

# **Lorton Parish Council**

## **Parish Plan 2025**

### **Draft for Consultation**



*Image courtesy of John Macfarlane.*

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## **Foreword**

The Lorton Parish Plan has been developed with input from parish residents. It ensures that their views and priorities are recognised and can be referred to by local government and external organisations when considering matters that affect our parish. The plan will also guide the Parish Council in responding to local issues, needs, and opportunities, helping to ensure that decisions reflect the views of the community.

To shape the plan, the Parish Council conducted a village survey in early 2024. A total of 62 questionnaires were returned, the majority from full-time residents. The results were carefully analysed and shared through the Parish Council newsletter, with a full summary published on The Melbreak Communities website.

This draft Parish Plan is directly informed by those survey responses. It reflects the current views of residents who took part and outlines ideas for the future. In doing so, the plan creates a useful reference for future decision-making and a shared understanding of community priorities.

The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of the plan, including those who supported the survey process and helped analyse the results. Above all, we thank the residents who shared their views; your input has shaped this document and will continue to guide the work that follows.

## **Role of the Parish Council**

As a volunteer body responsible for representing the interests of the local community, Lorton Parish Council seeks to foster a safe, inclusive, and vibrant environment while preserving the unique character of the village.

This Parish Plan will support that role by providing a clear framework for decisions over the next five years. It outlines steps to respond to the issues and opportunities raised through the 2024 community survey, helping the Parish Council align its actions with the priorities of local residents. By drawing directly on community input, the plan ensures that future developments remain rooted in what matters most to the people who live here.

The Parish Council has a number of responsibilities and limited powers under English and Welsh law. These allow it to manage local amenities, maintain public spaces, and support events and activities in the community. Its budget is raised from local sources and carefully allocated to projects that benefit the Parish. More detail about the Parish Council's powers and limitations as well as what people can expect from a Parish Council meeting can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

## **The Parish of Lorton**

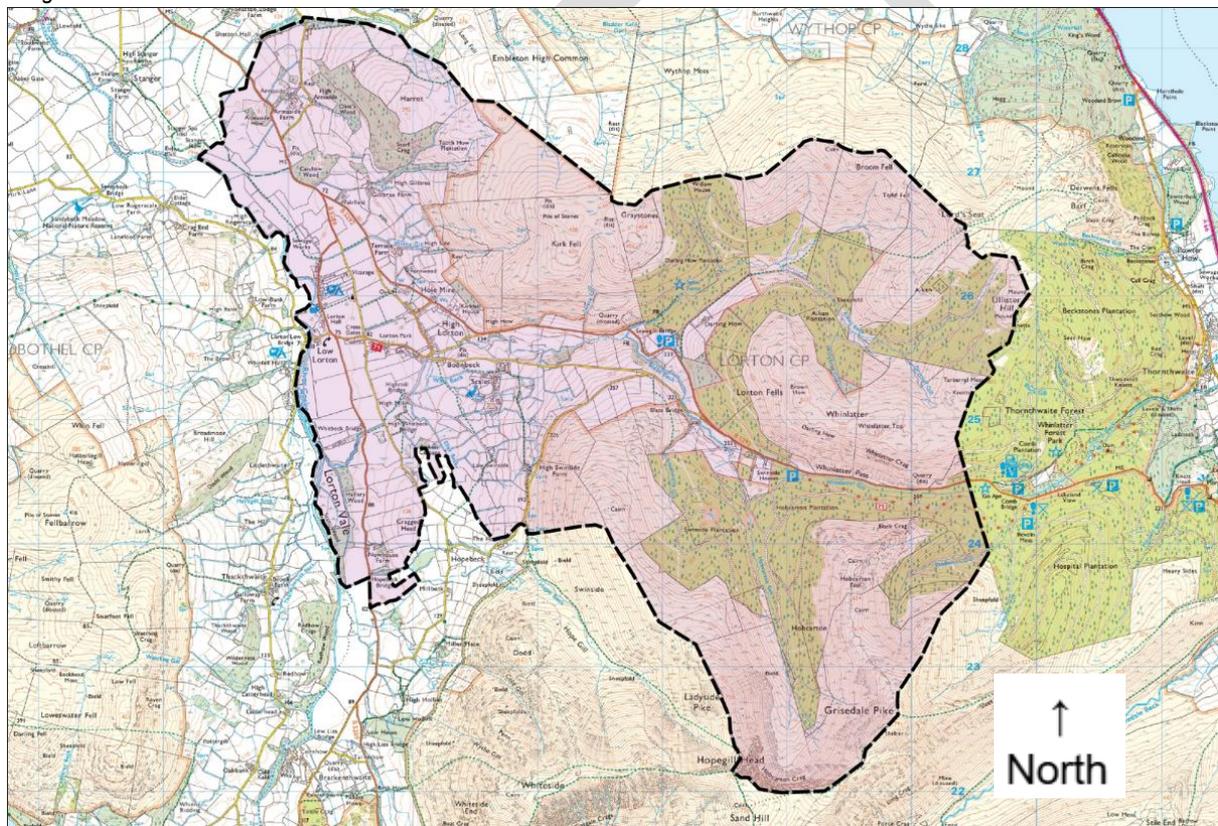
### [Location](#)

