

**Appleby Horse Fair 2021 Public Meeting**  
**02 September 2021**

Councillor Andy Connell, chair of the meeting, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Opening statements were made by members of the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group for Appleby Horse Fair, followed by a question and answer session with members of the public.

**Councillor Andy Connell, Cumbria County Council Elected Member for Appleby**

The history of the Fair shows that it was never confined to Fair Hill. Evidence from as early as 1866 refers to the streets of the town being full of people and horses. Much horse showing and trading took place around the river. This was even more the case after the Hill was conveyed to the Borough Council in 1911. It was enclosed and kept locked at Fair time from 1913 to 1965. Activity took place on roads and verges. No body could claim ownership. Traffic problems arising from roadside camping led in 1966 to the reopening of Fair Hill as camping ground. The Council sublet the Hill at Fair time to Gordon Boswell, a Gypsy who took responsibility for all aspects of its management. This arrangement has continued with a succession of GRT tenants.

The Fair has always required a police presence, along with the involvement of local authority officers dealing with highways, rubbish collection, trading standards etc. In 2008 the Chief Executive of Eden DC created the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group to enable agencies to respond more effectively to the problems created by the Fair. It was later joined by a GRT representative and by a councillor from each of the County and District Councils to be a voice for the residents within their divisions. It is important to stress that MASCG do not own or run Appleby Horse Fair.

**Les Clark, Chairman of the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group for Appleby Horse Fair**

The headlines identified from Appleby Horse Fair 2021 will be published in the annual Evaluation Report in the next month and operational lessons learnt will help with planning for 2022.

The numbers in phase one were less than usual during the build up to the Fair. The Fair itself was very busy, we saw more people camped in tents and an increase in number of day visitors. We will be looking more closely at this with planning for next year.

Another key issue was sufficient toilet provisions around The Sands, this will be reflected on with the provision and location of toilets for future years, as well as types of toilets provided.

Clean-up went well, there were some issues around the time contractors were on site as road closures were restrictive, this will be reflected on with planning for future years.

All facts and figures will be presented in the evaluation report.

**Superintendent Matt Kennerley, Appleby Horse Fair Gold Command**

Appleby Horse Fair is the largest policing operation in Cumbria. 200 Police personnel on site throughout the fair, this was increased this year due to crime issues.

Our main concern is about public safety and mitigating violence. There was robust policing around significant threats.

Over the course of the Fair there were:

- 25 crimes recorded
- 58 fixed penalties
- 9 stop searches
- 6 dispersals
- 86 calls for service – compared to 10 years ago, calls for service were 225

On Thursday we took the decision to close The Sands early due to the high number of visitors in the area, in the interest of public safety.

The types of crimes encountered over the course of the Fair were; theft public orders, damages, drugs, arson, assaults, possession of fire arm and offensive weapons.

Over a quarter of crimes reported were road offences. Other incidents related to harm and missing persons.

Over the course of the Fair, 75% of 101 calls were answered within 1 minute. There were 800 contacts per day across all communications including digital.

#### **Colin Cox, Director of Public Health for Cumbria**

A small team were on site during the Fair, offering advice, vaccinations and Lateral Flow Test kits. The advice to Travellers and visitors was to test before you travel.

There was little take up of the vaccinations during the Fair, but there was lots of engagement during the first 3 days about Lateral Flow Tests. On the final day we handed out a number of test kits to those travelling on and leaving.

Overall there was a good opportunity to engage with people at the Fair and raise public health importance around COVID.

Data has been monitored over last 2 weeks since the Fair. Data indicates a rise in cases in Eden during the week after the Fair, dropping down week after. In the surrounding area of Appleby there was little changes in COVID pre fair compared to post fair.

Test and trace teams have been working hard to engage with potential infection outbreaks. Only 2 people have possibly indicated they may have got COVID from the Fair. There were other events around the district at the same time that have been identified as the cause of new cases. We can rule out a substantial increase in infections as a result of the Fair. What we won't know is the case rates within the Gypsy and Traveller community as they are not Cumbrian residents.

