

Appleby Horse Fair: Pre-Fair Public Meeting

Appleby Public Hall

24 May 2023, 7pm

Councillor Andy Connell, Westmorland & Furness Council Member for Appleby

Appleby Horse Fair traditionally takes place around the weekend preceding the second Wednesday in June. From its beginnings in 1775 as a livestock fair, it evolved into an occasion primarily for horse-trading. For well over a hundred years` it has become a tradition for thousands of Gypsy Romani Travellers to gather at the Fair. This inevitably causes issues for local residents and businesses, whose day to day lives are impacted by the build up to, and duration of the Fair.

We have with us tonight Steph Cordon, the new chair of MASCG, a multi-agency body that works to manage the impact of the Horse Fair. A key element in this response is policing; also present is gold commander Matt Kennerley. They will explain the strategy planned for this year and answer any questions.

Steph Cordon, Chair Person of the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group for Appleby Horse Fair

Hello, I'm the new Chair of the MASCG the Multi Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group, I took over from Les Clark in April this year as part of my role as the Director of Thriving Communities, in the newly established Westmorland and Furness Council. As you know MASCG has oversight of community safety and regulatory issues and brings together partners to better co-ordinate activities relevant to the fair. It is not responsible or liable for the fair.

There are people here from the Council and the Police who will share operational updates on work that is happening to make sure that the fair is safe for all which is within the remit of MASCG. I want to reiterate that we are here to answer your questions or take them away if we can't answer them now and listen to your concerns and ideas for improvement.

At the last meeting, Les Clark updated you all on the fact that the former Eden District Council agreed to commission an external organisation, to undertake an independent review which had two main areas of focus: firstly, a strategic evaluation of the legalities and practicalities of the Fair becoming an organised event and secondly, a focused evaluation of the provision of transit sites.

Consultants – Opinion Research Services have been commissioned and they will be attending the fair to get a good insight into how it operates, to inform their final report. The expectation is that a draft report will be with us this summer, unfortunately there is nothing further I can add at this stage.

The evaluation report of the Appleby Fair Event last year has been produced and the following are some key highlights:

- the numbers of caravans counted in the Eden area was only up by 21 or 2% from the previous year.
- Matt will give you more information on the policing stats which appear to show an increase in reported crime but will also give the context for the police

taking a stronger stance to ASB and violent crime following concerns raised by both the settled community and gypsy and traveller community.

- Equally the number of fixed penalty notices went up by 140% from 58 to 139. These were mainly parking related within no waiting areas to keep things moving.
- Cleansing went well but this year we will seek to do more on some of the areas not being got to quickly enough because of travel restrictions and distance.

Overall, the operations of partners went well, and this has stood partners in good stead for this year's fair. Operational planning by partners has been effective and you will hear more about that from colleagues that are here tonight. For those who haven't had a look at the Appleby website, this has a lot of information which you may find helpful. You will have also seen that the communications are well underway around don't come too early.

I'll hand over to Matt Kennerley for his overview, our service area colleagues also present this evening can provide any detail that you may want to find out about. Please also do share anything with us.

Chief Superintendent Matthew Kennerley, Appleby Horse Fair Gold Command

Good evening, I'm Chief Superintendent Matt Kennerley, Police Gold Commander for the event and BCU Commander for Westmorland and Furness, with responsibility for all policing in Westmorland and Furness as my day job.

I have over 20 years' experience as a police officer in Cumbria and have worked the Fair over a number of years, from bronze roles on Fair Hill to regularly Silver Commander and Gold.

This event is still the biggest policing commitment for Cumbria Police. We have very detailed plans in relation to policing of the fair involving hundreds of officers across different specialisms.

We prioritise based on seriousness and harm. But we can't deal with everything.

I set high expectations for policing with officers clear about engaging with people and doing their best to intervene to prevent situations escalating.

What you can expect to see:

- Increased levels of enforcement against those who come to the Fair and cause crime, disorder, or Anti-Social Behaviour. We have many different options available to us from dedicated Roads Policing Operations involving camera vans, Covert HGVs, and other options. As always, we will be focussed on those who come to spoil things for others.
- The same numbers and broad deployment of police officers you would have seen at the 2022 fair. We significantly uplifted the numbers in 2019 and have continued to use that model. This year the modelling is over a slightly longer timescale, this was in response to feedback from last year. In Appleby there were larger numbers of Officer earlier in the week, with some dedicated support to the schools.
- Dedicated verge patrols start tomorrow across Westmorland and Furness and will grow each week. We assess every encampment. We do have new legislation and we may utilise it, but the bar is a high one in terms of the law.
- A dedicated phone line (via 101) for the fair. For those who have called us in the past, we have significantly reduced waiting times and have a range of online

reporting, webchat or even call back options if you don't want to hang on. We will also be staffing the Police Station front counter daily between 12 and 4.

