



CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Learning from the past.
Building for the future.



Durham News and Views



The "Tree of Life" mosaic being gifted to the University Hospital of North Durham

PARISH COUNCIL SAYS THANK YOU TO NHS AND COMMUNITY HEROES

The City of Durham Parish Council would like to say a huge thank you to all of our residents in Elvet and Gilesgate, Neville's Cross and Durham South for their continued adherence to Government guidance on measures aimed at keeping Durham a safe place. The Parish Council would also like to pay tribute to all of those working in front-line and essential services and to the massive contribution to community wellbeing being made by so many dedicated volunteers throughout the Parish area.

Last year, in addition to providing emergency grants to vital front-line services, the City of Durham Parish Council commissioned a local artist to create a "Tree of Life" mosaic, to be gifted to the University Hospital of North Durham as a sign of our collective thanks to the incredible staff who are working day and night in our NHS, keeping us all safe and well.



CITY CENTRE BUSINESSES WELCOME "UNPRECEDENTED" PARISH COUNCIL SUPPORT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Businesses and retailers across the City of Durham parish area have welcomed the recent support from the local Parish Council in the form of its business resilience grant.

Last year, the City of Durham Parish Council announced an emergency business resilience fund of £30,000 to provide urgent support to local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and provide reassurance to visitors and residents.

Grants of up to £1,000 per business were agreed and the funding made available to successful applicants within 48 hours of applying. The fund was introduced to cover the additional costs of making businesses Covid-19 health and safety compliant.

Director of Woven Durham, Chris Hayes said: "At a difficult time for small independent businesses across the country, the Covid-19 Business Resilience Fund from the City of Durham Parish Council provided us with

a real lifeline".

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council, Councillor Elizabeth Scott said: "we have heard some really reassuring and heart-warming stories from a number of the local businesses we have been able to support with this unprecedented level of funding from any Parish Council anywhere".

She added: "Almost 50 businesses in the City have been safeguarded. But of course, this is a very worrying time for anyone who owns a business and those in employment and our immediate concern now is for the long-term vitality of those businesses. The Parish Council is continuing to work with key partners to ensure that we have a road to recovery as soon as possible."

Applications are now closed for the Parish Council's Covid-19 resilience grant fund.





PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO COMMON LAND DE-REGISTRATION SET FOR END OF APRIL

The Planning Inspectorate has now announced that a full public inquiry will be held on 27th April 2021 in order to determine Durham County Council's application to de-register the coach park at the Sands as common land.

In 2019, the County Council applied to the Planning Inspectorate to have the site de-registered as common land in order to create 60 new controlled car parking spaces to support the new County Headquarters building.

The Planning Inspectorate had originally advised that they were satisfied to proceed to determine the application without the need for a public inquiry or hearing. However, following legal

representation from the Durham City Freemen and the City of Durham Parish Council, the Planning Inspectorate last year decided that a public inquiry is now necessary.

The Chair of the Parish Council Councillor Elizabeth Scott said: "The County Council's application to have the land de-registered has been extremely contentious, of more than local significance and has attracted widespread objections. The fact that the County Council and their developer Kier have fenced off our common land, unlawfully interfered with the public's rights to the common and shown a total disregard for the health and future of the trees in this area is



completely shameful. We look forward to putting our case to the Planning Inspectorate at the public inquiry in April".

PARISH COUNCIL BACKS PROPOSALS TO CONTROL LEVELS OF STUDENT HOUSING IN DURHAM

Durham County Council is currently consulting on a proposed Article 4 Direction relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) for the Mount Oswald area, Carville and Belmont in Durham City. The Article 4 Direction would mean that any change from a family home to an HMO would require planning permission. This would enable the Council to assess the suitability of the proposals in line with the County Durham Plan and the City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan.

