

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

**Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2026, 6.00pm,
Dovecote Centre, Amble.**

1. Welcome and Introductions: Chairman Luke McTaggart
Chairman Luke McTaggart welcome residents and attendees to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence
Councillor Ciara Dawson
County Councillor Glen Sanderson

The Town of Culture 2028 film was shown. This is a joint bid between Amble, Hauxley, Warkworth and Acklington with support from community groups. Amble Development Trust is the lead applicant for the 2028 bid.

3. Annual Report of Amble Town Council 2025-2026
Annual Report of the Town Council delivered by Chairman Luke McTaggart detailing the work the Town Council has done across the past year, including the council's new Draft Strategic Plan which we are seeking feedback from residents on.

Cllr McTaggart, Chairman of Amble Town Council gave a report on behalf of Amble Town Council. The report detailed the set-up of the Town Council, led by 9 Councillors across three wards, managed by 3 members of staff. Committee meetings are open to the public and all residents are welcome.

The Town Council has supported a number of community groups and organisations this year and continues to earmark a grants budget for this purpose.

Cllr McTaggart gave a breakdown of the 2025 2026 expenditure and the funds held in reserves. Councillor McTaggart presented the Draft Strategic Plan to those present at the meeting. The plan has three key themes running through it, people, prosperity and place. The plan, once adopted, will be reviewed annually to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Town and the needs of residents.

4. Town Regeneration Plan Update

Cllr. Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader of Northumberland Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth & Regeneration will deliver an update on the work being engaged in to prepare a Town Regeneration Plan to support Amble in securing investment.

Councillor Richard Wearmouth from Northumberland County Council attended the meeting to give an update on what Northumberland County Council are doing to help deliver investment and regeneration in Amble. It was acknowledged that the community was disappointed at the refusal of the Community Asset Transfer however Cllr Wearmouth reaffirmed that NCC is committed to working with the Town Council and the Development Trust to secure a bright and thriving future for Amble. Northumberland County Council continue to invest in Amble with the new school build, Morrisons, Turner Street Car Park and The Amble Inn. NCC are keen to create an Amble Forum meeting, made up of key NCC officers, representatives from Amble Town Council and Amble Development Trust, to work on a feasibility study to look to what is needed to enhance the already existing offer in Amble. Key priorities include town centre improvements, way finding and active travel, public realm improvements and connectivity.

It is hoped that there will be a solution to Coble Quay Walkway soon and as part of the master plan for public realm that will include additional car parking at Turner Street. It is expected that a series of engagement meetings will be taking place to seek the views of the community. NCC are also keen to engage with businesses to find out what they need to invest and grow in Amble, what is blocking their progression.

Cllr Wearmouth wishes Amble the very best for the Town of Culture 2028 bid.

Questions for Cllr Wearmouth

Mr K Henderson, representative of United Reform Church

We run a mental health group from the church and are currently at maximum capacity and without the facilities for larger groups. Is a feasibility study a delay tactic?

A: No, NCC need a sound understanding of what is offered in the existing buildings in Amble. Once this is known, work can begin to look at what funding opportunities are available to sustain and enhance this existing

provision. With some existing sites such as the former Amble First School, it is vital that the site is sustainable as it is unlikely that NCC will run these and we do not want the Town Council or the Development Trust to inherit a liability.

Q. Mr Henderson:

Why do other towns such as Ashington, have new community centres being managed by NCC, such as the new community centre being built in Ashington.

A: Cllr Wearmouth was not aware of this and requested additional information to be sent to him to investigate.

Q. Mr Henderson:

Amble is desperate for a new surgery and more GPs.

A: Cllr Wearmouth advised raising this with County Councillors Hume and Davidson who can raise this with the Health and Wellbeing Board. This can also be raised with David Smith MP who can take it to the ICB.

