

Murton Parish Council

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Chief Executive
Cumbria County Council
Cumbria House
117 Botchergate
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c/o Fairview
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Appleby in Westmorland
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9th September 2022

Dear John,

Following a great deal of discussion in Appleby, Kirkby Stephen and some local parishes regarding the management of the Appleby Horse Fair and the request of a resident that Murton Parish Council hold a parish poll regarding the fair.

It was agreed to hold a Parish Meeting to provide an opportunity for residents to voice their views about the fair. It was noted that only Murton parish residents could vote on any proposal made at the Parish Meeting

The following issues were raised. These have been grouped under topic headings and usually represent more than one comment made about an issue.

Policing the Fair - Comments about Policing the fair were numerous, Murton residents had personal experience of Police deliberately choosing to take no action during incidents that would usually demand police intervention.

Eden District Council erect fencing posts and no parking signs along the verges near the Flakebridge road. These posts are removed and no parking signs ignored. There is no enforcement.

No enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Order in Appleby.

A resident farmers field was broken into by travellers, the silage crop ruined and the fencing broken down, police were made aware but no action was taken.

Avoiding Appleby during the Fair - Many Murton residents felt that the fair limited their movement around their own community. They avoided going into Appleby or made only essential visits.

The main reasons were feeling intimidated and threatened by the large number of people gathered in the town.

Some residents had been threatened by those camping on the verge near the Flakebridge road end. They invade the road and sometimes harass passing drivers.

Some parents had kept children away from school and in 2022 the school had taken the decision to close for two days to keep pupils safe.

Murton residents shop and use services elsewhere during the fair. At least one supermarket refuses to deliver to Murton because goods have been stolen from the vans.

Some residents reported thefts and damage to property.

General issues about the management of the Fair - The following queries were raised:

Regarding the build up of caravans prior to the fair, a discussion about extending the opening of Fair Hill a week early and directing travellers camping on verges to Fair Hill. However it was noted that some travellers opt to camp on the verges to avoid paying Fair Hill fees, it was suggested that removing the fees charged would be an incentive to move travellers onto the hill. The majority of those present thought that this was a good idea.

Licences - is the sale of horses licensed? Are there street trading licences and alcohol licences in place for the Fair Hill? If so how are these licences enforced?

It was noted that Appleby Town council (ATC) owns Fair Hill and receives rental income for the fair.

A Freedom of Information request by one resident had led to the comment that the publicised costs of the fair should be interrogated more closely, as the true costs may not have been fully publicised.

Is there an economic benefit to the area? Many shops and services are choosing to close during the fair which would suggest a negative benefit apart from ATC who have a financial interest in the fair as it stands

The fair is a legal entity which can rent a field and apply for licences, but when it comes to organising and managing the event, no-one will take responsibility.

Your comment and answers to the questions raised would be welcome, I would also be happy to meet with you to understand more fully the issues involved and possible solutions.

Yours sincerely

John McDarren
Chairman - Murton Parish Council
Covering - Murton, Hilton, Langton Gate, Flakebridge, Brackenber and
Coupland Beck