

WARK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey

Contact: clerk.wark@gmail.com

Meeting held 26th September 2023 at 7pm in Wark Town Hall

MINUTES

- 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence:** Louise Kirkland, Clerk, Edward Jeffrey (EJ) Jason Riches (JR), Lisa Lorraine (LL) Steve Batey (SB), Annie Hutchinson (AH), Brenda Murray (BM), Nick Morphet (NM), Judith Weir (JW) 1 x MOP.
- 2. Notification of Other Business:** None
- 3. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:** None
- 4. Approval of Minutes –** Approved and signed by EJ.
- 5. Report from County Councillor Nick Morphet (Copied from Nick's notes)**
 - 1) The pole for the interactive speed sign on the Stonehaugh road will be installed by the entrance to Sidwood on 23rd October, and I received the details of the two different signs that you can choose between this afternoon. The small sign that could be moved between locations would cost £4,927 including installation, and the larger sign would cost £5,424 including installation. I've emailed the details to Louise. You can order the signs by emailing orders.stl@swarco.com or paul.wright@swarco.com.
 - 2) On the subject of speeding traffic, I've just been cleared for Community Speedwatch and I'm looking for people to partner up with in the Humshaugh ward. If you haven't signed up yet you'll have to wait until they re-open for applications on 2/1/24. For more info, go to: <https://careers.northumbria.police.uk/volunteering/police-support-volunteers/#speed>.
 - 3) I spoke to Richard McKenzie in Highways Programme about the "private road, residents and access only" signs for The Green. He said he had no objections if the people who live around The Green have no objections. I still haven't received a response from Highways Maintenance about whether they'd be willing to make the signs, despite nudging them regularly. I have a feeling that the answer will be no, and I'd suggest that it's time to give up on them. The sign for American Gardens was different because it was a nameplate sign.
 - 4) I haven't received an estimate for the cost of creating a lay-by next to the surgery yet, but I'll continue to nudge Highways Programme until I get one.
 - 5) I spoke to the Bridges Inspector about the loose cables under Wark bridge. He told me that they're the responsibility of BT. I emailed BT and was told to expect a phone call but I didn't receive one, and when I phoned to ask why I was told it was OpenReach's responsibility. I alerted OpenReach to the problem yesterday and they promised to inspect the bridge within 48 hours. I'll let you know if I get any feedback from them.
 - 6) I also spoke to Richard McKenzie in Highways Programme about opening Wark bridge to emergency vehicles. He said that the weight restriction is there for a good reason, and the width restriction is there to

restrict weight as well as width. He also pointed out that if the bridge was open to emergency vehicles it would be difficult to stop other vehicles crossing it.

7) I asked whether an extra passing place could be created on the C205 to the east of Burmoor farm, and I was told that the parish council would have to request it through the 2025/26 LTP programme next summer.

8) I asked the Neighbourhood Services Area Manager about the fly tipping at the allotments in Stonehaugh. He said that the County Council only deals with fly tipping on council land, and provided contact details for local skip hire companies – which I passed on to Louise. I also spoke to an Environmental Enforcement officer, who suggested putting up “No Fly Tipping” signs.

9) I’ll be taking the Highways Maintenance Area Manager on a tour of the ward on 3rd October, and I’d like your help to identify all the places in the parish that I need to take him. I’ll definitely take him to Elliott/Storey Terrace, but I’m also thinking of taking him to the road to Latterford Doors (which is the U5069), the road to Watsons Walls (which is the U5052) and the road to Shitlington (which is the U5055). There’s also the road to Linacres and Low Stead (which is an offshoot of the U5059), but I know that he already knows about that road.

10) I’ve been told that you can buy RFID cards for EV chargers at the Humshaugh village store, so if anyone wants to use the new EV charger but doesn’t have enough reception on their phone they can solve the problem quite easily (especially if they plan ahead).

11) I’ve been given an update on the 3G switch off. The latest information is that Vodafone will complete their switch off by early next year, EE will start their switch off early next year, Three will switch off at the end of next year, and O2 will switch off in 2025. Don’t forget that Three don’t have a 2G network, so if you’re with them and don’t have a 4G signal you’ll need to switch provider.

