



**Northumberland Association
Of Local Councils**

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

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Northumberland Association of Local Councils

2024-2025

PRESIDENT

Mr David Woodard

Vice Presidents

Cllr David Francis

Cllr Alex Wallace

Cllr Mike Wood

Hon Treasurer

David Nicholson

Hon Auditor

Mr Peter Basnett

County Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Mrs M Anderton – East Tynedale Forum | Mr D Nicholson – (Vice Chair) |
| Cllr P Claridge – Widdrington | Cllr K Overbury - Ponteland & Rural West (South) |
| Cllr G Curry – Hexham & Hexhamshire | Cllr S Phelps – Dinnington |
| Cllr C Cuthbert – Prudhoe | Cllr J Potts (Chair) – Blyth (s) |
| Cllr C Palmer – Amble | Cllr V Rook – Blakelaw & North Fenham |
| VACANT - Bellingham | Cllr A Sambrook – Morpeth |
| Cllr L Dunn – Ellington | Cllr A Taylor – Rural West (North) |
| Cllr G Eastwood – Seaton Valley (s) | Cllr S Taylor – Rothbury & Coquetdale |
| Cllr D Francis – (Vice Chair) Alnwick | Cllr J Tulley – Ashington (s) |
| Cllr K Grimes – East Bedlington (s) | Cllr P Vaughan – Choppington (s) |
| Cllr M Greener - Berwick | Cllr C Wakeling – Norham & Islandshire. |
| Cllr D Henderson - Allendale | Cllr D Wilson - Ulgham |
| Cllr S Hillan – Seahouses & Belford | Cllr M Wood (Vice Chair) – Greenhead |
| Cllr A Hogg – West Bedlington (s) | Cllr G Woodman – Newbiggin (s) |
| Cllr D Hughes - Glendale | VACANY – Mid Tyne |

Single Council membership (s)

Chief Officer Graeme Popay

Membership shown as at 31st March 2025

What we offer

We are an association of parish, town and community councils (often called “local councils”), which draws membership from Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. Our over-riding aim is to develop and support active and effective local councils. This requires local councils to be aware of local needs and concerns, and to find a way of addressing them, whether by taking direct action themselves or by encouraging others to take the lead. Local councils have unlimited powers to raise money by precepting on the Council Tax, and this is an opportunity which can be used enthusiastically but prudently to support local initiatives and services.

To support local councils, we provide or arrange:

- A regular distribution of topical information via our ENewsAdvice to clerks and councillors, on a wide range of topics: legal, managerial, financial, etc.
- Training: mostly short events, but also support for the CiLCA qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration)
- Accreditation of applicants for the national Local Council Award scheme
- Initial processing of applications for loan consent from the DLUHC
- Access to new opportunities, ranging from insurance policies, equipment schemes, IT solutions
- Advice to community groups on forming new councils
- Assisting in arranging representation on bodies such as the Standards Committees, and the Northumberland National Park Authority.

In addition to providing this direct help, we also undertake policy and partnership work, on behalf of the local councils’ sector. This involves monitoring changes, policies and proposals which may impact on local councils, and working to influence the decisions which are made by local government, agencies, and public utility providers. It also means working with other bodies to develop opportunities which can benefit local councils and their communities.

We are willing to assist the formation of new local councils in Newcastle and North Tyneside if local communities so wish.

Although we are an independent body, we also form part of the National Association of Local Councils, from whom we draw specialist support on legal, good-practice and policy topics, and to whom we pay an annual financial levy.

Chairman's Foreword

On behalf of our County Committee, I am pleased to present this annual report to our network of town and parish councils throughout Northumberland and Newcastle. It has been a pleasingly busy year, where we have continued to provide our array of supportive services to local councils, on a wide variety of topics. Our 'new' Chief Officer, Graeme Popay, is now well settled into his role, and is providing expert advice, information, training and other support, as well as maintaining and cultivating working-relationships with our partners in the wider world, both within and beyond local government.

