

4 August 2026

Councillor Jonathan Brook
Chair
Health and Wellbeing Board
Westmorland and Furness Council

Via email: Jonathan.brook@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Dear Jonathan

I am writing in your capacity as Chair of the Westmorland and Furness Health and Wellbeing Board regarding the ongoing consultation on Grisedale Croft.

I note that the Board's Annual Plan emphasises supporting people in the place they call home, strengthening community-based services and promoting effective intermediate care. Against that background, a number of constituents have asked whether the proposed reduction or closure of Grisedale Croft is consistent with those objectives.

In particular, I would welcome your views on:

- Whether reducing local care provision on Alston Moor aligns with the Board's commitment to enabling people to remain connected to their communities and support networks.
- How the loss of local beds would affect the availability of intermediate care and step-down provision within the area.
- Whether the Board has considered the practical implications for families required to travel considerable distances to visit relatives placed elsewhere.
- What role the Board intends to play in ensuring that health and social care planning for Alston Moor is undertaken in an integrated and place-based manner.

More broadly, I would welcome the Board's reflections on how the current consultation aligns with its wider objective of sustaining healthy and resilient communities. Many residents feel that the future of Grisedale Croft cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider history of service changes on Alston Moor. The community is still living with the consequences of the loss of hospital beds in 2018 and ambulance provision in 2021, and there is a growing concern that the further erosion of local services risks undermining both community confidence and long-term resilience.

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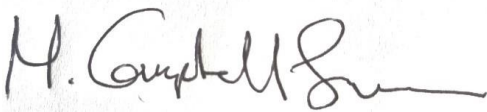
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Alston Moor's geographic isolation, limited public transport links and vulnerability to severe weather create circumstances that differ markedly from those in more accessible parts of the authority. For that reason, decisions about local care provision inevitably carry greater significance than they might elsewhere. There is a strong feeling locally that Alston Moor must not be left behind simply because providing services in a remote rural area is more challenging or more costly.

I would therefore be grateful for your assessment of how the current proposals can be reconciled with the Board's stated commitments to community-based care, intermediate care provision and reducing health inequalities, and what role the Board intends to play in safeguarding those objectives for Alston Moor residents.

Kind regards



Markus Campbell-Savours MP
Member of Parliament for Penrith and Solway

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Councillor Jonathan Brook
Chair, Health and Wellbeing Board
Westmorland and Furness Council

Wednesday 9th September 2026

Markus Campbell-Savours MP
Member of Parliament for Penrith and Solway
Unit 1B Lakeland Business Park
Lamplugh Road
Cockermouth
CA13 0QT

Dear Markus,

Re: Grisedale Croft Consultation and the Role of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Thank you for your letter of 4 August 2026 regarding the consultation on the future of Grisedale Croft and its relationship to the priorities of the Westmorland and Furness Health and Wellbeing Board.

I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your correspondence. It was important that the consultation process was allowed to conclude and that the views expressed through that process could begin to be considered before providing a substantive response. I appreciate your patience whilst officers have been reviewing the significant volume of feedback received from residents, families, staff and stakeholders.

As you will be aware, the consultation on the future of Grisedale Croft closed on 19 August 2026. The Council is currently reviewing and analysing the responses received, and a report setting out the findings of the consultation, together with recommendations regarding the future of the service, is scheduled to be considered by the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 September 2026, before being considered by Cabinet on 13 October 2026. Until Cabinet has considered the evidence and reached a decision, no determination has been made regarding the future of Grisedale Croft.

In your letter, you ask how the consultation aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities and what role the Board has played in considering the implications for Alston Moor.

The Health and Wellbeing Board's role is to bring together partners across health, care and the wider system to improve health outcomes, reduce

inequalities and support the delivery of integrated services. The Board does not make operational decisions regarding individual care settings, nor does it determine the outcome of Council consultations. However, it does have an important strategic role in promoting collaborative working and ensuring that decisions are considered within the broader context of population health, community wellbeing and place-based service delivery.

You specifically ask whether reducing local care provision on Alston Moor is consistent with the Board's commitment to enabling people to remain connected to their communities and support networks. This is a key consideration that has been raised by consultation respondents and stakeholders.

You also ask about the potential impact on intermediate care and step-down provision. The Health and Wellbeing Board recognises the importance of strong intermediate care pathways in supporting people to recover, maintain independence and avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital or long-term care.

With regard to the implications for families travelling to visit relatives, the Board recognises that maintaining contact with family, carers and wider support networks is an important aspect of wellbeing. The challenges associated with rurality, distance, public transport availability and adverse weather conditions are well understood.

