

CALDBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Note of informal discussions with local businesses 14 June 2021 in the Parish Hall 8:00pm

Cllrs participating: Tim Cartmell (Chairman), Norman Atkinson, Alison Young Poole, Angela Glendinning, Alan Tyson.

Also participating: Elspeth Mackenzie (Fair World Shop), James Whitesmith (Oddfellows), Sara and Charles Deans (Muddy Duck/Old Smithy), Angus Hodgson and Hugh Hodgson (Milkhouse/Midtown Farm), John Nicoll (Midtown Camping Barn), Karen Kennedy (Hestascene), Helen and Colin Dalgleish (Priest Mill cafe), Simon Smith (Clerk).

1. Apologies

Cllrs John Brown, Paul Doherty, and Ian Shaw, and subsequently from Lisa and Debbie, Caldbeck Village Shop.

2. Parking arrangements

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and, following introductions, explained that the purpose was to discuss the parking problems that had been experienced in recent weeks, particularly at weekends and the bank holiday and during the half term holiday. He was keen for the discussions to focus on what actions might be taken to deal with parking. Caldbeck was proving a popular destination following relaxation of COVID restrictions and further influxes of visitors were to be expected during the summer with the growth in day trips and UK holidays.

Possible steps for dealing with problems included:

- a) Restricting parking through use of cones, request notices to limit parking to 30 minutes, or through enforceable measures which would require County Council action through yellow lines or establishment of disc zones;
- b) Identifying additional parking areas;
- c) Making better use of existing parking through establishing parking bays and encouraging tidy/considerate parking.

During discussions the following points were made:

There was little enthusiasm for formal restrictions of car parking by yellow lines/parking zones which could be enforced. These were seen as being alien and in conflict with Caldbeck's rural location and traditional environment.

Some visitors were parking in the village close to businesses and then going for a long walk thus occupying parking spaces that would normally be used for people wishing to shop. It would be better to identify longer term parking areas and encourage more considerate parking.

Those businesses offering holiday accommodation had a role to play in ensuring their guests were fully briefed about where they should park. Parking information could be included on websites and in any information packs for guests.

There was support for the request notices limiting parking time to 30 minutes so that customers could access the shop. There was a suggestion that the area covered by the notices might be extended to include other businesses as long stay parking had migrated from outside the shop to opposite those businesses.

There was concern about inconsiderate parking on pavements and blocking access to junctions. Such parking is contrary to the Highway Code which can be used by those responsible for parking enforcement. Cones could be used to mark where cars should not park.

Suggestions for introducing one way flows to provide additional parking were thought not practicable, nor the notion of introducing parking advisers to encourage considerate parking and suggest the most appropriate parking for whatever activity visitors were wishing to undertake.

Turning to the identification of additional parking areas, the Chairman reported that Gillian McElvogue had said she was happy to accommodate parking at Fellview School at weekends, bank holidays and during school holidays. She thought there were spaces for six cars. There were suggestions that the school might be able to accommodate more parking if both gates were opened and there were a one way system for entrance and exit which might allow for parking on one side of the one way flow.

Angus Hodgson said he was looking at opening the barn field between Midtown and Upton for parking but would need to look at the details and he would not be able to accommodate parking in wet weather. He had used the field on special occasions as a one off such as the Jubilee weekend. His suggestion was welcomed.

Other suggestions included asking the GP Surgery and the Cricket Club if parking might be allowed at weekends or if no cricket was being played.

As regards making better use of existing parking facilities, there was strong support for encouraging more considerate parking so that more cars could be accommodated. There was little support for painting parking bays but posts, logs or different textures might be considered. In the first instance marker posts would be relative cheap and unobtrusive and permanent environmentally acceptable solutions might be progressed once the Parish Council had taken ownership of the main car parks.

The parking area by the Chapel was thought to offer opportunities for much more effective use which might significantly increase the number of cars accommodated.

