

WARK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey

Contact: clerk.wark@gmail.com

Meeting held 27th November 2023 at 7pm in Wark Community Centre, Westacres, Wark

MINUTES OF MEETING

- Welcome and Apologies for Absence: Present:** Councillor E Jeffrey (EJ), Councillor A Hutchinson (AH), Councillor J Riches (JR), Councillor J Wier (JW), Councillor B Murray (BM), Councillor L Lorraine (LL), County Councillor N Morphet (NM), Clerk and x1 Member of Public (MOP) **Apologies:** Councillor S Batey.
- Public Participation (For Members of the Public to speak - Restricted to 10mins max):**

EJ questioned if anyone had any issues to raise.

 - MOP raised Website and update of information/amenities and councillors. MOP advised that currently up to date information on councillors is being shared with NCC and agreed LK to speak with Liam Reid to get website updated.
 - MOP acknowledged how helpful NM had been in relation to the roadworks and impact on those in The Glebe.
- Notification of Other Business:** Timber at Stonehaugh/ Windblown – has now been clear felled, quantity of timber extracted – to check where it is moved to. BM reporting that the light is now much improved, work believed to have taken longer than initially quoted – to clarify with contractor.
- Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:** None
- Approval of Minutes** (26th September, draft circulated 28 October 2023) Proposed AH, Seconded BM.
- Report from County Councillor Nick Morphet – copied into minutes.**

The ward boundaries were finally decided upon in early October. There'll be no changes to the Humshaugh ward, but the Bellingham, Hexham with Acomb and Corbridge ward will be extended, and there'll be quite a few changes around Stocksfield, Prudhoe and Wylam. The most significant change in Northumberland is that the single, two-councillor Alnwick ward will be split into two single-councillor wards. The changes come into effect in May 2025, and I can share maps of the current and future ward boundaries with anyone who wants them.

The current ward boundaries :<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/> The future ward boundaries:
<https://northumberland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=122c3bc2b1644180a85795f0e8fbb1a1>

Since the County Council declared an **ecological emergency** in July it's been working hard to provide residents with information about the actions that it's taking (and intends to take) on environmental issues. One of the ways that it's

done this is by publishing an **Environmental Policy Statement**, which is well worth reading. I can share a link to it via the clerk (it's p7 to p30): <https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2257/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-Oct-2023%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

Cabinet agreed the scope of **the next Climate Change Action Plan** last week, and it's going to contain more on adaptation to the impacts of climate change than the last one did. They also agreed to set a target for Northumberland to be net zero for all greenhouse gases by 2040. That'll require us to reduce our methane and nitrous oxide emissions as well as our CO₂ emissions. The current target for Northumberland to be net zero for CO₂ by 2030 has been retained, and a new target for the County Council to be net zero for CO₂ by 2030 has been set. The new Climate Change Action Plan will be published next year and will run until 2026. I can share a link to the report with you via the clerk (the CCAP agenda item is on pages 23 to 36): <https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2258/Public%20reports%20pack%2007th-Nov-2023%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

EJ asking if coal fires will be banned after 2040. NM clarified that the County Council's target for net zero greenhouse gases by 2040 won't be enforce and won't involve bans on anything. The government banned the burning of coal and wet wood on 1/5/23 but smokeless coal and dry wood can still be burnt. The ban on new oil boilers will come into force in 2035.

Sewage Pollution of Rivers: Hexham Town Council declined my offer to present to them on sewage pollution of rivers, on the grounds that my offer might be politically motivated. I'll be asking Climate Action Newbrough and Fourstones if they'd like me to do a presentation for them, and if they're keen we might be able to make it a public event.

Cables over Wark Bridge: Openreach are having an argument with the County Council over the loose BT cables on Wark bridge. Openreach accept that they're responsible for the cables, but they're saying that the ducts they pass through are the County Council's responsibility and the County Council says that they aren't. Openreach have offered to fix the problem if the County Council pays for the work, but the County Council won't agree to that. I've emailed Openreach's Technical Engineering Professional myself, asking how bad they'll allow the problem to get before they accept responsibility – but they're refusing to budge. I'll keep trying, and I'll keep you posted.