The Parish of Lorton is a picturesque rural community located within the northwestern

section of the Lake District National Park (Unesco World Heritage Site), in Cumbria, North West England. It is approximately four miles south of Cockermouth. It sits within the scenic Vale of Lorton, the valley of the River Cocker, and is flanked by the Northern and North Western Fells.

The Parish comprises two linked settlements, High Lorton and Low Lorton, which were originally two separate row villages based on two separate manors, farming community, and scattered dwellings. It covers an area of approximately 22 km<sup>2</sup> (2,200 hectares). The landscape is characterised by open farmland, woodland and the dramatic backdrop of surrounding fells. The parish has road connections to Cockermouth, Loweswater, and Buttermere and beyond, as well as to Braithwaite and Keswick via Whinlatter Pass. The principal local authority is Cumberland Council; however, the Lake District National Park is the planning authority.

Image 1: Lorton Parish area

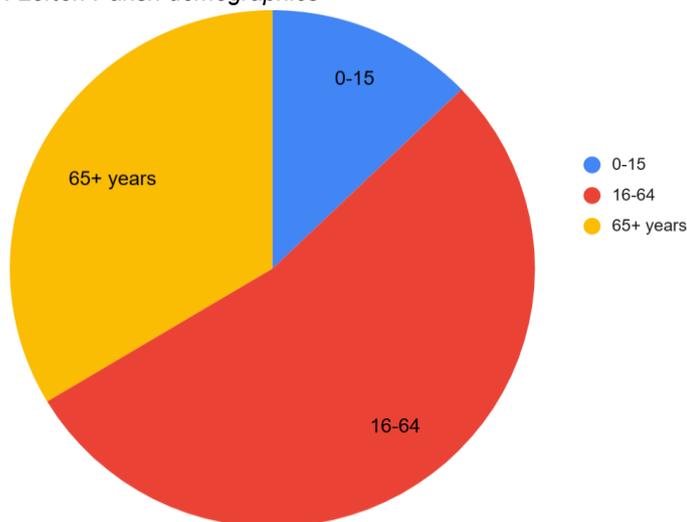


← 1km grid →

## Demographics

Lorton Parish has a relatively small population of 253 residents across 120 permanent households. The community is primarily made up of families and retirees, the majority (54%) are of working age, with a significant proportion (34%) of residents being over the age of 65. Young people are in the minority (14%). (Source Census 2021, Office for National statistics - see appendix B).

Graph 1: Lorton Parish demographics



### Amenities

Lorton Parish offers essential local amenities, including a:

- primary school, Lorton Primary School
- public house, The Wheatsheaf
- village shop, Lorton Shop
- Grade II Listed village hall, Yew Tree Hall
- 12th century church, St Cuthbert's
- tennis courts

In addition there are a number of public spaces, including the Parish Field (adjacent to the School), The Pound at Boonbeck bridge, and Crossgates wildflower areas.

Additional services such as healthcare (GPs and dentists), leisure facilities, and a secondary school, are available in Cockermouth and other local towns.

Primary-aged children can attend Lorton Primary School, which currently has 45 pupils. The school has access to the Parish Field, a recreational space gifted to Lorton Parish Council in 1935 for the use of children in the Parish. The field is also used for annual sports days, rounders matches, football, and other sports. It also has a table tennis table and swings. Outside of school hours, during weekends, and in holidays, village children and visitors have access to the school's play area.

