

City of Durham Parish Council

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Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87287825236>

Meeting ID: 872 8782 5236

Dear Councillor,

In accordance with both the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of local authority and Police and Crime Panel meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, I hereby give you notice that a meeting of the **Environment Committee** will be held in **via Zoom** on **Tuesday 16 February 2021 at 2.30pm** to transact the following business:

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th JANUARY 2021

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

5. DISCUSSION WITH BELINDA SNOW AND STEPHEN MCCALLAN ON NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN SLA

6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

6a. To note:

- i) Installation of Mosaic art work;
- ii) Durham in Bloom: update on Clean and Green proposals and Wear Rivers Trust project.

6b. To complete:

- I) Proposal to fund a water dispenser in Durham City
- II) Young People's Challenge
- III) Progressing the blue plaques scheme

6c. To decide:

- i) Climate change commitment and plan – report attached
- ii) DCC response on the use of glyphosates – report attached
- iii) Consideration of Durham In Bloom priorities for 2021-22

- iv) Proposal to install wildlife signage at Riverwalk Centre – report attached
- v) Proposal to launch a “Pride in our Street” competition – report attached
- vi) Consideration of disability audit for Durham City – reports attached

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

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

And pursuant to the provisions of the above-named act, I Hereby Summon You to attend the said meeting.

Adam Shanley
Clerk City of Durham Parish Council

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 12th January 2021 at 17:30pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors V Ashfield (in the Chair), E Ashby, L Brown, J Elmer and M Ross.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr D Freeman

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Cllr V Ashfield declared an interest in discussions relating to the St Nicholas' Church Burial Ground on Providence Row and took no part in the discussions on this item.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24th NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2020 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

5a. To update and note:

iii) Installation of Mosaic art work;

The Clerk advised that work on the mosaic, as agreed at the Full Council meeting in December, was nearing completion. The Clerk advised that the Hospital had offered a wall in the Chapel for this to be located. Members felt that this wouldn't be an appropriate location and it was agreed that the Clerk should investigate an alternative location within the hospital for this mosaic to be located. A location which ensured that the greatest number of people were able to view the mosaic. A suggestion was made that the Parish Council investigate this going into the restaurant at the hospital.

iv) Neighbourhood Warden report

Members noted the report from the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Warden. It was **agreed** that the Neighbourhood Warden Manager and the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Warden should be invited to the February meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee, in order to discuss the SLA between DCC and the Parish Council going forward.

v) Young People’s Challenge.

It was noted that the schools will not have had the opportunity to meet in order to discuss proposals for the Single-Use plastics challenge. It was **agreed** therefore that the Committee should recommend a number of projects to the schools, if not already considered and progressed by the schools directly, and see which projects the schools may wish to deliver. The Clerk stated that he would need confirmation from each school on the project they’d like to deliver prior to any funding being made available. The Chair reported that, to date, 6 of the local schools had agreed to participate in the single-use plastics challenge.

vi) St Nicholas’ Church Burial Ground on Providence Row

The Clerk advised that he had received correspondence from the Church Warden to state that the church had applied to the Ministry of Justice to have the burial ground “closed”. The Clerk explained that “closed” in this context means that no further burials would be carried out at the burial ground as opposed to the grounds being physically shut off from members of the public. The Clerk advised that, as per Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, it would be for either the Parish Council or the County Council to take over responsibility for the maintenance of the burial ground. The Clerk advised that, as soon as the Parish Council is notified of the intent to close the grounds, it would have a total of 3 months only in which to decide whether or not to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the grounds. If decided against, the responsibility would fall on the County Council to maintain the grounds. It was **agreed** to await a further update on this matter.

vii) Durham in Bloom: Update on Clean and Green proposals and Wear Rivers Trust project.

The Chair reported that these projects are due to be delivered in Spring 2021. The Clerk advised that the funding for these projects had been ringfenced in the Parish Council’s budget for this.

viii) Update on proposed Environment Committee budget for 2021-22 following meeting of Parish Council’s Finance Committee on 11th January 2021

It was noted that the Committee’s budget request for the financial year 2021-22 had been agreed at the Parish Council’s Finance Committee meeting on 11th January 2021.

5b. To complete:

i). Proposal to fund a water dispenser in Durham City.

The Clerk advised that he was still pushing for a meeting with Northumbrian Water in order to discuss this proposal in further detail.

