



## ALSTON MOOR BUSINESS ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

**Date/Venue:** Thursday 1 October 2020, 5.30pm, online via Zoom

**Present:** Ian Grey (Chair), Gina Perryman, Lesley Mearns, Janis Goodfellow, Guy Harmer, Elaine Edgar

**Apologies:** Gary Wright, Andy Holt

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### Minutes of committee meeting held on 27 August 2020

Agreed, with no matters arising. **Action for Gina** to update and publish on the website. All action points discharged, or carried forward as detailed below.

### Finance and Membership

No change to finances since the last meeting. Increase of 4 in membership, taking total to 89. The membership form is available on the [website](#).

### Marketing Group sub-committee

Gina provided an update on activities since the last committee meeting:

Caravan/Holiday Parks project - Ongoing.

Shop Local - An all member email went out in August asking someone to volunteer to take the lead on marketing Alston Moor retailers and service providers to residents, to encourage them to shop locally. Alison Clark (Miners Arms) kindly came forward. Gina has met with Alison this week, and a residents' survey about their use of local shops is being planned as the first step. Gina will email our members to explain this piece of work, and Alison is researching use of Survey Monkey. Gina and Alison are meeting again next week to take this forward. The survey will be shared with the AMBA Committee before going live.

Accommodation Forum – Guy reported that the group met yesterday. A mixed bag with some accommodation providers opting to close for the season, or being very hard hit by the additional Covid-19 restrictions in the North. The self-catering and B&B sectors though have generally had very good occupancy rates since they were allowed to re-open on 4 July.

### Front Street Steering Group/Meathaw Hill A686 closure

The Meathaw Hill works were completed ahead of schedule. Feedback from a few of the Alston town centre businesses indicated that there hadn't been any real impact on the level of trade. This may have been helped by the fact there was no signage on the Weardale or Teesdale approaches advising of the closure. And the signage on the A69 was an improvement on previous efforts, specifying that the A686 was closed after Alston. Cumbria County Council deserve credit for their decision to roll two year's worth of works into this closure, meaning that we won't have to endure one next year.

Front Street is closed from 5 October for 5 days. Through our membership of the Front Street Steering Group, and with the support of Claire Driver, Gina has secured 16 bespoke signs for the closure encouraging people to visit Alston, rather than take the Blagill diversion. This is similar to the approach that was used when UU closed the street in 2018, where it was found that the signage did help to mitigate the impact on businesses.



### **United Utilities sub-committee**

There are no grants currently being considered by the sub-committee, although there is one that is believed to be coming. There's around £300 left in the budget. **Action for Ian** to meet with UU once a demand for grants picks up again to see if they will allocate more funding.

### **Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS)**

Gina is leading on this for AMBA. The second round of update reminders have been issued and actioned for the online guide [www.alstonmoorhealth.org/guide](http://www.alstonmoorhealth.org/guide), which has had nearly 5,000 page views since its launch. The planned press releases on that have been prepared, but put on hold for now in light of the deteriorating Covid-19 situation over recent weeks. The Committee agreed that it's not appropriate to be encouraging day trippers to come to Alston Moor now, when many of them are in areas with additional restrictions due to high numbers of local cases.

The leaflet is ready to be designed now, and will build on the posters that were recently distributed to various outlets by Claire Driver.

### **AOB**

STR – Ian continues to remain in contact with one of the trustees over developments.

Alston Moor Parish Council – Meetings are still being held on Zoom, next one Monday 5 October, 7pm. Email [clerk@alstonmoor.org](mailto:clerk@alstonmoor.org) to be added to the email list for agendas etc. You can log-in and mute your sound and switch off video.

A couple of completely incorrect Facebook comments had been noted, both from the same person. One stated on Cumbria Crack that AMBA had 'bought the golf buggy bus' with the UU money. Of course, we did allocate a grant for the electric bus project but, when the vehicle was sold, the grant was repaid in full. This is reflected on our website in the document that shows where the money went (see news item 30 May 2020) [www.visitalston.com/media.html](http://www.visitalston.com/media.html). The other statement was to the effect that Cumbria County Council were acting illegally by using the Blagill loop as a diversion route for the A689 (Front Street) closure. That's not the case at all. Highways authorities have to do a risk assessment on any proposed diversion routes to assess their suitability and safety. For the A686 (Meathaw Hill) closure, the risk of directing all traffic onto the Leadgate route was too high, hence the official diversion was via the Brampton road. However, for the Blagill loop diversion, the risk is at a tolerable level.

Potential MP visit – action point carried forward to keep in touch to arrange Neil Hudson visit. **Action for Janis**.

Member event – Ian floated the idea of a webinar event, possibly with speakers from key organisations such as Cumbria Tourism, Eden DC Economic Development and the Chamber of Commerce. **Action for Ian** to sound out possible speakers in principle at this stage.

Christmas trees – Janis will liaise with Brian Cooper to check the arrangements are all on track. **Action for Janis**.

### **Date of next meeting**

Thursday 12 November, 6.30pm via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm.