

PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024



SUMMARY AND THANKS

It has been another very busy year for Longhoughton Parish Council (LPC). This report illustrates the range of activities and projects that Councillors are developing and implementing to meet the needs of residents and deal with changes in the economy and environment. Ten LPC meetings were held during the year.

It is very appropriate to thank the whole Council for their dedication and commitment in serving the community and giving their time as volunteers. Thanks are also due to Elizabeth Taylor the Clerk to the Council, Councillor Wendy Pattison and Laura Rowberry the representative of the RAF. It is also appropriate to thank all the people in the community who give their time in helping to run community groups, those who deliver newsletters and others who give their time supporting the community in various ways. Our community would be impoverished without all these people.

COUNCILLORS AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES

Parish Councillors – The following Parish Councillors held office during the year:

Adrian Hinchcliffe (Chair), Peter Bromley (Vice Chair), Jacqueline Barras, Caroline Bradshaw to 21.04.23, Bryan Ellis, Carole Green, Hannah Horsley, Peter McEwen, Chris Thomas, Jules Tilley from 18.09.23 . Parish Councillors are not paid for the time they give. Clerk to the Parish Council, Mrs Elizabeth Taylor. County Councillor, Wendy Pattison. RAF Representative, Laura Rowberry.

WHAT RESIDENTS PAID FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL SERVICES

£38.06 for the year for each household at the Band D level.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS

Ways of communicating with residents were continued including the use of Facebook. The popular six page Community Newsletter was issued every two months. Noticeboards are maintained at Howick, Boulmer and in Longhoughton outside the Co-op and the Running Fox. The Parish Council has two websites:

General information: www.northumberlandparishes.uk/longhoughton

Neighbourhood Plan: www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk

ROUTINE BUSINESS

Throughout the year LPC conducted the following routine business:

- Considering and commenting on planning applications (18 in the year)
- Dealing with various incoming consultations and correspondence
- Dealing with queries, complaints and requests from residents
- Arranging services and paying invoices
- Financial grants to community organisations of £4,674 were awarded
- Requests for services supplied by the County Council and other agencies
- Liaison with Northumberland County Council

KEY PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN DURING THE YEAR

Howick Burn Pedestrian Bridge. After several years of planning the new footbridge over the Howick Burn was finished in March 2024 along with changes to the permissive footpath approaching the bridge. Problems encountered were the devastating tree damage caused by Storm Arwen and the restriction of avoiding the bird nesting season. This is a considerable achievement and will enable a circular walk from Longhoughton which many residents are benefitting from. The cost of the bridge and associated works was over £25,000 paid for by a grant from Farming and Protected Landscapes Fund.

King Charles III Coronation . This was a joint event between the RAF Boulmer, the Parish Council and the Community and Sports Centre attracting over 750 people. It will be followed on the 7 July 2024 with a Summer Fete.

Liaison Arrangements with Longhoughton Quarries. Quarterly liaison meetings with Longhoughton Quarry commenced in April 2023 and have been very useful in discussing the issues such as vibration from blasting and mud on the road from vehicles emerging from the quarry. A more detailed report is included overleaf.

Liaison arrangements with Northumbria Police. These were set up partly to deal with an outbreak of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. This led to a review of facilities in the Parish for young people and to more frequent patrols by the police.

Liaison Arrangements with RAF Boulmer. Regular meeting have taken place with the Base Commander and are very useful following the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant in 2022.

Medical Facilities in Longhoughton. The Surgery was formally closed in 2023 with the promise to pursue ways in which facilities could be brought to Longhoughton. AMG proposed the discontinuation of the free delivery of repeat prescriptions and following discussions these are now available from the Longhoughton Community Centre twice each week.

Health and Wellbeing. A programme of Health and Wellbeing talks were sponsored by the Parish Council along with the *Thursday Together* luncheons and talks.

Lacey Street Vehicle Congestion. The popularity of the Running Fox has resulted in vehicle congestion in the Lacey Street area including North End. A public meeting was held in March 2024 and an action plan agreed aimed at reducing the congestion.

Neighbourhood Plan. A major public consultation was held in October to November of 2023. A good response was received and the drop-in sessions were well attended. Overall residents gave approval to the proposed plan. Some issues were raised by minorities and Statutory Consultees and these are being further developed to gain further support for the Plan.

SpeedWatch. A team of volunteers have been approved and trained by Northumbrian Police to operate a SpeedWatch team within Longhoughton. They will operate within the 30 and 20mph zones and taking the speed of vehicles and reporting those who are speeding. The objective of the team is to make Longhoughton's roads safer for all users.

Longhoughton Traffic Review. This longstanding review to reduce speed in the Parish and make things safer for children and adults has been awaiting the completion of the AONB Design Guide. Due to there being no funding available to support the proposals contained in the Design Guide the Parish Council is considering a scheme based upon variable speed machines.