During the year, the general election brought a new Government, together with new opportunities and new promises to address some of the issues which have been lingering and nagging for several years. The 'English Devolution White paper', published in December, holds open the prospect of a return from Whitehall to our region and our new mayoral authority of a variety of regeneration and funding programmes which had, until circa 2012 been deployed by the regional Development Agency and the Government officer for the North East. This same White Paper also holds open the prospect of some modest but important improvements to the functioning of local government, through reforms to the audit system, standards system, training and the holding of 'remote' meetings via video call.

Towards the end of the year, we worked with the County Council to prepare for the parish and town council elections that take place every 4 years. The overall pattern was fairly similar to previous elections, with highly contested seats in most of the towns, and fewer contests in the more-rural areas. The elections have brought new people on to many of our councils, while others were not successful, and our County Committee was particularly sad to lose our Chairman of the last few years: John Potts, who lost his seat. John has been an active member of Blyth Town council since its creation in 2009, as well as being a valued supporter of our County Association. We thank John for his commitment and contribution to our work.

With the departure of John and two other Vice Chairs, I have temporarily stepped in to chair the County Committee until after our Annual General Meeting in the Autumn. Having been the Association's chief officer for thirty years, and subsequently a member for the past nine years, this is not a role I had expected to take on, but I am happy to hold the fort while we re-group and rebuild our Committee.

As ever, my thanks go to the vibrant and dedicated network of councillors and staff in the parish and town councils throughout our area, to the officers and members of our Association, and to the grand support and goodwill which we receive from the County and City Councils, Community Action Northumberland, our National Association, and a range of other bodies and individuals.

David Francis

Chairman of the County Committee

Introduction and Summary

NALC is one of the county associations of local councils in England, which together form the National Association. There are 148 local councils in Northumberland and 6 in Newcastle, in addition there are nine Northumberland parishes who do not have a functioning local council at the present time. There are currently no local councils in North Tyneside.

We are delighted to report that 144 Northumberland and 4 Newcastle Parish, Town and Community Councils were members of NALC in 2024 – 25.

NALC was formed in 1946 and for many years received administrative and professional support from CAN (Community Action Northumberland). In 2015 a more formal separation of the two organisations occurred, although CAN still hosts the NALC Chief Officer and provides administrative support under a memorandum of understanding.

NALC is governed by a County Committee composed of representatives appointed by our member-councils. The chairman this year was John Potts supported by three Vice Chairmen - David Francis (Alnwick) Mike Wood (Greenham) and David Nicholson – David Nicholson was also Hon Treasurer.

2024/2025 an overview

Developing Skills and Professionalism

Crucial to NALC's impact has been its commitment to upskilling local councillors and clerks. Training and professional development remain at the heart of effective local governance.

Over the past 12 months, NALC has facilitated a wide range of training, delivered both in partnership with Durham and Cleveland ALCs and directly, including:

Core training: Roles and Responsibilities, New Councillor Induction, CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) Introduction, Finance and Budgets, Managing Meetings, Being a Good Councillor.

Specialist financial training: VAT (for both registered and unregistered councils), Internal Controls, Procurement, Finance for Councillors and Clerks, Budgeting.

Accessible online training: Introduction to Local Councils, Finance and Accounting for Local Councils.

Election preparation: A practical session run by the County Council's Elections Team to support clerks ahead of the May local elections.

Face-to-face sessions have also supported new councillors, ensuring they are well equipped to carry out their roles effectively.

Supporting Member Councils

Our ongoing relationship with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) remains a vital aspect of our work. Cllr David Francis (Newton on the Moor and Swarland) continues to represent our Association on the National Assembly and currently serves as NALC's Vice Chair for Member Services—ensuring that the voices, needs, and concerns of Northumberland's councils are effectively represented nationally.

NALC has also continued to lead on ethical standards, advocating for a stronger councillor conduct system, and on digital modernisation, including the adoption of secure gov.uk domains.

Enquiries from councils remain wide-ranging—covering planning, finance, employment, common land, cemeteries, and highways. The legal support provided by NALC has been vital in resolving complex issues and avoiding costly legal fees. In addition to remote advice, we have attended several parish and town council meetings across the county and welcome further invitations.

Our valued partnership with the Parkinson Partnership continues to deliver real benefits, with free VAT advice and highly regarded finance training courses well attended throughout the year.

