



## ALSTON MOOR BUSINESS ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

**Date/Venue:** Thursday 4 June 2020, 6pm, online via Zoom

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

Apologies: Gary Wright

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### Minutes of committee meeting held on 13 May 2020

Agreed, with no matters arising other than to add the word 'responsible' to our social media policy.

**Action for Gina** to update and publish on the website. All action points discharged, or carried forward as detailed below.

### Finance and Membership

Janis presented the latest finance figures. The bank balance is £5,943, including £872 remaining from the United Utilities grant fund. All cheques issued have now cleared. Total membership stands at 75.

### Free Membership Offer

A further 6 new members have joined since the last meeting, and several more businesses are known to be interested. All new members have had their profiles added to the website and email distribution list. We now have a firmer list of potential membership targets to follow up on; **action for Gina** to re-circulate for us all to pursue these.

Elaine suggested at the last meeting that maybe the Show Committee could join, and disseminate matters of interest to the farming community, instead of farmers joining individually. **Action for Elaine** from last meeting to contact the Show Committee carried forward.

### Marketing Group sub-committee

The sub-committee hasn't met since the last main committee meeting, as they're still working on the activities from their last sub-committee meeting. A meeting will be scheduled before 4 July, when the Government's Covid-19 restrictions are due to be eased for the visitor and hospitality sectors; **action for Gina** to arrange.

Guy has set up an Alston Accommodation Forum with a Facebook Group, and 15 or so of the members met on a Zoom call on 1 June. There was good feedback, and a demand for a further session, which Guy has arranged for 22 June. The group wishes to remain informal, and independent of AMBA, i.e. not an AMBA sub-committee.

### Heritage Open Days Group sub-committee

Guy, as Chair of this group, has emailed all potential participants and started to collate information. He's still waiting on a national decision as to (a) whether HODs will go ahead and (b) if so, what format it will be in.

### Front Street Steering Group

As agreed at the last meeting, Gina, Ian and Janis had a Zoom call with Claire Driver. Since then Claire's done all she can on our behalf to get the works back on track, and there is a definite will from those within Cumbria County Council (CCC), including the Council Leader, to see the setts ('cobblestones') reinstated. Gina attended the Steering Group meeting yesterday, and there was a mix of success and disappointment from that:



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- Work on laying the trial panels is now set to go ahead within the next 4 weeks. This will be managed by traffic lights, rather than a road closure. This has brought the work forward from CCC's statement a few weeks ago that it wouldn't be done until much later this year.
- The money is definitely there for Phase 1 (30 metres of setts, roughly from HSBC up to the Co-op car park entrance), plus remedial/tidying up works of the adjacent pavement and public access space such as car park areas. If the work doesn't all get completed in 20/21 then the balance set aside for Phase 1 will be there to spend in 21/22.
- It is physically not possible to lay the 30 metre stretch in 2020 now. The mortar needs a long spell at 3-4°C to set, which means that winter conditions aren't suitable for that. The 30 metres can't be laid until the results of the trial panels have been properly evaluated, so the delay in getting those down due to Covid-19 now means that there is an insufficient window to get the 30 metres laid and set before the temperature is likely to drop. The other issue is that the quarry supplying the stone can't fulfil the order in time for the setts to be laid in 2020. So, disappointingly, the CCC project team have rescheduled the work to spring 2021; this will involve a road closure
- The original plan had been to lay the 30 metres in late Summer 2020. While the road was closed, CCC were going to put temporary tarmac over the highway at the top of Front Street. The idea with that is that it will eliminate the need to keep surveying and patching up sections of the road where the setts are dangerous, and also it would look better than the patchwork of tarmac repairs within the setts that are there now. This is exactly what CCC did with the bottom of Front Street a couple of years ago. The ambition remains to remove the temporary tarmac areas, and to put setts down from the bottom to the top of Front Street. The proposal is to go ahead with laying the tarmac at the top of Front Street this year, and to do that around October time, with a road closure of approximately 5 days.
- A686 improvements from Meathaw Hill to Alston – this work has been done in stages over the past couple of years, and has reached down as far as the first Leadgate junction as you come down from Hartside. The proposal had been to continue in small stages, but CCC are proposing this year to roll 3 years' worth of work into September 2020. This would involve a road closure between the first and second Leadgate junctions, but the junctions themselves would remain open for local traffic. Once this work is completed, the team will move on to tarmac the top of Front Street.
- Gina has outlined the economic impact of the slippage in Phase 1 to the steering group, and asked that the remedial/tidying up works of the adjacent Phase 1 area be done in 2020 as planned, if it shortens the road closure time in 2021. CCC will look into the possibility of this.
- Gina asked that the Steering Group meets again sooner than the 5 August as next scheduled, so we can keep on top of progress. It was agreed that it would meet on 8 July.

