

WARK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey

Contact: clerk.wark@gmail.com

Meeting to be held 29 April 2025 at 7pm in Wark Town Hall

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence.

Present: Councillor Edward Jeffrey (EJ), Councillor Lisa Lorraine (LL), Councillor Annie Hutchinson (AH), Councillor Judith Weir (JW), Councillor Steve Batey (SB), County Councillor Nick Morphet (NM), MOP x 2

Apologies: Councillor Jason Riches (JR), Councillor Brenda Murray (BM)

Edward opened the meeting, welcomed everyone.

2. **Public Participation (For Members of the Public to speak - Restricted to 10mins max).** Sean Miles (MOP) expressed an appreciation of Nicks work whilst he has been county councillor. Also, the Moving Vehicle Signs are now installed which Sean believes is already making a difference. A second MOP wanted to express an appreciation of what has been done for Stonehaugh.

3. **Notification of Other Business. Stonehaugh Composting Toilet (AH)**

4. **Declarations of Conflicts of Interest – None.**

5. **Approval of Minutes (10 March 2025) –** No objections, signed by EJ. AH asked about Approved Minutes for auditor– Clerk advised that the approved minutes are with the accountant in the file.

6. **Welcome and Report from County Councillor. Nick presented report.**

1) The Sim Specs walk took place on Saturday 15 th March, and we spent a very interesting couple of hours finding out what Wark was like to get around for blind and partially sighted people. We identified that some of the dropped kerbs on Church Lane require the installation of tactile paving, and that the steps of the town hall and the planters outside Café 1897 would benefit from some bright yellow paint or tape to make them stand out. I amended the plans from our footway accessibility audit to reflect what we learnt during the Sim Specs walk and sent them to Highways Programme. Jack from the Thomas Pocklington Trust also sent me government guidance on tactile paving, which I also passed on to Highways Programme.

Comment: EJ said it was really eye opening walk. Learnt about tactile paving. Town Hall and Planters at Cafe – white paint around edges as they are hard to see (Town Hall and Café Owner to be informed).

2) The Highways Programme officers told me that the Local Transport Plan budget won't allow them to install

dropped kerbs in every location where my footway accessibility audits have identified that they're required, and they asked me to identify the priority locations. I told them that Church Lane and the S end of Westacres should be considered priority locations.

Comment: EJ agreed with the stated priorities.

3) I asked for an update on the very long dropped kerb just to the south of River Meadow, but the Highways Development Officer is away from work until tomorrow. I'll let you know as soon as I hear from him.

4) The gentleman who'd very kindly offered to do the drainage work on the road to Lowstead and Linacres (an offshoot of the U5059) sadly passed away in April. As far as I'm aware, the landowner is still refusing to do the work himself – and Highways Maintenance won't consider resurfacing it unless the drainage work has been done.

Comment: Noted that MOP with previous experience of highways said there is case law which NCC can use against landowners to clear ditches – It's a U Road. Utilities underground along the side of the road – Highways provided owner with plans on where they are. Noted and PC to see if they can speak with those involved to get the drainage works done.

5) The County Council's launched another call for Rural Asset Multiplier Pilot (RAMP) funding. The RAMP fund exists to fund projects in rural areas focused on enhancing the environment, supporting the tourist economy, improving health and wellbeing and engaging with communities. Grants of between £10k and £300k are available, and the RAMP team will guide community groups through the application process. For more information, go to: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Economy-Regeneration/Programmes/Rural-Growth-and-Innovation/Rural-Asset-Multiplier-Pilot-RAMP.aspx> and if you have any questions, email: ruralassetmultiplierpilotprogramme@northumberland.gov.uk. The deadline is Wed 7 th May.

AH raised issue of signage over Dunterley to Bellingham – promised for years they would remove signage as there are no passing places and tricky for Motor Homes/large vehicles. Nick confirmed he had tried with Highways and they said sign is fine. Spelling mistake (Whygate is Wygate). NM suggests put on Fix My Street – SB to do this.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Village Pride – Flower Tubs with reservoirs – JR update. JR more than happy to leave until after election – agreed.

7.2 Insurance and Ownership of New Car Park in Wark – JR update – email read out – confirmation received that highways are responsible for maintenance.

7.3 VE Day celebrations – JR/EJ. Event at the Battle steads, light beacon at 9.30pm. Judith to light it, words from chair of legion. EJ will get wood and get it ready.