#### **Question and Answer Session with members of the public:**

**Q:** Is there Public Liability Insurance for the fair and is it a public document?

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** Yes

**Q:** Who pays and provides the toilets and who pays for the clean up?

**A, Les Clark (MASCg):** EDC

**A, Emma Brass (EDC):** Private Licensed sites pay for their own toilets, they also pay for clean up. EDC pay for clean up of public areas and the toilets in the town.

**Q:** Are any of the service for the Fair paid for with council tax money?

**A, Andy Connell (Elected Member, Appleby):** There is no precept for Appleby Horse Fair resources.

**Issue raised:** What is happening now isn't what the people of Appleby want. Many come to the Fair for a free for all. The funding that is going into the fair isn't enough. We need to change the way residents and the GR+T Community work together. The one thing that will fix the issues is to actually organise the fair.

**Q:** Why are the posts put in along the verges and what does the sign on them mean? Many get ignored, taken down and burned.

**A, Laura McClellan (CCC Highways):** Cumbria Highways introduce parking restrictions to the areas which are approved by MASCG under a traffic regulation order, the meaning of the 'At Any Time' signs is that motorists are prohibited from parking in that area at any time and those restrictions are enforced by the Police.

We appreciate that posts are damaged and burned during the Fair, however without these in place to identify the prohibited areas, they would be more congested and difficult to clear resulting in the potential for an accident.

**Q:** How can residents speak to and feed into MASCG? Are MASCG going to invite community representatives to meetings?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** There is already a pathway for the community to feed into MASCG. You can feed into MASCG through your local elected members who sit on MASCG, Karen Greenwood for Appleby and Phil Dew for Kirkby Stephen.

**Issues raised:** Influx of travellers behind station road. No facilities in place, camped on unlicensed site.

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** This will be considered with planning for future Fairs

**Q:** Where does the waste from the Fair go? Does it go into landfill?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** Waste collected from public land goes through the same system as waste from public bins. The waste goes through treatment and is used as an alternative to fossil fuels. Waste on private land is dealt with by the landlord.

**Q:** Where does rubbish go that is on private land? The rubbish left behind on Winters Field was concerning.

**A, Emma Brass (EDC):** There is a requirement that licenced sites use appropriate, licenced waste disposal routes.

**Q:** This is a question to Billy Welch – how did you feel when you read in the paper that the people of Appleby were racists?

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** It was an accumulation of things over time. Our community had received a lot of abuse and racist remarks on social media in the run up to the fair, then when we heard the shops in Appleby were closing for the Fair we thought it was just another thing to try and stop the Fair.

**Comment from Phil Dew (Elected Member, Kirkby Stephen):** From a Kirkby Stephen perspective we had a good Fair, this year was better for Kirkby Stephen than previous years. Praise for the police and their response to keeping public order during the Fair.

MASCG provides an opportunity to discuss the issues and the complexities of creating a safe Fair. We are a constituted body and all meetings are noted. I can assure you that the Elected Members on MASCG put across the views of residents.

Myself and Karen Greenwood have met with the New Fair Group representatives and have picked up issues for consideration in planning for next year. These issues will be listened to and we as Elected Members will do our best to ensure these issues are taken seriously.

**Q:** If the Police and Crime Justice Bill goes through, can we get confirmation from Police that the trespassing bill will be enforced before and during the Fair?

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** If the law changes and it is a criminal offence to trespass, we will take action.

**Q:** Information around the date of this years fair was released in advance of the official statement from MASCG which caused many problems for locals and businesses. What will be done about this?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** This issues will be discussed at the next MASCG meeting. All MASCG members agree to and uphold the protocols of MASCG communications.

**Q:** Members of MASCG who have a vested interest in financial profit from the fair should not be involved in decision making, and should leave the room when decisions are made.

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** I am not aware that this is an issue.