Brian Grew reported to the Steering Group that the Alston Townscape Heritage project is now focusing on the Townfoot area to invest in, possibly some 'Gateway' features. CCC own this land, and discussions with them have started. The planned work on Potato Market area couldn't be progressed due to ownership being unidentifiable. Brian also advised that he is the Sustrans representative for the area.

If the Committee (or Members) have any questions for the Steering Group then let Gina know. We have been asked not to share information with our members, or anyone else, for now. CCC are responsible for the communications, and have undertaken to get an update message out on the Front Street project within the next few days.

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

There is still one grant currently being considered by the sub-committee; further information is needed from the applicant.

**Action for Ian** to meet with UU to see if they will allocate more funding (once the time is appropriate to do so). Carried forward again, as not appropriate yet.

### **Covid-19 Recovery Plan**

Ian continues to represent AMBA on the Alston Moor Emergency Response Group. Claire Driver met Eden DC Officers today, and there's potentially about £5k from an EU fund on offer for Alston Moor to assist with our re-opening to visitors, e.g. for signage, promotional activities. There's a Zoom meeting next week to discuss this; **action for Ian** to forward details to Gina who will attend.

### **AOB**

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

People and Places Survey – Regarding action from last meeting, Ian discussed the report with Yvonne Wells from Eden DC. She advised that Eden will use the information it in to inform various aspects of policy and decision making.

Motorcyclists – There had been recent negative comments made on Facebook by some of the community because large groups of motorcyclists had been congregating at Spar, contrary to Government guidelines, with some not observing social distancing inside and outside the store. Some of the motorcyclists had latched on to this, and were threatening to boycott Alston businesses, but still use local roads. One of the motorcycling community had then reached out via the Absolutely Alston page to smooth this over. It was agreed that we would communicate with him with a statement along the lines of:

*'Alston Moor Business Association would like to assure you that any negativity towards motorcyclists did not come from our business community. We warmly welcome all visitors to Alston Moor, irrespective of how they arrive. All we ask is that while here, they acknowledge that they're visiting a small rural community, and that they follow all government Covid-19 guidelines to keep themselves and our community safe'.*

Beyond that it was agreed that it should be up to individual businesses if they want to particularly reach out to bikers, as indeed The Nook, High Plaice and The Top Cafe have already on Facebook.

**Action for Gina** to coordinate this and advise our members accordingly, as it was referenced in an all member email that we'd be discussing this.

Community Statement on re-opening to visitors – when the tourism and hospitality sectors re-open, potentially from 4 July, it was agreed that a message to our community from our businesses might be helpful. The need for our community to welcome visitors also came up at the Accommodation Forum. We need to stress that all businesses are following Government guidance, and acting on that. It's not a case of putting profits ahead of safety, and if visitors follow the guidance then they should be treated with respect by the community. **Action for Gina** to pull a statement together with the Committee.

Wine Train event – of course we would love to run another event this year, but that may not be possible. We agreed to wait and see how things unfold regarding the Government's restrictions, and at STR. **We will revisit this at the next meeting.**

### **Date of next meeting**

Thursday 2 July, 6pm; **action for Gina** to set up Zoom meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.