Boulmer Vehicle Parking. The existing beach car park has been re-surfaced due to help received from the MGL Group. The County Council have agreed to take over responsibility for the existing Beach Car Park. This was promised to take place by Easter 2024 but has not happened yet. The County Council are to put in a planning application for a proposed car park next to Boulmer Memorial Hall. The Parish Council will contribute to the case for the car park.

Young People's Services. The Parish Council and the RAF Beacon Centre have proposed a Strategy Group to consider young people's facilities in the Parish.

Climate Change. The Community and Sports Centre is leading the way on a scheme towards self-sufficiency and a reduction in energy costs. The Parish Council is trying to resurrect the Climate Change Group.

Northumberland Coast National Landscape Visitor and Parking Strategy. A key report was received and supported in principle.

Recognising Volunteers. Following nominations and voting by residents seven individuals and six teams were recognised as giving exceptional service to the community.

Quiet Lane Status for Crowlea Road to Longhoughton Beach. A case for this was made to the County Council.

Local Transport Plan Requests. For 2024/25 were made to support our road traffic review, a car park on the old Recreation Field and improvements to Boulmer Road pavement.

OTHER ISSUES AND PROJECTS DEALT WITH DURING THE YEAR

Four Year Project Plan. We are now almost three years into this programme of projects. Progress is given against each project so that all Councillors can see the up to date position. The listing is published on the LPC website.

Longhoughton Dunes and Low Steads Farm. In January 2024 Howick Trustees introduced a scheme of charging for parking on the Longhoughton dunes using number plate recognition technology. The charging structure offers a daily charge or a season ticket. A new website <https://longhoughtonbeach.co.uk> describes the scheme which operates on a not-for-profit basis. The Parish Council promoted the need for a full consultation.

Overgrown trees owned by the MOD. This was on East Field and East Moor.

Overgrown trees Boulmer Road. The County Council took action.

Greenways. Discussions have been held with the Northumberland Coast National Landscape Team for the possibility of funding once it was known that the Coastlands Project had failed. These discussions were for the development of greenways linking Longhoughton, Lesbury and Alnwick. The initial bid failed but there is a prospect for the future funding rounds.

The bad state of Boulmer Road pavement. Drawn to the attention of the County Council.

Working with the Northumberland Coast National Landscape Team (NCNLT). The Parish Council has been represented on the Partnership and has reported various initiatives which are underway or proposed.

Chancel Place Tree Screening. This has been an ongoing issue due to the failure of Story Homes to implement a tree planting scheme that would give privacy to relatives and friends who were visiting the graves of loved ones. Planting took place in February 2024 but was considered to be inadequate. Further complaints have been made.

Grass cutting. Following a query by residents the Parish Council has requested that the County Council undertake three additional grass cuts each year at a total cost of £798.

Other Issues and Projects: Numerous other projects and initiatives were taken during the year. Some are listed here – objecting to bank closures in Alnwick; no entry into Burnside from North End; Boulmer Meadow; ageing well scheme; assistance to community organisations; Council tax and second homes; Boundary Commission changes; the planning of sixty free trees at the Community Centre; derogatory comments on social media; sunflower lanyard; support for the Aln Valley Greenway project; digital phone changeover; glass doorstep collection.

LONGHOUGHTON PARISH QUARRIES LIAISON GROUP: Report on the first Year

Purpose. This Group was set up as a sub-group of the Parish Council in April 2023 with the objective of providing a liaison meeting with Longhoughton and Littlehoughton Quarries to raise any issues concerned with operations. At about this time Littlehoughton Quarry closed down so the Liaison Group has dealt only with Longhoughton Quarry.

Membership. Membership was set to include members of the Parish Council and four residents. The positions were advertised and four residents applied and were appointed. Membership is as follows:

Representing the Parish Council: Adrian Hinchcliffe (Chair of the Liaison Group) & Peter Bromley.

Northumberland County Council: Councillor Wendy Pattison.

Residents: Robert Nicholson (Vice Chair of the Liaison Group); David Cant; Romaine Barclay-Kim; Louise Dawson.

RAF Boulmer: Laura Rowberry.

Attending the meetings are: Jamie Drysdale, Longhoughton Quarry manager.

David Love or Kevin Tipple, Senior Planning Officers, Northumberland County Council.

Invitations to the meetings are also been issued to Northumberland Estates and Howick Trustees.

Meetings. Four meetings of the Group have been held on 16.06.23, 22.09.23, 25.01.24 and 17.04.24.

Planning Regulations. The regulations for the operation of the quarry were established when the Planning application was approved in 2019. These set out in detail all regulations concerning all aspects of operating the quarry from blasting, public protection, vehicle journeys and the areas for extraction. Northumberland County Council is the monitoring Authority for carrying out checks and reporting that the quarry is complying with the planning conditions.

Monitoring Visits. During the year the County Council carried out four monitoring visits to the quarry.