The City of Durham Parish Council has backed these proposals and hopes that this can be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

In a report by its planning consultant, the Parish Council concludes that the latest council tax data in particular provides justification to demonstrate a need for the proposed Article 4 Direction at Mount Oswald. The report goes on to recommend that a trigger point should be established by the County Council which means if more than 10% of the total residential units within a postcode area are exempt from council tax charges as a result of a student exemption, an Article 4 Direction should be put in place in those areas. As part of this monitoring, the Parish Council argues that the County Council should also monitor information such as crime statistics and other data which highlights issues around nuisance.

Last year alone, the Parish Council was successful at getting almost 20 new applications for HMOs in the existing Article 4 Area quashed; many of which involved Parish Councillors arguing the case at the County Planning Committee.

Further details about the consultation can be found on Durham County Council's website here:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/24870/Consultation-on-Houses-in-Multiple-Occupancy-HMOs-in-Mount-Oswald-Belmont-and-Carville>

Closing date for public comments: 5pm on 26th February 2021.



The County Council has been applauded for its plans to demolish the existing bus station on North Road and replace it with a brand new ultra-modern building.

TIMETABLE SET FOR NEW BUS STATION ON NORTH ROAD

Work to create a modern and vibrant new bus station for Durham City will begin next month after approval of a multi-million pound funding package in January 2021.

Following a successful bid by Durham County Council to the North East Joint Transport Committee, £3.6 million has been allocated towards the scheme, which has been welcomed as "vitaly important in supporting the recovery of our local economy and transport sector following the impact of the pandemic" by the County Council's Leader Cllr Simon Henig.

The 18-month project is set to commence mid-February, with the new bus station expected to open in late summer 2022.

The Parish Council very much welcomed the plans at consultation stage, stating that the new building would be a more modern and welcoming building that is both fit for purpose and suitable for all users. The County Council consulted on the wider regeneration of North Road in 2015 and the Parish Council very much hopes that the plans for the bus station will form a crucial first step in the efforts to regenerate this area. Parish Council Chair Cllr Elizabeth Scott said: "for many tourists and visitors of the city travelling in by bus, the bus station is their first impression of the city and it is extremely welcome that the bus station is being improved".



RETAIL GURU HITS THE GROUND RUNNING IN DURHAM CITY

The City of Durham Parish Council has contracted the services of award-winning North East retail consultant Graham Sout to support local businesses throughout Covid-19 and to give city centre businesses a boost.

Graham, who began in May last year, has been primarily working with local businesses in Durham City to help them set up and improve their online presence and operations; a vital step to help businesses survive whilst the lockdown measures introduced by the Government in a bid to tackle the spread of Covid-19 are in place.

Graham is also working with the Parish Council to secure a variety of new retail and leisure occupants for empty business units and promoting independent retailers in the city. In spite of the Covid-19 restrictions, Durham City has defied the national trend and welcomed a range of new retailers to the City in the last few months – Mr Bojangles, Meeple World, the Boathouse, Durham Distillery, Yorkshire Trading Company and Durham Bed Company.

Graham Sout said: “I am thrilled to be working with businesses in Durham city. Durham is such a phenomenal place and it is clear that the Parish Council is keen to take a lead in supporting businesses of all shapes and sizes in the city centre in Durham and helping them to flourish.”

In January 2021, the Parish Council hosted a successful round table meeting with Durham Independents to assess what more can be done to support retailers.



Award winning retail consultant Graham Sout



Durham City's famous Indoor Market Hall

‘We’re here – in lockdown and beyond’ – says Durham Market Hall

Durham Market Hall may be closed for lockdown, but even if you can’t browse the stalls in person, you can still shop with several of them online. Launched in Autumn 2020, Durham Markets’ Online Shop (visit www.durhammarkets.co.uk/shop) has an array of your favourite local traders with whom you can shop, choose from fruit and vegetable boxes to sourdough breads and local cheeses, and from quirky gifts to household essentials. Weekly deliveries are local and eco-friendly - delivery partner ZMOVE heads out every Saturday morning, deliveries are within a 5-mile radius and by zero emission e-bike or electric car.

However, as soon as restrictions are lifted, the entrances to the Market Hall will be opened again, and our 40 local independent traders are looking forward to safely welcoming back customers, old and new. As well as the Market Hall, open from Monday to Saturday each week, the Saturday Outdoor Markets will resume, as will the monthly Food Producers’ and Crafters’ Markets.