It is also worth mentioning that we do a lot of policing now on smartphones, including intelligence briefings, recording crime, and looking at incidents, so you will see officers on their 'phones'.

Please do speak with officers and feedback incidents or problems directly. Let them know if you have seen issues or how they are doing.

The Neighbourhood team have been here for the build-up and will be after the event.

With regards to CAG meetings. We had virtually no attendance at the CAG meetings over the last few years so we will move this year to an online reporting system for issues if you want to feedback to MASC members and agencies.

Q&A Session

Q: Are we going to try and stop sulkies being used as a mode of transport from Fair Hill through the town?

A: MK: It will be a similar approach to previous years. We aim to reduce the number of horses crossing the bridge in Phase 2. Where we can, we will enforce and ticket and take any other appropriate measures.

Q: Last year there wasn't many pubs open in the town, the pub by train station was overwhelmed. There have previously been boardings outside the royal oak, would it be possible to have these at other pubs? Is there any contingency for the number of people allowed in the open pubs?

A: MK: There are some changes to licencing this year. The Midland and The Grapes are the main premises that will be open. There will be a large, licensed bar at salt tip corner field to try to alleviate some of the pressure in the town.

A: SW: A list has been put out to show which pubs are open and which are closed, that will be published this week. There are only 2 premises open within the town itself. One thing that was apparent from last years public feedback was that many residents felt the fair is getting too big for the town and wanted to see the fair move back towards Fair Hill. Having a licensed bar closer to Fair Hill will hopefully achieve this and alleviate some of the pressures on the town. The licencing application and licence is available on the public register, premises licence number 2000.

Q: Last year you closed the car park off, slightly concerned as Appleby has quite an elderly population, many people have disabilities etc. There is nowhere else to park when the Sands is not available during the fair. Are there any plans to make parking available for people who need to get into town for food/work etc?

A: MK: Decision to close the car park was not a decision made by the police last year. The co-op closed their parking and made it available for police vehicles. Last year we were able to support people to get into town as and when the issue arose.

Q: Regarding access for disabled people, there are two disabled spaces outside the butchers. Last year police were disregarding all illegal parking in this area in the days before the fair. This affected the trade of businesses. We don't get any traffic wardens.

A: MK: Traffic enforcement is not a policing issue.

A: SC: I will raise this with our traffic enforcement team and see if there is anything we can do about this.

Q: I don't understand why parking along A685 from Kirkby Stephen to Brough is allowed, it's dangerous for everybody.

A: MK: We assess every encampment in terms of risk and danger to traffic and public. This encampment is the only area it is deemed safest to have this. We can look to enforce temporary TRO. There is a strong element of danger on that road, and it is a concern, conversations are ongoing within MASCG to address this.

Cllr Dew, Kirkby Stephen: This is a contentious issue that has been going on for years. I'm disappointed that the consultants aren't addressing transit sites. The intention would be to find somewhere much more suitable that will be much safer for the gypsy and traveller community and traffic, safety is something that concerns us.

A: SC: The consultant is still looking at where potential transit sites could be. We need to look at where safe places could be but these need to be places that people will want to stop. I will be spending a lot of time over the fair looking into this. We can't move people on unless we have somewhere to move them on to, so we need to look at a more long term plan.

Q: Regarding the accident on main road into Appleby, a father and son were killed in 2003. Fatalities because of the fair have happened already.

A: MK: We always work to put mitigations in place to reduce this, it is one of the key things we try to focus on which is why we are putting more resources into enforcement.

Q: In terms of licenced sites, it is the council's duty to ensure safety of people using licenced premises. Previously animals were not removed from the field enough in advance which contradicts health and safety guidance, will this be done this year? Why are licences given year on year?

A: EB: This is only guidance, and we cannot legally enforce a site closure if the field has previously been used for livestock. It is not a year-on-year licence, permission was given years ago as part of planning permission. Site licence conditions were set out clearly at the time of planning applications which are standard conditions set out by Government.