Q: Claire Connolly (as individual and not Town Councillor)

A community hub should represent the community as a whole, young, old, social issues, addiction issues, housing, domestic abuse, NEET etc. These needs need to be met in Amble. NCC need to step up and provide the support required to help our people.

Q. Mr A Hudson:

Why do NCC want to knock the Sports Hall down when it would cost so much to do so but less to keep it operational which would be absorbed by the development trust.

A: The Community Asset process has been revisited twice and NCCs position remains unchanged given the contractual obligations associated with the build and arrangements with the Football Foundation and Sport England. There is an excellent facility in the new school build although it is acknowledged there are some issues that still need to be ironed out. It is vital that the community access provision is available and affordable.

Q: Mandy Bond

I agree that what you are doing is good. There is no point looking at old / existing buildings as they require extensive investment. It is worth looking at the old Amble First School site to be knocked down and something in its place?

Cllr Wearmouth was thanked for his time.

5. Community Groups

An opportunity for representatives of any community groups to raise matters of concern to their group or highlight work they have been engaged in across the previous year.

Given the length of the meeting, each community group was given two minutes to give a brief report.

Dry Water Arts gave a brief update.

The report in full is below:

Good evening, everyone. For those who don't know me, I'm Frances Anderson from Dry Water Arts. You can find us in Fenders Yard, just off Wellwood Street.

Myself and Paula Turner run Dry Water Arts along with a team of fantastic community positive volunteers to whom we are incredibly grateful.

To give you the 'nuts and bolts' of what we do:

Every single week we offer 12 regular classes for the community.

These range from drawing and watercolours to yoga, chair yoga, and our 'Better Balance' dance programme.

We also host regular exhibitions and special events—more of which I'll share in a moment! It has been a whirlwind 18 months, but the heart of everything we do remains the same: providing a warm, welcoming space for everyone in our community to feel good to meet to move and to Make

our mantra is Better Together

Part of our community commitment is our FREE Creative Health Monday programme It is completely free and open to everyone, and—most importantly—the kettle is always on - refreshments are part of the offer We rotate what we do each week:

- *Singing for Fun: A wonderful integrated and inclusive group where we sing songs the group wants to sing share memories of songs that have meaning to us , It's a proven way to combat loneliness, boost lung health, and it even helps with memory and feeling connected to others We'd also like to take a moment to congratulate the Harbour Lights Choir on their wonderful achievement of singing together for 15 years it's good to know*

between us, we're making sure Amble is a town that truly sings with good heart

- *The Reading Room: Where we share the joy of a good story or poem without the pressure of a formal book club. We are proud to be a registered provider and contributing organisation to the National year of Reading campaign Our reading Room is about sharing the joy of any reading material—from poems to magazines to comics. We are constantly surprised and delighted by what people bring in. In fact, it's been so inspiring that my co-director Paula now has a backlog of ten books to get through because of all the suggestions!*
- *HUSH: A jargon-free space for peace and calm people come to relax and feel the benefits of simple relaxation techniques. As one person recently commented I don't quite know where the time went but it was a lovely experience to feel anxiety free*
- *The Print Collective: Making art accessible to everyone—and we're even hosting the international 20:20 Print Exchange again which was the biggest exhibition of prints exhibited in Northumberland by 703 artists worldwide partnering with hotbed press Salford Its wonderful as the work of professional artists and community participants are exhibited together to celebrate the joy and delight of printing.*

Levelling up funds enabled us to deliver a 3 month project for the 2nd year- with 62 events engaging 2961 people with 42 volunteering roles done by 94 volunteers.

We worked with 53 artists over the year to deliver our projects

New Additions: World-Class Tai Chi "We are particularly excited to welcome our newest team member, Romina Naito, who was a World Champion in Tai Chi. It is a real coup for Amble to have someone of her calibre teaching here. We've added two new Tai Chi classes to our weekly programme, and it partners perfectly with our Body Wise Better Balance dance programme led by Paula A Year of 'Firsts' and New Ventures "We've been busy hosting some important 'firsts' for the town lately and have worked with over 53 artists to deliver. We held Amble's first-ever Contact Improvisation Day, which brought dancers to town from across the region accompanied by world class Double bass player Neil Harland.

