

Dalton Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs Elizabeth-Anne Broad JP, LLB (Hons), MA, CiLCA

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The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council will be held at 7.00 pm on Monday 11th May 2026 at Dalton St Michael's School, Higher Lane, Dalton, WN8 7RP.

Present: Cllr Louise Howard, Cllr Iain Pearce, Cllr Gill Rainford, Cllr Chris Murphy and four members of the public.

County Councillor Adrian Owens, Borough Councillors Whittington & Jukes sent apologies.

ANNUAL MEETING

MINUTES

1. To elect Chairman and Vice Chairman and hear declarations of acceptance of office

Cllr Louise Howard was elected Chairman. Declaration of acceptance of office was read out, signed and witnessed.

2. To record apologies for absence

Cllr Iain Pearce was elected Vice Chairman. Declaration of acceptance of office was read out, signed and witnessed.

3. To receive declarations of interest

None declared. Register of financial interests' forms were confirmed.

4. To deliver short report on the parish council year 2025/6

The Chairman gave the following report on the activities of the last year.

Chairman's Annual Report 2025

The Parish Council continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis throughout the year. At the Annual Meeting held on 12 May 2025, the Council returned with all seats filled and the following appointments confirmed:

- Cllr Louise Howard – Chairman
- Cllr Iain Pearce – Vice-Chairman
- Cllrs Gill Rainford, Chris Murphy and Toni Newman

The Parish Council has continued to work constructively with both Borough and County Councillors, who regularly attend meetings and assist in resolving local concerns. In particular, Cllr Adrian Owens has been extremely helpful in organising highway repairs and

liaising with Lancashire County Council on our behalf. We are also grateful to David Whittington and Katie Juckes for their attention to Borough Council matters affecting Dalton.

Unfortunately, changes within West Lancashire Borough Council have resulted in reduced officer support during the year. Reporting issues has become increasingly difficult and, in many cases, residents have had to pursue matters directly themselves in order to achieve a resolution. Changes to the planning system have also reduced the effectiveness of Parish Council responses to planning applications and consultations.

The Council was disappointed to discover that updates to the West Lancashire Borough Council website resulted in the removal of the Dalton Village Design Statement, and we had to request that this important document be reinstated.

During the year, the Parish Council commented on fourteen planning applications and responded to a variety of consultations. With the planning expertise of Cllr Toni Newman, the Council was able to better understand the significant changes to national planning policy and the potential threats these may pose to the Green Belt and the rural character of Dalton.

The Council has also continued to raise and pursue a range of local environmental and highways matters, including:

- Public rights of way
- Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam
- Roadside flooding
- Pavement and carriageway repairs
- Potholes
- Reports of road traffic accidents to the police
- Fly-tipping incidents

We have continued to utilise the £400 concurrent funding from West Lancashire Borough Council for roadside grass verge cutting, helping to ensure that areas around the Church and key road junctions remain attractive and well cared for.

This year the Parish Council reluctantly agreed to raise the precept to £6,500 in order to ensure sufficient funds remain available for the day-to-day running of the Council and its services.

The Parish Council also received £4,000 through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Part of this funding has been used to repair fencing intended to prevent bikes and quad bikes from accessing the footpath leading to the Beacon Point monument.

The Council continues to monitor discussions between West Lancashire Borough Council and Wigan Council regarding responsibility for the future maintenance of the Beacon Point monument and surrounding area.

It was with sadness that we received the resignation of Cllr Toni Newman following her move away from the village. The Council has relied heavily on her considerable expertise in planning matters and we are deeply grateful for the dedication, professionalism and knowledge she brought to the Parish Council. She will be greatly missed.

Looking ahead, the Parish Council faces many challenges, particularly the ongoing reorganisation of local government and the proposed dissolution of West Lancashire Borough Council. We are also aware that grant funding currently provided by the Borough Council is expected to cease from 2027, which will place additional pressure on parish finances and local service delivery.

Finally, I would like to thank fellow councillors, borough and county councillors, our clerk, and residents for their continued support and commitment to the parish throughout the year.

