GRISEDALE CROFT CARE HOME

What is happening, what we are doing about it, and how you can help

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1. The Threat

On **21 April 2026**, Westmorland and Furness Council (WFC) agreed — behind closed doors, with the press and public excluded — to begin a 12-week public consultation on the future of Grisedale Croft.

WFC is citing low occupancy (currently only three permanent residents), a building over 50 years old, high running costs and staffing pressures. Its **stated preferred option** is to find an alternative building locally — but only "if one could be acquired." There is no building identified. There is no funding confirmed. There is no timeline.

> **This is not just about a care home.**
>
> Grisedale Croft is the last surviving piece of a formal promise made to this community in 2018 when our hospital inpatient beds were permanently closed. Losing it would mean losing the only residential care facility in our area — and breaking a commitment that was the price of our silence when those beds went.

2. The Promise That Was Made

You will remember what happened with the Ruth Lancaster James Hospital. When the Clinical Commissioning Group approved the permanent closure of all inpatient beds in 2018, it was only after sustained, formal opposition — led by the **Alston Moor League of Friends and the Parish Council**, working together with the community. They engaged specialist public law solicitors, raised funds through CrowdJustice, and mounted a legal challenge — conducted throughout in a proper and measured way through lawful channels. The closure only went ahead on the NHS's formal undertaking that alternatives would be put in place. In their own words, alternatives would be in place "including... using residential beds as intermediate beds for health purposes."

That was Grisedale Croft. The two re-ablement and intermediate-care beds designated there were the NHS's answer to losing our hospital provision. They were not an add-on — they were part of the deal. The Alston Alliance Plan, the joint NHS and Council commitment to integrated local care, named this arrangement explicitly.

Most of what was promised in the Alston Alliance Plan was never delivered. The re-ablement beds at Grisedale Croft are, today, **the only element of that 2018 settlement that is still functioning.**

There is a human cost to this that goes beyond logistics. When an elderly person from Alston Moor is sent to a care home in another town, they lose the daily visits from friends and family that are a lifeline — particularly at the end of life. The difference between recovering or dying close to home, with familiar faces dropping in regularly, and recovering or dying in an unfamiliar institution far from everyone you know, is not a small one. It affects wellbeing, recovery and, we would argue, length of life itself. It also affects the care workers: a patient who is settled, content and well-visited is a patient whose care needs are lighter. The case for keeping Grisedale Croft is not only about promises and procedures. It is about what kind of community we are.

Why the low occupancy argument does not hold water:

We believe — and our Freedom of Information requests are designed to prove — that Alston Moor residents who should have been discharged to Grisedale Croft to recover at home have instead been sent to care homes in other towns. They were never told Grisedale was an option. The referral pathway that was supposed to keep the home full was never properly built. WFC is now using the low occupancy that its own failure produced as the reason to close the home. That is not acceptable.

3. What the Parish Council Is Doing

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Writing to Cllr Patricia Bell, WFC Cabinet Member for Adult Care.

We have written formally to ask her to step back from this consultation until a proper joint review with NHS partners has been carried out. We are asking her to look at what the 2018 commitments actually required, whether they were delivered, and what genuine replacement provision would look like — before any decision is made.

We have asked her to:

- Withdraw the consultation until a joint review with NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB, North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has been completed.
- Publish all 2017–2018 commitment documents — the Alston Alliance Plan, the NHS statements on intermediate-care beds, and WFC's own assessment of what was delivered.
- Build Grisedale Croft's occupancy by properly integrating it into hospital discharge pathways, as was always intended.
- Invest in the building — and if it needs replacing, replace it on Alston Moor, at full capacity, before closing what we have.
- Not pre-commit to any reduced-capacity alternative — such as the four- or five-bed option that has been informally discussed — before the review is done.

We are not expecting Cllr Bell to withdraw the consultation. But the request is now on the record, and she knows we understand the full history.

Submitting Freedom of Information requests.

Because we believe a joint review is unlikely to happen before the consultation closes, we have submitted Freedom of Information requests to eight different bodies. These force the evidence into the public domain — whatever happens with the consultation, the documentary record of what was promised and what was delivered will be on the public record.

4. Freedom of Information Requests

Because we believe a joint review is unlikely to be commissioned in time, the Parish Council has submitted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to the following bodies. These create a public record and will provide the evidence base for our full consultation response.

