

## **Appleby Horse Fair: Post-Fair Public Meeting**

### **Appleby Public Hall**

**26 June 2024, 7pm**

#### **Councillor Graham Simpkins, Westmorland and Furness Council Elected Member for Appleby and Brough.**

Councillor Simpkins welcomed members of the public, and outlined the purpose of the meeting, which is to provide an update on the outcomes of the MASCG strategic arrangement for Appleby Horse Fair 2024, and to provide an opportunity for the public to ask any questions directly to the MASCG.

Apologies were noted for Cllr Phil Dew WFC Elected Member for Kirkby Stephen and Tebay, who was unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

#### **Steph Cordon, Chairperson of the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group for Appleby Horse Fair**

Steph Cordon Chairperson of the MASCG, thank all members of the public for their attendance at the meeting and provided an overview of the role and statutory responsibilities of the multi-agency strategic group. A round of introductions of representatives from the MASCG present at the meeting followed. These included WFC Environmental Health, Waste, Highways, Communities and Elected Members, Cumbria Police and RSPCA.

An update on the activity recorded for the 2024 Appleby Horse Fair was shared:

- 1287 caravans and bow tops, compared to 1197 last year.
- More earlier arrivals in the South of the County for 2024.
- New powers exercised by Police to move people on from inappropriate stopping places.
- Reduced encampments on A685 and impact for Kirkby Stephen community, result of ditch and bund system.
- Street cleaning teams were directed to areas promptly to deal with encampments and early arrivals.
- Appleby surrounding areas experienced impact from movement of encampments during phase two, Burrells and Powis Lane in particular. Mitigation around this will be looked at moving forward.
- Exclusion zone around Appleby will be reviewed for 2025 to make this more fit for purpose.
- Early pre-fair arrivals into Appleby Town saw an increase this year from the Monday.
- Increased Police presence in Appleby Town
- Increased street cleaning, larger bins and earlier clean-up helped to reduce waste.
- For clarity, private fields are cleaned by the owners not WFC.
- New barrier system on Flashing Lane worked well, improving safety for pedestrians, positive feedback from community and fair goers.
- Additional toilets were helpful, more will be considered for next year.
- Welfare powers for RSPCA to act in response to animal welfare worked well.
- GRT community have supported zero tolerance to animal cruelty, welfare awards given out to animal owners.
- 268 stalls on the market field, with proactive engagement from Trading Standards £500k of stolen goods seized.
- Considerations for a scheme to introduce permit for market field from next year.
- Community drop-in sessions through the year have created opportunities for feedback on issues relating to the fair. This will be extended over the year ahead.
- Westmorland and Furness Council took over management of Applebyfair.org in 2023 on behalf of MASCG. The website has been reorganised and includes additional information on the arrangements for the fair.

- There has been an increase in social media activity from MASCG, sharing information frequently through the year, as a result the social media activity has achieved 650,000 impressions and 6000 engagements.
- Community Action Group forms are now available online for communities to inform MASCG of concerns. The new online system has worked well. 145 forms submitted during phase 1,2,3. All issues are problem solved at daily tactical MASCG meetings, feedback is provided on how this is progressed to the individual.
- Daily MASCG meetings moved to Appleby Library which provided a cell for MASCG this year.
- Co-location of MASCG agencies at Appleby Police Station worked well and help with problem solving and a quick response to incidents during the fair.
- A number of Freedom of Information requests have been received as a consequence of the fair. MASCG are dealing with them and will respond appropriately. The financial information requests have been disaggregated to allocate relevant costs.
- MASCG welcome ideas on how engagement, education and enforcement could be improved.
- MASCG would also welcome help or suggestion on alternative stopping.
- Broad Close Car Park will be closed next year during the fair, an alternative is being considered.

Steph Cordon thanked all officers involved in the planning for Appleby Fair.

### **Superintendent Daniel St Quintin, Appleby Horse Fair Gold Command**

Supt Daniel St Quintin Police Gold Commander for Appleby Horse Fair introduced himself to members of the public and confirmed he will be Gold Commander for the fair for 2025.

Focus of intentions for 2024 was to keep people safe, work with all partners and communities, proactively target criminals, road safety, with positive and targeted enforcement, to intervene early, prevent harm and mitigate the issues.

An overview of Police activities during the fair was shared.

- 409 incidents, 69 crimes, stopped searched 221, 91 vehicles searched, 94 vehicles seized.
- 528 fixed penalties for speeding and parking due to zero tolerance approach.
- Early intervention to prevent harm assisted with arrests.
- 102 arrests in total, 28 in phase one and 74 in phase two.
- Arrests included GBH, Sexual Offence, Drug Driving, Theft, Assault and Criminal Damage.
- Some of the arrests were resident from the area, and 27 of drug driving related arrests were not from GRT community.
- Horse death at Jubilee Bridge, two suspects identified not from GRT community. RSPCA are leading the investigation.
- One serious assault on fair hill resulting in hospitalisation. Five males were arrested, incident did not involve any firearms.

A more proactive approach to Policing was enforced during phase one and two. Swifter media releases helped to inform the community of any emerging issues. Collaborative working with Trading Standards was successful in seizing counterfeit goods and targeting troublemakers.

The atmosphere of this year's fair reflects the way it was policed; visitors were relaxed knowing they were safe in the fair environment.

The strategy and command structure for 2025 will build on what worked well this year, and reflecting on what didn't. Incorporating a plan for change in behaviour and enforcement action as required. We will also look at emerging locations that were not on the radar this year, and the

earlier influx into Appleby. Police officers' engagement with communities will increase. We will look at improvements around technical aspects to communication and data recording. The planning for 2025 has already started, we are pleased for support and engagement from the community to assist with planning for a safe fair.