Once proposals for providing additional parking areas are firmed up, it was suggested the Parish Council should prepare a map showing all the parking areas and drawing attention to those where people are asked to limit parking to 30 minutes and all day parking facilities where people might wish to go for a longer walk. That would help promote more considerate parking and those businesses offering holiday accommodation would be able to use the resource in their literature.

Actions:

- a) Emphasise the need for considerate parking, not parking on pavements, using request signs to limit parking by the shop and businesses to 30 minutes, and placing cones to identify where parking is not permitted because of proximity to road junctions;
- b) Review existing car parking areas and consider whether parking bays can be indicated in an unobtrusive way so as to accommodate more cars. This would include the parking area by the Chapel as well as the various parking areas which the Parish Council is purchasing from the National Park;
- c) Determine whether additional parking can be provided at Fellview School, one of Midtown Farm's fields, the Surgery, the Cricket Club;
- d) Once decisions have been made prepare a map showing parking facilities and indicating whether parking is short term or all day. This should be displayed in the village and made readily available on the Parish website which businesses could draw on for their own websites and information packs.

3. Caldbeck Public Toilets

Concerns were expressed that Caldbeck public toilets remained shut when there were so many visitors who were making unreasonable demands on local business and using their facilities.

The Clerk explained that Allerdale Borough Council owned the facilities and had shut them when the COVID pandemic hit. Allerdale had previously decided that it wanted to withdraw support for a number of public toilets as a savings measure. The Parish Council had agreed to take over the facilities following the budget consultation in December 2019 when parishioners were very much in favour of ensuring the facilities remained available. The Parish Council had included a budget for their servicing.

In transferring the facilities to the Parish Council, Allerdale has agreed that it should either pay for the upgrade of the facilities to get them to a reasonable standard or provide an equivalent grant if the Parish Council wised to undertake the upgrade itself or find an alternative option for the long term

The Parish Council has been pressing Allerdale to re-open the facilities and agree the upgrade work and has requested a joint site visit for some time. Mike Johnson, Allerdale's Leader who is Caldbeck's County Councillor, has also been pressing for action.

Allerdale has recently undertaken a condition survey which has concluded that the facilities could be re-opened 'as is'. The survey also sets out what investment should be undertaken. Whilst the Parish Council has been advised that the facilities can re-open, it has not seen the report. There is still a pressing need for a joint site visit with Allerdale, the Parish Council and the Parish Council's contractor who will service the facilities as all parties need to be content that the facilities can be re-opened. The Clerk hoped that a joint site meeting would take place very quickly and that if all is acceptable, the facilities would be reopened shortly.

Angus Hodgson questioned upgrading the existing facilities as they were in such poor condition and considered that alternative provision should be made. He explained that the Hodgsons had offered to help with this but nothing had happened since their suggestion some 6 months ago.

The Chairman said the Parish Council had looked at alternative sites but nothing had so far proved feasible. New facilities would be a significant cost and funding would be challenging.

The Clerk said that in the short term, reopening the existing facilities was the obvious solution so long as all parties were content. Any upgrade would take place later on so there would be an opportunity to look again at relocation and discuss options, including any proposals from the Hodgsons, before deciding whether the existing facilities provided a long term solution after their upgrading.

Actions:

- a) Parish Council to press for a joint site meeting with Allerdale, the Parish Council and its contractor to determine if the facilities 'as is' can be reopened very quickly;
- b) Allerdale and the Parish Council to agree what upgrade should be undertaken if the facilities provide a sensible long term option;
- c) Prior to any upgrade consider alternative options including a new build and any proposals made by the Hodgsons.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions. He said a note of the meeting would be discussed by the Parish Council at its meeting on 21 June and actions agreed. Because of COVID restrictions, only six members of the public were able to attend the Parish Council meeting and anyone interested in attending should contact the Clerk to reserve a place.

The informal discussions ended at 9:05 pm.