



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING
HELD ON 24th May 2023 AT 7.30PM IN WYLAM INSTITUTE**

Present: Councillors A Armstrong, D Carney (Chair), John Hanley, M Jones and C Percy

Also present: T Wood (Parish Clerk), M Hadden (Village Handyman), L Bray (Volunteer Tree Warden), Colin Hall (Environment Agency) and 10 members of the public.

1. Welcome and Introduction

D Carney (Chair) Wylam Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Parish Council members to introduce themselves. The format of the meeting was explained, including a coffee break and a chance to complete a 'Shaping your Parish' form followed by an opportunity for questions..

a. Role of the Parish Council

D Carney gave an overview of the Role of the Parish Council. The Parish Council is made up of Councillors who are volunteers and two paid members of staff and is funded by Precept. The rules set out in Government legislation ensure that the Council takes no unacceptable risks with public money.

The aim of the Parish Council is to foster a vibrant and flourishing Wylam, and to improve the quality of life for people living in the Parish. The Council represents and lobbies on behalf of the local community with outside bodies such as Northumberland County Council and delivers services to meet local needs. There are currently 3 vacancies on the Council, interested residents can talk to existing members and get in touch with the Clerk who can supply application forms and information needed in relation to becoming a councillor.

Examples of the Council's work are:

- Management of Ovingham Cemetery
- Provision of allotments
- Litter bins
- A Local Nature Reserve
- Grants and donations to local charities and organisations
- Curating Wylam's green spaces and assets
- Funding for the provision of public toilets
- Litter Picks
- Working towards Wylam Net Zero

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- Promotion of Wylam's railway and engineering heritage
- Commenting on planning applications
- A Community Flood Plan and a Resilience Plan
- Hosting special events, such as the Coronation Picnic
- Lobbying outside organisations on behalf of Wylam.

b. **Outgoing Chair's Annual Report**

C Percy gave an overview of the Council's Annual Report 2022/23 including the financial statement. Thanks were noted to the outgoing Clerk, Marie Moore, for her work with the Parish Council. Averil Armstrong was welcomed as the newest Councillor and thanks were noted to Councillors who had left the Council, Stephen Duckworth, Brendan O'Kane and Lynne Wood. Thanks were also given to the Volunteer Tree Warden, Liz Bray and the County Councillor, Holly Waddell for their continued support.

D Carney thanked C Percy as outgoing Chair.

2. **A Community Flood Plan for Wylam**

Colin Hall, Flood Resilience Engagement Officer from the Environment Agency thanked the Council for the work on the Community Flood Plan for Wylam which is now in place. An overview of increased risk of flooding was given and the establishment of a Flood Plan for Wylam will ensure advance notice of flooding and measures can be put in place to increase safety and ensure that residents can cope better with the risk of flooding.

Residents joined the discussion noting that:

Better flood management would have a positive impact on the catchment of water entering the river. Volunteering was discussed and Colin Hall advised that a greater number of volunteers would improve communication; they are the Environment Agency's eyes and ears on the ground during a flood. There is no funding available for flood proofing of individual homes but personal flood plans can be arranged by contacting the Clerk. High risk homes can be added to the Resilience Plan, and these homes would become a priority for an early warning sent to volunteers to check flood defences.

Colin Hall and his team are continuing to work with the Parish Council on a Resilience Plan should this ever be needed. Thank you to residents who offered to be Volunteers at the meeting. Volunteers are a key element of the Flood Plan and full support and training are offered. If you are interested in becoming a Flood Volunteer please contact the Clerk.

An article will appear in the Summer Globe, followed by a meeting to launch the Community Flood Plan in the village.

3. **Introduction to a Neighbourhood Plan for Wylam**

D Carney gave an overview of the Neighbourhood Planning process which is a right for communities through the Localism Act 2011. The Parish Council has been looking at some form of Village Plan for some time, with the aim of informing the Parish Council's future policies and spending priorities, especially with regard to the prudent use of the money held from the sale of the former Post Office premises in Wylam. At the Parish Council meeting in April, members agreed to investigate the formal process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan, seeking advice and assistance from Northumberland County Council. Once a decision is agreed and ratified, the intention to produce a Plan will be publicised.