**Q:** If MASCG notes are public documents then why did members of MASCG refuse to be recorded at a meeting?

**A, Karen Greenwood (Elected Member, Appleby):** This incident was during the Pre-Fair Public Meeting. I was at the back of the meeting when I was made aware of a disturbance, Appleby Town Council Clerk approached me to say that a member of the public had complained that filming and live streaming was taking place. A public meeting is allowed to be filmed and streamed. It is a public meeting, press are present to report. The chair asked if anyone had an issue with being filmed and some people did, someone then left the meeting.

**Q:** It has been said that members of MASCG are pressured and harassed to make certain decisions. What will be done about this?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** All parties around the MASCG table have an equal voice. There is no intimidation or pressure applied in meetings, it is a partnership environment. I would not let this happen as Chair.

**Q:** There were a number of traffic offences in Church Brough turning circle – the road is double yellow lines no parking. An encampment of Gypsies was there throughout the horse fair. Police attended but did not move them on.

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** Apologies that this was not dealt with appropriately. It is hard to find additional land to accommodate the encampments. Going forward if the Police and Crime Bill does pass this will help to get people onto licenced land.

**Issue raised:** Appleby Community Enterprises surveyed businesses after the fair. 35 businesses responded. A full report of the responses will be sent to MASCG. 100% of those who responded said they didn't like the new date in August for the Fair. 34% of businesses stayed open. Many shops took the decision to close due to the financial cost of staying open and issues with access to town for deliveries. Also, there were many stalls on the market field that were taking trade from the town.

**Q:** Are Police from outside the area aware of the roads and one-way system in Appleby ahead of their shifts at the Fair? How is the one-way system policed during the Fair? Police seem to watch horse and carts go by and not pull them up when they shouldn't be in the town.

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** Officers policing the Fair are walked around Appleby before the Fair. We do enforce traffic systems but the difficulty is, our officers are on foot and there is only so much they can do to stop a horse a cart, it is difficult.

**Q:** Why are Police not dealing with low level stuff? A lot of things that people report and have issues with would be wiped out if Police dealt with the lower level stuff.

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** We understand that low level things are important, our brief to officers was – where you can take action, do. We were dealing with more higher level incidents and threats this year which drew resources away from the low level stuff.

**Q:** Why are there always vans and caravans parked on the roadside before the fair? There is no need to be travelling two weeks before the start of the fair.

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** Horses cannot be moved quickly they need to be led to and from the fair with time for grazing and resting.

**Q:** Can we have confirmation as soon as possible from MASCG on the date for next years fair? It's also the Queen's Jubilee.

**A, Karen Greenwood (Elected Member, Appleby):** This will be on the agenda for the next MASCG meeting.

**Issues raised:** We own a farm and caravan park on Long Marton Road and experienced damage to property. A fence was cut along one of the farm fields, that travellers then used as toilet and to graze horses. We experienced a lot of intimidation from the travellers and we had to back down. If we were asked we would have let them use the field if they cleaned up after themselves. There was a lot of human waste left in the field. The police were helpful.

We are now left with the cost to repair the fence and anything else needed to protect property and land. We are a local business bringing people into the area all year round and we want to let them see the good side of the Fair but we experienced too many issues this years.

There needs to be respect for local businesses and residents.

**Q:** This is the third consecutive Fair that my garden fence has suffered damage. Horses and buggies park along the pavement by the pub and are tethered to my fence. Is it an act of trespass if they tether to someone's property?

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** The number of tethering places in the town is something that we need to look at. MASCG Need to look at appropriate tethering points for next year.

**Q:** Appleby Cricket Club chose to close because a lot of work went into the renovation. Our machinery was vandalised and a mess was left which we have cleared up. We have had to pay £650 for repair, do we have cause to reclaimed this from the authority?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** I don't believe there has ever been a mechanism for damage to property to be repaid through MASCG.

**Issue raised:** It seems to have been very easy to change the date of the Fair, which sounds like organisation to me. If Police do not have the capacity to deal with low level incidents, then the Fair needs to be smaller and organised.