### Community

Lorton has a wide range of societies and organisations, including local history, gardening, wildlife, and arts and crafts groups and tennis and table tennis clubs. Many events are designed as opportunities for community members to share skills and knowledge, while social clubs organize activities such as coffee mornings, days out, wine tastings, and film nights, many of which take place regularly at the village hall. Other community events are

school fundraisers by Friends of Lorton School, including Christmas fetes, the Lorton 10K, and the annual Duck Race.

The Melbreak Communities, a community group comprising the four parishes of Blindbothel, Buttermere, Lorton and Loweswater, has a clear focus on community resilience, established in 2009 following that year's floods.

Its landscape, rich history, and opportunities for outdoor recreation make it an appealing place to live and visit, offering a peaceful and scenic environment steeped in heritage and natural beauty.

Appendix D has a directory of the facilities, organisations, clubs and societies that are part of the community of Lorton.

### Economy

The predominant economic activity in Lorton is farming. There are several operating farms in the area, ranging from dairy, pastoral and hill farming. The rural community is significant. Tourism also plays a key role in the Parish economy with visitors making many local businesses viable but sometimes with associated burdens on infrastructure, environment, and housing demand.

Some economically active residents commute to Cockermouth, Keswick, Workington, or further afield. A significant number work from home. Very few are employed within Lorton Vale or the wider Melbreak Communities area, with the exception of farming. Local job opportunities are limited, and housing affordability and availability remains a challenge, with high demand and house prices that exceed average local income levels for West Cumbria.

### Housing

Although there are a small number of modern houses, Lorton is characterised by traditional stone-built cottages, farmhouses and two substantial halls set in their own grounds. Many of these buildings have historic value and indeed there are 26 Grade II Listed buildings in the parish, which includes Yew Tree Hall. It is an attractive village, with significant heritage value.

According to Cumberland Council's records, in February 2025, there were 174 residential properties in the parish. Out of this number, 28 were categorised as second homes, with a further 21 being registered as holiday lets. Together they amount to almost 30% of the housing stock.

This table provides an overview of the number and types of residential properties in the Parish, alongside the number of residents and households recorded in 2025.

Category	Number <sup>1</sup>	Percentage
<b>Total residents</b>	253	—
<b>Total residential properties</b>	174	100%
└ Permanent residences	125	71.8%
└ Non-permanent residences (total)	49	28.2%
• Second homes	28	16.1%
• Holiday lets	21	12.1%
<b>Permanent households (occupied)</b>	120	—

#### Definitions:

- Residents refers to the total number of individuals living full-time in the parish.
- Residential properties include all dwellings in the parish, whether occupied permanently, used occasionally, or let out.
- Permanent households are homes occupied by full-time residents — each household may consist of individuals or families.
- Non-permanent residences include second homes and holiday lets that are not lived in year-round.

### **Key issues affecting Lorton Parish and Priorities**

The overall vision for the Lorton Parish is to foster a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community while preserving the unique. The Parish Council seeks to facilitate and support work in the community that aligns with this aim.

The Lorton Parish Council 2024 survey identified **three key priorities for residents**:

- 1. Preserving Lorton Parish's unique character by protecting both its natural beauty and built heritage**
- 2. Maximizing existing local amenities to ensure they are well-used and maintained**
- 3. Fostering a welcoming and inclusive community for both current and future residents**

These priorities reflect the fact that 95% of respondents reported being satisfied with the quality of life in Lorton and wish to see it maintained and enhanced. This provides a firm foundation for the community to build upon when producing its parish plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Total residents data sourced from Census 2021. total residential properties data sourced from Cumberland Council.

The following Action Plan aims to support these priorities, while also addressing three specific issues identified, including:

1. **Road Safety:**

Residents raised concerns about road and traffic safety within Lorton village, including speeding, road conditions, and parking shortages. Limited parking, especially near the Village Hall and school contributes to congestion, while speeding, poorly maintained narrow lanes, and potholes all pose safety risks.

2. **Public Transport:**

Public transport options are limited, especially in winter when the seasonal bus service to Cockermouth and Keswick does not operate throughout the Lorton Valley. Many residents are dependent on the ability to drive their own vehicle.

3. **Housing Policy:**

The availability of affordable housing is a concern as well as the impact of second homes and holiday lets on the village's viability.