5c. To decide:

vii) Further actions to reduce anti-social behaviour;

The Clerk advised that he was still awaiting a response on this matter from the Community Protection Manager at DCC and he would be requesting a further meeting of the ASB sub-group in order to discuss ongoing ASB matters. The Committee agreed that Covid-19 would probably take priority over ASB in the present climate.

viii) Heritage project – Seven Hills Trail and Battle of Neville’s Cross

The Clerk advised that there is currently one outstanding matter on the Seven Hills Trail project; namely permission from Durham University to promote the use of their land as part of the Trail. Specifically the areas of land in question were the land at Old Elvet, Whinney Hill and the Racecourse and the land on the west side of South Road. The Clerk advised that he was awaiting a response to his enquiry from the Director of Estates at Durham University as to whether this land can be used as part of the Trail.

The Clerk also advised that there had been a meeting of DCC Officers and representatives of the Parish Council on a proposed use of Section 106 funding in order to carry out a project to improve the heritage information and the Cross as part of the Battle of Neville’s Cross. It was noted that October 2021 would mark the 675th Anniversary of the Battle and it was **agreed** that the Parish Council should work in collaboration with the County Council in order to progress this. It was also suggested that the Parish Council should organise a commemorative walk as part of the 675th Anniversary. The Clerk advised that a report would be going to Full Council on this matter.

ix) Blue plaques scheme

The Clerk reminded Members that the proposal of the Parish Council launching its own blue plaque scheme was considered at a recent Full Parish Council meeting and the Environment Committee had agreed to take this forward as a heritage project.

This scheme is based loosely 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. The Clerk advised that launching such a scheme would be an encouragement for residents to celebrate their heritage and an opportunity to engender Civic Pride. If the scheme is successful, it could form part of a heritage trail in the City which could attract more visitors. There are a number of plaques already in existence in the City; delivered by the former City Council, the City of Durham Trust and the Durham Rotary group.

The Clerk advised that he had investigated this through other Parish and Town Councils who have delivered such a scheme and presented a proposal including costs and criteria for the scheme to the Committee. It was **agreed** that this should go forward as a Parish Council project for consideration at the January Full Council meeting.

6. AOB

Cllr L Brown advised that she had been contacted by a local resident about the issue of grit during icy weather. Cllr L Brown agreed to discuss this with the

relevant officer at DCC to see what could be done to assist the lady with this issue.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

16th February - 2.30pm

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

ITEM 6B: CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITMENT AND PLAN

City of Durham Parish Council Environment Commitment Climate impact and our influence

The City of Durham Parish Council is committed to combatting the global climate emergency by encouraging a healthy natural environment, improving air quality, promoting zero carbon developments, managing land for nature and reducing waste, so promoting the health and wellbeing of our residents and reduced impact on the global climate.

This means we will underpin all our activities with the principle of sustainable development, embodied within the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We recognize our role in helping to deliver these goals. We therefore wish to adopt the following Sustainability Principles, which will underpin all our work.

Sustainability Principles at Full Council

- **Encourage the County Council to take a wider view of the local governance by:**
- revising the Climate Emergency targets in line with other councils –ie to be carbon neutral by 2030, including disinvestments from carbon fuel funds and from airport expansion and seeking for economic stability rather than economic growth;
- supporting the proposed Durham Climate Change Alliance to have greater responsibility as a high-level decision maker.
- a reduction of road building and support for low carbon transport infrastructure including improving communal transport;
- regeneration across the county not just focused on the city;
- new homes (and retro-fitting of existing) to be zero-carbon, fitted with renewable energy, nature friendly, and located close to public transport and amenities;
- all new taxi licences in the County to be restricted to electric vehicles;
- designated places for trees, creation of renewable energy, nature restoration and safe walking and cycle routes.

Sustainability Principles through Committees

Planning

Actively support planning applications for new renewable energy in the area.

- Place conditions on all new planning applications: require every decision to be well informed on its climate impact and demand that the planning authority provides you with the appropriate information;
- Influence decisions on infrastructure and transport projects made by local authorities;
- Encourage increase in the amount of renewable energy generated locally & encourage use of electronic display showing how much energy has been generated and how much money and CO2 emissions saved;

- Request street lighting which uses well-directed LED lighting;
- Encourage car-sharing schemes for commuting and non-commuting journeys.
- Press for differential car-parking charges for fully electric, hybrid and high carbon vehicles and provide dedicated spaces with electric charging points;
- ban the use of idling carbon-using vehicles (e.g., ice cream vans and promotion vehicles) in the Market Place, Millennium Place and other central urban spaces in the County.

