



WYLAM PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report 2023-2024



50 YEARS OF THE WYLAM GLOBE!

**WYLAM
GLOBE**
The Newsletter of
Wylam Parish Council



Number 1 July 1973

INTRODUCTION

For some time the Parish Council have been considering producing a periodic newsletter, giving information about what the Council itself is doing, and including other items and issues of general interest relating to the village. At its meeting on the 15th June the newly elected Council wholeheartedly supported this idea and agreed to experiment with a quarterly newsletter - of which this is the first issue. Having decided to publish, the next problem has been to select a suitable name. We are suggesting calling it the "Wylam Globe".

The first cover of the first edition of the Wylam Globe, printed in July 1973.



Introduction

This Report describes the main activities of Wylam Parish Council during 2023-24.

About Wylam

Wylam is a thriving village of about 2,000 people, located on the River Tyne and well positioned for the workplaces and cultural facilities of nearby Newcastle and Hexham. It is served by a good selection of shops, cafes and restaurants, public houses, churches, and sports and community facilities. It has a library, a doctors' branch surgery and a well-regarded primary school. Wylam retains a strong sense of community with a wide range of community-organised activities and events.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Wylam was home to collieries, a brewery and an ironworks. The work of several early railway pioneers, including Timothy Hackworth and William Hedley, designers of the *Wylam Dilly* and *Puffing Billy* locomotives, was centred here. George Stephenson - referred to by some as the "Father of Railways" - was born here in 1781, though he moved on aged eight to another village locally.

Today, wildlife, including salmon, heron and otters, has returned to the river. The former Wylam waggonway from the village to Newburn and beyond is now a multi-user recreational route. The village is close to Hadrian's Wall and the waggonway forms part of the strategic Hadrian's Cycleway.

Wylam Parish Council

The Parish Council office is located at Wylam Institute, Church Road, Wylam, NE41 8AP. The Parish Council Clerk, Tracey Wood, works on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 10.00am to 4.00pm.

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As from May 2024, the Parish Council will meet bi-monthly on the second Monday of the months of July, September, November, January, March and May, at 7.00pm in the Centenary Room at Wylam Institute unless otherwise indicated. Members of the public are always welcome to attend.

The Parish Council is the host council for the Ovingham Joint Burial Committee, which manages Ovingham Cemetery. The Committee comprises two representatives each from Wylam, Ovingham, Ovington and Horsley Parish Councils and meets quarterly.

Parish Councillors 2023-24

The Parish Council may have up to eight Councillors at any one time. There is an election every four years, the next being in May 2025. Councillors can be co-opted between elections.

As of May 2024 we have five Councillors.

Councillor Averil Armstrong
Councillor Lizzie Barker*
Councillor Diana Carney (Chair)
Councillor Martyn Jones
Councillor Colin Percy (Vice-Chair)
*Co-opted October 2023

County Councillor for Bywell Ward

Councillor Holly Waddell

Parish Council Staff

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer:
Tracey Wood

Village Handyman: Matthew Hadden

Village Tree Warden: Liz Bray (volunteer)

What does the Parish Council do? Here are just a few highlights from our activities during 2023/24

Shaping the Parish – Neighbourhood Plan

In September 2023, Wylam Parish was officially designated a Neighbourhood Plan Area. A first meeting was held in January 2024 with the NCC Planning Officer assigned to Wylam, Mark Harrison. Since then, the Steering Group has held further meetings with Mark to identify policy areas relevant to Wylam on which the Plan will focus, and to hear about the specialist technical and financial help available via Locality and Central Government.

Engagement with Wylam Parish residents and interest groups is key to every stage of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. A Parish Survey questionnaire has been drafted and after a review by our Neighbourhood Planning Officer, it should be ready for circulation in June. For ease of analysis, we hope to gather most of the data online, but paper copies of the questionnaire will be available on request. We are also happy to help any residents who may find completing the online survey challenging.