A key concern highlighted in the community survey was the effect of second homes and holiday lets on the viability of the village. In the Parish, close to 30% of the housing stock falls into these categories, which is above the 20% threshold identified by the Lake District National Park Authority as the point where a settlement's sustainability may be affected<sup>2</sup>.

Both Cumberland Council and the Lake District National Park Authority have policies aimed at reducing the number of second homes and holiday lets, and at increasing the availability of affordable homes. Please see Appendix C for further details.

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<sup>2</sup> Who Pays for the Lake District?, pg 20, Research commissioned by Friends of the Lake District (<https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/whopaysforthelakes>)

## Action Plan

<b>Priority 1: Preserving Lorton Parish's unique character</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Rationale / Outcome</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Key Stakeholder(s)</b>	<b>Timescale (year)</b>
Work to recognise natural environment and local conservation efforts as part of The Melbreak Communities efforts	Protects and promotes local nature, sustainability and raises community awareness	A cared for natural environment	The Melbreak Communities / Local conservation groups	Ongoing
Monitor developments that could potentially impact flooding in the future. Feedback to MBC planning applications made.	Protects community from flood risk and ensures sustainable development that doesn't exacerbate flooding issues.	Reduced flood risk and appropriate development controls.	Cumberland Council / Lake District National Park / Environment Agency / Local residents	Ongoing
Consider designating the village as a Conservation Area	Provides additional planning control to help preserve natural and built environment	Protected character and heritage features	Lake District National Park	1st–3rd
<b>Priority 2: Maximizing existing local amenities</b>				
Continue working with Yew Tree Hall on its upgrade or replacement	Ensures long-term, inclusive community space	Modern, accessible facility	Yew Tree Hall Trustees	Ongoing
Enhance and promote awareness and usage of community outdoor spaces for all age groups across community	Encourages broader use of existing green areas, encourages inclusive use and strengthens community ties	Increased use and upkeep of local amenities/ green space, stronger social connections	The Melbreak Communities/ Local Groups	Ongoing
Collaborate with local institutions to strengthen community use	Encourages community unity and sustainability of local facilities	Better engagement and shared use	Lorton Primary School, Lorton Village Shop, The Wheatsheaf, St Cuthbert's	Ongoing

<b>Priority 3: Fostering a welcoming and inclusive community</b>				
Maintain existing and identify new safe, accessible walking routes and travel connections	Makes the village more accessible for all if meeting miles without stiles or safe school routes schemes that also serve other amenities in the village including Church and Shop which have no pavement access.	Greater access for residents and visitors	Landowners/ Lake District National Park	Ongoing
<b>Issue 1: Road Safety</b>				
Explore traffic-calming, speed limits, and signage	Identifies concerns and improves safety	Safer roads for all	Cumberland Council	Ongoing
Explore a twenty is plenty signage programme	Improves road safety for all users, identifies what speed measures can be in place.	Safer roads for all	Cumberland Council	Ongoing
Appraise parking availability.	Tackles parking issues	Improved parking	Community Stakeholders	Ongoing
Promote alternatives to car use with better bike/pedestrian access	Encourages healthier travel and reduces congestion	Safer, more active transport options	Community Groups	Ongoing
<b>Issue 2: Public Transport</b>				
Work with transport providers to extend bus service beyond tourist season	Improves year-round access	More reliable public transport	Transport Providers/ Cumberland Council	Ongoing
Investigate a community bus or car-sharing scheme	Builds a flexible and sustainable transport system	More inclusive transport access	School / The The Melbreak Communities groups	Ongoing
<b>Issue 3: Housing Policy</b>				

Through the planning process encourage sustainable and affordable housing in the community.	Supports long-term housing needs in the community	More energy-efficient, local occupancy, affordable homes	LDNPA	Ongoing
Collaborate with the LDNPA to explore further measures for managing second homes and holiday lets	Provides greater control over housing management	Balanced housing market that supports full-time residents	LDNPA	Ongoing
Support Cumberland Council's review of Council Tax for second homes and unoccupied properties	Promotes fairness in the housing market	Increased housing availability for local residents	Cumberland Council	Ongoing
Continue backing the Lake District National Park Authority's (LDNPA) efforts to increase permanent housing	Enhances community sustainability	Higher proportion of permanent homes in the National Park	LDNPA	Ongoing

### Summary

By addressing these issues, Lorton Parish can enhance community facilities, improve transport and accessibility, support local housing needs, and create a more connected and inclusive village.