Highways Maintenance: I took the Highways Maintenance Area Manager (Andy Olive) on a tour of all the maintenance issues in the ward on 3rd October. He told me that the roads to Latterford Doors, Watsons Walls and Shitlington were all too long for Highways Maintenance to resurface and that resurfacing would have to be requested through the Local Transport Plan programme for 2025/26 next summer. I reminded him about the drainage problem on the offshoot of the U5059 that runs to Lowstead and Linacres and he promised me that he would look into it. I asked him if reflectors could be attached to the bollards on Wark bridge and he told me to put it on FixMyStreet, which I did. He also told me to put the fords at Coldcotes on FixMyStreet, but I haven't done that yet because we need to send them photos of the specific problems when we do that. Would anyone from the Coldcotes area be willing to take the photos? I could upload them to FixMyStreet for you if you have trouble uploading them yourself. I also asked Andy about the passing place signs on the C205. He said that if they were flagged on FixMyStreet they would be looked into, but only if they were on official passing places. He also told me that the County Council isn't obliged to put passing place signs on passing places, even if they're official passing places. He also told me that it was important that whoever flagged the missing passing place signs on FixMyStreet provide them with photos – NM will email SB to check.

I asked Highways Programme about installing "keep left" markings or "deflection arrows" on either side of the lay-by on the crest of the hill between the Newtonrigg and High Moralee turns. They told me that they're only permitted where there's a centre line, and that the road at this point is too narrow for a centre line. They also said that motorists should know to keep to the left as they approach the brow of the hill.

Local Transport Plan: The Local Transport Plan programme "long list" for 2024/25 has been released. The "top loop" of the C205 is unlikely to be resurfaced next year. It was given 20th highest priority out of 59 similar requests, but only the top eight are likely to be resurfaced. I asked for more information about why it has been rejected and I was told that it

was due to the lack of available finance, other competing priorities and the size of the maintenance backlog. I was also told that it should in theory move up the list for 2025/26. They also told me however, that the work that's been done on the C205 since 2017 was only because of a successful bid to the DfT Challenge Fund. Last week's Autumn Statement also announced a £19bn cut in spending on public services, so it's not looking good for the County Council's highways budget.

I get three LTP programme requests each year (one for maintenance, one for road safety and one for sustainable transport) and my highways maintenance request for 2024/25 was for the C205 at Elliott Terrace and Storey Terrace to be resurfaced. They're still considering that request, and I'll let you know what they decide.

The parish council's request for a lay-by next to the doctor's surgery was rejected because LTP funding can't be used to provide parking spaces. However, I have recently received the quote that the parish council asked me to obtain for construction of the lay-by. A 24m lay-by would cost £40,000 if no drainage was required and £50,000 if drainage was required. I'd be happy to pass your response back to Highways Programme, once you've had a chance to think about it.

EJ querying whether mesh could be installed instead – NM stating would still need dropped curb.

JR querying whether there is an argument through safety concern, that if want to participate in destination management then need places for parking/protect spaces that are available. If going to participate in NCC's progression for Rural (Director of Transport and Environment) point us in the right direction as to how we are going to be able to do this. NM advice to send Email to Paul Jones. JR to email.

On the subject of parking bays, Highways Programme have just decided that the footway by Walton House is wide enough for a disabled parking bay to be marked on it. They're in the process of consulting with residents, and the consultation will run until 25th December. I've brought a plan of the parking bay, but I don't know what the width of the gap between the parking bay and the railings will be. I've asked, and I'll let you know when I've had an answer. **JW saying that visibility is impaired when cars left on the footway. Some concern that gap left will impair use of footway – Needs to be wide enough for buggy/wheelchair to get through. Person using it will require blue badge to use it. JR and JW to follow up on this.**