Wylam Community Flood Plan

At the last Annual Village Meeting, we welcomed Colin Hall, from the Environment Agency to speak about our Community Flood Plan. The group of 9 Volunteer Flood Wardens has monitored vulnerable areas in the village during the past year, a year in which heavy rain on many occasions has caused problems. Crawcrook Lane, at its junction with Sled Lane, although not in Wylam Parish, is a flooding hotspot as is the lower part of Bluebell Lane and Wylam Wood Road. Ovingham Road is often impassable during heavy rain, but this is outside the scope of Wylam's Flood Group. During monitoring, the Group confirmed that most of the problems in other parts of the village are caused by blocked drains. These have been reported to NCC via the *FixMyStreet* app. Earlier this year, Colin Hall was able to talk to several residents of potentially vulnerable properties in the village about Individual Flood Plans.

Road Safety

Road Safety

This remains the most frequently reported area of concern for Wylam residents.

Each year, the Parish Council provides village priorities for inclusion in the County Council's Local Transport Plan. For 2023/24, we put forward (1) measures to reduce speed on Wylam Wood Road, (2) road safety and speed control measures in the vicinity of the shops and (3) the same for the Fox and Hounds area. NCC funding for measures to reduce traffic speeds near the Fox & Hounds Inn has been approved.

We have forged a very positive relationship with NCC Highways officers and met with them in April to discuss possible solutions on Main Road and issues flagged by residents at the Hedley Meadows development on Holeyn Hall Road.

In October 2023, the Parish Council organised a successful speed awareness exercise on Holeyn Hall Road. The Parish Clerk is currently setting up **Wylam Community Speedwatch** in conjunction with our Community Police Officer. This will be operated by volunteers from the Parish Council's Road Safety Group.

The vehicle-activated speed signs in the village are to be renewed. We thank County Councillor Holly Waddell for her contribution towards the funding of this initiative.

As regards potholes, pavement problems and faulty street lighting, these can now be reported directly by residents to NCC via the *FixMyStreet* app. This App is proving very popular.

Heritage

Wylam Parish Council and the National Trust have worked together to create "Walk the Line", a monthly guided walking tour around the village to learn about Wylam's pioneering railway engineers. Each walk includes a visit to Wylam Railway Museum and George Stephenson's Birthplace.

Nine guided walks took place during 2023 and the National Trust and Wylam Parish Council plan to repeat these in 2024. There will be a modest charge this season to encourage people to honour

their bookings. The Parish Council is grateful to Councillor Colin Percy for liaising with the National Trust to make these walks a success.

The Parish Council has continued to maintain Wylam Railway Museum, located in the Falcon Centre and open during Library hours and by special arrangement.

Looking to the future, 2025 is the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. The 2025 Wylam Winter Tales Festival is aiming to highlight Wylam's part in railway history through a series of activities across the village. As so many of these projects will leave a legacy of songs, stories and artwork permanently available to Wylam residents of all ages, Wylam Parish Council has recently agreed to provide the major part of grant funding for this using some of the money available from the sale of the former Wylam Post Office building.

Wylam Haughs Nature Reserve

The Nature Reserve has had a busy year with ongoing work to promote more diverse and healthy flora and fauna. The small Management Group is augmented by a *Friends of the Haughs Nature Reserve* volunteer group under the leadership of the Parish Council's volunteer Tree Warden, Liz Bray. This has provided very welcome labour for vital maintenance jobs over autumn and winter.

Small signs ('blackboards') giving information on the wildlife or the work that is being done seem to be popular. Larger tasks such as strimming and major tree work continue to be carried out professionally. Following extensive public consultation, three of the Oak trees adjacent to the western boundary of Wylam Allotments were felled in Autumn 2023. The Allotments Association is reportedly happy with the extra light this has given to the allotments near this boundary.

Climate Action Working Group

This group has been paused for the time being, but several initiatives will be shared soon.