Finance

Ensure money is invested wisely.

- ensure any council funds are invested safely in low-risk sustainable banks or investment funds.
-

Business

Provide a local guide that provides information on accredited local businesses including:

- renewable energy installers for solar panels, batteries, EV charging points and heat pumps;
- eco-friendly retailers, green builders and landscape companies;

Buy green and support bulk purchases

- reward businesses committed to a green future;
- encourage green electricity, help develop new renewable energy (eg Ecotricity, Good Energy and Octopus);
- buy green including any food provided at events, (mainly plant-based food and less but better meat and dairy);
- support local costs of installing solar PV & other renewable technologies such as heat pumps;
- bring together local homeowners and businesses to support lower costs if done in bulk, street by street, or area by area.
- Reduce / eliminate plastic use.

Environment

Encourage the formation of Climate Action groups in schools

- provide resources, training and advice to climate action groups;
- help them come together to demand national action;

Manage land for nature.

- allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, commons and open spaces and village greens can be managed to enhance nature, particularly through changing mowing regimes.
- Encourage support for "Buglife's B-lines project" aiming to support the development of a network of wildlife friendly corridors;
- help people green the streets where they live.
- reduce pesticide (eg glyphosate weed killer) use and other harmful activities including using signage on council-owned land where you use peat-free compost.

Increase tree cover.

- Campaign to replace all trees that are lost and to double the city's tree cover. (The Forestry Commission's aim is for at least 20% tree cover) including encouraging and supporting landowners to take part in tree planting.

Use green transport.

- Encourage employees and councillors to walk, cycle or use public transport or car-share;
- Encourage the county council to provide bikes or electric bikes for staff for any work-related trips including zero-interest loans for buying bikes;
- Refund travel costs only for electric vehicles.

Recycle fully and minimise waste going to landfill or incineration.

- ensure all waste is recycled or composted;
- set-up community recycling facilities for hard-to-recycle items;
- set up a community composting scheme;
- eliminate plastic use;
- Minimization of waste by reuse (eg, reusable cups) & avoiding unnecessary purchases.
- Quick wins
 - add "plastics only" bins in urban areas to make recycling easier for the public and have occasional monitoring of the use, to remind the public how to use them;
 - encourage children (through school programmes) to "monitor and encourage" adults to respect the recycling policies;
 - provide a major advertising programme to encourage students, especially those unused to recycling, to respect our norms.

Environment Committee Work Programme 2020 - 2022

Programme 5: Combating the Climate Emergency

Outcome: Reduction of climate warming; improving health and wellbeing

5.	Programmes	Intended Outcomes	Activities	Partners	Budget
a)	Encourage a green infrastructure; Manage land for nature.	Enhanced biodiversity; Improved appearance of green areas; Reduction of use of fossil fuels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant trees • Plant bulbs • Seek green investment opportunities e.g. charging points; • Encourage retrofitting buildings with sustainable investment. 	DCC All residents	2000
b)	Investigate and encourage energy research,	Increased sustainable investment within the parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Durham Energy Institute 	University	
c)	Encourage electric vehicles	Reduced carbon emissions; Improved air quality Improved health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Market's use of electric bikes; • Meet bus companies; • Meet with DCC • Promotion 	DCC, Bus companies	1000
d)	Reduce plastic use	Reduced littering, waste and recycling of plastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with YP at YPEC • Work with Market and Northumbrian water to provide water points in city 	Market manager; Residents; YPEC	1000
e)	Explore and encourage sustainable food sources	Reduced food miles; Improved access to fresh food Reduced food inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate availability locally in collaboration with partners 	Health food shops and providers; University; Allotment holders	1000
f)	Reduce water consumption	Reduced impact on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage low-water gardening and use in allotments 	Allotment Societies	2000 (grant to allotments)

ITEM 6C: DCC RESPONSE ON THE USE OF GLYPHOSATES

The Vice-Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee has recently raised the issue of the use of glyphosates with Durham County Council. In particular, concern has been expressed regarding the use of glyphosates and the impact this has on the urban rewilding and biodiversity of public spaces in County Durham.

Glyphosate is the now the most widely used chemical herbicide in the world with usage increasing more than 20-fold since 1990. This has created huge levels of dependency on the product both for farming and amenity uses, for example Round-up and Weedol are available over the counter and contain the active compound. It is noted that stopping the use of glyphosate is by no means easy but numerous Council's across England are piloting and transferring their practices to the range of alternatives that exist.