We ran the town's first Death Café and there will be another. It was a beautiful event characterised by compassion and listening We've also just launched a monthly Poetry Cafe in partnership with local residents.

Looking ahead, we are hosting Amble's first Climate Cafe on Sunday, June 7th. As part of this, we are proud to be the only local organisation screening The People's Emergency Briefing. This is an incredibly significant film featuring Chris Packham, highlighting the serious situation regarding climate change. It is free to attend and will be facilitated by a skilled expert.

Putting Amble on the Map "We are also working hard to bring the best of the art world to our doorstep. In June, we're welcoming Anna-Rubin , an international artist who makes beautiful kinetic installations worldwide including at the Venice biennale 2018 and in September we welcome Kirsten Saur for a return visit from Germany theatre designer and sculpture has been recently working with Matt Copson and we are hoping to bring world experts in new inflatable puppet and parade technology from Columbia to Amble to work with the community to build skills in easy to store puppets for the light parade.

Our team is also sharing our 'Amble-grown' expertise further afield. I'll be leading our work with the Glynn Vivian a Tate plus gallery in Wales celebrating kinetic arts and my co-director Paula has been working as part of an academic research project in Jarrow, where they've successfully campaigned for a new adventure playground."

Art Doing Good: Monica Epstein & Amble Food Bank "Finally, we believe art should do good. We recently collaborated with artist Monica Epstein for an Affordable Art Sale. Because of her generosity, local people bought beautiful pieces for as little as £3, and together we raised £620 for the Amble Food Bank.

Whether it's world-class Tai Chi, a singalong on a Monday a drawing class or pilates we want you to feel uplifted by what's happening here.

We all know Amble has applied for Town of Culture and although we were not included in the recent promo video am sure that everyone will agree that Culture Creativity and Community has been and continues to be our core business for over 8 years now and we look forward to making a positive

and inclusive contribution If Amble get through to the next stage You are always welcome and included at Dry Water Arts. Thank you!"

Northumberland Theatre Company gave a brief update.

The update in full is below:

Chair's Annual Report 2025–2026

It is my privilege to present the Chair's Annual Report for the year 2025–2026. Following the strong foundations laid in the previous year, this has been a period of consolidation, growth, and renewed confidence for Northumberland Theatre Company (NTC). We have continued to build on our artistic successes while deepening our engagement with the communities we serve.

Mission and Purpose

For over 40 years, NTC has remained committed to bringing high-quality, professional theatre to rural communities. That mission continues to guide every aspect of our work. In 2025–2026, we have further strengthened our role as a cultural lifeline across Northumberland and beyond—ensuring that access to inspiring, thought-provoking theatre is not limited by geography.

Touring Highlights

This past year has seen us expand both the scale and reach of our touring programme:

“The Strange Tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde” & “The Body Snatcher” (Autumn 2025 Tour) – *Our double-bill of Robert Louis Stevenson adaptations toured extensively following their successful festival premieres. The productions were praised for their atmospheric storytelling and inventive staging, reaching new audiences across the region.*

“Rumpelstiltskin and Other Equally Grimm Tales” (Christmas 2025) – *Our festive production brought warmth and optimism to communities during the winter season. The show resonated strongly with audiences, combining NTC's signature creativity with a timeless story of hope and connection.*

“Sherlock Holmes and the Sting of the Scorpion” (Spring 2026 Revival Tour)
– Due to popular demand, this original production is returning for a shorter but larger venue tour, continuing to captivate audiences with its engaging narrative and dynamic performances.

Across all productions, we reached an estimated 7,500 audience members, with a continued focus on rural and underserved venues. We are particularly encouraged by the number of returning audience members, alongside those attending theatre for the first time.