Cllr Louise Howard, Chairman, Dalton Parish Council

The meeting received a written report from County Councillor Adrian Owes, which was distributed to those attending.

5. Public Participation: Any item raised by a member of the public will be discussed at this point.

The meeting heard of parking issues along Long Heys Lane, where random cars are poorly parked, presumably by visitors to the area/dog walkers perhaps, parking in the layby's preventing farm vehicles getting through. Could 'Passing Place Only' signage be considered? Working farms need the space, so there is a designated need for a reserved passing place, along this single-track road.

The meeting heard that the DMMO (Definitive Map Modification Order) to create/restore the PROW (public right of way) from Pinfold, Higher Lane through to Newbrugh, above bluebell wood, was progressing. The Planning Inspectorate determined that this does not need a public inquiry to be decided.

Concern was raised about the use of the land sign-posted 'Donate a tree' on Higher Lane and WLBC Planning Officer was asked to confirm the situation with the following response:

The Parish Council's general understanding is broadly correct. The land remains designated as agricultural (and within the Green Belt), and as such its lawful use is restricted to agriculture (e.g. grazing, cropping, horticulture). The subdivision of land into plots and their sale in itself does not necessarily constitute a breach of planning control. However, issues may arise where the use of those plots changes or operational development takes place.

In particular, the following would likely require planning permission and could represent breaches if undertaken without consent:

- Erection of buildings or structures (e.g. sheds, cabins, greenhouses, storage units)
- Stationing of caravans or use of land for residential or leisure purposes
- Creation of domestic curtilages (e.g. garden use, domestic-style boundary treatments)
- Storage of non-agricultural/domestic paraphernalia
- Any material change of use from agriculture to leisure or mixed use

Simple post-and-wire fencing associated with agriculture may be acceptable, but more domestic or subdivisional boundary treatments could also warrant further assessment depending on their nature and impact.

Given the concerns raised, there is potential for breaches of planning control to occur (or to have already occurred), but each case would need to be assessed on its individual merits. If residents or the Parish Council believe unauthorised development or use is taking place, they can submit a report to the Council's Planning Enforcement Team, who will investigate and determine whether any action is expedient. More details and the ability to submit the complaint online can be found at: [Breaches of planning control and enforcement notices - West Lancashire Borough Council](#)

I hope this information is helpful.

Regards
Assistant Director of Planning and Regulatory Services

6. To ratify as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held 9th March 2026

The Minutes were accepted as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

7. To confirm schedule of meetings for 2026/27

The following schedule of meetings was agreed. Mondays, approximately eight-weekly-interval, beginning at 7pm in Dalton St Michael's School Hall, Higher Lane, Dalton, WN8 7RP.

13th July 2026; 14th September 2026; 9th November 2026; 11th January 2027; 8th March 2027; 10th May 2027; 12th July 2027.

8. To agree annual memberships - CPRE, LALC, SLCC

The renewal of membership of the following organisations was agreed: CPRE, LALC, SLCC.

9. To amend Standing Orders where necessary and confirm policies for retention/disposal of documents, publication scheme and complaints procedures

All documents were accepted with minor amendment from the previous year, including the complaints procedure and habitual and vexatious complaints policy.

10. Accounts for ratification and payment and conclusion of audit to include:

M Rigby	070426	Grass cutting	01	£55.00
M Rigby	240426	Grass cutting	02	£55.00
E A Broad	270426	Clerk's salary April 26	03	£319.60
Unity Trust	300426	Bank Charges	04	£7.00
LALC	110526	Annual membership fee	05	£80.15
Zurich Municipal	110526	Insurance renewal In a long-term agreement	06	£241.00

M Rigby	110526	Grass cutting	07	£55.00
Purple Umbrella	110526	Internal Audit fee for S Jones	08	£60.00

Agreed future payments:

ICO	210526	Fee for data protection	09	£47.00
E A Broad	290526	Clerk's salary March 26	10	£319.60
Unity Trust	300526	Bank Charges	11	£7.00
Ground Changers	010626	Grass verge cutting	12	£55.00

*contains VAT

Balance of accounts as at 11th May 2026

Current Account	£2,062.40
Reserve Account	£7642.41
Total	£9,704.81

The accounts were ratified and authorised for payment.