Highways Programme had planned to install the post for the interactive speed sign at Sidwood on the C205 (Stonehaugh Road) on October 23rd, but the storms prevented them from doing so. They promised me that they'd have it installed by the end of November – has it been installed yet? NB: I shared the details for ordering the ISS itself with the parish councillors in September. **To order the interactive sign – AH proposed this is completed, Discussion about installation of one or two – measure the post, put order in for Sidwood Sign and decide which sign is to be installed when new development is completed (Opposite The Glebe). Richard gave us advice on south end of village – NM to ask advice on timescales on installation and whether to wait until complete.**

As I think I mentioned at the last parish council meeting, I've been given the green light to start Community Speedwatch and I've been doing it in Hexham while I wait for people in the Humshaugh ward to be given the green light to start. If anyone speaks to someone who's doing it, please could you tell them that they're welcome to get in touch with me if they'd like to partner up. Anyone who wants to join Community Speedwatch can read about it and sign up by going to <https://careers.northumbria.police.uk/volunteering/police-support-volunteers/> or emailing citizensinpolicing@northumbria.police.uk.

I've asked whether the road (the U5078) through Stonehaugh would qualify for a 30mph limit, but I haven't had a respond yet. I'll let you know when I do.

I did email NPG about the generator failures in September, but I haven't had a reply yet. I'll chase them up soon and hopefully I'll have had a response before the next PC meeting.

Funding for town hall energy efficiency measures:

- Community Action Northumberland (for advice and signposting)
- Northern Powergrid Foundation
- NCC Environment and Climate Fund
- Delia Faran
- Wind farms
- The government's Community Energy Fund
- My MLIS (but also Wark Sports Club +/- the ISS)

6. Matters Arising

- 6.1 Condition and Repair of Stargazing Pavilion at Stonehaugh – AH shared with those present that LR has started to remove rotten wood, Clarks have promised to deliver hoggin (SB is leading on this), we need volunteers. Forestry Commission have said they will donate the money to assist with the repairs.
- 6.2 Power Supply for Wark Village Green Tree – JR to provide update. Few members of parish have complained about the aesthetics of the post and how this impacts on photograph. During that time members of council came and started to hack away at the post, complaint from Highways was received that it wasn't a lockable box – JR requested that this is delayed enabling discussion to take place. Subterranean box is requested, Did say they would fit it for free, but cost of installation is up for debate. EJ – underground installation being explored. EJ has access key to current box which means Christmas lights can still go ahead. No one can tamper. JW asking if timer will be installed, AH asking if lights have been ordered – EJ confirmed that yes, harness has been delivered, awaiting bulbs. EJ circulated the information. Installation of lights is in hand with EJ leading on this.
NM advised: Keith can remove the post and bury the end of the cable if they decide that they don't want it after all.
- 6.3 Wark Christmas Tree Lights – EJ to provide update. See above.
- 6.4 Wark Public toilet – AH provided update, outraged at the time taken by solicitors to resolve this. AH is complaining to Law Society. This has taken over three years to get it resolved. Ongoing – AH will continue to chase.
- 6.5 Commemorative Seat installation at Stonehaugh, B/F from September meeting - BM proposed that the bench is sited near to the finger post at the top of the village – this was seconded by AH. Needs progressed. Roger Bulman is going to install. NM advised of there are no electricity cables or water (or gas) pipes on the road verge, but there is a BT cable running parallel to the road and 9m away from it. NM emailed BM a map showing the BT cable on 15th October.
- 6.6 Stonehaugh Grass Cutting – LK has drafted and circulated to councillors a Tender document – to be finalised/agreed by councillors. Discussion re: areas that are to be cut, needs clarified with the residents, that their land is their responsibility. Area in front of Kern Green is residents' responsibility.

Agreed EJ to visit and identify specific areas that are to be cut.