Trees, Grass Cutting and Nature Recovery

The grassed area at Station Road is now being cut regularly, following complaints received about its untidy appearance during the Parish Council's experiment in 'rewilding.' NCC have instituted a policy of neatening village entrances. We have continued to monitor trees around the village, liaising closely with NCC's Trees and Woodlands Officer and our volunteer Tree Warden carries out an annual tree survey. Trees and shrubs on the green space at Jackson Road have been thinned out. There were a number of dying Birch trees and the Portuguese Laurel which was threatening to take over the space has been radically trimmed back, but will regenerate fairly swiftly. Small shrubs which had been struggling for light will now be able to grow freely as will wild flowers.

Floral displays

The Parish Council pays Wylam Nurseries to provide and maintain floral displays throughout the village.

Village Handyman

We are grateful to Matthew Hadden, our Village Handyman, who is employed by the Parish Council to keep Wylam looking neat and tidy, picking up litter and clearing weeds from pavements. He is currently undertaking two online training courses, Health and Safety and Manual Handling, which will help him to do his job safely.

Special Events

Coronation Picnic

On 7th May 2023, the Coronation of King Charles III was celebrated with a picnic on the Jubilee Field hosted by the Parish Council. Around 150 people gathered to share their picnics. Wylam Guides and Scouts put on games and activities and Councillor Averil Armstrong's crown-making hub proved a great success with all ages. The warm, sunny weather helped to make it a memorable afternoon. We are grateful to the Community Playing Fields Association for their help and support. We would also like to thank

Wylam WI and Wylam Brownies for decorating the station platform so beautifully.

Litter Pick

The annual village Litter Pick was held on 16 March 2024, radiating out from the War Memorial Car Park as usual. There was an excellent turnout of around 25 volunteers. The Parish Council is now registered as a volunteer group with NCC and litter picking equipment is available for individuals and groups to borrow from the Parish Clerk at Wylam Institute.

Support for local organisations

Our budget allows us to offer grants to local organisations to support their work. We make awards to *Wylam Institute Community Association* and *Wylam Playing Fields Association*, providing £3,000 to each of them annually.

Communication and Engagement

The Wylam Globe

We arranged door to door deliveries of three issues of our newsletter the *Wylam Globe* in 2023/24, highlighting both Council and village news. We think it is important to maintain this 'hard copy' means of communication, now in its fifty-first year.

New Website

A completely new website was launched in Spring 2024. Take a look at:

www.wylamparishcouncil.org.uk

Liaison with partner organisations

The Parish Council has continued to build relationships with officers in the various departments at Northumberland County Council. We also have regular meetings with Wylam's Community Police Officer. The Northumberland Association of Local Councils is a valuable source of advice and training opportunities for both councillors and the Clerk. Northumbrian Water is

working on eel screens at Ovingham and they have confirmed that funding is available from them for projects in Wylam.

Staff Training

Our Clerk, Tracey Wood, has recently successfully completed two sector-specific training courses: the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) and the Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration (FILCA). She now moves on to the next level qualification, the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) which will take a further year to complete. Wylam Parish Council enters the 2024/25 year looking forward to the day when we have an officially 'Qualified Clerk.' This will enable us to work towards several Quality Parish Council certifications.

Wylam Parish Council: How your money was spent 2023-2024

Please note these figures are unaudited.

We spent a total of £61,234 in 2023-2024.

Expenditure 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Staffing, office and administration	£26,921
Publications	£ 2,038
Property, Open Space and Equipment	£13,296
Grants and donations	£15,653
VAT (2023/2024)	£3,326

Our income of £59,975 was broadly in line with expectations.
The VAT refund will be claimed in the next financial year.

Income 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Precept on Council Tax	£54,000
Property, Open Space and Equipment	£ 827
Clerk Salary Recharge (OJBC)	£ 2,358
VAT Refund (2022/2023)	£2,790