- **Receipt of Internal Auditor's Report**

The following report and recommendations were accepted by the meeting.

To: Chairman and Councillors, Dalton Parish Council

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2025-26

An internal audit was undertaken following examination of the accounts and minutes as presented by Mrs E Broad, Clerk to the Council and RFO.

It was found that the processes in place show a good standard of internal control. Sample checks of income, expenditure and bank statements were carried out and the audit trail was found mainly to be in order, with the exception of one invoice which is detailed below. The cashbook is maintained and balanced on a regular basis and the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Retention of Document Policy, Model Publication Scheme, IT Policy and Data Protection Policy have all been reviewed during the year.

Invoice Sample

A sample of six invoices was chosen and the invoices in the file were checked against the payment spread sheet, relevant minutes and the bank statements.

All were found to be in order, with the exception of payment ref 42 – St Michael School hire for £150. Although the payment was listed on the spread sheet and on the minutes, there was no invoice found on file.

It is recommended that checks are made when payments are approved and authorised to ensure that all expenditure has supporting documentation.

Bank Reconciliations

Bank reconciliations were found to undertaken on a regular basis, with bank balances regularly reported as part of the Parish Council minutes.

Payment of Salary

The sample chosen for payments to the Clerk were all found to be in order. Documentation has been provided to evidence each payment and any back pay, although there is no signed letter from the Chair to confirm the payment scale for her employment. NI and Tax payments were also found to be in order.

It is recommended that each change in salary is evidenced by a letter or similar document signed by the Chair to provide reassurance that the correct payments are made.

Risk Register and Management

It was found that although a risk register and management schedule had been prepared in May 2025, the minutes did not include formal approval.

It is recommended that the risk register and management schedule are approved at the next Parish Council meeting.

Publication Requirements

Although the Model Publication Scheme and the Data Protection Policy were approved at the May 2025 Parish Council meeting, neither are currently posted on the Parish Council website. In addition, the Statement of Variances for 2024-25 accounts have also not been published on the website.

It is recommended that all the stated documentation is published on the Parish Council website as soon as possible to ensure compliance with the latest legislation.

Assets

The Assets Register was found to be in order with no additions during the year. A check against the insurance cover currently in place confirmed that all assets are adequately insured.

Sandra Jones. CiLCA 5 May 2026

- **Completion of Annual Governance & Accountability Return forms**

The AGAR forms were completed and signed, ready to be submitted to the External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn.

- **Declaration of Exempt Status and confirmation of dates for the exercise of public rights to examine the accounts**

Dalton Parish Council declares exemption status for the limited assurance review as a local authority total gross income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000.

Total annual gross income for the authority 2025/2026 £ 11,237

Total annual gross expenditure for the authority 2025/2026 £ 6,497

The dates for the exercise of public rights to examine the accounts were determined to be Wednesday 3rd June 2026 – Tuesday 14th July 2026 and notice of this will be put onto the website and noticeboard.

- **Review of Financial Risk Management Plan & Register**

These documents were reviewed and signed.

- **Having met the conditions of eligibility, it is proposed that Dalton Parish Council adopt the General Power of Competence as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 961 of The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) Prescribed Conditions Order 2012**

Resolved.

11. Update on grass cutting and maintenance

It was resolved to continue grass cutting at £55 per cut. The repair of a black-and-white metal Dalton border sign is underway, after it was found damaged.

12. To record any police issues

Encroachment on Dalton Quarry, which is still privately owned continues following social media posts falsely suggesting it is public open space. Generally, there has been more antisocial behaviour and some fire damage across both public land and the more remote private land areas. It was resolved to write to the land owners so that they are aware and suggest some repairs to fencing to prevent encroachment onto the private land.

