

CommunityTalk

IN RENNINGTON, ROCK & STAMFORD WINTER 2025



Neighbourhood Development Plan

We've made significant progress! After a challenging process, we've finally achieved the goal of starting the rounds of statutory consultations.

Last month, we invited residents and businesses in our parish to participate in the (Regulation 14) consultation on the Draft Plan, and this month we organised two 'Drop-In' sessions. We also have invited feedback from the statutory consultees. The Draft Plan is focused on preserving the rural character of our parish and reflects your views from our last round of consultations. The Draft Plan and all supporting documents are available on the parish website.

The consultation period runs until 1 December and provides an invaluable opportunity for you to share your views and contribute to shaping the future of our community. Your input is crucial.

Once the consultation closes, we'll review all the feedback, publicise it, and update the Draft Plan where necessary.

The Draft Plan will then be submitted to Northumberland County Council, who will review it and carry out their own six-week consultation. After which, an independent examiner will be appointed to review the Draft Plan. If approved, it will proceed to a local referendum, giving all residents the opportunity to vote on whether our Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted as part of Northumberland County Council's Planning Policies.

On Our Agenda

The Parish Council has been busy with several projects. Councillors recently planted more bulbs around the parish, installed a new bench on Rock Village Green, and added two new waste bins – one for Stamford and a replacement for the 'red' bin in Rennington. At our meeting on 13 November, the Council decided to repair the roof of the Hockett bus shelter, as it was significantly cheaper than demolishing it. We had received reports of problems with some of the pavements in Rock, and we're grateful to Highways for resurfacing them.

Promoting our principal settlements and encouraging safe driving is also a priority for the Council. To help with this, our County Councillor, Wendy Pattison, has kindly offered to fund some Glasdon gateway signs within the parish. Unfortunately, some of our narrow verges limit our ability to locate them. On advice from Highways, it has been agreed that four new Glasdon gateway signs will shortly replace the existing signs (one for Rock, one for Stamford, and two for Rennington). Additionally, one damaged

sign at Stamford will be replaced on a like-for-like basis.

Last year's parish-wide 'Spring Clean' was a resounding success, highlighting the pride residents have in our community. In view of this positive response, the Council has decided to make it an annual event. Our next annual 'Spring Clean' will be held on Saturday 21 March, and we'd be delighted if you would join us again for litter-picking, cleaning benches and road signs. Please meet up at 10 am in either Rock, Rennington or Stamford on the day. We'll be sending out a reminder in our upcoming Spring 2026 issue.

That's not all! At our Council meeting on 13 November, we discussed potential locations for a new defibrillator in Stamford. We're also commissioning a survey to assess the feasibility and potential costs of the footpath initiative linking Rock and Rennington.

We'll keep you updated in our Spring edition.

Bird Watch

How long do wild birds live?

This is a challenging subject to study because wild birds are difficult to track, and it's virtually impossible to know exactly when a bird began or ended its life. Birds don't exhibit visible signs of ageing – they don't lose their feathers, go grey, or become arthritic. Once in adult plumage, which they moult annually, they're impossible to age.

In animals, greater life expectancy generally correlates with a lower metabolic rate. In mammals, it's often linked to body size – humans live longer than dogs and cats, which live longer than mice or hamsters. Birds are different: they have extremely high metabolic rates, and some live a remarkably long time.

Most of our knowledge of wild bird lifespan comes from ringing studies:

- Body size – larger birds tend to live longer.
- Number of chicks – longer lifespans tend to correlate with fewer chicks.
- Years to reach adulthood – shorter-lived species reach adulthood more quickly.
- Life on the ground - birds that live on the ground have shorter lifespans.
- Island and marine life – birds that live at sea and nest on islands tend to live longer.

Songbirds' average lifespan is 1-3 years, though some may survive for over a decade. Approximately 80% of juvenile songbirds don't survive their first year due to predation, disease, food shortages, and accidents.