12) I’ve presented on sewage pollution and river water quality for five parish councils now, and I’ll be presenting for Hexham Town Council later in the year. The presentations have led to some good conversations and several people have offered to support my campaign. A few of us met with the Chief Executive of the Tyne Rivers Trust last week, and she put us in touch with the researcher from Newcastle University who’s been studying bacteria from sewage in the Ouse Burn. We’ve since spoken to him about the possibility of one of his MSc students studying sewage bacteria in the North Tyne, and he’s currently writing a draft project outline.

13) New greenhouse gas emissions data for Northumberland was released over the summer, and it makes for interesting reading. The amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by land uses such as forestry has been revised downwards, and as a result of that the total emissions for the county have been revised upwards. In other words, the mountain that we have to climb to get to net zero has just got bigger. Whereas the data used to show that we achieved a 22% reduction in CO₂ emissions in 2020 (with the help of Covid), it now shows that we only achieved a 15% reduction. And unfortunately, the new data for 2021 shows that the county’s CO₂ emissions rose by almost 15% - meaning that we’re more-or-less back to where we were before the pandemic with only 6 ¼ years to go before we’re supposed to be a net zero county.

14) There *was* some good climate news, in that the week before last the government amended the Energy Bill to facilitate a switch to renewable liquid heating fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) after the 2026 ban on new fossil fuel boilers in off gas grid areas came into effect. However, last week the government postponed the ban until 2030, meaning that off gas grid areas are off the hook for the time being, but that it’ll be harder for Northumberland to become a net zero county by 2030.

15) Finally, there’s a Town and Parish Council Conference at County Hall on Thursday 5th October. It starts at 2pm and finishes at 6pm. There’ll be updates on various council services as well as its climate change work, and a chance to ask the Leader of the Council questions.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Condition and Repair of Stargazing Pavilion at Stonehaugh

AH and EJ attended meeting, met with Forestry Commission Alex Mclennan and Peter Sharp, a lot of rotten wood inside pavilion. Recommendations made for repair, volunteers to move hoggin into pavilion site. Roofing area requires work, PC have been awarded a £2000 grant to complete this. Discussed whether should be tendered, spec will be provided by Liam Ried. Want the pavilion to be a long term, sustainable project that can be used by schools and the community more widely. JR suggests quotations required from tradesman, from health and safety point of view needs to be safe for access to all. EJ advocating that hoggin is moved before the end of the year by volunteers. AH has already circulated request for volunteers on social media which has not yet been successful. Various options discussed re identifying individuals or groups that could assist. Specification for the project repair needed from Liam Ried which can then be circulated.

6.2 Wark Christmas Tree Lights

EJ to follow up with Mr Nichol on this. NM contact hasn't forgotten about digging trench, EJ and NM to progress.

6.3 Wark Public toilet

AH no further forward with solicitor. AH received a report from a MOP relating to unpleasant odour in the toilet. Observations are that a person is urinating in the corner which is acknowledged as very unpleasant. JR states ventilation is poor which exacerbates the odour. AH stating that if no improvement will have to consider closing them in the evening. EJ suggesting Air Freshener is installed.

6.4 Completed Install of American Gardens Signage.

Thanks to NM sign delivered, installed by EJ, looks good. All complete.

6.5 Commemorative Seat installation at Stonehaugh.

Seat has been collected from Newbrough and is currently at clerk's address, need details as to where it is to be delivered to. BM wants it installed to an alternative site than was initially agreed. BM proposed that the bench is sited near to the finger post at the top of the village – this was seconded by AH.

6.6 Overhanging Bush on Church Lane

Observations of an overhanging bush which is restricting the pedestrian walkway. On privately owned land. NM suggests flag up on Fix My Street, Highways inspectors would assess and manage the issue. EJ to speak to property owners in first instance. AH propose, SB seconded.

6.7 Outside Tap for Walkers

AH concerned that there is nowhere for people to wash dogs or dirty boots. EJ cites there is one and location

discussed however currently not easily accessed. To monitor.