7.4 Stonehaugh Play Area Inspection (June) - ? Liam to be informed of the date so he can be present.

7.5 Grass Cutting Contracts (Stonehaugh and Wark) – EJ. Discussed tender from Monday Men. AH

queried if licence is needed – SM said no, public liability covered by Parish Council. Stonehaugh, contractor has started the work – discussion re: which areas, EJ confirmed he has started. Clerk confirmed 12 cuts per year – contract drafted for EJ to get signed.

- 7.6 Moving Vehicle Signs – EJ update. Brilliant feedback thus far. Speed Awareness is next step. SB – been up to Rochester (cut out policeman) – works. MOP forwarded complimentary email regarding installation which was read out. SB asking if any plans to get hedge cut which is in hand.
- 7.7 Activity Centre Lighting/Electrics – SB update. Park End Electrics has completed the works.
- 7.8 Stonehaugh Stargazing Pavillion Repairs – EJ. EJ expressing concern that work is falling to Liam, MOP contacted him to ask about it, asked about materials and volunteers, he responded, let me know if you want any help getting a working party together. Few people – need to be asked. No one else has any awareness that the activity centre belongs to Parish Council and are community assets. Complete hoggin in centre, lift decking to same level, remove roof panels but leave struts, without a roof the seating will be open to the elements. Inner seating counterbalanced the outer seating. If roof not replaced seating will rot. Boxed off and not useable at the moment – not critical. Newsletter to confirm ownership and use of it.
- 7.9 Financial Regulations, Transparency Code and Standing Orders – AH. These should be reviewed and adopted by PC. Clerk has forwarded up to date templates/models to Councillors.
- 7.10 Planning Application(s) - Stonehaugh Garage – no objections.
- 7.11 Parish Council Election 2025 – SB and BM elected for Stonehaugh Ward. Nominations completed, 6 for 5 seats.

8. Financial Matters

- 8.1 Accounts and Approve Payment Schedule – Circulated as below

Date Invoice/ Receipt	Payee Name	Description of Goods/Service	Amount (£)
01/04/2025	NALC (National Association of Local Councils)	Subscription including National Affiliation Fee and Annual Website Fee	259.12
08/04/2025	SWARCO	Supply and install moving vehicle sign	7862.95
08/04/2025	SWARCO	Supply and install moving vehicle sign	6509.05
29/04/2025	Wark Mechanics Institute and Town Hall	Letting Fee for Meeting held on 29 April 2025	30

- 8.2 Bank Account – balance noted as at 8 April 2025 = £24710.27 (noted substantial invoices to be paid for MVS, as detailed above).
- 8.3 Appointment of Internal Auditor – Susan from Scotch Coulthard, Independent. Accepted.

9. Reports from Representatives to Other Bodies (Wark Town Hall, Stonehaugh Community Hall

and Giles Heron Trust)

Wark Town Hall: JW going well, new kitchen installed, hall being well used.

Stonehaugh Community Hall

Things are coming together, good fundraising events that have gone well, applying for funding as work to be done on repairs (rot), significant work to outside of the building, new kitchen quote as some of the events are catered events and good turnout but the kitchen is not really fit for purpose, quotes coming in for around £20,000 – to speak with JW about Town Hall kitchen/contact. Cooker/Dishwasher needed. Woodwork needs treating. We have sublet one of the rooms, another still available. Location is the challenge. Challenge to get people from the village to attend events. We have started to work with CAN and are getting lots of support. Richard Wilson has a meeting organised for tomorrow, Rupert (Trustee) will be attending – Warm Hub applied for. Lot of paperwork to be sorted out. Support of PC is appreciated. RAMP funding may be an option given the funds would benefit community engagement.

Giles Heron Trust: Meeting next week. Nothing to report today.

- 10. Other Business – Not for Decision.** SB expressed concern/complaints that people attending the picnic site are putting dog poo bags in the toilet. Notice should be in place. No dog poo bins – not allowed as forestry land. Composting Toilet is our responsibility – SB, could this be attached? Get a bin, attach it and put notice saying Dog Waste Only. Who is going to empty it? Can we apply to council to have it emptied? Ask County for it to be emptied? We have lease for area that toilet is situated on.

SB – has put on fix my street the Pundershaw junction – they have put white marks on the wrong bit. SB has put it back on fix my street.

Annie Hutchinson – 40 years as a Councillor – recognised as a substantial contribution to the community. Thanks to Annie.

- 11. Close Public Meeting/ Agree Date for Next Meeting.** Close the meeting 20:30hours. 13 May 2025 7pm – Next Meeting. (JW given apologies).
- 12. Housekeeping Matters/Not for Open Meeting (Resignation of Clerk**

Clerk to Wark Parish Council