## Appendix A. – Powers and Limitations of a Parish Council in the United Kingdom

### And What People Can Expect of a Parish Council Meeting

Parish councils in the UK have various legal powers and responsibilities granted by different statutes. These powers enable parish councils to make decisions and take actions that benefit their communities. While they have some statutory obligations, most of their powers are discretionary, meaning they can choose whether to use them based on the needs and priorities of the local community.

#### Key Legal Powers of a Parish Council in the UK

##### 1. General Power of Competence:

- **Localism Act 2011:** This relatively new power allows eligible parish councils to do anything an individual might do, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. To use this power, the parish council must meet specific criteria, including having a qualified clerk and at least two-thirds of its members elected.

##### 2. Provision and Maintenance of Public Amenities:

- **Public Health Act 1936 & Local Government Act 1972:** Parish councils can provide and maintain various public amenities, such as parks, open spaces, public toilets, village greens, and recreation grounds.
- They can also manage community centers, village halls, and other facilities for social, educational, and recreational purposes.

##### 2. Allotments:

- **Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908:** Parish councils have a duty to provide allotments if there is demand. They can acquire land for this purpose and manage and maintain allotments for residents.

##### 2. Burial Grounds and Cemeteries:

- **Local Government Act 1972 & Open Spaces Act 1906:** Parish councils can provide and maintain burial grounds, cemeteries, and crematoria, either independently or in partnership with other local authorities.

##### 2. Highways and Transport:

- **Highways Act 1980 & Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984:** Parish councils have powers related to public footpaths, bridleways, and lighting of footpaths and roads.
- They can also contribute to traffic calming measures, provide bus shelters, and work with principal authorities on local transport initiatives.

##### 2. Planning:

- **Town and Country Planning Act 1990:** Parish councils are statutory consultees on planning applications. This means they have the right to be notified about planning applications within their area and to submit comments to the local planning authority. However, they do not have the

power to approve or reject planning applications.

2. **Community Safety:**

- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998:** Parish councils can take action to promote community safety, including installing CCTV, providing street lighting, and participating in crime reduction partnerships.

2. **Environment:**

- **Environmental Protection Act 1990 & Litter Act 1983:** Parish councils have the power to provide litter bins, manage public waste collection, and take measures to prevent and control litter and environmental pollution.
- They can also issue dog control orders and work on local environmental conservation projects.

2. **Tourism and Economic Development:**

- **Local Government Act 1972:** Parish councils can encourage tourism and contribute to local economic development through promotional activities and providing or maintaining tourist facilities.

2. **Public Rights of Way:**

- **Highways Act 1980:** Parish councils can maintain public rights of way, such as footpaths and bridleways, ensuring they are accessible and safe for public use.

2. **War Memorials:**

- **War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923 & Local Government Act 1948:** Parish councils can maintain, repair, and protect war memorials within their parish.

2. **Community Grants and Funding:**

- **Local Government Act 1972:** Parish councils have the power to provide grants and funding to support local community groups, charities, and initiatives that benefit residents.

2. **Entertainment and the Arts:**

- **Local Government Act 1972:** Parish councils can support and provide entertainment, arts, and cultural activities, including concerts, festivals, and public events.

2. **Provision of Bus Shelters and Public Clocks:**

- **Parish Councils Act 1957 & Local Government Act 1972:** Parish councils can provide and maintain bus shelters and public clocks.

2. **General Community Well-being:**

- **Local Government and Rating Act 1997:** Parish councils can take any action that is for the general well-being of the community, provided it does not contravene other laws.

### **Financial Powers and Responsibilities**

- **Precept:** Parish councils have the power to raise funds through a "precept," which is a local tax levied on the residents of the parish as part of their council tax. This provides the parish council with a budget to fund its activities and services.
- **Borrowing:** Under certain conditions, parish councils have the power to borrow

money to fund larger projects, but this usually requires approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG).

### **Statutory Duties**

While parish councils have many discretionary powers, they also have some statutory duties, such as:

- **Conducting Annual Meetings and Elections:** Ensuring proper governance, transparency, and democratic processes.
- **Maintaining Proper Financial Records and Audit Compliance:** Parish councils must maintain accurate accounts and comply with audit regulations.
- **Adhering to Code of Conduct and Standards:** Councillors must follow a code of conduct and uphold standards of public life.