Presentation of the Monitoring Reports. At each meeting of the Liaison Group a County Council Senior Planning Officer has verbally presented the monitoring report and at the meeting on 17.04.24 a full report for the year was given. This included the following points:

- Overall there are no substantive issues with the operation of the quarry within the stipulated planning conditions
- A new wheel-wash has been installed and went into use in late March 2024
- Vehicle movements were within the limits set by the planning conditions
- The plant in the eastern quarry was working satisfactorily
- Noise from the quarry was within the limits set in the planning conditions

Vibration from blasting had been monitored at Elworthy Road, Longhoughton for all blasts and had been well within the range specified in the planning regulations. Vibration monitoring had also taken place at other locations eg. Chancel Place.

- Blasting had taken place no greater than the stipulated once each week
- The requirements for the restoration of the western quarry had not progressed in accordance with the planning conditions. (See Restoration of the western quarry and a proposed extension to the eastern quarry below.)

Operational Issues.

Mud on the road. Numerous complaints were received about mud on the road from Longhoughton to Denwick which was being brought out of the quarry on the wheels of vehicles. After a long search for the right product a new wheel-wash was installed in March 2024.

Safety procedure for blasting. The safety procedure for blasting was outlined for the group to be sure that it is safe for anyone passing the quarry at the time of blasting. The procedure involves the raising of red flags, sounding of a siren and sentries who are placed in strategic places around the periphery of the site. All the sentries are in contact with the quarry manager by radio to confirm that there are no people or animals within the area. Only when the area is completely clear will the signal be given for the blast to take place.

Vibration from Blasting.

This is an issue that concerns many residents. The Group has requested a great deal of information about how the blasting is organised, controlled and monitored. A guide to monitoring was produced by an independent company, Vibrock Limited, and this was approved as part of the Planning Approvals and the operations have to be strictly in accordance with the approved scheme. The guide sets out how blast monitoring shall be done, the maximum vibrations levels, how they are calculated and where they should be monitored and adjustments for air pressure. This applies to every time that blasting takes place. The vibration levels set are based upon national standards set by Government. The guide stipulates that every blast should be monitoring at the closest vibration sensitive property to the blast which is listed as Tedder Place. In practice the property 33 Elworthy Road has been identified as the closest location. The vibration has to be measured by an approved

seismograph or equivalent that complies with BS ISO 4866:2010. Blast monitoring is undertaken by an independent company, R J Blasting.

The stipulation for the vibration from the blast is as follows: Ground vibration as a result of blasting operations shall not exceed a peak particle velocity of 6mm/s in 95% of blasts over any 12 month period and shall be recorded and made available within 7 days upon request by the Mineral Planning Authority. No individual blast from the date of this permission shall exceed a peak particle velocity of 12 mm/s as measured at all predicted vibration receptors. The measurement to be the maximum of three mutually perpendicular (long, vertical and transverse) directions taken at the ground surface.

The County Council (the monitoring authority) has supplied the blasting results for all twelve Whinstone blasts that have taken place at the quarry from 01.04.23 to 11.04.24. The following table shows the high, low and the average readings. The percentage of the maximum allowable vibration of 6mm/s is shown for each of the longitude, vertical and transverse readings.

Vibrations from Blasting for blasts during the Period 01.04.23 to 11.04.24						
Levels recorded for the 12 blasts	Longitude	% of the maximum allowed	Vertical	% of the maximum allowed	Transverse	% of the maximum allowed
Lowest recorded	0.300	5%	0.275	4%	0.175	2%
Average	1.510	25%	0.700	11%	0.680	11%
Highest recorded	3.125	52%	1.475	24%	1.200	20%
Vibrations from blasting recorded on 27 th March 2023						
Blasting on 27.03.23	2.286	38%	2.267	37%	4.572	76%

The table above shows that all the vibrations from the twelve whinstone blasts during the period 01.04.23 to 11.04.24 were well within the permitted range. The figures in red show the percentages of the maximum allowed. The bottom entry in the table is for the blast that took place on 27.03.23 which was noticeably higher and caused many complaints but even that was within the range. The quarry manager has said that this blast was a one-off and will not be repeated.

Investigation into blasting to determine if it constitutes a nuisance

At the request of the County Council Planning Department, the Public Protection Service of the County Council had been asked to investigate the vibration from blasting at Longhoughton Quarry to establish whether there is a case for it to be classified as a nuisance under the appropriate Act. Two whinstone blasts were observed. The Protection Service reported that the blasts are within the limits specified in the Planning Permission and are of limited duration, low frequency and severity and therefore would not be actionable under 'nuisance'. In view of these findings the case will be closed as the County Council are unable to take any formal action.

Restoration of the western quarry and a proposed extension to the eastern quarry

Wardell Armstrong, working on behalf of Northumberland Estates and Tynedale Roadstone, have submitted a request for a screening opinion under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations to the County Council relating to the restoration of the western quarry. There is also a proposal for a lateral extension to the east quarry. NCC has issued the screening opinion which concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. Until a full planning application is submitted it is not possible to accurately consider what is proposed.

Communications

To prevent rumours communications are important about things like blasting and other operational issues that affect residents. The emailing provision for residents to be informed when blasting is to take place is a useful facility.



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