The following response has been received on this matter from Durham County Council:

Glyphosate is shown as the most cost-effective method of controlling weeds and vegetation. Whilst the Council has numerous areas, that are more natural where no herbicide is used, if left unchecked in an urban area the pathways and paving can quickly become unsightly and hazardous.

The Council does continue to monitor and review Government advice regarding the application of herbicide, including for example that of the Health and Safety Executive.

As you will note from their website The UK has a rigorous approvals process for pesticides. The main aim of the process is to protect the health of people, creatures and plants and to safeguard the environment. All companies wishing to obtain approval for their pesticides are required to submit substantial data dossiers to support their applications. The extensive range of studies undertaken on pesticides is aimed at establishing acceptable safety for people, animals and the wider environment. This process has been applied to glyphosate which has been approved as safe and efficacious for a number of years now. The Government feels that the regulatory process for authorising plant protection products (PPP) is a robust system. The authorisation process takes into account all scientific knowledge available.

As you will be aware the current EU expiry date on the licence is 15 December 2022, and there are UK Government plans that following the expiry of the Brexit transition period that it is extended until 15th December 2025. This three-year extension on the EU licence is being provided to allow time for the development of the new GB active substance renewal programme, although HSE will still retain the power to review active substance approvals at any time, should new evidence identify any concerns to human health or the environment.

Notwithstanding the above, we do recognise the public concerns, including from yourself regarding the use of glyphosate. Over the last two years the Council has created wildlife habitats on over 6ha of publicly

accessible open space which was previously intensively managed amenity grassland. The program is on-going and we have a portfolio of sites on which we will be delivering wildlife habitat improvements over the coming years. Furthermore we recognise that on some occasions, more than necessary pesticide has been applied, and we have been reminding our operatives to target the delivery. Finally I am pleased to confirm that we are also reviewing the use of pesticides in our cemeteries, around headstones and kerbside surrounds, in recognition of the sensitivity of these sites. I do not want to suggest however that alternatives are easy – the main option (other than allowing grass to grow) is to strim around these areas, not only more labour intensive, but posing their own risk to stone damage.

I do hope that the above account helps to assure you that we do regularly monitor Government guidance, and notwithstanding this have begun steps to consider the potential for alternatives in our cemeteries.

Members are asked to consider what follow up action they wish to take in light of this response.

ITEM 6C: PROPOSAL TO INSTALL WILDLIFE SIGNAGE AT RIVERWALK CENTRE

Proposals

I have heard from a number of residents recently that there is increasing concern about the mess on the riverbanks and one local resident in particular has asked the Parish Council to consider a positive counter-proposal about signage.

Immediate action

1. Signage

Approach the management of Riverwalk to ask if the Riverwalk Centre would provide spaces for signboards overlooking the river to raise awareness of what people might usually miss, for example the more common varieties of animals and birds seen here, e.g. otters and salmon, heron, common tern, dipper, sand martins, goosanders, cormorants, swans, mallards and geese. They could perhaps also provide a small amount of information about them. We could ask Riverwalk if they would also like to sponsor the boards but otherwise the Parish Council could provide the boards. Perhaps approach DCC for ecology help /information / advice.

Decision

Agree the proposals above, investigate collaboration of Riverwalk and of necessary budget.

Report by Cllr V Ashfield.

ITEM 6C: PROPOSAL TO LAUNCH A "PRIDE IN OUR STREET" COMPETITION

Resulting from the walkabout meeting held in collaboration with local residents, Neighbourhood Wardens and DCC refuse workers in November, the idea arose of having a challenge in some of the heavily studentified areas (e.g. the Viaduct, Whinney Hill, Elvet Crescent, etc.) to encourage students to improve their immediate environment, e.g. tidying away bins and improving gardens.

We could offer a prize to the best kept street in the nominated areas (possibly a street picnic provided by a local caterer, funded by the PC, or a voucher for a co-operative (and sponsoring) restaurant).

In addition to this, it is also proposed that the Parish Council organises a community litter pick at various spots around the City. Co-ordinate residents' groups / school children / students, perhaps on the same day working at different points where litter is most often reported. This will clearly depend on the Covid-19 regulations at the time.

Decisions required:

1. Take the idea forward and investigate collaboration of University / local businesses / Neighbourhood Wardens / Refuse Department and cost the "Pride in our Streets" project.
2. Agree to contact Residents' Groups to ask for suggestions for areas to focus on for a community litter pick. Plan for a date as soon as lockdown may be released.

Report by Cllr V Ashfield