



Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum Constitution

Name of Forum:

The name of this Forum shall be "Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum", hereafter referred to as "the Forum"

Neighbourhood Area:

The Forum shall cover the Consett Neighbourhood Area, shown on the map in Appendix A, subject to any amendments as may be agreed with Durham County Council in its capacity as the Local Planning Authority designating the Neighbourhood Area.

Aim and Objects:

The purpose of the Forum is:

- To promote and improve the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the Consett Neighbourhood Area and its residents
- To prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the Consett Neighbourhood Area
- To ensure full community involvement, from all sections of the community
- To liaise with the County Council and its representatives on preparation of specific aspects of the Plan
- To make necessary arrangements for the publication of the Neighbourhood Plan, including publicising the Plan

Inclusion/Equalities Statement:

The Forum:

- shall not be affiliated to any political party or organisation
- is committed to a policy of inclusion of all members of the community and to the prevention of any form of discrimination such as age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief
- is committed to seeking out the views of those in the community who may be harder to reach, to maximise inclusion and participation in its activities and the decision-making process

Affiliations, Operations and Independence:

All members of the Forum shall act in the best interests of the Forum and the residents of the area and shall follow the good governance guidelines set out in the attached guidance (and any subsequent updates): <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/>

The Forum shall act in accordance with best practice and Government guidance in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, and shall seek to work collaboratively with the Local Planning Authority to achieve this



Powers:

In furtherance of its objects, the Forum may:

- Invite and receive contributions and raise funds where appropriate, to finance the work of the Forum, and to open a bank account to manage such funds
- Publicise and promote the work of the Forum and organise meetings, training courses, events, or seminars etc.
- Work with Forums or other groups of a similar nature and exchange information, advice, and knowledge with them, including cooperation with other voluntary bodies, charities, statutory and non-statutory organisations Employ staff, consultants, and volunteers as are necessary to conduct activities to meet the objects of the Forum
- Take any other action that is lawful and necessary to achieve the aims and objects of the Forum
- Seek to establish mechanisms for joint working and planning on any 'cross boundary' issues, where the boundaries of the proposed Consett Neighbourhood Area adjoin other designated Neighbourhood Areas or parished areas.

Membership:

- The Forum will comprise at least 21 individuals who live or work in the Consett Neighbourhood Area or who are elected members of Durham County Council
- New members may apply to join by completing an online form, or in writing to the Forum Chair or Secretary
- All members must complete an application form, where they agree to fulfil the constitution of the Forum, and provide contact details and evidence of eligibility
- Membership is open to all individuals who support the aims and objectives of the Forum and who live or work in the Consett Neighbourhood Area, or who are elected members of Durham County Council. Membership shall be accepted from different parts of the Consett Neighbourhood Area and different sections of the community in the Consett Neighbourhood Area
- Membership is open to all who are eligible, without distinction on the grounds of age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation
- All members will be obliged to abide by the Forum's constitution, and will commit to act legally, promoting inclusivity and equality
- Resignations from membership shall be submitted in writing to the Forum Chair or Secretary
- Membership may be refused or revoked where an individual or organisation does not meet eligibility criteria or acts in a way which is contrary to this constitution. This decision will be taken by a majority vote of the Management Committee, and the reasons for refusal/revocation shall be provided in writing. Any such person or organisation shall have the right to appeal to a Forum General Meeting.

Forum Meetings and Working Arrangements:

- An Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on an annual basis where Forum progress will be shared with the Consett Community.
- The Forum will meet a minimum of four times a year (including AGM). The quorum level will be set at 5 members (in addition to the Management Committee). Forum meetings shall be open to any member of the public to observe.



- In-person meetings will be held in appropriate locations throughout the Neighbourhood Area, in a spirit of open and inclusive membership and representation.
- The Officers may call additional meetings of the Forum from time to time as appears necessary to them.
- At least 14 days' notice shall be given to members of any Forum meeting to take place. Details will be publicised via email and the Forum website/social media.
- All Forum members are entitled to attend meetings to propose and vote for motions and to stand for election. Voting shall be by a show of hands.
- All decisions of meetings shall be minuted (by the Forum Secretary once appointed), distributed to members by email and approved at the start of the next meeting
- An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) may be requested in writing by at least one third of the membership of the Forum, giving notice to the Secretary, who shall convene the EGM within 21 days of receipt of the notice.

