk highlighted that the strategy sets out what the areas of development or change the Council intends to focus on over the next year outlining those areas of service that are identified as priority aims and objectives.

The Clerk advised that the City of Durham Parish Council has five overarching priorities for our area:

1. Being an ambitious voice for the city
2. Enhancing the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish
3. Upholding the Neighbourhood Plan and representing the parish on planning matters
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.

Councillors were also reminded that the Parish Council had agreed to formulate its strategy for 2026/27 ahead of the budget setting process in November 2025.

As part of this, all Parish Council Committees were being asked to agree their priorities for the forthcoming financial year so that this can feed into the Parish Council's budget agreement.

Members **agreed** that the strategic priorities for the Environment Committee for 2026/27 are:

Council priorities 2026/27	Environment priorities 2026/27	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with and responding to residents of all ages and backgrounds in environment-related work Mobilise Volunteer groups Work with young people and respond to their concerns	Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life.
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promote cleaner air, a cleaner river, green spaces, and streets for living across the city. Reduction in light pollution. Reduction in night time noise. Sustainable travel Supporting the creation of a Community Emergency Plan	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Work with all relevant committees to ensure the climate and ecological emergencies are considered in all planning matters. Sustainable housing	Theme 4: A City with attractive and affordable places to live
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Improve and protect the appearance of the city and its heritage.	Theme 2: A Beautiful and Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Be proactive and collaborate with all partners (including Parish Council committees, Durham County Council, residents, developers, landlords, and other businesses) to coordinate our impact on the climate and ecological emergencies and increase community resilience. Encourage sustainable Travel Increased awareness and action on climate change. Tackle the ecological emergency	Theme 1: A City with A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

7. TO CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S BUDGET FOR 2026/27

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council is required to agree its budget and precept request for the forthcoming financial year in November 2025.

In order to assist the Council in agreeing both the budget and precept for 2026/27, the Clerk advised that each Committee of the Council is being asked to propose a budget against their individual identified priorities for next year.

In view of this, the Committee **agreed** the following budget for 2026/27:

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Noise abatement	
<i>What to do if you have a local issue in Durham leaflet...</i>	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	

Planting budget	£20,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Emergency plan	
Community emergency plan – scenario planning with the Red Cross	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Improving the appearance of our City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£13,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Promoting the heritage of our parish area	
Heritage project	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 6: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust (Education and INNs)	£2,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£44,500.00

8. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

8a. To decide:

I) To consider a proposed new heritage blue plaque for former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam at Trevelyan College

A detailed proposal was presented for a blue plaque commemorating Mo Mowlam, former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Durham graduate. Members agreed this was a significant and appropriate heritage project due to her historic role and local connection. The Committee noted that Trevelyan College already houses a bust and theatre space named after her, indicating strong relevance and institutional support.

The Clerk explained that the nomination had come via the Durham Women's Banner Group and aligns with the Committee's commitment to highlighting women's history in the city.

Funding arrangements were confirmed and the Parish Council would be asked to pay the upfront plaque cost (approx. £550 after VAT reclaim) as well as the costs for any reception associated with a blue plaque and the plaque will be gifted to the College who will be asked to maintain the plaque into the future.

Members **agreed** to recommend this to Full Council and thanked the Clerk for such an excellent report.

II) Report on Clean Air initiatives proposed to the previous Parish Council in April 2025

The Committee received the previously circulated resident report proposing a local congestion and charging zone around the Elvet area as a way to address poor air quality. The Chair provided context for new members, explaining that residents' concerns had been ongoing and that a significant amount of technical modelling and research had been undertaken by local resident Steve Lindsay and the Durham Clean Air Group prior to submission.

Councillor G Bignardi opened the discussion by expressing clear reservations about the feasibility of the proposed congestion zone. He emphasised that the Parish Council does not possess statutory authority to implement or enforce such

measures and that congestion charging schemes would fall strictly within Durham County Council's legal powers

Councillor G Bignardi also noted that the proposal attempted to solve a city-wide pollutant issue by targeting only one small geographic area and therefore risked merely displacing traffic into neighbouring streets.

Councillor T Cleaver stated that rather than supporting congestion charging, the Parish Council should focus on securing a fair share of the new electric bus fleet being rolled out in the North East region, arguing that buses are proven to be the major contributor to emissions hotspots within central Durham. He specifically highlighted Church Street as an example where buses idle and contribute significantly to pollution levels.