- 6.7 Tree Works – Wark Forest Landscapes - Update. Trees are felled around Scotty's yard. Need to know where the timber has gone. Stephanie to forward up to date bill. Relevant to precept. Cost of works needs to be kept under review as they are substantial and selling of extracted timber is needed to offset some of the costs. LK shared that correspondence has been sent advising of need to seek confirmation from councillors for any costs above the estimate provided (prior to work being completed).
- 6.8 Celebrations for 100 years of Forestry Commission. SB not present. FC have been in touch with Michael Murray, trying to get older generation to complete video recordings. BM indicating that residents of the village are not showing motivation/interest in this. JR – Woodhorn have a number of resources that they may be able to share with us/invite us to purchase from them. SB has suggested a Totem Fest. Seal and a Silver Chain (14th century) at the Hancock Museum. AH thinks it should come back to either Stonehaugh or The Heritage Centre. Enough time to take it forward.
- 6.9 Annual Donations – consider recipients from previous year and any new requests. AH saying that any profits that come from Stonehaugh are to be used for Stonehaugh. AH proposing, JR Seconded – agreed funding of £1500 toward repair of the Community Hall building at Stonehaugh.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 Accounts and Approve Payment Schedule. Annual Donations Agreed and included.

Payee Name	Description of Goods/Service	Amount (£)
Stonehaugh Community Hall	Hire of Room for meeting and Defib Electricity	60
Wark Branch of Royal British Legion	1 Poppy Wreath	20
The Monday Club	Grass Cutting Wark Sept/Oct 23	566.66
Mr E Jeffrey	Air Freshner for Wark Public Toilets (Reimbursement)	6
HMRC	PAYE Liability for November (month 24/08)	2.4
Natasha Reid	Payroll	93.78
Mandy Stoker	Payroll	91.38
Louise Keeney	Payroll	386.1
The Monday Club	Annual Donation	200
Wark Town Hall	Annual Donation	50
M Murray	Annual Donation	50
Sport Tynedale	Annual Donation	50
Great North Air Ambulance	Annual Donation	100
Wark C Of E Primary School	Annual Donation	50
Wark Juniors Football Club	Annual Donation	50
Wark Senior Citizens Dinner	Annual Donation	50
Wark Parent And Toddler Group	Annual Donation	50
St Michaels Church, Wark	Annual Donation	100
Citizen's Advice Bureau	Annual Donation	100

Stonehaugh Community Hall	Annual Donation	1500
B Murray	Reimbursement for postcrete for bench installation	8.5

7.2 Bank Account – Balance circulated from statement and noted - £22, 354.94 as at 4 October 2023. Clerk reminded those present that there are substantial costs yet to be billed including Interactive speed signage and Tree Surgery/Timber Felling.

8. Reports from Representatives to Other Bodies (Wark Town Hall, Stonehaugh Community Hall and Giles Heron Trust)

- Town Hall progressing well, Warm Hub again, Bacon Butties up and running Dec- March.
- Stonehaugh – steps are pulled down, rotten into building, Down pipes – Ant Wright coming to repair. Generator installed and up and running. Micro Grant successful– £500 for a freezer. Road around bull ring getting churned up.
- Giles Heron – 40 applicants for tenancy, new tenants to be offered the property.

9. Highway Matters

9.1 Signage at Hetherington (Whygate signpost) and also Deneburn Crossroads. AH requested added to agenda for discussion. Fix My Street - AH to send photos to LK. NM Advised: Dean Burn junction signage. I asked the Highways Maintenance Area Manager about this in August 2021. He said it was fine, and that the C204 is open to all users and used as an alternative route when the B6320 is closed.

9.2 Road around The Green, Wark – AH requested added to agenda for discussion. JR trying to establish ownership. Discussion about ownership/use. JR to lead on this. Residents' signage to be installed. NM advised that The Highways Maintenance Senior Team Leader (Glen Harrison) agreed to provide Jason with a quote for the "Private Road, Residents and Access Only" signs in early October – JR has in hand.

10. Other Business – Not for Decision

11. Items for Discussion at Future Meetings: Precept 2024-2025, form to be returned by 26 Jan 2024. PC to take the land back at Stonehaugh if residents not committed to maintenance - PC re-take ownership of it – to be informed by outcome of EJ discussions with residents.

12. Dates for Next Meeting: 23rd January 2023, 7pm. Wark Town Hall. NM has given his apologies in advance.

L. Kirkland

Clerk to Wark Parish Council