Larger birds such as owls and hawks may live for up to 30 years; arctic terns and eagles have documented lifespans of up to 35 years. The oldest living wild bird is a Laysan Albatross named 'Wisdom', which is documented to be over 70 years old. She has fledged more than 35 chicks but only one each year.



Tim Walls

Neighbourhood Community Resilience Plan

On Monday, 3rd November, members of the Parish Neighbourhood Community Resilience Group met at Rennington Village Hall for an annual refresher meeting with Nigel Fisher, the Civil Contingencies Officer for Northumberland County Council. It's been four years since Storm Arwen, but we never know what's around the corner, as the photo from that storm reminds us. Should an emergency arise, the group is ready and willing to help, equipped with torches and high-vis vests. The Village Hall will also be designated as the safe centre if required.

The whole Parish is now covered by area coordinators. If you need any assistance during an emergency, please contact Fred Bosanquet at fred_bosanquet@hotmail.com 07989 396 982 and volunteers will be on hand to help in any way they can.



Percy Farms Update

Harvest 2025 drew to a close in record timing on the 27th of August. This is after the driest growing season for the farm in 23 years. On the whole farm, yields have been pleasing; however, spring-planted crops really struggled from late April onwards and unfortunately did not yield to their full potential. As harvest was in full swing, we were already planting Harvest 2026 Oilseed Rape crop across the farm. We progressed well and completed all autumn planting by the end of September.

Whilst it has been a challenging year for growing crops on the farm, the wildlife has thrived in pleasant conditions with impressive numbers of farmland birds noticeable across our farmed area. The environmental stewardship habitats flourished with extended flowering periods due to the warm and sunny conditions. This, in turn, increased insects present in the crops for young chicks to feed on, giving them the best start to life on the farm.

Our focus now shifts to a busy winter of new hedge planting as part of a long-term environmental stewardship scheme. This initiative aims to increase the hedgerow areas on farmland and renew ageing fencing on the grass fields. We hope for a kind winter and a good spring for both the crops and wildlife on the farm.

Tom Ziemelis, Farm Manager



Tucked Away in Lee Moor...

... Alnwick Bakery is a small and growing craft business that some in the parish may not know about. Established in 2001 as part of Farm Bakery, which included two retail outlets, the bakery underwent a change in ownership and name in February 2022 and has since become an independent business.

Now exclusively supplying local shops, post offices, cafes, restaurants, and

hotels, as well as the two shops that were part of the original business, Alnwick Bakery has focussed its efforts on its strengths, producing buns, breads, and scones. The new owners' success is evident, growing through word-of-mouth. With a team of four, they can produce around 3,500 buns and 200-300 loaves of bread daily.

Good luck to them!



MURDER MOST FOUL



at Rennington Village Hall February 7th 2026, 7pm

A murder mystery evening at Rennington Village Hall including a simple three course supper. Drinks will be available from a pay bar.

Tickets, IN ADVANCE ONLY, £25 per head; under 18s, £15 per head.

A "cast of up to 20 players" will be required to enact the mystery but we can include additional "observers" who will act as detectives testing the evidence presented.

If you would like to join in the fun and spot the murderer please contact Chris Hedges to reserve your tickets. Please indicate if you would like to take a participating role or simply observe.

Chris Hedges - Email; chedges58@gmail.com - Mobile; 07736 770200



Did you Know?

In addition to its unique feature of having a 'large organ in a small church', the church in Rock dedicated to St Philip and St James also holds several fascinating and obscure facts.

- Often overlooked are the Monuments to members of the community, including the Bosanquet family, who have resided in Rock for centuries. Of particular note is the stained glass window in the nave, featuring symbols from the life of Charles Bosanquet and his wife, Barbara, who lived at Rock for much of the 20th century. The stained glass is the work of the highly accomplished and influential Leonard Evetts and highlights the church's artistic heritage.
- The floor of the chancel features a medieval grave cover depicting a sword and an axe; the latter is relatively rare on ecclesiastical grave slabs. It was John Salkeld of Hulne Abbey who was buried in the chancel after having purchased Rock in the year 1620.
- The Norman west door stands as a testament to its original state, still intact since its construction around 1176. It features a round-headed arch, ziz-zag ornamentation, and scalloped capitals on the jamb shafts, making it one of the most well-preserved examples of Norman ecclesiastical architecture in the region.
- By the end of the 18th century, the church had deteriorated so severely that no services could be held. In 1806, Charles Bosanquet, who had acquired the Estate in 1804, invested in the church to resurrect it as a building suitable for worship.