Everyone at Durham Markets looks forward to seeing you all again as soon as we are able to do so, and we hope to be able to return to enjoying everything the city of Durham has to offer later this year.

DEDICATION TO RUTH FIRST TO BE REVITALISED AFTER SUCCESSFUL FUNDING BID BY PARISH COUNCIL

The City of Durham Parish Council has been successful in its funding bid to have the Ruth First mural on Providence Row revitalised by the original artist.

The mural, which was commissioned by the former City Council, was erected to coincide with the first free, democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 and was unveiled by two of Ruth First’s daughters.

Ruth First was a South African anti-apartheid activist and scholar who lectured in development studies at Durham University between 1973 and 1978. Ruth was assassinated in Mozambique, where she was

working in exile, by a parcel bomb built by South African police.

The poor condition of this plaque had recently been raised with the Parish Council as the plaque had become very heavily worn.

The funding bid for £2,000 was approved by the County Council in January, following a strong application by Parish Councillor John Ashby and a letter of support from the local County Councillors and the local Residents’ Group St. Nicholas Community Forum.

The possibility of one of Ruth First's daughters participating in an unveiling event when the artwork is reinstalled is being investigated.



The mural dedicated to South African anti-apartheid activist and scholar Ruth First on Providence Row is to be revitalised, following a successful bid to Section 106 funding by the City of Durham Parish Council



‘A REMEMBRANCE LIKE NO OTHER’ - DURHAM CITY’S PARISH COUNCIL HOSTS ‘HISTORIC’ YEAR OF REMEMBRANCE 2020

The City of Durham Parish Council has marked 2020 as an historic year of Remembrance.

In spite of the significant challenges posed throughout 2020 by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the City’s Parish Council worked alongside local voluntary groups, the local Women’s Institutes, the Armed Forces, the Finchale Group, the Royal British Legion, Durham Markets Company, Durham County Council and many more to ensure that Durham City remembered those who gave their lives during the World War conflicts.

September 2020 marked the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain event and the Parish Council, together with Durham Town Hall and the Markets Company, hosted an event in the Market Place, which included the display of a ubiquitous Hawker Hurricane fighter, a 29th Field Kitchen HQ, World War II food and

rationing display and a special nostalgia production by a local group known as “The Time Bandits”.

In conjunction with this event, Durham Town Hall also hosted a special exhibition by local artist Denis Harry Fox, which marked the first time that the new series of paintings, depicting events known as ‘Black Thursday’ when the Luftwaffe attacked the North-East of England, were shown together.

Sadly, the usual parade in November for Remembrance Day had to be cancelled due to Government restrictions in response to the pandemic. However, a small service followed by an outdoor Cathedral service, involving a limited number of groups, did go ahead. Added to this, the Parish Council worked throughout 2020 and had over 8,000 knitted poppies produced and designed into a stunning cascading poppy display at Durham Town Hall.

The Town Hall, along with other landmarks across the County, was lit up red during the Remembrance weekend. The Parish Council would like to say a heartfelt thanks to all the wonderful volunteers and to Durham County Council for their support with this project, which also saw the Parish Council launch a “Sponsor a Poppy” Appeal which raised funds for the Royal British Legion.

Added to this project, the Parish Council also provided funding towards the training of veterans and ex-service personnel to the Finchale Group, based here in Durham, as part of a “looking to the future” Remembrance project and the Group is providing skills training to get people back into employment.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott said: “This has been an historic year for us all and a Remembrance like no other and one we can all be proud of”.





DURHAM CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN NEARS IMPORTANT REFERENDUM STAGE

The referendum into the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan looks set to take place later this year, following the seal of approval from the Independent Examiner.

The Plan was initially created by members of Durham City's Neighbourhood Planning Forum and was taken over by the City of Durham Parish Council following the Council's creation in May 2018.

