

PRESTON-UNDER-SCAR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 11 December 2025

Present: Councillor Councillors Amsden, Fletcher, Higham, Knights and Sayers
Clerk: Linda Stevens

29. Apologies for absence: Unitary Councillor Sedgwick

30. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 29 September 2025

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 29 September 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

31. To declare Councillors' interests in items on the agenda: None

32. Action taken since the last Parish Council meeting on 20 May 2025

Bus Shelter opposite Preston under Scar Cemetery – The Clerk reported that following an email received from a resident, she had requested North Yorkshire Council to inspect and carry out repairs to the roof (which in its current condition constituted a health and safety risk) and guttering on the bus shelter and to consider carrying out improvements such as the provision of seating. An update following the inspection was awaited.

Emergency Kit – Councillor Higham reported that she had now taken delivery of some communications equipment from North Yorkshire Council's Resilience and Emergencies Team, for use in the event of the need to activate the Village Community Emergency Plan.

33. Finance and Banking

Resolved:

(1) To note that the opening balances as at 1 December 2025 were as follows:

- **Current Account: £4497.93**
- **Savings Account: £2330.49**

(2) To note the payments authorised by the Clerk under her delegated authority or which were contractually required to be made since the meeting of the Parish Council on 29 September 2025, as set out in bold type in Appendix A to these minutes.

(3) To approve the second quarter financial review for 2025/26 as submitted by the Clerk

34. Village Maintenance – the Clerk reported that a resident had requested the Parish Council to ask North Yorkshire Council to replace the central grit bin which had been damaged by a refuse collection vehicle with a green one instead of a yellow one on aesthetic grounds.

Councillors noted the colour of the current bin and considered that no action was required on the Parish Council's part.

35. Wensley Quarry Planning Application – update

Councillor Sayers reported on the following developments following Councillors' meeting with representatives from Wensley Quarry on 27 October 2025:

- As a gesture of goodwill, Tarmac had provided documents relating to their pre application discussions with North Yorkshire Council (NYC) as Mineral Planning Authority (MPA). These documents were not normally disclosed to third parties. It was evident that phase 6 of the proposal had been included following discussion with the MPA. This in turn had led to the inclusion of an extension of time for the quarry working as this was required to enable all phases to be worked.
- Councillor Sayers and David Brooks had recently met NYC's Head of Enforcement and team colleagues to discuss why breaches of the current planning permission for the quarry had not been enforced over the past 10 years and had been advised that the former Richmondshire District Council had failed to carry out any enforcement. NYC had recruited an additional member of staff to undertake Minerals Planning Enforcement and the complaints that had been raised during the consultation on the now withdrawn planning application had been forwarded to Tarmac who had been requested to provide a response by 14 December 2025. There was scope for escalating matters if this was necessary. Complaints, including photographic evidence and, importantly, details about the adverse impact of the activity/issue concerned on residents' quiet enjoyment of the village should be sent to the Team. On a more general point, NYC would shortly publish a draft Local Enforcement Plan for consultation as recommended in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Councillor Sayers and David Brooks had also met with representatives of Tarmac. The main outcomes from that meeting being:
 - The Dust and Air Quality Action Plan was being rewritten by consultants and would be made available to the Residents Group
 - Tarmac had produced a Dust Action Plan, detailing 22 actions to improve dust mitigation, 13 of which had been completed. The actions included using water cannon to damp down dust piles and installing covers. Wheel washers had been ordered and were scheduled to be available on site within 8 weeks

- The Noise Plan was being rewritten
- The geology of the site, including the Keld Heads Cave was being investigated to find out how far into the proposed Phase 6 of the quarry the cave extended.
- A new and significantly upgraded planting/site restoration plan had been produced and was currently being considered by Lord Bolton (as the landowner)
- The bridge and underpass on the Tank Road had recently been inspected. This had revealed some corrosion and a load assessment would be required to assess whether the bridge could continue to support current load levels. This would take about 6 months to complete. The ongoing suitability of the parapet would also be reviewed.
- Tarmac continued to use weather and wind data from the weather station at Leeming Bar and also used data gathered on site which indicated a south westerly wind for approximately 10% of the time. This had been disputed by Councillor Sayers and Mr Brooks, who had offered to share the data obtained by the Parish Council from NYC's weather station on the A684 to the east of Leyburn.
- Tarmac's local pre-submission consultation on the revised application would comprise:
 - a dedicated website (due to go live in December 2025)
 - a household/property letter drop (covering a 3 mile radius of the quarry)
 - Exhibition in the Village Hall on (currently scheduled for 24 January 2026) which would include various independent experts (eg Dust Scan) who would be available to talk to residents and answer questions
- Following the exhibition, Tarmac hoped to be able to submit a fresh application to NYC by the end of February 2026
- Tarmac were very keen to reinstate the Quarry Liaison Meetings with the Residents Group and to include NYC Planning and Enforcement Teams amongst the invitees. Councillor Sayers and Mr Brooks had welcomed this and had suggested that these should resume once the planning application process had been completed.