Nowadays open to visitors, the church remains a place of worship, a sanctuary of peace and beauty, and increasingly, a valuable asset to the Rock Community. Regular events in the summer include recitals on the restored organ.

Garden Talk

Perilous plants: a source of food and beauty but also of danger. Foxgloves (source of digoxin) are well known and I remember being told 'don't eat laburnum seeds'. While some plants, like potatoes and rhubarb, have edible parts, their leaves are highly poisonous. Adults know not to sample things they're unsure of, but children and pets are different. Plants with attractive berries can be a particular problem.



Honeysuckle produces lovely berries, but most are quite toxic. The lily-of-the-valley, while not a prolific berry producer, is also highly poisonous, both its berries and leaves. All parts of the yew are poisonous, and even handling the plant (pruning, etc.) should be done with care because toxins can be absorbed through the skin. Woodworkers take precautions when working with yew and avoid using it to make anything that comes into contact with food.

Monkshood (wolfbane) is a very attractive plant often used by flower arrangers. However, all parts of the plant, especially the roots, contain toxins that can be absorbed through the skin. Euphorbias, also known as spurges, require care because their sap can cause a severe photosensitive dermatitis.

Among wild flowers, hemlock (similar to cow parsley) is highly dangerous to handle and ingest. In Ancient Greece, it was considered a state poison. The name "Deadly Nightshade" hints at its deadly nature.

Nor are houseplants immune. The castor oil plant, for example, is a source of deadly ricin (the pellet in the umbrella). There are many other plants that can be deadly, so it's important to remember that plants are beautiful, but some can be deadly.

Hilary Walls

Your Suggestions

As we plan for next year, we'd love to hear your ideas for community projects that would make our parish area an even better place to live.

Some suggestions we've already had include replacing the old conifers on Rennington Green with specimen trees, or introducing the 'Little Free Libraries' (which are popular in coastal communities) into Rock, Rennington, and Stamford. However, before we decide on projects for next year, we want to hear your thoughts.

Have you noticed an area that could be revitalised, or a new facility or service that you think would be beneficial?

Submitting ideas is simple: just email the Parish Clerk (clerk@rennington-pc.gov.uk) with a short description of your idea. You don't need technical expertise – just a willingness to share your thoughts.



Best In Northumberland Awards

The Horseshoes Inn has some fantastic news!

They've made it to the finals of the Food & Drink Business of the Year category at the Best of Northumberland 2025 Awards. The awards ceremony will be held at Slaley Hall Hotel. We wish Gary and Charlotte every success!

Whats On

28 November 7pm

30 November 11-4pm

5 December 4-8pm

5 December 6.30pm

12 December 6.30pm

14 December 5pm

16 December 2.30pm

21 December 4pm

24 December 3pm

24 December 9pm

7 February 7pm

21 March 10am

Christmas Bingo - doors open 6.30pm, RVH

All Saints Christmas Fayre, RVH

Organic & Local Market, free entry, RVH

Christmas Tree Lighting, RVH

Christmas Quiz Night, RVH

Christmas Tree Lighting, Rock Village Green

Carol Singing at The Grange

Community Christmas Carols, All Saints, Rennington

Family Christingle Service, St Philip & St James, Rock

Candlelit Holy Communion, All Saints, Rennington

Murder Most Foul - £25 per head, under 18s £15, RVH

Spring Clean - meeting up in Rock, Rennington and Stamford

Next Issue

Spring 26; please submit content no later than 27 February 26

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