

WARK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey

Contact: clerk.wark@gmail.com

Meeting held 10 March 2025 at 7pm in Wark Town Hall

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Chair - Councillor Edward Jeffrey (EJ), Councillor Brenda Murray (BM), Councillor Lisa Lorraine (LL), Councillor Judith Wier (JW), Councillor Jason Riches (JR), Councillor Annie Hutchinson (AH), County Councillor Nick Morphet (NM), MOP x2. Councillor Greg Munro

Apologies: Councillor Steve Batey (SB).

2. Public Participation (For Members of the Public to speak - Restricted to 10mins max).

- 2.1. MOP – Relates to road entering Wark to the North of the village. Couple of neighbours nearly got knocked over by van, speed excessive, mounted kerb – persons had to go onto grass to get out of the way. Second incident observed. When is Road Safety Audit to be completed - NM confirmed update – Road Audit has been forwarded to designer (uncertainty as to who this is) – Overseeing organisation is NCC and Audit has gone to them. Response needed from relevant organisations. Parish Council are aware of the issue, raised with CC, discussions will continue.

3. Notification of Other Business – None.

4. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest - None

5. Welcome and Report from County Councillor

- 1) A Highways Programme officer came out to programme the new Twenty When Lights Flash signs in February, but discovered that there was no power to them. He's asked Street Lighting to provide power to the signs, but Street Lighting haven't said when they'll do it yet.
- 2) The latest iteration of the Local Transport Plan programme for 2025/26 makes no mention of the installation of dropped kerbs in Wark, despite the previous iteration saying they would be installed. I've asked for clarification and I'll keep you posted. I've spoken to the owners of the Old Rectory and Police House, and they're fine with either dropped kerbs or continuous footways being installed where the footway crosses their driveway. The footway resurfacing requests have now been scored, and unfortunately Wark's footways won't be resurfaced as part of the LTP programme for 2025/26. I think they'll automatically consider the request again for the 2026/27 LTP programme, so I don't think it'll need to be requested again.

- 3) I've received an update on the excessively long dropped kerb on Church Lane, just to the south of the entrance to River Meadow. The Road Safety Audit has now been completed and Highways Development Management tell me that they're waiting for responses from the designer (which is Coast Consulting Engineers) and the "overseeing organisation" (which is a designated Highways officer) and will provide me with another update once they've received them. I'll let you know as soon as I have more news.
- 4) Drainage work on the U5069 to Latterford Doors was completed in December. That means that the road is now suitable for resurfacing, and I know that the residents of Latterford Doors would be grateful if the parish council could request it through the 2026/27 LTP programme.
- 5) I haven't managed to get an update on the road to Lowstead/Linacres (which is an offshoot of the U5059). As far as I'm aware the drainage work still hasn't been done, which means that Highways Maintenance still won't consider resurfacing it.
- 6) Unfortunately, the owners of the mast at Ray Hill have given up on the idea of connecting it to the electricity grid. Apparently Forestry England said no to them installing overhead lines or burying the cables beneath forest tracks, and the land alongside the forest tracks was found to be unsuitable. They've now reverted to their original plan, which is to install solar panels and back up generators. We'll discuss this at the next Off Grid Task Force meeting, and I'll let you know if anyone has any thoughts on how we might be able to get the possibility of establishing a grid connection back on the table.
- 7) The public transport officers were grateful for my suggestions for improvements to bus services. They're looking into the possibility of providing more 680 buses in the evenings and on Sundays, and they're also looking at improving the 682 service between Hexham and West Woodburn. They can't re-introduce hourly services on any route yet, but hopefully that will change if usage increases.
- 8) The Sim Specs walk is taking place at 11am on Saturday. We'll meet by the war memorial, and we'll be given glasses that simulate various visual afflictions to wear. We'll then spend an hour or so finding out how difficult it is for blind and partially sighted people to get around the village. We'll then have a fifteen minute discussion about our experiences, and we should be finished well before 1pm. Everyone's welcome to join us, but the organisers need to know how many people to expect – so please let me know if you'd like to join in.