13. To record any highway or public rights of way issues

Following complaint about the landowner installing barbed wire alongside the public footpath FP 0807034 the matter was reported to the Footpath Officer and received the following response:-

‘I inspected the footpath on 01/04/2026 and contacted you on the same day for clarification, just to ensure I was assessing the correct location.

Unfortunately, in this case the landowner has provided a reasonably generous width for the footpath and has positioned the barbed wire on the correct side of the posts. On that basis, we would struggle to justify any enforcement action.

I did note that a new hedge has been planted, so we will monitor this to ensure it does not encroach on the available width. I’m also aware that the route becomes muddy, although the surrounding field conditions are similar.

I’m sorry we cannot offer more assistance on this occasion

Kind Regards’

Public Rights Of Way Officer, Planning and Countryside, Lancashire County Council

14. To consider any planning issues or applications including

- **Empty Public Houses: Prince William and The Beacon Inn**

It is understood that the planning application at the Prince William Public House was refused but an appeal is in progress. There is no current information about the Beacon Inn.

The neighbouring parish of Newburgh has an application for new development at Tears Lane. There is a DMMO application currently with the Planning Inspectorate to establish a pathway leading from Higher Lane to Newburgh.

- **Dalton Quarry restoration scheme**

Dalton Quarry restoration scheme is being undertaken by Green Earth. However, the land is still privately owned and there is no public right of access.

Application Number: 2026/0342/FUL

Location: Delph Cottage, Crow Lane, WN8 7RY

Proposal: Proposed side extension to dwelling replacing previous planning permission for the same agreed volume

Parish Council Response: Dalton Parish Council has no objection to this proposal.

Application Number: 2026/0151/FUL

Location: Valley Farm, Lees Lane, Dalton, WN8 7RB

Proposal: Retrospective permission for alterations to existing detached garage building to form ancillary accommodation incidental to the main dwellinghouse at Valley Far, including minor roof alterations.

Dalton Parish Council has reviewed the retrospective application for the conversion of the existing garage to accommodation. We raise no objection to the principle of the conversion itself.

However, we object strongly to the roof alterations, which differ significantly from the original structure and have resulted in material harm to the Green Belt, local character, the street scene, and the setting of a building identified as locally important.

1. Green Belt – Increased Bulk, Height and Visual Impact

The application site lies within the West Lancashire Green Belt, where development must preserve openness and avoid encroachment.

While the conversion of an existing building can be acceptable in principle, the works carried out here go well beyond a like-for-like conversion:

- The ridge height has been raised by approximately 300mm
- The rear pitched roof has been replaced with a flat roof
- The rear eaves have been raised by over 11 courses of breeze block (approx. 2.5m), creating a much taller and more imposing structure

These alterations have materially increased the bulk and massing of the building, resulting in a greater impact on openness than the original garage.

This conflicts with Green Belt policy, which requires development to be no more harmful to openness than the existing structure.

2. Harm to the Setting of a Building of Local Importance

- The Dalton Village Design Statement (SPG), page 11, identifies Prescott's Farmhouse, one of the adjacent properties, as an "Other Building of Local Importance."
- Development affecting such buildings must be sympathetic in scale, form, materials, and roof profile, and must preserve their setting.

The increased height, altered roof form, and stark rear elevation fail to respect the historic and rural character of Prescott's Farmhouse and diminish its setting, contrary to the Design Statement and WLBC design policies.

3. Visual Impact on the Street Scene

- The gable end is clearly visible from the public highway.
- The altered roof form appears incongruous and visually intrusive, disrupting the established roofline and proportions of nearby buildings.
- This is particularly harmful in a rural Green Belt village where roof profiles and traditional forms are a key part of local character.

4. Overbearing Impact on Adjacent Properties

- Two neighbouring dwellings sit immediately adjacent to the structure.
- The increased height and massing create an overbearing and dominant presence, particularly due to the raised eaves and flat-roofed rear section.
- This results in a material loss of residential amenity.

