

WARK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey

Contact: clerk.wark@gmail.com

Meeting to be held 23rd January 2024 at 7pm in Wark Town Hall

DRAFT MINUTES

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence:** Present: Councillor Edward Jeffrey, Chairman (EJ), Councillor Judith Weir (JW), Councillor Jason Riches (JR), Councillor Brenda Murray (BM) Apologies: Councillor Ann Hutchinson (AH), Councillor (LL), Councillor Steve Batey (SB) County Councillor Nick Morphet. 5 MOP present.
2. **Public Participation (For Members of the Public to speak - Restricted to 10mins max)**
 - 2.1 MOP requesting that the resurfacing of the U5069 road to Latterford is added to the parish LTP requests 25/26 (Clerk notified in advance of meeting by email 4 Jan 2024). MOP attended meeting and raised issue, providing details of the road surface condition, liaison with county council and efforts thus far to repair road surface and the impact it has on road safety, road surface is hazardous to vehicles and those using the road. Confirmed that Local Transport Plan includes one for road safety. Drainage is poor and a consultant is to view the road - it is felt that drainage will need dealt with as a priority to reduce risk of any new surface being washed away. Following discussion EJ agreed to add it to parish LTP priorities for 2025/2026 which will be submitted later in the year (July). Push on drainage and explore landowners' responsibility who has indicated will forward to land agent for follow up. LK to liaise with MOP if have any updates.
3. **Notification of Other Business - None**
4. **Declarations of Conflicts of Interest - None**
5. **Approval of Minutes** (27th November 2023 – already circulated in advance of meeting) – EJ signed.
6. **Report from County Councillor Nick Morphet.** Nick present and read out report. Nick to send to LK for distribution with minutes.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR WARK PC MEETING 23/1/24

I met with the Director of Environment and Transport (Paul Jones) and the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration (Simon Neilson) to discuss **the cables on Wark Bridge** in December. Neither were aware of the situation but Paul has since looked into it. He got back to me this evening with the following statement: "As part of the refurbishment works between 2010 and 2015, NCC installed a duct to support an Openreach cable. This was accepted by Openreach at the time. Openreach now claim that the duct isn't supported at 1.5m intervals and therefore doesn't meet their requirements, but there are no records of the duct needing to meet this requirement. Openreach also claim that the duct is subject to a ten year guarantee, but no guarantee

exists or has been implied by NCC and Openreach haven't presented any evidence to support their position. NCC's position is that Openreach need to apply for a permit and submit a "Special Engineering Difficulty" detailing their proposals to support their duct for approval by Streetworks via the usual process. They are aware of what they need to do next".

The Twenty When Lights Flash scheme by the school hasn't been working well, so Michael McMonagle from Highways Programme is going to come over to reprogramme it. He'd hoped to do it last week but illness in his team prevented him. He says he'll do it as soon as he can.

The post for the interactive speed sign on the Stonehaugh road hasn't been installed yet because of bad weather, but the construction team's promised to get to it as soon as possible.

I asked whether it was too soon to finalise **the locations for the interactive speed signs at the north and south ends of the village**, and Michael offered to help us to identify them when he's here to reprogramme the Twenty When Lights Flash scheme. Edward has offered to join him, and he'll ring Edward with a time and day as soon as he knows it. He has Jason's phone number too, and will ring him if Edward can't make it.

I found out today that the resident's application for a **disabled parking bay** opposite the EV chargers was unsuccessful, because some of the neighbours objected.

I asked Highways Programme whether **the road through Stonehaugh** is eligible for a 30mph speed limit, and they told me that it isn't because there aren't enough houses over a sufficient distance. You need 20 or more houses over at least 400 and usually 600m – and the houses on Kern Green are too far away to count. As far as I'm aware, the only way to try to change the officers' minds would be by launching a petition, which is very easy to do.

And finally, Community Action Northumberland is holding a Zoom event called **Preparing Your Village Hall For Emergencies** on the morning of Thursday 1st February. Speakers will include Nigel Fisher from the County Council's Civil Contingencies Team and Andy Dean and Christine Nicholls from CAN. I'll share the contact details that you'll need to book a place with you via Louise (traceymorgan@ca-north.org.uk / 07919 531712).

Matters Arising

Wark

- 7.1 Bin Liner needs replacing – EJ. Metal liner on bin by post office by telephone box. is rotten. To identify the make of the bin and purchase liner, door needs a catch on it.
- 7.2 Power Supply for Village Green and Wark Christmas Tree lighting – Successful installation of lights achieved – EJ. Thanks to the Nichol family – letter of thanks to be sent. Installation of cable and electricity supply completed however some residents are not happy with the post for electricity – discussed. EJ advised that this has been discussed with county council (Keith) who will discuss further with lighting team but it is anticipated it will have to remain above ground or it will result in removal and not be reinstated. Noted that Wark Forest Landscapes to be informed/reminded of lighting when time for maintenance to be completed on tree which will be in the autumn/winter. JR asking if this can be

explained on Wark Town Hall page so residents are clear, particularly those that have complained re: aesthetics.

- 7.3 Website Update— Action from previous meeting - is in progress. DOI to be forwarded (EJ and JW have returned, JR is up to date – other Councillors to respond).