Body	What We Are Trying to Find Out
Westmorland & Furness Council (WFC)	Cabinet papers and reports on Grisedale Croft; full occupancy and referral data since 2018; building condition surveys; financial modelling of all options; equality impact assessments; the consultation process itself; and all records of the 2017-2018 Alston Alliance commitments and WFC's assessment of delivery against them as successor authority to Cumbria County Council.
North East & North Cumbria ICB (NHS)	All commissioning documents and correspondence about step-down and re-ablement beds at Grisedale Croft; all records of the 2017-2018 Alston Alliance Plan and the CCG commitments on replacement care provision; and the current status of any NHS funding for beds at Grisedale Croft.
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust	Legacy records of the 2018 hospital bed closure plan for Alston, including all commitments made about alternative provision; data on patient discharges to Grisedale Croft from Cumberland Infirmary.
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Data on patient discharges to Alston Moor from Hexham General Hospital; any records relating to the Ruth Lancaster James Hospital and the Alston Alliance Plan.
Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Data on patient discharges to Alston Moor from the Freeman Hospital and the Royal Victoria Infirmary — to establish how many of our residents are being sent elsewhere to recover rather than home.
Cumberland Council	Any records inherited from the former Cumbria County Council regarding the 2017-2018 Alston bed closures, the Alston Alliance Plan, and any Health Scrutiny Committee proceedings about Alston; also any cross-boundary placements of Cumberland residents in Grisedale Croft.
Care Quality Commission (CQC)	All inspection reports and monitoring records for Grisedale Croft since 2019; any correspondence with WFC about the potential closure; any concerns or notifications received about the home.
NHS England	All documents relating to the North Cumbria Success Regime (2015-2017) and the specific commitments made to Alston Moor; any monitoring or evaluation of whether those commitments were delivered.

5. Did This Happen to Your Family? We Need to Hear from You

One of the strongest arguments in our case is that Alston Moor residents who should have been discharged to Grisedale Croft to recover close to home were instead sent to care homes in other towns — leaving families with long journeys and patients far from their community. We believe this has been happening for years, and that it has directly contributed to the low occupancy figures WFC is now using to justify closure.

If you, or a family member or friend, were discharged from hospital to a care home outside Alston Moor when you would have preferred to come home to Grisedale Croft — or if you were never even told Grisedale Croft was an option — please contact the Parish Clerk with the details.

Please get in touch — your story matters

Contact the Parish Clerk: Claire Thomson

Alston Town Hall, Front Street, Alston, CA9 3RD

Tel: 01434 382076

Please share: your name, the approximate dates, which hospital the person was discharged from, and where they were sent instead. All information will be treated with care and used only to support the campaign — we will not share personal details without your permission.

Even one family's experience is powerful evidence. Please do not assume someone else will come forward.

We have created a form for you to use to give us information about your case.
https://forms.gle/hYpgZsxpAXNVo9VDA

We are also setting up an online form so you can submit your story easily from home. Details will be announced shortly — watch the noticeboard and the Parish Council website.

6. Stay Involved — This Is Just the Beginning

The Parish Council will be communicating regularly throughout the consultation period. Please watch out for further information on noticeboards, in the post offices, and on the Parish Council website at alstonmoorparish.gov.uk

- Respond to WFC's formal consultation when it opens — details will be announced in the coming weeks. Every individual response matters and the Council is legally required to consider each one.
- Write to your WFC councillors — Cllr Mary Robinson and Cllr Michael Hanley — and to Cllr Patricia Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Care.
- Write to your MP, Markus Campbell-Savours, at www.campbellsavours.uk

- Speak to your neighbours — make sure everyone in Garrigill, Nenthead and across the Moor knows what is at stake. Share this leaflet. The more voices we raise, the harder we are to ignore.
- Come along to future public meetings — we will announce these as soon as they are arranged.

This community has always engaged properly and persistently with decisions affecting its services, even when the outcome was not what was wanted. This time we have something we have not always had: **a specific, documented promise — made in writing, in public, by the NHS — that the proposal now being consulted on would directly undermine.** That promise is the foundation of everything the Parish Council is doing. Make your voice heard.

Grisedale Croft is the last promise made to this community still standing.

The Parish Council, working with this community, intends to hold them to it.