It is also worth highlighting that representatives of Alston Moor Parish Council have had the opportunity to discuss many of these concerns directly with senior leaders from both the Council and the NHS. Following arrangements made by Nikkie Phipps, Director of Care Services at Westmorland and Furness Council, a meeting was held on 21 August 2026 with representatives of Alston Moor Parish Council, Rachel Mitcheson, Director at the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, and Councillor Patricia Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care. The discussion focused on the future of Grisedale Croft, wider health and care provision within Alston Moor, and the particular challenges associated with delivering services in a remote rural community. Such engagement is an important part of ensuring that local perspectives continue to inform decision-making and future service planning.

You also ask about the Board's role in ensuring integrated and place-based planning for Alston Moor. The Board will continue to support partnership working between the Council, NHS organisations, the Integrated Care Board, voluntary and community sector partners and local communities.

More broadly, I recognise the strength of feeling within the local community that Grisedale Croft should be considered in the context of wider changes to health and care services on Alston Moor over recent years.

The Health and Wellbeing Board remains committed to supporting healthy and resilient communities, reducing inequalities and promoting integrated care that reflects the needs of local people.

I hope this response is helpful. The report detailing the consultation findings and recommendations will be published in advance of its consideration by the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 September 2026 and subsequent consideration by Cabinet on 13 October 2026, in accordance with the Council's usual governance processes.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Jonathan Brook
Chair, Health and Wellbeing Board
Westmorland and Furness Council

4 August 2026

Councillor Patricia Bell
Cabinet Member for Adult Care
Westmorland and Furness Council

Via email: patricia.bell@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Dear Patricia

I am writing regarding Westmorland and Furness Council's consultation on the future of Grisedale Croft.

I have been contacted by constituents who are concerned that proposals to close or substantially reduce provision at Grisedale Croft do not adequately reflect either the facility's history or the role it was intended to fulfil following the 2018 reorganisation of healthcare services on Alston Moor.

I understand local stakeholders are seeking five specific commitments from the Council:

1. Withdrawal of the current consultation until a joint review involving the Council, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has considered whether the commitments made in 2017-2018 were fully delivered.
2. Publication of the relevant commitment documents, including the Alston Alliance Plan, NHS statements concerning intermediate care beds, and the Council's assessment of delivery against those commitments.
3. Action to improve occupancy through fuller integration of Grisedale Croft into discharge and step-down pathways.
4. Investment in the existing facility and, should replacement become necessary, a commitment to provide replacement capacity in Alston before existing provision is withdrawn.
5. An undertaking not to pre-determine a reduced-capacity replacement model before the above review has been completed.

I would be grateful if you could set out the Council's position on each of these points.

I would also welcome clarification as to how the Council has assessed the practical consequences of reducing local care capacity for residents and their families. Alston

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Moor's remoteness and limited public transport links create particular challenges in maintaining family contact when people are placed in care outside the area. For many families, regular visiting becomes difficult or, in some cases, effectively impossible.

In addition, I would appreciate confirmation of how the Council has discharged its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, including whether sufficient consideration has been given to the impact on unpaid carers, who are predominantly women and who frequently balance multiple caring responsibilities. I would be interested to understand how these factors have been reflected in the Council's equality impact assessments.

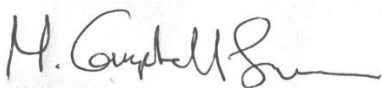
More broadly, I would ask the Council to reflect carefully on what the managed decline or closure of Grisedale Croft would mean for Alston Moor as a whole. Local residents increasingly see Grisedale Croft not as an isolated service, but as the remaining element of the package of provision that was intended to follow the closure of in-patient beds at the Ruth Lancaster James Cottage Hospital in 2018. If this facility is now allowed to decline or disappear, many will regard that as confirmation that the commitments made at that time were never fully honoured.

There is a strong feeling locally that Alston Moor must not simply be written off because providing services in a remote rural community is more expensive. The area is still adjusting to the loss of its hospital beds in 2018 and ambulance provision in 2021. Given the town's distance from major centres, limited public transport and susceptibility to severe weather, the withdrawal of further local provision would have consequences far greater than would be the case elsewhere in the authority.

I therefore urge the Council to ensure that the long-term sustainability of health and care services, community resilience and the needs of local residents are given equal weight alongside financial considerations when determining the future of Grisedale Croft.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards



Markus Campbell-Savours MP
Member of Parliament for Penrith and Solway

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