Management committee:

- At its inaugural meeting, the Forum shall elect a Management Committee of four Officers, plus 6 additional committee members from the wider membership, who will direct the policy and management of the Forum
- The Management Committee has day to day authority to make decisions about operational matters, but any decisions material to the Neighbourhood Plan must be ratified by vote at a meeting of the full Forum
- The Forum will have the power to co-opt members if it wishes to use this power
- Other members may be appointed to undertake responsibilities within the Forum.
- Sub Committees may be created to research and develop key sections of the Consett Area Neighbourhood Plan.
- Leaders of Sub Committees will demonstrate some knowledge and appreciation of the Neighbourhood Plan subject area they undertake to develop before being appointed in this role.
- A short proposal will be shared by those interested in leading a Sub Committee, setting out a brief summary of their relevant knowledge and appreciation, as well as any relevant experience relating to the subject matter with the Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum, and then a vote will be held to appoint the Sub Committee leaders.
- Following Sub Committee meetings, outcomes and plans must be shared with the full Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum.

Management Committee officers and roles:

- Chair: responsible for calling and chairing regular meetings and have a casting vote on elections and resolutions, if required; acts on behalf of the Forum and represents it externally; has the power to take decisions on urgent matters between meetings of the Forum and interpret the Constitution.
- Secretary: responsible for organising meetings, maintaining the minutes, recording the decisions of the Management Committee and membership, updating the Constitution of the Forum, and making all these documents available to members
- Treasurer: responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Forum and for presenting a budget annually for the following year to an Annual General Meeting. The Treasurer shall submit a summary of accounts to every full meeting of the Forum
- Data Protection Officer: responsible for applying the relevant General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to all personal data held by the Forum, and the correct handling of any confidential information received by the Forum



If the Chair is not present, another officer will chair the meeting. If the Secretary is not present, another officer will take the minutes.

Finances:

- Any money raised shall be used to further the aims of the Forum and for no other purpose.
- A bank account has been opened in the name of the Forum, with a minimum of two signatories.
- The account will require two signatures on any cheque or other bank document (except paying in slips).
- A statement of the Forum's financial position will be produced and available at Forum meetings.
- Finances shall be tabled at the AGM.
- No member shall derive any financial benefit from the Forum, except for payment of reasonable expenses.
- No money will be paid out in the name of the Forum without a receipt being presented.

Declarations of interest:

Declarations of interest and potential conflicts of interest will be recorded and managed:

- Business interests that could result in any personal or business gain must be declared.
- Personal interests must be declared, where close family or friends could potentially benefit from any decisions made.
- All ongoing declarations will be included in the minutes of Forum meetings, and they must also be included in individual membership application forms, where relevant.

Conflict Resolution:

At all times the Forum will recognise the primary need to encourage community involvement in, and support for, the Neighbourhood Plan. Where there are conflicts within the Forum, this will be minuted, and every effort made by the membership to resolve any differences by negotiation, and by consultation with the wider community. The final contents of the Neighbourhood Plan will be decided by a vote of the full Forum.

Duration:

The duration of the Forum is a maximum of 5 years from its inaugural general meeting

Amendments to the constitution:

This constitution shall become effective upon approval by the inaugural meeting of the Forum.

If amendment(s) to the constitution are necessary, members will be informed in writing and given the opportunity to consider and vote on the amendments. The amendment(s) will be made if there is a two-thirds majority vote of members.



Dissolution:

If the Management Committee, by a simple majority, deem it advisable to dissolve the Forum, it shall call a meeting of all the members of the Forum, giving not less than 14 days' notice. If such a decision is confirmed by a majority of those present, then all the assets of the Forum shall be transferred to another Forum, local voluntary group, or community group with similar aims.

Signed:.....(*Christine Thomas - Chair*)

Signed:.....(*Anne Louise Grant - Treasurer*)

Signed:.....(*Mike Shiels - Secretary*)

Signed:.....(*Lucy Reed - Data Protection officer*)

Signed:.....(*John Million - Committee member*)

Signed:.....(*Kelli Turner -Committee member*)

Signed:.....(*Mark Russell - Committee member*)

Signed:.....(*Maureen Clyne - Committee member*)

Signed:.....(*Niamh McDonald - Committee member*)

Signed:.....(*Richard Lumley -Committee member*)