MOVING VEHICLE SIGNS. The post at the south end of the village (which was accidentally removed when the Twenty When Lights Flash signs were installed) has now been replaced. Cussins were concerned that the post which was installed at the north end of the village might affect the results of the road safety audit and affect their management company's ability to maintain the road verge, but they've now agreed to its installation. I'm about to make a £5,988.33 contribution from my Members Local Improvement Scheme allowance, which will cover the purchase and installation of one sign.

STONEHAUGH COMMUNITY HALL REPAIRS I'll be contributing £3,000 towards the repairs from my Members Local Improvement Scheme allowance. I've already made a contribution of £1,000, and I'll make the next contribution as soon as I know whether Simonburn PC are proceeding with the road safety

scheme.

BM acknowledged the impact Nick has had. Antonia is taking over from Nick

6. Matters Arising

- 6.1 **Village Pride** – Flower Tubs with reservoirs – Update from JR, sharing designs he has identified online, pricing shared, logo can be put on. Spoke to School who are wanting to adopt for a year as part of nature programme. Keen to involve the community – can it be put out to adopt it for a season. Start with two tubs. What do people think? BM – School will be a good idea. School will get their own plants to attract butterflies. Stipulate type of plants? If we can't get anyone to look after another, PC will take care of it. MOP asked about location – confirmed thinking where the new car park is and try to stop parking on the grass. EJ – will have to be anchored into the ground. BM – thinks proposed location is good. Spend a little money on something people can see. Show of hands – All in agreement.
- 6.2 **Insurance and Ownership of New Car Park in Wark** – AH. AH expressed concern as to who car park belongs to – JR confirmed Highways own it. AH asking if it is insured – NM to clarify with Highways. They gave us permission to do the building work. Liability will be for every verge in the authority. NM will ask Highways to put it into writing. Came out to do inspection – rectified kerb. Reassessed. JR to make contact with them.
- 6.3 **VE Day celebrations** – JR – 8 May and 10 May 2025. Wark School have an event at the school. Four days of celebrations. School Street Party in afternoon and inviting all community. Grant applied for cups, plates, bunting (NCC VE Day Funding – max £250). Recycle them for Saturday event on Village Green. Café get involved put a 40's menu on. Approached The Battlesteads for their support for the Thursday evening, DH has agreed to light beacon on Thursday evening and The Battlesteads celebrations (drink). Donations requested to support event (County Council or Parish Council). If grant doesn't come through second source of funding needed. EJ to approach Battlesteads.
- 6.4 **Maintenance of Composting Toilet (Stonehaugh)** – AH. Full of Water and Shotton's have emptied water, been in situ around 12years, could do with a service, suggested a company in Glasgow but could talk Liam through process of servicing. Turn the baskets. Need to have someone else knowledgeable about how to maintain it. If Liam gets a date, EJ and JR willing to go and listen. SB to be invited.
- 6.5 **Grass Cutting Contracts (Stonehaugh)** – EJ – One application received. Previous contractor unwell, only completed three cuts, current condition is poor. Three years for Wark – Monday Club. EJ to progress and ensure Public Liability in place. In front of Kern Green is residents, Bull Ring is parish owned. Decide whether to cut and maintain appearance – if comes a time that is not financially viable then will have to address it.
- 6.6 **Stonehaugh Public Toilet** – Expressions of interest received for cleaner. Two applicants.
- 6.7 **Moving Vehicle Signs** - update by EJ. Swarco email received today – hoping to start work 1 April 2025. NCC definitely do not want the sign installed, Cussins saw pole put in, affecting road safety audit results,

management companies' ability to maintain, don't want PC to install speed sign until they have made their decision. JR will speak with colleague in the management company. Pole is already installed. MOP they haven't maintained the grass. NM no objection to installation, EJ will chase up Cussins, JR to speak with management company. If can't persuade Cussins and Management Company – need email to forward to NCC. NM will up date Richard McKensie.