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Once adopted (or made) by the Planning Authority, it is a statutory document, a part of the Local Development Plan for Northumberland. It enables the community to take the lead in producing policies and a vision for the future of the Parish. Community Engagement is a key requirement of the process and information gathered from this engagement will give a clear picture of community priorities and enable the Council to formulate a vision statement and set priorities.

Following a formal designation of Wylam Parish as the Neighbourhood Plan Area, a Steering Group will be set up which will include members of the community and Parish Councillors. If you are interested in the process or have skills that you feel would be useful, get in touch with the Clerk for further information.

4. Shaping your Parish

During the coffee break residents were encouraged to record their thoughts on Shaping your Parish on the forms that were available at the meeting. Residents who were unable to attend the meeting in person can take part by completing a form, which are situated in the entrance porch of Wylam Institute. Findings from the forms will be collated and used to inform the Parish Council.

Following the break, Dr Stephen Westgarth gave an overview of the work of the Clean Tyne Group, including monitoring pollution in the river and the group's work on trying to achieve 'Bathing Status' for the river. The initial application was not successful but the group is likely to appeal. Volunteers are needed to help with river monitoring and sampling, please contact the Parish Clerk if you are able to assist.

5. Questions

The following issues were raised by those in attendance:

Why do we need a Neighbourhood Plan – to direct the future of the village and the plan will include statutory sections and community priorities. A survey will be sent to every home to gain views on village priorities. The plan is an inclusive consultative process to include all age groups.

Ongoing Safety on Waggonway – Issues raised around cyclists, motorbikes and electric scooters on the Waggonway. This is an ongoing issue since the tarmacking of the surface, and this will be raised and discussed with Northumberland County Council. The Clerk has regular meetings with Community Police and this issue has been raised and is monitored by the Community Police representative.

Summer Fair – first fair in three years will be held on 24 June, and volunteers are needed to assist in set-up. Interested residents should contact the Parish Clerk for further information.

Decision on Oaks adjacent to the western border of Wylam Allotments – the issue of the Oaks has been ongoing for a number of years. The Parish Council has taken opinions from residents, allotment holders, external contractors and Northumberland County Council. The Parish Council, at its meeting on 17th April ratified a decision to remove three oaks and crown-thin the remaining trees. Doing this now is prudent use of public money before the problem becomes more expensive to rectify. A resident informed the meeting that they are memorial trees and suggested making bird boxes from the trees that are felled for use in the village.

Riverside Footpath and landslip below Wylam Nurseries – A number of residents asked for an update on the Riverside Footpath and who is responsible for its repair. The Chair informed the meeting that the Parish Council is keenly aware of public interest and concern around this complex issue which the Parish Council takes very seriously. With reference to the landslip, the Parish Council has consistently followed and continues to follow the advice of its insurer. Residents thanked the Parish Council for the update.

Village Speeding – Residents raised the issue of speeding in the village, there was a debate about speed humps, chicanes and pedestrian crossings. The Parish Council reported that there are ongoing

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discussions with Northumberland County Council about road safety in Wylam, and speeding will be raised as an issue in the 2024/25 Local Transport Plan, to reflect the safety of all users, pedestrians, cyclists and traffic. Wylam Wood Road was also raised as an area of concern for speed and volume of traffic, this area would also be raised as an issue in the 2024/25 Local Transport Plan.

Wylam Bridge – Issues were raised over the conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on Wylam Bridge. Cyclists use the footpath due to the narrowness of the bridge carriageway even though there is a 'Cyclists Dismount' sign; how can this be improved? The Parish Council is working closely with Northumberland County Council and the Tyne Valley Bicycle Mayor on this issue.

Installation of electronic advertising screen on Main Road – a member of the public asked if planning permission had been granted for this installation. The Clerk would contact Northumberland County Council for feedback.

Grass Cutting – There were queries about why just the edges of grassed areas are being cut. The Parish Council is working on village zones for grass cutting, which may mean that in some areas grass cutting is more restricted.

Wylam Institute – The Parish Council were thanked for the annual grant and ongoing support of the Institute.

Invasive Plants – Invasive plants had been reported by residents. These had been reported to Northumberland County Council who will begin work to control this issue. The Parish Council thanked members of the public who routinely look out for this issue across the village.

D Carney thanked the members of the public for their attendance and input into the meeting.

6. Date of next meeting

Ordinary Meeting – 12th June 2023

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

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