In his report, the Independent Examiner Mr Tony Burton said: "Producing the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan has clearly involved significant effort over many years led by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party both before and after the creation of the City of Durham Parish Council. There has been significant community involvement.

There is evidence of collaboration with Durham County Council and this will continue to be important in ensuring delivery of the Plan. The evident commitment of all those who have worked so hard over such a long period of time to prepare the Plan is to be commended and I would like to thank all those at Durham County Council and the City of Durham Parish Council who have supported this examination process".

The Examiner has also made it clear that the policies set out in the Neighbourhood Plan can now carry significant weight when considering new planning applications within the Plan area.

Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Working

Party and of the City of Durham Parish Council Planning Committee, Coun. Roger Cornwell said: "I am very pleased that the County Council has now issued a Decision Notice saying that the City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan can go forward to a referendum next May. This is a key stage which means that it is now being given "significant weight" in determining planning applications within our Parish. The Plan is the result of six years' work by a dedicated team of volunteers, first from the Neighbourhood Planning Forum then subsequently by largely the same people working with the Parish Council."

The Referendum must be delayed until May 2021 in accordance with Government guidelines relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

EMERGENCY GRANT FUNDING PROVIDED TO VOLUNTARY GROUPS DURING PANDEMIC

Each year, the City of Durham Parish Council extends the opportunity to local community groups, charities or voluntary organisations to apply for a financial grant from the Council's grant budget. This year, more than any other, this funding has been a real lifeline for a lot of local organisations doing great work in our community.

The funding window began on 1st April 2020 and a number of organisations submitted an application for funding to the Parish Council. In the 2020/21 scheme the Parish Council supported local organisations with grants totalling over £24,000.

All successful applicants were delighted to hear the news that they would receive a grant award, particularly in light of the huge pressures all of them have been put under as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some of the frontline services supporting local residents during the pandemic who received funding include; Sanctuary 21 (for the renovation of their cooking facilities to help feed the homeless), Harbour (a domestic abuse charity which supports the most vulnerable residents), Durham City Food Bank (to provide food to those in need), Samaritans (for the upgrading of their equipment used to speak with those experiencing mental health crisis and

many more. This funding also went towards some great local initiatives to improve the community, e.g. the Parish Council has supported and is helping to finance the construction of the new Lowes Barn Community Centre in Neville's Cross, the upgrading of the toilets at the St. Oswald's Institute on Church Street and the renovation of a popular mosaic in Wharton Park.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott said: "The City of Durham Parish Council is extremely proud to support such a large number of local community and voluntary organisations through its grant awards during this exceptionally difficult year. We will continue to support these groups who make our community the amazing place it really is".

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR CITY'S BLUE PLAQUE SCHEME

The City of Durham of Durham Parish Council is seeking nominations for its blue plaque scheme, set to be launched in February this year.

This scheme is based on the English Heritage scheme for blue plaques in London and has been delivered in other local areas outside London by various Parish and Town Councils. It is hoped that, by launching such a scheme, this will be an encouragement for residents to celebrate their heritage and an opportunity to engender Civic Pride.

It is intended that these blue plaques will be located at appropriate locations around the parish area,

in order to commemorate either, a significant individual (must have been deceased at least 20 years), an historic event or a significant building from the Parish area.

Nominations are invited from members of the public via e-mail to the Parish Clerk at parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk and Councillors will then assess each application on its own merits.

If the scheme is successful, it is hoped that this could form part of a heritage trail in the City to attract more visitors.



An example of the type of plaque envisaged as part of the City of Durham Parish Council's scheme.



PARISH COUNCIL ON A “MISSION” TO CLEAN AND GREEN OUR LOCAL AREA

The City of Durham Parish Council has said it is on a “mission” to green its community; with over 500 trees, 7,000 spring bulbs and hundreds of colourful bedding plants planted already in the last year alone.

In February of last year, the Parish Council planted 114 trees at the Sands, enlisting the support of the Freemen of the City and local schools, in order to replace those felled to support the construction of the new County Hall Headquarters.