Community Engagement

Our work within the Dovecote Centre and wider community has continued to grow in both scope and impact:

- The Community Banking Hub remained on site until February 26, a vital local service, supporting residents’ access to essential financial facilities.
- Our monthly community cinema has seen steady growth, with audiences now regularly exceeding 30 attendees.
- In partnership with Dovecote Street Arts, the monthly Art Crit continues to thrive, attracting a diverse range of creative practitioners.
- We have supported the formation of the Amble Collage Collective, adding a new dimension to our visual arts programme.
- Although the Harbour Lights Choir found a new home, the Centre continues to provide a home for Amble and Warkworth WI, and a range of classes, rehearsals, and creative activities.
- Since December 2025 we have seen the transformation of the outbuilding and yard with the creation of Amble Men’s Shed and a blossoming beneficial relationship between them and NTC. The Men’s Shed have assisted in, and actioned an ongoing maintenance of the building and grounds.

These initiatives reinforce our belief that NTC is not only a touring company but also a cornerstone of community life.

Financial Overview

Despite ongoing pressures within the arts funding landscape, NTC has maintained a stable and resilient financial position.

We have seen modest growth in earned income, particularly through increased ticket sales and venue partnerships. Fundraising efforts remain a critical component of our sustainability, supported by loyal donors and successful grant applications.

We remain deeply grateful for the continued support of Northumberland County Council, Arts Council England, and charitable trusts. Their investment enables us to sustain our outreach and artistic ambition.

Strategic Developments

This year marks continued progress against our three strategic priorities:

- *Representation – Our programming continues to broaden, with a commitment to reflecting the diversity of contemporary rural life.*
- *Sustainability – We have taken practical steps to reduce our environmental impact, including more efficient touring logistics and set design practices.*
- *Resilience – We have strengthened internal systems, expanded partnerships, and increased organisational flexibility in response to sector challenges.*

Volunteers

Our volunteer base continues to grow and remains essential to our work. Volunteers support a wide range of activities, including front-of-house operations, cinema screenings, exhibitions, and site maintenance.

Their dedication, generosity, and sense of ownership play a vital role in sustaining NTC as both a theatre company and a community organisation.

Gratitude

I extend my sincere thanks to our staff team, freelance artists, Board of Trustees, volunteers, and supporters. Your commitment and passion make everything we achieve possible.

Most importantly, I thank our audiences—whose enthusiasm and loyalty continue to inspire us and affirm the importance of our work.

Looking Ahead

As we move into 2026–2027, we aim to build on this momentum with:

- *The development of new original touring productions*
- *Expanded partnerships with schools and community organisations*
- *Continued growth of the Dovecote Centre as a multi-purpose cultural venue*
- *Increased opportunities for participation in both theatre and visual arts*

We remain steadfast in our belief that great theatre belongs everywhere—and that no community is too small to experience it.

At the close of another successful year, I once again extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported Northumberland Theatre Company on this journey.

Jim Donnelly

Chair of the Board

Northumberland Theatre Company

Women's Institute gave the following report:

The Women's Institute continues to provide a safe and welcoming place for women to meet. There are currently 50 members and we support the lifeboat, the foodbank and CRAG. We meet on the second Monday of every month and everyone is welcome.

6. To consider resolutions submitted by electors of the parish (of which written notice has been given)

There were no resolutions submitted for discussion.

7. Open Forum

An opportunity for residents of the parish to raise their questions on matters relating to the town.

Susan Swanston from The Puffin Lounge made attendees aware of a free Variety Show taking place in the Masonic Hall on Saturday 16th May 2026 at 7pm.

The Puffin Lounge is a free community group, open to all, they too are running low on funding and are running out of space.

The Chair closed the meeting and invited all present to network and help themselves to refreshments provided.

The meeting ended at 19.14pm.

DRAFT