Councillors noted the update and thanked Councillor Sayers and David Brooks for their continuing work on these issues on behalf of the village.

36. Cemetery – update

Councillor Higham reported that following receipt of comments from the Clerk she was now in the process of producing the third draft of a new Cemetery Policy. It was hoped that this would be available for wider consultation with all Councillors in the New Year, with a view to being submitted to the next Parish Council meeting for formal consideration and approval. Some aspects of cemetery administration and burial law were very complex and it was important that these were reflected properly in Council documents but in an accessible way for both the Council and those wishing to purchase the rights to burial plots.

A Cemetery Risk Assessment had been prepared and paperwork for Memorial Testing had also been prepared. Formal testing (to be undertaken by Councillor Higham and the Clerk)

would take place in the Spring, when ground conditions were better. An initial informal survey indicated however that there were currently no unsafe headstones.

It was noted that the current Cemetery fees had not been reviewed since 2019 and that these should now be reviewed.

37. Biodiversity

Councillor Knights reported that matters relating to the quarry proposals had delayed further work on observing and recording the Parish's biodiversity but that he hoped to recommence that work in the New Year. Issues relating to the proposals for the future development of the quarry and associated landscape restoration reinforced the need for Parish Councils and residents to be involved in the protection and enhancement of local biodiversity and it was hoped that Tarmac's revised proposals for landscape restoration would be available in early 2026.

38. Website Update

The Clerk reported that:

- She had attended further training with Active Council on website administration
- All links within the Council's website and links to other websites were now operating correctly
- In consultation with Councillor Knights, changes had been made to the structure of the Environment and Biodiversity section of the website and, with assistance from Active Council, the Parish Profile had been uploaded to the website
- Active Council were now supplying monthly usage statistics, those for November indicating that 106 unique visitors had accessed the website, mostly from within the UK but also from the United States, Canada and the Netherlands. The most popular pages (in November) had been History, Planning Applications, Parish Profile and Environment and Biodiversity
- Active Council had been very responsive in dealing with queries and requests for assistance

39. Parish Council Budget and Precept for 2026/27

Councillors considered a draft budget and Parish Council precept for 2026/27. The draft budget and precept had been circulated to all residents on the Council's email list and had been published on its website.

The Parish Council's costs generally had risen over the last two years. The principal reasons for this being:

- Inflation

- Increased regulation, which had impacted on the number of hours the Clerk was required to work and required additional training.
- The Parish Council had also needed to procure a new and improved website and to change to a gov.uk domain and email addresses all of which had resulted in additional costs, many of which were ongoing.

The Council had made savings where it could, for example by changing Insurers and by reducing grass cutting. Essential Health and Safety checks in the Cemetery would also be carried out by the Council itself (following training) rather than by engaging external contractors, at potentially significant cost, and the Council would continue to further reduce costs wherever possible. However, there was now very little scope for further reductions in expenditure.

During the last two years, the Council had used its reserves to meet one-off costs, and to help fund its general expenditure, in order to avoid significant increases in the precept. As a result, the Council's reserves had now reduced to the extent that they could no longer be used to support routine expenditure and the Council needed to set a precept (£7,100) for 2026/27 which would fund its budget for the year. It was estimated that this would result in an average £20 increase (over the year) in the precept payable on a Band D property.

Resolved:

- (1) That the budget for 2026/27 attached as Appendix B to these minutes be approved;**
- (2) That the Clerk notify North Yorkshire Council of the Parish Council's precept requirement of £7,100 for the 2026/27 financial year.**

40. Planning Applications

New Applications: None Notified

Upcoming Applications: None notified

Update on Previous Applications: None outstanding

41. Date and agenda items for the next meeting

Resolved:

That the next Meeting of the Parish Council be held in the second half of February 2026 and that the Clerk consult Councillors on a suitable date.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

CHAIRMAN

