

MINUTES OF THROPTON PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY HELD ON TUESDAY 19th MAY 2026 COMMENCING 7PM IN THROPTON WAR MEMORIAL HALL

Those Present: C Foggon, R Aplin, J Sutton, M Frazer-Kelly, C Miller, ten members of the public

1/26 Apologies for Absence

S Bertram

2/26 Presentation from Northumberland Wildlife Trust in relation to the Rothbury estate

Paul Barrett of Northumberland Wildlife Trust present, whose role involves working with community groups. NWT had partially purchased the Rothbury Estate, with £18m funding raised to date, and a total of £30m required. The part NWT were fundraising for includes the old railway line. The area already purchased comprises of four farms, with 2800 sheep and 150 cattle. NWT employ local farmers who are shepherds by trade. The estate has been farmland and by and large will remain farmland. Possibly other animals, such as ponies, could be introduced. There are a number of tenants on the part not yet bought, and who come with the land. NWT will not stop tenants farming the way they wish to farm. Farming is an ever changing landscape, with farmers under enormous financial pressure. For ecological purposes, sheep numbers would be reduced and cattle numbers increased. There has been talk about European bison, however PB not aware of any plans, and it could not happen without a lot of work and consultation. Some animals, such as pine martens, may appear on the estate, which would assist the grey squirrel problem. Beavers are another species that could also re-appear. PB confirmed lynx would not be introduced. Heather burning is not something NWT want to do, but this raises the question of controlling fire. The preference would be to mow heather to create fire breaks, NWT working with Simonside Connect, which comprises the Hepple estate / MOD / National Park and National Trust, who are working on items such as a fire plan. Survey work being carried out, particularly with local groups involved in archaeology, ecology and ornithology, to understand what lives on the estate. Acoustic monitoring equipment records for nine days at a time each season, with data analysed. This assists with understanding the landscape and management required. Consultation with farmers on the estate has been carried out, and it appears NWT are winding the clock back, the last 50 years farming has become more intensive. Tenants will farm the way they want to. NWT do not have a negative view of farming but an aspiration for their land. Coquetdale River Action Group (CRAG) work with Coquet valley community groups to carry out water monitoring, and have the ability to hold the Environment Agency and Northumbria Water to account. There is a lot of archaeology which isn't mapped on Garleigh Moor. Newcastle & St Andrews Universities have been on site looking at soil DNA, and can go back in time to determine what was being grown centuries ago. The past is one of the best guides to the future, stories are hidden in the soil.

Resident asked about logging – PB advised NWT got a lot of rap about “saving” the Rothbury estate, the wording was in relation to plans to massively extend conifer plantation around the estate, however Forestry England have a tenancy on the land for 900 years, and some designated woodland has to be replaced. NWT are working hard for this to be a native species that would not be commercially felled. There will always be timber production, however this will not be increased, and hopefully would be reduced.

Resident referred to the David Attenborough advertisement seeking funding, and suggested NWT approach DA again to encourage further funding. NWT had called on a lot of support, too much can be asked of people, however DA could be approached again.

Resident referred to the funding shortfall. PB advised contracts have been exchanged, but payment not transferred, with the deadline being October 2026. As the deadline gets closer, conversations will start if there is a chance the money will not be raised.

The railway line goes right into the estate, NWT want to re-open this for people to access the estate and be close to nature. NWT working on creating a nature corridor from the coast to Kielder.

Resident referred to tenant Forestry England, and asked who decides /influences in instances such as a mountain bike park being installed. PB advised there was a cycle event held on Simonside last year, and this was presumably arranged via people power / negotiations with landowners. If there was a desire for such events, NWT would work with Forestry England.

Resident, a former employee of the National Park, advised there is an awful lot of consultation goes on. Forestry England produce a forest design plan every ten years or so, which takes account of recreation, footpath, bridleways etc. Plantations are treated in different ways, Kielder for instance is very commercial.

PB has an office at Lordenshaw should anybody wish to visit, and can be contacted by email.

PB thanked for his attendance and left the meeting at 750pm.

3/26 Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 20th May 2025

RESOLVED:

Those present agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 20th May 2025 were a true record.