Strengthening Local Partnerships

Communication with our members has been enhanced through the refreshed Enews bulletin, which has broadened reach, improved engagement, and added a subscription link for accessibility.

Links with Northumberland County Council have also been significantly strengthened:

- Free use of County Hall for County Committee meetings and the Annual General Meeting.
- NALC's active representation on the Town and Parish Council Liaison Working Group, ensuring a strong voice for grassroots councils.
- A highly successful County Conference at County Hall, which featured:
 - A “marketplace” environment staffed by County Council officers providing direct advice.
 - A lively Q&A session with the Leader of the Council, demonstrating open dialogue and joint working in practice.

Responding to a Changing Landscape

This year has seen major developments for local government in Northumberland and beyond:

New mayoral position: The creation of a mayoral role for the North East Combined Authority, as part of the North East devolution deal, marks a significant shift in local governance.

Devolution white paper: Expected shortly, this will clarify the scope of powers and responsibilities under devolution. Parish and town councils must be ready to engage with these new structures.

National infrastructure decisions: The government's announcement on ending the dualling of the A1 in Northumberland has raised serious local concerns about connectivity, investment, and regional fairness.

NALC will continue to represent and champion the needs of Northumberland's councils in these evolving debates.

Highlights of the Year

- Delivered a comprehensive training programme, including financial and governance topics.
- Elections Team training session prepared clerks for the May local elections.
- Strengthened partnership with Northumberland County Council, including free use of County Hall.
- Active representation on the Town and Parish Council Liaison Working Group.
- Successful County Conference at County Hall with officer marketplace and Q&A with the Leader.
- Cllr David Francis continued to represent Northumberland at the national level as NALC Vice Chair for Member Services.
- Strong partnership with the Parkinson Partnership delivering VAT and finance expertise.
- Advocacy on ethical standards, digital modernisation, and key national issues such as devolution and the A1.

NALC's finances

The County Committee is pleased to report a modest surplus for the 2024/2025 financial year, as set out in the Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet. This surplus will be reinvested during 2025 to support the transition to a new website platform for the County and for the 76 parish websites currently hosted. The change follows the announcement from our existing provider, Steven Brydon, that his service will close at the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

We would like to record our sincere thanks to **CAN** for their generous support, and in particular to **Margaret Tweddell** for her efficient management of our accounts and to **Peter Basnett**, our auditor, for his valued advice and guidance.

A Personal Note

I'd like to thank the Chair John Potts for his professional stewardship of our meetings. I would also like to extend my thanks to colleagues and friends from Member Councils, the County Committee, national NALC, Northumberland County Council Officers, Newcastle City Council Officers and other County Associations who have supported me this year. I would also extend my personal thanks to my colleagues in the CAN Office and a special thanks to Margaret Tweddell for keeping our finances in order.