### **Purpose and Role of Parish Council Meetings**

- To discuss and act on matters raised by local residents
- To vote on matters affecting the local community, from small spending decisions e.g. planting tubs to planning responses

### **Meeting Structure and Procedures**

- Lorton Parish Council meetings are held every two months, minutes are taken (and approved), financial accounts are reviewed, and statutory notices are given
- Lorton Parish Council meetings should provide a forum for residents to raise concerns, take part in local decision making, and share ideas about community issues (that could be acted on within or outside of LPC)
- Decisions are made by voting
- Agenda items are added to the agenda by (insert LPC process)
- Public participation is allowed, and there is time at each LPC for this. However, it should be noted that as formal local government meetings, participation from the public is limited to the agenda time only

### **What the Public Can Expect from Participation**

- A dedicated slot early in the meeting (often after formalities but before main business)
- Typically lasts 15 minutes total, may be time-limited per speaker (often 3 minutes each)

### **What the Public Can Do in a Parish Council Meeting**

- Raise concerns about local issues affecting the parish
- Ask questions about council decisions or spending
- Request the council to consider taking action on specific matters
- Provide information relevant to agenda items
- Express views on planning applications or local developments

**In summary**

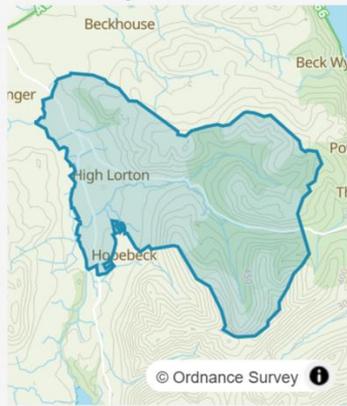
Parish councils in the UK have a broad range of powers and responsibilities, given to them by Parliament, that allow them to address local issues and improve the quality of life for their communities. These powers are designed to be flexible, giving parish councils the ability to focus on what matters most to their residents. By using these powers effectively, parish councils can play a vital role in local governance and community development.

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## Appendix B - Lorton, ONS images

### Lorton

#### Area map



#### Population

**250**  
people

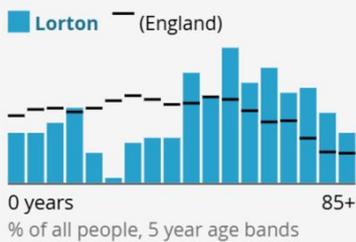
**56,490,000** people in England  
Rounded to the nearest 10 people

#### Number of households

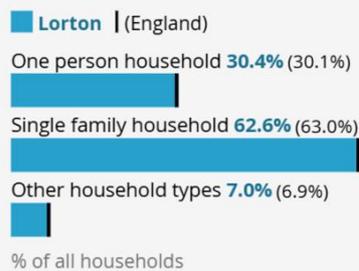
**120**  
households

**23,436,100** households in England  
Rounded to the nearest 10 households

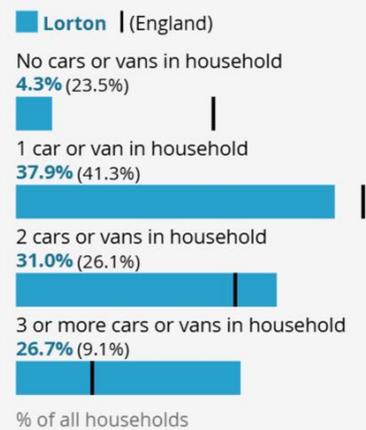
#### Age profile



#### Household composition

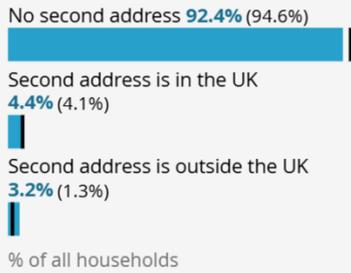


#### Number of cars or vans



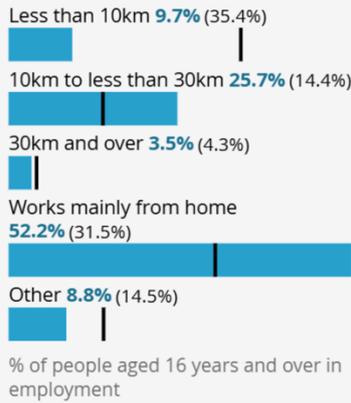
## Second address indicator

Lorton (England)