Q: Looking at licences, can you stop the market fields?

A: EB: The planning permission that is in place for the fields where the markets take place allows stalls to be there, so we can't restrict stalls on this field as it is covered in the planning permission that was granted. Some of the other licences exclude stalls.

Q: Could this planning permission be retrospectively changed?

A: EB: This would be something that would need to be looked at by planning.

Q: How would we go about doing this?

A: EB: I would have to investigate and get back to you.

Bill Lloyd, Gypsy & Traveller Rep: When the fair market first started, we were concerned. We have raised this at MASCG to look at the planning permission for the market field, we have been told that it can be done but it is a very difficult, long, and costly process.

Q: Will the consultants cover Kirkby Stephen and the larger area around Appleby?

A: SC: Short answer, yes.

Q: I would like to raise a wildlife issue. It is apparent now that we have Otters in the river Eden, and they are being filmed quite regularly by the bridge. The pups are born around June. Otters are the most threatened species under section 41 of the wildlife act. It is illegal to injure, kill or disturb habitats. With horses being washed in the river there is shampoo/chemicals going into the river. We also have fish and ducklings. What will be done about the environmental impact this has on our wildlife?

Bill Lloyd, Gypsy & Traveller Rep: This concern was raised around 10 years ago and the Environment Agency took samples of the river downstream around the sands, the pollution in the river was described as undetectable. If you know where the Otter holt is, something may be able to be done to deter people from the area, we could possibly work with Wildlife Trust on something.

Q: My point is that on the Government website it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly restrict access to a holt. Otters with pups will not be able to get back to their holt if horses are in the river.

A: MK: I will pass this on to our Wildlife Crime unit to investigate.

Q: Am I right in thinking that the tent licence is for 5,000 people? Is it licenced to play music until 11pm? And is it licenced to serve alcohol until 11:30pm? Does this not make it an event?

A: SW: All details are on the website. The Licence holder is a company called Wannasee Ltd. The service is mid-day until 11pm. The licence includes playing recorded music on site, there are no live bands. The premises licence is for serving of alcohol and playing of recorded music. The mention of 5,000 on the licence is a bracket used for allocating licences, there will not be 5,000 on this site, it will be monitored.

Q: Where is this tent going to be?

A: SW: The bar will be sited opposite Salt Tip Corner as you come off the slip road from the A66 onto the Long Marton Road, it is the field straight opposite that was previously used as a car park.

Q: I wrote to Emma with a few suggestions about litter and some other suggestions, you said you were going to investigate but I've not heard back. We are fast approaching the fair, will anything be done?

A: EB: I have taken the matter forward and had a meeting with contractors around the issues raised. The issue has also been taken to the MASCG operations group. I have information to feedback which I can email to you.

Regarding the suggestion for a stand to promote proper disposal of litter (e.g. keep Britain Tidy), this will not happen this year. In terms of litter clear up, we are not responsible for litter left on private land. I have raised the issue around better litter picking around verges. I have raised the issue around litter picking later in the year, this is something that can be looked at if items are found.

Q: People go to the toilet in the street and in gardens, what will happen about this?

A: EB: Toilets are provided and the numbers are reviewed every year. We have increased toilet numbers recently. Clean up has been improved and contractors are aware of issues.

A: MK: Where officers see it happening, we will absolutely take enforcement activity.

Q: Are there going to be more officers on the ground?

A: MK: No, I feel that the officers on the ground have the capacity to do more with the options they have.

Bill Lloyd, Gypsy & Traveller Rep: We are aware of the toilet issue, it is disgusting. The fair hill committee have agreed to pay for additional toilets, we have been in conversations with Westmorland & Furness and Appleby Town Council about this. We are hoping that by providing additional toilets and paying for additional cleaning we will see a reduction in this activity. These toilets are not for fair hill, we have plenty, these additional toilets will be going in Appleby town and the surrounding areas.

Q: You say you have enough for yourselves, which is great, but we have already established that the market field brings in people that are not gypsies and travellers and do not come for the fair. We would not see as many issues and would not need as many toilets if we got rid of the market field.

Q: With the new legislation around white diesel are you going to be more proactive around the theft of diesel?

A: MK: The short answer is no. We are not seeing issues around fuel theft in this area, it seems to be reducing.

Q: You said earlier on that MASCG does not have responsibility for the fair. Who does?