Graeme Popay
NALC Chief Officer
July 2025

MEMBER COUNCILS 2024-2025

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Acklington | Ford | Nunykirk |
| Acomb | Glanton | Ord |
| Adderstone with Lucker | Greenhead | Otterburn |
| Allendale | Haltwhistle TC | Ovingham |
| Alnmouth | Harbottle | Ovington |
| Alnwick TC | Hartburn | Pegswood |
| Alwinton | Hauxley | Plenmeller with Whitfield |
| Amble TC | Haydon | Ponteland TC |
| Ancroft | Hazlerigg | Prudhoe |
| Ashington TC | Healey | Rennington |
| Bamburgh | Hebron | Rochester & Byrness |
| Bardon Mill | Heddon on the Wall | Rothbury |
| Bavington | Hedgeley | Rothley and Hollinghill |
| Beadnell | Hedley on the Hill | Sandhoe |
| Belford with Middleton | Henshaw | Seaton Valley CC |
| Bellingham | Hepple | Shilbottle |
| Belsay | Hepscott | Shoreswood |
| Berwick upon Tweed TC | Hexham TC | Shotley Low Quarter |
| Birtley | Hexhamshire | Simonburn |
| Blanchland | Holy Island | Slaley |
| Blyth TC | Horncliffe | Stamfordham |
| Bowsden | Horsley | Stannington |
| Branxton | Humshaugh | Stocksfield |
| Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst | Ingram | Tarset & Greystead |
| Broomhaugh & Riding | Kielder | Thirlwall |
| Brunswick | Kirknewton | Thirston |
| Bywell | Kirkwhelpington | Thropton |
| Capheaton | Knarsdale with Kirkhaugh | Tillside |
| Chollerton | Kyloe | Togston |
| Choppington | Lesbury | Tritlington & West |
| Coanwood | Longframlington | Chevington |
| Corbridge | Longhirst | Ulgham |
| Cornhill | Longhorsley | Wall |
| Corsenside | Longhoughton | Wallington Demesne |
| Craster | Lowick | Warden |
| Cresswell | Lynemouth | Wark |
| Denwick | Matfen | Warkworth |
| Dinnington | Meldon | West Allen |
| Doddington | Melkridge | West Bedlington TC |
| Duddo | Milfield | Whalton |
| East Bedlington | Mitford | Whittingham, Callaly & |
| East Chevington | Morpeth TC | Alnham |
| Edlingham | Netherton with Biddlestone | Whittington |
| Eglingham | Netherwitton | Whitton & Tosson |
| Ellingham | Newbiggin by the Sea TC | Widdrington Station & |
| Ellington & Linton | Newbrough | Stobswood |
| Elsdon | Newton by the Sea | Widdrington Village |
| Embleton | Newton on the Moor & Swarland | Wooler |
| Falstone | Norham | Woolsington |
| Featherstone | North Gosforth | Wylam |
| Felton | North Sunderland & Seahouses | |

There are nine parishes in Northumberland without a functioning parish council.

Akeld, Bewick, Earle, Ewart, Hartleyburn, Ilderton, Kilham, Roddam, Snitter and Widdrington.

Easington is now part of Belford and Cartington has been divided between Rothbury and Whitton & Tosson.

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Statement of Income & Expenditure
1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

| <u>2023-2024</u> | | <u>2024-2025</u> | <u>2023-2024</u> | | <u>2024-2025</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| £ | <u>Expenditure</u> | £ | £ | <u>Income</u> | £ |
| 17,323.75 | National Association - Membership Fee | 15,767.17 | 55,303.66 | Membership Subscriptions | 55,621.54 |
| 30,000.00 | Community Action - Agency Fee | 30,000.00 | - | | - |
| 968.88 | Meetings & Events | 478.88 | 1,904.40 | Training Events | 475.00 |
| 440.00 | Miscellaneous | 495.00 | - | Miscellaneous | - |
| 327.94 | NALC Website | 280.00 | - | | - |
| 1,752.00 | Parishes Website Portal | 2,329.94 | 5,625.00 | Parishes Website Subscriptions | 5,400.00 |
| - | Bank Charges | 9.42 | 654.85 | Bank Interest | 713.31 |
| - | | - | - | | - |
| 12,675.34 | Surplus | 12,849.44 | - | Deficit | - |
| <u>63,487.91</u> | | <u>62,209.85</u> | <u>63,487.91</u> | | <u>62,209.85</u> |

1. Meetings & Events – Zoom £155.88; Training & room hire £323
2. Miscellaneous - External Consultants (Advice Service)

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2025

| <u>2023/2024</u> | | <u>2024/2025</u> | | |
|------------------|--|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| £ | | £ | £ | £ |
| | <u>CURRENT ASSETS</u> | | | |
| 824.18 | Sundry Debtors | 328.44 | | |
| 66,792.85 | Cash on Deposit | 80,167.03 | 80,495.47 | |
| | <u>LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u> | | | |
| - | Sundry Creditors | - | | |
| - | Receipts in Advance | 29.00 | 29.00 | |
| 67,617.03 | | | | 80,466.47 |
| | <u>FINANCED BY</u> | | | |
| 54,941.69 | General Reserve - Accumulated Surplus | | 67,617.03 | |
| 12,675.34 | - Surplus for Year | | 12,849.44 | |
| - | - Deficit for Year | | - | |
| 67,617.03 | | | | 80,466.47 |