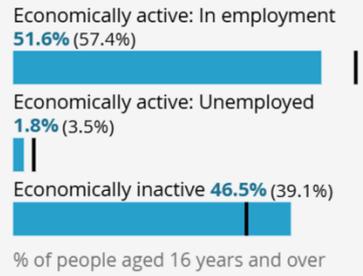
## Distance travelled to work

Lorton (England)



## Economic activity status

Lorton (England)



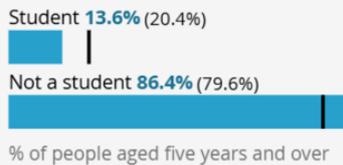
## Occupation

Lorton (England)



## Schoolchildren and full-time students

Lorton (England)



## **Appendix C - Cumberland Council Policy and LDNPA Policy - Housing**

### **Cumberland Council Policy**

From 1st April 2025

- all properties classed as second homes will be subject to a 100% council tax premium
- long term empty properties between 1-5 years will be subject to a 100% council tax premium
- long term empty properties between 5-10 years will be subject to a 200% council tax premium

This policy directly benefits the parish as any additional council tax results in an increase in the 'top slice' of monies payable to the Parish Council via the precept charge.

The overall impact of this policy will not be known for a couple of years yet.

Link: <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategies-allerdale>

### **Lake District National Park Authority Policy**

Existing policies include

- all planning applications for new homes will be conditioned that they only be occupied as a permanent home, and not be permitted to be used as either a second home or holiday let. The majority of these will also be subject to a local occupancy clause.

This policy is active in Lorton, with around a dozen or more properties being subject to local occupancy clauses

Link: <https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/planning/planningpolicies/local-plan/policies/policy-15-housing>

## Appendix D - Directory of facilities, services, clubs and organisations

### Community Facilities

#### The Melbreak Communities

- Website and “home” to the four parish Councils in the Vale of Lorton, and many of the other community organisations

<https://melbreakcommunities.wordpress.com/>

#### Lorton Parish Council

The Parish Council has the following facilities

- The Pound
  - PC owned shared communal space
  - Free to access
  - Play area for children – please be aware of the river. Access should be supervised, with safety and supervision being the responsibility of parents or guardians.
  - Quiet space
  - Dogs are allowed on The Pound, but please clean up after them.
- Parish field
  - PC owned, recreational space, given to the village for the benefit of the children
  - Used as the school playing field, so access at times can be restricted for safeguarding reasons
  - Dogs are not permitted for hygiene reasons
  - Play equipment is provided and maintained by the school
  - Table tennis table – bats and balls are stored underneath the table
  - Available for general public use, and group use by arrangement: contact [lortonparishclerk@gmail.com](mailto:lortonparishclerk@gmail.com)
- Benches
  - 12 benches at various locations around the parish
  - Maintained by the Parish Council
- Yew Tree Hall
  - Owned and managed by a separate community body.
  - The village Hall <https://yewtreehall.uk/>
  - Used by different clubs and societies, and for village functions
  - Can be booked for private functions - see website
  - The gardens at the end of Yew Tree Hall are open for community enjoyment

#### Other village facilities

- The Wheatsheaf Inn
  - <https://wheatsheafinnlorton.co.uk/>
- The Village Shop
  - <https://www.lortonvillageshop.com>
- The School
  - <https://www.lorton.cumbria.sch.uk>

- St Cuthberts Church
  - Runs a “free library” in the church

### **Clubs and organisations**

- Lorton Tennis Club
  - Courts can be booked by non club members using the Clubspark app
  - <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/LortonLTC>
- Vale of Lorton Community First Responders
  - Volunteers, and part of North West Ambulance Service, who respond to life threatening conditions
  - In an emergency dial 999 and ask for Ambulance. If appropriate ambulance control will task Community First Responders
- Lorton and Derwent Fells Local History Society
  - <http://www.derwentfells.com>
- Lorton Gardening Club
  - <https://melbreakcommunities.wordpress.com/activities/local-clubs-and-societies/lorton-gardening-club>
- Lorton Table Tennis Club
  - <https://melbreakcommunities.wordpress.com/activities/local-clubs-and-societies/table-tennis-club>
- Other clubs and societies
  - These are listed on The Melbreak Communities website  
<https://melbreakcommunities.wordpress.com/activities/local-clubs-and-societies>