The Chair confirmed that she did not support introduction of a congestion charge and believed that positive incentives and alternative transport options would be more effective. The Chair stressed that many of the measures being sought — including incentives to switch to electric vehicles, provision of charging infrastructure and shaping bus routes — sit with County Council or regional transport authorities, not the Parish Council.

The Clerk further explained that the County Council's own clean air working group had already identified a number of actionable schemes, most of which were still in progress and therefore the congestion zone proposal was premature.

The Chair reminded the Committee that they had never endorsed the congestion zone concept and there had been no formal decision to support it

Councillor V Ashfield proposed that, given the sensitivity and political implications, it would be inappropriate for the Environment Committee alone to take the decision to reject or endorse the scheme and therefore recommended that the matter be referred to Full Council to ensure complete transparency and that residents are able to observe decision-making at the highest level.

The Clerk added that if the proposal progresses to Full Council, the Parish Council should formally ask Durham County Council to undertake city-wide modelling, as current data does not show the displacement impact this scheme might cause on the wider transport network

The Committee also held a broader discussion on student car usage, with the Chair noting that some students leave their cars parked for months in residential streets, contributing to space shortages but not necessarily emissions. The Chair reported that changes to parking charges had reduced commuter parking by University staff but had little effect on students leaving vehicles long-term

Councillors **agreed** that reducing student vehicle dependency required proactive University action, not a congestion charge.

The Committee **agreed** that the Parish Council should not support the clean air zone / congestion charging proposal and will instead prioritise electric buses and sustainable transport initiatives and **agreed** to recommend this to Full Council.

8b. To complete:

I) Update re: fundraising efforts to fund new green roof bus shelters

The Clerk advised that he was awaiting a decision on the Section 106 funding application and would update the Committee accordingly soon. The Clerk advised that he understood this to be out for a 21-day consultation and he hoped to receive confirmation from the lead officer at DCC in due course.

II) Update on the Shincliffe boundary stone project

The Clerk confirmed that work continues on the Shincliffe boundary stone heritage installation. This project has a ring-fenced allocation within the existing heritage budget, up to £2,000, previously agreed by the Committee. The installation involves collaboration with the landowner and with heritage officers to ensure appropriate siting and interpretation signage that reflects the historical boundary significance.

Discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring high-quality interpretation that enhances public appreciation of the boundary stone and the Clerk advised that he would continue to liaise with relevant parties, including with Shincliffe Parish Council who have been asked to co-fund part of this project.

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

A detailed update was provided by the Clerk on planning for the unveiling ceremony of the blue plaque dedicated to former Crossgate City Councillor Sam Green. The unveiling event has been scheduled for Sunday 16th November, and due to the number of expected attendees and the historical significance of the plaque, the Clerk advised that invitations are now time-sensitive, as diaries must be secured well in advance.

The Committee thanked the Clerk for his ongoing work for this event and advised that they looked forward to a good event on 16th November.

IV) Update on project to adopt the Gilesgate duckpond project

The Chair advised that she was awaiting a response to the pre-application inquiry on this matter and hoped to update the Committee in due course.

V) Update on the supply of emergency boxes to places of safety as part of the community emergency plan project

The Chair provided a comprehensive update on implementation of the emergency preparedness programme, explaining that emergency supply boxes have now been collected by and distributed to designated "places of safety" around the parish.

The Chair advised that the boxes contain foil blankets, signage boards, paper-based checklists and basic emergency items designed to assist volunteers and residents during power loss, flooding or civil contingency events. The Chair

described the packing and sorting process as “great fun”, and it was noted that resident volunteers had been enthusiastic and supportive during distribution.

The Chair reported that there remain minor gaps in equipment, particularly where supplies were insufficient for the number of emergency locations. The Chair confirmed she will procure the outstanding items following a meeting of the organising Group.

VI) Working together with local landlords to support improvements to Boyd Street

The Committee received an update regarding collaboration with private landlords in Boyd Street to enhance visual amenity. A landlord has proposed installing maintenance-free decorative plastic flower baskets on the exterior of properties. The Committee discussed concerns over maintenance burdens should live plants be used, and noted that synthetic options, while not environmentally beneficial, could improve the appearance of the street and reduce waste from dead planting.

At present the Committee is still awaiting a definitive response from the originating landlord. Members recognised that this project could serve as a pilot for improving hard-to-manage rental areas where transient tenants make long-term planting impractical. The Committee agreed to await landlord confirmation before committing further spend or officer time.

9. AOB

None received.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

11th November 2025 at 10:30am via Zoom

13th January 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 City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee
(11th November 2025)**