During the first lockdown of last year, the Parish Council also launched a scheme which provided free bedding plants around the community to help provide some cheer and colour to vulnerable local residents and to the local Hospice during an incredibly difficult time.

The Parish Council has also been successful in a bid to the Woodland Trust for 315 new trees to be planted in the Flass Vale area and in September enlisted the support of local

residents, students at Durham University and local schools across the Parish to plant over 7,000 bulbs for daffodils, scilla, crocuses, snowdrops and irises to flower in Spring.

Groups of volunteer students from Durham University also helped to plant over 1,000 bulbs and 500 pansies for winter flowering at the Sands Flats in the City.

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee Coun. Victoria Ashfield said: “We are on a mission to green our community and we are absolutely thrilled at the level of support the local community – including local schools, local residents, Durham University's Student Volunteers and many more - have shown for this project. The weather hasn't always been great but that hasn't dampened any enthusiasm or spirit and we really want to say a huge thank you to everyone for their help”.

She added: “Whilst we face the two crises of Covid-19 and the climate emergency, one thing

is for certain - our environment, plants, trees and open green spaces in Durham City have never been more valuable. Passers-by have already noticed the improvement to a number of areas and we hope that everyone will find these plants bring brightness and joy into our daily lives through this hard Covid-19 winter.”

The Parish Council is now working closely with Durham County Council on a further £7,500 project to green the parish and is also working with the Wear Rivers Trust on a project to help eradicate invasive species from the River Wear.

Last year the Parish Council declared a climate change emergency and has been working with local groups to take action on this. Through a joint project with the Parish Council's Environment and Planning Committees, the Parish Council will soon be looking at launching a public consultation on a proposed Supplementary Planning Document to look to see how trees can be better protected through the planning system.





PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT TO BE FROZEN FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW

At its January meeting, the City of Durham Parish Council agreed to freeze its precept for the third year in a row.

The overall annual charge for the Parish Council for a Band D property in the Neville's Cross, Elvet and Gilesgate and Durham South divisions will therefore remain £34.87, giving the Parish Council a budget of just over £150,000.

At the same time, the Parish Council is increasing its allocated budget on clean and green projects, continuing to fund additional wardens for the City, promoting Durham City heritage and providing grants to frontline organisations in Durham.

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council's

No more diesel generators in Durham's Market Place

Diesel generators are soon to become a thing of the past in Durham market place.

The City of Durham Parish Council has been working together with Durham Markets Company and has funded the installation of electrical equipment for users of the market to scrap the diesel generators which pollute our air and switch to electric. In addition, a code of non-usage has been introduced for anyone renting a space. The Parish Council is working with partners to do everything possible to clean and green our community and that includes ensuring we have good air quality.

Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee Cllr Victoria Ashfield said: "It's all about improving the environment in the city centre. We've shown that by working together we can make this kind of difference".

Finance Committee Cllr Alan Doig said: "this is a really fantastic budget for Durham City. Not only is the Parish Council freezing its precept for the third year in a row but we are also moving forward with more of what residents have told us they want for the Parish; Neighbourhood Wardens, support for independent businesses and increasing our budget for greening the Parish being just a few examples. We recognise that times are difficult at the moment and we are looking to support local residents and improve our community."

Independent auditors have also recently praised the Parish Council for its good financial governance arrangements.



Chair of the City of Durham Parish Finance Committee Coun. Alan



Community champions recognised by prestigious City Award

Five members of the community have been recognised with the Parish Council's Good Citizen of the Year Award 2020

Local campaigners Janet George and Kirsty Thomas, Remembrance parade organiser Arthur Lockyear, Neighbourhood Planning guru Sue Childs and world-renowned sculptor Dr Fenwick Lawson have each been awarded the prestigious award Good Citizen of the Year Award by the City of Durham Parish Council.

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Cllr Elizabeth Scott, on presenting the Awards, said: "these five amazing champions have really gone above and beyond to make our community what it is today. They have devoted so much of their time voluntarily and, in each case, their work is going to have a real, meaningful and long-lasting positive impact on our parish. We thank each of them for all that they do".