4/26 Public Participation

Resident raised the matter of bank erosion on the River Coquet between Thropton and Rothbury, with a footpath having been closed off by the landowner. This is not an official public right of way, but has been used for many years by walkers. There is a move afoot for local groups / residents to look into what can be done. It would need to be proven that it has been used as a public right of way for twenty years. However the difficulty is the piece that was walked on no longer exists, and therefore cannot be claimed to be a right of way. A resident advised the landowner has a responsibility to prevent erosion.

Resident advised he had requested footpath signage at Thropton bridge indicating the route for ramblers, via County Council reporting system Fix My Street, which had not been actioned.

Resident thanked the Parish Council for placing a bench at the riverside and requested a further seat be placed in the location - resident advised to put this request in writing to the Parish Council.

The W.I had queried the petition result to lower the speed limit to 20mph via M.P. Davis Smith, as a reasoning for rejection was that Thropton has a through road. However the W.I. had pointed out Alnwick is on a through road and has a 20mph restriction.

Resident referred to the play area upgrade. The grass seed has not taken, and there is subsequently nowhere for the children to play football.

The Parish Council have limited funds, and the plan is to move the goalpost further down once the grass has taken. The Parish Council upgrade plans involve placement of three pieces of adult gym equipment, a slide and new swing seats, to be paid for via funding application(s). Resident asked for permission to place a temporary goal post at the park. It was agreed Parish Cllrs and residents would meet on site, 930am 23/5/26, to discuss the ground works and a suitable location for a temporary goalpost.

5/26 Highway Improvements

The Thropton to Rothbury road was to receive full surface dressing, which would result in a full road closure of three days over the length of the project. The following details were indicative

SIGNS WILL BE ERECTED IN ADVANCE OF THE WORKS AND ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS WILL BE MAINTAINED AS FAR AS REASONABLY PRACTICABLE. SCHOOL AND SERVICE BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED THROUGH THE WORKS BUT THERE MAY BE SLIGHT DELAYS

SURFACE DRESSING OPERATIONS WILL BE CARRIED OUT IN THIS AREA BETWEEN MARCH AND AUGUST 2026, FURTHER CLOSURES WILL ALSO BE IMPLEMENTED DURING THIS PERIOD TO CARRY OUT THE FOLLOWING: PHASES 2,3 & 4

What are we doing?

NCC will be carrying out Phase 1 Civils and Patching operations. The work is estimated to take **3 Nights weather permitting**. Dates supplied on the advanced signage are subject to change due to weather and various other factors, but signs shall be erected before works are due to begin. Road to be open as normal during weekends.

Will the work be disruptive?

The works will be carried out between the hours of **21:00pm to 06:00am** under a road closure. Every effort will be made to minimise the effects and duration of the works; however, some disruption will be inevitable. Traffic management operatives will be on site to advise at all times.

Future Road Closure Phases of Works

Phase 1 Civils & Patching

All Iron works are raised, Drainage issues repaired, ditches refreshed and cat's eyes are removed and temporarily filled until dressed in which they will be replaced with new. Patching is also carried out to bring the road up to specification in preparation for Phase 2 to commence.

Phase 2 Dressing (Expected 21/07/26 2 Days)

The existing carriageway is layered with bitumen emulsion by a calibrated Bitumen tanker to seal and protect the surface from excessive force increasing life span expectancy of the new surface along with spreading of chippings which are compressed with heavy duty rollers to ensure the chippings lie flat in the binder and then followed by sweepers to clear access debris.

Phase 3 Lockchip (Expected 27/07/26 1 Day)

Lockchip is then carried which is a high-performance, sealed surface dressing system designed by Bituchem to lock in chippings on the newly surfaced road. It involves applying a specialised bitumen emulsion to seal in the aggregate and improve durability and created a uniformed black finish.

Phase 4 White Lining (Expected August TBC)

All aspects of Road marking are refreshed over the new surface layer and Final inspections carried out over the new surface course.

Please note further communication will be issued for each phase before works commence as the above dates may differ weather permitting



Resident referred to water gushing from Physic Lane, which is a perennial problem – this item had been raised at the Coquetdale Cluster meeting where the County Council Cabinet Member for Highways had been made aware of the long-standing issue.

6/26 Any Other Business

There was no other business

7/26 Date of Next Meeting

The next Annual Assembly of Thropton Parish will be held on Tuesday 18th May 2027 commencing 7pm in Thropton War Memorial Hall

The meeting closed at 826pm

Claire Miller, Parish Clerk