Stonehaugh

- 7.4 Tree Works – Wark Forest Landscapes – update – SB (not present). BM confirmed that timber cut was pulled/stacked to roadside. Works have let in so much light, positive impact discussed. Discussion about the sale of the timber and need for this income to offset the substantial costs to the PC of the felling.
- 7.5 Stonehaugh Allotment Rent – Fee for 2024 to be agreed. Agreed to remain as last year.
- 7.6 Stonehaugh Grass Cutting –brought forward from last meeting, discussed PC to take back the land at Stonehaugh if residents not committed to maintenance – EJ has confirmed he has spoken with residents, Tender is now advertised – enquiries to EJ. EJ confirmed he has spoken with some of the residents – one tender received thus far.
- 7.7 Condition and Repair of Stargazing Pavilion at Stonehaugh –plan is in place for volunteers to complete the repairs – AH to update councillors. AH not present due to weather.
- 7.8 Celebrations for 100 years of Kielder Forest – update. SB managing this and not present. Further update to be provided at next meeting.

8. Planning Matters

- 8.1 Application made for Installation of pole mounted transformer on a single pole, Site Address Cell Site, Henshaw Common, Wark, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 3ED – deadline 29/1/24. JR – Aesthetics of common, will it impact. WPC no objections – accepted that there is a need to increase connectivity.

Financial Matters

- 7.1 Accounts and Approve Payment Schedule – Circulated.
- 7.2 Bank Account – Balance to be circulated from statement and noted - £20,073.00 as at 3 January 2024.
- 7.3 Precept 2024-2025, form to be returned by 26 Jan 2024. Discussion about need to be able to achieve maintenance of services, acknowledged that financially people are experiencing stresses associated with cost of living, any increase to be minimal however recognised that costs are increasing. Proposed 10% increase by EJ, seconded by JW and JR.
- 7.4 EJ updated on supplier of the electricity for toilets – three-year contract Easifix – no change in pricing.

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

Wark Town Hall – two warm hubs per week at the moment, Tuesday is well used, Coffee morning on a

Friday well used, lots happening, Wildlife Trust – Exhibition in May, booked for election this year and next. Proposed building works/upgrading – joined green energy cooperative – feasibility study. Help with paperwork through council (batteries, solar and back up generator if required. Library room to be made accessible to all. Kitchen needs upgrading too if we are used as a resilience hub. JW shared that have been offered help from people doing sewage works – offered free work/help and equipment to do something. Leak in the roof identified as priority.

Stonehaugh Community Hall– Thanks from the committee for the £1500 donation which has helped to complete the funding to replace the wooden steps and ramp in the building. Engineering firm are scheduled to arrive 24 Jan to fix the metal ramp and steps to the front of the building. The generator was almost put to use yesterday, the electricity was only off for just over 2 hours through early morning. Wendy Brady has a list of contacts in the even of emergencies and we're happy to say that SCH will be open for anyone needing help and care.

Giles Heron - Tecket Farm – has been successfully let to a family.

9. Highway Matters

- 9.1 Village Green Road update – JR - JR has been researching ownership. JR querying whether we can approach County Council for repair of potholes. Discussion about state of road, repair and financial responsibility for this.
- 9.2 Proposed Village Car Park – JR. EJ and JR have meeting scheduled 7 Feb to discuss traffic management in the village. Drop the kerb, prepare ground for matting outside Dr Surgery. If not will provide costs for this. JR liaising with County Council – will also see about tarmacking on the green when machinery is in situ. Thanks to JR. MOP raised issue of signage outside shop – cannot use car park – request to be made to move them slightly. If can get potholes filled in, when doing surface redressing they might come and do. Discussion about grant applications from Ray wind.
- 9.3 SWARCO Interactive Signage – update – EJ/JR – EJ has costings from NM, two different specs – discussion about options – agreed permanently sited option is preferred. To get ordered – bigger one. Order from SWARCO directly. MOP asking about warranty period on them – believed to be 5 years.
- 9.4 Disabled Car Parking Bay – Walton House – JR. JR obtained opinions of neighbouring residents, measurements obtained, identified large vehicles would not be able to get through. Spoke to EJ, raised concerns, dimensions given road too narrow. If permanent Disabled Bay it will be responsibility of parish. Objection on measurement reasons – objected formally on behalf of PC – would support application if didn't encroach onto road and impact on access.

10. Other Business – Not for Decision

Owner of The Shop (MOP) present and advised that post office contracts exchange end of January, current owners of post office have agreed to run until the end of February. Change of licence needs to be granted or alternative would be closure. Plan is to cordon off existing post office, modernise existing

internals to expand shop. MOP wished to share that current owner of post office; Mrs Nixon has been more than helpful with this transaction.

Containers – complaint received, have swapped land for access to back lane, build storage warehouse round the back – containers can go and will go round the back. Planning looks like another container – temporary (MOP/Owner affirmed is just one container).

Green Container round the back of Black Bull garden– application submitted, owner feels is hidden to impact is minimal. Grey container will be removed. Building that was the Butchers – work is starting, turning it into café – planned to be open in Summer time.

11. Items for Discussion at Future Meetings: JR will update on Village Green/Car Parking.

12. Dates for Next Meeting: 12th March 2024. Wark Town Hall. NM gives apologies.

Clerk to Wark Parish Council