6.8 Stonehaugh Grass Cutting

This was an action from July meeting - EJ confirmed he has spoken to contractor who has had an accident, machinery problems too. He has only had one bill handed in.

6.9 Recent Multiple power cuts, generator and Northern PowerGrid response.

JR asked for this item to be included on the agenda. Generator provided which was appreciated however it was unreliable, 4 power cuts in four days, raises concern that Town Hall as a Warm Hub. Request/Query if PC can approach Northern PowerGrid to explore the issue. Because it was planned work, ask for more transparency on planning. Stated it was a Cooling Sensor and Cable issue. Have not got a generator for the area which is an issue in an emergency. More investigation around prep for dropping off generator as well as emergency planning. 8-9 days was the overall timescale for works, when ask for permission to do works in the future need clear schedule of works communicated. Texts are inconsistent, communication is poor. Affects GP and School. PC to write to Northern PowerGrid and asking matter to be address.

7. Financial Matters

7.1 Accounts and Approve Payment Schedule – Circulated, approved.

Payee Name	Description of Goods/Service	Amount (£)
The Monday Men	Grass Cutting for July/August - Wark	566.66
NALC	Subscription, Affiliation Fee and Annual Website Fee	232.73
CI Accountancy Ltd	Submission of declaration of compliance x 2 January 2020 and January 2023	60
Mandy Stoker	PAYE for period September 23	91.38
Natasha Reid	PAYE for period September 23	93.78
Louise Keeney	PAYE for period September 23	386.1
Louise Keeney	Expenses (Work from Home, Phone and Internet)	193
HMRC	PAYE Liability	2.4
Wark Mechanics Institute and Town Hall	Wark Town Hall Letting Fee for Meeting 26/9/23	30
Stonehaugh Community Hall	Postcrete for bench installation	6.06

7.2 Bank Account – Balance as at 8 September 2023 is £23 748.10.

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

- WTH – JW says all well, busy, cherry picker as need new gutters. Need scaffolding at front of Town Hall – applied for £9000 grant for solar panels at back of hall to go on extension at the back of the hall. Next year further grants for electric boiler with plan to come off grid, be self sufficient. Need to apply to wind farm for grants. EJ can PC apply for grants for moving vehicle signs – can apply online –

AH to action. North of Tyne grants available for educational projects, ? stargazing pavilion would be eligible? AH to apply for grants.

- SCH – two meetings, one with Nick, can't put shower in building and we have roughly £3000, emergency doors are rotten – can use £3000 to fix the steps as we are a warm hub – meeting this week to discuss grant. Still require additional funds to fix steps, three quotes in, one steel, one wood and another of stone. Friday at MP's office, discussion at Northumbria Water, water delivered to village, worries that it will not to be rectified until 2025 – being followed up. Generator on site, to be given a date within next couple of weeks.
- GHT – open day at The Teckett Farm.

9. Highway Matters –

- JR says sign for Wark as you come in from Garage end – looking sorry for itself – weeds and dead plants around it – can something be built around it to make it look inviting. EJ suggests stone holder and planted up to make it look nice.
- SB – passing places missing signs reported on Ward Lane – no feedback/progress yet.

10. Other Business – Not for Decision

11. Items for Discussion at Future Meetings

- Parish Council are equally concerned about missing signage.
- JR asking why they are amending negative emission – updated organic soil and method that they use to update data from combined to local. Tree felling and lots of newly planted.
- Speeding in Stonehaugh – incident report of individual being knocked by a van door mirror whilst walking the dog. AH advised speed limit is 60MPH national speed limit – last time looked at identified villagers. Discussed viability of additional pathways? Vans are bad (delivery drivers) and cyclists. Can something be put on social media reminding of what is helpful to keep yourself safe.
- Back Lane – discussion about presentation, how it is unsightly. LK to draft email and forward to Steph Fathers again, been away (JR).

12. Dates for Next Meeting: Monday 27th November, Community Centre in Wark.

Louise Kirkland

Clerk to Wark Parish Council