#### Questions/Comments:

Q; The Chair of Gargrave Parish Council, West Yorkshire highlighted the gathering of traveller groups on route to Appleby Fair which has increased to 60 this year. A question was raised around the measures are in place for MASCG to liaise with North Yorkshire council and provide Police for support.

A; MASCG work closely with Northumbria and Durham Local Authorities to discuss encampments on route to Appleby Fair. This will be discussed with colleagues in North Yorkshire for a response. Cumbria Police also work with neighbouring Police forces and will liaise with North Yorkshire Police on this matter. The representative for Traveller Community suggested North Yorkshire considers a similar approach to MASCG for the area.

Q; Issues were raised in relation to Church Brough encampments on turning circle and impact on community.

A: Member of the community who reported incidents via 101 were thanked for raising this. The Police and Community Team will respond to the issues. The turning circle requires more engagement, MASCG will work with the community to problem solve this and improve for next year.

Q; A query was raised around permission for encampment at Appleby Train Station.

A: This was an emerging location for 2024, with no warning. Network Rail who issued permits were contacted. Next year we will work with Network Rail to manage this.

Q; A suggestion was raised around reducing cessation of the Market Field, which would potentially reduce visitor numbers to the fair by 50%.

A: The market field has planning permission that allows for caravans and can be used for market stalls, there is no market licence in place. It takes place on private land, so the rules are different and not council responsibility. To stop the market stalls the planning permission would need to be overturned.

Q; A question was raised if Police have powers to intervene with market stalls trading.

A: This year Police worked collaboratively with Trading Standards targeting the market stalls and as a result a significant amount of counterfeit goods were seized. We can repeat this activity for next year and possibly increase it.

A few years ago, the Council introduced an informal permit system for food stalls, this ensured all food stalls coming to the fair are registered with a local authority. The system has improved the standards of the food stalls, and working with the landowner we could consider this approach with other stalls but the process is lengthy.

An issue was raised around the mess left from the Roman Road gathering during phase one.

Q: A query was raised on the caravan count for Appleby Horse Fair and if this included the surrounding areas such as Kirkby Stephen.

A: Officers confirmed the caravan count complete includes the sovereign area of Eden.

A suggestion for AHF 2025 was for Police Officers to be given street maps of Appleby in preparation for the fair.

A question was raised around how businesses could benefit from the fair, as many chose to close. Suggestions were put forward from Traveller representatives.

A question was asked around communities integrating with the fair. Information on a cultural evening with the GRT community was discussed, this could be organised if there was interest.

A discussion around the age of individuals in charge of Sulkies and legal interventions to stop accidents. Cumbria Police will provide a separated response to this after the meeting, following enquiries for clarification.

A suggestion was raised from the Traveller community that stopping places need to be dispersed to allow for distributed encampment and reduce stress in certain areas.

**MP Tim Farron** Raised the point about safety of young people and suggested this is investigated for clarity on what can be actioned, in particular, issues raised around young people. With regards to the market field, it's good to hear the work of the council to improve matters, there may not be a need for an Act of Parliament but working with officers to make changes could provide a solution.

A concern was raised by a member of the public around horse welfare following a number of reports of horses looking harassed, in the run up to the fair. A suggestion was put forward that the RSPCA attend a week before the fair.

RSPCA provided information on their operation for the fair that covers phase one and two, and response to CAG forms. People were urged to use 101 as dealing with incidents in real time is useful. In terms of response to incidents, RSPCA have officers on strategic locations around the fair to intervene and report horses that need to be stopped. RSPCA are targeting the small minority who abuse animals and getting help from GRT community. Each year the RSPCA have ongoing investigations and as a result, convictions relating to AHF. The organisation does prosecute people and has great support from the police.

A discussion on the number of visitors who frequent the fair from the traditional GRT communities continued, an estimated 10,000 who camp on fair hill are part of the ethnic GRT community.

A suggestion from Appleby Parish Councillor was raised to work towards reducing the fair visitor numbers, and if this could be achieved by working with landowners.

Q; An issue was raised around Holme Court, Appleby which houses many elderly residents, relating to the week before the fair. The area around Farm Bridge became congested with white encampment of vans. Police responded at the time, but the issues will need addressing next year. A suggestion for more police presence and toilets would reduce impact on the community.

Rising Sun holiday Park responded that the fair policing for 2024 was positive, as was the increased presence from the RSPCA. For 2025 Police need to consider measures to reduce night racing, and horse welfare for animals tied up with no food or water.

Issues were raised around Powis Lane road end at Long Marton, which was heavily congested in phase one and two of the fair, residents were unable to get children to school. There was a lot of rubbish left. A request for an increase in bins on flashing lane for next year, emptied early morning and late night. Toilets are located but not enough, they are overflowing by the end of the first day. To improve safety, tie-ups for horses on the railings would be useful.

A; Westmorland and Furness Council will look at what improvements can be made to the clean up around this area for next year.

Q: Powis Lane end near Long Marton Church experiences a pre-fair gathering, three weeks prior to the fair. Access to the village and disruption from horse racing impacts the community. Though it

is Policed, farm fields are broken into and the safety of residents going about their day is compromised. This year in particular there was an increase. No stopping signs were ignored, and posts removed and burnt. Safety for residents is the main concern.

A: MASCG are aware of the issues on Powis Lane. We are working with National Highways and looking at stopping places that may be available through dualling scheme. This year the lack of stopping places was a main issue with such an influx and nowhere to move people on to.

Cllr John Murray expressed thanks to all officers from WFC and MASCG who work year round to co-ordinate the strategy for a safe fair, and reminded all that the local elected members are the voice of the community to feedback issues and suggestions to the MASCG. All views raised today will be considered in the planning for Appleby Horse Fair 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.