5. Retrospective Nature of the Application

- The works have already been carried out in a manner that exceeds what would reasonably be expected for a garage conversion.
- The retrospective nature of the application should not justify acceptance of a design that would likely have been resisted had it been submitted in advance.

Conclusion

Dalton Parish Council therefore objects to application 2026/0151/FUL on the grounds of:

- Harm to the openness of the Green Belt through increased bulk and height
- Excessive and harmful increase in massing
- Incongruous and unsympathetic roof design
- Overbearing impact on neighbouring properties
- Harm to the street scene
- Harm to the setting of Prescott's Farmhouse, a building identified as locally important in the Dalton Village Design Statement (SPG)
- Conflict with WLBC design, amenity, and Green Belt policies

We request that the application be refused, or that the applicant be required to reinstate a pitched roof form consistent with the original structure and sympathetic to the Green Belt setting and the adjacent locally important building.

Application Number: 2026/0248/FUL

Address: Land North East Of Lees Lane Dalton Lancashire WN8 7RB

Proposal: Construction of a general purpose agricultural building (18m x 12m) on farmland using existing access

Parish Council Response:

Dalton Parish Council strongly objects to this application. While agricultural buildings may be acceptable in the Green Belt in principle, both national and local policy require clear evidence of a genuine agricultural need. No such need has been demonstrated, making the proposal inappropriate development.

1. No Agricultural Need (NPPF 149(a)) NPPF paragraph 149(a) allows new buildings only where they are reasonably necessary for agriculture. This test is not met:

- The applicant has not farmed for over 20 years.
- All agricultural buildings previously under his control have been converted to residential use, with only one barn remaining.
- That barn has been used for non-agricultural storage, including rental for vintage aircraft, confirming the absence of any agricultural activity.

The land is worked by a tenant farmer who:

- Operates multiple farms with existing buildings,
- Has permission for a new building on his own land,
- Previously stated he no longer required the applicant's barns due to construction of buildings at his own farm, during the planning process for the barn conversions on Boydells Lane in 2019. There is therefore no agricultural enterprise requiring this new building, so no functional need for it.

2. Existing Barn Removes Justification The applicant already owns a lawful agricultural barn at Hillock Lane. It remains structurally capable and available for agricultural use. No evidence has been provided to explain why this building cannot meet any alleged need. Policy requires existing buildings to be used before new ones are constructed. This is a fundamental failure.

3. Inappropriate Green Belt Development (NPPF 147-148) As the proposal fails the agricultural exception, it is inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful and only permitted in very special circumstances. None have been demonstrated. The proposal would reduce openness and encroach into the countryside, contrary to NPPF 138(c).

4. Conflict with Local Plan- GN1: Fails to comply with Green Belt policy.- GN3: Not justified, visually intrusive, and does not support sustainable agriculture.- EN2: Harms rural character through unnecessary built form and massing.

5. Planning History Undermines Credibility The applicant has not farmed for decades, has converted agricultural buildings to housing, and uses the remaining barn for storage. This strongly undermines claims of agricultural need.

6. No Need from Tenant Farmer The tenant farmer has sufficient buildings and has previously stated no requirement for the applicant's facilities. The proposal is not necessary for the land's use.

7. Visual Impact and Loss of Openness Contrary to the applicant's claims, the building would be clearly visible from Lees Lane and from the well-used Parbold Hill viewpoint. It would intrude into open views and harm the rural landscape, resulting in loss of openness. 8. Access Concerns The application states use of an existing access, but mapping suggests a new track off Lees Lane. This raises concerns about accuracy and potential additional harm from new hardstanding or track creation.

Conclusion: The application should be refused because it:

- Fails to demonstrate agricultural need (NPPF 149(a))
- Is inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- Harms openness and landscape character
- Conflicts with Local Plan policies GN1, GN3, and EN2
- Lacks very special circumstances
- Relies on inaccurate access information

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15 pm.

Cllr Louise Howard
Chairman to Dalton Parish Council

13th July 2026