A: AC: The short answer is no one. It is not an event, it is a gathering of people.

Q: If it is not an event then why is all this stuff put in place?

A: AC: It is not an organised event. Traditionally people have always turned up on this weekend in large numbers, therefore it makes sense to put the relevant safety measures in place to protect everyone.

Q: Haven't you just said you are putting an event on for a 'none' event? The Wannasee licenced tent seems to be an event.

A: SW: I understand where you are coming from with this. The licence is intended to put a bar in place to alleviate some of the pressures on the two pubs in Appleby town that will be open.

Cllr Dew, Kirkby Stephen: The reasons why we have commissioned consultants is to investigate the possibility of making the fair an organised event. We are taking the concerns of local residents seriously. The consultants want to see the fair in action to be able to write their report. MASCG is a multi-agency group who work together to ensure the fair is safe for all, they do not organise it.

Q: Maybe one way to get the numbers down is to suspend alcohol licences for a few days, not give more out. If they know there will be no alcohol served, they will not come.

A: SW: If there were no premises open then they would go to the Co-op or the Spar to purchase alcohol.

Q: Suspend off-licence sales as well.

A: SW: I'm sure the Spar and Co-op would have something to say about that. Even if the shops in Appleby didn't sell alcohol the travellers would go to other areas to buy their alcohol, so I don't think that is the solution.

Q: You have stated that a premises licence is needed to be able to serve alcohol. A temporary event licence was given last year for a similar event in Long Marton for under 4,999 people. This premises licence has been given indefinitely. The sale of alcohol could increase the number of crimes and ASB.

A: SW: There is a 28 day representation period after an application is received. Notice is put in the local paper. Anyone has the right to make their representation against that application. If after that 28 day period no representations are received we are obliged to issue that licence. No representations were received. The 4,999 is the first block that is used in licensing for collecting fees. This does not mean that this many people will be in attendance.

Q: Where were the notices put?

A: SW: There was a notice put on the fence at the field, and in the C&W Herald. It is also on the public register on the council's website.

Q: This is a main through road, many people would not stop to look. Many people don't read the Herald anymore. Shouldn't you have been more proactive in letting the community know what was happening so we could object?

A: SW: This is why the notices are posted on the Council website, on the site itself and in the local paper which is in accordance with the Licensing Act.

Q: What is going to be in place to make sure this road is kept clear and drunk people are kept safe coming out? This is a main thoroughfare.

A: MK: I have already been speaking to officers about enforcement in this area. We always have officers staffing dedicated points in this area. The bar is set well back in the field, not close to the road. The bar has their own security staff also.

A: LM: From a highway point of view, we have asked that a temporary 30mph is introduced.

Q: I have worked with Wannasee since 2016. They are exceptionally skilled in creating music events. Hearing the news of bringing Wannasee to the fair is scary. Having a bar would be good, but if it is turned into a music festival this would cause issues.

A: SW: Wannsee festival is at Hutton in the Forest. The license for Appleby is for a bar and recorded music, there is no intention or desire for this to be anything more than a bar with recorded music.

Bill Lloyd, Gypsy & Traveller Rep: This is a bar, it is not an event. We would have strongly objected to an event. This bar is considered to be a step forward to alleviate the pressures in the town and will be controlled and monitored by MASCG.

Billy Welch, Gypsy & Traveller Rep: It's a bar for us to go and have a drink and take the pressure off the town. We can only see good come from it.

Q: The public liability that the pubs hold, they are liable for anything that happens on their premises. Who's responsible for this with the field bar?

A: SW: The public liability insurance is with Wannasee Ltd and we have had sight of this.

Q: Surely with the success of the Wannasee event of 25,000 people, would this not encourage them to make it a bigger event next year if it's successful this year?

A: SW: The answer is that Wannasee know that they are going to be at capacity with 2,500 people, in that field they can not get any bigger.

Q: A few years ago there was planning permission declined for refreshment tents by Fair Hill. What has changed? Why can't we look at why pubs wont open and bring money back into the town?

A: SW: We can't force premises to open or close it is entirely their choice to do so over the period of the Horse Fair and we support their decisions.

Q: Why don't you support them to open? Could we not have encouraged one of the local premises to run the tent?

A: SW: We do support our premises where we can. I don't have an answer to this at the moment, but we can put the idea to local premises for next year to see if they wish to open a bar.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.