**Q:** A ticketed event would be the best way to scale the Fair back, helping to return it to the original Romany Fair it was and get rid of the hangers on.

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** Genuine Romany and Gypsy people would love for the Fair to go back to how it was. We will support the community to do so.

**Q:** Proposal for MASCG to get quotes for an events company to organise and ticket the fair.

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** We can't give any guarantees that an events company will be sourced. MASCG will consider and discuss everything that has been raised tonight.

**Q:** Where did authority come from for MASCG to change the date of the fair?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** There were many long discussions about the Fair date. In the MASCG notes there is information about how the date was agreed. MASCG had to make a decision whether to risk ad hoc gatherings at different times through the year, or suggest a date that all organisations involved could provide their usual support.

**Comment from Phil Dew (Elected Member, Kirkby Stephen):** It is important to recognise that this years Fair was not all negative. I am wholly in favour of reducing the size of the Fair. We need to get on top of all the issues raised to allow the Gypsy + Traveller Community and the residents of Appleby to work together to ensure the continuation of a Fair this is enjoyable for all.

**Q:** The fair is too big and needs to be reduced – so why is Billy Welch on the news talking about how good the fair is and publicising it, attracting more visitors?

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** I talk about the Fair publicly because I am proud of it. I would be happy to meet with the New Fair community group to discuss the fair and find a way forward.

**Q:** Why isn't there representation from the residents of Appleby on MASCG?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** We want residents feedback on MASCG, the mechanism for this is via your local Elected Members who are there to provide a voice for the local community – Karen Greenwood for Appleby area and Phil Dew for Kirkby Stephen area.

**Q:** If the fair is so important to the Romany Gypsy community, why don't they self-fund it?

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** We run Fair Hill, and Fair Hill is self-funded. 70% of visitors to the Fair are from settled community.

**Q:** Why don't you ask visitors to pay for a ticket, the money could go to fair costs and clear up.

**Issue raised:** On the Sunday and Monday, horses were tied up by Crown and Cushion. People couldn't get into the Spar.

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** Officers were there to stop and respond to any issues, horses are allowed in the town on the Monday they are not on Thursday to Sunday.

**Q:** Where in the Police figures at the beginning of the meeting did the rape get reported?

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** There was a serious sexual offence reported but we are unable to disclose any information or discuss the incident at this time.

**Q:** I own a local business and I had a positive experience with the Fair. There was a lot of mess, but I didn't experience any crime or damage. The main issues is, as a town we don't seem to have a voice at MASCG. Making the Fair a ticketed event is a huge step but it seems like the best way forward, how can we make this happen?

**A, Les Clark (MASCG):** To look at a ticketed event we would first need to look at whether or not it would solve the problems. We would then need to look at specifying what the event will be in order for it to be an organised event. We also need to fully understand the legal and operational needs of the Fair. Only after all this has been established could we look at the possibility of procuring an event management organisation.

**Q:** What is the costs to the Police of this years Fair?

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** I do not have the exact figures yet, but I will expect that they will have significantly increased from the last Fair. Costs will be released as soon as they are available.

**Q:** What is being done to look at and learn from other similar events around the country?

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** Appleby Fair is unique, it is the largest horse fair in the country. Other forces with similar events look to Appleby for advice.

**Q:** MASCG must have some responsibility for the Fair as a lot of it happens on council land. There is lots of legislation that could be used to help manage the Fair.

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** Legislation is difficult when there is no specific organiser.

**Q:** When the new date for the Fair was released, how did the hangers on find out?

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** I relayed the message to my people. I expect the message will have also got out on social media.

**Q:** This is a question for Billy, would you be in favour or an organised ticketed event?

**A, Billy Welch (GR+T Rep):** Yes, I would be in favour.

**Q:** If the Fair becomes a ticketed event it would need public liability insurance, would police support and provide armed response?

**A, Matt Kennerley (Police):** If it is a private ticketed event, armed response could be requested and provided. If it is a public event in a public place, Police have a duty to provide a response.