

Minutes of the Preston under Scar Annual Village Meeting held on 21 May 2026 at 6.00pm

Twelve residents attended the meeting, including five Parish Councillors

As Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Amsden chaired the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting on 20 May 2025

These were agreed as a true record.

2. Issues arising from the minutes of the 2025 Village Meeting

Village Hall – provision of sound baffles – Councillor Fletcher reported that the Village Hall had decided not to proceed with the provision of sound baffles in the Village Hall at this stage.

Village Play Area – Councillor Higham reported that there were currently 7 rabbit holes in the Play Area and 1 dead rabbit, which she would remove, so rabbits remained a significant issue. It was noted that North Yorkshire Council had recently mown the grass and that the spring on the gate had been repaired. The Parish Clerk was requested to make North Yorkshire Council aware of the ongoing problem with rabbits.

Cemetery update – Councillor Higham reported that

- the Parish Council would be considering a number of proposed documents relating to the future management of the Cemetery at its meeting later in the evening.
- A grant of £400 had been obtained from North Yorkshire Council's Locality Budget for Biodiversity Initiatives within the Cemetery although was currently the wrong season for planting wildflowers.
- The next phase of improvements would be looking at the provision of a Garden of Remembrance/area for cremated remains. There would be an opportunity for residents to contribute to the development of proposals.

It was confirmed that there was currently a designated area set aside for up to 20 urns of ashes (to the left of the entrance gates), but it was felt that the number of cremations was likely to increase in the future, so this was likely to be inadequate in the longer term.

Winter Gritting, west end of Village update – the Parish Clerk reported that North Yorkshire Council had again refused the request made by the Parish Council following the last Village Meeting, that it grit the West End of the village, on the grounds that the request did not meet its criteria for gritting.

Grass Cutting – Councillor Sayers stated that he would cover this issue when speaking about the Parish Council Budget and Precept later in the meeting.

3. Quarry Planning Application

Councillor Sayers reported on developments since the last Annual Village Meeting in May 2025, which had only come about as a result of the actions of the village as a whole, recording

and submitting complaints to Tarmac and the relevant NYC officers, the prolonged hard work of several individuals and the constant attention and help of Dave Brooks.

Concerted action by the Residents Group had shown up inaccuracies in Tarmac's application when they claimed there had been no complaints about their operations. On 22 September 2025, the group had challenged Nick Harne, Corporate Director Community Development at NYC, questioning how Tarmac's application could be considered given their failure to hold a public consultation as part of their pre-planning application when this is a requirement in the NYC Statement of Community Involvement.

Tarmac had subsequently withdrawn their application on 25 September stating:

“Following the feedback we received during the statutory consultation earlier this year, we have decided to withdraw the application. We are in the process of carrying out further technical work and reviewing the concerns raised by the local community and statutory consultees so that they can be addressed in our revised application.”

Tarmac had then sought to engage with the residents' group which challenged their application and their operational methods on dozens of highly detailed points. This had resulted in Tarmac:

- Listing 33 improvements to be actioned in relation to Dust control.
- Employing contractors, Dust Scan to upgrade their DMP and monitoring systems.
- Undertaking inspection of and improvements to the road bridge by the quarry entrance.
- Contracting an industry leading expert to review their blasting operations and the impact on the village.
- Introducing a new complaints management system.
- Finally producing a surface and foul water management plan after 10 years of avoidance and getting it signed off by NYC.
- Holding public consultation as required.
- Upgrading the restoration plans for after quarrying has ended.
- Re-establishing a Quarry Liaison Group.
- Having to delay their revised application from February 2026 to a new target date of July 2026.

The Residents Group had also taken NYC to task over consistent historic failures to enforce conditions placed on Tarmac. They had lobbied NYC officers within Planning, Enforcement and Environmental Permitting to try and ensure that all conditions and regulations relating to Wensley Quarry were up to date and enforced. This lobbying, re-enforced by the regular stream of examples of breaches emailed by residents to NYC, had resulted in NYC recruiting an additional Enforcement officer to cover quarries and publishing a draft Enforcement Plan for consultation with stakeholders. The Residents Group approved of this new plan in principle, but will need to be ever watchful that officers actually enforce all the required conditions. Preston under Scar Parish Council had also supported the new draft Enforcement plan and hoped that it will be the catalyst for effective minerals planning enforcement in the future.

There was now a hiatus in the process prior to Tarmac submitting their new application. Once they had that it was essential that the village make one final effort to make its objection to the

application loud and clear, the main objection being that it will have a substantial negative impact on residents, their quality of life and the environment, and that Tarmac had clearly shown that they were not to be trusted.

In recent months it had become clear that some NYC officers and councillors have adopted the view that all of Tarmac's errors and omissions and NYC's own failures were in the past, that the future would be rosy and that Tarmac should be applauded for the improvements they were making.

Councillor Sayers concluded by emphasising that residents would all need to write objections to the revised application – aiming to get even more letters in than the 70 submitted last year. There would be a need involve the local press, and to attend the Strategic Planning Committee meeting en masse, when the application was considered.

4. Biodiversity – update

Councillor Knights reported that the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre's database was now available on the Parish Council website. New Biodiversity pages were also now live on the website and included some monthly Nature Diaries. The diaries were experimental and residents were encouraged to write to him with any observations on local flora and fauna that could be included in the diaries.

5. New Parish Council Website

Councillor Sayers reported that the new website had now been live for approximately 1 year. The website was a live resource that would develop over time, but already eclipsed the old version in every respect, especially in design, functionality, breadth and quality of content, images, and it would seem popularity.

In March this year there had 225 visits – more than the old website would get in a year, with 387 page views. The most popular pages were History (61), biodiversity (29) and Planning (10).

The Council wished to thank the Clerk for her excellent work in getting the new PC website up and running, and thanks were also due to Ben Knights, the author of both the History and Biodiversity pages and to Andrew Fletcher for supplying so many new photographs.

6. Parish Council Budget and Precept 2026-27 and beyond

Councillor Sayers reminded the meeting that the budget and precept for the current year 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 – everything - grass cutting, insurance, maintenance.
- Increased regulation, which had impacted on the number of hours the Clerk was required to work and also 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 from 13 visits a year to 10 in both the village and cemetery.

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 it was no longer prudent to use them to support routine expenditure and the Council had set a precept of £7,100, an increase of £2,303 for 2026/27 which would fund its budget for the year. To put this into context, this would result in an average £20 increase over the year (39 pence per week) in the precept payable on a Band D property.

However, the next financial year 2027/28 would see further cost increases over and above the expected inflationary rises. The Council was already aware that it would need to find an extra £500 to cover NYC's admin charge for the Parish Elections, IT costs would need to increase to reflect additional activity, and it also needed to address digitising the Cemetery records. With regards to this latter point, following the extensive and excellent work by Jules Higham, it was clear that the Council would also need to review the cost of reserving a plot in the cemetery.

7. Open Forum

A resident expressed concern about the untidy appearance of Light Lane as a result of mowing only one strip along the verge and felt that the verge should be mown back to the hedge. It was noted that other residents had said that they felt leaving part of the verge unmown would help improve diversity so the Parish Council had taken a compromise route of partial mowing.

Attention was also drawn to the overhanging Sycamore tree by the play area. The Clerk would ask NYC to deal with this.

8. Chairman's Thanks

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the various Parish Councillors and Clerk for their work during the year, and to those other residents who had again helped with the upkeep of the village and were otherwise supportive.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm