



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee at 10am on Saturday 1st March 2025, held online.

Online: Cllrs: Alex Wallace, John Potts, David Francis, David Nicholson. Paul Vaughan, Liz Dunn, Violet Rook, David Hughes David Woodard, Sylvia Hillan, Colin Wakeling, Alan Sambrook, Louis Brown.

Also Present

Mr Graeme Popay – Chief Officer [Actions marked as GP] Rob Murfin NCC Director of Housing and Planning (Chief Planning Officer) Place and Regeneration

1: Welcome.

Cllr John Potts welcomed everyone and a special welcome to Rob Murfin.

2: Apologies for Absence.

Monica Anderton, Cllrs: Karen Overbury, Chris Cuthbert, Gwen Woodman, Adam Hogg,

3: Rob Murfin NCC Director of Housing and Planning (Chief Planning Officer) Place and Regeneration .

Rob spoke on the new Planning and Infrastructure Bill which has introduced a number of changes to legislation aiming to reform the planning system to increase housing and infrastructure delivery, modernise local planning authorities, speed up decision making and the planning process. The bill is an important part of the Labour governments strategy to reach its goal of building 1.5 million new homes, accelerating decision making, and unlocking land for development.

Headlining topics in the new Bill include:

Planning Fees – LPAs will be able to set their own planning fees, the goal being to help plug the funding and capacity shortfall that many LPAs have experienced.

Composition of Committees – the Bill sets out controls over the size and composition of planning committees with the aim of ensuring “good debate is encouraged with large and unwieldy committees banned”.

Strategic Planning Authorities (SPA) – the Bill introduces SPAs, these will be either strategic planning boards, combined authorities, combined county authorities, upper-tier county councils or a unitary authority

Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) – SPAs will be responsible for preparing SDS which set out policies in respect of development and the use of land in an area of strategic importance.

Environmental Delivery Plans (EDP) – Natural England will be responsible for preparing EDPs which set out: environmental features likely to be negatively affected by development; conservation measures to be actioned by or on behalf of Natural England; the amount of



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nature restoration levy payable; and environmental obligations that are discharged, disapplied or modified by developers paying the levy.

Nature Restoration Levy (NRL) – Before development is commenced, where an EDP applies, developers must make a request to Natural England to pay the NRL, and once accepted, they are then committed to paying it. NRL regulations must require Natural England to spend funds on conservation measures for which the levy has been charged.

Compulsory Purchase Reform - Reforms to the compulsory purchase regime are intended to speed up the acquisition of land needed for housing and infrastructure.

Electricity Bill Discounts - The Bill introduces benefits for homes near electricity transmission projects. This includes people living within close proximity of new pylons receiving money off their electricity bills.

Rob was keen to point out that whilst this may be a change in direction for some local authorities, the Northumberland Local Plan, alongside many neighbourhood plans is well ahead with its building targets as Northumberland has over 10,000 houses with planning permission that have not started to be built yet.

Rob took questions from members including the topics of second homes and the poor enforcement on building sites.

Cllr John Potts thanked Rob for his very informative presentation.

4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th January 2025

All agreed to accept the minute as a true record – Cllr David Hughes asked for his name to be added to the list of apologies.

5: Matters arising

- Election Costs – The CO & Cllr David Francis had met with the elections team and were satisfied that NCC had taken steps to minimise “passed on costs” to Parish & Town Councils.
- Elections Training – this was planned for Monday 3rd March at 6:00pm. The meeting would be led by the Elections team. It would be recorded and available to view on NCC website on the elections page.
- Constitution – a review was due in the autumn. The CO asked members to email him if they would like to be part of a working group.
- Constitution of the County – the document had been reviewed by Officers. It was tabled for discussion. The revised document would stand to be adopted at the 2025 AGM
- NCC Training – The CO had circulated a link to members – it was agreed that the link would be circulated to all Councils after the elections.

6: Finance

The Financial report was tabled showing the current position. All agreed to accept the report.



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7: National Issues

Cllr David Francis gave a verbal report on recent national issues including:

- New Government Devolution White Paper – increased emphasis on Mayors and Mayoral Authorities.. – some parts of the Country are facing a rapid change. Read more here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>
- NALC would shortly be publishing online and free to download the Local Councils Explained book on their members website.
- Cllr Francis encouraged members to look at the recent Star Council Awards winners published on the National Website and consider nominating their Council/Clerk in 2025

8: 2025 County meetings.

The format and dates of the 2025 County meetings were discussed – ***NOTE changes to previously circulated dates***

- Saturday 12th April – County Hall & Hybrid
- Saturday 7th June – County Hall & Hybrid
- Saturday 19th July - County Hall & Hybrid – *Note changed from 12th due to CO diary clash*)
- Saturday 20th September – AGM Venue to be agreed – it was suggested that we invite the New Lord Lieutenant to be our guest speaker (*Note/Update – unfortunately the Lord Lieutenant is not available on that date*)
- Saturday 1st November - Online only.

9: Any Other Urgent Business

National Honours – the CO had met with Caroline Prior the New Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland to discuss how NALC could help promote the National Honours system and see a better representation of awards in the County. In the recent New Years Honours list only 6% of national Honours were from the North of England, Caroline was keen to reverse that trend.

The CO asked members to take this discussion back to their parishes and promote the Honours system locally.

Please contact the CO if you have a topic for discussion.

10: Next Meeting of the Committee – Saturday 12th April County Hall & Hybrid

Meeting Closed at 12.10