- 6.8 **Speed Limit (Stonehaugh) – AH.** Speeding is a problem in the village. Has been raised in the community meetings (MOP) – Kern Green towards campsite, petition raised, and signatures invited. NM – not enough houses fronting the main road, speed survey resulted in no speed restrictions/limit. Churning up the grass in the village.
- 6.9 **Activity Centre Lighting/Electrics update– SB.** Quote obtained – 324 + VAT. EJ – Lights need fixing. AH proposed, JR seconded. JW/SB to progress this.
- 6.10 **Stonehaugh Pavillion Repairs – Update – AH.** AH clarified belongs to PC, condition deteriorating, Gravel needed. Roof needs to come off as rotten. EJ sought clarification on what Liam needs – more stone required and volunteers to move it. JR/EJ – Have any requests gone out to villagers (MOP have a community Whatsapp and if know what is required – can ask, I don't think people know). MOP to liaise with AH and Liam Reid. Internals to be completed first then can tend to externals.
- 6.11 **Storm Damage Trees (Stonehaugh) – AH.** AH/BM – we had an agreement that Michael would cut up any trees that came down and keep wood. We need to confirm the continuation of this. Michael to keep wood – BM to ask MM. Did we find out how much trees made – advised around £2000. EJ questioning who owns the land (schoolhouse – NCC – AH). JR is it declassified? JR outstanding risk that these trees need felled. NCC to deal with? NM has emailed photos to chase up to determine ownership.
- 6.12 **Inspection Reports** – need to be updated/completed. Liam submits these annually, seats done (EJ/JR). Recommend that metal seats need touched up. One of the posts needs replaced (dog poo bin) down river.
- 6.13 **Barrier or rail outside the cafe at roadside (Wark).** - JR updated those present. Owner has confirmed they do not wish to have a rail/barrier. Said had spoken to NCC who did not want barrier. Plans to move doorway in the future so does not want any action taken. AH – two grab rails onto the doorway.
- 6.14 **Parish Council Election 2025** – Process and discussion re: candidate nominations and timescales for application. Nomination forms distributed.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 Accounts Package/Laptop replacement – Parish Council Laptop is not fit for purpose, replacement required. AH suggested this is delayed until later in year, Clerk highlighted concern that PC does not have a fit for purpose laptop.
- 7.2 Accounts and Approve Payment Schedule – To be circulated at meeting – done.

7.3 Bank Account – balance shared and noted.

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

8.1 Wark Town Hall – Doing well, really busy, new kitchen to be installed which has arrived, installation tomorrow, electric first fix done, integrated fridge, chilled unit, green energy – solar panels, no evidence of bats, want to put infra-red cameras – if roosting bats want three workers on site to move them. All being funded by cooperative. Energy from roof will outperform what we need, 10KW battery capacity, electric radiators – another survey to determine radiator use and if battery will be enough, we do have some south facing space to put additional panels on if needed. MOP – leave oil in situ, putting electric radiators will cost a fortune. £2000 for oil each year, make £1100 annually, reliance upon grants to keep it going. Back up generator could be a solution. Roof repairs and get rid of damp. More self-sufficient on money generated. Full forecast received. CAN has new community energy advisor.

Stonehaugh Community Hall – Continue to be difficulties in establishing good communication within the committee which impacts on functioning of the committee. Guy Opperman gave us a grant, get solar panels on roof. Fish and Chip event, Nick will be giving a donation of another £2000 (£1000 given already), accounts to be brought up to date. New member in the village trying to bring community together. Three monthly newsletters and events programme has helped. Without out lying people coming in there would be poor attendance at events. MOP present confirmed that a good meeting held last night. Accounts are overdue which is getting in the way of getting grants. Accounts submitted today which should clear barrier to grants. Trying to pull together all our risk assessments/insurance issue.

Giles Heron Trust – Nothing new – next meeting May.

9. Other Business – Not for Decision. NM – planning £5988 MILS – purchase and installation of one sign, papers ready for submission. We do have time to do this but need to act fast. Bank Statements and constitution/article of association.

AH – Thanks to NM

10. Close Meeting/ Agree Date for Next Meeting – 29th April 2025 at 7pm

Clerk to Wark Parish Council